



CONTINENTAL DIVIDE TRAIL COALITION

LESSON PLAN HISTORICAL ROLE PLAYING



AGES

Ages 12-18

SUBJECTS

Colorado history, indigenous history, lands equity

CONCEPTS

Understanding the diverse perspectives of historical figures.

SKILLS

Collaboration and problem solving, applying historical concepts to the present.

MATERIALS

Printed background and photos of individuals if desired, map of Colorado, ropes or cones.

TIME CONSIDERATIONS

2hrs total: 1 hr lesson and 1 hr walking on the CDT.

LOCATION

Indoor or outdoor with room to sit in a circle and room to split into separate groups.



Historical structures spot the trail. Photo: Mike Henrick

Background

Although some stories have often been buried and ignored, all people have a connection to the land, and all play an important role in conservation. By sharing stories, we give voice to those who have been silenced and can begin to understand how history plays a role in the many ways that people connect to public lands.

It is important to acknowledge the multitude of ways people connect with nature and examine how historical and current events and attitudes shape these connections. Although the stories of Indigenous Peoples, African Americans, Mexican Americans, and other communities have largely been ignored throughout U.S. history, these groups played and continue to play a role in the preservation of public lands, wilderness, and other shared public spaces. The familiar and often-told stories that we learn about conservation figures and explorers are important parts of our land history. However, to more completely understand the story of our public lands, we must give thoughtful attention to all environmental perspectives.

This lesson explores the various ways in which people connect with the shared legacy of land, specifically around the CDT in YOUR TOWN/REGION. Some stories may be familiar, and some may be new. We encourage you to consider all of these stories in the context of the social and historical movements in which they occurred or are occurring.

OBJECTIVE 1

Students gain a better understanding of local indigenous history in addition to Euro-centric history through examples of individual stories

OBJECTIVE 2

Students are able to contextualize historical information to present day land management and cultural dynamics through roleplaying.

Doing the Activity (1 hour)

INTRODUCTION:

Provide a brief background on the Continental Divide Trail and the concept of public lands to prime students for understanding how present land ownership is a legacy of past events (10mins)

1. Explain that as we work to bring every American into the conversation on our public lands, we need to consider the host of ways people connect with nature. The often-told stories are important, but we want to make sure we are paying attention to all environmental perspectives. Here are a few stories of individuals who played a role in YOUR TOWN/REGION land history.
2. Introduce historical figures to the group (10 mins)
 - For older students pass out printed stories and have each participant take a moment to read their individual's brief biography
 - For younger students introduce each individual to the whole group, show the image and read the summary
3. Have students split into groups of 3-4 with each group containing 1 Colorado government figure, 1 indigenous figure and 1 settler figure (5 mins)
4. Ask students to introduce themselves to their group in the role of their individual, providing their motivations and goals (5 mins)
5. Ask each group to come to a consensus on one or all of the following questions with each student taking on the role of their assigned figure (10 mins)
 - How can we work together to come to an agreement about who gets to live on what lands?
 - Who holds the power in this dynamic and how can knowing and acknowledging that change the negotiation?
 - What resources does each individual have? Where is the power in the relationships between individuals?

***Reminder:** "We hope students come to see that it doesn't take being "evil," "bad," or even exceptionally bigoted to buy into the wages of whiteness or the class incentives of labor exploitation. When oppression is structural, it merely requires following the logic of a system. If we lead students to believe that only "bad" people are racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, or destructive to the environment, it becomes easy to make oppression something other people do, not something of which we are all capable, and for which we all have a role in recognizing, disrupting, and resisting."

Additional note: Emphasize that these are individuals and while we can make some generalizations for learning purposes, each figure presented here represents their individual story rather than the experience for all people in that group.

CONCLUSION:

Bring students back together as a full group (10 mins). Consider the following questions and reflections as a group.

