Episode Two: Tecumseh's Vision
Transcript

Narrator: No pictures were ever made of him during his lifetime. No account in his own words was left behind. Looking back the movement he led would seem to some to have been doomed to failure from the start. And yet in the course of his breathtakingly brief and meteoric career, he would rise to become one of the greatest Native American leaders of all time. And one of the most gifted, far-sighted, revered and inspiring... forging, from the glowing embers of his younger brother's soaring vision**,** an extraordinary coalition, and orchestrating the most ambitious pan-Indian resistance movement ever mounted on the North American continent.

Kevin Williams, Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma: I mean, to be Shawnee, and to have Tecumseh be a member of that tribe is to be honored -- to be honored to be in that tribe. He and his brother was trying to get the Shawnee people back to their roots and try to keep their lands from being taken. And he was a visionary. And I think today, what would have happened if he had succeeded in his plan? It would have changed history.

Andrew Warrior, Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma: He had a vision to make sure that the Indian way of life was going to continue at whatever cost. This is a man, an Indian man, a self-proclaimed leader, a self-proclaimed chief, who stood up and said, "Hey, this is enough. I don't want no more of this. You've taken enough." And he took a stand.

Stephen Warren, historian: One way one might think of Tecumseh as a man who led a revolution of young men -- young men who were tired of the accommodationist stance of their elders -- young men who thought that the leadership structure of the Shawnee tribe needed to be reordered and re-imagined, in order for the Shawnees and all native people to survive.

David Edmunds, historian: What Tecumseh is fighting for is the ability of Indian people east of the Mississippi to hold onto their homelands. Their lands are under siege in the period after the American Revolution. The white frontier is moving into the Ohio Valley. It's also moving onto the Gulf Plains in the South. And Tecumseh says, "This has got to stop. We have to stand and all realize that we're in this together."

I think Tecumseh's one of those people that, if he were alive today and would walk into a room, people would stop talking and just stare at him. Tribal people back in the first part of the 19th century would say, "Tecumseh is a man of very, very strong medicine." There was this aura around him of leadership and respect, that even people who opposed him -- even his enemies -- admired him.

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His genius was in inspiring people. And he was a very inspirational man that was able to bring out the very best in those people who supported him, and to see beyond any particular tribal affiliation, and to realize that this was a struggle that was of greater magnitude.

I also think that there was a spiritual component to this -- that he believed that he was appointed by the powers in the universe to really bring people together and to make this stand. And to retain what was left of the Indian homeland. This was his life. This was what he had been born to do.

Tecumseh (Michael Greyeyes): These lands are ours. No one has a right to remove us. The Master of Life knows no boundaries, nor will his red people acknowledge any. The Master of Life has appointed this place for us to light our fires, and here we shall remain.

George Blanchard, Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma: Well, I've always heard *"Teh-cum-theh"* -- *"Teh-cum-theh"* -- means, in our culture and our belief, at nights when we see a falling star, it means that this panther is jumping from one mountain to another. And as kids, we saw these falling stars, we'd kind of hesitate about being out in the dark, because we thought there were actually panthers out there walking around. So that's what his name meant: *Teh-cum-theh.*

David Edmunds, historian: Ohio was a very special place for the Shawnees. The Shawnees called Ohio, and the Ohio Valley, the "center of the world." It was an area where Shawnee villages dotted the river valleys. It was an area where one could come down from Ohio, cross the Ohio River and hunt into the bluegrass region of Kentucky -- where at this time there were small herds of buffalo, there were elk, there were deer there. So it was a very spatial place, and it was a place, which was very dear to Shawnee hearts. The word *Shawnee* means "Southerner," and they were called "southerners" by other Algonquin-speaking people**.** Shawnees had lived in the Ohio Valley off and on for a great period of time. They had scattered in the early 1700s, but they'd come back into Ohio, and they hunted extensively into Kentucky.

Colin Calloway, historian: Tecumseh was born around 1768. That's the same year that a huge treaty at Fort Stanwix in New York essentially opens up what is now Kentucky to English settlement. Much of that territory is Shawnee hunting territory. So right at the time of Tecumseh's birth, it's clear that issues of land -- and English or American access to this land -- are going to be vital factors in shaping his life.

David Edmunds, historian: Tecumseh and his younger brother grew up in the midst of the American Revolution. And it was an exciting time, I'm sure, for a young Shawnee man to come to manhood, but it was also a time of danger, and a time of a certain amount of turmoil. It was a time when Shawnee warriors went south across the river to strike at the frontier forts in Kentucky, and it was a time when the Shawnee villages north of the Ohio were attacked periodically by expeditions of Kentuckians into the region.

Narrator: Named for the Kispokothe war clan into which he was born -- whose spiritual patron was a celestial panther leaping across the heavens -- he showed promise from the start: quick to learn, graceful and athletic, and touched with a striking natural charisma. "There was a certain something in his countenance and manner," a childhood friend recalled, "that always commanded respect, and made those about him love him." The contrasts could not have been more striking with his troubled younger brother, Lalawethika.

David Edmunds, historian: Lalawethika was seven years younger than Tecumseh and grew up in his brother's shadow. He was very unsuccessful as a little child. His nickname was Lalawethika -- which means the "noise maker," I think translated idiomatically it probably meant "loudmouth," a person that makes a lot

of noise. As a child of about 10 or 12 years old he shoots his own eye out while fooling around with a bow and arrow, and just is not a very happy young child.

Narrator: In the end, no Shawnee family would be left untouched by the rising tide of violence in the Ohio River Valley.

Stephen Warren, historian: Tecumseh and Lalawethika lost their father when Tecumseh was seven. Their mother left for Missouri in 1779 after horrifying warfare between the Long Knives and the Shawnees. So that by the time Lalawethika was 13, roughly half of their immediate family members had been either killed or had voluntarily removed from Ohio.

