



# *Deadlands 1876* **Sioux Nation**

## **Overview**

Simplified for *Deadlands*, the natives that white men call the Sioux are composed of three closely-related tribes—the Lakota, the Dakota, and the Nakota. These words all mean “friend” or “ally” in the particular dialect shared by that tribe. Despite the fact that many “Allies” refer to themselves as “Sioux” when speaking English, the word “Sioux” is a French transliteration of a Chippewa exonym meaning “enemy,” and does not appear in the Lakota language. Still, because Sioux is the most commonly-used name for these tribes, for the purposes of this scenario it will be retained.

## **Spelling and Pronunciation**

Over the course of researching Sioux history, the author has come to deeply admire the Lakota language. Combining the polysyllabic delight of Japanese with the mysterious beauty of Gaelic, spoken Lakota has a sonorous, hypnotic quality, and the following pages are undoubtedly filled with well-meaning pretensions and poetic liberties. With that in mind, a few words about spelling and pronunciation might be helpful before proceeding further.

### **Spelling**

Being a language based in oral tradition, Lakota was first captured on paper by French traders, who produced many of the translations and transcriptions still in use today, from the term “Sioux” to clan names such as “Brulé” and “Sans Arc.” Contact with the French is also evident in the common names for many Sioux objects and customs—warriors wear “bonnets,” their nomadic sleds are called “travois,” and warriors display their bravery by counting “coup.” The Lakota language was first formally transcribed by Christian missionaries in 1832 under Stephen Return Riggs, who (naturally) used it to produce a Lakota Bible. Over the years, custom and usage evolved, producing a wide range of spellings that appeared in newspapers, magazines, military reports, Agency paperwork, textbooks, and dime novels. Only recently has written Lakota become standardized, with linguists using the IPA, or International Phonetic Alphabet, to reflect its many characteristic sounds and inflections. For example, the Sioux clan known as “Plants by the Water” is most properly rendered as “Mnikhówožu,” and is (roughly) pronounced “mini-KH’OW-wo’zhu.” However, contemporary sources used the French “Miniconjou,” which itself produced English variants such as “Minneconjou,” some of which remain in use today.

As one can imagine, when writing a campaign featuring the Sioux, such linguistic variety presents a set of choices that must be navigated for the sake of clarity and consistency. In general, for Lakota words that have entered the “common vocabulary” of the West, the author has elected to use the most widely-used contemporary names and spellings, such as “teepee,” “powwow,” “Brulé,” etc. For Sioux individuals that have gained fame among white Americans, English names are favored over the Lakota. For instance, “Sitting Bull” is used instead of “Thathánka Íyotake,” or even the Europeanized “Tatanka Iyotake.” For words and names that have less “white currency,” the author has elected to use slightly modified transcriptions. For example, the name “Kills in Forest” is most properly written as Čhaŋowíçhakte, and is pronounced “CHA’n-oh-WEE-chakh-tay.” Contemporary sources have usually transcribed it as “Canowicakte.” Because this simplification invites mispronunciation, it is rendered among these pages as “Chanowíçhakte,” a transliteration that stresses correct emphasis and pronunciation without the reader having to master the International Phonetic Alphabet.

### **Speaking of Pronunciation...**

Lakota is a very difficult language to pronounce for most European speakers, but a few pointers may be useful. When a syllable is particularly stressed, its vowel is often accented, as with Spanish. Also like Spanish, the vowel “i” is generally pronounced as “ee.” Like Gaelic, the letter “s” is usually made a sibilant “sh” like “shook;” while “c” is generally pronounced like the “ch” in “charm.” There are more glottal stops than in English, with the “skip” English speakers make when saying “uh-oh” often expressed with an apostrophe. Certain consonants such as “g,” “k,” “p” and “t” sometimes have a throatiness similar to the German “ch” or Spanish “j,” which this text attempts to depict by appending “h” to the relevant letter, such as “kh” or “t’h.” Some vowels—especially “a”—are occasionally pronounced nasally, like in French. In the IPA system, such vowels are followed by the “ŋ” symbol; but this is rarely indicated in standard form. For instance, the Great Spirit “Wakhánj Thánka” is usually transcribed as “Wakan Tanka,” even though it is pronounced more like “WAKH’a(ng) t’HAN-kha. In these pages it’s spelled “Wakhán T’hánka.” For those wishing to explore proper pronunciation, there are some excellent sources online, some of which include samples of spoken words. I particularly recommend Lakota 1.0, an audio-visual Lakota dictionary available through the Lakota Language Consortium.

## **Sioux Tribes**

The Lakota sometimes refer to themselves as the “Teton,” or “People of the Prairie,” and generally roam the westernmost regions of the Dakota Territory and down into Nebraska. The Dakota generally refer to themselves as the “Santee,” or the “People of the Knife,” and dwell in the eastern ends of the Dakota Territory as well as western Minnesota and northern Iowa. The “Nakota” also call themselves the Yanktonai, or “Little Village at the End,” and sprawl between the Minnesota and the James Rivers. To further complicate matters, the Sioux have organized themselves into seven major “nations,” each a part of the Seven Council Fires that compose the Great Sioux Nation.

**Historical Note:** Although considered the height of political correctness in 1876, modern scholars have determined that the above classification is slightly inaccurate, and the “Nakota” tribe has been renamed the “Western Dakota.” Today, “Nakota” refers to a splinter group of Yanktonai who traveled north into Canada and developed their own dialect.

## The Lakota

The Lakota are the largest tribe of Sioux. Within the Lakota are seven clans, also known as branches, bands, or sub-tribes; each made up of 25-50 extended families known as “thiyóšpaye.” To add to the nomenclatural confusion, most English speakers refer to these clans as “tribes”—including many English-speaking Sioux! In order to reflect the common parlance, this text also refers to these seven clans as “tribes.” To help with pronunciation, modern IPA spellings have been provided, along with the more common spellings that would have been used in 1876.

### **Húŋkpap̃ha** (HOO’nk-PA-p’ha)

Meaning “Village at the End” and more commonly spelled “Hunkpapa,” this important band is led by Sitting Bull, the most important holy man—wichášha wakhán—of the Sioux. (Wichášha wakhán, pronounced “wee-CHA-sha wa-KH’uh.”)

