

## SAVED BY AN INDIAN WOMAN

Lewis and Clark's famous expedition to the Pacific Northwest in 1804 almost came to an untimely and deadly end.

Half-starved and almost frozen, the men staggered out of Idaho's Bitterroot Mountains into the camp of the Nez Perce Indians, who had never before seen white men.

A chief named Twisted Hair had to decide what to do with the weak but wealthy strangers suddenly in their midst.

According to the tribe's oral tradition, some of the Nez Perce proposed killing the white men and confiscating their boxes of manufactured goods and weapons. The expedition's rifles and ammunition would have instantly made the Nez Perce the region's richest and most powerful tribe.

But an Indian woman came to the aid of the white men. As a young girl, she had been captured by an enemy tribe on the plains, who in turn sold her to another tribe. Eventually, she was befriended and treated kindly by white people in Canada before escaping and making her way back to her own people.



They called her Watkuweis – meaning Returned from a Faraway Country – and for years she told them stories about the fair-skinned people who lived toward the rising sun. She was aged and dying by the time the explorers arrived.

When she learned about plans to destroy the expedition, this woman intervened.

“These are the people who helped me,” she said. “Do them no hurt.”

What she had experienced with white people convinced the Nez Perce to offer friendship to the explorers. They provided camas root cakes and other food, helped them build canoes for their continued westward journey, and mapped out the water route the expedition would follow.

A little kindness can have amazing and unexpected results.

(more)

Every day, in the work we are called to do in health care, we have the opportunity to positively, and kindly, impact the lives of those entrusted to us.

And while their lives are blessed by our actions, we find fulfillment and sense of purpose arising from those deeds of selflessness.

*A man who is kind benefits himself, but a cruel man hurts himself (Proverbs 11:17 ESV).*

– Beecher Hunter