

PUBLIC ART PROJECT

TEACHER'S GUIDE



[Healing Minnesota Stories](#) has created this guide to help engage students in learning about Minnesota's public art and the history it tells, particularly about Native American peoples. The guide has three parts:

- A virtual tour of public art in the Minnesota state Capitol and other public places in the metro area.
- This Teacher's Guide, which provides background, commentary and questions about the public art in the virtual tour.
- An I-B curriculum prepared by art teacher Rachel Latuff to engage students in learning about public art and to challenge them to make contemporary public art.

This guide is a work in progress. We encourage you to adapt these materials in a way that best fits your students and classroom. Please send us examples of public art from your own community (and its historical background) so we can improve this curriculum. We welcome your comments and suggestions. Contact us at: info@spinterfaith.org

OVERVIEW

This virtual public art tour is about art, mythology, and politics—and how we tell our history through art. In particular, we focus on how Native Americans are portrayed. We attempt to show the historical lens that existed at the time the artwork was created. We hope it helps you engage students in a dialogue about parts of our history that are not told, how different people are portrayed in art, and what new art might be needed today. Throughout this guide, we include our own commentary on the art and suggest questions that could engage students. Consider this a starting point. Add research or change questions as appropriate for the ages and interests of your students. Here are a few broad questions that could be used to get started:

- **Do you have a favorite piece of public art? What do you like about it?**
- **What is the purpose of public art, particularly in the halls of government? (To tell our history? To reflect our people? To inspire our future? To bring beauty into our lives?)**
- **Thousands of school children tour the Capitol every year—does the art they see matter and if so, why?**
- **State lawmakers see Capitol art daily when making key decisions about our state's future—does the art they see matter, and if so why?**

THE VIRTUAL TOUR

IMAGE #1: Statue of Christopher Columbus/Minnesota Capitol

We will start with the Minnesota state Capitol, shown here in the background behind a statue of Christopher Columbus on the east side of the Capitol grounds.

COMMENT: Columbus is the starting point for the introduction of Europeans and European values to the shores of the Western hemisphere. Columbus and the explorers that followed operated under what came to be known as the “Doctrine of Discovery.” In essence, the Doctrine of Discovery said that explorers could claim land and resources on behalf of European monarchs as long as there were no baptized Christians there with a prior claim. This was the forerunner to the idea of Manifest Destiny, a term coined in the 19th Century to capture the idea that Americans were exceptional and destined to expand throughout the continent.¹

OPPORTUNITY: Consider engaging students around the concepts of Doctrine of Discovery and Manifest Destiny, and how they might be seen from a Native perspective.

Q: Columbus is a controversial figure. Some communities have opted to change “Columbus Day” to “Indigenous People’s Day.” What do you think?

IMAGE #2: Capitol architect Cass Gilbert

Minnesota became a state in 1858, but the current Capitol was not built until 1905, nearly 50 years later. Much of the major Capitol artwork was installed at or near the time of construction. Architect Cass Gilbert,² working with the State Capitol Board of Commissioners, played a strong role in selecting artists and subjects for the art. Gilbert built in the Beaux Arts style. The Beaux Arts reflects “the optimistic American sense that the nation was heir to Greek democracy, Roman law and Renaissance humanism,”³ according to Wikipedia.

COMMENT: The Capitol’s art and architecture tell us a lot about how government leaders of the early 1900s saw themselves, the state, and our history. It may or may not represent how we see ourselves today. With the exception of the images of Native Americans we will discuss, there is very little art depicting people of color in the Capitol.

OPPORTUNITY: If you haven’t already, consider engaging students in a discussion of why public art matters, and how it shapes how we see ourselves. (Bertold Brecht noted: “Art is not a mirror held up to reality, but a hammer with which to shape it.”)

¹ See Wikipedia on [Manifest Destiny](#).

