

LESSON PLAN for students grades 4 to 8 STANDING BEAR, PAINTED MUSLIN

“... one of the most elaborate and visually complex historical narratives in Plains art.” Father Peter J. Powell, *“Visions of the People: A Pictorial History of Plains Indian Life”*



Artist: Stephen Standing Bear (Mató Nájin) (1859 – 1933) Minneconjou Lakota

Events Leading to the Battle of the Little Big Horn, ca 1899

pencil; red, blue, yellow, green and black pigment, 72” x 72”

Loan of the Foundation for the Preservation of American Indian Art and Culture

Curriculum Areas Visual Arts / Social Studies / Geography

Learning Objectives Visual Arts, American Indian Studies, Social Studies & Geography

Benchmarks

FPA4.2.A.1, FPA8.2.A.1, FPA4.2.A.2, FPA8.2.A.2, FPA4.3.A.1, FPA8.3.A.1, FPA4.3.A.2, FPA8.3.A.2, FPA4.3.A.3, FPA8.3.A.3, SS5.2.1, SS8.2.1, SS5.2.2, SS8.2.2, SS5.4.1, SS8.4.2, SS5.4.4 (Based on WDE Social Studies Standards current as of 2018)

Pre-Museum Visit

The primary source for this Lesson Plan is the book, *Visions of the People: A Pictorial History of Plains Indian Life*, 1992, published by The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, with essays by Evan M. Maurer, Louise Lincoln, George P. Horse Capture, David W. Penney and Father Peter J. Powell.

Father Peter J. Powell's essay, found on pages 81 to 101, provides a stunning detailed interpretation of Standing Bear's beautifully painted muslin. At the time of his writing (1992) only three Standing Bear muslins had been identified from Lakota sources. Today, six are known, all portraying the great Lakota-Cheyenne victory at the Little Big Horn. A seventh created by him shows a Lakota Sun Dance, a buffalo hunting scene in the distance. Of the six Little Big Horn portrayals, only the painted muslin described herein portrays the two important spiritual events related to that victory: the Animal Dreamers' Dance on the Rosebud and Sitting Bull's Sun Dance where he beheld his vision of victory ahead. Both ceremonies were offered on Rosebud River, while the Lakotas and Cheyennes were moving toward the Little Big Horn, where they wiped out the soldiers led by George Armstrong Custer.

Standing Bear portrays the movement of spiritual power as upward: beginning with the Animal Dreamer's Dance (lower left); gaining strength as Sitting Bull's Sun Dance, the holiest of Lakota ceremonies; and fulfilled by the great victory over the soldiers at the Little Bighorn.

About Standing Bear

The Lakota master artist Stephen Standing Bear was born on the Tongue River in the harsh winter of 1859. Although Minneconjou, his family was allied with Crazy Horse's Oglalas. Thus it is highly certain he witnessed the Animal Dreamers' Dance and Sitting Bull's Sun Dance, both offered on the Rosebud. At the age of sixteen he participated in the Little Big Horn fighting. Lakota tradition places all these events in June 1876. When the warfare with the soldiers ended, Standing Bear remained with Crazy Horses' Oglalas who settled on Pine Ridge reservation. There he married a woman named Red Elk and they had a daughter named Yellow Calf. In 1890, Red Elk was killed at the terrible Wounded Knee Massacre at Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, and it was believed that Yellow Calf was also killed by the soldiers. Standing Bear was to marry again. This time to Louise Renick (or Rieneck), the oldest daughter of an Austrian family that he knew from his days of traveling in Europe with Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show. Louise had traveled to Pine Ridge in late 1890 or early 1891 to work as a nurse. The two married and had three children. Louise died in June 1933 from injuries relating to an automobile accident on Pine Ridge Reservation. Standing Bear followed her death a few months later. Standing Bear was highly respected as an artist, both among his own Lakota people and in the White world outside Lakota country. He and the venerated holy man Black Elk were close friends. Standing Bear created the illustrations for *Black Elk Speaks*, by John G. Neihard, now an internationally respected account of Lakota spiritual life.