Narrator: For the Shawnees as a whole, the outcome of the American Revolution would prove nothing less than cataclysmic. All through the war they fought valiantly on the British side in defense of their homelands, without losing a battle, only to discover --following the British surrender -- that their one-time allies had ceded all lands west of the Appalachians to the new American republic.

Colin Calloway, historian: At the Peace of Paris in 1783, no Indians are there. The terms of the treaty do not even mention Indian people, and, yet, this is a treaty that has huge significance for Indians. Britain transfers to the new United States all territory that it has claimed south of the Great Lakes -- east of the Mississippi, north of Florida. That is Indian country. For the United States, it's a crucial resource. Land is the basis of the new nation. Land is the opportunity to create what Jefferson comes to call an "empire of liberty." But you have to get that land from Indian people. And within a few years, Indian people begin to recoil from that, and to recognize the degree to which the United States represents a major threat to their existence. Indian nations begin to unite in a confederation, to resist that expansion.

Narrator: In the alliance of tribes that now rose up to stop the white invasion, the Shawnees would take the lead, and Tecumseh himself first make a name for himself on the field of battle in what would prove to be the beginning of an epic 30-year-long struggle, waged across a thousand miles, that would permanently shape the physical and moral geography of the new nation.

David Edmunds, historian: The area they called the Old Northwest -- the area north of Ohio -- was sort of up for grabs in the period after the American Revolution. The British still had forts at Detroit, and they still had a lot of influence among the tribes because they were operating out of Canada. And the British are not even sure whether the new United States is going to stand. And they feel that if the United States goes under, they want to be able to move back into this region in force. And so the British keep telling the Indians, "Oh, well, you should stand up against the United States, and we will supply you with guns and ammunition."

Narrator: For six long years, the Shawnees and their allies kept U.S. forces on the run -- all but destroying the American army in 1792 in northern Indiana -- only to be stopped two years later at the battle of Fallen Timbers in northern Ohio where a well-planned retreat to the safety of a nearby British fort was turned into a disaster for the Indian Confederacy -- and a bitter lesson in British reliability that Tecumseh would never forget.

David Edmunds, historian: Tecumseh fights in the battle, and eventually has to withdraw, with part of his warriors, towards the British fort. The tribal people assume that the British are going to let them into the fort, and that there'll be another stand made there, but the British refuse them entrance.

Colin Calloway, historian: The British slam the gates of the fort in their faces, fearful of a renewed war with the United States. To the Indians -- to Tecumseh -- this is another act of British betrayal.

David Edmunds, historian: Well, Fallen Timbers is a disaster for tribal people, and it is following this battle that the tribes are forced to sign the Treaty of Greenville, giving up about the southeastern two-thirds of Ohio. Tecumseh refuses to sign the treaty. He even refuses to participate in the proceedings. Tecumseh is incensed that they are forced to give up much of his former homeland. But this is the death knell, in many ways, for the tribes in the Old Northwest.

Donald Fixico, historian: The natural world that the Shawnees knew was changing. The eastern tribes are being pushed farther into their lands. There are observations of deer being less, bear being less -- the receding of wild game. And so Tecumseh has to construct some type of plan. And it has to be a large plan, in order to confront this huge westward expansion that begins to pulsate into different areas, into the Great Lakes area and into the southeast part of the United States. But how do you stop this huge westward expansion?

Narrator: The Treaty of Greenville marked a crucial turning point in the battle for the eastern half of the continent, opening the Ohio River Valley to a flood of white settlers, and hemming the Shawnees and their allies onto dwindling tracts of land too small to sustain the old ways of life. Even in the newly created Territory of Indiana -- into which Tecumseh and his followers now retreated, hoping to find refuge -- a systematic policy of land loss and dispossession was soon put into place by American politicians, eager to effect the transfer of land any way they could and convinced the Indian way of life was dying.

"The American settlements will gradually circumscribe and approach the Indians," President Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1801, "who will in time either incorporate with us as citizens of the United States, or remove beyond the Mississippi. Some tribes are advancing, and on these English seductions will have no effect. But the backward will yield, and be thrown further back into barbarism and misery ... and we shall be obliged to drive them with the beasts of the forest into the stony mountains."

Stephen Warren, historian: I don't think we appreciate just how ruthless Thomas Jefferson was as President in 1801, and how ruthless folks like Jefferson's territorial governor, William Henry Harrison were in the period specifically after 1800. The Americans employed what was called the "factory system." And what that was was the establishment of government forts throughout the old Northwest where the government would accept furs in exchange for goods. And it became a way of making native people into debtors of the United States. And when Thomas Jefferson becomes President, in his first term he writes William Henry Harrison and says, you know, essentially, "Through the factory system, native people will incur debts beyond what they are willing to pay, and they will only be able to pay those back through a cession of lands."

John Sugden, biographer: So for the Shawnees -- for Tecumseh -- it was a period of continual dispossession, continual violence, and continual retreat. There is no place at that time you could really, if you were a Shawnee, have called home. Because it was constantly being taken off you.

Stephen Warren, historian: So that by 1805, native people find themselves confined to a small corridor of land -- really a spit of land -- in northwestern Ohio and northeastern Indiana. That's all that's left of them. And it is not enough to continue a hunting tradition. What was happening to them was a tragedy of epic proportions. Men could no longer hunt. They could no longer operate as life-sustaining killers. They could not feed their families via hunting. They were on a constant war footing. And another horrifying aspect of it is that so many men have tried to protect their people through war, and have died doing it, that these villages are

totally out of balance. So that there are probably double the number of women as men in any native village in 1805, because of this war of attrition. And so these are not only broken homes, but broken communities.

David Edmunds, historian: It is a time in which disease flourishes and spreads across many of the tribes of the Ohio Valley. It is a time when alcoholism begins to spread among the tribe. The very fabric of tribal society, the kinship systems, seem to be under stress. And it's a time when, I think, a lot of Shawnees are having second thoughts about: "Who are we, and what is going on here? Why has the Master of Life turned his face from us? What has happened to us? What have we done to cause this?"