1. Ask students to reflect on what it was like being in the role they were given. How does it feel? What surprised you? What did you learn?
2. What did you notice about whose stories are remembered? (For example, the stories of Native peoples who were "peace makers" are more often told and remembered).
3. Knowing that the CDT crosses the ancestral lands of at least three Native tribes in Colorado, how can they help honor all connections to public lands as the spend time recreating outdoors?
4. Ask students why it is beneficial to understand the importance of diversity in the outdoors in the present day and why it is important to understand the history of land ownership and cultural dynamics that have resulted in current status on land ownership.

Alternatives/Additional Activity

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUSHING UTE NATIVE AMERICANS OFF THEIR LANDS

This activity is a physical representation of Ute territory getting smaller and smaller over time. Have the students who have been given Native American roles stand within a roped off area. Have an instructor read off the historical events and dates that led to the displacement of Utes. Using the timeline, have students roleplaying as settlers and Colorado government officials move the rope pushing the students in the roped off area into smaller and smaller confines to illustrate the magnitude of physical displacement and power dynamics.

Materials

BACKGROUND ON THE CDT

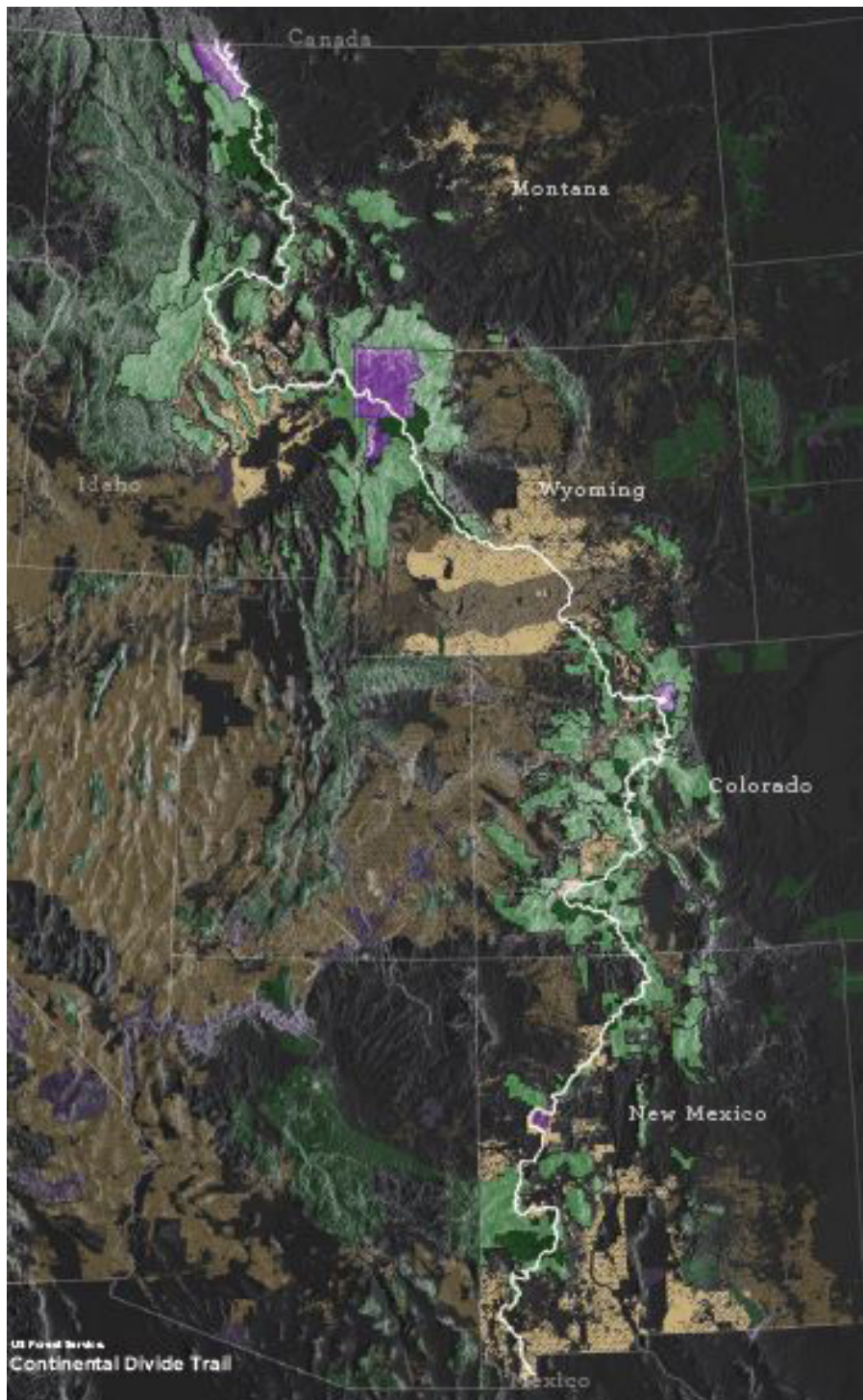
The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDT) is one of the most significant trail systems in the world. Established in 1978, it spans over 3,000 miles from Mexico to Canada, traverses five states and connects countless communities along the spine of the Rocky Mountains. 740 miles of the Trail are in Colorado as well as the highest point, Grays Peak (Arapaho name for both Grays and Torreys peaks - heeniiyoowuu), at 14,270 feet.

