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Earth, Animals, and Academics: Plateau Indian Communities, Culture, and the Walla Walla Council of 1855

CLIFFORD E. TRAFZER

In the early winter of 1980, an elderly medicine man of mixed Palouse and Nez Percé blood shared many stories. He was a small, thin man with long, white hair pulled back into a ponytail. He spoke of many things and told of his own unique powers. "You come from that university where you have men and women who spend their lives studying plants and animals." The medicine man continued, saying that the scientists could see only a part of the world of living things. "I see things that they have never seen, heard things they have never heard." The medicine man was in deep earnest. He had talked to plants and animals and heard their stories and songs. Through his oral presentation about the plants and animals, he offered insights into the history and worldview of Indians living on the Great Columbia Plateau of present-day Washington, Oregon, and Idaho.¹ The discussion of plants and animals, mountains, and rivers is an integral part of American Indian history, but often these are elements of the past that are little understood by historians. As part of the legacy of the

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Columbian invasion of America, Europeans have debased native beliefs in the sanctity of the natural world and have downplayed the significance of cultural forces within Native American communities as important factors influencing the course of history. The result has been historical writings based on uncritical evaluations of biased documents by scholars who have little understanding of Native American cultures.

Scholars who address issues involving Indian nations should understand the native view of the earth, plants, and animals. This is certainly the case for historians focusing on the history of Indian peoples on the Northwest Plateau, where "animal people" interacted with each other and with the natural elements of the earth prior to the arrival of human beings.² In fact, the plants, animals, and natural features of the earth dealt with each other for some time in order to make the earth ready to receive native peoples. For example, Coyote once floated down the Columbia River disguised as a baby so that the *Tah Tah Kleah*, or Five Female Monsters, living near the lower Columbia would take him in and raise him as their own. The *Tah Tah Kleah* adopted Coyote, and each day while they gathered food, Coyote worked to destroy an earthen dam the Giants had created in order to prevent salmon from moving upstream. After five days of work, Coyote broke the fish dam and led the salmon up the Columbia to the different tribes living near the *Chewana* and its tributaries.³

Such dramas are considered history by Native Americans, and their historical accounts, preserved through the oral tradition, provide an understanding of the relationship of Indian people to the earth and animals.⁴ Indeed, this is true not only of Plateau Indians but of all Native Americans whose communities encompass far more than the inhabitants of their villages and bands; they include hills and mountains, rivers and valleys, moss and trees, corn and beans, bears and deer. Thus, community is an integral part of the American Indian past, one that cannot be separated from the political, military, and economic history of Indian people. Native American history must be written out of and into the communities from which it developed, and it is best understood through studies of those native communities and through the oral tradition.⁵

No one can deny the importance of standard scholarly documents in the presentation of major events in American Indian history. The majority of the sources used in writing Indian history are derived from records left by white explorers, traders, govern-

ment agents, superintendents, missionaries, military personnel, and the like. These documents were composed by individuals who believed in the importance of the written word; therefore, it behooves historians to approach all documents with caution. Interpretation of the specific sources must be conducted with an understanding of the social, political, and economic past of whites at the time the documents were written. In analyzing a treaty council in the mid-nineteenth century, for example, the researcher should know the national Indian policies of the era, the structure of administrative offices involved in decision-making processes, and the background of the individuals creating and executing policies relating to the tribes. In sum, historians are obliged to know as much as possible about the origin and nature of Indian policies in the United States and the ways in which these policies were applied to American Indians. This is a major responsibility of a scholar engaged in Indian history, but it is by no means the only one.

In dealing with an Indian treaty council of the mid-nineteenth century, a historian certainly should present and analyze sources dealing with the political milieu of whites during the era of that treaty council. But the scholar should also understand the Indian communities with whom the treaties were made. One would expect a diplomatic historian examining Franco-American relations to know something about the French as well as the Americans, so a historian studying a treaty council involving whites and Indians should know something about both peoples as well.

There are three major reasons for a historian to examine both white and Indian communities, cultures, and history in any work dealing with the two peoples. First, such an examination will enable the scholar to produce a work that is well-rounded and comprehensive, perhaps even definitive. Second, understanding both the Indian and white perspective helps the scholar analyze Indian and white sources. Without a fundamental knowledge of a tribe's history and culture, a historian cannot adequately interpret the documents because of the natural bias inherent in both Indian and white materials. And third, it is difficult to imagine a scholar presenting a sound interpretive framework for a study without knowing something about the specific documents relating to Indians addressed in the work. Thus, a study of an Indian council in the mid-nineteenth century must assess aspects of American culture during the era, including the significance of Christianity, the political genesis of Indian policies, and the

expansionism of America's white population. Equally important is an understanding of American Indian religions, the political and social organization of the tribes involved, kinships, and the native view of the earth as relative to community.⁶

During the mid-nineteenth century, whites moved into many regions where Indian nations had governed themselves successfully for years. Meriwether Lewis and William Clark explored a small portion of the Northwest in 1805 and 1806. David Thompson of the Northwest Company of Traders claimed the land for Britain in 1807, inaugurating the era of fur trade in the Northwest that was largely controlled by the Hudson's Bay Company during the first half of the nineteenth century. In the 1830s, Protestant missionaries entered the area, soon followed by Catholics.⁷ Both denominations encouraged white expansion into the region. In 1832, Nathaniel Wyeth led a small party across a route soon to be known as the Oregon Trail, opening a road to the Northwest that would bring United States territorial government and hundreds of white settlers.⁸ When the government established territorial rule in the Oregon Territory, it assigned representatives to deal with Indian nations. In 1842, Dr. Elijah White became the first subagent of the United States in the area, but his influence among the Indian nations was minimal.⁹ The full weight of the United States government was not felt by the Northwestern tribes until 1853, when Franklin Pierce appointed Isaac Ingalls Stevens governor and superintendent of Indian affairs in Washington Territory.¹⁰