Narrator: By the spring of 1805, the misery and suffering in northern Indiana had reached the breaking point. In Tecumseh's village along the White River, even so great a provider as he was helpless to defend his people from the rain of woe now descending upon them; while almost day by day, his younger brother, Lalawethika -- a failed hunter and warrior, who had tried without success to support his family as a holy man and healer -- sank further and further into an abyss of shame and despair.

Stephen Warren, historian: I think that Lalawethika fell victim to all of the worst unintended consequences of colonialism. He was an alcoholic, and many viewed him as lazy, prone to violence; he abused his wife. And so every opportunity that Lalawethika had to distinguish himself resulted in failure. And, by most accounts, he could not support his family. So that he was dependent upon Tecumseh, and others like him, to literally feed his family. He was so caught up in the sadness and the despair of dependency upon the United State in the form of alcohol, and the fur trade, and of land loss. It was so destructive, and such a sad time.

Narrator: It would be all the more surprising then in the dark spring of 1805, as the universe continued to come unhinged for the Shawnees, that a message of terrifying beauty and hope would be brought to the beleaguered people -- coming in their very darkest hour, and in the end, from the least likely of sources.

Stephen Warren, historian: In 1805, his family recalls, an event in which Lalawethika falls into a fire. He collapses. And everyone in his immediate family, his immediate vicinity, believes that he's dead. But he miraculously comes back to life. He wakes up to report a vision of extraordinary breadth and power.

Lalawethika (Billy Merasty): I died, and was carried in a dream by the Master of Life down into the spirit world, until we came to a parting of the ways. To the right lay the road to paradise open only to the virtuous few. To the left, I saw an army of forsaken souls stumbling on towards three dark houses -- fearful dwellings of punishment and pain. I saw unrepentant drunkards forced to swallow molten lead. And when they drank it their bowels were seized with an exquisite burning. At the last house their torment was inexpressible. I heard their screams, crying pitifully -- roaring like the falls of a great river.

Colin Calloway, historian: When Lalawethika recovers from his vision, he says that he has come with a message. And the message is, I think, a message of revitalization, of restoration for a people who've lost their way, in the way that he had lost his way. He is a reformed individual. He takes a new name for himself: Tenskwatawa, the "Open Door." And the message that he brings -- that Indian people can make themselves whole again by rejecting the worst influences that white people have brought to them -- hits a powerful chord. It gives people who may have lost hope a new hope. It gives them a direction. It gives them an opportunity to remake themselves, to restore themselves by reviving their Indian culture and identity.

John Sugden, biographer: The impact is he reforms instantly. He suddenly doesn't drink anymore. And he is preaching to others now that, "If you want to save yourselves, you have to have a personal revolution in your way of life."

Tenskwatawa (Billy Merasty): My Children! The Great Spirit bids me say to you thus. You must not dress like the Whites. You must not get drunk. It displeases the Great Spirit.

Stephen Warren, historian: And he formulated a message that appealed to a great many Shawnee, Delaware, Wyandotte, Kickapoo, Pottawatomie, because that was their experience at the time. You know, this is a world totally out of balance. And so his vision is a vision for all native people, in a broad way. It's intended for everyone. And as a recovered alcoholic, he could speak to people who had not had that conversion experience -- who were still caught up in that cycle of despair.

John Sugden, biographer: He took the name Tenskwatawa -- the "open door" --which was a way of suggesting that you could reach grace through him. He was a doorway to salvation.

Narrator: Friends and family members were astonished by the changes that had transformed Lalawethika almost overnight -- and none more so than Tecumseh himself -- who all through the fall and winter of 1805, looked on thoughtfully as young men from across the Midwest trooped into their village along the White River in increasing number, drawn by his brother's siren call of renewal and by his brother himself, who would soon be known simply as the Prophet.

Tenskwatawa (Billy Merasty): Now my children, I charge you not to speak of this talk to the whites. The world is not as it was at first, but it is broken, and leans down, and those that are on the slope, from the Chippewas, and further, will all die if the earth should fall; therefore, if they would live, every Indian village must send to me two persons to be instructed, so as to prevent it.

Stephen Warren, historian: I think Tecumseh understands that there are a whole bunch of wounded warriors out there, and by wounded I mean people who are psychologically wounded, people who are culturally wounded. And I think he sees Tenskwatawa's vision as a means of inspiring them to act -- to pick up their feet and to join him. So he parlays Tenskwatawa's vision into that kind of pan-Indian organizational scheme.

John Sugden, biographer: And very quickly, as early as 1806 you see a political plan coming into it. Tecumseh is saying, "We can use this movement to reunify this broken people, the Shawnees." Which was a long-desired dream of Shawnee leaders -- to bring this scattered tribe together, make them of consequence again.

Narrator: In the spring of 1806, the two brothers took their first decisive step.
Eager to establish a center for the new movement and to re-assert the Shawnee claim to homelands already ceded by treaty, they moved their village to a new site in western Ohio on the American side of the line established by the Treaty of Greenville 10 years earlier, in open defiance of the American government. Then sent out messengers to villages across the region, often led by Tecumseh himself.

Tecumseh (Michael Greyeyes): The Shawnees have heretofore been scattered about in parties, which we have found has been attended with bad consequences. We are now going to gather them all together to one town that one chief may keep them in good order, and prevent sickness, want, and shame from coming among them.

David Edmunds, historian: Initially, Tecumseh remains in the Prophet's shadow. We know that he's aware of his brother's transformation; we know that the brother lives in, quote, "Tecumseh's village." But it is the

Prophet that first attracts the tribal people to the village.

