



A Sacred Dakhóta Site Inspires Community Renewal

From Lower Phalen Creek Project to Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi

DANIEL W. MCGUINNESS, WITH MAGGIE LORENZ, PAGE 1

By the Numbers . . .

In the 1970s, land below St. Paul's white bluffs along Phalen Creek to the Mississippi was a mess: toxic soils, polluted water, an abandoned dump site—all on what is sacred Dakhóta land. East Side activists assembled as the Lower Phalen Creek Project (LPCP), and with help from other organizations, created a community vision to transform the site, daylight sections of the creek, and build the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary. Along the way, members better understood the sacred and historical importance of the land around them. They connected with and listened to Dakhóta community members and invited Dakhóta leaders to the board. Under Dakhóta leadership, the vision of the group transformed, as did the organization's name—Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi (WTA). Daniel W. McGuiness, an early member of LPCP, and Maggie Lorenz, executive director of WTA, share this history in "A Sacred Dakhóta Site Inspires Community Renewal: From Lower Phalen Creek Project to Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi" on page 1. Below are a few facts about WTA in 2022:

Events hosted by Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi:

- 18** Urban Restoration & Conservation
- 26** Cultural Connections & Healing
- 29** Environmental Education

Volunteers and volunteer hours:

442/1,299

Funds raised to daylight a section of Phalen Creek:

\$3.3 million

Funds raised to build Wakan Tipi Center:

\$13.2 million

Native trees/shrubs planted:

72

Trash removed:

2,500+ pounds

SOURCE: Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi, 2022 *Annual Report*, August 2023.

ON THE COVER



Lower Phalen Creek Project transformed a toxic site into a nature sanctuary. Soon, the organization now known as Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi will build its long-planned Wakan Tipi Center. Here, Mishaila Bowman, with longtime ties to LPCP/WTA, leads a group of bird watchers through the sanctuary. *Courtesy of Lower Phalen Creek Project and Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi.*

Contents

- 1** *A Sacred Dakhóta Site Inspires Community Renewal*
From Lower Phalen Creek Project to Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi
DANIEL W. MCGUINNESS, WITH MAGGIE LORENZ
- 12** **Dakhóta lápi: A Brief History in Three Parts**
- 13** *We Speak Dakhóta*
Dakhóta Uᅅkiapi
DEACON DEBOER
- 21** **Dakhóta lápi Today**
EILEEN BASS, JUSTIS BROKENROPE, AND AVA GRACE,
WITH DEACON DEBOER
- 31** *To Those Who Want to Know the Dakhóta Language*
Tóna Dakhóta lápi Uᅅspépi Čhínpi Kin
DR. REV. CLIFFORD CANKU, WITH ŠIŠÓKADÚTA AND
HEATHER MENEFFEE
- 35** *Imagining a Future that Doubles Our Impact*
Campaign to Transform Gibbs Farm
CHAD P. ROBERTS

Message from the Editorial Board

As part of environmental reclamation, a process called daylighting brings waterways previously channeled through underground pipes above ground. It returns water to its natural state, restoring ecological balance. Daylighting can appropriately describe this issue of *Ramsey County History*, as we present articles by and about Dakhóta people and their sacred connection between land and language (iápi)—what has been lost and what has been brought back into light.

In the Dayton's Bluff area, neighbors sought to reclaim Phalen Creek from the damage wrought by human impact. As this group revived the creek, they learned more about its meaning to Dakhóta people and how it is a corridor to the Mississippi and flows by a sacred meeting place—Wakan Tipi. Working patiently to overcome pollution, neglect, and the history of conflict and loss, what started out as a creek reclamation project transformed into something bigger. Dakhóta iápi was nearly *another* casualty of westward expansion. In Dakhóta tradition, land and language go hand in hand, and much like the land of the Dakhóta, their language began to disappear. A young generation of Dakhóta language learners and scholars show us what it means to care for their spoken and written word. Our everyday language in Minnesota includes many Dakhóta place names, words we say without thinking of their meaning. We have the capacity to learn much more about the land and language of Mnísota Makhóche—the place we all call home.

Anne Field
Chair, Editorial Board

The Ramsey County Historical Society thanks former Board Member James A. Stolpestad and affiliate AHS Legacy Fund for supporting the design of this magazine. Publication of Ramsey County History is also supported in part by a gift from Clara M. Claussen and Frieda H. Claussen in memory of Henry H. Cowie Jr., and by a contribution from the late Reuel D. Harmon. Sincere thanks to Harlan Boss Foundation for the Arts for their financial support.

