

CUJ Op-Ed/Columns

Ta 'c ki iye pi ihekin. Welcome home!

The unveiling and consecration of Doug Hyde's emotive sculpture 'etweyé wise, "I return from a difficult journey" at the Josephy Center this week marks a turning point in the presence of the walama NiiMiipoo, better known as the Chief Joseph Band Nez Perce, in Wallowa County. After more than a century of abuse, war, and genocide, the people who had lived here, "for 10,000 years, maybe 20,000 years, from time beyond memory," as Ferris Paisano III, Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee member said as Barbara Rounsavell returned a Nez Perce mortar that her family found in Hells Canyon long ago, "we are coming back, finally, to our home."

This return has been sparked by Wallowa County citizens, especially residents of the City of Wallowa. In 1989, the City of Wallowa invited Taz Connor, a Nez Perce and descendent of Chief Joseph, to help plan a Native American Festival. That led to Tamkaliks, which led to the Homeland Project, which grew to 320 acres of publicly accessible land, a longhouse built with love and respect by Wallowa County locals, a sweat lodge, and this year, a salmon habitat restoration project, and grand opening of a first-class educational exhibit at the Homeland Project in Wallowa.

"Whenever the white man treats an Indian as they treat each other, then we will have no more wars. We shall all be alike — brothers of one father and one mother, with one sky above us and one country around us... that all people may be one people"

— *Hinmatóowyahtq'it (Chief Joseph), 1879*

Along with their presence at Chief Joseph Days parade and Friendship Feast, exhibits and a library at the Josephy Center, and Nez Perce Fisheries offices in Joseph, the statue at the Josephy Center heralds that the Wallowa Band, Nez Perce now are assuming their rightful place as part of a more diverse Wallowa County population. In the future, the

Wallowa County Chieftain plans to honor its name and masthead with a column by, and occasional news from, Chief Joseph Band members at Nespelem and elsewhere, as well as other Native American voices from within our community.

We, the sooyáapoo (non-Indians) welcome the return of the Wallowa Band, Chief Joseph's people, from a very difficult journey, which is not complete yet.

There is room in the county and in our hearts for your more permanent presence, and so very much we can learn from you.

Ta 'c ki iye pi ihekin. It's good to see each other. Welcome home! We will honor Chief Joseph's words.

- Ellen Bishop, Wallowa County Chieftain, June 26, 2019



Doug Hyde's sculpture represents a "difficult journey."