### **Oglála** (oh-GLA-la)

Meaning “They Scatter Their Own” and more commonly spelled “Oglala” or sometimes “Ogallala,” this large clan has produced the war chief Crazy Horse, but counts Red Cloud as its spiritual leader.

### **Sičhán̄ǵu** (she-CHA’ng-GU)

Meaning “Burnt Thighs,” this tribe is more commonly known by their French name, “Brulé,” and is guided by American Horse.

### **Itázip̃cho** (ee-TAH-zeep’cho)

Meaning “No Bows,” this tribe is more commonly known by its French name, “Sans Arc.” The Itázip̃cho have furnished *Deadlands 1876* with its most important Indian adversary, Chief Snake Biting Hawk of the Black Ghost Nation.

### **Mnikhówožu** (mini-KH’OW-wo’zhu)

Meaning “Plants Beside the Water,” this clan is more commonly spelled “Miniconjou” or “Minneconjou.” They are led by Chief Lane Deer, who has recently begun questioning Sitting Bull’s leadership.

### **Oóhenuŋpa** (oh’OH-hay-noo’pa)

Meaning “Two Kettles” and more commonly spelled “Oohenupa,” this tribe was once part of the Mnikhówožu.

### **Sihásapa** (See-HAH-sa’puh)

Meaning “Black Feet,” this Lakota band should not to be confused with the Algonquian “Blackfoot” tribe.

## The Northern Cheyenne

The closest allies to the Sioux are the Northern Cheyenne, who help them mediate with the tribes of the Coyote Confederation. Although the Cheyenne speak a different language and practice different customs, the Sioux-Cheyenne alliance is sturdy and enduring, and the Northern Cheyenne have incorporated many Lakota words and customs into their culture. Indeed, the Cheyenne chief Morning Star is actually better known by his Sioux name, Dull Knife. For these reasons, many whites often mistake the Cheyenne for Sioux, occasionally with unfortunate results.

## Politics

Political organization among the Sioux is not as rigid as among white governments, but there are many important organizations, positions, and roles that help structure society. The men of the Sioux generally organize themselves into fraternal orders called *okhólakičhiye*, usually translated as “warrior societies” or just “war societies.” As they grow older and accumulate honors, men may leave one society and join another. Once they have become too old to fight—middle age, usually around their mid-thirties to forties—a Sioux may join the ranks of a political society, or *Načá Omníčiye*.

### Načá Omníčiye

Although the particular traditions of these “leadership councils” differ from place to place, these political societies are composed of elders responsible for making the big decisions of the tribe—where to migrate, what treaties to establish or break, when to wage war or seek peace, etc. These men are sometimes affectionately—or sarcastically—known as “Big Bellies.” The leaders of the *Načá Omníčiye* are known as *wíčháša itháŋčhaŋ*, generally translated as “chiefs.” While there are advantages to being born into the right family, becoming a chief is neither a birthright nor an elected position; but one that reflects and acknowledges a leader’s influence among his people. An Indian remains a chief only as long as his people continue to follow him. Most *thiyóšpaye* within a clan are headed by a chief.

**Historical Note:** The Indian system of chiefdom has led to numerous misunderstandings in the history of Red/White relationships. Most of these problems occurred when whites mistakenly assumed that a particular chief spoke for a larger group of Indians. More unfortunately, sometimes whites deliberately sought a pliable leader to “make” into a chief. Lacking genuine authority over his people, this “chief” would sign treaties which were essentially meaningless, giving aggressive whites an excuse to punish “hostile” natives. This was complicated further by the Indians themselves. Some aging warriors exaggerated their status to whites, while others sought alliances for their own political benefit.

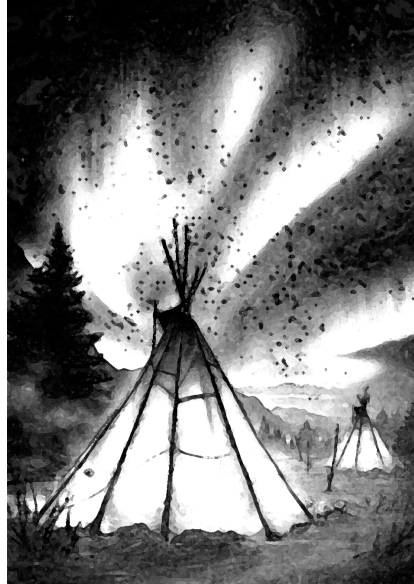
### Wakíčhuŋza

Periodically, the elders of a tribe appoint younger men to serve in political roles. These officials are known as *Wakíčhuŋza*, or “deciders,” and are drawn from the most respected and promising warriors of the tribe. The most common form of *Wakíčhuŋza* is the “shirt-wearer,” so-named for his ceremonial shirt of office. The shirt-wearer is essentially the voice of the Big Bellies, and acts as an intermediary between the older political leadership and the younger men of the war societies. He is expected to settle disputes, help locate new camps, and guide the *akíchita* in their duties. Until he dishonored himself by stealing another man’s wife, Crazy Horse was a shirt-wearer for the Oglala.

**Historical Note:** Some sources specifically assign the name *Wakíčhuŋza* to “pipe-holders,” another form of appointed warrior-official. Unfortunately, there are many contradictory and conflicting accounts of internal Sioux politics; even nineteenth-century interviews with contemporary Indians are not consistent. As one might imagine for a nomadic people, customs vary from *thiyóšpaye* to *thiyóšpaye*, let alone tribe to tribe. In modern Lakota, *Wakíčhuŋza* translates as “magistrate.”

## **Akíchita**

Usually translated as “warrior” or “police,” the akíchita are charged with keeping the peace, coordinating buffalo hunts, and carrying out special assignments. A cross between an elite guard unit and a tribal police force, the akíchita are chosen among the elite of the warrior societies, and the office is held on a rotating schedule. More information on the akíchita and the war societies is found in “*Deadlands Organizations—Sioux Societies.*”



## **Culture**

The culture, religion, and lifestyle of the Lakota are subjects that have filled many books, but a few aspects relevant to role-playing encounters with Sioux characters will be detailed here.

