

Ten-squat-a-way or Tenskwatawa, the Shawnee Prophet

Tenskwatawa, whose name means "open door," was a Shawnee Indian from present-day Ohio who fiercely opposed Indian removal. Tenskwatawa was a revered religious figure among the Shawnee, and he advocated a return to Indian customs and preached that performing certain sacred rituals would make the Shawnee impervious to the white man's bullets. He also denounced drunkenness and the drinking of whiskey. He worked to enlist support for his brother Tecumseh's confederacy that would unite Indian tribes to fight against the U. S. government and drive white settlers out of the Old Northwest (present-day Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio). Tecumseh's uprising failed, and Tenskwatawa and other Shawnees were eventually removed to Indian Territory in present-day Kansas. This portrait by famed artist George Catlin was painted during one of Catlin's visits to Kansas in 1831. The portrait shows Tenskwatawa holding a medicine stick and a sacred string of beans; it also shows where he was accidentally blinded by an arrow. The original painting is housed in the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History.

Creator: Catlin, George, 1796-1872

Date: 1831

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