Beginning in the early 1800s, representatives of the United States convened numerous treaty councils, where they and Indian nations discussed a variety of issues involving land, water, minerals, and other resources. Such meetings included the Walla Walla Council, held in Washington Territory between May and June 1855. The Oregon Provisional Government had previously passed the Donation Land Law of 1850, allowing a single person to claim 320 acres and married couples to claim 640 acres, if they settled in the Northwest prior to 1 December 1851.¹¹ However, after this date, white Americans demanded that the government remove Indians to selected areas and open the land as "public domain" to white settlement.

Officials of the United States had a tradition of dealing with the Indian nations by having certain "chiefs" cede lands. In the eastern United States, treaties were made that ultimately forced the removal of thousands of native people. By the 1850s, Ameri-

can Indian policy incorporated the concepts of removal, relocation, and reservations, and the United States officials brought these traditions to the "New Northwest" when they negotiated agreements in the Walla Walla Valley of Washington Territory.

At the Walla Walla Council, the United States set out to extinguish all Indian title to thousands of acres, except those lands that the tribes would secure for themselves as reservations.¹² In these concentrated areas, the Indians lived as the "wards" of Bureau of Indian Affairs agents. This was a terrible time for the Indians, who faced rapid cultural, social, economic, and political change as a result of the white invasion of the Great Columbia Plateau. The Walla Walla Council was a watershed in the history of the Plateau Indians because of the dramatic changes that occurred with the signing of the Yakima, Nez Percé, and Walla Walla-Umatilla-Cayuse treaties.¹³ Governor Stevens of the Washington Territory engineered the council and sent his secretary, James Doty, east of the Cascade Mountains in April 1855 to request a meeting with the major Sahaptin-speaking Indians the following May. Because the proposed treaties would influence the Indians of northeastern Oregon as well, superintendent of Indian affairs Joel Palmer also participated in the council.¹⁴ Both of these men represented the government, and their words and actions at the council reflected the policies of the United States at the time. They had been instructed by the commissioner of Indian affairs to frame treaties with the various tribes to liquidate Indian title to the land, create Indian reservations, remove Indians to the reserves, and establish a legal relationship between the government and the tribes. When the council convened at Walla Walla, Stevens and Palmer were clear about their objectives to establish two reservations between the Cascade and Bitterroot mountains and to remove as many Indians as possible to these two designated areas.

To present the history of the Walla Walla Council solely in terms of white participants and policies would be to present a one-dimensional work, lacking depth and breadth. This article is not intended as an in-depth discussion of the Walla Walla Council but rather as an interpretive essay suggesting alternative ways of examining the council through an understanding of the Native American world of the Plateau during the mid-nineteenth century.

White academics have studied the council in detail. The first major discussions of the Walla Walla Council appeared in 1888 and 1890 in Hubert Howe Bancroft's *History of Oregon* and *History of Washington, Idaho and Montana*.¹⁵ Bancroft viewed the reserva-

tions and treaties as a natural consequence of white expansion, a positive consequence of Manifest Destiny. This "Whiggish" view of the council, treaties, and reservations continued to dominate the historiography of the Walla Walla Council until 1965, when Alvin Josephy, Jr., addressed it using documents that provided Indian sources such as William Compton Brown's *The Indian Side of the Story* and A. J. Splawn's *Ka-mi-akin, Last Hero of the Yakima*.¹⁶ Josephy carefully analyzed these sources, which were generally debunked by historians who felt that such first-hand accounts were unreliable because they were based on Native American oral traditions.¹⁷ Josephy's discussion went largely unchallenged until 1979, when Kent D. Richards published *Isaac I. Stevens: Young Man in a Hurry*, the most comprehensive study of Governor Stevens. Unfortunately, Richards accepted the documents of Stevens and Doty without analyzing them from the viewpoint of Plateau Indian culture, religion, and society. He accepted documents as truths and was uncritical of Stevens's actions, perpetrating the "Whiggish" view of American policies.¹⁸ Such writings by historians have been damaging to Native Americans and their communities, since they portray Indian history in one-dimensional terms based on a white cultural bias that does not consider Native American sources and perspectives.

Understanding and appreciation of Native American society, values, and spiritual beliefs adds an important dimension to the study of the Walla Walla Council or any event associated with Indian-white relations. Too often, scholars lack "traditional" documents dealing with Native Americans, since Indians left few written records. Instead, Native Americans left a rich oral tradition that sometimes is difficult to obtain because of the time that must be spent and the personal relationships that must be developed in order for individuals to share their knowledge. Nevertheless, consulting these sources leads to a broader interpretive framework from which to analyze the people and events relating to the Walla Walla Council at the time it took place.