Standing Bear with his wife, Louise, ca 1912, Photo: Smithsonian Archives

Elk Dreamer



Black-tailed Deer Dreamer



Wolf Dreamer



Animal Dreamers' Dance on the Rosebud:

The Animal Dreamers' Dance – "Medicine Day" – was a rarely held public display of the mysterious powers possessed by certain animals with those persons who dreamed of them. In Lakota society, "the most powerful spirit animals are the elk, the black-tailed deer, the buffalo, the wolf, and the bear. Traditionally, a person who dreamed of any of these became a member of that society whose membership shared the same dream animal's power." ("Visions of the People: A Pictorial History of Plains Indian Life", p. 84)

The **Elk Dreamers** are wearing horned masks and the yellow and black paint of their society. The masks were made of young buffalo skins. A pair of trimmed branches represent elk antlers. Their forearms and the lower part of their legs are painted black. Each is carrying a sacred hoop. At the center of one dreamer's hoop is a small mirror which is held in place by two rawhide cords arranged at right angles. Light from that mirror could be flashed at an opponent placing him in the power of the Elk Dreamer's Society. The cords symbolize the four directions of the universe. The hoop itself represents the holy circle, the embodiment of the sacred power in the universe. The Elk Dreamers possessed special power to win women's hearts.

The **Black-tailed Deer Dreamers** are recognizable by their large ears of rawhide. The dancers' arms are painted red with their lower painted black. Each carries a sacred hoop with a reproduction of a spider web at the center. Spiders share the protective power of thunder, power that protects the Black-tail Dreamers from enemy attacks. Here (see above) a Black-tail Deer Dancer turns his spider web hoop toward a crouching spiritual opponent, warding off the evil power being directed at him. A **Buffalo Dreamer** and **Wolf Dreamer** dance near the Black-tailed Deer Dancers. The Wolf Dreamer is dressed like a wolf. Wolves possess special power to discover the enemy. Wolves also possess special power to heal sickness and remove arrows from wounds other than war wounds. That power is possessed by grizzly bears also. A lone Buffalo Dreamer appears. When the Buffalo Dreamers as a society danced, a shaman or Holy Man (Wicasa Wakan) appeared, dressed as a buffalo. As he danced around the camp, a young man stalked him, the other members of the society following. At the proper moment, the young man rose and shot an arrow into a spot marked on the shaman's buffalo hide. Then the shaman pursued the young man who shot him. The Wolf Dreamers then rescued him. Later another shaman would use healing medicine on the wounded man. Then he pulled the arrow out and the wound immediately healed. Here, however, only a single Buffalo Dreamer appears, demonstrating how few in number Buffalo Dreamers were.

Buffalo Dancer



This evil shooter is aiming at the Black-tailed Deer Dancer



The Sun Lodge



Sun Lodge, detail



Sitting Bull's Sun Dance:

Sitting Bull (b. ca 1831 – d. 1890)

Shortly after the Animals Dreamers' Dance, the Lakotas and Cheyennes crossed the Rosebud River to the west side. There just north of the present Northern Cheyenne reservation, the Lakotas prepared to offer their holiest of ceremonies, the Sun Dance. Sitting Bull had vowed this summer's Sun Dance, thus it was offered in the Hunkpapa village. To this day it is called "Sitting Bull's Sun Dance". The autumn before, while on a horse capturing expedition against the Canadian Metis, he had promised Wakan Tanka, the Great Mysterious, that if he was successful he would present him with a 'red blanket'. The 'red blanket' was his own blood. Sitting Bull returned home successful. Now, he prepared to fulfill his vow giving one hundred pieces of his flesh as his thank offering. Cut from his arms, he laid his flesh offerings at the foot of the Sun Dance lodge center pole, 'the tree of life'. Then, the red blanket of blood covering his shoulders, he took his place among the other sun dancers, eyes fixed upon the sky, bobbing up and down eventually blowing his eagle wing bone whistle. He danced all the third day, through the night, on into the heat of the fourth day, the holiest day.

Then the vision came. " soldiers and some Indians on horseback coming down like grasshoppers, with their heads down and their hats falling off They were falling right into the camp ... " ("Visions of the People: A Pictorial History of Plains Indian Life", p.91.)

In Standing Bear's painted muslin, the Sun Lodge is depicted as circular bower sided and covered with green branches. In the center of the lodge is the Sun Pole, the sacred pole, formed from a living cottonwood tree, it is painted red, the sacred color of sun himself.