## **Hospitality**

Like many Plains Indians, the Sioux greet friendly strangers with a mixture of good-natured curiosity and polite formality, offering an earnest handshake and an eager “háu!” This greeting—spoken by males only—literally means “hello,” and is the origin of the stereotypical “how!” quoted by whites when mimicking Indians. Guests are usually invited to smoke a pipe, which is often followed by a feast. This latter custom is quite important, and the Sioux appreciate good meals, especially during peaceful gatherings. Many dishes have particular significance; for instance, offering a guest boiled dog is an expression of respect. Refusing food is interpreted as rudeness. Gifts are exchanged freely, sometimes to the consternation of visiting whites, who may not understand that something passed to a friendly Indian may be interpreted as a present! Another aspect of Sioux culture whites find surprising is the lack of chairs—like most Indians, the Sioux tend to sit, squat, or crouch on the ground, preferably above a nice layer of buffalo robes.

## **Diet**

The Sioux diet is rich in meat, primarily buffalo, elk, deer, antelope, and dog; sometimes supplemented by turnips, roots, and berries; and maize, squash, pumpkins, and beans when available. Meat may be preserved in the form of “wasná”—also called “wakáphapi”—a kind of pemmican made from buffalo meat, boiled marrow, and grease; occasionally flavored with berries or wild cherry.

## **Smoking**

A quintessential part of Sioux culture, legend contends that smoking was introduced to the Sioux by White Buffalo Calf Woman, who gave them the chanúpa, or sacred pipe, as one of the Seven Sacred Rites. Smoking occupies a central role in many religious ceremonies, from marriage to the Sun Dance, and the “pipe holder” of a war society is among the highest offices. Smoking is used to welcome strangers and greet old friends, it helps establish peaceful relations and strengthens social bonds, and it offers a pleasant pastime for warriors reliving past exploits.

### *Tobacco Blends*

While genuine tobacco is cherished, its availability varies, so the Sioux have evolved a wide range of different pipe blends made from available resources. Additionally, pure tobacco may be reserved for ceremonial practices, especially when supplies are low. The most casual smoking blend is called “chanshásha,” and is made from the ground inner bark of the red osier dogwood, more commonly known as “red willow.” This may be cut with tobacco to form “chanlíwakpa,” which may also contain sumac and bearberry. White traders refer to these Indian blends as “kinnikinnick,” an Algonquian word used to represent all forms of indigenous “tobacco.”

## **Gender Roles**

For the most part, Sioux culture is patriarchal. While the men hunt and make war, the remainder of the burden of tribal life falls upon the women. The women cook and clean, forage and tend gardens, make clothing and tools, set up and take down the teepees, and are primarily responsible for the duties of child raising. They are accustomed to greater physical labor than most European women, and receive little in the way of male assistance. Most Sioux women accept this arrangement uncritically, as most contemporary European women accept their restricted social responsibilities; and a “woman’s work” is seen as complementary to “man’s work,” essential to the overall health of the tribe. Women also play a role in certain religious ceremonies, and various women’s societies emphasize different cultural practices such as singing, dancing, and medicine.

### *Marriage & Divorce*

Sioux culture is polygamous, with sororal polygyny being common, in which a single man marries sisters. Sioux courtship follows strict rituals, most involving a suitor attempting to capture the attention of a young woman and receive a symbolic token of her approval. Songs may be played outside of her teepee, or she may be “surprised” during a casual walk. If a female is trying to attract the interest of a male, she may stand outside her family’s teepee wrapped in a blanket, which she opens as her intended beau passes by. If he steps inside the blanket, the girl’s family acknowledges the courtship. Marriages are usually arranged by the bride’s father. The suitor is expected to have a teepee of his own—in the case of a first marriage, his mother traditionally makes him a new lodge. The suitor must then offer presents to his intended’s family. The usual gift is a few horses, which are left at the family’s lodge. If the father grants his blessing by accepting the gifts, the marriage takes place shortly. However, if the gifts are rejected, the suitor is shamed and loses status within the tribe.

Women are expected to marry at an early age, and unmarried women are treated with increasing levels of disrespect. Indeed, being an old spinster in Sioux society is

tantamount to death or exile, unless she is absorbed into someone's family. Although adultery is frowned upon for both spouses, the consequences of infidelity are quite different. A male adulterer is subject to social penalties, and may be expected to defend himself against a vengeful husband; but a female adulteress may be exiled, subjected to facial mutilation, or even slain. Despite this inequality, a Sioux woman is not expected to remain in an unhappy marriage, and may divorce her husband simply by returning to her family. Social penalties for divorce differ from tribe to tribe, but many white missionaries have expressed dismay over the "transient" nature of Sioux marriage.

### *Winkte*

Like many Indians, the Sioux recognize non-binary gender roles. Some young men identify as homosexual early on, usually through a series of dreams or visions. These men are known as "winkte," a contraction of "winyan'ikčéka," which means "to be like a woman." A winkte may prefer female clothing, and frequently adopts traditional feminine roles such as making clothing, quilling, and beading. Some tribes believe that winkte possess special powers, such as prophesying the future or bestowing "lucky" names to children. Although a winkte may be subjected to teasing, and is often the subject of ribald humor, his attraction to other men is not viewed as shameful. Indeed, in some clans, a warrior may even adopt a winkte as a second or third wife—but never as a first wife, who is expected to bear children. Interestingly, the Sioux have no word for females who prefer other females, such as the Cheyenne "hetaneman."

**Historical Note:** In the nineteenth century, the French term *berdache* was broadly applied to all Indians who occupied non-traditional gender roles. This word is still in use today, although some consider it an antiquated relic of colonialism. Many use the modern expression "Two-Spirited," while others prefer terms specific to individual tribal cultures, such as the "winkte" of the Lakota, the "nádleehí" of the Navajo, or the "ininiikaazo" of the Ojibwe. Still others argue for the continued use of *berdache*. Because *Deadlands* is set in the nineteenth century, the term *berdache* will be retained for general discussions, and is meant as no disrespect to modern LGBTQ+ Native Americans.