As superintendent of Indian affairs for Washington Territory, Isaac Stevens convened the council on 29 May 1855, near the site of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman's mission at a place the Indians called Waiilatpu, "the place of the rye grass."¹⁹ Even before the Indians arrived at Waiilatpu, they knew the purpose of the council because of their contacts with white men who lived in their communities, Indians from the East, and Northwest Coastal Indians who had met with Stevens a few months before. Such men

as Jim Simonds or “Delaware Jim,” William Craig, and Father Charles M. Pandozy had told the Indians what to expect at the council—namely, treaties, reservations, and removals.²⁰ Yakima Chief Kamiakin had learned from his cousin, Chief Leschi of the Nisqually, that Stevens had forced a treaty and a reservation on his people and others during an Indian council convened at Medicine Creek, at the southern end of Puget Sound. Moreover, according to Leschi, his brother, and some whites who had attended the council, Stevens had forged the marks of various headmen onto the Medicine Creek Treaty because Leschi and others had refused to sign the document and had left the council grounds.²¹ Thus, before the Walla Walla Council commenced, the Indians understood the basic outline of the American agenda.

Some of the Indians who attended the Walla Walla Council were predisposed to sign a treaty. This was particularly true of the largest tribe, the Nez Percé, who apparently had made a prearranged agreement with William Craig, the first Nez Percé agent and a white man married to the daughter of Big Thunder, a prominent Nez Percé chief.²² Significantly, Craig’s lands on the reservation were guaranteed to him by the treaty. Moreover, under the terms of the treaty, the Nez Percé Nation secured a large amount of land that encompassed nearly all of the territory traditionally claimed by its various bands.²³ As a result, the Nez Percé lost few lands and were not as affected as the others with regard to lost territory. However, leaders from other Indian nations, most notably Kamiakin, opposed making a treaty even before he arrived at Waiilatpu.²⁴ Kamiakin was a Yakima chief of mixed Yakima, Palouse, Nez Percé, and Spokane descent who had always refused to receive gifts from whites. When he first met Doty in April 1855, the chief told Stevens’s secretary “that he had never accepted from an American the value of a grain of wheat without paying for it.” To have done so would have jeopardized Kamiakin’s claim to the land, since he feared that the whites would say he had sold his land for the price of that grain of wheat.²⁵ Kamiakin, unlike his brothers, Skloom and Showaway, or his uncles, Teias and Owhi, had also been reluctant to meet with Doty. Indeed, Kamiakin’s family played a significant role in the outcome of the Walla Walla Council, and few scholarly studies recognize the importance of Kamiakin’s family history to the outcome of the council. There can be no full understanding of the council that led to Kamiakin’s signing of the Yakima Treaty without a study of his family’s genealogy and history. Under the

terms of the treaty, the chief ceded to the government thousands of acres that had never been claimed by him or his tribe. The most important reason that he signed the document is understood only in terms of his family and friends.²⁶

At the time of the council, the most eminent Yakima chiefs were Owhi, Teias, and Kamiakin; of the three, Kamiakin was the most prominent. His mother, Kamoshnite, was the daughter of the great Yakima patriarch Weowhicht, and Kamiakin's father, Tsiyiak, was Palouse, Nez Percé, and Spokane. Kamiakin's broad family base provided him contacts with many tribes other than Yakima, but it also created problems. Kamoshnite's brothers, Teias and Owhi, resented the fact that by 1850 their nephew had emerged as the foremost Yakima headman. Kamiakin was a tall, handsome, and articulate man whom whites compared to Tecumseh. In his youth, he had received a powerful *tah*, or guardian spirit, on the snowy slopes of Mount Rainier. His vision came to him in the form of a buffalo, an influential spirit that was to guide his life. However, like the buffalo, Kamiakin's power would develop early and enjoy great strength but would ultimately wane and be extinguished at the hands of whites.²⁷

Kamiakin was born into a "royal" family of leaders who originated from a Star Man. According to family tradition, two sisters, Tahpallouh and Yaslumas, went off to dig roots by themselves. They made a camp, and, as they lay under the stars, they pointed to the stars that they wished to be their husbands. In the morning, they awoke in a wonderful land where two men greeted them. The couples married, and Tahpallouh had a baby boy. When the women first arrived in the strange land, they did not know where they were. It was a pleasant land, however, and they enjoyed a good life there. The men instructed the two women which roots to gather but forbade them from digging one particular type of root. Once the men were gone, however, the women ignored the instruction and dug up the forbidden root. When they did, they saw the earth below and realized they were in a star land. A new wind of consciousness blew into the star land, and the women determined to go home. They constructed a rope from a hazelnut bush, and Tahpallouh, Yaslumas, and the baby escaped to earth. The women and the baby boy began a new family of strong leaders, eventually including Weowhicht, Kamiakin's maternal grandfather and chief of a large band of Yakima Indians. Thus Kamiakin was born into a regal family and rose to become one of the foremost chiefs of his time.²⁸

As a young man, Kamiakin had distinguished himself as a warrior and buffalo hunter. As such, he set himself apart as a member of not only a leadership family but of the buffalo-hunting and warrior classes—men who were known for their bravery, physical skill, and leadership in war. He was also of the wealthy class, for over the years he had accumulated vast herds of horses and cattle and could afford a total of five wives. As was customary among the Yakima, his first wife, Sunkhaye, was from the women of his own family. She was Kamiakin's first cousin, the daughter of Teias. However, Kamiakin broke social convention when he married four other women from the rival family of Chief Tenax. Teias and Owhi disliked Kamiakin's father and were jealous and suspicious of their nephew.²⁹ As an adult and a chief in his own right, Kamiakin had forged many alliances outside his immediate family, among his father's people and his wives' extended families. By the 1850s, Kamiakin overshadowed his uncles, who envied his stature in the Indian communities. When the government of the United States sent representatives into the inland Northwest, Owhi and Teias saw an opportunity to advance themselves politically and socially through an association with whites. While Kamiakin rebuffed the whites, his uncles embraced them. The Walla Walla Council provided Teias and Owhi with a chance to put Kamiakin in his place and to assert themselves as the spokesmen of the Yakima. Kamiakin opposed the treaty council and the treaty, but he attended the council to watch and listen. He feared that his uncles and brothers might surrender Yakima land and agree to a reservation.³⁰