The figure of a man wearing a split-horn, single-tail warbonnet, stripped to the waist and carrying a crooked lance is Sitting Bull. Both are the insignia of his office of head chief of the Strong Heart Society. His body is painted yellow, and he is wearing a breechclout of strips of red trade cloth. His white horse, head lowered, and exhausted, dances beside him. His tail is tied with red trade cloth, a bridle of German silver covers his head, eagle feathers are tied to his forelock and tail. A red-painted scalp dangles from his bit. "Only a horse who has ridden down an enemy in battle could wear such decoration." (White Bull. In Vestal, "Warpath", p. 187, "Visions of the People: A Pictorial History of Plains Indian Life", p. 92.) Now horse and owner offer the Sun Dance sacrifice together.



Sitting Bull with his horse beside him

A Lakota in chief's clothing



Battle of the Little Big Horn, detail



Battle of the Little Big Horn (also referred to in various sources and publications as Battle of the Little Bighorn): The Battle of the Little Big Horn took place on June 25 & 26, 1876, in southeastern Montana territory between the Native peoples of the Great Plains - Lakotas and Cheyennes - and the United States Army, Seventh Cavalry, led by Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer. Custer and his troops were quickly overwhelmed and within a relatively short period, probably at the time of noon, when the sun was high in the sky, every last one of his soldiers were killed, numbering some 200 troops. It was a decisive Plains Indian victory. Events of the chaotic battle are painted in great detail by Standing Bear. At the right: Warriors pursue fleeing soldiers, the warbonnet man reaching out to pull the nearest trooper from his horse. Four mounted warriors are racing in to cut off the fleeing soldiers, so all could be destroyed. Upper left: Four warriors pursue soldiers' horses racing away in fear at the shouting and noise of battle. Center: Warriors charge in upon the soldiers who are retreating. Dying and dead soldiers mark the retreat. Warriors charge in, striking the troops, coupling them, then finishing them off. Upper center, below the line of soldiers: A warbonnet man wrests a guidon from a trooper's hands. Another warrior, hair knotted over his forehead, wrestles a rifle from a soldier, an arrow protruding from him. At the top, flags flying, the surviving soldiers are making their last stand. In the midst of the chaos and death, a single mounted Lakota appears, wearing the clothing of a chief. Surely he is Sitting Bull, gazing upon the victory he saw in his Sun Dance vision.

Numerous books, stories, documentaries and movies have been written and told about the Plains Indian victory at the Battle of the Little Big Horn often times referred to as 'Custer's Last Stand'. From the Native perspective the best reference material is:

Bad Heart Bull, Amos, and Helen Heather Blish. *A Pictographic History of the Oglala Sioux*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967.

Campbell, Walter. *Interview with One Bull*. Walter Campbell Papers, University of Oklahoma Library, Notebook 19, p.47, July 1926.

Campbell, Walter. *Prophecy of Sitting Bull – of complete annihilation of Custer and his soldiers, as told to One Bull*. Walter Campbell Papers, University of Oklahoma Library, Box 10, MS 25.

Campbell Walter. *Sitting Bull's Vision from Interview with White Bull*. Walter Campbell Papers, University of Oklahoma Library, Notebook 8, pp. 53-54, June 1930.

With related letter from Raymond J. DeMallie to Father Peter J. Powell, February 15, 1991.

Vestal, Stanley (Walter S. Campbell). *Sitting Bull, Champion of the Sioux*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1932.

Walker, James R., Elaine A. Jahner, and Raymond J. DeMallie. *Lakota Belief and Ritual*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980.

Wissler, Clark. "Societies and Ceremonial Association in Oglala Division of the Teton-Dakota" in *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History*, Vol. XI, Part I. New York, 1912.

Powell, Peter J. *People of the Sacred Mountain: A History of the Northern Cheyenne Chiefs and Warrior Societies, 1830 – 1876*, HarperCollins Publishers, 1981.