Narrator: From the start, the new movement sent shock waves surging through Indian country, unsettling native communities already rocked by decades of change and deeply dividing the Shawnees themselves -- along with other worn down tribes, like the Delawares and the Wyandots.

John Sugden, biographer The Shawnee chiefs in Ohio saw a power struggle in it straight away. They saw that "this is a man, from a junior division of the Shawnees, bidding for power -- and we're damn well not gonna give it to him."

Colin Calloway, historian: And even within Tecumseh's own nation, there are Shawnees who are now trying to follow the white man's path -- who are following the lead of Black Hoof, who was a person who had fought against the Americans through the Revolution, up until the Treaty of Greenville, but now, as an older man, is saying, "We fought. We've tried that way -- it's not working -- we need to try this way."

Narrator: In April 1806, eager to win more recruits from among the troubled tribes in Ohio and Indiana, Tenskwatawa issued a direct challenge to any leaders who opposed him, accusing them of witchcraft and of being in league with the U.S. government.

Stephen Warren, historian: He essentially engaged in a series of high-profile confrontations with their leaders to the point where he enters into a Wyandotte village and engages in a ritualized killing of a Wyandotte leader. He essentially accused him, and others like him, of being a witch, of attempting to undermine them by acting as a kind of wedge for Americans to enter their communities and harm their people. And so people begin to see him as an iconoclast of sorts, who's willing to take on government chiefs who are in the pay of the United States. And his message spreads like wildfire as a result.

Narrator: In late April, as a wave of fear and unease rippled through white communities in southern Indiana, the territorial governor, William Henry Harrison, fired off a letter to the Delawares -- denouncing the Shawnee Prophet as an impostor and urging them to put his supposed powers to the test.

William Henry Harrison (Dwier Brown): My children, who is this pretended prophet who dares to speak in the name of the great Creator? Examine him. Demand of him some proof at least of his being a messenger of the deity. If he is really a prophet, ask him to cause the sun to stand still, or the moon to alter its courses, the river to cease to flow or the dead to rise from their graves. If he does these things you may believe he is sent from God. Otherwise drive him from your town and let peace and harmony prevail amongst you.

David Edmunds, historian: And in June 1806 the Shawnee Prophet predicts an eclipse of the sun -- called a "Black Sun" by the Shawnees -- which is a sign of great things to come, a sign of great change. And, at first, many Shawnees -- many other Indians -- said, "Oh, this time I don't really think he's able to do it."

Tenskwatawa (Billy Merasty): Did I not speak the truth? See now, the sun is dark!

David Edmunds, historian: And the eclipse was so complete that the farm animals, for example, went into the sheds and the birds roosted et cetera. And the Prophet's stock after this rose like a skyrocket. William Henry Harrison could not have done anything that helps the Prophet, and propels the Prophet and Tecumseh to a position of prominence, more than issuing this challenge.

Narrator: As news of the miracle spread, the trickle of pilgrims coming into Greenville swelled to a flood. By July, Ojibwa villages on the shores of Lake Superior stood empty and deserted. To the south, Potawatomis left corn crops standing in the fields, and came to hear the Shawnee holy man whose words now, with each passing month, seemed to grow in stridency and power.

Tenskwatawa (Billy Merasty): My children! The Great Spirit bids me say to you thus: Have very little to do with the Americans. They are unjust; they have taken away your lands, which were not made for them. The whites I have placed on the other side of the Great Water, to be another people, separate from you. In time, I will overturn the land, so that all the white people will be covered and you alone shall inhabit the land.

Stephen Warren, historian: And the U.S. government panics, and the fear really proliferates. Because by 1807 certainly, most Americans just assumed an orderly process of dispossession and conquest, in which Native Americans would gradually recede from the picture, or assimilate into American society. And when Tenskwatawa has his vision, all of a sudden 10 years of confidence erodes, as native people reconsider and attempt to reorganize themselves in an effective way against Jefferson's vision of land loss and dispossession.

Narrator: Now events began to accelerate. In the spring of 1807, the Indian agent at Fort Wayne, William Wells -- alarmed by the upturn in Indians passing through his outpost -- accused the Prophet of keeping settlers "in a continual state of uneaseness," he said, and demanded he leave Greenville.

That June, convinced that English agents operating out of Canada were egging the Indians on to war, William Henry Harrison fired off a letter to the Secretary of War. "I really fear," he wrote, "that this said Prophet is an engine set to work by the British for some bad purpose." In the fall of 1808 as the war of words grew louder, the two brothers decided to move their center of operations to a new site: 150 miles west, strategically located near the junction of the Wabash and Tippecanoe Rivers, deep in Indiana Territory, far away from prying white eyes, they hoped, and closer to the western tribes that had been most receptive to the Prophet's message to begin with.

The new village, called Prophetstown, would rise to become one of the greatest centers of Indian resistance on the North American continent. It would also become a major obstacle to the dreams of statehood nurtured by William Henry Harrison, who in 1809 redoubled his efforts to drive the Indians from Indiana, bribing local chiefs into signing away lands over which they had no authority and pressing one land cession after another through the Territorial Legislature, culminating in the notorious Treaty of Fort Wayne in the autumn of 1809.

John Sugden, biographer: The Treaty of Fort Wayne really changes everything, and the politics comes to the fore. Here's three million acres of Indian land suddenly snatched away, and white settlements are moving closer than ever before to Prophetstown. And suddenly there is a need for very urgent political action.

Narrator: For Tecumseh, it was the decisive moment. Convinced now that only the most radical and concerted efforts could save the Indian land base, he stepped out from behind his brother's shadow once and for all and sprang into action. In the months and years to come, rallying warriors from half a continent to his cause, he would do everything he could to push back and redraw the still fluid boundaries of the new United States and to create of a permanent Indian homeland in the very heart of the country -- bounded by the Ohio River to the south and east, by the Great Lakes to the north, and by the Mississippi River to the West -- a United Indian States of America within the United States.

