Caŋsayapi

Ehaŋna k'a Dehan

Past and Present

Thoughts on Sovereignty
from the President

Sovereignty is the community's right, ability, and responsibility to make laws and decisions for our determined lands and our citizens and then enforcing those laws. The Community Council wields Sovereignty daily in meetings with our State and Federal counterparts and in educating agencies, organizations and the general public on our history, our future, and the meaning of Sovereignty. They may have their own thoughts on what it is or means, but we make them realize what it means to us.

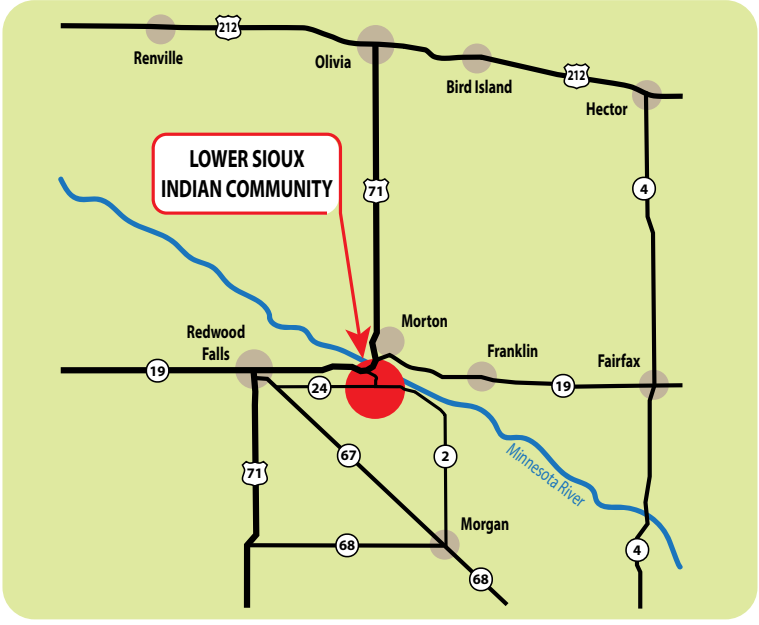
We, along with other tribes, fought to get State laws made that recognize our Sovereignty, including having Governor Walz's Executive Order 19-24 "Affirming the Government to Government Relationship between the State of Minnesota and Minnesota Tribal Nations" codified as Minnesota Statute 10.65. This law ensures that State agencies will at a minimum meet once per year in meaningful consultation with each tribe. Together we are trying to make relationships that work for both parties into the future. Whereas in the past, the relationship was more of a paternal one as the State did not think we could govern ourselves. These are moves for a better future for our citizens.

Robert Larsen, President
Lower Sioux Community Council

Welcome to Caŋsayapi

In the valley of Mni Śota Wakpa (Minnesota River) is a place called Caŋsayapi (chahn-sha-yah-pee) – "where they mark the trees red." Dakota people and their ancestors have lived here for thousands of years. Today, the traditional lands of Caŋsayapi are home to the Lower Sioux Indian Community.

The Lower Sioux Indian Community is located on the south side of the river opposite the city of Morton. The reservation shares geography with Redwood County and is centered around the intersection of County Highways 2 and 24. Jackpot Junction Casino Hotel is located to the immediate west of the intersection. The Lower Sioux Agency Historic Site is 1.5 miles to the east on County Highway 2.



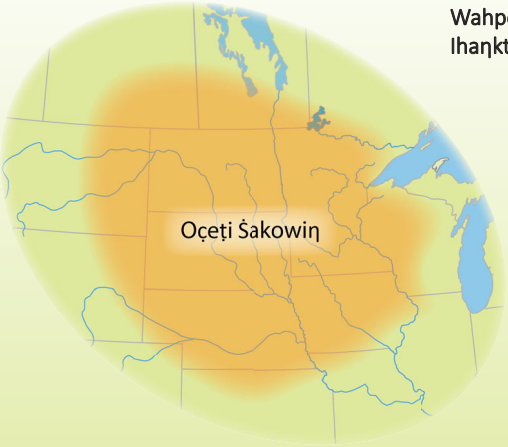
Mitakuye Owas'iŋ:

Mitakuye Owas'iŋ (we are all related) is a deeply rooted concept that embodies the worldview of Dakota people. All things, animate and inanimate, are related and interconnected. Our relationship with the world around us, including people, the land, and all things within our universe is reciprocal. Within this worldview, we each have a responsibility to care for one another and be stewards of the natural world.

