



On Nov. 29, 1864, more than 150 Cheyenne and Arapaho, including many women and children, were brutally killed by more than 700 soldiers.

COURTESY OF BRENT LEARNED

MEMORIALIZING A MASSACRE

Native American art exhibit gives voice back to people who were killed at Sand Creek in 1864

BY STEPHYN QUIRKE
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

On Saturday, the Clark County Historical Museum in Vancouver, Wash. will unveil an exhibit of Native American artwork commemorating an American massacre.

The exhibit, "One November Morning," features work by Cheyenne – Arapaho artists Brent Learned, George Curtis Levi and BJ Stepp, who are descended from survivors of the Nov. 29, 1864, massacre at Sand Creek, Colo.

Levi, a Cheyenne ledger artist and an illustrator of children's books, says that telling the story is part of a healing process that gives a voice back to the people who died at Sand Creek. Levi said he's already seen the powerful effect that the art has on his audience at viewings in Colorado.

"This is a traditional art form amongst us," he said. "And it is just a beautiful way of letting people know about our history, who we are."

For the opening reception, Learned and Levi will host a screening of a PBS documentary on Sand Creek before introducing their art. The two artists will

also engage the audience in a discussion about how the massacre at Sand Creek informs and resonates with contemporary issues.

The artists will conduct programs Feb. 14-21, including a mural painting by Learned and Levi on Feb. 17 and a workshop with the artists Feb. 20 that is free with admission.

Although the works will be displayed only at the Clark County Historical Museum, related programming will take place at Washington State University Vancouver and Fort Vancouver. The Portland Art Museum will host a related panel discussion from 10 a.m. to noon April 24 titled "Who controls the Narrative: Visual Representations of Native Histories," moderated by Roben White.

"One November Morning" has been featured in the Denver Art Museum, Denver University and Northwestern University. John Evans, the governor of Colorado Territory during the massacre, later founded both Denver University and Northwestern – a major reason those venues were selected. Saturday's show will be the first time "One November Morning" is shown on the West

Coast, where similar historical legacies will be examined. According to the National Park Service, one of the original goals of Fort Vancouver, Wash., was "to provide for peaceful American settlement of the Oregon Country, by battling and dispossessing the Native American Indian inhabitants."

Levi says ledger art was one evolution of the traditional pictographic art common to all Native American cultures. As buffalo hides became scarce because of the settlers' eradication program, which was designed to starve Indians, the

traditional pictographic art form became transferred to paper acquired from traders – common accounting paper from ledger books. Ledger art became emblematic of the changes in Plains Indian culture that resulted from forced relocation to reservations. No matter

'ONE NOVEMBER MORNING'

What: Art exhibit commemorating the survivors of the Sand Creek Massacre

When: Opens 4 p.m. Feb. 13; runs through May 28

Where: Clark County Historical Museum, 1511 Main St., Vancouver, WA

Information: www.cchmuseum.org/one-november-morning/

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