

THE EFFECTS ON THE LAKOTA SIOUX: THE MASSACRE OF WOUNDED KNEE
CREEK

Student's Name

Course

Date

Abstract

Several things could have happened to the Lakota Sioux after the massacre at Wounded Knee Creek, but the mental and physical effects lingered as a result of that cold day in December. The tragic morning of December 29, 1890 is one of the many crimes that were committed against the Native Americans during that period. Beginning with the mind-set of the Lakota before this atrocity occurred; the Lakota had been dwindling down. From the Battle of the Greasy Grass (Little Bighorn) in 1876, the battle that united the Cheyenne and Lakota under the Great Chief Sitting Bull, the rounding up of tribes onto reservations, Crazy Horse's death in 1877, to Sitting Bull's death just two weeks before the massacre, the Lakota had endured endless physical and mental abuse. The Massacre at Wounded Knee Creek was the last major conflict between the Lakota and the United States.

The Effects on the Lakota Sioux: The Massacre of Wounded Knee Creek

In order to understand the effects of Wounded Knee Creek, the history leading up to the Massacre must be examined. The explanation of why this confrontation, along with others, happened and measures that could have prevented such bloodshed. The Massacre at Wounded Knee Creek occurred in December of 1890, but the tension between the U.S. Army and the Sioux Nations started long before. As the list of battles is long, history will always remember the major battles with the most casualties.

The United States government entered into a treaty with the Lakota Sioux at Fort Laramie in 1868, establishing that the Black Hills, or *Paha Sapa*, belonged to the Sioux Nation and were considered a sacred land to the Lakota. The discovery of gold in the Black Hills incited the influx of miners from all over the country, beginning in 1874, after the finding of gold was made public. It prompted the United States Federal government to step in and violate the treaty set forth just seven years earlier. To this day, the Lakota have not accepted the illegal repossession of their sacred lands, and continues the fight to gain back what rightfully belongs to their nation.

June of 1876 saw the unity of the Lakota and the Cheyenne, formed by Sitting Bull, rise against the 7th Calvary led by General George Armstrong Custer. After attacking an Indian camp on the Little Bighorn River, and underestimating the size of the Native forces, General Custer and his men found themselves to be surrounded and severely outnumbered. His company was annihilated that day, boosting for a short time, the moral of the involved Native tribes. It would be the last battle they would win, as the battles that followed resulted in the slow decline of Lakota and Cheyenne welfare and morale. In January of 1877, Crazy Horse's band of warriors participated in the Battle of Wolf Mountain, and after weather conditions forced him to

withdraw, they later surrendered at Camp Robinson on May 5, 1877.¹ Sitting Bull's final defeat was in the Battle of Cedar Creek on October 21st 1876, when he withdrew and fled to Canada, eventually surrendering on July 19th 1881.²

The reasons for the misunderstandings, stand-offs, fear, and animosity can be widely speculated; but a reason for the Massacre at Wounded Knee can be attributed to the language barrier and tension between the United States Army and the Lakota.³ The United States employed translators, but did not always have meaning and intentions conveyed correctly. The English language can be spoken many different ways, and each word might not mean the same thing if said with certain emphasis on different syllables.

¹ William Coleman, *Voices of Wounded Knee* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 12

² Jonathan Ellerby, "Spirituality, holism and healing among the Lakota Sioux, towards an understanding of Indigenous medicine," *University of Manitoba Libraries*. (2000). <http://hdl.handle.net/1993/2382>

³ Renee Flood, *Lost Bird of Wounded Knee: Spirit of the Lakota* (New York. NY: Da Capo Press, 1998), 28.

Bibliography

- Beasley, Conger. *We Are People In This World: The Lakota Sioux And The Massacre At Wounded Knee*. Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 1995.
- Coleman, William. *Voices of Wounded Knee*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2000.
- Ellerby, Jonathan. "Spirituality, holism and healing among the Lakota Sioux, towards an understanding of Indigenous medicine." *University of Manitoba Libraries*. (2000).
<http://hdl.handle.net/1993/2382>
- Fenelon, James. *Culturicide, Resistance, and Survival of the Lakota ("Sioux Nation")*. Philadelphia, PA: Taylor & Francis, 1998.
- Flood, Renee. *Lost Bird of Wounded Knee: Spirit of the Lakota*. New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1998.