

For all of his warnings, Dark Cloud could do little to raise the consciousness of many of those present at the meeting. He was aware of the fact that the runaway faction of the tribe looked down on those who stood for peace. Part of him agreed with them. He knew there were many present who stood for neither peace nor war, but, rather, wished to just go along with the way things were, and didn't care about the events that were certain to come.

For the most part, the Sioux, of the reservation, did not feel greatly threatened by the proposals for the new railroad on their hunting grounds. It was the bane of the renegade Sioux who still roamed that part of the country.

In his talks, with the leaders, Dark Cloud was unsuccessful in rousing their concern.

For an already jaded Soaring Heart, there was little surprise in his failed attempts. The lack of success just fueled his appetite for war even more. Late in the second day of council, he approached Running Water's tepee, to confer with him.

"Their ears have fallen deaf." He said to his friend. "They will be swept up by the coming tide, and things will never be the same."

"I know." Running Water replied. The two were fed up by now with the indecisiveness of their fellow tribesmen. "Let's roll!" Running Water suggested. And they left the tent to listen in on the rest of the discussion.

As they approached the large circle of debaters, faces turned in their direction, expecting their dissenting opinions. But the two felt it was not their place, as young warriors, to debate their elders. The presence of such leaders as American Horse calmed many frazzled nerves, but their aura was foreign to the young warriors.

Spotting fellow warriors, the two friends held discussions of their own, and the subject matter was not surprising. "Cowards!" One tall brave exclaimed. His name was War Hawk and he usually led the rebellious youths on such occasions. "We are preparing to join Crazy Horse and his followers." He explained to Running Water and Soaring Heart, who were gladdened by this news.

Amid their clamoring, Soaring Heart glanced up to see his father observing them. Dark Cloud was in a rather precarious position. He understood the youth's anger, but did not support their distancing themselves from the tribe. In my younger days I probably would be doing the same thing. He thought to himself.

On July 2, 1874, General Custer set out, on a reconnaissance mission, ordered by General Sheridan, in the Black Hills. The goal was to seek out the best spot for a new fort. The move was a blatant violation of the Fort Laramie treaty, the Black Hills being in the Great Sioux Reservation. With him, Custer took along several scientists and geologists. They were, also, looking for gold.

Unbeknownst to the Sioux, the expedition marched through the hills for two months and, indeed, found gold. It wasn't in large quantities, however, so Custer proceeded to tell large tales of the size of their find. By the time the expedition reached Fort Abraham Lincoln, prospectors had already entered the hills.

When the news of the prospectors reached Sherman, he stated that any man entering the Indian Reservation would be executed at gunpoint. He ordered the arrest of all violators, as well. The orders were not taken seriously by many officers. By mid-1875, hundreds of prospectors were in the Black Hills.

The Indian Bureau, now, sought to "rectify" the situation by bringing the Indian leaders to Washington, with the hopes of cajoling them into selling the land. When this failed, they sent them back home with the promise that they would return to the matter soon. A geological party was sent to

verify Custer's claims, and their subsequent report was affirmative.

A Commission was dispatched to the Red Cloud Agency, in September, to discuss changing the Treaty of Fort Laramie, or buy the Black Hills. The government no longer dealt in treaties, recognizing their insignificance, and now used "agreements." The party was not welcomed warmly.

A Sioux Indian named Little Big Man roused those present, and they surrounded the Commissioners. The cavalry, present, drew arms. The threat of war was averted, however, by Chief Spotted Tail who bluffed the Sioux war party by calling for a fight, then and there.

The Commissioners were further shaken by Red Cloud's shocking demand of \$6,000,000, but neither party budged on the price. The Commissioners then left the bargaining table with no clear end in sight. "The Commission were the gladdest people to get away from that part of the country that had ever visited there. They didn't recover their courage until they got the Missouri River between them." -General George Crook.

The result of the Sioux's stubbornness was a very negative report from the Commissioners. In it they drove home the point that the Sioux had failed to "civilize" themselves on their own, and they needed to be taught a tough lesson. By November, the government issued a decree that **all** Indians must report to their agencies on the reservation. This was another blatant violation of the treaty, as the Indians on the unceded, hunting grounds would have to come in, as well.