Colin Calloway, historian: Tecumseh's vision is to establish, I think, what I would call cultural and physical space for Indian people. He understands that for Indian culture to survive and for Indian independence to

survive there needs to be a land base, and that land base can only be preserved and protected by a united tribal resistance. This is no longer a fight that can be waged by just some Shawnees, just some Delawares, just some Wyandottes. He's appealing to a larger, pan-Indian future, in which the future of all Indian peoples will be affected by the stand that Indian peoples take now.

Tenskwatawa (Billy Merasty): They have driven us from the sea to the lakes, and we can go no farther. They have taken upon themselves to say this tract of land belongs to the Miamis, this to the Delawares and so on. Our father tells us that we have no business on the Wabash -- that the land belongs to other tribes. But the Great Spirit intended it to be the common property of all the tribes, nor can it be sold without the consent of all.

Narrator: In 1809, Tecumseh set out with a entourage of warriors and interpreters on the first of a series of epic tours -- east to the Shawnees and Wyandots in Ohio, west to the Sacs & Foxes and Ho-Chunks in Illinois, south to the Creeks and Choctaws in Alabama and Georgia, and north, as far as way as Canada, to the home of the Senecas, the Iroquois and the British -- determined to swell the ranks of the burgeoning Indian confederacy any way he could, and to find supplies and reinforcements for the armed conflict he now knew was inevitable.

John Sugden, biographer: He doesn't pluck this confederacy out of nowhere. He just tries to revive the confederacy he had known as a young man. He even uses the same terminology -- the idea that the land is held in common by the Indians. No one tribe can cede it without the permission of the others, and, therefore, it's in all our interests to defend it. Now this was a job that was much more difficult than the job of the American founding fathers, who at least had some tradition of common origin and a similar language and similar thought patterns and mind sets.

On top of those problems, though, Tecumseh was facing the fact that these weren't states, they were fragmented villages. So you couldn't just convince a few chiefs and hope that was going to do the business for you. Those chiefs might have almost no or little authority within their own communities. But this lack of authority in Indian communities both played against him and for him, because even if the chiefs were in opposition, he could pull the warriors from underneath them by appealing to them. And this is really one of his strategies.

Tenskwatawa (Billy Merasty): Listen, my people. The past speaks for itself. Where today are the Pequots? Where the Narragansetts, the Powatans, Pocanokets, and many other once powerful tribes of our race? Look abroad over their once beautiful country and what do you see now? Nothing but the ravages of the pale-face destroyers. So it will be with you Creek, Chickasaws and Choctaws. The annihilation of our race is at hand unless we are united in one common cause against the common foe.

Donald Fixico, historian: I mean, so many different groups come to this call for warriors. When you think about 20 different tribes -- many in which the languages are so different and the politics are so different -- he's dissolved tribal barriers, tribal differences, cultural differences as well, and he's got them to believe in one mind. For one person to get so many people to come of the same mind, yes indeed, it's propaganda, yes indeed, it's campaigning, yes indeed, it's diplomacy, being an ambassador, a military strategist. And so in my mind he's succeeded with this idea.

Narrator: By 1810, the impact of Tecumseh's diplomacy could be felt up and down the Wabash. By May, nearly a thousand people had streamed into Prophetstown, and all spring and summer the numbers continued to build. Fearing imminent bloodshed, William Henry Harrison called for a contingent of federal troops to

reinforce the territorial capital at Vincennes, then sent a messenger to Prophetstown itself urging the Prophet to come to Vincennes to air grievances about the Treaty of Fort Wayne. In the end it was Tecumseh himself who replied, telling the messenger that he personally would come to meet with Harrison to discuss Indian outrage over the newly ceded lands.
On August 12th, 1810, a party of 75 warriors with Tecumseh in command arrived at Harrison's headquarters at Vincennes for the historic confrontation.

John Sugden, biographer: There were some canonical stories about Tecumseh, which, even if you knew nothing else you could say, "This is someone you have to reckon with." One of them is that confrontation with Harrison in 1810. That magnificent confrontation, where he knew a conflict was coming, and so did Harrison. And here you have two representatives of entirely different philosophies and points of view. And neither individual was afraid of the other. Harrison had no need to be; the resources were all behind him. But Tecumseh -- there was no sense that being in a weak position should mitigate, or reduce his point of view or the worthiness of his cause.

Tecumseh (Michael Greyeyes): How, my brother, can you blame me for placing little confidence in the promises of our fathers the Americans? You have endeavored to make distinctions. You have taken tribes aside. You wish to prevent the Indians from uniting, and from considering their land the common property of the whole. I do not see how we can remain at peace with you if you continue to do so. Brother, this land that was sold, and the goods that were given for it, they were done only by the few. If you continue to purchase land from those who have no right to do so, I do not know what will be the consequence.

I now wish you to listen to me, brother. I tell you so because I am authorized by all the tribes to do so. I am at the head of them all. I am a warrior, and all the warriors will meet in two or three moons from this. Then I will call for those chiefs that sold you the land and shall know what to do with them. For, brother, we want to save this land; we do not wish you to take it. And if you take it you shall be the cause of trouble between us.

William Henry Harrison (Dwier Brown): The United States has not treated the Indians dishonestly nor unjustly. Indians are not one nation, nor do they own the land in common. Has not the Great Spirit given them separate tongues?

Tecumseh (Michael Greyeyes): How dare you!

William Henry Harrison (Dwier Brown): This council is over.

John Sugden, biographer: He stood up in a very remarkable and frank way and more or less admitted to Harrison that war would come. I think he said at one point, "You are pushing us into a conflict. We have no alternative. This is going to happen if you continue with this policy." And, of course, Harrison certainly was going to continue that policy. But both men gave no ground.