This interrelated worldview extends to Dakota star knowledge, the cycles of the moon, and the reflection (kapémni) of star constellations above on the cultural landscape below. A Dakota origin narrative tells how the spirits of our people journeyed from the Wičhaŋȟpi Oyate (star nation) and took physical form on Uŋčí Maka (Grandmother Earth).

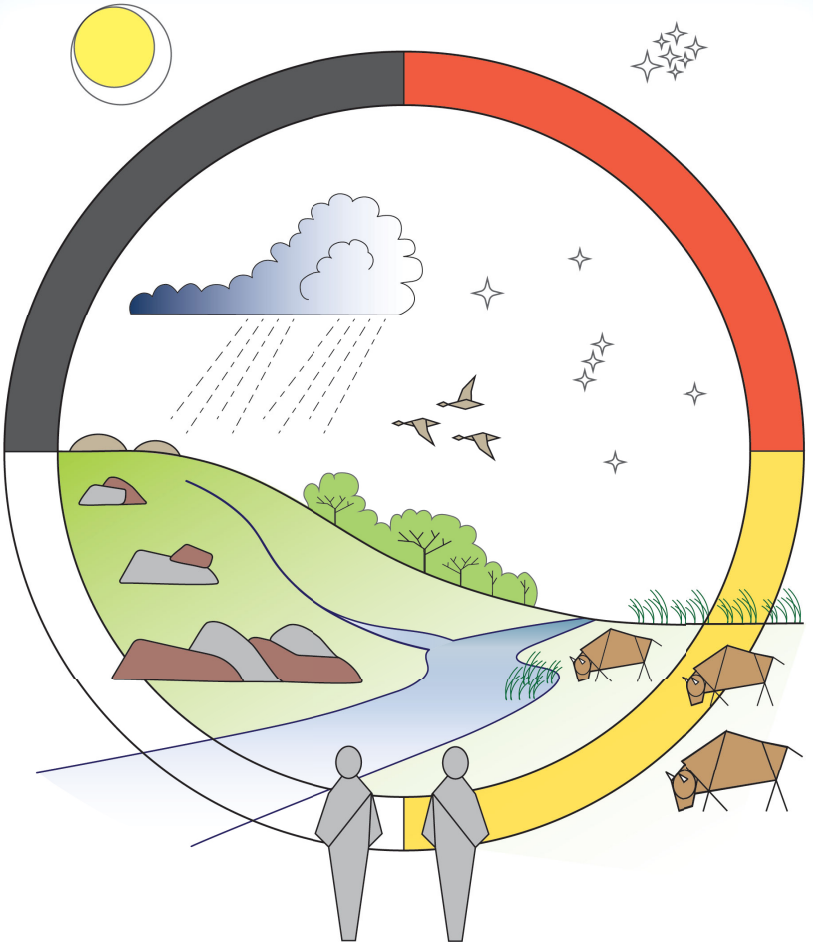
Mni Sota Makoće (land where the waters reflect the clouds) is Dakota homeland. Villages around Mde Wakaŋ (Spirit Lake, now called Mille Lacs) were home to the Mdewakaŋtoŋwaŋ - the "Dwellers of the Spirit Lake." The Caŋsayapi community traces its lineage primarily to the Mdewakaŋtoŋwaŋ Dakota who are one division of the Oceṭi Šakowiŋ (Seven Council Fires) commonly known as the Sioux. The Oćeti Šakowiŋ (Seven Council Fires) spread from the woodlands of the Great Lakes region west to the prairies and plains.

Historically, the Wahpekute Dakota were the closest ally of the Mdewakaŋtoŋwaŋ and they lived near each other both before and during the reservation period. These two groups are joined by their shared heritage. Other members of the Oćeti Šakowiŋ are the Sisitoŋwaŋ, Wahpetoŋwaŋ, Ihaŋktoŋwaŋna, Ihaŋktoŋwaŋ, and Titoŋwaŋ.



Mdewakaŋtoŋwaŋ may also be spelled and pronounced Bdewakaŋtoŋwaŋ. Because Dakota is traditionally an oral language, there are multiple orthographies (spelling systems) and dialects used across the Oceṭi Šakowiŋ.

