

Biography



Settling the West, 1865-1890

Native Americans

Sitting Bull, 1831?-1890

The great Lakota chief Sitting Bull was born Tatanka Iyotake around 1831 in the Dakota Territory. He faced his first battle at age 14, in a raid against the Crow tribe. As a young man he joined two groups, a warrior society known as Strong Heart and a group that worked for tribal welfare, Silent Eaters. Sitting Bull became chief of the Lakota Sioux nation when he was 37 years old. A holy man as well as a warrior, Sitting Bull led Native Americans in sun dances and prayers to the Great Spirit.

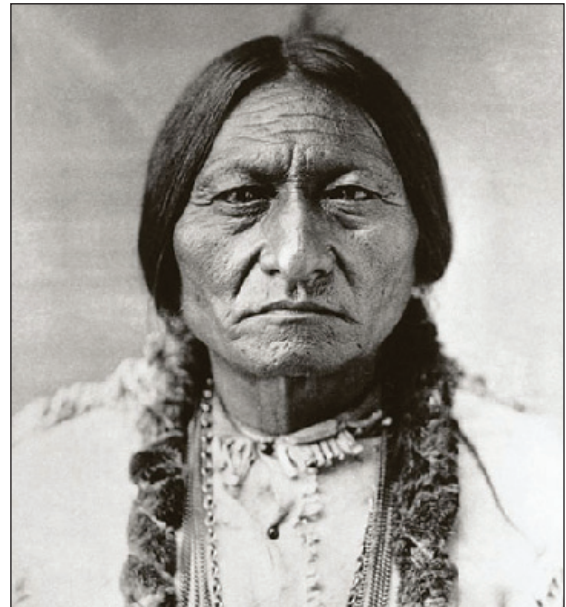


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The Black Hills gold rush in 1874 brought prospectors to the Sioux holy lands in search of riches. When the Sioux fought the incoming prospectors, the U.S. Army retaliated. Sitting Bull relocated his people to present-day Montana, and eventually reached the valley of the Little Bighorn River. A vision he experienced while performing a traditional Sun Dance led him to believe U.S.

troops would soon return. He was right. On June 25, 1876, the U.S. Seventh Cavalry under the command of George Custer attacked the large Native American encampment. Custer and his entire immediate command of soldiers were killed.

After his victory at the Little Bighorn, Sitting Bull led his people to Canada to avoid the reservation system. In 1881, with his people facing starvation, Sitting Bull led them to Montana. He asked his son to hand the commanding officer of Fort Buford his rifle, hoping to show that "he has become a friend of the Americans." Sitting Bull also asked it to be remembered that "I was the last man of my tribe to surrender my rifle." Four years later, he briefly joined Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. He was killed by a Lakota, as he had seen in a vision five years before: A Lakota policeman shot him in a scuffle trying to keep the great chief from joining a Ghost Dance, which had been outlawed.

1. Describe two qualities that made young Sitting Bull a good choice for chief of the Lakota people?

2. How did Sitting Bull wish to be remembered?