² See Wikipedia on [Cass Gilbert](#)

³ See Wikipedia on [Cass Gilbert](#)

The Capitol Rotunda (IMAGES 3-6)

Walk through the Capitol's front doors and you enter the Rotunda. Looking up at the dome you will see four trapezoidal paintings, or "lunettes" on the side walls. Prominent muralist Edward Simmons painted these images on stretched canvas in his Paris studio. They were rolled up and shipped to St. Paul where they were cemented in place. This series is called "Civilization of the Northwest." The narrative and symbols in this series of paintings is explained in the officially sanctioned Capitol Guidebook published in 1912.⁴

IMAGE #3 (Civilization of the Northwest, first of four lunettes)

Following the Beaux Arts style, the first panel shows a young man of sturdy classical proportions leaving home (the East). He has the goddess of Wisdom at his side and is beckoned forward by a lithe woman representing Hope.

IMAGE #4 (Civilization of the Northwest, second of four lunettes)

In the second panel, the young man scourges the land of *savagery* represented by a bear, *cowardice* represented by a cougar, *sin* in the form of the deadly nightshade plant borne by a woman with the head of a fox, and stupidity in the form of stooped figure holding a sprig of stramonium, another deadly plant.

IMAGE #5 (Civilization of the Northwest, third of four lunettes)

The third panel focuses on the wealth lying in Minnesota's soil. Here the youth-become-man wrests an immense boulder bearing crystals and gold from the ground, breaking the soil. Hope and Wisdom are still with the man. The presence of the woman with a small child adds to the painting's theme of fertility. Figures holding maize and flowers rise out of the broken soil.

IMAGE #6 (Civilization of the Northwest, fourth of four lunettes)

The last panel shows the man enthroned, clothed in the cloak of Wisdom, resting from his labors, enthroned and powerful enough to direct the four winds.

COMMENT: The Rotunda art reflects three broad themes that will be repeated throughout the Capitol:

1. European settlers viewed the culture and landscape here as savage, sinful and uncivilized, to which they brought hope and wisdom.
2. Minnesota's soil held great wealth awaiting cultivation.
3. The work of civilizing and cultivating this place was divinely ordained.

⁴ The Minnesota Capitol: Official Guide and History, by Julie Celine Gauthier, 1912, Pioneer Press. [Available for free load through Googlebooks](#), pp 16-19.

OPPORTUNITY: Consider having students contrast a view of the land as a resource and a source of wealth to Native American view of land as sacred or land as mother.

Q: What do we mean by “civilization,” and what civilizations were in Minnesota prior to European arrival?

Q: What is our right relationship with land and nature (and what might that look like if you were designing the art today)?

The Senate Chambers (IMAGES 7-8)

The artwork we just saw in the rotunda is clearly mythological, using different symbols to communicate broader messages. As we move through the rest of the Capitol, the artwork becomes more literal, representing real people and historical events. Still, this artwork portrays its own mythology. It narrates a story of who we are as a people, who is in control and who is not. The mythology, symbols, and messages in the art deserve our critical attention. We move next to examine two murals in the Minnesota Senate Chambers.

IMAGE #7: *The Discoverers and Civilizers Led to the Source of the Mississippi*

On the Minnesota Senate’s north wall is a painting by Edwin H. Blashfield, a leader of the mural movement, described by The Minneapolis Journal in 1903 as the “father of municipal art.” His painting, titled *The Discoverers and Civilizers Led to the Source of the Mississippi*, mixes mythological imagery with realistic portrayals of early European settlers.⁵

- The central white-robed figure represents “the great Manitou, the chief God of the Indians.” This spirit-being holds an urn from which he pours the Father of Waters, the Mississippi. To either side of him are an Indian man and girl.
- To the right are the “discoverers,” with the “Spirit of Discovery” hovering overhead.
- To the left are the “civilizers,” led by a priest. The “Spirit of Civilization” hovers overhead.

OPPORTUNITY: This is an opportunity to engage students in a conversation about the power of symbols and the subtle messages they carry.

Q: What strikes you about the painting, what people or images stand out?