### **Superstitions**

To the Sioux of the nineteenth century, the world is a living place full of spirits, visions, and magic. As a Sioux ages, he often acquires numerous personal beliefs and rituals, animistic practices that some whites regard as "superstitions." Recalling his time spent with the Oglala, Frances Parkman writes:

All these Indians, and he among the rest, think themselves bound to the constant performance of certain acts as the condition on which their success in life depends, whether in war, love, hunting, or any other employment. These "medicines," as they are called in that country, which are usually communicated in dreams, are often absurd enough. Some Indians will strike the butt of the pipe against the ground every time they smoke; others will insist that everything they say shall be interpreted by contraries; and Shaw once met an old man who conceived that all would be lost unless he compelled every white man he met to drink a bowl of cold water. My host was particularly unfortunate in his allotment. The Great Spirit had told him in a dream that he must sing a certain song in the middle of every night; and regularly at about twelve o'clock his dismal monotonous chanting would awaken me, and I would see him seated bolt upright on his couch, going through his dolorous performances with a most business-like air.

These “superstitions” frequently amused, fascinated, or infuriated white observers, and were factored into many stereotypical depictions of Plains Indians.

### *The Heyókha*

Usually translated as “sacred clown” or “contrary,” the heyókha is a type of Sioux holy man who lives according to a strict code of “opposites.” If the heyókha is cold, he’ll shed his clothing and complain about the heat; during a feast, he’ll discuss his ravenous hunger; if he is angry, he speaks words of peace and love. A heyókha may dress backwards, speak backwards, and even ride his horse backwards. Like a court jester, a heyókha is a Shakespearean fool free to flout social convention and break taboos in order to satirize traditions, critique power, or simply express unspoken truths. The heyókha are associated with the Wakíŋyaŋ, or thunderbirds, mystical beings that visit a heyókha in his youth and set him upon his contrary path.

### **The Sun Dance (Wiwáŋyaŋ Wačhípi)**

Usually held during the late summer when the buffalo herds are at their peak, a Sun Dance is a large gathering of Plains Indians at which they hunt, feast, dance, and ritualistically celebrate their connection to the Great Spirit, Wakhán T’hánka. Although many different rituals are practiced during a Sun Dance, the most important—and infamous—is the “Vow of the Sun.” Indeed, this ritual is so closely associated with the Sun Dance that it is usually referred to by the same name. Intended to test a warrior’s bravery, pay homage to the Great Spirit, and invoke a powerful vision, the Vow of the Sun varies in form, but always involves a ritual of purification, a gruesome ordeal of self-mutilation, and a period of frenzied dancing. These rituals leave lasting scars, and the visions experienced during the Sun Dance are believed to be transformative. More on the Sun Dance may be read in the “*Deadlands Rules—Sun Dance*” section.

### **The Teepee (thípi)**

One of the West’s many icons, the Plains Indian teepee is a conical tent of buffalo hide, some fifteen feet in diameter and scraped clean with elk-bone knives, softened and tanned by immersion in a mixture of mashed buffalo brains, and pegged over a framework of seasoned poles. The top of each teepee features a ventilation flap, while the interior of the base is encircled by an opaque band of hide intended to provide insulation as well as privacy. The door is a round flap of hide stretched out on sticks and often decorated by beadwork.

### *Interior*

The Interior of a teepee contains bedding made from buffalo hides, fox fur pillows stuffed with grass, and chair-like backrests fashioned from leather and willow poles. The walls are usually decorated with shields and arms, and beaded rawhide boxes called *parfleches* are used to store clothing, utensils, and cured meat. An altar is positioned behind the central fireplace, which serves as the heart of the teepee. When a fire is burning, the teepee is illuminated from within like a giant lantern—all the more reason for the interior band of buffalo hide, which offers its occupants privacy, and conceals their number from potential enemies. A store of buffalo fat is kept aside to occasionally throw upon the fire, which creates a sudden and dramatic flaring of light, often shooting sparks from the ventilation flap. Many families paint the interior of their teepees with personal stories, family records, or other such intimate pictographs.

### *Medicine Teepees*

Certain families have the honor of painting their teepees to signify their achievements or importance. These “medicine teepees” are divided into three bands. The base features earthly sights such as animals or geometric designs; the middle band depicts personal exploits and visions, while the top of the cone is reserved for spiritual symbols. These teepees are considered great treasures, and may be passed from generation to generation.

### **Other Customs**

Miscellaneous Sioux customs and practices are found elsewhere in *Deadlands 1876*, usually tied to various rules systems. Combat practices such as counting coup, staking down, and making medicine shields are found in “*Deadlands Rules—Indian Rules.*” Hunting and processing buffalo is detailed in “*Deadlands Rules—Buffalo Hunting.*”

## **History**

The Sioux are believed to have originated near the source of the Mississippi river in Minnesota. They migrated into the Dakota region, where they eventually split into three dialectically distinct tribes. Quickly incorporating European horses into their lifestyle, the Sioux developed a nomadic culture that ebbed and flowed with the buffalo migrations. Early allies included the Cheyenne, but the Sioux loathed the Pawnee and Shoshone, whom they essentially expelled from the Great Plains after a series of brutal conflicts.

### **Red/White Relations**

The Sioux had a mixed relationship with the French traders, one that was not without periods of violence. After the American Revolution, the Sioux were forced to deal with an influx of white “Americans” armed with rifles, riddled with disease, and waving treaties. Most of these treaties reflected the settlers’ thirst for land and resources, always with the stipulation that the Sioux remain on land “reserved” for them in exchange for yearly annuities from the Federal government. Unfortunately for the Sioux, the government often entrusted such annuities to white Indian Agents or traders who played fast and loose with the promised funds. Furthermore, government adherence to signed treaties was subject to convenience, and annuities sometimes failed to materialize when needed the most. When an Indian was discovered on “white land,” it was always seen as an act of trespassing and violation, whereas the US government did precious little to curb white encroachment on Indian soil.

### **The Dakota War of 1862—“The Sioux Uprising”**

In 1862, a failed crop and a severe winter brought hardship to a group of Santee Sioux living in Minnesota. Because their Federal annuities were late, they asked the local trading post for credit, and were refused. One trader named Andrew Myrick remarked, “If they’re hungry, let them eat grass.” On 17 August 1862 a party of young Santee raided a local settlement, killing a farmer and his entire family. This action sparked a series of similar raids all along the Minnesota River, with the Mdewakantan chief Little Crow (somewhat reluctantly) leading the affiliated tribes. The Santee attacked the offending trading post, murdering Andrew Myrick and stuffing his mouth with a handful of grass. The Dakota War of 1862 had begun.

