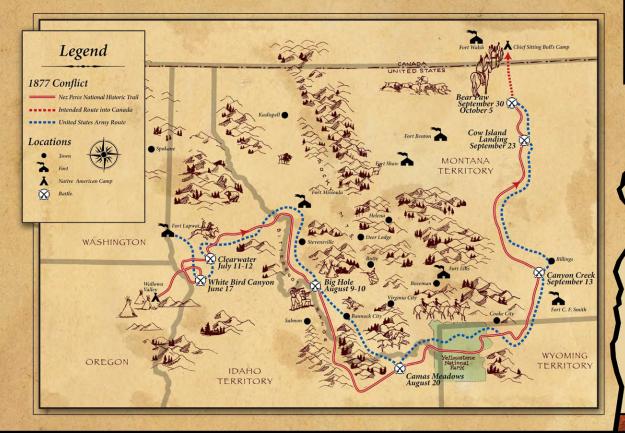
The Nez Perce Conflict of 1877

For thousands of years the fertile Wallowa Valley was home to many Nimiipuu, or Nez Perce people. A treaty in 1855 affirmed Nez Perce ownership of this homeland. Competition for land, grazing and hunting opportunities, and the discovery of gold in 1860 resulted in a renegotiation of the 1855 treaty. The new treaty of 1863 reduced the reservation to 10% of the original homeland. Ultimately, General O. Howard ordered the peaceful Nez Perce bands, no longer protected by treaty rights, to move to the reservation near Lapwai, Idaho, in May of 1877.





The Wallowa band sadly gathered their belongings, livestock and horses, and headed for the reservation. They crossed the Snake River, swollen with spring runoff, and gathered at Camas Prairie near Grangeville, Idaho. Agitated by past events, a few young Nez Perce men attacked several white settlers. In the aftermath of their attacks, there was no option but to flee.

In June 1877, nearly 800 men, women, and children with over 2000 horses began the flight that took them over the Bitterroots, through the Rockies, and onto the high plains of Montana. They survived sweltering heat,

dangerous mountain passes, and attacks by five different US Army Regiments. The Nez Perce families were within 40 miles of freedom at the Canadian border before being surrounded by U.S. Army soldiers just as the winter snows began to fall.

For five days, the Nez Perce endured cannon fire, freezing temperatures, and starvation. When it became obvious the people could survive no longer, Joseph negotiated a settlement that would allow the people to return to Idaho. Unwilling to trust Colonel Miles, Chief Whitebird led his people on a nighttime escape to Canada. Chief Joseph stayed with the remaining people. On October 5, 1877, Chief Joseph walked across the wintry plain and surrendered to Colonel Nelson A. Miles.

"From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever."

Chief Joseph (Hein-mot Too-ya-la-kekt)







This site is a certified component of the Nez Perce (Nee-Me, Poo) National historic Trail, which Congress authorized to commemorate the 1877 Nez Perce War and Flight. The multi-state Trail is administered by the USDA Forest Service in cooperation with public land agencies and other partners. Please respect and preserve this special place, that others may also experience it.

To learn more go to www.fs.fed.us/npnht http://www.fs.fed.us/npnht