During the course of the council, Stevens and Palmer presented their proposals in terms of the political, economic, and social traditions of nineteenth-century white America. They explained the benefits of white civilization, and they offered the Indians the "light" of religious and cultural change. One of the goals of the government officials, particularly white reformers, was to "uplift" native peoples by bringing Christianity, agriculture, and formal education to the tribes. This was seen by some whites as a mission to enhance the lives of native peoples in this world and to "save" them for the next.³¹ Stevens may have genuinely cared about the well-being of the native peoples of the Northwest, but he was definitely interested in the Manifest Destiny of his country. He pushed the Indian leadership to agree to the treaties and reservations and to accept the "light" that the whites had offered them.

Like the government agents, the Indians presented their responses regarding the white proposals in terms of their own worldview. The Indians considered themselves free, autonomous people, and they did not take kindly to the idea of white rule and Indian removal to reservations. The thought of displacement from their traditional lands was abhorrent and totally contradictory to their view of the land. Simply put, the earth was sacred to them because "their land was their religion, and their religion was the land."³² To the Indians, the Creator had made the earth so that people could live from its bounty. The earth, animals, fish, and plants were all a part of the whole, all a part of the creation. The Plateau Indians worshipped (and continue to worship through the Washat) by offering praise to the roots, game, and fish—the vital elements that formed the basis of their livelihood. The earth provided life for the Plateau people and was the final resting place for the Indians when they died. Like so many people, the Indians had a special feeling for the dead and their cemeteries. To leave the earth that provided their livelihood and held the bones of their ancestors was beyond the comprehension of many people who attended the Walla Walla Council.³³

In addition, the Indians were tied to their place on earth. Their oral traditions united them to the plants, places, and animals. They believed that the plants and animals had once interacted on the Columbia Plateau in a great historical drama in preparation for a new people who would one day live in the land. The new people were Native Americans who arrived after the plants and animals and who shared the land with animate and inanimate objects and places that were part of the community. The ancient stories of the Plateau Indians speak of this time, and they form a body of tradition that reaffirms the close, ongoing connection between Native Americans of the region and the salmon, deer, bears, huckleberries, camas, and bitterroot. The people are also related to the Blue, Bitterroot, and Badger mountains. They are related to the Snake, Yakima, Columbia, and Salmon rivers. They are relatives of the earth, animals, and plants; their history is tied to them, unlike Euro-Americans, who do not enjoy this unique historical relationship with the traditional plants and animals of the Plateau. Native American communities include these elements of nature, which were placed there first to suckle the people as a mother does a baby.³⁴

At the time of the Walla Walla Council, the single most important element affecting the Indians was their traditional religion.

The first Indian to speak at length at the council was Five Crows, a Cayuse chief and half-brother of Old Joseph, and the first words he spoke referred to religion. Five Crows explained that he and the others had "one Father in Heaven; it is He [pointing upward] who had made all the earth; He made us of the earth on this earth."³⁵ These statements reflect the influence of Christianity on the people, since the notion of a heavenly father is not traditional on the Plateau. Coyote is considered the symbol of creation and confusion—not a single figure or god but part of the great movement of life.³⁶ Since the 1830s, Protestant and Catholic missionaries had worked among various tribes on the Columbia Plateau, and their message of a single God had an impact on the native people. Elements of this influence are seen in the testimony given at the Walla Walla Council.³⁷ Still, the traditional native attachment to the earth emerged as a central theme addressed by the leaders at the meeting. For example, Five Crows had no interest in selling that which was related to him, the land he considered sacred. Stevens stated that the whites would pay the Indians for their land, but Peopeo Moxmox (Yellow Bird) reminded the governor that "goods and the Earth are not equal." Money was not the issue, since no amount was worth the selling of one's mother.³⁸

When it became apparent to the Indians that Stevens and Palmer did not understand their position in reference to the earth, Sticklus, a Cayuse chief, asked them to think of the earth as if it were their mother. "If your mothers were here in this country who gave you birth, suckled you and while you were sucking some person came and took your mother and left you alone and sold your mother, how would you feel then?" The lands south of the Snake River were as precious as one's own mother, and Sticklus refused to sell his mother earth. He explained, "This is our mother, as if we drew our living from her." Young Chief, another Cayuse leader, addressed the council, speaking of the "chieftainship" of the earth and asking "if this ground has anything to say . . . if this ground is listening to what is said." Young Chief knew what the earth would say: "[T]he earth says, God [the interpreter's choice of words for Creator] has placed me here . . . to take care of the Indians." According to Young Chief, "God named the roots that he should feed the Indians on. The water speaks the same way." Furthermore, the Creator made the plants, animals, and fish, and it was from the earth that "man was made." The Indians had a divine duty "to take care of the earth," because the earth

was the eternal provider whose essence was a part of the Indian community.³⁹

The Indians were concerned not only about surrendering the lands that provided them with their physical and religious sustenance but also about violating the "law."⁴⁰ In a poetic manner laced with Christian influences, Owhi spoke of the earth and its relationship with the Creation. "God gave us day and night, the night to rest in, and the day to see, and . . . as long as the earth shall last, he gave us the morning with our breath; and so he takes care of us on this earth and here we have met under his care." Turning to the Indians, Owhi asked, "Is the earth before the day or the day before the earth? God was before the earth, the heavens were clear and good and all things in the heavens were good. God looked one way then the other and named our lands for us." Owhi explained that he was reluctant "to speak of the land" because he was "afraid of the laws of the Almighty." The chief asked, "Shall I steal this land and sell it? Shall I give the lands that are part of my body and leave myself poor and destitute?"⁴¹