Museum Visit

- The tour begins with students reading the Crow spiritual leader Thomas Yellowtail's prayer blessing at the entry to the gallery. When talking about the works of art a connection should be made between Thomas Yellowtail's words, "to love, trust and honor one another ... teach our children to love, respect and be kind to each other" and the love, respect, spirituality that embodies the art in the *To Honor The Plains Nations* exhibit.
- A 10-minute introduction about the American Indian gallery includes a brief discussion about the Crow, Northern Cheyenne and Lakota peoples.
- The remainder of the tour (20 minutes) focuses on Standing Bear's historic painted muslin, talking about the Lakota encampments, two spiritual events - Animal Dreamers' Dance and Sitting Bull's Sun Dance on the Rosebud - which preceded the Battle of the Little Bighorn and the battle itself, as described in the Pre-Museum Visit material.
- The docent should allow 10 minutes for a question & answer period.

Art Activity

The following **art activity** can be included as part of the museum experience, or teachers may elect to use this activity in the classroom as part of a Post-Museum Visit.

- Supplies needed:
 - White drawing paper at least 8 ½" x 11" and not larger than 11" x 14"
 - Colored pencils, preferably red, blue, yellow, green and black, representing the colors found in Standing Bear's painted muslin.
 - 12" or 14" ruler(s)
- Each student is required to select a figure drawing in the muslin to recreate in colored pencil on paper.
- Measuring with a ruler, the paper should be lightly marked in pencil with lines to make a grid of 1" or 1 ½" squares.
- The student will begin by making an outline of the figure (human or horse, or both) by first making a mark for the top of the head, the shoulders, legs, etc. to create proper proportion, using the squares of the grid as a guide.
- Colored pencils are used to finish the drawing, in keeping with the artistic style of Standing Bear's pictorial muslin.
- Each student will present a verbal summarization about the figure they chose to draw and will be asked to identify in what part of the Standing Bear's muslin this subject appears. Extra credit is given for accurate historical information that is related to the drawing.

ASSESSMENT

Advanced	Proficient	Basic	Below Basic
Demonstrates an acute understanding of the historic events depicted in Standing Bear's painted muslin, and is able to communicate that the Animal Dreamers' Dance and Sitting Bull's Sun Dance are important spiritual events.	Is able to interpret or describe in some detail the Animal Dreamers' Dance and Sitting Bull's Sun Dance, and recognizes the importance or spiritual meaning of at least one of these two events.	Demonstrates an ability to recognize the importance of the Animal Dreamers' Dance and Sitting Bull's Sun Dance, and can point to and identify at least one figure in both events.	Understands there are various events depicted by Standing Bear and comprehends that the upper portion of the painted muslin tells the story of the Battle of the Little Big Horn. Does not demonstrate an interest to go beyond this level.
Is able to summarize accurately Sitting Bull's Sun Dance vision of the Battle of the Little Big Horn.	Comprehends the connection between Sitting Bull's Sun Dance and the Battle of the Little Big Horn.	Is able to identify the figure of Sitting Bull and Sitting Bull's horse in the Sun Dance event.	Does not comprehend the Animal Dreamers' Dance or Sitting Bull's Sun Dance as spiritual events.
Is successful in using the grid system to proportionately draw in good detail a complete figure, or more than one figure represented in the muslin.	Is successful in drawing one complete figure and demonstrates accurate use of color.	Is able to complete or partially complete one figure drawing and uses at least two or more correct colors.	Is not able to complete a finished figure drawing.

Docent Material

10-minute Introduction

The superb Plains Indian art on display in the *To Honor The Plains Nations* exhibit includes American Indian art from the Bradford Brinton Memorial & Museum, the historically important Edith and Goelet Gallatin Collection gifted by the Foundation for the Preservation of American Indian Art and Culture and pieces on loan by The Brinton Museum Endowment Fund.

Bradford Brinton purchased the Quarter Circle A Ranch headquarters from William Moncreiffe in 1923. He happily spent his summers in Big Horn and filled the home with beautiful Western and American Indian art.

Edith and Goelet Gallatin lived in New York City and relocated to Big Horn in 1910. The Gallatin Ranch is located to the east, across the road from The Brinton grounds. During the years the Gallatins were in Big Horn, the Indian peoples frequently camped along Little Goose Creek which runs diagonally, southwest to the northeast, through the Quarter Circle A Ranch property. Edith Gallatin, in particular, became a good friend to the Crows and Northern Cheyennes. It was Edith who encouraged the Crows and the Northern Cheyennes to smoke together, making peace. Because of her genuine goodwill and kind generosity, the Crows and Cheyennes gifted to the Gallatins numerous fine and beautiful works of art, examples of which are on display in this gallery. The Gallatins' extensive collection of exquisite American Indian art was lovingly preserved by the Foundation for the Preservation of American Indian Art and Culture which for a period of time exhibited items from the Gallatin collection at the Chicago Art Institute. Today, the Gallatin collection is part of The Brinton Museum's permanent collection of Plains Indian art.

