

Activity

Students study past efforts to commemorate the Wounded Knee Massacre and work together to draft a letter to current elected officials.

Grades

9-12

Content Areas

Social Studies

English Language Arts

Skills

- Persuasive writing
- Researching historical events
- Planning a memorial

Understandings

1. A memorial can be used to protect land, commemorate people, embody perspectives or important ideas, and record history.
2. All members of a community, including young people, have a voice that they can use for change.

Procedure

1. This activity asks students to look closely and think deeply about the nature of memorializing acts of violence and commemorating victims; specifically, what has and hasn't been done in regards to the Wounded Knee Massacre. Students should work through the Proposal section after becoming familiar with the other sections of *Takuwe* and having a good understanding of what happened at the massacre.
2. To introduce students to the activity, ask them to name memorials or monuments they've visited in the past. What did the site honor or commemorate? What was their experience at those sites? How did the structure itself communicate a message? Did the memorials have anything in common? What was different at each place? Who designed and paid for the memorial? Discuss in small groups or as a class what it means to memorialize a tragic event. This article from Teaching History <http://www.teachinghistory.org/best-practices/using-primary-sources/24079> discusses using monuments as "thought objects". Depending on the level of students, it may be helpful to introduce examples about the complicated nature of memorializing histories of violence. For potential examples, go to <http://thgc.texas.gov/blog/post/the-challenges-of-memorializing-genocide>; this article gives examples of memorials around the world and presents brief arguments that have been made in their favor and against them. The link below is to an article by an American architect that is available through the "What So Proudly We Hail" history textbook website. It discusses how a monument can communicate by examining the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC. Go to https://www.whatsoproudlywehail.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Hubbard_A-Meaning-for-Monuments.pdf.
3. Provide students with a copy of the Proposal panel text. As students read, they should create a list of the different efforts that have been made at the site and in government since 1890, from Luther Standing Bear's "reverence for the dead" and Joseph Horn

Cloud's granite monument, to the various congressional resolutions. What has been "successful"? What hasn't?

4. After reading the *Takuwe* text, students may want to research parts they had questions about or look for images of the site if they are unfamiliar with it. When looking for images, students should take care with their search queries. Looking for just "Wounded Knee" in Google Images or through Bing primarily brings up the 1973 Occupation at Wounded Knee and images from 1891, during and immediately prior to the burial. Including "monument" or "memorial" in the query is somewhat misleading but helps with the image results somewhat. As of 2018, the only things that approach a memorial at the site are the cemetery atop the hill with Joseph Horn Cloud's granite monument, and the red wooden signs along the highway. Providing students with teacher selected images may be a preferable strategy. Students may also want to read more about Zintkala Nuni (Lost Bird), and the Congressional Medals of Honor that were given to Twenty U.S. soldiers for their actions in the Wounded Knee Massacre. There have been efforts to have these medals revoked as a way of correcting history and acknowledging the massacre more truthfully. These two articles provide more information on the medals and the rescindment efforts. Go to <http://werehistory.org/medal-of-honor-wounded-knee/> and <https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/21425>.
5. Once students have spent time studying the history of proposals around the Wounded Knee Massacre, it's time for them to develop their own proposal using a 'Snowball Discussion' strategy. Instructions for this strategy can be found at Cult of Pedagogy's website: <https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/speaking-listening-techniques/>. Students start by working in pairs, pairs join to form groups of four, groups of four merge, and so on. Students will share ideas and develop a proposal responding to the question "How can the present-day site of the Wounded Knee Massacre be better memorialized?" Ask students to be as specific as possible and to include details from what they've learned, covering everything from what any signs should read to the revoking of the Medals of Honor. With each group merge, students should aim to combine the ideas from their smaller groups to create a cohesive proposal that becomes richer with each round. You may also have students include drawings or other elements if appropriate.
6. Once the class has developed a group proposal (or two, depending on the size of the class), help students draft a letter to Congressional members and leaders in Oceti Sakowin nations to ask for help in better protecting the land and commemorating the Lakotas who were senselessly slaughtered at Wounded Knee.