### *Lincoln Takes Action*

Once the escalating violence attracted national attention, President Lincoln dispatched General John Pope to deal with the situation. Pope and his men defeated the Sioux

during the Battle of Wood Lake. After the Indians surrendered, over three hundred of their warriors were found guilty of rape and murder. They were quickly sentenced to be hanged. According to Wikipedia:

No attorneys or witness were allowed as a defense for the accused, and many were convicted in less than five minutes of court time with the judge. President Abraham Lincoln commuted the death sentence of 284 of the warriors, while signing off on the execution of 38 Santee men by hanging on December 26, 1862 in Mankato, Minnesota. It was the largest mass-execution in U.S. history. Afterwards, the US suspended treaty annuities to the Dakota for four years and awarded the money to the white victims and their families. The men remanded by order of President Lincoln were sent to a prison in Iowa, where more than half died.

### **Red Cloud's War, 1866–1868**

In 1863, gold was discovered in the Montana territory, and white prospectors began streaming into Montana across the Bozeman Trail, an offshoot of the Oregon Trail connecting Fort Laramie in Wyoming with Virginia City in Montana. Unfortunately, this trail cut directly through the Powder River basin and the Bighorn Valley—the very heartland of the Lakota Sioux. Although the Federal government tried to negotiate concessions from the Sioux, the Indians began raiding military outposts along the trail, and the situation grew increasingly fragile. In 1866 a band of Oglala directed by Chief Red Cloud openly attacked a wagon train at Crazy Woman Fork on the Powder River, and Red Cloud's War had officially begun. For over a year, Red Cloud's warriors skirmished with Federal soldiers, with the two largest conflicts being the Battle of the Hundred Slain and the Wagon Box Fight.

#### *Battle of the Hundred Slain/Fetterman Massacre (1866 December 21)*

The biggest Indian victory of the war came when Red Cloud, along with a Miniconjou warrior named High Backbone and his young Oglala protégé Crazy Horse, conceived a brilliant plan to trap the soldiers sheltered in Fort Kearny. A group of warriors were sent to attack a nearby woodcutting operation known as a “pinery.” Responding to the distant gunfire, a detachment of bluecoats was dispatched from Fort Kearny to reinforce the pinery garrison—approximately fifty soldiers of the 18th Infantry and thirty troopers from the 2nd Cavalry under the command of Captain William J. Fetterman. After leaving the fort, the soldiers were led astray by a group of decoy warriors lead by Crazy Horse. Once the troopers crossed the Peno Creek, nearly 2000 Indians rose from the landscape and engaged the soldiers, killing every last bluecoat and mutilating their remains. According to Wikipedia:

The Indians had few guns and fought mostly with bows and arrows, spears, and war clubs. Only six of the 81 soldiers died of gunshot wounds. Captains Fetterman and Brown are reputed to have committed suicide by shooting each other in the head. However, Indian accounts also credit a Lakota warrior named American Horse with killing Fetterman by slashing his throat, and the official army report gives the throat wound as the cause of his death. It is possible that Fetterman shot himself just before American Horse cut his throat. The Indians scalped, stripped, and mutilated the soldiers' bodies before leaving. In his report to his superiors, Carrington listed some of the items he found on the battlefield the next day: eyes torn out and laid on rocks, noses and ears cut off, teeth chopped out, brains taken out and placed on rocks, hands and feet cut off, private parts severed. The Oglala seemed particularly vindictive towards the two civilian volunteers, Wheatley and Fisher, who carried brand-new sixteen-shot Henry repeating rifles which may have caused a disproportionate number of Native American casualties. Both had had their faces “smashed into bloody pulp, and Wheatley had been pierced by more than a hundred arrows.” The last trooper to die in the battle may have been Adolph Metzger, a bugler who used his instrument as a weapon

until it was battered shapeless. Metzger was the only soldier whose dead body was not mutilated, and they instead had covered it with a buffalo hide. It is thought they left his body untouched as a tribute to his bravery in standing alone against several armed enemies.

Known to Indians as the Battle of the Hundred Slain and to whites as the Fetterman Massacre, the defeat was sensational news back East, and raised the question of whether or not the Bozeman Trail was actually worth protecting.

#### *Wagon Box Fight* (1867 August 2)

Designed as a trap similar to that which baited Fetterman and his men, this Indian plan went awry after a group of overeager warriors prematurely alerted Fort Kearny to their nearby presence. Failing to lure out additional troopers, the Indians turned on the woodcutters at the pinery, who had circled their wagons into an effective barricade and repelled the attack after an intense morning of fighting. Armed with new breech-loading Springfields and eventually supported by a Howitzer, the whites declared the engagement a total victory—although by now, the government was growing weary of fighting the Sioux for access to Montana.

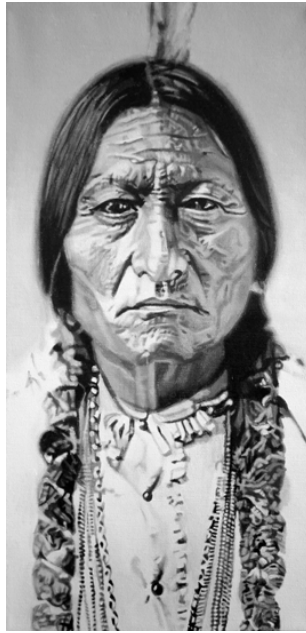
#### **Treaty of Ft. Laramie**

After their rebuke at the pinery, the Indians increasingly relied on guerrilla tactics. Most white civilians were considered fair game, and raids continued along the Bozeman Trail, the Oregon Trail, and the Union Pacific Railroad. Recognizing that winning Red Cloud's War would require a dangerous extension of Federal resources, President Colfax decided to negotiate a peace at Fort Laramie; a decision re-confirmed by General Grant after Colfax's untimely death. According to Wikipedia:

Red Cloud did not arrive at Fort Laramie until November. He signed the Treaty of Fort Laramie of 1868, which created the Great Sioux Reservation, including the Black Hills. The reservation included all of South Dakota west of the Missouri River. Northern Arapaho representatives also signed the treaty. The treaty declared the Powder River country as "unceded Indian territory", as a reserve for the Indians who chose not to live on the new reservation, and as a hunting reserve for the Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho. The treaty also accorded the Indians continued hunting rights in western Kansas and eastern Colorado. Most importantly, the treaty specified what Red Cloud sought: "no white person or persons shall be permitted to settle upon or occupy any portion" of the Powder River country "or without the consent of the Indians first had and obtained, to pass through" the Powder River country.

