

The Sand Creek Massacre

Exploring the Role of Historical Trauma, Relocation, Reconciliation & Healing

Thank you for joining us in a special journey to a sacred place on the high plains of Colorado that has so many stories and lessons to share. It was Thanksgiving time in 1864 when more than 150 Cheyenne and Arapaho people – many of them unarmed women and children – were massacred only days after they had presented themselves to an Army fort to negotiate peace. It was a disgraceful episode that was celebrated by a local newspaper, while national leaders and others wanted to wipe it away.

While history books gave the Sand Creek Massacre short shrift, the massacre's actual physical site was unclear for 140 years, in the view of public officials. The land was left to private ranch ownership, until the National Park Service conducted a formal site location study that considered historical records, archaeology and the tribes' oral histories. Once the site officially was identified, the NPS assumed management in 2007. As a comparison, it took the federal government just five years to approve and build a memorial after the Oklahoma City bombing.

In measuring the massacre's toll, tribes indeed compared Sand Creek to the 1995 Oklahoma bombing. During our trip, we will look back at this difficult history, meeting with tribal descendants (who now come from four distinct sovereign entities in Oklahoma, Montana and Wyoming) and with National Park Service personnel responsible for managing the site. We also will look forward – to how tribes and others are seeking proper acknowledgement of the historical event, the land itself, and deeper understanding of the massacre's causes and consequences.

These background materials include the following:

- NPS brochure of Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site;
- Excerpts from the NPS site location study;
- Samples of oral history interviews from Sand Creek tribal descendants;
- A letter from Capt. Silas Soule, Commander of Company D, 1st Regiment, Colorado Cavalry, to Major Edward Wynkoop within one month of the massacre about why he did not allow his soldiers to participate in the massacre;
- 1864 editorials in the Denver *Rocky Mountain News* newspaper celebrating the massacre;
- A one-page overview about the idea to learn from the massacre by establishing a learning institute.

Native Americans in Philanthropy also will share contemporary strategies for addressing sustainable change in Native communities. Native Americans in Philanthropy is a national membership organization of individuals and organizations that share a common interest in using philanthropy to build stronger Native communities. Marking its 20th anniversary in 2010, the organization's mission is to advance philanthropic practices grounded in Native values and traditions by 1) engaging Native and non-Native practitioners, 2) empowering Native leaders, and 3) educating about the role of Native values in effecting sustainable change. For more information, see nativephilanthropy.org.