We Are All Related



Connected to the Land

About 11,000 years ago, the torrential waters of a glacial river carved an impressive gorge through the plains. At Caŋśayapi the glacial meltwater exposed bedrock outcrops (considered some of the world's oldest rocks), created steep bluffs, and formed a wide valley through which Mni Śota Wakpa (Minnesota River) now flows on a narrower path.

The biomes of the region - the floodplain, the wooded bluffs, and the prairie - offered a wide variety of resources to sustain the occupants of the valley. Taȟča (deer), and occasionally heȟaka (elk), lived in the timber along the valley, while tataŋka (buffalo) roamed the surrounding expansive tallgrass prairie.

Archaeological sites reflect the depth of connection with Caŋśayapi. Artifact styles and radiocarbon dates testify to Native people living along the valley of Mni Śota Wakpa and using the resources of the surrounding prairie for more than 10,000 years. At Caŋśayapi are several sites that illustrate this heritage. At one site dating to about 7,000 years ago, buffalo, deer, bird, rabbit, and turtle bone were excavated along with stone tools for hunting and processing game.

Intensive cultivation has changed the prairie landscape, but the river and the floodplain continue to provide habitat for aquatic mammals, waterfowl, and fish, as well as edible aquatic plant life including psiŋ (wild rice), tewapa (water lilies), pšitoda hu (arrowhead), and wihuta hu (cattails). Here also grows tipsiŋna (prairie turnip), pezihota (sage), siŋkpe tawote (bitterroot), čaŋśaśa (sacred tobacco), and other cultural and medicinal plants.

Stewardship

Dakota people are traditional caretakers of the land and its resources. The importance of our kinship with Uŋči Maka (Grandmother Earth) is reflected in the Caŋśayapi community's commitment to stewardship through which we exercise our sovereignty and continue the practice of natural law.

The Lower Sioux Office of the Environment works to restore tiŋta (prairie), psiŋ (wild rice), and other traditional plants on community lands. Woodlands are managed for collecting maple syrup and other resource gathering. Invasive species are monitored and removed. The Office of the Environment also monitors air and water quality both within the community and the surrounding area. In keeping with the Dakota value of sharing knowledge and resources with others, the community published a guide to *Cultural Plants of the Lower Sioux Indian Community*.

The Caŋśayapi community is also stewards of resources associated with Dakota heritage and continuing cultural practices. The Caŋśayapi Cultural Department, which includes the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, Lower Sioux Agency Historic Site staff, elders, tribal monitors, and Cultural Advisory Committee members, undertakes the preservation, protection and planning for these invaluable resources tied to the life ways of the community.

The Cultural Department is responsible for the maintenance of the Community Register of historical and archaeological resources, traditional cultural sites, and burial locations within Caŋśayapi.

In consideration of the historical background of the Mdewakaŋtoŋwaŋ, cultural stewardship is not limited to the boundaries of the reservation. The Community places historical claims to other sites outside of its current land base including an area of over 24 million acres in the Minnesota River Valley alone.

Examples of culturally significant locations beyond the community that Caŋśayapi and other Native nations are deeply connected to include Iŋyaŋ Ša K'api / the Pipestone Quarry and the site known as Jeffers Petroglyphs together with other locations along Iŋyaŋša Bdowaŋzida (Red Rock Ridge).

Mni Sota Makoće:

Mni Sota Makoće (land where the waters reflect the clouds) is Dakota homeland since time immemorial. While it includes present-day Minnesota, it is larger than the state.

Long before coming into direct contact with European explorers, the people of Mni Sota Makoće began to experience changes in their way of life. Many Native nations suffered significant mortality as foreign disease spread across indigenous lands. The growth of European colonies along the Atlantic coast also displaced native populations leading to increased clashes as relocated groups in turn dislocated other nations from their traditional lands.