Red Cloud proved to be a very canny negotiator, and refused to sign the treaty until the forts along the Bozeman Trail were abandoned and burned to the ground.

**Historical Note:** In the *Deadlands* timeline, the Treaty of Fort Laramie occurred at the beginning of the Suspension, right after General Grant declared Martial Law. Weakened by the prolonged Civil War and ravaged by the Blue Plague, Grant's "Emergency Cabinet" ruled that Indian problems in the western territories were not a priority. Therefore, the fictional Red Cloud won more concessions than his historical counterpart, and the Great Sioux Reservation of *Deadlands* is actually larger, stretching down into the Nebraska Territory and forming the rough outline of the future "Sioux Nation."



## **The Black Hills War**

The ink was barely dry on the Treaty of Fort Laramie before whites began violating it, especially when they realized they could cut lumber in the Dakota territory and simply float it down the Cheyenne River to Missouri. Additionally, Federal geologists suggested that the Black Hills region might be rich in minerals, and in 1873 white trespassers began returning with stories about a “hidden mine” of “Indian ghost rock.” When Grant’s government approached Red Cloud to secure lumber concessions and mining rights in the Black Hills, Shiloh veteran Colonel John E. Smith returned with a negative answer, famously responding, “nothing short of their annihilation will get it from them.” With the Kentucky Vein running dry in Mammoth Cave and the Hammer of ’74 battering the Union to pieces, President Grant ordered General Phil Sheridan of the Department of the West to investigate these rumors.

### **The Custer Expedition, July–August 1874**

In response to Grant’s request, General Sheridan dispatched Major General George Armstrong Custer and the 7th Cavalry to escort an expedition to the Black Hills. Although nominally charged with scouting the location of a possible fort, the party consisted of nearly one thousand individuals, and included journalists, photographers, experienced gold miners, and an expert on azurcite from the “Floating College” of Lynchburg. It also included Colonel Frederick Dent Grant, the president’s oldest son. Although the expedition failed to find any Sioux ghost rock, they did discover gold. Custer’s announcement triggered a swarm of prospectors into the region, panniers and rifles at the ready. With the Federal government making a transparently feeble attempt to stave off the invasion, the Sioux watched anxiously as the Treaty of Fort Laramie was trampled under the Black Hills Gold Rush. Meanwhile back home in Boston, political pressure mounted that Grant do something about the “troublesome” Sioux.

### **Attempts for a Peaceful Solution**

It was obvious to both sides that this latest crisis was rapidly approaching a kindling point. According to Wikipedia (with “Washington DC” switched to “Boston” for *Deadlands* consistency):

In May 1875, Sioux delegations headed by Spotted Tail, Red Cloud, and Lone Horn traveled to [Boston] in an eleventh-hour attempt to persuade President Ulysses S. Grant to honor existing treaties and stem the flow of miners into their territories. They met with Grant, Secretary of the Interior Columbus Delano, and Commissioner of Indian Affairs Edward Parmelee Smith. The US leaders said that the Congress wanted to pay the tribes \$25,000 for the land and have them relocate to Indian Territory (in present-day Oklahoma). The delegates refused to sign a new treaty with these stipulations. Spotted Tail said, "You speak of another country, but it is not my country; it does not concern me, and I want nothing to do with it. I was not born there ... If it is such a good country, you ought to send the white men now in our country there and let us alone." Although the chiefs were unsuccessful in finding a peaceful solution, they did not join Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull in the warfare that followed.

That fall, a US commission was sent to each of the Indian agencies to hold councils with the Lakota. They hoped to gain the people's approval and thereby bring pressure on the Lakota leaders to sign a new treaty. The government's attempt to secure the Black Hills failed. While the Black Hills were at the center of the growing crisis, Lakota resentment was growing over expanding US interests in other portions of Lakota territory. For instance, the government proposed that the route of the Northern Pacific Railroad would cross through the last of the great buffalo hunting grounds. In addition, the US Army had carried out several devastating attacks on Cheyenne camps before 1876.

Grant and his administration began to consider alternatives to the failed diplomatic venture. In early November 1875, Major General Philip Sheridan, commander of the [Department of the West], and Brigadier General George Crook, commander of the Department of the Platte, were called to [Boston] to meet with Grant and several members of his cabinet to discuss the Black Hills issue. They agreed that the Army should stop evicting trespassers from the reservation, thus opening the way for the Black Hills Gold Rush. In addition, they discussed initiating military action against the bands of Lakota and Northern Cheyenne who had refused to come to the Indian agencies for council. Indian Inspector Erwin C. Watkins supported this option. "The true policy in my judgment," he wrote, "is to send troops against them in the winter, the sooner the better, and whip them into subjection."

### **Sitting Bull Resists**

As white pressure to seize the Black Hills mounted behind Grant, red pressure to hold firm found its focus in Sitting Bull, the Hunkpapa chief. Proclaiming that the Black Hills were essential to the survival of the Sioux, Sitting Bull's camp in the Powder River country began to accumulate hundreds of new followers. Settling into his role as leader of the "free" Sioux, Sitting Bull welcomed these newcomers, whether they came from still-nomadic tribes or had abandoned the safety of their Agencies. By the spring of 1876, Sitting Bull's village had become one of the largest gatherings of Plains Indians in history. Continuing from Wikipedia:

Concerned about launching a war against the Lakota without provocation, the government instructed Indian agents in the region to notify all Sioux to return to the reservation by January 31, 1876, or face potential military action. The US agent at Standing Rock Agency expressed concern that this was insufficient time for the Lakota to respond, as deep winter restricted travel. His request to extend the deadline was denied. General Sheridan considered the notification exercise a waste of time. "The matter of notifying the Indians to come in is perhaps well to put on paper," he commented, "but it will in all probability be regarded as a good joke by the Indians."