Q: What is the significance of the angels? The leashed dogs?

Q: What do you think the Native man and girl in the painting are thinking and feeling?

⁵ The Minnesota Capitol: Official Guide and History, by Julie Celine Gauthier, 1912, Pioneer Press. [Available for free load through Googlebooks](#), p. 40.

COMMENT: The Native man and woman appear afraid. The “civilizers” led by a priest seem to offer them two choices: salvation (symbolized by the outstretched crucifix) or physical harm (symbolized by the threatening dogs bearing their teeth and restrained by leashes.) The winged spirits seem to give the sense of the divine intervention on behalf of the settlers’ westward expansion. The Native girl is depicted bare breasted, which would not have been the custom. Whatever the reason, this portrayal makes early Native American community seem less civilized.

IMAGE #8: *Minnesota the Granary of the World*

Q: What strikes you about the painting, what people, symbols, or images stand out?

This painting is on the Senate’s south wall, a companion mural also painted by Blashfield. Here, a woman representing “Minnesota” sits on sheaves of golden wheat on a harvest cart drawn by two white oxen. She is being crowned by two winged genii draped with red and gold brocades. A child walks in front of the oxen carrying a tablet that reads, in Latin, “This is Minnesota, the granary of the world.”

COMMENT: This image again emphasizes the theme of land as resource to be cultivated, a source of great wealth. This painting was done in the middle of Minnesota’s flour boom. According to the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board: “By the 1880s, Minneapolis had become the flour milling capital of the nation, a distinction it held for the next 50 years. The engine of that booming economy ran on water - the waterpower of St. Anthony Falls.”⁶

The House of Representatives Chambers (IMAGE 9)

IMAGE #9: *Minnesota—Spirit of Government*

Q: What strikes you about the painting, what people, symbols, or images stand out?

We focus on just one major piece of art in the House chambers, the large relief sculpture above the Speaker’s desk done by father and son Carlo and Amerigo Brioschi. This piece was added in 1938 when the spectator gallery on the north side of the House chambers was closed to make room for more offices and committee rooms, creating a space for new art. In the center of the tableau is a goddess representing “Minnesota—Spirit of Government.” To one side are a Native man and woman. On the other side are a trapper and voyageur. Running on both sides of the central image is the Latin phrase, which translated reads: “The Voice of the People – is the Voice of God.”

⁶ http://www.mnhs.org/places/safhb/history_flour.php

COMMENT: There is a strong symmetry to this work. Both the Natives and pioneers are represented with a certain dignity. This portrayal suggests Minnesota developed as a kind of noble cooperation between the natural resources, the indigenous population, and the settlers. While the image seems respectful, it stands in stark contrast to what we know of the state’s history—and the condition of Native families—at that time.

- Native peoples did not share political power. Most lived in poverty.
- This was during the Boarding School Era, a social policy that broke apart Native families, sought to eliminate Native cultures and religions, and get Native peoples to assimilate to American ways. For example, in 1938, it was still illegal for Native peoples to practice their religions.
- The phrase “The Voice of the People is the Voice of God” reinforces the sense of divine providence in work of government.

The Governor’s Reception Room (IMAGES 10-11)

The Governor’s Reception Room has great symbolic power. This is where the Governor receives foreign dignitaries and makes major announcements to the media. The artwork here has a unique and important role. Architect Cass Gilbert and the Minnesota Historical Society intended this art to illustrate the state’s most important historical events. This sets it apart from the art in the rotunda and the legislative chambers where allegorical and mythological themes predominate. (Also, unlike the lunette paintings which are permanently fixed to the walls, the Reception Room paintings are framed and hang on the walls.)

Of the six paintings in the Reception Room, four feature Civil War scenes, including one of Minnesota fighters at the Battle of Gettysburg. At the time the Capitol was built, Civil War veterans were still alive and the war was part of living memory. We will focus on the two Reception Room paintings that show scenes predating statehood, reflecting exploration, conquest, and acquisition of the land.

