



Handout 4 - "Documents 5-7: Newspaper Stories Published in the Days Before and After The Massacre at Wounded Knee / Survivor's Testimony"

One of the most actively suppressed expressions of Native American culture during the late 19th and early 20th centuries was music. The various forms of singing, drumming, and dancing associated with different tribes were considered "savage" by many of the white men in powerful positions in the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Traditional musical practices were banned, and non-compliance was often used as a reason to withhold land and rations to Native Americans as part of various treaties and acts of Congress bearing language regarding "habits of civilized life."

The "Ghost Dance" was not an "ancient" tradition. Rather, it emerged during the late 19th century as part of a pan-tribal religious movement. Many of the participants believed that the dance would unite Native Americans and drive out colonists. Some even believed it would make them impervious to bullets.



On December 28, 1890, two bands of Lakota--known to be peaceful, even by local military officers--were surrounded by the U.S. 7th Cavalry. The 7th Cavalry was tasked with disarming all members of the Lakota, who were rumored to have embraced the Ghost Dance. They marched the Lakota five miles and then ordered them to set up camp. They encircled the camp and set up four Hotchkiss "mountain guns," capable of firing two-pound rounds up to 3500 yards. The following morning a small skirmish, often reported to have begun when an elder Lakota began dancing, set off a melee during which 200-300 Native Americans, mostly women and children, and twenty-five U.S. troops were killed. Many of the U.S. troops are thought to have died from "friendly" Hotchkiss fire. Several of the soldiers involved in what was first called "The Battle at Wounded Knee," but has since been deemed a "Massacre," were awarded Medals of Honor which still stand.

The newspaper excerpts and testimony below, published the month before and a few days after The Massacre at Wounded Knee, show white perspectives and their consequences.



Document 5 - Daily Tobacco Leaf-Chronicle, November 22, 1890.

Indians Continue to Indulge in the Ghost Dance.

Bloodshed the Only Thing That Will Stop Them.

Agent Boyer Says the Hostiles Have Plenty of Ammunition and Will Use It.

THE GHOST DANCE Still Goes On

Omaha, Nov. 22. An Indian at Wounded Knee gives the information which has caused the agents to put on a more serious look. Coming in Thursday afternoon he reported that the Hostiles at Wounded Knee were still carrying on their dances and that they had heard of the arrival of the military, but what is of much more importance to the agents is they have strapped on their guns and are dancing fully armed. They declare they will meet the soldiers and will not hesitate to go into battle with them. Reports relative to the Indians declaring their willingness to fight for their religious craze have come in frequently, but up to this point are simply rumors. This information comes direct, however, from a source which Agent Boyer pronounces trustworthy ...

Said Mr. Boyer ... "It is not worth while to deny further that the trouble is imminent. Everyone of these hostiles is heavily loaded with ammunition and they will use it, I have been among them before ... Bloodshed is all that will stop them now."

[Interviewer] "That applies to stopping the dances"?

"Yes sir, they must, be stopped, and soon."

Agent Boyer computes the actual number of able-bodied men who are prepared to fight who are thoroughly armed at 600. The squaws, who are by no means a trivial factor in the fight, of course stretch that number away out.



RUMBLE
The Indians Who Rocked the World



Document 6 - Bismarck Tribune Weekly, Jan 2, 1891

A Fight With Hostiles.

GENERAL MILES TO COLONEL CORBIN.

CHICAGO, Dec. 29.

Colonel Forsythe reports that while disarming Big Foot's band a fight occurred ... This again complicates the surrender of all the Indians, which would have taken place in a short time had this not occurred. Forsythe had two battalions and Hotchkiss guns.

CONFLICT AT LAST.

While Disarming Big Foot's Band of Hostiles, a Disastrous Fight Occurs.

Captain Wallace of the Seventh Cavalry Killed, and Lieutenant Garlington Wounded.

Five Other Soldiers Killed and Fifteen Wounded in the Conflict.

Pine Ridge Greatly Excited, but Colonel Forsythe Believes the Worst is over.

Members of the Seventh Cavalry Again Show Themselves to be Heroes.

Captain Wallace Met His Death by a Blow on the Head by a War Club.

General Brooke reports: "The Indians are being hunted up in all directions. None are known to have gotten their ponies."

Troops were massed around the village and Hotchkiss guns [were] overlooking the camp not fifty yards away. Colonel Forsythe ordered all the Indians to come forward and away from their tents. They came and sat in a half circle until counted. The dismounted troops were then thrown around them ... The order was then given to twenty Indians to go and get their arms. Upon returning it was seen that only two guns were had and detachments at once began to search the village, resulting in thirty-eight guns being found ... All of a sudden they threw their hands to the ground and began firing rapidly at the troops, not twenty feet away. The troops were at a disadvantage, fearing the shooting of their own comrades. Indian men, women and children then ran to the south ... firing rapidly as they ran. Soon the mounted troops were after then shooting them down on every side. The engagement lasted fully an hour and a half. Just now it is impossible to state the exact number of dead Indians. Many more than fifty, however, were killed outright. The soldiers are shooting Indians down wherever found, no quarter being given by anyone.... It is doubted that before night neither a buck or squaw out of all of Big Footed band will be left to tell the tale of this day's treachery. Members of the Seventh cavalry have once more shown themselves to be heroes in deeds of daring.



Document 7 - From the Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1891, published in James Mooney, *The Ghost-dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890*, 14th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, Part 2 (1896), and PBS.org

WORSE AND WORSE

Sixty Dead Indian Men Were Counted on the Plain Where the Attempt Was Made

To Disarm Big Foot's Band and Where the Fight Began, and on Other

Parts of the Ground There Were 18 More Not Including Those Killed in the Ravines.

General Schofield Says he Thinks Miles Will be Master of the Situation Very Soon.

Besides Captain Wallace, 25 Men of the Seventh Cavalry and an Indian Scout Were Killed.

Forty Men Wounded, Many Severely —About 30 Wounded Indian Men, Women and Children.

When the Soldiers Were Ordered to Search the Tepees 120 Indians Turned Upon Them,

Below is testimony about the events at Wounded Knee from Lakota survivor American Horse.

The men were separated ... from the women, and they were surrounded by the soldiers. Then came next the village of the Indians and that was entirely surrounded by the soldiers also ... then they turned their guns, Hotchkiss guns, etc., upon the women who were in the lodges standing there under a flag of truce, and of course as soon as they were fired upon they fled, the men fleeing in one direction and the women running in two different directions. So that there were three general directions in which they took flight.

There was a woman with an infant in her arms who was killed as she almost touched the flag of truce, and the women and children of course were strewn all along the circular village until they were dispatched. Right near the flag of truce a mother was shot down with her infant; the child not knowing that its mother was dead was still nursing, and that especially was a very sad sight. The women as they were fleeing with their babes were killed together, shot right through, and the women who were very heavy with child were also killed. All the Indians fled in these three directions, and after most all of them had been killed a cry was made that all those who were not killed wounded should come forth and they would be safe. Little boys who were not wounded came out of their places of refuge, and as soon as they came in sight a number of soldiers surrounded them and butchered them there.