Narrator: For nearly a week the talks continued. Tecumseh insisting the lands be returned; Harrison, insisting they had been fairly acquired, refusing to return them.
Before the deadlocked meetings adjourned, Harrison promised to pass Tecumseh's demands on to the president in Washington adding, however, that he very much doubted the request would be granted. No one present ever forgot Tecumseh's reply.

Tecumseh (Michael Greyeyes): As the Great Chief in Washington is to determine the matter, I hope the Great Spirit will put some sense into his head to induce him to direct you to give up this land. It is true, he is

so far off. He will not be injured by the war. He may still sit in his town, and drink his wine, whilst you and I will have to fight it out.

William Henry Harrison (Dwier Brown): The implicit obedience and respect which the followers of Tecumseh pay to him is really astonishing, and more than any other circumstance bespeaks him one of those uncommon geniuses spring up occasionally to produce revolutions and overturn the established order of things. If it were not for the vicinity of the United States, he would perhaps be the founder of an Empire that would rival in glory that of Mexico or Peru.

John Sugden, biographer: Now, Tecumseh did a remarkable thing. He said a remarkable thing in 1810, when he confronted Harrison at Vincennes. He said something I don't think any Native American had before, and I don't think many had said afterwards. He stood up, defended Indian land, and said *he represented every Indian on the continent.* Now, what a preposterous assertion, even for someone whose life had been so far-flung as his. But to make such a claim at that time -- it was an absolutely preposterous thing to say. Yet what he was saying was that he understood that Native American peoples were in a particular historical predicament, and he was articulating that predicament, and he was doing it for all of them.

R. David Edmunds, historian: Well I think that by 1811 Tecumseh can see that war is imminent between the Americans and the British, and I think that he hopes to use this war to help defend Native American homelands in the Old Northwest. The problem for Tecumseh is always going to be one of logistics. It's one of bringing in large numbers of warriors and supplying them and feeding them, and providing them with adequate arms and ammunition.

Stephen Warren, historian: My sense of Tecumseh is that he was keenly aware of moments of opportunity, moments to strike, moments to act. And 1811 was not one of those moments.

Narrator: The dog days of summer 1811 were just reaching their peak when Tecumseh embarked on one last grueling tour -- heading South this time to what the Shawnees called the Mid-Day -- determined to bring the Chickasawas, Choctaws and Creeks of Mississippi and Alabama into the confederacy, and to shore up British support for the movement. Before leaving Prophetstown, Tecumseh urged his younger brother to do everything he could to keep from being drawn into a fight with Harrison prematurely, then made one last stop at Vincennes to see Harrison himself before continuing south, hoping to convince him not initiate hostilities.

Stephen Warren, historian: It was crucial to hold off for several reasons. The first is that Tecumseh was the only person equipped to lead; the second being that British support was crucial, and whatever they did it had to be coordinated with the British. And third, I think that Tecumseh was really confident that his Southeastern tour would result in a great many adherents.

William Henry Harrison (Dwier Brown): August 6th, 1811. The day before he set out, he paid me a visit, and labored hard to convince me that he had no other intention by his journey to the south than to prevail on all the tribes to unite in the bonds of peace. August 7th. He is now upon the last round to put a finishing stroke to his work. I hope, however, before his return that that part of the fabric which he considered complete will be demolished, and even its foundations rooted up.

Narrator: In late August -- writing that Tecumseh's "great talents" alone were holding together the heterogenous mass" of warriors on the Wabash -- Harrison received permission to march on Prophetstown, and one month later, on September 26th, 1811, at the head of a force of nearly 1,000 men headed north towards the Indian stronghold, 180 miles away. As reports came in to Prophetstown of Harrison's

approaching army, hundreds of warriors converged on the Indian village to defend it.

Colin Calloway, historian: As Tenskwatawa watches the American army advance, he is faced with the question of what to do. Do you sit and wait, to see if the American intentions are peaceful, or should you strike against it? When Tenskwatawa hears of the American army advancing, he interprets this as an act of aggression.

Narrator: Around two o'clock on the afternoon of November 6th Harrison's thousand-man force clambered up a steep ravine on the eastern side of a narrow stream called Burnett's creek, and went into camp on a narrow bench of high ground, planted with high oak trees. One mile to the east lay Prophetstown, stretching south along the Wabash from the mouth of the Tippecanoe. As the light began to fail, two officers and an interpreter rode out under a white flag to convey Harrison's orders that the Indian camp disperse.

Stephen Warren, historian: Tippecanoe. There's a crucial moment on November 6th, when Harrison arrives. He arrives with more than a thousand men. And Harrison and Tenskwatawa agree to meet the next day, to discuss how they might reach some kind of compromise. But on the night of November 6th, Tenskwatawa is besieged by his Western Algonquian allies, and they tell him, "Look. You know, we have to fight, we have to surprise them. They think we're going to have a discussion, but let's wage a preemptive strike." To come all that way and to do nothing but wait for Tecumseh made little sense to them. And so Tenskwatawa goes against his brother's wishes for him. You know, he caves to pressure. And not only that, but he tells his allies that they'll be safe from American bullets -- that his power as a medicine man is such that no one will be harmed.

Narrator: Sometime in the night, a long column of warriors began to file silently out of the village, heading in a long arc for the northwest corner of the American encampment.

Donald Fixico, historian: It was a very wet morning. Sentries are posted and everything. And possibly, Winnebago warriors, but certainly warriors tried to penetrate the camp, crawling in to the camp. And they even make it past the sentries.

Narrator: Around four in the morning, a picket stationed a few yards out beyond the left flank of the camp thought he saw something moving in the trees. Whipping his musket to his shoulder, he fired blindly into the gloom -- mortally wounding a Kickapoo warrior as he attempted to steal into the camp. Harrison himself was in his tent, when the first shot rang out, followed by a series bloodcurdling war cries, and a tremendous crash of muskets as the war party rushed in. The Battle of Tippecanoe had begun.