IMAGE #10: *Father Hennepin Discovering the Falls of St. Anthony*

Q: What strikes you about the painting, what people, symbols, or images stand out?

The painting on the east wall (at the back of the Reception Room) shows Father Hennepin as he “discovers” the Falls of St. Anthony—accompanied by the Dakota people. This particular scene and Father Hennepin’s gesture with the cross were recommended to the artist, Douglas Volk, by architect Cass Gilbert. Volk was the founder of the Minneapolis School of Fine Arts (now the Minneapolis College of Art and Design).⁷ A number of Native people and members of Father Hennepin’s party are seated around him. To the right side of the painting, is a half-naked Native woman carrying a heavy pack.

⁷ Thomas O’Sullivan, *North Star Statehouse: An armchair Guide to the Minnesota State Capitol*, 1994, p. 81

COMMENT: Father Hennepin’s raised cross could symbolize a blessing of the falls—as suggested by the original Capitol Guidebook—a claiming of the falls, or a combination of the two. Father Hennepin appears to be the leader of the group, but in fact he was a prisoner of the Dakota at the time he visited the falls. The original Guidebook notes the presence of the woman with the backpack “signifies that a portage has just been made around the falls.” Like the Senate painting, a Native woman again is depicted bare breasted, which would not have been the custom. She also is the only one doing heavy labor. She is portrayed in a way many would find disrespectful, seemingly uncivilized.

Q: What does it mean to “discover” something or to give something a new name?

Q: Note the Native man sitting by the canoe, his chin resting in his hand. His expression is not easily interpreted. What do you think he is thinking?

IMAGE #11: *The Signing of the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux*

At the front of the reception room is a painting of the signing of the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux on July 23, 1851. It was done by Francis Davis Millet, an eminent painter, illustrator, author and war correspondent. Under the treaty, the Dakota ceded 24 million acres of land—roughly one third of Minnesota plus portions of Iowa and the Dakotas—to the U.S. government. This painting was an obvious choice to reflect one of Minnesota’s most historic moments, a celebration of what many saw as Minnesota’s founding event.

In the painting, Territorial Governor Alexander Ramsey and U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs Luke Lea can be seen on the platform with other well-known early residents. A U.S. flag waves in the breeze in the background. A large representation of chiefs and other Native Americans and U.S. officers sit in orderly fashion before the table where the treaty is being signed.

We provide additional background here to give context to the painting and assess how it matches up with history. We encourage you to add your own research.

COMMENT: The Minnesota Territory was created in 1849, just two years prior to the treaty. Like most settlers of the time, Territorial Governor Ramsey was an expansionist—one firmly convinced of the “right” and the obligation of white settlers to continue expansion of the territory firmly under their control. According to the 1849 census, the territory had only 4,535 settler “residents”. With 25,000 Indians controlling 97 percent of the land, Ramsey was eager to get a land-cession treaty process underway. General James A. Baker, a Historical Society officer and member of the State Capitol Board of Commissioners, argued vociferously to include this painting in the Governor’s Reception Room, stating that “Ramsey’s treaty was as formal as a meeting of the Roman Senate, and was marked by all the negotiations of a solemn contract between independent nations.”⁸

⁸ Thomas O’Sullivan, *North Star Statehouse: An Armchair Guide to the Minnesota State Capitol*, p. 78.

Perhaps it is not hard to understand the eagerness of Baker and others to have a painting that honors the treaty signing as a fair negotiation between two sides with equal power. However, history suggests it was less formal, less orderly, and less honorable than the painting projects.