What is the Continental Divide? A continental divide is the location on a continent such that drainage on one either side of the divide drains into different oceans. In the U.S. the Rockies are the line that separates drainage into the Pacific Ocean on the West side and the Mississippi River on the East side.

BRIEF PUBLIC LANDS BACKGROUND:

[ADDITIONAL LESSON AVAILABLE](#)

Public lands in the U.S. are the lands that are managed by federal, state, and local agencies for all people to share. On the national level, we have 400 national parks (including historic parks and sites, conservation areas, monuments, memorials, battlefields, recreation areas, etc.), 560 national wildlife refuges and almost 250 million acres in other public lands that are managed by the Department of the Interior. In addition, the U.S. Forest Service, under the Department of Agriculture, manages 154 National Forests. Public lands are ostensibly owned and accessible by all people, however, due to a history of racism, exclusion, oppression, and injustices (among other factors) there are many barriers to accessing public lands for many people, especially those in communities of color, disabled population, low-income communities, tribes and LGBTQ communities.

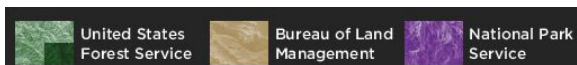


CDT on Federal Land

U.S. Forest Service Land: 2164 miles or 71% of the CDT passes through 20 National Forests managed by the U.S. Forest Service

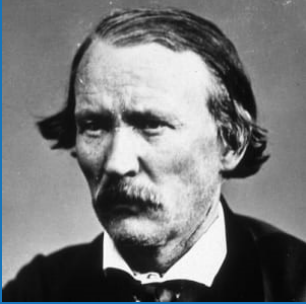
U.S. Bureau of Land Management Land: 408 miles or 13% of the CDT passes through land managed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management

U.S. National Park Service Land: 260 or 8.5% of the CDT passes through 3 National Parks and 1 National Monument managed by the U.S. National Park Service

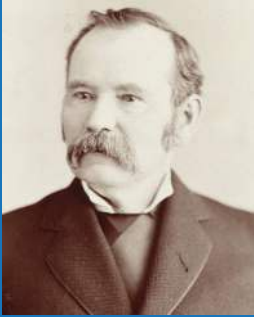


Printed Stories

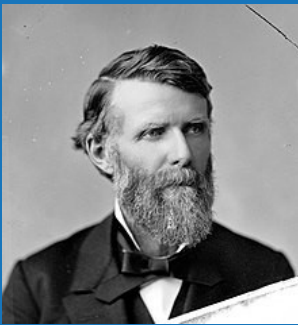
COLORADO GOVERNMENT



[Kit Carson](#) (1809-1868). Born in Missouri, Kit Carson spent his life in the West as a fur trapper, guide and scout for the US Army Corps of Engineers, Indian Agent, and officer in the US Army. He spoke Spanish, French, and could speak a number of Native American languages including Navajo, Apache, and Comanche. He was the federal Indian Agent in Northern New Mexico working with the Utes and Jicarilla Apaches and also led campaigns against Navajo tribes in the region. He spent the final months of his life as the superintendent of Indian affairs for Colorado Territory and played a key role in negotiating the 1868 Ute Treaty.



