

Sergeant Mad Bear (Kuruks Tîčaris)

Sgt. Mad Bear (c.1847 - c.1913), was the first Native American to receive the Medal of Honor. Sgt. Mad Bear, in the spring of 1869, along with Company A and elements of Company B and C of the Pawnee Scout Battalion, joined with the 5th Cavalry Regiment who were pursuing Cheyenne Dog Soldiers under the leadership of Tall Bull. Most of this campaign occurred in northern Kansas in Lincoln, Mitchell, Osborne, Smith, and Phillips counties. The pursuit and several other fights occurred in the Republican River valley from Franklin County, NE, to Yuma County, CO.

The fighting had been initiated by a series of raids around Lincoln, KS. On May 30, 1869, numerous immigrants were killed, and two women and several children were captured. The town of Lincoln, coincidentally, had been settled recently by men who had committed atrocities at Sand Creek against the Cheyenne in November 1864 and had fought against the Cheyenne at Beecher Island in September 1868.

On the night of July 5th, 1869, the camp of the 5th Cavalry and the Pawnee Scout Battalion was attacked by Dog Soldiers in the attempt to steal or run off the horses of the Army. This would stop the pursuit and allow the Dog Soldiers to get away. During the fight, Sgt. Mad Bear mounted his horse and rode into the dark to attack the Cheyenne's. It was somewhere at this time that friendly fire struck him in the hip. The wound placed him in medical care for the remainder of the campaign. Six days later on July 11, the Army attacked the Dog Soldiers in complete surprise at Summit Springs in Logan County, CO. The Cheyenne were completely defeated, Tall Bull was killed, thousands of pounds of buffalo meat, all the Cheyenne tipis, and nearly all their horses were captured and/or destroyed. After the battle, the Cheyenne's signed a treaty and placed themselves on a reservation in Oklahoma.

Sgt. Mad Bear would also be at Massacre Canyon in 1873, when 400 Pawnees were attacked while hunting 1000+ Oglala and Brule warriors. While many notable leaders were killed there, Sgt. Mad Bear survived and came to Oklahoma in 1874 or 1875. He was allotted 160 acres in Pawnee County and would later die at an estimated age of 65 on February 12, 1913.

Ref: Matt Reed, Pawnee Tribal Historic Preservation Officer