From Lower Phalen Creek Project to Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi

DANIEL W. MCGUINESS, WITH MAGGIE LORENZ

The sound of celebratory singing by local Dakhóta drum group, Imnížaska, filled the cavernous Clarence W. Wiginton Pavilion at Harriet Island Regional Park in St. Paul on September 14, 2023, as part of the annual fundraiser for the nonprofit organization Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi (WTA). During the event, drummers performed in honor of Jim Rock, who was gifted a beautiful star quilt and a plaque for “stewarding and advocating for Wakan Tipi for over twenty years.”¹

In his acceptance remarks, Rock, of Dakhóta ancestry, noted that he grew up in the Mounds Park neighborhood, 200 yards from a place called Wakan Tipi—one of a few caves at the base of the bluffs next to an active railroad yard. Rock described the sacred cave as “a place in between” the earth and the sky and how we are “in between—in between our great grandparents, grandparents, parents, and our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.” He reminded guests of the concept of mitákuye owas’iŋ—the belief that we are all related in wótakuye (kinship).²

Eighteen years earlier, Rock offered a prayer and spoke about the significance of Wakan Tipi to Native Americans at the opening of Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary, which is situated on land around the Wakan Tipi site.³ That event was sponsored by the Lower Phalen Creek Project (LPCP), a once-informal group of neighborhood environmentalists. Now, on this evening in 2023, Rock found himself being honored by this same organization. However—the organization’s name had changed recently from Lower Phalen Creek Project to Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi (those who care for Wakan Tipi).

Readers might wonder how LPCP, which was started by mostly Euro-American volunteers interested in reclaiming an abandoned rail yard



To receive a star quilt as a gift from members of the Native community is a special honor, one well-deserved by Wakan Tipi scholar Jim Rock. Photograph by Tommy Sar, courtesy of Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi.

and nearby creek corridor on the East Side of St. Paul, eventually transformed into a Native-led organization with a new mission, vision, and values. LPCP changed slowly—over decades—as Native and non-Native people began to communicate, build trust, and recognize each other as allies. The result is a story of restoration of Native land, renewal of Native leadership, and revitalization of Native language and cultural ways.

That Which Once Was—A Brief History

As you might guess, this story begins at Wakan Tipi, and it ultimately returns there. This small but significant cave was formed through the erosion of sandstone and limestone bedrock by spring water flowing out of the bluffs just below what is now called Indian Mounds Regional

This image of “Carver’s Cave in Dayton’s Bluff” comes from photographer Edward A. Bromley. Prior to the cave’s exploration by Jonathan Carver and its renaming sometime after 1766, the cave was and still is known to the Dakhóta people as Wakanj Tipi. Today, the entrance to the sacred site is sealed. *Courtesy of Ramsey County Historical Society.*



Park. Its name translates closely to “Dwelling of something sacred.” Wakanj Tipi is part of a larger sacred landscape that includes the Dakhóta site of first creation at the confluence of the Minnesota (formerly St. Peter) and Mississippi Rivers—Bdóte. The cave was known to early settler colonizers as Carver’s Cave, named for Jonathan Carver, the first European visitor known to enter the site around 1766.⁴

“For hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years prior to European and American colonization, this was a place of gathering and ceremony for Dakota [and other Indigenous] people,” until the signing of the Treaty of 1837, when Native land east of the Mississippi River was ceded to the United States. Most Dakhóta people were forced west of the river and eventually exiled from the state entirely. Almost immediately, white settlement swept over both banks of the Mississippi River and along what would become known as Phalen Creek, named after Edward Phelen, who settled here in the late 1830s. Other early immigrants from Sweden, then Ireland, Poland, Italy, and Mexico, would take up residence along the creek in what would eventually be known as Swede Hollow.⁵

In 1855, North Star Brewery set up shop in two small buildings and a cave below the bluff near Commercial Street. Around 1860, Andrew T. Keller built a small brewery on the upper end of the hollow on land acquired in 1864 by Theodore Hamm. Hamm’s Excelsior Brewery (later Hamm’s Brewery) thrived into the 1970s.⁶

Minnesota’s first rail lines were laid in 1862 at the confluence of Phalen Creek and the

