

Title: Winter Count

Grade Level: 6th, 7th, and 8th Grade

Theme: Understanding Lakota Winter Counts

Duration: 3 Days

Goal: Students will understand the Winter Count as a method of time keeping, recording history, and teaching

Objectives: Students will be able to:

- Understand the purpose of winter counts
- Identify the meanings of glyphs on winter counts
- Compare and Contrast a variety of winter counts
- To use the winter count vocabulary to grasp the understanding of winter counts

South Dakota Standard: Essential Understanding 6, Indicator One: Analyze the Oceti Śakowiŋ historical eras recorded through Oceti Śakowiŋ Winter Counts

Cultural Concept: The Lakota Winter Count is an event centered history depicting the annual event of the most importance based on the consensus of the tiospaye

Cultural Background: Oceti Śakowiŋ recorded important annual events in a winter count using glyphs. The most significant event was chosen by the elders and recorded and recounted by the keeper

Student Activities:

Anpetu Tokeya

Students will create a flag that has meaning that is specific to the class and their culture

Review vocabulary specific to winter counts and record it in vocabulary notebook

- Pictograph—images painted on symbols representing an idea, object, activity, place or event using and illustration
- Waniyetu Wowapi--Winter Count
- Mnemonic device--a device that helps you remember something educational
- Tiośpaye--extended family group
- Keeper--the elder who keeps the winter count and tells the stories of the tiospaye's history
- Glyph—a drawn symbol that imparts information nonverbally
- Winter Count—a Lakota system of keeping track of time by diagramming and depicting the most important event occurring each year

Appetu Inunpa

Students will read the following paragraphs from resource Lakota Society Time and History:

***Sioux winter counts typically consisted of series of pictographs drawn in rows or in a spiral on hide, cloth, or paper, that represented memorable events of each “winter,” meaning a year (starting at the first snowfall; therefore the Sioux “winter” spanned parts of two years of the western calendar)...The pictographs were secondary to the winter count, which was most importantly preserved as oral tradition; they were mnemonic devices, each representing a short, memorized phrase that served as the name of the winter.**

Winter counts had two main functions. The first was to serve as a calendar by which past events could be located in time. The second function of winter counts was to teach and instruct. In addition to recalling names of the winter, the keepers integrated stories of all kinds into their oral repertoires, and when telling the names of winters, they could also provide related stories of battles, natural catastrophes, encounters with the spirits, and every kind of entertaining tale.

Historical fact was valued not according to its chronological accuracy but according to its relevance to the people. Those events actually happened in a certain way, to certain individuals, at certain times and places, instead of being the focus of Lakota history as it is for us, was rather the background. The message was more significant than the details.

It seems that there was at least one winter count keeper in every Lakota camp.

From the Smithsonian website, www.wintercounts.si.edu/index.html, students will view elements from 1823, 1843, and 1863 in the Rosebud (on cloth), American Horse (in a sketch book), and Lone Dog (on buffalo hide spiraling out) Winter Counts, noting the different forms (spiral in, spiral out, and page to page) and figure orientation (figures always facing left) and take notes on the note sheet

Have students read the information below on the Leonids Meteor showers of 1833 and discuss the 1833 glyph of the Leonid Meteor showers.

***The Leonids get their name from the location of their position in the constellation Leo: the meteors appear to radiate from that point in the sky. They tend to peak in November. The meteor storm of 1833 was of truly superlative strength. One estimate is over one hundred thousand meteors an hour over the entire region of North America east of the Rocky Mountains. It was recorded in Oglala winter counts, there are many others recorded from different Sioux groups. Winter count traditions have been identified at Standing Rock, Cheyenne River, Rosebud, and Crow Creek reservations. Some of these counts are closely related to the Oglala ones, especially for the earlier years. These counts are all from the Tetons and**

Yanktonais; none from the Santees or Assiniboinis have been located. Other tribes known to have kept winter counts are the Mandans, Blackfeet, Poncas, and Kiowas. Resource Lakota Society, Time and History pages 114-122



Woodcut print depicts the shower as seen at Niagara Falls, New York. *Mechanics' Magazine* said this illustration was made by an editor named Pickering "who witnessed the scene."

Anpetu Iyamni

Students will solve the following math problem:

During the Leonids meteor showers of 1833, it was stated that approximately 100,000 meteors fell per hour. Using 100,000 as your base number, how many meteors would have fallen in one-eighth of an hour. Students can solve this many different ways, one method I used was to turn $\frac{1}{8}$ into a decimal .125 (have the students change $\frac{1}{8}$ to a decimal) and multiply .125 times 100,000 giving the answer of 12,500. Have the students check their answer. The method I used to check my answer was to multiply 12,500 by 8 and $\frac{8}{8}$ would equal the whole ($12,500 \times 8 = 100,000$). You could create various math problems using this information. Have fun, be creative.

Resources: www.wintercounts.si.edu/index.html, paper, pencil, calculator, copies of readings, access to computer to access winter counts website, student notebooks, blank paper or ledger paper for student winter count assessment

Assessment: 1. Create a winter count vocabulary assessment. 2. Use a copy of the Lone Dog winter count drawn on muslin by Lt. Hugh Reed 1876 (after having thoroughly studied with the students meanings of glyphs) have the students pick ten or more glyphs to draw and label the meanings on a piece of ledger or plain paper.

References:

Greene, Candace S. II. Thornton, Russell, *The Year the Stars Fell*, Lakota Winter Counts at the Smithsonian www.wintercounts.si.edu/index.html

Walker, James R. (1991). Walkers Outline of Oglala Mythology. *In Lakota Belief and Ritual* (Raymond J. DeMallie and Elaine A. Jahner, Eds., pp. 50-54). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

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*Bold printed paragraphs should be made as handouts for students to read. (With electronic copy and paste will be a page or less).