In fact, Ramsey and Indian Affairs Commissioner Lea made a strategic divide-and-conquer decision for dealing with the Dakota. They would focus first on the Sisseton and Wahpeton bands, often referred to as the “Upper Sioux,” because they had less experience with treaties than the Mdewakanton and Wahpekute bands (Lower Sioux) and were in dire economic straits following harsh winters. They would be more receptive to the government’s offer. A treaty with the Upper Sioux could be a model that would help the process with the Lower Sioux.⁹

The chosen meeting site was Traverse des Sioux, a traditional Dakota crossing of the Minnesota River. Ramsey and Lea arrived by steamboat, expecting to find hundreds of Sisseton and Wahpeton ready for negotiations. Heavy, late rains had forced serious travel delays and participants drifted in over a period of many weeks, a long and tiresome time for Ramsey and his partners. Ramsey’s patience grew thin and he eventually announced—over Dakota objections—that negotiations would begin.¹⁰

The Dakota pressed for time for more of their kin to arrive. Eesh-ta-hum-ba, chief of the Swan Lake Sisseton band, addressed the commissioners: “your coming and asking me for my country makes me sad; and your saying I am not able to do anything with my country makes me more sad. Those who are coming behind are my near relatives and I expected certainly to see them here. That is all I have to say.”¹¹

With virtually all of the Dakota land on the table—they were unable to wrest from Ramsey and Lea the time they wanted for their leaders to assemble and give full consideration to their decisions. With no good options, the Dakota signed the treaty.

Historian William Lass explains their decision. “As the treaty’s terms were explained to them, the chiefs and headmen realized they were being presented with an ultimatum. Collectively, they concluded it was better to sign and get something for their land rather than refuse and run the risk of simply having it taken from them.”¹²

Indian Affairs Commissioner Lea’s explanation of how the treaty would benefit the Dakota shows how it never came close to meeting government assurances:

⁹ Mary Lethert Wingerd, *North Country: The Making of Minnesota*. 2010, 189

¹⁰ William E. Lass, *The Treaty of Traverse des Sioux*, 32

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 42

¹² *Ibid.*, 44

*There are many other tribes of red men, who, like yourselves, once owned a large country — it was of no use to them, and they were poor; so they sold out to the Great Father, receiving therefore, goods, provisions, and money, with many other substantial benefits. Those tribes are now happier and more comfortable, and every year growing richer and richer. We hear of no starving among them. They always have plenty to eat, and enough to clothe them. Your Great Father wants to put an end, in like manner, to the suffering and poverty which has existed among you.*¹³

As a final demonstration of the unfair treaty process, the Indians quickly lost most of the money they were supposed to get in exchange for their land. After signing the treaty the Indians were directed to a second document to which most placed their mark. This paper was neither read nor explained. It obligated the Sisseton and Wahpeton bands to reimburse traders for outstanding individual debts of individual Indians—and diverted the treaty money directly to traders to pay any debts they claimed they were owed.¹⁴ As a result, Henry H. Sibley, the indebted head of a major fur trading operation, received more money from the initial treaty payments than all of the Dakota combined. Of the initial \$305,000 cash payment, Sibley got \$66,000, and the Dakota got \$60,000, less than 20 percent of the total. Seven years later, Sibley would become Minnesota’s first governor.¹⁵

Commenting on the Traverse des Sioux painting, Minnesota historian Mary Lethert Wingerd concludes: “The scene represents, of course, one of the darkest moments in Minnesota history for Native Americans,” a fact of which “turn-of-the-century capitol planners had little appreciation when they commissioned [the work] to depict what they viewed as a triumphant victory.”¹⁶

Q: If you were going to design the Governor’s Reception Room today, what images would you include as Minnesota’s most important moments and events?

Other Capitol Art (Images 12-14)

IMAGE #12: *The Attack on New Ulm*

This painting by Anton Gág, completed in 1893, depicts the Battle of New Ulm during the Dakota-U.S. War of 1862. It hangs in a first-floor Senate conference room. The painting is notable for the extensive effort the artist made to be true to his subject. He did considerable research, collected clothing, interviewed defenders and survivors, engaged his friends to role-

¹³ Ibid., 41

¹⁴ Ibid, 47

¹⁵ National Public Radio’s This American Life featured titled: “Little War on the Prairie,” first aired on Nov. 23, 2012. A transcript is available at www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/479/transcript

¹⁶ Mary Lethert Wingerd, *North Country: The Making of Minnesota*, notes to Plate 128.

play aspects of the battle, and spent time at the Lower Sioux agency talking with Native Americans and painting their portraits. He made two copies, one he left with his subjects as the only payment they would accept.