The agents did not spread the word to all of their officials, and the bands did not have enough time to report, as the deadline was January 31. It is doubtful that Crazy Horse, and his followers, received word, as well. By that time, it was winter on the plains, and the weather was brutal for traveling. By the time the deadline was reached, only one band had come in. The matter was given to the Army, and General Sheridan set about making plans to annihilate the Indians on the unceded territory now assumed to be hostile.

His strategy was much the same as before, on the Southern Plains. Three columns were to converge on the junction of the Yellowstone and Bighorn River. One from the east, Fort Lincoln, one from the south, The North Platte River, and one from the west, Fort Ellis, Montana Territory.

The Council had not been over long, when news of the unfolding events reached Running Water's camp. War Hawk had not been successful in getting the two friends, and several others, to follow him out of the reservation completely. Running Water and Soaring Heart were at the ready, however, and the news of the events at the negotiation, and the subsequent deadline given to the nontreaty tribes, was enough to send them on their way.

A steamed Soaring Heart did not have to say anything to his friend. The minute they received the information, they met at his tent.

"I know." Running Water said, with a look on his face that let his friend know he meant business.

As the two loaded their horses down, Falling Leaves stood at the opening of her tent, not saying a word. Once again they go off. She thought to herself. She knew not whether they were coming back. She would have to look to the Great Spirit for comfort and pray for their safe return.

Dark Cloud watched them, as well. He too was at a loss for words, and torn. Part of him wished he could go with them, the other part thought he was too old. However, he believed he was making the best statement by staying behind.

Running Water and Soaring Heart were not alone. There was an entire group of young warriors that wanted to leave the confines of the reservation, and join their brothers on the unceded territory. They massed together near the end of the village, and called for anyone else to join. There were no takers, however, so they rode off to the west.

Their journey would cover a month and a half's time, but their thoughts were not on the days or hours just the minutes. Before leaving, several of them had visited the Shaman. He blessed them with the spirit of invulnerability.

“We shall destroy our enemy!” One warrior shouted out, as they rode. His declaration met with approval from his friends, as they let out a large whoop. They **were** invincible!

During their journey, they anticipated running into prospectors, on their way to the hills. They couldn't wait to get their chance to “enforce” the treaty, themselves. The receding winter weather left a dew covered grass that engulfed the rolling hills that made up the region they now crossed. The scenery was magnificent, as spring painted a new picture on the earth's canvass.

After a week-and-a-half's ride, they encountered a devastating scene, as the remnants of a prospecting wagon train were strewn across the prairie floor, burnt and ravaged.

“War Hawk must have gotten to 'em.” Running Water said, recognizing the handiwork of fellow Sioux warriors.

“If only we had been sooner.” His friend responded.

“We'll have our chance.” He answered back. “We'll have our chance.”

For the adventurers, in part, their chance did come. Closer now to the Black Hills they came across the path of a group of prospectors who believed their journey was near its end. In a way, they were right. The arrows of the amped warriors cut through the bodies of the wagons' drivers. Their bullets tore through the wagons' covers. All who remained alive were killed, as well. Swinging with his tomahawk, Running Water relished his opportunity to “enforce” the law of the land. Scalps were taken and sown on to the necklaces of the braves. When they entered the renegade camp, in the Powder River country, they would look like heroes, they all thought.

As they circled the Black Hills, Running Water looked off in their direction. The clouds seemed to hang over them like a sign from the Great Spirit. **The Great Mystery**, Wakan Tanka, was aware of their struggle, he thought to himself.

In Sioux spirituality Inyan is the creator. He has no beginning and existed only with Hanhepi, the Darkness. His spirit is called Wakan Tanka. From himself, he created three other spirits; Maka, the Earth, Skan, the Great Spirit, who when joined with the other two into one shape spoke saying, “I am the source of energy, I am Skan.” He is the highest sacred being, because he is all spirit. The third spirit was Wi, the sun, who was created by Skan for Maka, who was unsatisfied with her condition, when Hanhepi was split in half, by Skan, to make light, after he made her. All of them together were called Wakan Tanka. It is similar to the Christian belief in the trinity, in which God is made up of several beings.