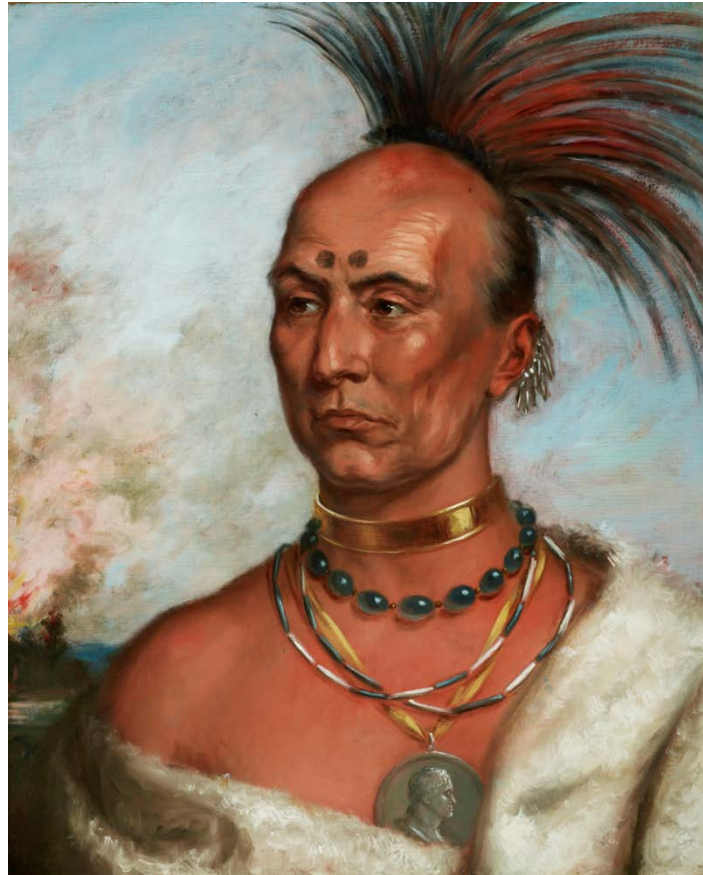


# AMERICAN MUSEUM OF WESTERN ART

THE ANSCHUTZ COLLECTION



Charles Bird King  
*Blakchawk Makataimehikiakiah*  
1833

## Notice details in the painting to identify the individual:

- Clothing (robe over shoulders, jewelry, face paint which signifies his clan membership, and feather headdress).
- Indian Peace Medal worn around his neck
- Scene (Battle blazing along horizon line, over right shoulder)
- Expression on his face (wary determination, set jawline, slightly downturned lips)

## Background Information:

- Soon after the Louisiana Purchase, Blackhawk, among others, signed over their land in present-day Illinois, Wisconsin and Missouri.
- By 1831, settlers had flooded the area and the Indians were forced to move west of the Mississippi into lands much smaller than their original holdings.

- Black Hawk led a contingent of tribesmen back to Illinois in 1832, attempting to reclaim the land and even partnering with neighboring tribes for support.
- This sparked the Black Hawk War, culminating in a disorderly retreat back to whence they came.
- He was taken captive by US troops, jailed at Jefferson Barracks, where another artist, George Catlin, encountered him and his crew, and was struck by, “the gigantic and symmetrical figures of most of these warriors, who seemed, as they reclined in native ease and gracefulness... rather like statues from some master hand than like beings of a race whom we had heard characterized as degenerate and debased. They were clad in leggings and moccasins of buckskin, and wore blankets, which were thrown around them in the manner of the Roman toga, so as to leave their right arm bare.”  
([https://2.americanart.si.edu/exhibitions/online/catlinclassroom/catlin\\_browsesec.cfm?ID=3](https://2.americanart.si.edu/exhibitions/online/catlinclassroom/catlin_browsesec.cfm?ID=3))
- This is how King has depicted the chief, with the battle blazing over his right shoulder, wearing a medal of honor, awarded to him by President Jackson.
- Blackhawk and 8 other Sauk leaders were taken east as ordered by then-President Andrew Jackson. They traveled by steamboat, carriage, and railroad, met with large crowds wherever they went. Once they arrived in D.C., they met with Jackson and were then delivered to prison in Norfolk, Virginia. They were held a few weeks at the prison, where they posed for portraits like this one.
- King painted more than 143 paintings of Native Americans from 1822-1842.  
(<https://americanart.si.edu/artist/charles-bird-king-2628>)
- Thomas McKenney, with the US Bureau of Indian Affairs, initiated the government’s commissioning of the portraits. He believed (like many others during this time period) that Indians were nearing extinction, and he thought it was important to preserve their history and culture. (<https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/news/the-indian-portrait-gallery-of-thomas-l-mckenney/>)

**Quotes/Additional Primary Sources:**

“I told the interpreter what I wanted to say to these people, viz: "Not to settle on our lands, nor trouble our fences, that there was plenty of land in the country for them to settle upon, and that they must leave our village, as we were coming back to it in the spring." The interpreter wrote me a paper, I went back to the village and showed it to the intruders, but could not understand their reply. I presumed, however, that they would remove as I expected them to. I returned to Rock Island...and had a long conversation with the trader. He advised me to give up...I told him that I would not...I traveled three days farther ...to see the Prophet, believing that he as a man of great knowledge. When we met, I explained to him everything as it was. He at once agreed that I was right, and advised me never to give up our village, for the whites to plow up the bones of our people. He said, that if we remained at our village, the whites would not trouble us, and advised me to get Keokuk, and the party that consented to go with him to the Iowa in the spring, to return and remain at our village.”

Blackhawk, dictated to US Interpreter Antoine LeClair, 1833  
(<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/7097/7097-h/7097-h.htm>)

“My reason teaches me that land cannot be sold. The Great Spirit gave it to his children to live upon and cultivate as far as necessary for their subsistence, and so long as they occupy and cultivate it they have the right to the soil, but if they voluntarily leave it, then any other people have a right to settle on it. Nothing can be sold but such things as can be carried away.”

Blackhawk, dictated to US Interpreter Antoine LeClair, 1833  
(<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/7097/7097-h/7097-h.htm>)

“The war chief arrived and convened a council at the agency...He then rose and made a speech. He said: ‘The president is very sorry to be put to the trouble and expense of sending so large a body of soldiers here to remove you from the lands you have long since ceded to the United States. Your Great Father has already warned you repeatedly, through your agent, to leave the country, and he is very sorry to find that you have disobeyed his orders. Your Great Father wishes you well, and asks nothing from you but what is reasonable and right. I hope you will consult your own interests, and leave the country you are occupying, and go to the other side of the Mississippi.’

I replied: ‘We have never sold our country. We never received any annuities from our American father, and we are determined to hold on to our village...’

The war chief said:

‘I came here neither to beg nor hire you to leave your village. My business is to remove you, peaceably if I can, forcibly if I must! I will now give you two days in which to remove, and if you do not cross the Mississippi by that time, I will adopt measures to force you away.’

I told him that I never would consent to leave my village and was determined not to leave it.”

Blackhawk and General Gaines, as Blackhawk dictated to Antoine Le Clair, 1833

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/7097/7097-h/7097-h.htm>