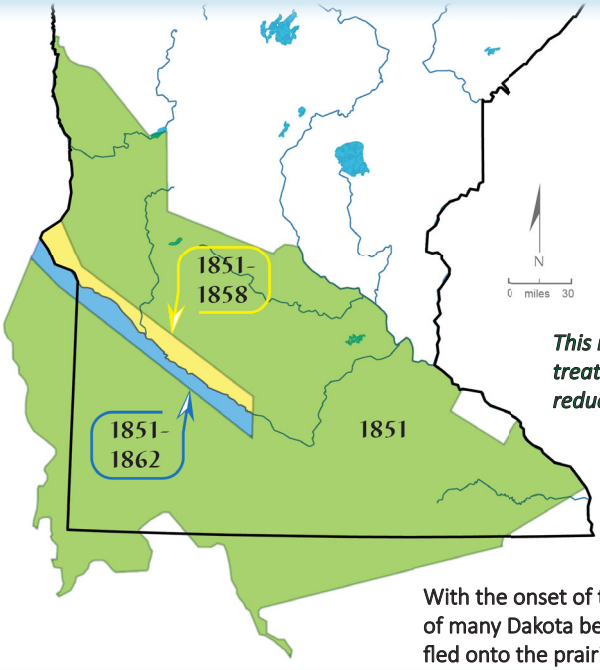
From the mid-1600s through mid-1800s, the Ojibwe gradually moved west and caused the Dakota to shift their villages from the northern woodlands to the prairies and river valleys to the south and west. By the early 1800s, the Mdewakaŋtoŋwaŋ primarily lived along Wakpa Taŋka (Mississippi River).

After 1805, Dakota homeland was further eroded by treaties and encroached upon. An 1837 treaty between the U.S. Government and Dakota nations resulted in the loss of territory east of the Mississippi River.

Fourteen years later, in 1851, 35 million acres of Dakota land, including the remaining lands within what is now Minnesota, were ceded to the United States. The treaties of 1851 created a reservation along the Minnesota River valley that was 20 miles wide (10 miles to either side of the river). This reservation was divided into upper and lower portions. Beginning in the fall of 1853, Mdewakaŋtoŋ and Wahpekute families were relocated from their homes to the lower portion of the reservation where they settled in villages to the east and west of the government agency (now the National Register-listed Lower Sioux Agency historic site).

In 1858, the lands of the reservation were halved when the United States negotiated for the portion north of the river. The 1858 treaties also left at the discretion of the U.S. Government how best to spend the tribal annuities (annual payments), intensified efforts to assimilate Dakota people into American culture, and sought to replace the traditional Dakota community system with individual farms. The level to which these policies were resisted or accepted led to increased polarization amongst the Dakota confined to the reservation. Dependence on the U.S. Government for annuities and years of poor crops resulted in further frustration and desperation.

Homeland and Treaties



This map shows how the treaties of 1851 and 1858 reduced Dakota lands.

As the United States became increasingly embroiled in the Civil War, promises to the Dakota were all but forgotten amidst graft and corruption in the Office of Indian Affairs. Frustrated and provoked by a series of broken treaty promises and by reservation policies that forced cultural change, Dakota soldiers decided to go to war with the United States in August 1862.

The fighting began at the Lower Sioux Agency on August 18, lasted six weeks, and took the lives of nearly five hundred whites, mostly civilians, and an unknown but substantial number of Dakota.