Stevens and Palmer hurried the Indians during the council, pushing them to sign the treaties at the earliest possible moment. The Indians wanted to go slowly and postpone the conference in order to discuss the important issues raised during the proceedings. The whites urged the people to come to a decision that would benefit the United States government and the native people—or so they said. They looked forward to the day when the Plateau Indians would stop fishing, hunting, and gathering and, instead, would farm in a "civilized" manner. These notions of time, land use, and work were contradictory to native values and a grave source of contention between the groups. Each night during the council, the Indians met in their tipis to discuss the white proposals.⁴² Some of the Nez Percé—trained at the mission school at Lapwai, Idaho, by Reverend Henry Spalding—kept written notes about these meetings, but, to date, none of these have been discovered. Still, it is apparent from the official proceedings that most of the Indians, except the Nez Percé, had become incensed over the proposal to create two reservations and force all of the Indians onto them.⁴³ "Your marking of this country is the reason it troubles me so," remarked Young Chief, who asked, "[W]here was I to go to, was I to be a wanderer like a wolf?"⁴⁴ Palmer responded to this concern by proposing a separate reservation in northeastern Oregon for the Umatilla, Cayuse, and Walla Walla. This suggestion, although far from ideal, appealed to some Indi-

ans, particularly in comparison to the idea of removal to the Yakima or Nez Percé reservations. The Palouse, Wanapum, Walla Walla, Umatilla, and Cayuse were concerned about confinement on a reservation far from their traditional root and hunting grounds as well as their favorite fishing sites. They were also upset about the prospect of leaving their cemeteries, the grounds that held the bones of their ancestors. Stevens and Palmer countered these concerns by assuring the Indians that, under the terms of the treaties, the Indians would “be allowed to go to the usual fishing places and fish in common with the whites and to get roots and berries and to kill game on land not occupied by the whites.” Furthermore, the Indians were told that they would be permitted to hunt, fish, and gather forevermore “outside the reservation.” These concessions were sufficient to sway the Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla. These tribes, along with the Nez Percé, decided to sign their respective treaties. However, the Yakima were divided, because Kamiakin remained steadfast in his opposition to the treaty.⁴⁵

Stevens dictated the terms of the Yakima Treaty (and those of the Umatilla and Nez Percé treaties), subjecting a number of different tribes and bands to the agreement. He also appointed Kamiakin the “head chief” of all of the people and nations mentioned in the preamble of the Yakima Treaty. This was a dubious honor for Kamiakin, who never assumed such a position. This is a historical issue of great importance, since some Indians and whites claim that Kamiakin agreed to the treaty, which was harmful to many tribes and bands. Other scholars disagree, arguing that the documents created by whites in 1855 are self-serving instruments made by government agents to justify their actions against this Indian nation. The treaty also described the lands to be incorporated in the Yakima Reservation, stating that the Indians would cede all other lands to the United States. Under the terms of the treaty, the Yakima and all other Indians party to it surrendered a right of way to the United States for roads, river travel, and surveys. The Indians agreed not to war on the United States and to “acknowledge their dependence” on the government. In addition to annuities, the Indians were to receive formal and vocational education, medical doctors, hospitals, and medicines. The people secured for themselves the right to fish, hunt, and gather “at all usual and accustomed areas.” During the council, this issue was discussed, and Stevens agreed that the Indians would continue to fish at all their usual and accustomed

places on and off the Yakima Reservation. The United States agreed to establish a sawmill and flour mill in addition to employing a carpenter, a blacksmith, and a plough maker. The terms of the treaty were discussed, but the Indians did not learn the details of every article.⁴⁶ Chief Owhi, Kamiakin, and others understood the broad implications of surrendering their land and establishing a reservation, but they had no idea about the "legal" implications of the document. Such written agreements were foreign and unnatural to them. Kamiakin opposed making any agreement from the start, but he remained in the Walla Walla Valley to listen to the proposals and to counsel against it.

On the morning of 9 June 1855, Kamiakin prepared to leave the council without signing the treaty. As a courtesy to Stevens, he visited the governor to announce his intentions. Stevens was furious and demanded to know why Kamiakin, "the acknowledged Head Chief of the Yakimas did not speak his mind in Council as became a Great Chief, why he did not take a decided course." According to Doty, who was present, Stevens asked Kamiakin to make "a Treaty of Peace and Friendship with the Whites, to endure forever." After a pause of "considerable duration," Doty recounted that Kamiakin said, "All say I am Head Chief of the Yakimas." The secretary reported that Kamiakin finally agreed to "make the treaty as you wish" and that the chief made a "list of Tribes and lands over whom he had authority as Head Chief." This list included the Yakima, Palouse, Wenatchee, Klikitat, and various Salish-, Sahaptin-, and Chinookan-speakers of the Columbia River. Not surprisingly, these were the same people who had been included in the Yakima Treaty composed before 9 June.⁴⁷