Mississippi River. Between 1865 and 1893, St. Paul became a hub of rail transportation in the Midwest. In the early 1870s, the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad connected the three cities and created a rail yard for switching and servicing trains here. To make room for more lines, the railroads removed seventy-five feet off the face of the bluff at Wakanj Tipi. In doing so, the entrance to the cave was destroyed, along with thousands of years of history embedded in the petroglyphs on its interior walls. In the early 1900s, James J. Hill had created the Great Northern Railroad, which used this land as a staging area for its famous Empire Builder passenger service west to the Pacific. By 1970, as train traffic declined, the railroads drastically reduced use of the yard.⁷

As St. Paul’s East Side grew, companies such as the Seeger Refrigerator Company (later Whirlpool) and Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company (later 3M) invested in the area, providing jobs and a strong tax base for the community. But, along with continued growth, periodic flooding and increasing pollution of Phalen Creek prompted the city to bury and divert the creek into a system of underground storm sewers—a process completed by 1930. Meanwhile, the once-bustling Swede Hollow deteriorated until it, too, disappeared. In 1956, the city declared the area a health hazard and forcibly removed the settlement’s remaining occupants. Left unattended, the ravine from Minnehaha Avenue and Hamm’s Brewery to the mostly abandoned rail yard near the Dayton’s Bluff and Railroad Island neighborhoods became an unofficial dumping ground and gathering place for people “riding the rails” for the next two decades.⁸

Transforming Our Damaged Land

In the mid-1970s, it took the wherewithal of Olivia Dodge and other members of the Saint Paul Garden Club, along with several East Side residents and the Saint Paul Parks Department, to suggest converting the unsightly area into a vibrant city park. This they did over the next fifteen years. During this time, the city restored a small portion of Phalen Creek above ground—a process called daylighting.

Phalen Creek historically flowed from the south end of Lake Phalen, meandering

for about four miles through what is now the East Side of St. Paul, emptying into the Mississippi River near Wakan Tipi cave. This creek served as a corridor for the Dakota people who lived here, traveling from the Wakpa Tanka (Mississippi River) . . . by canoe to Bde Mato Ska (White Bear Lake), . . . where they gathered psin (wild rice).⁹

Today, continued daylighting is bringing more of the creek back above ground to improve water quality and ecosystems, create new habitats, help with storm water management, and connect visitors to their natural world. From this initial effort, in 1994, East Side residents formed Friends of Swede Hollow (FOSH) to provide advocacy for the new park.¹⁰

In turn, FOSH created the Lower Phalen Creek Project. LPCP teamed up with Citizens for a Better Environment (CBE). CBE leaders Amy Middleton and Sarah J. Clark, along with Dan Ray of the McKnight Foundation, planned “to create a vibrant green space and improve the water quality of this Mississippi River tributary.” This would require cleaning up industrial pollution in the ravine and convincing the city to expand public parkland from Swede Hollow downstream to the railroad yards at Commercial and Fourth Streets. The vision was reinforced by a *Metro Greenprint* report prepared by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.¹¹

The 1980s and early '90s brought increased interest in reconnecting St. Paul to the river. City leadership, supported by nonprofit organizations and foundations, saw the Mississippi River and the Lowertown neighborhood as the next locations for economic development and urban renewal. With start-up support of the Lowertown Redevelopment Corporation (LRC) and its leader, Weiming Lu, along with the McKnight Foundation, twenty-five organizations, including the St. Paul Riverfront Corporation, collaborated to back LPCP.¹² At that time, the six LPCP founders had no intention of creating a formal nonprofit organization. Rather, they simply wished to revitalize the area by creating new parks, trails, and natural open spaces.

In 1997, the collaborators created a steering committee. Railroad Island resident, Kristin (Murph) Dawkins chaired the committee and

was joined by Karin DuPaul, Christine Baeumler, Carol Carey, and Colleen Ashton—all Dayton’s Bluff residents active in the Friends of Swede Hollow organization. Lu was also a member, representing the LRC and CapitalRiver Council. The committee convinced collaborating organizations to raise funds for consultants to further define the work and organize the community for specific projects. For example, in 1999, LPCP and the city received \$20,000 to stop erosion on the bluffs near the cave, and the Minnesota Environmental Initiative provided \$9,000 so volunteers could plant native trees and shrubs. Individuals used their connections to build support for the work, as well.¹³ Still, professional help was needed to provide focus and a unified vision. LPCP retained Marjorie Pitz, a landscape architect with Martin & Pitz Associates, Inc. to help.

