

Joseph's Death

Colvilles Insist, It Was 1904

NESPELEM — A Port Orchard woman's claim that Chief Joseph was seen alive in 1918, some 14 years after his reported death in Nespelem, has been greeted with stunned disbelief by members of the Colville Confederated tribes contacted by the Omak Chronicle.

"I've heard some pretty far-fetched stories but never anything like this," said Harry Owhi, executive secretary of the tribal business council. Owhi, a Nez Perce whose grandfather fought with Chief Joseph in the War of 1877, said there was "no truth" in the report.

"I don't believe it," said Mrs. Ann George, a part Nez Perce and daughter of the Palouse-Yakima leader, Cleveland Kamiakin. Now probate clerk at the Bureau of Indian Affairs office in Coulee Dam, Mrs. George said as a girl she often listened to old-timers gossiping and telling stories, and never was there a whisper indicating a conspiracy to pretend Joseph was dead.

According to all published or written accounts available to the Chronicle, Joseph died on September 21, 1904, near his tepee along Nespelem creek at the age of 64. He was buried in the Nespelem cemetery.

On June 20, 1905, he was reburied and a monument erected (though Mrs. George says his body

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At left, Chief Joseph at Nespelem creek a few years before his reported death in 1904.