John Sugden, biographer: It was a classic Indian attack. If you don't have the numbers on your side, you make a sudden attack and try to overwhelm and demoralize the enemy quickly. And it was carried through at Tippecanoe with great determination, considering how few warriors there were. And they didn't have much ammunition.

The Indians were a very mobile force. They're almost like water -- they gave way to things; and they strengthened around weak points in a very flexible way. They didn't have to wait for orders from chiefs; they fought very much individually. So if they perceived a force getting out of its depth -- moving forward and getting split up from the main force -- they could easily rally round and start surrounding it, and cutting it to pieces. I mean, if there had been more Indians on the ground, the Indians might have been capable of inflicting great damage.

Colin Calloway, historian: The Indian warriors attack Harrison's army in camp at dawn. For a moment, it looks as if the Indians have infiltrated the lines. There's confusion. But as the light increases, it becomes clear to the Americans that the Indians lack the numbers, that they lack the ammunition to carry this assault home. And, eventually, the Indians are driven from the field.

In reality, the Americans suffered probably more casualties than the Indians. The American force was superior; the American force was better armed; the American force had more ammunition. But I do think that it represents a blow to the confederacy.

Narrator: On the night of November 8th, two days after the battle, Harrison's soldiers edged warily into Prophetstown for the first time -- only to find that the confederated forces had dispersed into the surrounding country side. Ordering his men to plunder the village -- setting fire to the lodges and destroying all the Indian's food supplies -- Harrison headed back down the Wabash towards Vincennes, declaring in dispatches his mission had been accomplished.

Don Fixico, historian: Following the defeat at Prophetstown one would think that all of this was over. And it was not. It was just the beginning, in fact. It was an impossible task of the largest scale for Tecumseh to rebuild his army, and he did -- making twice the effort, twice the stamina.

Colin Calloway, historian: When Tecumseh comes home, he's reputed to have grabbed the Prophet by the hair and shaken him and reprimanded him, scolded him for this foolish action.

Dave Edmunds, historian: Tecumseh, we know, is very angry with his brother after this battle. And I think the Prophet spends the rest of his life trying to get back into a position of prominence.

Don Fixico, historian: Tecumseh has a choice. Do you discard the Prophet? Or do you reunite with him in this kind of campaign effort? And he realizes that he has to embrace him again. And he forgives his brother, and so now we're in the next chapter of rebuilding this huge army. And this time, make no mistake about it, Tecumseh is going to be there.

Narrator: Though Harrison had destroyed the Indians food supplies and scattered the Indian warriors, he had not destroyed the confederacy itself, and he had not destroyed Tecumseh, and in the end only succeeded in emboldening the great Shawnee warrior who, on returning to the Wabash in January 1812, immediately set out to reassemble the scattered alliance, convinced -- despite all appearances to the contrary -- that the moment of opportunity for the Indian confederacy was rapidly approaching.

Stephen Warren, historian: I think, in a way, Harrison creates a huge problem for all Americans living in the Northwest Territories, because he disperses those who are antagonistic to the United States everywhere across the Midwest. They have not given up. They're not putting their weapons down.

Narrator: All through the winter and spring of 1812 -- as long festering tensions between the United States and Great Britain spiraled upward -- Tecumseh labored tirelessly to rebuild the confederacy and to shore up British support before a renewed offensive could be launched against Prophetstown. By May, more than 800 warriors had streamed back into the village, while across the Northwest more than 4,000 warriors were on the move -- the largest Indian confederacy ever mustered on the North American continent.

By the third week of June, Tecumseh himself was on his way north towards a British fort on the Canadian side of the Detroit River hoping to secure supplies and ammunition when a messenger arrived bearing news

he had long been waiting for. Three days earlier, on June 18th, the United States had officially declared war on Britain over the fate of the long-contested Northwestern frontier.

The War of 1812 had begun -- bringing with it the last best hope of a permanent Indian homeland east of the Mississippi.

John Sugden, biographer: And of course, the British were at a crisis point themselves; they needed American Indian allies. They were fighting a war in which the odds were against them. They wanted to defend the Canadian line, and of course they needed manpower. Only the Indians could fill that void for them. So it was an inevitable alliance at that point Tecumseh needed them, and they needed him. And, certainly, Tecumseh's war aims -- he was still incredibly, I have to say, in 1812 looking at some possible way to regain the Ohio boundary as a boundary between the white settlements and the Indians. And he sold that goal to the British.

Narrator: Arriving at the undermanned British outpost of Fort Malden in the waning days of June -- where most were convinced that Canada would fall before the approaching American army -- Tecumseh changed the military equation on the ground in less than three weeks, rallying wavering Indian allies to the cause and bolstering British resolve, and astonishing the British commander in charge, General Isaac Brock, with his extraordinary military skills and sheer force of personality.

John Sugden, biographer: Brock's remark is a classic one. He spoke to Tecumseh for a very short time, a mere few weeks. But he wrote back to the British Prime Minister, and he says that, "I've talked to the Indian chiefs, and there are some extraordinary characters amongst them. But here's Tecumseh," he says, "a more gallant or sagacious warrior does not exist."

Narrator: Tecumseh's brilliance on the field of battle in the summer of 1812 would cement his reputation among the British high command as one of the greatest military leaders of all time. In little more than three weeks, the small but highly mobile force under his command completely unnerved the American army led by William Hull, forcing him to retreat back across the Detroit River to the American side and effectively bringing the invasion of Canada to an end.

On August 4th, at the Battle of Brownstown south of Detroit, with only 24 warriors at his command, Tecumseh attacked and routed an American force six times as large -- killing 19, wounding 12, while himself losing only a single warrior.

Colin Calloway, historian: Tecumseh's finest hour is probably Detroit in 1812, when Tecumseh teams up with Isaac Brock, who finally seems to be the person who is going to deliver on the promises that the British have been making so long. Tecumseh and Brock together mastermind the capture of Detroit.