COMMENT: The painting shows a battle scene, but as art historian Julie L'Enfant sees it, this painting is distinguished by his effort to portray the Dakota as warriors rather than savages.¹⁷ Wingerd agrees, but notes that the painting would nevertheless be viewed as an unprovoked savage attack.¹⁸

IMAGE #13: *Bust of Chief Wabasha III*

This bust is one of the few complimentary images of people of color in the Capitol, one in which they are portrayed with honor and respect. This sculpture is by Joanne Bird, member of Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate, who was raised on the reservation in South Dakota. It dates from 1986 and is displayed near the Capitol Rotunda.

COMMENT: The bust includes no biographical information on Wabasha III or why he was selected to be honored. According to Wikipedia, Wabasha III was one of the signers of the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux.¹⁹ The Dakota Lakota Nakota Human Rights Advocacy Coalition website has additional biographical information on him here: http://www.dlncoalition.org/dln_nation/chief_wapasha3.htm

IMAGE #14: *The Quadriga*

Perhaps the most visible piece Capitol art is The Quadriga, the sculpture with golden horses that sits atop the front entrance. This work was done by Daniel Chester French, an American sculptor who created the statue of Lincoln for the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C., and Edward C. Potter, a noted sculptor of animals. The Quadriga symbolizes the triumph of government and prosperity. The figure of prosperity stands in a triumphal chariot pulled by four horses. In one hand, he holds a horn of plenty overflowing with Minnesota grains, fruits and vegetables; in the other hand he holds a banner with a symbol of the state.

COMMENT: This sculpture dramatically captures the focus of so much of the Capitol art: 1) It emphasizes the wealth possible in cultivating this land of abundance, and 2) It emphasizes the government—the State of Minnesota with its in-migrating population—as the institution through which this land's potential will be realized. Progress, prosperity and continued expansion are evoked by the shimmering gold leaf surfaces, the horses' energy, and the group's forward surge.

¹⁷ Julie L'Enfant, Youtube video uploaded October 7, 2011

¹⁸ Wingerd, id. notes to plate 127.

¹⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wapasha_III

OTHER ARTWORK AROUND THE TWIN CITIES

IMAGE #15: *Pioneers*

This sculpture was given to the City of Minneapolis by the Pillsbury family in 1936. Originally located in Pioneer Park near the central post office downtown, the statue now stands in B. F. Nelson Park on Main Street Northeast. The artist is John K. Daniels, a Minneapolis-based Norwegian American sculptor. The work shows a towering pioneer family with the key tools of the pioneer enterprise: a musket and a plow.

IMAGE #16: Back panel of *Pioneers* statue

On the back of the Pioneer sculpture pedestal, a carved panel shows a meeting of pioneers and Indians.

COMMENT: Of particular note on the back panel is the image of a priest confronting the Indians with a cross, the symbol of his and his culture's spiritual authority.

Ramsey County Courthouse/St. Paul City Hall (Images 17-24)

There are four large vertical murals on the east wall of the chambers shared by the St. Paul City Hall and the Ramsey County Courthouse. They were done by John W. Norton, a well-known Illinois muralist in 1936.²⁰ We will highlight a few images.

IMAGE #17: St. Paul City Hall, Panel 1

The first panel in the historical sequence shows a French Canadian *Voyageur* with Indian guides. It includes images of the fur trade.

IMAGE #18: St. Paul City Hall, Panel 1, *In a canoe*

There is a small inset of a trapper and Native man riding in a canoe, the trapper has a gun, the Native man is paddling.

IMAGE #19: St. Paul City Hall, Panel 1, *Father Galtier*

There is a small inset of a priest, perhaps Father Galtier, holding out a cross at Native people.