To evaluate the Walla Walla Council treaty using only the official proceedings and Doty's account would be incomplete. Andrew Pambrun was also present when Kamiakin spoke with Stevens on the morning of 9 June, and his account provides another perspective, significantly different from Doty's. According to Pambrun, who spoke Sahaptin and served as an interpreter, Stevens became impatient with Kamiakin, and the governor restated "all that had been said and offered and concluded by saying, 'If you do not accept the terms offered and sign this paper [holding up the prepared treaty] you will walk in blood knee deep.'"⁴⁸ Kamiakin stormed out of the tent and returned to his camp, apparently planning to bolt. But according to Andrew Jackson Splawn, a close friend of many Yakima, Kamiakin coun-

ciled with Peopeo Moxmox and met with Owhi, Teias, Skloom, and other Yakima leaders, who pressured him into signing the treaty. Kamiakin finally agreed to touch the pen as an act of "peace and friendship," but he never intended to sell his land, his heritage, or his community of relatives. Kamiakin returned to the governor's tent and was the last to sign the document, but "he was in such a rage that he bit his lips that they bled profusely." To his dying day, Kamiakin refused to accept any gift from whites, and he maintained the position that he had never forfeited his lands but had touched the pen only as an act of peace and friendship.⁴⁹

If Kamiakin actually said that he was "head chief," he did so in sarcasm, for, within the Indian communities, he would have been labeled a liar for claiming dominion over land and people who were not of his Yakima band. Doty lied in his diary to bolster the government claim that Kamiakin spoke for many different tribes and bands. This was an old technique used by whites for the convenience of making treaties. Kamiakin would not have listed Indians as under his control who were not members of his band, and the various Indians included in the Yakima Treaty had never been "considered as one nation." Kamiakin would not have claimed to be a "head chief," since there was no such thing in the political structure of the Plateau Indians. Any scholar who accepts Doty's documentation on the subject uncritically lacks basic knowledge and understanding of Kamiakin and the Plateau Indians. However, Kamiakin probably did conclude the council with these reported words: "I, Kamiakin do not wish for goods myself. The forest knows me, he knows my heart, he knows I do not desire a great many goods . . . I have nothing to talk long about. I am tired, I am anxious to get back to my garden." With that, the fifty-five-year-old chief returned to his home on Ahtanum Creek, but not for a peaceful future.⁵⁰

In less than four months, war erupted after white miners discovered gold in northeastern Washington Territory and whites rushed into the area. The land still belonged to the tribes, since the treaties signed in the Walla Walla Valley had not been ratified by the United States Senate. White miners traveled up the Columbia River, across Yakima land, and into the inland Northwest. Along the way, they stole horses and raped and murdered Indians. When Owhi's son executed some of these miners, Yakima agent Andrew Jackson Bolon rode into the interior, where he was murdered by two members of a band of Yakima he encountered.⁵¹ This triggered the Plateau Indian War in 1855, and Kamiakin

willingly participated in the conflict. Although the war had begun well for the inland nations, it soon soured, and Kamiakin was forced forevermore from his mother's homeland. Like Kamiakin, descendents of the chief refused to return to the Yakima country, preferring to live in the Palouse Hills. After Kamiakin's death in 1877, his family and band moved to the Colville Reservation, where they reside to this day.⁵²

Specific knowledge about American Indians—including information regarding genealogy, kinships, political organizations, and religion—is imperative to any study dealing with Indians and whites involved in an event. Scholars who probe Indian societies and use information gained in such research provide much more than an "Indian perspective." Indeed, such scholars offer a more comprehensive presentation of historical events, personalities, and developments. It has been common practice for scholars to beg the issue by stating that they are not "Indian" historians, but rather historians who specialize in white history as it relates to Indians. Some of these individuals have criticized the so-called Indian historians for offering a romanticized view of American Indian history, and, in some cases, this criticism is justified. Some Indian histories have been criticized for recreating Rousseau's "noble savage" while simply portraying all whites as land-hungry, ruthless individuals who cared nothing for Indians. To present the past in such simplistic terms is offensive to all scholars. But it should be equally offensive for a historian to examine an event involving Indians and whites using only documents provided by whites and to interpret these sources without extensive knowledge of specific American Indian communities.

The lives of the Plateau Indians were turned upside down as a result of the Walla Walla Council of 1855, but their story is little different from those of thousands of other native peoples who had to deal with the white invasion and its bureaucrats and military officials. The Plateau tribes have survived, but not without severe consequences, including a historiography that too often overlooks their traditional beliefs and oral histories. The earth, plants, and animals significantly influenced the course of American Indian history, and academics who are trying to analyze the American Indian past would do well to listen to the old stories and learn from the words of elders who know the history of the First Nations.⁵³

NOTES

1. Oral interview with Andrew George, by Clifford E. Trafzer, Richard D. Scheuerman, and Lee Ann Smith, 15 November 1980, Department of Ethnic Studies, University of California, Riverside.

2. This is a common theme in Native American stories, emphasizing that plants and animals provided the first "history" and established many laws set down by the creation for humans upon their arrival. This is explained fully in Clifford E. Trafzer, ed., "Grandmother, Grandfather, and Old Wolf," a book-length manuscript, Sobel Weber Associates, 146 East 19th St., New York, New York.

