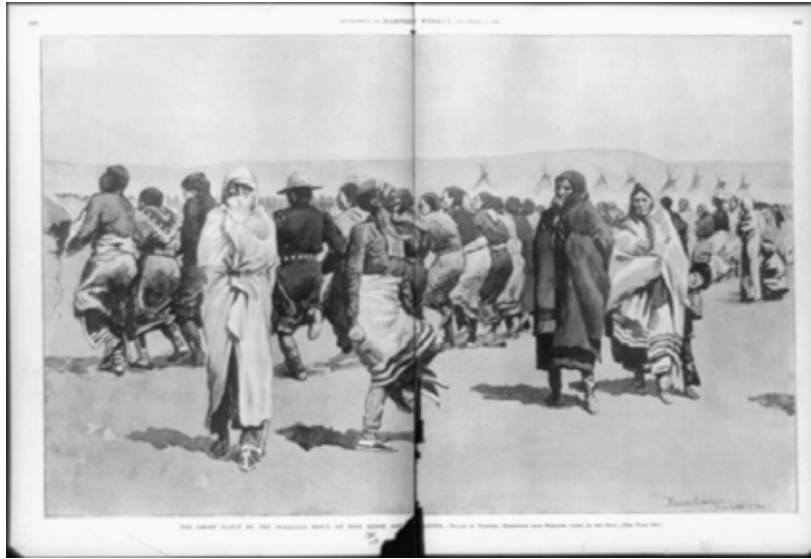


# WOUNDED KNEE

Ghost Dance illustration

The Wounded Knee Massacre took place on Dec. 29, 1890 on the Lakota Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. It was the result of built-up tension and unrest between the Native Americans and the white men. Natives were forced to sell their home lands and move to reservations, but were not provided enough protection, food or supplies. Many were wiped out from disease. Likewise, many white settlers had been killed or attacked by Native Americans protecting their land from intruders.



In 1888, a holy man called Wovoka had a spiritual vision, claiming the Earth would be destroyed and reborn, and that Native Americans would inherit the new land and be free of suffering. He spread his vision—the “Ghost Dance”—and taught his people new rituals and dances, encouraging them to shun the ways of the white man. But in December, 1890 the Ghost Dance was banned. Those who did not obey were arrested or killed. On December 28, a group of 350 Lakota Indians were stopped and surrounded by a *cavalry* of U.S. troops, on suspicion of taking part in Ghost Dance rituals. The next morning, troops began trying to disarm the group. This proved difficult—many did not want to give up their expensive guns. Suddenly a shot rang out, and all chaos ensued. Most of the natives fled. Some stayed and fought, but in the end many innocent people (including women and children) were chased down and killed. There were at least 150 Lakota Sioux men, women and children killed and 51 wounded. On the U.S. army’s side, 25 soldiers died and 39 were wounded.

There were 20 medals of honor awarded to U.S. soldiers at Wounded Knee, and to this day it is still a *controversy*. Native American survivors of the massacre have been attempting to get compensation from the government for the dead/wounded since 1890, but none have ever succeeded.

## VOCABULARY

*Massacre*- an unnecessary killing, or slaughter, of a group of living beings.

*Cavalry*- military troops on horseback

*Controversy*- a public disagreement or argument, usually continued over many years.

ANSWER THE QUESTION BELOW ON A SEPARATE PIECE OF PAPER.

What did the Ghost Dance symbolize for Native Americans? Why do you think it got banned?

Explain the controversy about medals of honor awarded at Wounded Knee.



Site of Wounded Knee Massacre