Two more recently acquired works of art represented by the impressive Blackfeet War Shirt and Leggings (ca 1830s) and the Apache Woman's Dress (ca 1850s) are loaned by The Brinton Museum Endowment Fund.

The Crows and Northern Cheyennes live on reservations in southern and southeastern Montana, respectively, in fairly close proximity to Big Horn, Wyoming. The Oglala Lakota American Indian reservation is located at Pine Ridge in South Dakota. Many important events in Western and American Indian history took place in the foothills, plains and adjacent lands of the Bighorn Mountains and also at Ft. Laramie in southern Wyoming and in the Black Hills of South Dakota.

The many works of fine art present in the American Indian gallery represent the spiritual connection between the Plains Indians and their Creator. The collective spirituality of this "Great Teepee" speaks to the enduring legacy of American Indian art and culture shared with us for generations to follow.

Optional

The following Information about 7 works of art in the American Indian Gallery can be included in the Museum Visit introduction.

The Crow reservation is located in southern Montana. The site of the Battle of the Little Big Horn is in Garryowen, in the heart of Crow Country.

- **Crow Beaded Cradle, ca 1880** **baakáatiche**

A child would be enveloped in warmth, beauty and both physical and supernatural power. The beautiful rose-color beads that dominate the upper portion of the cradle are symbolic of the pink glow of first morning light, blessing the child wrapped inside the cradle.

- **Woman's Beaded Bridal Robe, ca 1900** **bishbaalopuuchihkuua**

The vertical and horizontal stripes created by what is meticulous beadwork represent the flow of power in the universe – north, south, east and west, the four directions – and attests to the love and respect the makers of this robe had for the woman to whom the robe was given.

The Northern Cheyenne reservation is located in southeastern Montana, Lama Deer is its headquarters.

- **Girl's Moccasins, ca 1900** **he'e ka'eskone mo'kehanotse**

Made of deer hide and glass beads, this pair of girl's moccasins are designed with the patten of the morning star – the holiest of the Sacred Powers. The Northern Cheyenne call themselves the Morning Star People.

- **Boy's Moccasins, ca 1890** **hetane ka'eskone mo'kehanotse**

The bird motif on this pair of boy's moccasins is a manifestation of Thunder, one of the Sacred Powers. The Thunderbird represents a great eagle. The moccasins also bear the buffalo hoof design; the white trail through the green beading represents the split hooves of that great

animal, the Ever Generous One who gave its entire body to sustain the lives of the Plains people.

- **Cheyenne Horse Bridle, ca 1890** **h'oxahtsen'aeto 'hamestotse**

In Plains Indian culture, a supernatural relationship exists between humans and horse. Rider and horse are as one, working together, always one in spirit. Horses were used in warfare, to hunt buffalo, in parades and as pack animals to carry supplies and move camp. It was the introduction of the horse that allowed the tribes to become great hunters of the buffalo. A warrior never left a bridle on a horse killed on the battlefield. To leave the bridle behind was considered an act of cowardice. The docent should talk about the relevance of the horse in American Indian culture of today - Indian Relay Race, Crow Fair Parade, rodeo & ranching ...

The Lakota reservation is located in Pine Ridge, South Dakota

- **A Lakota Woman's Dress, ca 1910** **cheskasansan ksupi**

Made of elk hide, beadwork and ribbon, this 'important occasions' dress incorporates a beaded u-shaped design (center) which represents a turtle. In Lakota belief, turtles had the power to protect a woman's health. The turtle is considered sacred in the lives of the Lakotas and Cheyennes.

- **Lakota Possible Bag, ca 1885** **wizipan**

Made of hide, colorful glass beads and hair, this reservation-era 'possible' bag was most likely used to store clothing. Possible bags were so-named because they could be used for whatever one might possibly wish to store in them.

NOTES



Copyright August 2019

The Brinton Museum, Big Horn, WY All Rights Reserved

Design by Curator of Education Barbara McNab