3. This is a brief synopsis of five stories about the female monsters, including "How Speel-yi Tricked the People Devouring Tah-Tah-Kle-Ah" and "Sho-pow-tan and the Tah-Tah-Kle-Ah," by Tomawash, 1919; "Tah-Tah-Kle-Ah," by William Charley, 1918; "How Coyote Destroyed the Fish Dam at the Cascade," by Chepos Tocos, 1916; and "Speel-yi and the Five Sisters of the nChe-wana," by An-nee-shiat, 1918. All of these stories are found in the Lucullus V. McWhorter Collection, manuscripts and archives, Washington State University Library, Pullman, Washington. Hereafter cited as McWhorter Collection, WSU.

4. Clifford E. Trafzer and Richard D. Scheuerman, eds., *Mourning Dove's Stories* (San Diego, CA: San Diego State University Press, Publications in American Indian Studies, 1991), 3.

5. Paula Gunn Allen, ed., *Spider Woman's Granddaughters* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1990), 5; idem, "Bringing Home the Fact: Tradition and Continuity in the Imagination," in *Recovering the Word*, ed. Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987), 575-76.

6. Each Indian society is unique, and it is important to understand the nuances among the various tribes and bands. The Sahaptin-speaking Indians of the Northwest Plateau practiced the Washani religion, which predates white contact. Not long after the Walla Walla Council, the religion was formalized by a Wanapum Indian prophet known as Smohalla (teacher or preacher). For the best studies of the religion, see Robert Ruby and John Brown, *Dreamer-Prophets of the Columbia Plateau* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989); Helen H. Schuster, "Yakima Indian Traditionalism" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1975); Clifford E. Trafzer and Margery Ann Beach, "Smohalla, the Washani, and Religion as a Factor in Northwestern Indian History," *American Indian Quarterly* 9 (1985): 309-324; Click Relander, *Drummers and Dreamers* (Caldwell, ID: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1956); Margery Ann Beach, "The Wanapums and the Priest Rapids Dam: Fulfillment of an Indian Prophecy," manuscript in author's files; Leslie Spier, "The Prophet Dance of the Northwest and Its Derivatives: The Source of the Ghost Dance," *General Series in Anthropology* (Menasha, WI: George Banta Publishing Co., 1953); Cora DuBois, "The Feather Cult of the Middle Columbia," *General Series in Anthropology* (Menasha, WI: George Banta Publishing Co., 1938); and chapter 6 of James Mooney, "The Ghost Dance Religion," *Fourteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1892-93).

7. Clifford E. Trafzer and Richard D. Scheuerman, *Renegade Tribe: The Palouse Indians and the Invasion of the Inland Pacific Northwest* (Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press, 1986), 21-28.

8. Donald W. Meinig, *The Great Columbia Plain* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1968), 110.
9. Trafzer and Scheuerman, *Renegade Tribe*, 30.
10. Kent D. Richards, *Isaac I. Stevens: Young Man in a Hurry* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1979).
11. Dorothy O. Johansen and Charles M. Gates, *Empire of the Columbia* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 231, 234, 246–47.
12. Richards, *Isaac I. Stevens*, 170–72, 181–93.
13. Stevens and Palmer proposed three treaties by the end of the council, not the two originally suggested. Initially, the whites wanted to negotiate only the Nez Percé and Yakima treaties that created the two reservations. Because of the opposition of members of the Umatilla, Walla Walla, and Cayuse leadership, the whites combined these three tribes into a single group with another reservation and treaty. For the best studies of Stevens, Palmer, and the Walla Walla Council, see Alvin Josephy Jr., *The Nez Percé Indians and the Opening of the Northwest* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1965), 285–332; Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown, *The Cayuse Indians* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 189–204; Richards, *Isaac I. Stevens*, 211–34; Trafzer and Scheuerman, *Renegade Tribe*, 46–59.
14. Bruce Wendt, “A Political History of the Warm Springs Reservation, 1855–1955” (Ph.D. dissertation, Washington State University, 1989).
15. Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Oregon* (San Francisco, CA: The History Company, 1888), 361–68; idem, *History of Washington, Idaho and Montana* (San Francisco, CA: The History Company, 1890), 101–107.
16. William Compton Brown, *The Indian Side of the Story* (Spokane, WA: C. W. Hill Printing, 1916), 49–50, 85–135; A. J. Splawn, *Ka-mi-akin, Last Hero of the Yakimas* (Portland, OR: Stationary and Printing Company, 1917), 32–33, 37–41. More than a decade after Josephy published his book on the Nez Percé, Edward J. Kowrach edited an important account that had been written by a participant years after the Walla Walla Council. Some scholars discredit this account because of the time lapse, but it is a worthy document to consider, owing to the fact that the participant was a mixed-blood who could speak Sahaptin. See Andrew Pambrun, *Sixty Years on the Frontier of the Pacific Northwest* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1978), 94–96.
17. Josephy, *The Nez Percé Indians*, 312–18.
18. Richards, *Isaac I. Stevens*, 215–26.
19. For a biased but thorough discussion of one missionary, see Clifford M. Drury, *Marcus Whitman* (Caldwell, ID: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1936).
20. Stevens to Doty, 20 May 1855, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Washington Superintendency, National Archives, record group 75, letters sent (hereafter cited as NA, RG 75, LS); Stevens to Mannypenny, 28 May and 13 June 1855, Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Treaties with Various Indian Tribes, 1810–1869, NA, RG 75, microfilm T494, reel 5 (hereafter cited as Council Proceedings, 1855). Also, see Trafzer and Scheuerman, *Renegade Tribe*, 41, 50.
21. Carole Seeman, “The Treaties of Puget Sound” and “The Treaty and Non-treaty Coastal Indians” in *Indians, Superintendents, and Councils: Northwestern Indian Policy, 1850–1855*, ed. Clifford E. Trafzer (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986), 19–67.
22. Clifford E. Trafzer, *The Nez Percé* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1992), 44.