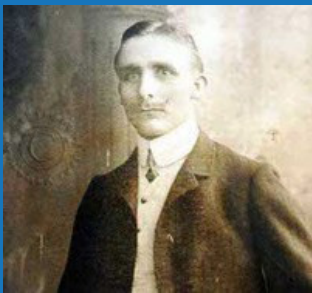
[John Long Routt](#) (1826-1907). Born in Kentucky, Routt received a formal education in Illinois and worked in multiple government positions before being appointed as Territorial Governor of Colorado in 1875. Routt was then the first Governor of the state of Colorado (from 1876-1879), winning without ever making a public speech. In 1879 Routt traveled to Leadville in response to silver miners striking and ended up investing in the Morning Star mine. Though he lost the next Governor's race, Routt became Governor of Colorado again in 1891.



[Frederick Pitkin](#) (1837-1883). Born in Connecticut, Frederick Pitkin moved to Wisconsin after completing college and law school. After spending two years in Europe, he settled in southwestern Colorado and began practicing law and investing in the mining industry. He became the second Governor of Colorado from 1879-1883. He was responsible for ordering military action against the Utes at Milk Creek and the White River Indian Agency (Meeker Incident).

PROSPECTORS

[Abe Lee](#) (no picture) Abe Lee arrived in Colorado in 1860 after spending time in the California gold fields. He discovered gold on April 25 south east of present-day Leadville, named California Gulch for Lee's supposed shouts of finding "California (gold)" in his pan, and is credited for starting the mining rush in the area when as many as 8,000 people arrived shortly afterward to prospect for gold.



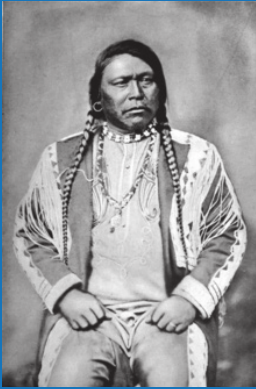
[August Meyer](#) (1851-1905) Born in Missouri, August Meyer studied mining and metallurgy in Europe. Upon his return from the U.S. he worked processing ores from Colorado. His job as a mining engineer quickly led him to Oro City (near present-day Leadville) where in 1876 he started buying ore from the area and established a smelter for silver. Though he returned to Kansas, he is remembered as pivotal in Leadville's silver boom and growing the population of Leadville.



[Horace Tabor](#) (1830-1899). Born in Vermont, Tabor moved West to Kansas and then on to Denver and Leadville in 1859 with the Colorado Gold Rush. He made mining claims from the San Juan Mountains, to Aspen, to Cripple Creek. Horace Tabor was known as the "Silver King" as he became one of the wealthiest people in Colorado through silver mining in the late 1870s. You may know that Tabor had the post office and the Tabor Theater built (in just 100 days) in Leadville in 1879.

NATIVE AMERICANS

Chief Niwot (Left Hand) (no picture) (1820s-1864). Though his birth and birthplace is unknown, Chief Niwot became a prominent Arapaho leader in the mid-1800s. As the gold rush began on the traditional lands of the Arapaho and Cheyenne, Niwot was involved in negotiating peace with prospectors and the Colorado Territorial Government. He was a diplomat, negotiator, and spoke English fluently. Despite his dedication to maintaining peace and preventing settlers from removing Native Americans from their lands, Chief Niwot was killed in the Sand Creek Massacre in 1864.