Narrator: On August 16th, at the Battle of Detroit, Tecumseh convinced the American defenders inside the fort that they were facing an army many times greater than their own, parading his small host of warriors again and again through a clearing in the forest. Before the British and Indian attack had even begun, a white flag appeared above the ramparts of the fort, and the American army marched out and surrendered their weapons. It was one of the most humiliating defeats ever suffered by an American army.

David Edmunds, historian: Fort Detroit falls, Fort Michillimackinaw falls. Tecumseh and Brock, who were very close, are able to take Fort Detroit. They're able to, generally, gain the upper hand here on the Detroit frontier.

Colin Calloway, historian: And it seems as if the vision of an independent Indian confederacy -- an independent Indian state, if you like, supported by British allies, but independent of the United States -- is on the brink of becoming a reality.

David Edmunds, historian: And then, unfortunately for Tecumseh -- and unfortunately for tribal people -- General Isaac Brock is killed fighting the Americans over by Niagara. And the new British commander is named Proctor. And he's much less aggressive, and much more interested in just defending Canada, and in not really helping tribal people retake part of Ohio from the Americans. Tecumseh has to continually goad Proctor to march against the Americans. They invade Ohio twice, attempting to take Fort Meigs, which was an American fort near modern Toledo, and are unsuccessful.

Narrator: In the fall of 1813, the British fleet was defeated not far from Detroit at the Battle of Lake Erie, ceding control of the Great Lakes to the Americans. By then, Lalawethika and a ragged band of followers had appeared in his brother's camp along the Detroit River in Ontario -- driven from Indiana by their old nemesis, William Henry Harrison -- who even now was moving north at the head of a vastly reinforced American army.

David Edmunds, historian: The Americans invade Canada. And particularly after Perry's victory on Lake Erie, the British want to abandon the Detroit frontier and flee to what is now Toronto. And Tecumseh makes them stand and fight.

Colin Calloway, historian: The British-Indian army turns to make a stand at Moraviantown, on the Thames River in Ontario, in 1813. The outcome of the battle seems really to have been a foregone conclusion. By the time the British general Proctor actually stops to turn to fight, he has lost the confidence not only of his Indian allies, but of his own men. When the fighting breaks out, the British resistance is minimal. What resistance is mounted is mounted by Tecumseh and the Indian warriors.

Narrator: The final British betrayal would come on the cold, misty morning of October 5th, 1813, when, as Harrison's vastly superior American forces began their attack, the British simply abandoned their Indian allies entirely and left them to fend for themselves on the field of battle.

David Edmunds, historian: And in one of the more remarkable speeches given throughout American history, Tecumseh says to the British, "Look. You have somewhere to go. But we are standing here, and we are fighting for our homeland. And if you want to run, you run. But leave us the guns and ammunition, because we will stand and fight."

Tecumseh (Michael Greyeyes): Listen! Father! We are much astonished to see you tying up everything and preparing to run the other way. You always told us to remain here and take care of our lands. It made our hearts glad to hear that was your wish. But now we see you drawing back like a fat animal, running off with its tail between its legs.
Listen! Father! The Americans have not yet defeated us by land. We, therefore, wish to remain and face our enemy should they make their appearance. If you have an idea of going away, leave us the guns and ammunition and you may go and welcome for it. Our lives are in the hands of the Great Spirit. We are determined to defend our lands, and if it is his will, we shall leave our bones upon them.

John Sugden, historian: And then, finally, at the end, you often tell great leaders in the way they react in adversity. He knew that the British had given way before they engaged themselves. And, yet, there is no

question of him retreating -- there is no question of him doing the "sensible" thing, which is to fight another day. He has committed himself to this act. He has said he's going to defend this land, and, if necessary, he's going die for this land. And that's what he does.

David Edmunds, historian: And you couldn't think, in some ways, of a more fitting way for Tecumseh to die. He dies in the final battle here for the control of the Great Lakes. And he dies surrounded by his comrades. He dies killed by the Americans. And in the aftermath, his body is mutilated so badly by Harrison's Kentucky militia that the Americans who know him can't really identify him.

Colin Calloway, historian: And with Tecumseh dies, of course, the person who has held together the Indian confederacy -- the person who has represented the best hope for Indian independence in North America. The death of Tecumseh puts, in a sense, finality on the American conquest of that area that what we know now as an American heartland, is going to be American. There will be no place in there for Indian people.

Stephen Warren, historian: I think Tecumseh is, in a sense, saved by his death. He's saved for immortality through death on the battlefield.

John Sugden, biographer: One of the great things in icons is to bow out at the right time, and one of the things Tecumseh does is he never lets you down. He was there, articulating his position -- uncompromisingly pro-Native American position. He never signs the treaties. He never reneges on those basic as principles of the sacrosanct aboriginal holding of this territory. He bows out at the peak of this great movement he is leading. He's there, right at the end, whatever the odds are, fighting for it into the dying moments.

Colin Calloway, historian: I think one of the things that is so important about Tecumseh is that he is person who by his vision and by his personality and the way he conducts himself gives us glimpses of humanity at its best. That in the most difficult of situations -- in the most hopeless of situations, perhaps -- people can have the courage to stand up and fight for what they believe in. Courage in the face of adversity; Tecumseh personifies it.

Kevin Williams, Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma: Hope -- hope and freedom. That's what I thought he stood for. And his vision that he had, the way he looked into the future and tried to stop progress for the red people.

Sherman Tiger, Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma: For some people, they may call him a troublemaker. And I think that's because, in the end, he lost. Had he won, he'd have been, you know, a hero. But I think, to a degree, he still has to be recognized as a hero, for what he attempted to do. If he had a little more help, maybe he would have got a little farther down the line. If the British would have backed him up, like they were supposed to have, maybe the United States is only half as big as it is today.