23. Nez Percé Treaty, 1855, in Charles J. Kappler, *Indian Affairs, Laws and Treaties* 2 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1940), 702–706. Article 10 deals with William Craig's land claim on the reservation.

24. Trafzer and Scheuerman, *Renegade Tribe*, 44–45.

25. Doty's Journal of Operations, in Council Proceedings, 1855. Hereafter cited as Doty's Journal.

26. A discussion of Kamiakin's genealogy and its significance to the Walla Walla Council and the Yakima Treaty is found in Trafzer and Scheuerman, *Renegade Tribe*, 33–34, 199.

27. *Ibid.*; Theodore Winthrop, *Canoe and Saddle* (Tacoma, WA: John H. Williams, 1913), 178.

28. William Poniah, "Two Sisters and Their Star Husbands," December 1917, McWhorter Collection, WSU. The same story was related to the author by Emily Peone on the Colville Reservation in 1980.

29. Trafzer and Scheuerman, *Renegade Tribe*, 33–34.

30. There are numerous oral histories conducted by Judge William C. Brown in the Brown Collection, manuscripts and archives, WSU. For other genealogical information on Kamiakin's family, see Brown, *The Indian Side of the Story*, 60–80; Splawn, *Ka-mi-akin*, 15–21; Winthrop, *Canoe and Saddle*, 178; Robert I. Burns, *Jesuits and the Indian Wars of the Northwest* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966), 52, 54, 74, 126, 363–64.

31. Council Proceedings, 1855.

32. Document 213, B/84, McWhorter Collection, manuscripts and archives, WSU.

33. Oral interview with Andrew George, by Trafzer, Scheuerman, and Smith, 15 November 1980; and with Mary Jim, by Trafzer and Scheuerman, 9–11 November 1979, Department of Ethnic Studies, University of California, Riverside.

34. The McWhorter Collection, manuscripts and archives, WSU, contains numerous traditional stories of the Columbia Plateau that emphasize the relationship between humans, animals, plants, and places. The author has edited many of these into a manuscript, "Grandmother, Grandfather, and Old Wolf;" also see Trafzer and Scheuerman, *Mourning Dove's Stories*, 1–9.

35. Council Proceedings, 1855.

36. Andrew George to Clifford E. Trafzer, 29 March 1987, Department of Ethnic Studies, University of California, Riverside.

37. William N. Bischoff, *The Jesuits of Old Oregon* (Caldwell, ID: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1945).

38. Council Proceedings, 1855; Brown, *The Indian Side of the Story*, 49–50. Henry Harmon Spalding gave Five Crows the Christian name Hezekiah, but Five Crows renounced Christianity after the Whitman killings and the Cayuse Indian War.

39. Council Proceedings, 1855.

40. The traditional "law" of Native Americans, including those on the Columbia Plateau, came from the teachings found in the oral traditions, the ancient stories about coyote, rabbit, bear, beaver, turtle, etc.

41. Council Proceedings, 1855.

42. *Ibid.*; Lawrence Kip, "The Indian Council at Walla Walla, May and June, 1855," in *Sources of the History of Oregon* 1 (1897). Hereafter cited as Kip's journal.

43. Ibid. The author has tried unsuccessfully to locate the Nez Percé written accounts of the Walla Walla Council. What a treasure they will be if they are ever found, for they will tell more of the Indian perspective, particularly the internal discussions of the pro- and anti- treaty forces within the tribe and among other groups.

44. Council Proceedings, 1855.

45. Ibid.; Doty's journal; Kip's journal; Josephy, *The Nez Percé Indians*, 324. Josephy provides an excellent discussion about the boundaries of the reservation.

46. Yakima Treaty, 1855, in Kappler, *Indian Affairs*, 698–702.

47. Ibid.; Doty's journal; Council Proceedings, 1855.

48. Yakima Treaty, 1855, in Kappler, *Indian Affairs*, 698–702.

49. Ibid. See also Kowrach's edited work, Pambrun, *Sixty Years on the Frontier in the Pacific Northwest*, 95.

50. Yakima Treaty, 1855, in Kappler, *Indian Affairs*, 698–702; Doty's journal; Council Proceedings, 1855.

51. L. V. McWhorter, *Tragedy of the Whak-Shum; Prelude to the Yakima Indian War, 1855–56; The Killing of Major Andrew J. Bolon* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1958).

52. Council Proceedings, 1855. For other details regarding published accounts of the Walla Walla Council and the Kamiakin question, see Richards, *Isaac I. Stevens*, 211–14, 221; Josephy, *The Nez Percé Indians*, 328–29, 331; Brown, *The Indian Side of the Story*, 85–130; Splawn, *Ka-mi-akin*, 27–35; and Hazard Stevens, *The Life of Isaac Ingalls Stevens*, vol. 2 (Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., 1901), 47–48. For another view of the Walla Walla Council, see Kent Richards, who accepts Doty's explanation of the events leading to Kamiakin's signing of the Yakima Treaty without taking into consideration the political and social factors relating to the tribes, the religion of the Indians, or the family alliances and factions present at the council.

53. For an in-depth analysis of Native American philosophy, see Arnold Krupat, ed., *Voices in Native American Literary Criticism* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993).