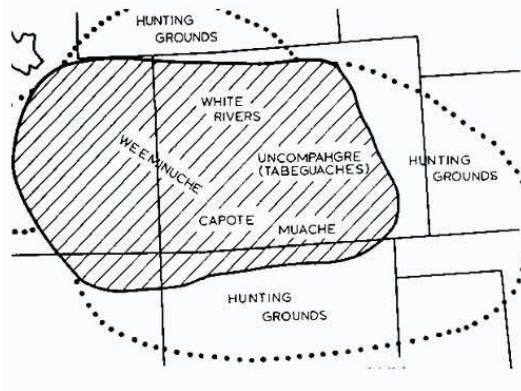
Chief Ouray (1833 -1880). Born in Abiquiú, New Mexico, Ouray (“Arrow” in Ute language) was the son of a Jicarilla Apache father and a Tabeguache Ute mother. When he was young, his parents were criados - indentured servant for wealthy landowners. He became the leader of the Tabeguache (Uncompahgre) band of Utes in Colorado because the U.S. Government assigned him the title of Chief of all Utes in Colorado, contacting him as the primary negotiators for treaties from 1868 onward. The first treaty he completed was in 1864 at Conejos which ceded all the Ute land east of the Continental Divide to the U.S. government. He died in 1880 while traveling to meet with Southern Ute Leader Ignacio as a final attempt to establish a peace agreement and gain support before the Uncompahgre Utes were forced to relocate in Colorado.



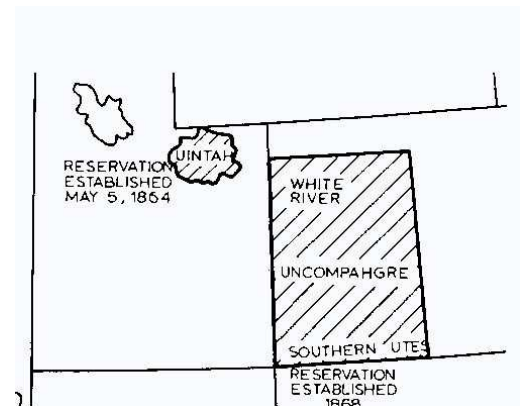
Chipeta (1843-1924). Married to Chief Ouray in 1859, Chipeta was Apache by birth but raised in the Ute tribe. She is remembered for her hospitality and negotiation skills and though her participation in treaty-making with the U.S. Government is not always recorded, it is thought she was involved in many negotiations. Chipeta lived for 34 years after Chief Ouray died and was never fully compensated (like many Native Americans) by the U.S. Government after the agreement that resulted in the removal of the Uncompahgre Utes from Colorado in 1880.

-Possibility to add more-

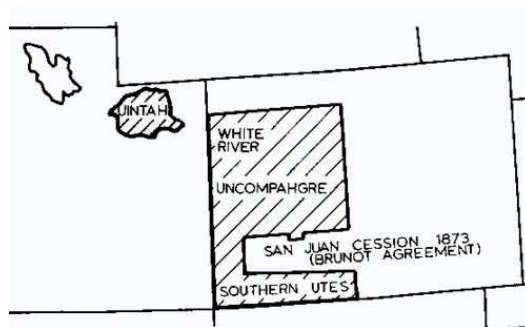
Maps of Colorado/Ute Territory



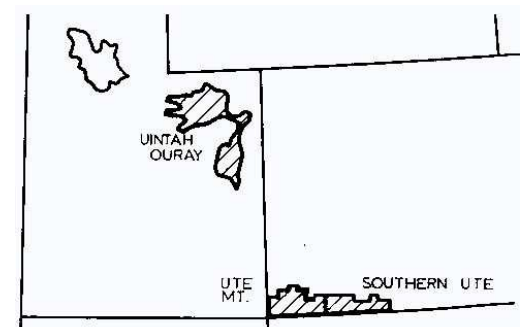
Original Ute Territory



Ute Lands - 1868



Ute Lands - 1873



Ute Lands - Present



Ute Land Dispossession (abridged) Timeline

1861 - Territory of Colorado established by the U.S. Government on February 28.