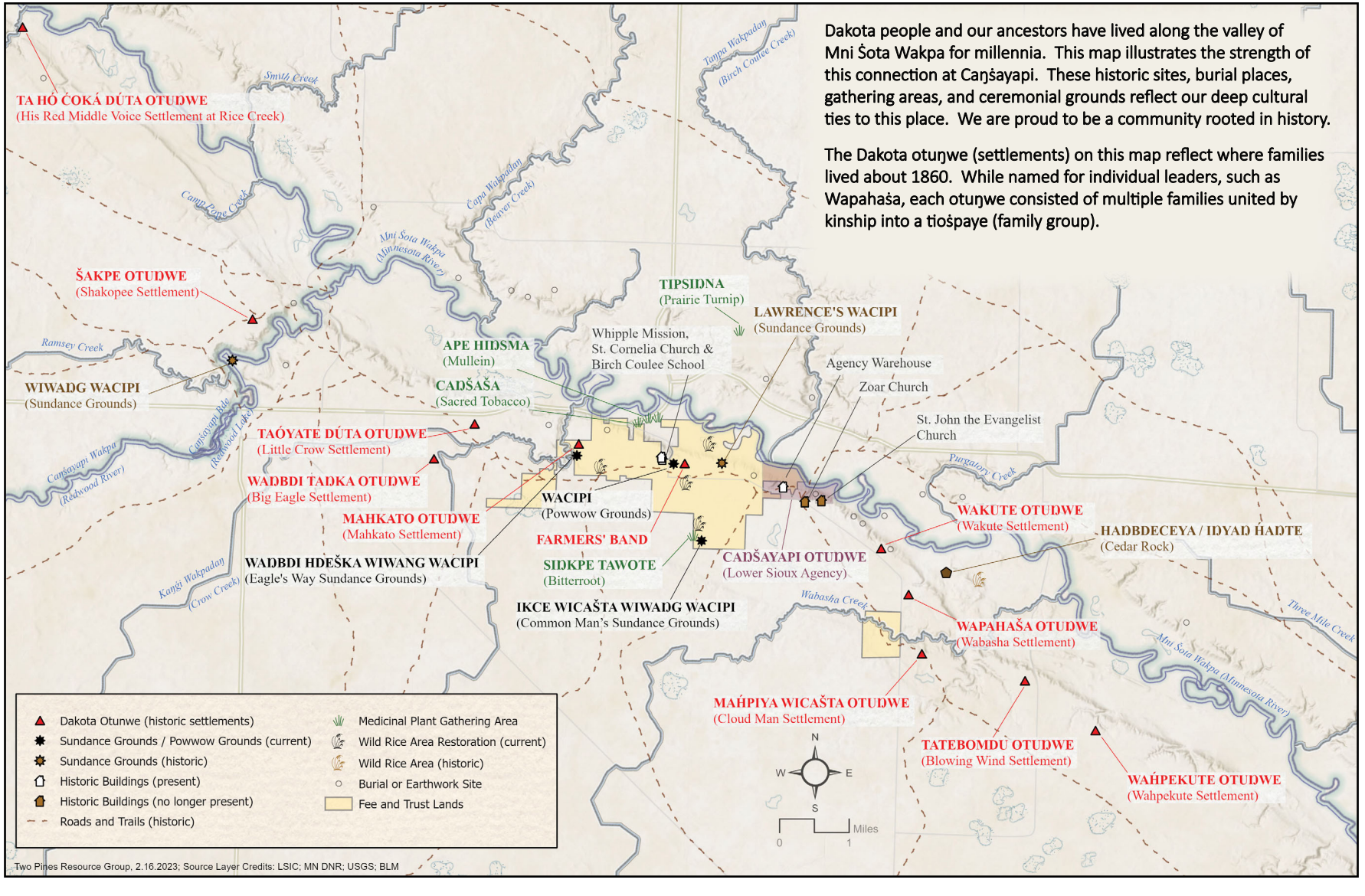
With the onset of the war, the diaspora of many Dakota began as vast numbers fled onto the prairies to the west and north into Canada.

The United States punished the Dakota by nullifying its treaties with them, including voiding promised annuities, and removing all Dakota from what is now Minnesota. Only a few hundred mix-bloods and their full-blooded relatives who had not been found guilty of participating in the war were permitted by the government to stay.

In time, the survivors that escaped gradually returned. Others chose to leave the reservations they were assigned to in order to live in their homeland of Mni Sota Makoće.

Lower Sioux Presence in the Minnesota River Valley

Dakota oyate kiŋ Mni Šota Wakpa Osmaka Ouŋyaŋpi



Caŋṡayapi Otuŋwe

Caŋṡayapi is located on the south side of Mni Šota Wakpa (Minnesota River). In the wake of the U.S.-Dakota War, when most Dakota were exiled from Minnesota, a small community returned to this area. In 1884, Wakiŋyaŋwaṡte (Good Thunder) purchased 80 acres. His example was followed by Charles Lawrence who bought the adjacent 80 acres. These lands formed the core of the Lower Sioux Indian Community.

The community was formally recognized and established by federal laws including the 1888-1890 Appropriation Acts, and the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934.

Mahpihdegawin and Wakiŋyaŋwaṡte, 1897

The current land base of the Lower Sioux Community consists of approximately 2500 acres. The reservation encompasses portions of the river flood-plain, the bluff slopes and adjacent upland area. The community continues to expand and reclaim Dakota homeland.

Today, approximately 145 families live at Caŋṡayapi and there are about 1,150 enrolled members that live within a 10-mile radius service area and beyond.

Sovereignty

Sovereignty is the natural right of a people to govern themselves. The Lower Sioux Indian Community is a sovereign Native nation with the authority and responsibility to self-govern. Native nations and forms of government predate colonization and their sovereign status has been recognized since their first interactions with non-natives.

