

The young people must cherish and respect the aged and inform. All property should be held in common, according to the ancient law of their ancestors. Indian women should cease to intermarry with white men. The two races were distinct and should remain so. The white men's dress--even his flint and steel--should be discarded. Indians should wear the old-time buckskin clothes and use the firestick. Every tool and every custom derived from the whites should be put away, and the Indians should return to the ways taught them by the Master of Life. When they did this, they would again be taken into the divine favor and find happiness. They would live as their fathers had become the coming of the whites. As proof of this divine mission, he announced that he had received power to cure all diseases and arrest the hand of death in sickness or on the battlefield.

Intense excitement followed the prophet's announcement of his mission. A crusade began against all suspected of dealing in witchcraft. The Prophet was able, usually, to turn the crusade against any who opposed his supernatural claims. He changed his name to Tenskwatawa, "The Open Door." This symbolized the new mode of life he was pointing out to his people. His headquarters were at Greenville, Ohio. Indians from the various scattered tribes of the Northwest Territory came here to learn of the new doctrines. He continued to have dreams and announce wonderful revelations from time to time. He allied himself with his brother, Tecumseh. The brothers built a large frame meetinghouse in Greenville, and 50 or 60 cabins for converts.

Although the Prophet's message at first seemed harmless, the whites began to get worried as his influence spread. Governor Harrison of Indiana Territory ridiculed him, and challenged him to produce a miracle. He hoped to undermine the Indians' belief in him. But somehow the Prophet managed to predict an eclipse of the sun for June 16, 1806. It is not known whether someone tipped him off that the eclipse would occur or not. At any rate, he made the prediction and the eclipse occurred when he said it would. Word of this miracle spread rapidly and Indians as far away as Minnesota were enthusiastic in their support of him and Tecumseh. They developed new pride and purpose and a feeling of unity. The Prophet began to preach against Christianized Indians and others who professed friendship for whites.

War Between Indians and the United States

Meanwhile tension was growing between Great Britain and the United States. The western settlers thought that the British in Canada were stirring up the Indians and supporting the Prophet. Tecumseh decided to move farther away from white settlements to avoid premature trouble. By this time he was working on a plan to unite the Indian tribes, and get them to resist white settlement as a unified people. In May of 1808 the Prophet and 80 families established Prophet's Town at the confluence of the Tippecanoe River and the Wabash. This was in present Indiana. As soon as the town was established, Tecumseh set out on horseback on his mission to unite the tribes for defense of their lands.

Many Indians opposed Tecumseh, even though many accepted him enthusiastically. The older men and chiefs who had signed the Treaty of Greenville did not want to join him. They had fought with the American all their lives and they felt that the situation was hopeless. But some whole tribes responded to Tecumseh's message with enthusiasm. In 1809 he visited dozens of tribes from the Seminoles to the Osages. He tried to enlist the Iroquois on his side, but without success. He was laying the groundwork for the common defense of the Indians' country by trying to bring about the greatest military alliance in Indian history.