1863 - [Conejos Treaty](#), October. A treaty between the U.S. Government and the Tabeguache band of Ute people. Ceded all land in the Rocky Mountains east of the Continental Divide in present-day Colorado to the U.S. Followed the Homestead Act of 1862 as more and more Europeans and European-American settlers pushed into Native territory.

1865 - Treaty of Little Arkansas River, October 14. Though signed in present-day Kansas, this was the final treaty of three that compose the land ceded in [cession 426](#) in Colorado. The treaty established “perpetual peace” between the U.S. and Arapaho and Cheyenne Nations who were then pushed onto even more limited land.

1866 - Nearly all Leadville’s placer gold deposits were depleted, causing a significant drop in population as miners left.

1868 - [Ute Treaty or “Kit Carson Treaty.”](#) Seven leaders from bands of Ute Indians in present-day Utah and Colorado signed the treaty which established a large reservation on the Western slope in exchange for the Central Rockies going to the U.S. Government. Became a turning point in opening up the mineral rich Divide to settlers and further stoking the drive for mining and pushing natives even further from their ancestral lands.

1876 - Colorado is granted statehood on August 1.

1877 - Leadville was founded and silver was discovered outside of town, bringing in a second boom for the town with a population of 30,000. After being called by many names, including California Gulch, Boughton, Cloud City, and Slab City, the town was officially named Leadville in 1878 after the lead ore found in the area.

1879 - [Meeker Incident](#), September 29. Following increasing pressure from Indian Agent Nathan Meeker to change their lifestyle and his call for military presence, Utes attacked the White River Indian Agency killing Meeker and his employees. Around the same time, Ute Raiders ambushed U.S. soldiers at Milk Creek following an illegal invasion of the reservation by Captain Thornburgh. Between 20-37 Ute warriors and 24 U.S. soldiers and settlers were killed in the massacres. These events increased the pressure from the Colorado state government and the U.S. Army to remove all Ute tribes from the state. responded with the forced removal of the White River Utes and the Uncompahgre Utes from Colorado and the Colorado Legislature passing a resolution calling for Ute removal and support from Colorado militia to drive off the White River Utes.

1880 - After continued fighting and attempted peaceful negotiations - that continued to require the Utes to cede land - that involved Chief Ouray of the Tabeguache band, the U.S. government created a nonnegotiable agreement that forced the White River Utes to Utah and Ouray’s band to present-day Grand Junction.

1881- The remaining Ute tribes were removed from Colorado onto Reservations, even those who had previously negotiated for land in Colorado, forcing them to leave land they had inhabited for over 500 years.

[Present day](#) Southern Ute Indian Tribe has 1,400 members and land is limited to 300,000 acres in Southwestern, CO and Ute Mountain Ute Tribe has 2,000 members and land is limited to 624,000 acres.

Things to keep in mind about misconceptions that students may have:

1. Students might enter the lesson with stereotypes about Native Americans (i.e. Native American cultures are all the same, Native Americans are savages, etc.).

Response: Native Americans form a diverse series of communities/ nations. Though they have some commonalities, most Native American nations were deeply influenced by their environment. For example, historically Native Americans in the Southwest dealt with different climates than Native Americans in the Midwest, making their cultures and societies different. Native Americans lived differently, but that does not make them better or worse than other civilizations. If students use offensive language when discussing Native Americans, correct them kindly and explain why we use respectful terms.

2. Students may believe human history of the area started with European settlers in the 1800s.

Response: While much taught history begins with American/European discovery of gold and other minerals, there were people (namely Native Americans) here long before.

3. Students may believe Native Americans and European settlers were always peaceful, that European settlers treated Native Americans fairly.

Response: Some Europeans and Native Americans were peaceful; however, there was also conflict between the populations. The Europeans brought diseases, guns, and took land, leading to conflict between the civilizations and conflict within both societies.