Within the Dakota worldview, sovereignty is an innate right that extends beyond laws and statutes to encompass all aspects of life. Dakota are a nation governed by natural laws and traditional practice. These concepts are reflected in how the community governs itself and relates to other nations.

The Lower Sioux Indian Community created a constitution and bylaws under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. Both documents were adopted by a community vote on May 16, 1936 and their status was recognized by the federal government shortly thereafter.

The Lower Sioux Community Council has five elected members: President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, and Assistant Secretary/ Treasurer. Council members serve two year terms.

As a sovereign nation, the Lower Sioux Community protects and provides for the health, safety, and welfare of its members and lands through Tribal departments and agencies. Among the departmental responsibilities are cultural preservation, education, law enforcement, judicial systems, health care, environmental protection, and the development and maintenance of community infrastructure such as housing, roads, public buildings, telecommunications, and solid waste disposal.

Grounded in Tradition

The Lower Sioux Community upholds Dakota life ways, language, arts, and cultural traditions. These are all parts of a peaceful, balanced and connected life. This is the Wodakota way -- what it means to be Dakota.

The Caŋsayapi Cultural Department undertakes the preservation, protection and planning for the community's cultural heritage. The department manages the Lower Sioux Agency Historic Site (1853-1862) which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, as are St. Cornelia's Church (1890) and the Birch Coulee School House (1891). The school house is a rare example of an Indian day school that was attended by local children and not used as a boarding school. The Cultural Department also provides a voice for the Community where local, state, and federal projects may impact Dakota cultural sites across our ancestral land base.

Since 2018, the Caŋsayapi Waḳaŋyeża Owayawa Oti (children are sacred school) early learning programs have provided Dakota language immersion, education, health, nutrition, social and other services to enrolled children and families.

In 2022, the Community opened the Caŋsayapi Wicoicage Oti (place for generations) - a center that supports intergenerational engagement, cultural transmission, art and artists, and language programs. Among the spaces in the building is a public gallery, artist studios, a teaching kitchen, media room, a library, and classrooms.

The Caŋsayapi community has a strong connection with art. Among community members, 72% are practicing artists of a wide variety of art forms. Our community includes potters, bead and quill artists, wood carvers, dancers, quilters, writers, film makers, musicians, and more. Lower Sioux Community members began producing art pottery in 1972 and that tradition continues in the Wicoicage Oti.

Wacipi - *A Celebration of Life*

On the second weekend in June, the community hosts its annual Wacipi (pronounced wah-chee-pee) or powwow. This weekend-long event brings family and friends together for a cultural celebration of life and heritage. It is also a time to remember and honor relatives and to commemorate special occasions. All are welcome at a Wacipi.

Wacipi means "they dance" and dancing is at the center of a powwow. Wearing traditional clothing, or regalia, dancers participate in exhibitions and contests organized by age group and style of dance such as Traditional, Grass, Fancy, or Jingle. A dancer's regalia can take several years to create and may incorporate significant family pieces and objects that are sacred.

Each day's activities begin with the Grand Entry. This vibrant procession is led by flag bearers and eagle staff carriers, many of whom are veterans. Following the flagbearers are honored guests, tribal leaders, and elders. Then dancers of all ages fill the arena's circle. The host drum group provides the entrance song. The drum holds special cultural significance and is the heartbeat of the Wacipi and the people. The entrance song is followed by a prayer and honor songs for the flag and veterans.

Food booths and artists selling crafts, clothing, and jewelry are also part of a powwow gathering. Throughout the Wacipi, Dakota cultural heritage is preserved, celebrated, and renewed.

