

# Little Elk, 1829

See a lesson plan related to this material on the [Wisconsin Historical Society website](#).



WISCONSIN  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

## Speech – “Speech by Little Elk”

Primary Source Speech: Atwater, Caleb. "Speech by Little Elk." In Remarks made on a tour to Prairie du Chien, thence to Washington City, in 1829. Columbus: Jenkins, Grover, 1831. Speech by Little Elk, Ho-Chunk Nation

...The first white man we knew, was a Frenchman--he lived among us, as we did, he painted himself, he smoked his pipe with us, sung and danced with us, and married one of our squaws, but he wanted to buy no land of us!

The "Red coat" came next, he gave us fine coats, knives and guns and traps, blankets and jewels; he seated our chiefs and warriors at his table, with himself; fixed epaulets on their shoulders, put commissions in their pockets, and suspended medals on their breasts, but never asked us to sell our country to him!

Next came the "Blue coat," and no sooner had he seen a small portion of our country, than he wished to see a map of THE WHOLE of it; and, having seen it, he wished us to sell it ALL to him. Gov. Cass, last year, at Green Bay, urged us to sell ALL our country to him, and now, you fathers, repeat the request.

Why do you wish to add our small country to yours, already so large?

When I went to Washington, to see our great father I saw great houses all along the road, and Washington and Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York are great and splendid cities. So large and beautiful was the President's house, the carpets, the tables, the mirrors, the chairs, and every article in it, were so beautiful, that when I entered it, I thought I was in heaven, and the old man there, I thought was the Great Spirit; until he had shaken us by the hand, and kissed our squaws, I found him to be like yourselves, nothing but a man!

You ask us to sell all our country, and wander off into the boundless regions of the West. We do not own that country, and the deer, the elk, the beaver, the buffalo and the otter now there, belong not to us, and we have no right to kill them.

Our wives and our children now seated behind us, are dear to us, and so is our country, where rest in peace the bones of our ancestors. Fathers! pity a people, few in number, who are poor and helpless.

Do you want our country? your's is larger than our's. Do you want our wigwams? you live in palaces. Do you want our horses? your's are larger and better than our's. Do you want our women? your's now sitting behind you, (pointing to Mrs. Rolette and her beautiful daughters, and the ladies belonging to the officers of the Garrison,) are handsomer and dressed better than our's. Look at them, yonder! Why, Fathers, what can be your motive?

See more classroom materials and lesson plans on the [Wisconsin Historical Society website](#).