²⁰ City of St. Paul website, www.stpaul.gov/index.aspx?NID=2085

IMAGE #20: St. Paul City Hall, Panel 2

The second panel in the sequence has a montage of settlers arriving and a city developing. The scenes include an image of a steamboat captain and the commerce and travel that happened along the Mississippi River.

IMAGE #21: St. Paul City Hall, Panel 2, *Cargo Loading*

One part of this second panel shows a young, strong African American man loading cargo.

IMAGE #22: St. Paul City Hall, Panel 2 *Treaty Signing*

Images on this panel also show a treaty signing. It is likely a reference to the treaty negotiated by Lt. Zebulon Pike in 1805 in which two men acting as the “Sioux nation” ceded territory that includes much of what is now Minneapolis and St. Paul.²¹

IMAGE #23: St. Paul City Hall, Panel 3 *Construction in the River Corridor*

The third panel in the mural shows a surveyor, laborers, and a railroad under construction in the river corridor. The natural landscape is giving way to development.

IMAGE #24: St. Paul City Hall, Panel 4

The last panel shows an engineer, furnaces, and steam trains. The city has developed; the Courthouse and City Hall are completed.

IMAGE #25: St. Paul City Hall, Panel 4, *Businessman Arriving*

The scene features the arrival of a modern businessman; an African American porter carries his luggage.

COMMENT: As in other public art we have seen, this mural has an image of a priest with a cross outstretched at Native people. (Other examples include a painting in the Senate Chambers and the statue in B.F. Nelson Park in Minneapolis.) Native peoples disappear after the second panel. African Americans appear as unskilled, subservient laborers. Also notice the natural landscape begins disappearing in panel 3, with few trees remaining. By the last panel, there is no hint of natural character of the river corridor.

Q: Which of these images in these four murals strikes you the most and why?

Q: What story lines do you see in these paintings?

²¹ Minnesota Humanities Commission web site, www.minnesotahumanities.org/resources/bdote/piketreaty.pdf

IMAGE #26: *Vision of Peace*

This three-story sculpture towers above first floor visitors in the St. Paul City Council/Ramsey County Courthouse building. Swedish sculptor Carl Milles was commissioned to do this work for Memorial Hall to remember the war dead. Milles, however, refused to create a work that glorified war. He developed the concept for this figure, originally titled “God of Peace,” after attending a pow wow in Oklahoma. The main figure arises out of the smoke from a circle of Native American figures with peace pipes. It is the largest carved onyx figure in the world. It was renamed “Vision of Peace” in a special ceremony in 1994.²²

IMAGE #27: *Sacred Bowl*

This sculpture is located in St. Paul’s Indian Mounds Park, the work of Minnesota native Duane Goodwin, a member of the White Earth Band of Ojibwa and Bemidji resident. Installed in 2006, it overlooks and protects the Indian mounds.

That completes the tour. We are sure there are other examples of public art that we could add to this review, and we welcome your suggestions.

To close, let’s return to the questions posed at the beginning of the lesson.

- **What is the purpose of public art, particularly in the halls of government? (To tell our history? To reflect our people? To inspire our future? To bring beauty into our lives?)**
- **Thousands of school children tour the Capitol every year—do the art and images they see matter and if so, why?**
- **State lawmakers see Capitol art daily when making key decisions about our state’s future—do the art and images they see matter, and if so why?**
- **What do you think of the artwork you saw today? Which pieces do you remember most and why?**

Healing Minnesota Stories is an initiative of the St. Paul Interfaith Network (SPIN). Healing Minnesota Stories grew out of a 2011 SPIN conference on religion and racism. Our group includes Native and non-Native individuals representing congregations, faith communities, secular organizations, and higher education institutions. We are calling ourselves Healing Minnesota Stories because we believe in the healing power of stories.

We would appreciate your thoughts and comments on this curriculum. Contact us at info@spinterfaith.org

²² Historic Structures website, www.historic-structures.com/mn/st_paul/city_hall2.php