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## Oregon Treaties Primary Source

### Cholcutah (Tyee George) and Tecumtum (Tyee John)

*Cholcutah (Takelma) and Tecumcum (Shasta) were two of the important headmen leading their people through the period of treaty-making, the Rogue River Wars, and removal. Although the legacies of Indigenous leaders of this time may be well remembered in their own communities, it is rare to find Indigenous leaders quoted in their own words. These speeches were given in 1857, at a meeting with a special inspector sent to Siletz to investigate the severe problems on reservations throughout the region. Notice how Cholcutah and Tecumtum describe the treating-making process from their perspective.*

**John [Tecumtum]:** It is well that you should understand what little I have to say. I never saw you before, but expect you came here for a good purpose. It is good in the President to send to know what our hearts are. For my own part my heart is sick; many of my people have died since they came here; many are still dying. There will soon be none left of us. Here the mountains are covered with great forests. It is hard to get through them. We have no game; we are sick at heart; we are sad when we look at the graves of our families.

A long time ago we made a treaty with Palmer. There was a piece of land at Table Rock that was ours. He said it should remain ours, but that for the sake of peace, as the white settlers were bad, we should leave it for a while. When we signed the paper that was our understanding; we now want to go back to that country.

I am glad I can now send my talk to the President. During the war my heart was bad. Last winter when the rain came, and we were all starving, it was still bad. Now it is good. I will consent to live here one year more; after that I must go home. My people are dying off. I am unable to go to war, but I want to go home to my country.

**George [Cholcutah]:** I also want to tell you what my heart is. What the white chiefs have said to me. I have not forgotten. When Palmer was buying our lands, we sold him all our country except two small tracts, one on Evans' Creek and one on Table Rock. That portion was reserved for our own use. We did not sell it, and such was the understanding when we signed the treaty. I would ask, am I and my people the only ones who have fought against the whites that we should be removed so far from our native country. It is not so great a hardship to those who have always lived near here. But to us it is a great evil. If we could be even on the borders of our native land, where we could sometimes see it, we would be satisfied. I have kept silent until now. The time has come when I can talk out. I want the President to know how we feel about it. I am carried further away from my country than anybody else. My heart is not bad; it is sick. Palmer told us, when he bought our country, we could live at Table rock and Evans'

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Creek for five years. Then we would have to come to the reservation. I told Palmer we would never consent to sell him those lands; we wanted them to live upon; we could always fish and hunt there; we only wanted the mountains, which were of no use to the whites.

I am told the President is our Great Father. Why, then, should he compel us to suffer here? Does he not know it is against our will? If he cannot fulfill the promises made to us through his agents why does he not let us go back to our homes. Does he like to see his children unhappy? We are told that if we go back the white people will kill us all—that their hearts are bad towards us. But the President is powerful. Let him send a paper to the whites, and tell them not to trouble us; if he is powerful they will obey him. We are sad now; we pine for our native country. Let us go back to our homes, and our hearts will be bright again like the sun.

Before I end my talk, I would ask what has become of our guns. Palmer took them from us on pretense that he would return them as soon as we reached the reservation. We have never seen them since. Has he stolen them?

**John [Tecumtum]:** I have a word more to say, and then I am done. My heart is for peace. When there was war, we fought like brave men. But there were many of us then; now there are few. I saw, after we had fought for our country, that it was no use—that we could not stand it long. I was the first to make peace. My people were dwindling away before the white man. All the tribes that were united with us were fighting in different parts of the country; but they were badly provided with arms. The whites were numerous and rich. They had muskets and ammunition. My son-in-law went to the Dalles to live with the Yakimas and Klickitats. I made peace and sent word to him, and to all the hostile tribes, to quit fighting. I told him to tell them I had made peace, and it was no use to fight any more. For this I think we deserve well of the President. He ought to let us go home, and not compel us to remain here, where we are all dying.