

The Northwestern Shoshones, the Bear River...

Summary

The student will be able to understand the tragic circumstances of the Bear River Massacre. They will also discover the adaptability and determination of the Northwestern Band of the Shoshone in their ability to repurpose the site.

Time Frame

1 class periods of 90 minutes each

Materials

Teacher Materials

- [At a Glance: The Bear River Then and Now](#) (pdf)
- Video: [We Shall Remain: The Northwestern Shoshone](#)

Student Materials

- [Henry Woonsook's Grandmother's Tale of the Bear River Massacre](#) (pdf)

Background for Teachers

This lesson explores the legacy of the Bear River Massacre and the ways the Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation is using the site of the massacre for development and the assertion of sovereignty. One of four tribal bands of Shoshones, the Northwestern Shoshones--who were recognized as a sovereign nation by the federal government on April 29th, 1987--today have tribal land in Utah and Idaho. In 1863 approximately 350 Shoshones, including many women and children, were slaughtered by U.S. troops. This little-known massacre was one of the worst in U.S. history and began a long period of displacement for Northwestern Shoshones.

However, the story of the site of the Bear River Massacre also offers a clear example of the importance of American Indian sovereignty over land. Today, while the site still carries a tragic legacy, the Northwestern Shoshones have reestablished sovereignty over the land and are turning it into a place of renewal. The struggle of the Northwestern Band to develop a viable land base and its decision to harness geothermal power at Bear River brings the importance of Indian sovereignty into focus.

Instructional Procedures

Review the concepts of federalism, sovereignty, and land use with the class, and have them keep those ideas in their minds as they take notes on *We Shall Remain: The Northwestern Shoshone*. (If there is not time to screen the whole film, the selected clips will give them the background they need.) They may want to note people of interest and dates of events.

Give students the oral history excerpt to read; then as a class discuss their impressions and comprehension of the Bear River Massacre and the current use of the land where the event took place.

Have them research both the Bear River Massacre and the geothermal project using the digital archive at <http://www.UtahIndians.org> and current newspaper articles. Using direct quotes to support their theses, have them write a narrative essay about this unusual repurposing of land. The essay should reflect the journey of the Northwestern Band of the Shoshone from tragedy to sovereignty.

Extensions

Compare and contrast the current situation of the Northwestern Band of the Shoshone with other Utah tribes.

Students can do additional research and participate in a debate on the merits of the geothermal plant.

Assessment Plan

Film notes

Essays

Discussion participation

[End of Unit Assessment](#)

Bibliography

Blackhawk, Ned. *Violence over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006.

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Moulten, Kristen. "Shoshone Tribe Plans Geothermal Plant in N. Utah Set to Run in 2010." *Salt Lake Tribune*. Oct. 2, 2008.

Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation. "Historical Events."

Parry, Mae. "The Northwestern Shoshone." In *A History of Utah's American Indians*. Ed. Forrest S. Cuch. Salt Lake City: Utah State Division of Indian Affairs, 2000.

The University of Utah's [American West Center](#) (AWC) produced the curriculum materials in consultation with the [Utah Division of Indian Affairs](#), [Utah State Office of Education](#), [KUED 7](#), and the Goshute, Northwestern Band of the Shoshone, Southern Paiute, and Ute nations.

Authors

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