

The Arrival of Looking Glass

By Colonel Lawrence Kip

This excerpt from Army officer Lawrence Kip's journal describes the dramatic arrival of Chief Looking Glass at the 1855 Walla Walla Council. Looking Glass had been in Buffalo Country for three years hunting buffalo and fighting against the Blackfeet. As Kip describes, the elder Nez Perce chief arrived rather angrily at the council grounds carrying the scalp of a slain foe and accompanied by twenty mounted warriors.

Not bothering to dismount, Looking Glass scolded his fellow Nez Perce, saying to them: "My people, what have you done? While I was gone, you have sold my country. I have come home, and there is not left me a place on which to pitch my lodge. Go home to your lodges. I will talk to you."

Looking Glass represented a contingent of Nez Perce that were reluctant to negotiate a treaty with the United States. While some Nez Perce leaders were eager to sign a treaty agreement, others refused to accept the loss of much of their land and resources in exchange for what they saw as a shaky promise to keep whites off what land remained to them.

Looking Glass eventually signed the treaty creating the Nez Perce Reservation, but his fears about the agreement were soon confirmed. Shortly after the Walla Walla Council, gold was discovered in and around the newly established reservation. In 1863 the federal government reduced the reservation to a tenth the size agreed upon in the 1855 treaty in order to accommodate the increasing numbers of white miners and settlers.

This reduction of the reservation eventually resulted in the Nez Perce War of 1877, in which Chief Looking Glass's son, also known as Looking Glass, was killed.

Further Reading: Josephy, Alvin M. *The Nez Perce Indians and the Opening of the Northwest*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1965.

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