Dakota Language

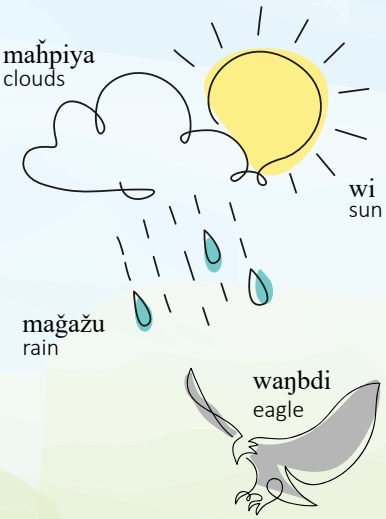
Revitalization and Restoration

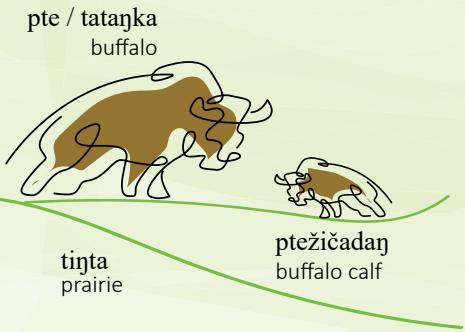
The Dakota language embodies the values, worldview, spirituality, and culture of the Dakota Oyate. The Lower Sioux Indian Community has prioritized the revitalization and retention of the Dakota language. The community is taking steps to revive the language and raise up a new generation of speakers.

In tandem with these efforts is the restoration of the use of the Dakota language across Caŋ̇ayapi. Examples include road signage and heritage interpretive markers in Dakota. The increased presence of the language on the landscape reflects the importance and deep connection of this place with the Dakota Oyate.

It is important to remember that Dakota is traditionally an oral language. Beginning in the 1830s, Christian missionaries developed a Dakota alphabet, dictionaries, and grammar guides for the purpose of translating the Bible and other writings into the language.

In spoken Dakota, the emphasis is most often placed on the second syllable of a word. Phonetic guides to help with pronunciation are provided in parentheses in the checklist. Syllables are separated by dashes. The stressed syllable is capitalized.





waniyetu
winter

wetu
spring

bdoketu
summer

ptaŋyetu
autumn

NATURE CHECKLIST

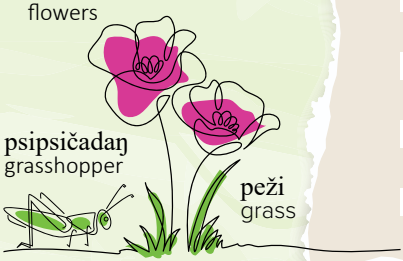
- ☐ ahdeška (ah-DAY-shkah)
  salamander or lizard
- ☐ čaŋ (chahn)
  tree
- ☐ čapuŋka (cha-POON-kah)
  mosquito
- ☐ četaŋ (chay-TAHN)
  hawk
- ☐ iŋyaŋ (EEN-yahn)
  stone
- ☐ kimamana (kee-MAH-mah-nah)
  butterfly
- ☐ peži (pay-ZHEE)
  grass
- ☐ psipsičadaŋ (p'see-P'SEE-cha-dahn)
  grasshopper
- ☐ pte (p'TAY)
  buffalo cow, also buffalo (general)
- ☐ ptežičadaŋ (p'tay-ZHEE-cha-dahn)
  buffalo calf
- ☐ taȟča (TAHK-cha)
  deer
- ☐ tataŋka (ta-TAHN-ka)
  buffalo bull, also buffalo (general)
- ☐ tiŋta (TEEN-tah)
  prairie
- ☐ waȟča (wahk-CHA)
  flowers
- ☐ waŋbdi (wahn-b'DEE)
  eagle
- ☐ wabdoša (wah-B'DO-sha)
  red-winged blackbird
- ☐ zitka (zee-TKAH)
  birds

kimamana
butterfly

waȟča
flowers

psipsičadaŋ
grasshopper

peži
grass



Language pages created in partnership with the
Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway

Lower Sioux Agency Historic Site

The U.S. Government established the Lower Sioux Agency in 1853 as an administrative center for the reservation created by the 1851 treaties. At the Agency, Dakota people maintained relationships with U.S. officials, obtained their annuity payments, and advocated for their community. When treaty obligations were unmet, the U.S.-Dakota War began here in August of 1862.

But this place is more than a flash point in the U.S.-Dakota War. Dakota and non-Dakota families lived and worked at the Agency, which resembled a small rural town. Here, and within the reservation, Dakota people defended their way of life through diplomacy, accommodation, and resistance. In the aftermath of the war, they returned to this place to re-establish their community and continue to exercise their sovereignty here.

Since 2007, the Lower Sioux Indian Community has managed the historic site through a cooperative agreement with the Minnesota Historical Society. In 2021, about 115 acres of the historic site were returned to the community's care and stewardship. The reclamation of the land benefits everyone through a richer telling of the multifaceted history of this place.

