



## A Dark Day: The Wounded Knee Massacre

### Class Activity – Reality Check

#### Introduction:

Today's students, with social media, are exposed to news coverage like we have never seen in the past. Many times, the world is aware of someone's death before the immediate family even knows. News programs are saturated with reports of human deaths at home and abroad due to accidents, intentional harm, disease, etc. For example - currently 284,000 deaths have occurred in the United States due to COVID-19, and nearly 1.6 million people have died worldwide. For many students, realistic video games also expose them to death daily.

The following activity is designed to emphasize the horrible reality of death that took place on December 29th, 1890, at the Wounded Knee Massacre, in which 177 people were killed.

#### Materials:

Phone book (1 for every 3 students)

South Dakota Official Highway Map

Possible materials

Plywood / poster board – student would need to bring

Chicken wire/brown paper sack – (maybe complete this part at home)

Staple gun – (maybe complete this part at home)

Glue (white)

Water

Tempera paint

Newspaper or scratch paper

Corn/rocks/beans/beads (other small items)

Grass / small trees / twigs / branches

#### Process:

- The students should view Dakota Pathways #20: A Dark Day. Discuss the events that took place on December 29th, 1890, and the events that led to the tragedy.
- 84 Minneconjou men, 44 women, and 18 children died that day. 31 Calvary soldiers were also killed. A total of 177 people died that horrible day.

# Dakota Pathways



- **Mini-Activity: The Reality of 177**

1. South Dakota Official Highway Maps have a chart listing the population of cities and towns in South Dakota. It is a reality check to look at the populations of the towns in comparison to the number of people killed at Wounded Knee. Over 100 towns have populations less than 177. A South Dakota [map](#) can be viewed online.

2. A phone book also works well. Have the students look up their town in the phone book. Then look through all the listings and imagine that 177 of them have been removed.

3. This activity also works great for houses or trees close to your school. Take a walk with your students and count houses or trees. Keep walking until you have counted 177. Then turn around and imagine all the trees or houses you have counted are gone. Many examples like these can be used to reinforce the importance of the number 177.

- The students will construct a three-dimensional topographical model of the Wounded Knee Massacre site. The model should be constructed on a piece of plywood. The contours of the valley surrounding Wounded Knee Creek can be constructed using chicken wire or crumpled pieces of paper. The chicken wire should be secured using a staple gun. I suggest having the parents help with this step at home. Crumpled pieces of paper can also be glued or stapled to the board to produce the desired contours.
  - Tear newspaper into strips
  - Mix glue and water ( $\frac{1}{4}$  glue with  $\frac{3}{4}$  water)
  - Apply strips over constructed contours – dry time
  - Complete model (paint / grass / trees / small branches / etc.) -welcome creativity
- The following is the most important step. Each of the 177 deaths that occurred at the Wounded Knee Massacre site that day must be represented. Different types of beans, colored rice, corn, etc. should be selected by the students to represent each group below. The exact number of each must be glued on the model. A key should be made in the corner which shows the following information.

<b><u>Item (Glue to Key)</u></b>	<b><u>Group</u></b>	<b><u>Number of Deaths</u></b>
Yellow	Native Men	84
Pink	Native Women	44
Green	Native Children	18
Blue	Calvary Soldiers	31

# Dakota Pathways



- This is an educational activity that your class will never forget! Having to glue the 177 separate items onto the model will open the eyes of your students and reinforce the fact that the Massacre was a tragedy in history that should never be forgotten.
- Wounded Knee Massacre Site Model ([Photo Album](#)) - The photographed model was constructed using a 2' X 2' X 1" piece of plywood. Brown grocery bags (instead of chicken wire) were stapled to the wood to produce the contours. Strips of newspaper were attached to the brown grocery bags using the glue mixture indicated above. The model was painted, and colored pieces of paper were attached.

