

Chief Joseph

the dam was named after a leader of a band of nez perce indians. a man of peace, chief joseph was also a skilled military strategist and statesman. after a series of battles with the u.s. army, following encroachment of nez perce land by settlers, his band was overpowered in 1877 near bear paw, montana. after several relocations, chief joseph spent his last years in exile on the colville indian reservation, which borders the north shore of rufus woods lake. he is buried on the reservation near here.



a bronze medallion of chief joseph, on display at the visitor center, was sculpted in 1889 by new york sculptor olin warner. it was donated by erskine wood whose father, Lt. charles erskine scott wood, was present at chief joseph's surrender on october 5, 1877 in montana. it was Lt. wood who recorded the chief's famous surrender oration:

"tell general howard i know his heart. what he told me before, i have in my heart. i am tired of fighting. our chiefs are all killed. looking glass is dead. too-hul-hul-soot is dead. the old men are all dead. it is the young men who now say 'yes' or 'no.' he who led the young men in battle is dead. my little daughter has run away upon the prairie and i do not know where to find her. perhaps i shall find her, too, among the dead. it is cold and we have no fire, no blankets. the children are crying for food and we have none to give. my children - some of them - have run away to the hills and have no blankets, no food. no one knows where they are; perhaps freezing to death. i want to have time to look for my people and see how many of them i can find. hear me, my chiefs; my heart is sick and sad; from where the sun now stands joseph will fight no more forever."

to learn more about chief joseph the following links are helpful:
[chief joseph](#) from "[the west](#)", a five-year 8 part documentary done for pbs.

Point of Contact: Natural
Resource Manager

Phone:
509-686-2225

Email:
LAURA.M.BEAUREGARD@USACE.ARMY.MIL