

Missions

(Native Voices from *Tribal Legacy*)

1) Antone Minthorn (Umatilla), "Missionaries and War"

<http://lc-triballegacy.org/video.php?vid=757&era=4&subcat=4B>

Transcript:

The vast Columbia River basin plateau was open to American colonization. The Lewis & Clark Expedition was followed by the Hudson's Bay Company, missionaries Marcus Whitman and Henry Spalding. Marcus Whitman established the Waiilatpu mission and the opening of the Oregon Trail that passed through Cayuse land on the way to the Willamette Valley.

After 1843 and the opening of the Oregon Trail, thousands of American settlers entered and crossed the territory of the Cayuse Nation. Disturbed by this encroachment, the Cayuse leaders demanded the missionary Marcus Whitman stop bringing settlers. The missionary refused, and the Cayuse struck the first blow of retaliation and war.

Marcus Whitman and others were killed, and hostages taken which shut down Waiilatpu Mission. The Cayuse war went on for three years from 1847 to 1850, until five Cayuse surrendered to the military and were taken to Oregon City where they were prosecuted, found guilty and hanged. There were Cayuse present at the court trial including Chief Tawatoy, but they all left before the hangings. The five Cayuse were Tomahaas, Tiloukaikt, Klokomas, Kiamasumpkin and Iaiachalakias. These warrior men are buried at Oregon City.

There continued to be unrest among the American settlers in the coast and plateau regions of the Cascade Mountains.

2) Joyce Silverthorne (Salish-Pend d'Oreille), "Black Robes"

<http://lc-triballegacy.org/video.php?vid=498&era=4&subcat=4B>

Transcript:

In the early 1800s, after Lewis and Clark, we had people from our tribe who went back to find the Black Robes. They had learned from the Iroquois, who had come with traders, that, that in fact there were people with power. And power, whenever we are threatened, becomes an appealing opportunity. Whenever something endangers our ability to survive, we look for the power to overcome whatever is threatening us, and with that westward movement came other tribes. Other tribes moved into the region, and the tribes became closer and closer, and the nomadic lifestyles were more and more difficult to maintain. And so the competition between tribes was as threatening as what later came with Europeans coming into the area as well. And so, for survival, people sought greater power, and greater power—from the Iroquois's stories—was going to be the Black Robes, and that the Black Robes would come and, and bring power that would help us to survive. And so we'd look for them. We sent three different expeditions and were finally successful and brought them to our community.

3) Allen Pinkham (Nez Perce), "Writing and the Bible" (2003) <http://lc-triballegacy.org/video.php?vid=409&era=4&subcat=4B>

Transcript:

But there's another son, his name was Blacktail Eagle. And he is the one that I, that I surmised and from the things that I found out, that he probably went to St. Louis in 1830 or [183]1 with three other Nez Perce. Now whether this Black Eagle was born in 1806, I'm not sure. But he must have been influenced by his father Old Red Bear, that there are certain things that we need to do as tribal people and that is to find out how do the minds of these strange creatures work. How do they do these things that they do? And one of those things that they do, is they write. They go like this [makes circular gestures in the air with his right hand] and then they can hand that—what they have written—to someone else, and they can read that, word for word. And we wondered, 'How do they do that?' This is one of the things that our old people would talk about: 'We need to know how they do this.'

So, when Black Eagle went to St. Louis, you know he... they made the sign, 'the book'—you know, 'how do you write'. Well, the missionaries misinterpreted that and said, 'Oh, they must be looking for the bible. Their souls are thirsting for religious teachings.' Well, that may have been true to a certain extent, but that was not the main purpose. The main purpose was, how do you transfer knowledge so you can make things that you need, or it makes your life a little bit easier. That's what we were really after. But missionaries misinterpreted that, so we got inundated by missionaries—Presbyterians, the Catholics, the Methodists—all came out to our country. Which is good, which is bad also. The missionaries told us, 'Don't practice your heathen ways. You know, you're not going to go to Heaven if you practice your heathen ways. You'll go to Hell, if you practice your heathen ways.' That's what we were told. Ignoring the alliance that we had set up.

4) Greg Pitcher (Shawnee), "Gender Roles" <http://lc-triballegacy.org/video.php?vid=1432&era=4&subcat=4B>

Transcript:

[Audience member asks a question]
Are the Shawnee a matrilineal or patrilineal society?

[Greg Pitcher responds] Well, actually as far as the groups of men and women are concerned, the lineage goes with the father. But a lot of times in the Shawnee tribe, and it's really one of the things that caused a lot of trouble between Shawnees and Europeans, and especially missionaries, because one of the jobs of Christian missionaries was to get the Shawnees to abandon their social structure. Because women and men were equal within the Shawnee tribe, and they had different duties they were assigned of course, and there were fine lines—even today in Shawnee ceremony, there are ...there are things that men do in the ceremonies and things that women do, and it's a real mistake to do the wrong thing.

And I'll give you an example. At the last Red Dance that the Shawnees had at the ceremonial grounds, as the ceremony was starting there was a...a lady who I hadn't seen for a long time standing within the sacred circle. And she asked me to come over and speak to her and I went over and sat down beside her to

speak to her before I realized that I was standing in the woman's part of the woman's ceremonial grounds. And I got, uh, ostracized and criticized and everything else because I touched my seat to the bench in the place where only women were supposed to sit.

But one of the big problems for missionaries though, was...is that they felt they wanted to...the women to have the European model, uh, that they saw - where the men were . . . were the bosses and they defined what happened in the families. And in Shawnee families the decisions . . . the women had just as much influence on what the tribe did or what the family did, and that was one of the things that was a constant source of friction, uh, all the way through the Kansas area between the missionaries from the Methodists and the Baptists and the Quakers, that were primarily the missions to the Shawnees in Kansas.

5) Kathryn Harrison (Grand Ronde), "The Role of Missionaries"

<http://lc-triballegacy.org/video.php?vid=665&era=4&subcat=4B>

Transcript:

And in those treaties, though, we were promised education, housing, and the welfare that included all the things that we would need. But there was also a map I saw somewhere that said all the different parts of the United States were divided up by the missionaries. And what I read about Grand Ronde was the Catholics said "we must hurry and get the Grand Ronde before the Christians do." So, we had a Catholic church. And most of our people were Catholics. And they did a good job. They had a Father Crockett, who was just so dearly beloved by the people that he just had to wrestle[?] with the heart all the time. Things were given to him like beds and furniture and bedding, and it was written in his diary that . . . or the story of his life that said, "There's no need to give Father Crockett anything because he just gives it away to those Indians." So, he was a real good friend and spent many years here. And they said every day he would climb up here at [Spirit Mountain?] and do his prayers and seek his visions, you know, how to serve the Indian people here better. I remember one story that really stands out in my mind, too. There was a young girl that died, and they got ready to bury her, and people went up and looked at her in her casket. Turned around and looked at their mother and said, "After all the Teachings we've had, why do you have her dressed like that?" There she was in her regalia, her braids, and all that. So she looked beautiful. And the mother turned to the priest and said, "Because I want the creator to recognize her when she gets there, so he'll know who she is."