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### Authors Share Nez Perce Perspective on Lewis and Clark

by Steve Chapman

It's not often that a casual conversation over coffee turns into a 15-year book project. However, for Mr. Allen Pinkham and Dr. Steven Evans, that's exactly what happened.

*Lewis and Clark Among the Nez Perce: Strangers in the Land of the Nimiipuu*, tells the story of the Lewis and Clark expedition through the eyes of the Nez Perce. On Monday, October 14, the authors spoke to a crowd of about 80 at Washington State University during a presentation and book signing.

The seed of inspiration for the book began back when Pinkham began learning about the expedition of Lewis and Clark and their "conquering" of the American West in school. Pinkham, who is Nez Perce himself and a noted tribal historian, soon realized these stories in school were very different from the ones he listened to his father tell.



**Mr. Allen Pinkham (foreground, left) and Dr. Steven Evans (foreground, right) autograph copies of "Lewis and Clark Among the Nez Perce: Strangers in the Land of the Nimiipuu" at WSU October 14.**

"Something's wrong with this," Pinkham said he realized. "We've got to put something down from the tribal perspective about all this inundation of civilization and Christianity which befell us."

So, after many conversations with Evans, the two decided to take on the task of putting this long tradition of oral story telling into writing.

They say you can't change the past, but that's exactly what some critics have accused Pinkham and Evans of doing with this story.

"We didn't really set out to revise anything, we just decided to tell the same story, but tell it our own way with no pre-judgments," said Evans, a WSU alum with a PhD in history.

"We're not changing history," Pinkham said. "You're just going to hear a side you've never heard before."

Graduate student Renee Holt reinforced this point when she pointed out how significant the publication was for the Nez Perce and Native community as a whole.

"From the Native community, research is usually conducted on us, and we're usually subjects," Holt said. "Hearing from the personal story and then hearing from the scholastic side, it's really a privilege."

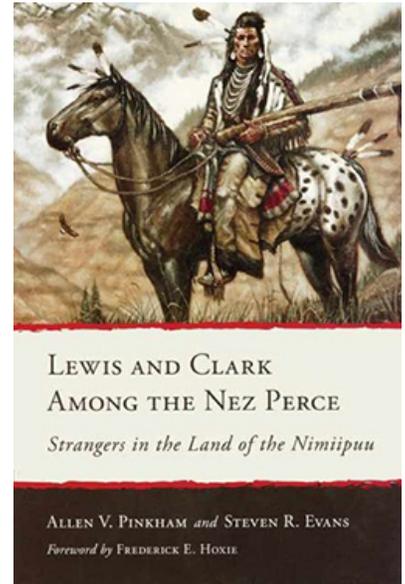
One focus of their book is the expedition on Sargent John Ordway and his men down Hell's Canyon. This expedition marked the first time white men traveled the depth's of Hell's Canyon; a piece of Idaho state history which until recently had yet to be explored. With Ordway's journals in hand, Evans and Pinkham made the expedition themselves, and found evidence of the camps Ordway described in his writing.

Both men agreed these research trips were their favorite parts of the 15 years spent developing the book.

"It was very exciting and very fun," Evans said. "Right until the last two years when we had to revise, and revise and revise again and trim and throw out photos, and chapters..."

The men's new book is available for purchase at the WSU Bookie, and can also be found online at Amazon.com.

[Watch an interview with Mr. Pinkham and Dr. Evans about their book for WSU "Great Conversations at Washington State."](#)



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