



FREE SPIRIT

MESSAGES



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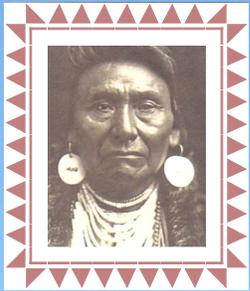
... An Uplifting Wind Beneath Your Wings To Carry You Through These Challenging Times!

JULY 2012

"TAMKALIKS"

From Where You Can See The Mountains...

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Returning To Their "PRECIOUS LAND"

Driven from their original homeland during The Nez Perce War of 1877, descendants of Chief Joseph's Wallowa Band Nez Perce have been joyously returning to Oregon's Wallowa Valley for their annual Tamkaliks Celebration every July for the past 22 years.

Tamkaliks means "from where you can see the mountains"—an enormous understatement! Rising straight up from the valley floor to nearly 10,000 feet, this magnificent panoramic expanse will simply take your breath away.

I was privileged to live on this sacred ground for nearly a decade, getting to know some of the native elders who so generously shared their wisdom and patiently taught me a few words of the Nez Perce language.

Leaving that beautiful valley seven years ago, I hadn't heard those powerful Nez Perce drums again until last week's annual gathering. Tears welled in my eyes as a small band of Nez Perce riders in full regalia moved silently across the rim-rock cliffs in early morning light. If a seven year absence elicited this much emotion in me, how could I even begin to fathom what these Original People must be feeling?

Always a valiant protector of the women, children, and elders, Chief Joseph never wanted to be a war chief, but circumstances finally forced his hand. He had no choice but to become a brilliant military strategist to protect his people.

Long renowned for their expert horsemanship and development of the hardy American Appaloosa breed, for four brutal months Chief Joseph and his courageous band outran, outsmarted, and outfought the pursuing U.S. cavalry. But alas, on October 5th, 1877, after a grueling 1170 mile retreat north, his numbers rapidly dwindling, Chief Joseph surrendered just 40 miles short of the Canadian border, the safety of Sitting Bull's camp... and freedom.

***"Our chiefs are killed... the old men are all dead...
It is cold and we have no blankets.
The little children are freezing to death...
Hear me, my chiefs. I am tired. My heart is sick and sad.
From where the sun now stands,
I will fight no more forever."***

— Chief Joseph

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The bones of Chief Joseph's father, Old Joseph (Tuekakas) still rest in The Wallowa Valley, but young Chief Joseph (Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekht, "Thunder Rolling In The Mountains") was never allowed to return. He lived out his remaining days on the desolate Colville Reservation in Washington state. On September 21, 1904, at the age of 64, Chief Joseph left for the Other Side Camp.

Many say he died of a broken heart...

Yes, this is a dark, sad story to hear... but there is a bright silver lining to consider. The Nez Perce have recently regained a foothold in the Wallowa Valley. The tribe now owns 320 acres of choice land along the Wallowa River (at Wallowa, Oregon) where their Tamkaliks Celebration is annually held. They've also acquired another 10,000 acres in Joseph Canyon. The slow wheels of justice are starting to turn.

So when you come to watch the tired old feet of the elders dancing at Tamkaliks, now you'll understand why they touch the earth with such unfathomable reverence. And whenever you hear thunder in the nearby mountains, you'll know the spirit of Chief Joseph has come home at last!



**So modern, footloose, fancy free,
Have we forgotten what it means to be
Connected to the Earth?**

**With roots now scarcely half an inch long,
We've broken the link to our sacred song,
Rolling like tumbleweeds
That never belong.**

**Maybe it's time again to go deep,
Remember the dust on the ancient feet
Of those who walked us here
To *listen* instead of speak.**

Maybe it's time...

**— Teryl "T" Johansson
July 2012**

May this humble offering inspire
The Extraordinary Being
You *already* are...

Many Blessings,
Teryl "T" Johansson

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