

My Painting

“Desperation”

My painting was based off the well recognized disease, smallpox. Smallpox is a disease that forms boils/or sores filled with infected liquid. (<http://www.immunizationinfo.org/vaccines/smallpox>) This disease causing the “*Native American population size to decline from 1-18 million before European contact (c. AD 1500) to an estimated 530,000 by 1900.*” (according to www.earlyamerica.org)

My painting is supposed to show how the Native Americans must have felt to not only have to fight for their land and tribes, but to have almost all of them die from diseases like Smallpox. The people in my painting have no face because it's supposed to show that no one person was affected by this disease, children, women, and men were all affected and killed in the end. The dark clouds are supposed to represent the looming darkness and hate towards the natives towards the late 1600's. The teepees are not marked with any specific mark, because I did not want to give the impression that only one tribe was affected.

The first recorded Smallpox breakout was in 1519 when over half of the native american population was wiped out (according to www.earlyamerica.org). The disease wiped out so many people that, out of many people in one tribe, only one or two would survive the epidemic. From one tribe to another, Smallpox would be transferred through direct contact with victims. Since no one really knew what germs were (and had no sure-fire way to cure it) it was passed on like a wildfire.

I do not think that the Europeans actions can be forgiven. If they had just passed on smallpox, maybe they could have been forgiven, but they didn't. They killed whole tribes and waged war against the rightful inhabitants. Only adding onto that were all the other diseases that were passed onto the natives, who had no immunity against them. When the tribes were sick with smallpox, european troops would attack them, raping, pillaging and burning down tribes. (according to www.furtrapper.org)

Smallpox were also a way that europeans could take control of the tribes. When they were dying, the europeans would promise that if they became christian, that they would be saved. The natives believed this and went to their churches to be “cured”, only to figure out it did nothing for their illness. Once they got to the church areas, they were not allowed to leave and were forced to learn our language and live our kind of lifestyle.