Visit the history center (Memorial Day to Labor Day) for exhibits on Dakota history, life and culture. Follow the trails past the 1861 stone warehouse and through the hardwood forests along the river valley. Interpretive signage along the trails tells of Dakota ancestral homelands, the early years of the Agency, changes that took place in 1858, the site's history to the present, and Dakota stewardship of the land.

Resources

Please see the following for additional information.

The Lower Sioux Indian Community
Community information and department contacts.

https://lowersioux.com/

The Lower Sioux Indian Community Wacipi
Held the second weekend in June.

The Lower Sioux Agency Historic Site
History center hours and additional site information.

https://www.mnhs.org/lowersioux

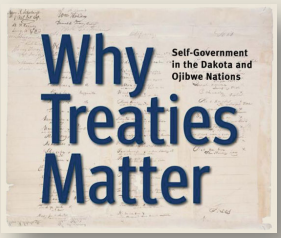
https://youtu.be/zQ8IvHtaI1A

Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway
Byway map and guide to Discovery Sites.

https://www.mnrivervalley.com/

Why Treaties Matter: Self-Government in the Dakota and Ojibwe Nations
Online version of the nationally recognized traveling exhibit made in partnership with the Minnesota Humanities Center, Minnesota Indian Affairs Council and the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian.

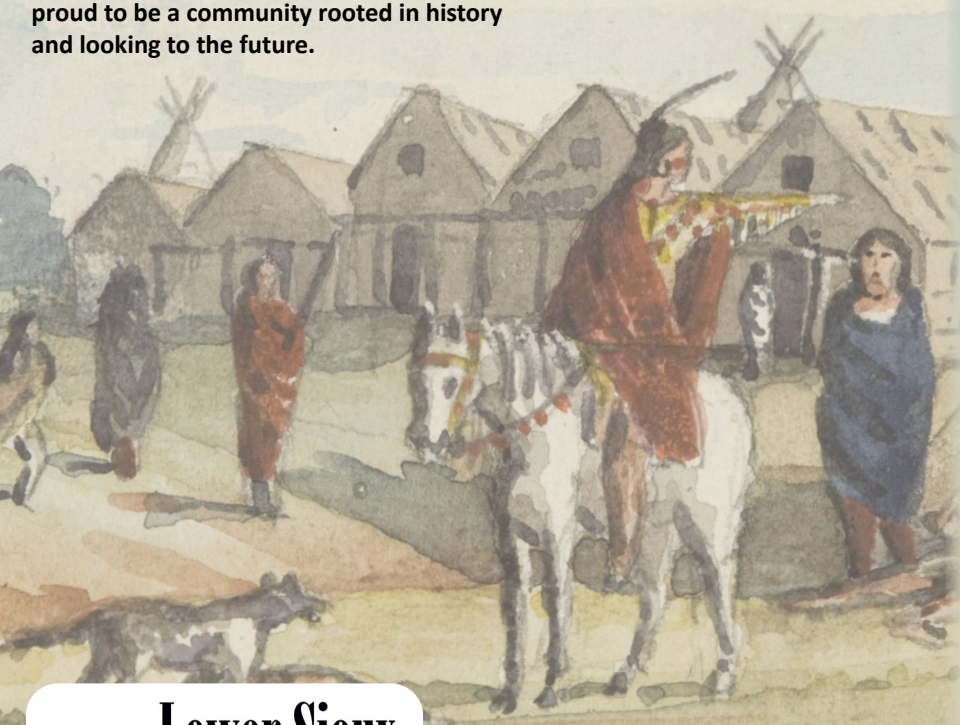
https://treatiesmatter.org/exhibit/



Back Cover Artwork:
Detail from "Indian Village Near Redwood" by A. Sully, c.1856, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

Along the banks of Mni Ṡota Wakpa (Minnesota River) is the area known as Caŋṡayapi, *where they mark the trees red.* Winter counts tell of ceremonies and councils held here centuries ago by members of the Oceṭi Ṡakowiŋ (Seven Council Fires).

The Lower Sioux Indian Community honors the deep connection of our ancestors to this place as we continue to maintain and strengthen our cultural practices. We are proud to be a community rooted in history and looking to the future.



Lower Sioux
INDIAN COMMUNITY
TRIBAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

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