As the deadline of January 31 passed, the new Commissioner of Indian Affairs, John Q. Smith, wrote that "without the receipt of any news of Sitting Bull's submission, I see no reason why, in the discretion of the Hon. the Secretary of War, military operations against him should not commence at once." His superior, Secretary of the Interior Zachariah Chandler agreed, adding that "the said Indians are hereby turned over to the War Department for such action on the part of the Army as you may deem proper under the circumstances." On February 8, 1876, General Sheridan

telegraphed Generals Crook and Terry, ordering them to commence their winter campaigns against the “hostiles.” The Great Sioux War of 1876–77 had begun.

## **Historical Great Sioux War**

Historically, the Great Sioux War began in the spring of 1876, with June witnessing the series of battles that culminated in Custer’s defeat at Little Big Horn. Because *Sic Semper Tyrannis!* takes place in an alternate version of this conflict, the Marshal may wish to know the basics of the historical summer of 1876. Of course, depending on the outcome of Act V, the history printed below is likely to change—radically.

### *General Terry’s Expeditions* (March–June 1876)

General Alfred Terry was placed in charge of finding and defeating Sitting Bull. Based at Fort Abraham Lincoln near Bismarck, Terry led the 7th Cavalry in several complicated maneuvers through the wilderness of Dakota and Montana territories. Using the steamship *Far West* as his base of operations, Terry was assisted by General George Crook, Colonel John Gibbon, and General George Custer, who had politically alienated himself from both Grant and Terry. The three main battles of the spring and summer of 1876 are as follows, adapted from Wikipedia:

#### **Battle of Powder River**

General Crook immediately launched the first strike. He dispatched Colonel Joseph J. Reynolds with six companies of cavalry, who located a village of about 65 lodges and attacked on the morning of March 17, 1876. Crook accompanied the column but did not play any command role. His troops initially took control of and burned the village, but they quickly retreated under enemy fire. The US troops left several soldiers on the battlefield, an action which led to Colonel Reynolds’ court martial. The US captured the band’s pony herd, but the following day, the Lakota recovered many of their horses in a raid. At the time, the Army believed they had attacked Crazy Horse; however, it had actually been a village of Northern Cheyenne (led by Old Bear, Two Moons and White Bull) with a few Oglala.

#### **Battle of the Rosebud**

In the late spring of 1876 a second, much larger campaign was launched. From Fort Abraham Lincoln marched the Dakota Column, commanded by General Alfred Terry, with 15 companies or about 570 men, including Custer and all 12 companies of the 7th Cavalry. The Montana Column, commanded by Colonel John Gibbon, departed Fort Ellis. General Crook commanded a third column that departed Fort Fetterman to head north. The plan was for all three columns to converge simultaneously on the Lakota hunting grounds and pin down the Indians between the approaching troops.

General Crook’s column was the first to make contact with the northern bands in the Battle of the Rosebud on June 17. While Crook claimed a victory, most historians note that the Indians had effectively checked his advance. Thus the Battle of the Rosebud was at the very least a tactical draw if not a victory for the Indians. Afterward General Crook remained in camp for several weeks awaiting reinforcements, essentially taking his column out of the fighting for a significant period of time.

#### **Battle of Little Bighorn**

George Armstrong Custer and the 7th Cavalry were ordered out from the main Dakota Column to scout the Rosebud and Bighorn river valleys. On June 25, 1876, they encountered a large village on the west bank of the Little Bighorn. The US troops were seriously beaten in the Battle of the Little Bighorn and nearly 270 men were killed, including Custer. Custer split his forces just prior to the battle and his immediate command of five cavalry companies was annihilated without any survivors.

## **Conclusion of the War**

Custer’s stunning defeat galvanized the nation, and triggered a re-evaluation of Indian-fighting tactics. Troop levels were increased across the board, and an Agency-wide crackdown resulted in the arrest of Indian leaders, even those friendly to the government.

Any resources that might be passed on to the rebellious Sioux were confiscated, including rifles and horses. New forts were commissioned, fresh regiments sent west, and even the deprivations of the harsh winter were used as a weapon against Indian non-combatants. After a string of military defeats, most of the antagonistic Sioux surrendered, including Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse. The former eventually became a star in Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West show, while the latter was bayoneted to death while in captivity.

### **The Great Sioux War of *Deadlands* 1876**

In the world of *Deadlands 1876*, the Great Sioux War is known as the Black Hills War, and has been playing out quite differently. There are three important differences between the *Deadlands* timeline and actual history:

#### *Magic*

Without a doubt, the existence of magic is the biggest element working to the Indian's advantage. In *Deadlands*, Sitting Bull's medicine is inarguably real, and the Great Spirit clearly favors the Sioux. Occasionally compared to a "Red Moses," Sitting Bull possess genuine powers, and many of the reports are true—grass grows around his camps, fresh water bursts forth in bountiful springs, and the buffalo thunder wherever he treads. It is through these resources that Sitting Bull can feed and maintain his growing "city." Additionally, *Deadlands* "Medicine" allows Indians to better conceal themselves, to confuse and disorient enemy soldiers, and to call for aid from the spirit world. The Sioux have mastered the art of walking the "Ghost Roads," using a series of scared spaces to instantaneously travel across the land without crossing the distance between. And last but not least, the Ghost Dance movement, the Black Ghost Nation, and the Raven cult have all come to terms with the Reckoning in ways most white men have not, and their threats to call upon the dead for salvation are not idle boasts founded in superstition!

#### *Politics*

The politics of *Deadlands 1876* also plays a role in the Indians' drive towards independence. Obviously the extension of the Civil War has greatly weakened Federal presence in the Territories, which is one of the reasons the *Deadlands* West is less settled and contains more Indians than the historical frontier of 1876. The loss of California, Utah, and to a lesser extent Colorado has also impacted the United States, and more than a few Easterners have come to accept the reality of a diminished Union—the idea of "manifest destiny" has been misplaced or redefined somewhere during the War. Finally, the Sioux have powerful allies to the north and the south, and are supported by the Canadian British as well as the Southern Confederates. Both regard a strong Sioux Nation as an important check on Union power, and neither are reluctant to smuggle guns or pass along intelligence regarding Federal military maneuvers.

#### *Union Generals*

Historically, William Tecumseh Sherman was appointed General of the Army after the Civil War, and after a brief period with Winfield Hancock leading the Department of the Missouri, Sherman found a reliable Indian fighter in Hancock's replacement, Philip Sheridan. Together these Union heroes carved a bloody path into the West, waging a genocidal war against the Sioux, the Cheyenne, the Kiowa, the Apaches, and so on. After the Massacre at Wounded Knee ended the Ghost Dance movement in 1890, the West had become largely pacified.

Of course, in the world of *Deadlands 1876*, General Sherman was defeated at the Battle of the Salkehatchie and lynched by enraged Georgians. The current General of the Army is George Meade, who has an independent South, a belligerent Great Britain, and several “Disputed Territories” all vying for his attention. As a result, the Union has a weaker Indian policy than the historical USA. Additionally, the Philip Sheridan of *Deadlands 1876* is different from his historical counterpart. A wounded prisoner of war, Sheridan requires a cane to walk, and neither his mental nor physical health are what they were during his days roaming the Shenandoah Valley. Indeed, there are some who believe that Hancock should be returned to the Department of the West, as Sheridan has lately been seen muttering to himself, as if he’s speaking to an imaginary companion...

### **The Black Hills War So Far...**

In the *Deadlands 1876* timeline, the Federal government has spent much of 1876 dealing with the Mormons, negotiating the Armistice, and worrying about the British. As a result, Boston has not responded to Sitting Bull with the same alacrity as did the historical Washington. A few early actions remain intact—General Terry and the 7th Cavalry were dispatched west, and Fort McKeen was reinforced and renamed Fort Abraham Lincoln. General Crook’s Battle of Powder River played out more-or-less historically in March. The main difference lies with General Terry’s “Summer Expedition,” the famous three-columned march on Sitting Bull that culminated in the Battle of Little Bighorn. In this scenario, General Custer’s absence has delayed the expedition until late summer, and is only now getting underway. Because of this postponement, Sitting Bull has continued to gather his forces, and has recently been joined by his “rivals” in the Black Ghost Nation. It is here, in Powder River country during the Great Sun Dance, that Act V of *Sic Semper Tyrannis!* will be played out, determining the fate of Sitting Bull and General Custer, and deciding whether or not the Sioux Nation will be established—or become a dream like Wodziwob’s Ghost Dance....

## **Establishing the Sioux Nation**

If Sitting Bull and his followers can successfully unite the Plains tribes and repel the Union from the Powder River Basin and the Black Hills, they plan to declare the “Sioux Nation” a sovereign state. This territory will include all the “Great Sioux Reservation” as detailed in the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie, as well as a significant portion of the “Unceded Indian Territory” in Wyoming and Montana as detailed in Article 16 of that Treaty, and an extension of that Unceded Territory into the Powder River basin. In return, they are willing to part with the Article 11 Hunting Grounds in Nebraska, offer the Union an exclusive gold concession in the Black Hills, and allow Union Blue to partner with the Sioux Nation to complete the Northern Pacific Railroad as a joint venture.

Sitting Bull realizes that this dream can only come true if he has powerful white allies, and he’s been exploring relationships with the British, the CSA, the Texans, the Mormons, and the California Republicans. Although the latter two nations have proved unsympathetic, the British and the Confederates have expressed significant interest, with the former providing savvy political assistance and the latter agreeing to supply the Sioux with modern firearms. Both have agreed to recognize the Sioux Nation if Sitting Bull’s forces survive the imminent Union assault. The Texans have also expressed interest in recognizing Sioux independence—but only if the Lakota agree to aid them in a “peaceable solution” to their “Apache problem.”

Of course, in order for any of this to happen at all, Sitting Bull and his allies must first survive General Terry's campaign, defeat the 7th Cavalry, capture Fort Lincoln, hold Deadwood hostage, and pose a credible threat to Fort Laramie. They must continue to be successful against any future white forces thrown against them, which may include General Meade and an aerial bombardment. They must apply unrelenting pressure on Union Blue's railroads, deny settlers access to the gold fields, and maintain political unity within their own ranks.

And all of this begins at a place called Little Bighorn...

## Sources & Notes

### Sources

I am greatly indebted to the [Lakota Language Consortium](#), whose [Lakota 1.0](#) software has been a tremendous resource for my *Deadlands* campaign. This is simply one of the best dictionary programs one could wish for, and it's helped me considerably with this beautiful but difficult language. Also helpful has been UniLang's [Lakota for Beginners](#) and A.W. Tüting's "[Some Reflections on Lakota Language Structures as Looked at By a Naive Non-Native](#)" site. Much of my historical summary was adapted from the following four books: *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* by Dee Brown, *The Indian Frontier of the American West 1846–1890* by Robert Utley, *Crazy Horse and General Custer* by Stephen Ambrose, and *The Last Stand* by Nathaniel Philbrick. The article "[Directions in Gender Research in American Indian Societies](#)" by Beatrice Medicine was instrumental in outlining the gender roles, as was Will Roscoe's [Who Are the Two Spirits?](#) I obviously relied heavily upon Wikipedia as well. Please excuse my extensive Wikipedia quotations, but it seemed the most expedient way to fill in some blanks about the Indian Wars! Another useful online resource was Judith Wilson's "[The Sioux Tipi](#)" from Guinness Cultural Studies. Finally, the Ken Burns television series [The West](#) was also quite helpful.

### Images

The title banner incorporates *Northern Lights*, a magnificent painting by Marius Janusonis. Visit his page [The Art of Marius](#) to see more. A black-and-white altered version of this painting is also embedded in the middle of this page. The painting of Sitting Bull is by the photorealist painter LJ Lindhurst, and comes from her amazing [Civil War series](#). (She also sells prints!) Both images were used with permission.

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**Last Modified:** 2017 May 11

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