In 2000, the committee also enlisted Trust for Public Land (TPL). The Minnesota-based, national organization identified a twenty-seven-acre site potentially available as a public park and trail link from Swede Hollow to the Mississippi River. Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad owned the land, located below Indian Mounds Regional Park. Most of the original buildings were long gone, but old rail sidings, some warehouses, and at least two known caves existed in the bluffs on the site.¹⁴

As TPL negotiated with the railroad, the steering committee rallied support and ideas from nonprofit organizations, district councils, the city, and government interests. With so many entities involved with their own agendas, there was potential for little progress and lots of chaos. Thanks to continued funding from the McKnight Foundation and LRC, however, most everyone got behind the task of creating a common vision and goals.¹⁵

LPCP published *A Community Vision for Lower Phalen Creek*, prepared by Pitz and Barr Engineering Co., in July 2001. The report summarized the natural and human history and current condition of the creek corridor as a mostly abandoned dump site with a few empty buildings. It noted that a place called “Wakan-tebee or Carver’s Cave,” a historic gathering place of Dakhóta people, was located here. The document also presented a compelling plan for cleanup and restoration of the BNSF rail

and industrial lands and the protection of the Mississippi Flyway for migratory birds through the creation of a proposed Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary. A year earlier, Bruce Vento, a long-time East Side resident, science teacher, environmentalist, champion of the unhoused and immigrants, and sitting US Congressman, had died of cancer. It seemed a fitting tribute to name the park after him.¹⁶

The LPCP vision also described the potential for multiple connections with local and state trails. In effect, the sanctuary was envisioned as the hub of hundreds of miles of pedestrian and bike trails. This would help community economic revitalization while protecting open space and natural habitat in lands adjacent to the trails.¹⁷

The report provided clear instructions, with ten strategic and phased action steps to be completed within six years, and it demonstrated widespread community support for LPCP as an emerging, although informal, organization.¹⁸

At the end of the plan, Pitz added a call to action:

Lower Phalen Creek Project is no longer just a dream. It is a responsible vision whose time has come. Money is on the table and plans are being made. The creation of the Bruce Vento Nature [Sanctuary] can happen with your support.

Help us reclaim this abandoned rail yard.

Help us knit together a green corridor, and create a sanctuary for migrating songbirds.

Help us learn from environmental abuse, and create an interpretive center where our children can learn about and respect nature.

Together, we can create a new preserve where the natural features that awed early river travelers on the Mississippi River can once again be revered.¹⁹

The vision gained wide support. Council Member Kathy Lantry, a leading proponent, called it, “The coolest project in the world.”²⁰

While the vision was being prepared, TPL secured funds and commissioned engineering and environmental studies to evaluate the site. Project partners expected that the decades-long industrial uses of the area likely contaminated

the soil and groundwater. It was important to find out what was there, what would be required to clean the site, and how much it would cost to make it usable as a sanctuary. Indeed, the location was toxic. Consultants developed a *Voluntary Response Action Plan* to remove contaminants or cap areas with clean soils.²¹

In 2001, TPL and the city retained cultural resource management consultants 106 Group to determine if the site contained any previously recorded or unrecorded intact historical or archaeological resources. There were numerous journal articles about Carver’s Cave and at least one other visible cave on the property. Also, historical accounts cited European settlement starting in the mid-1800s and the construction of a brewery, various mills, housing for workers, and railroad buildings. One of the largest structures adjacent to the property at the corner of Commercial and Fourth Streets was a four-story warehouse built in 1914 by Standard Oil Company.²²

Hoping the site would be acquired, LPCP retained Emmons and Olivier Resources, Inc. to complete a *Natural Resource Management Plan*, laying the groundwork for cleanup, removal of invasive plants, and restoration of woodland, savanna, and wetland habitat.²³

In November 2002, TPL acquired the twenty-seven acres from BNSF and, in turn, sold it to the city, with a seventeen-acre conservation easement held by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Soon, 106 Group began consulting with the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council and leaders of local Dakhóta and Anishinaabe communities to complete additional studies. In February 2003, they issued a report stating that Wakan Tipi cave was eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. This determination would play a pivotal role in the future of the site and the LPCP itself.²⁴

Efforts to move forward continued, and on June 21, 2003, 170 volunteers spent a combined 500 hours removing fifty tons of trash—tires, refrigerators, mattresses, coolers. Two days later, the Environmental Protection Agency announced it would provide a \$400,000 grant for cleanup of petroleum and hazardous substances. The activity spurred the Community Design Center of Minnesota Executive Director Ruth Murphy to create an East Side Conservation Corps. Over the years, hundreds of high

school students removed invasive plants, restored habitat, and built trails.²⁵

As 2003 ended, the committee reviewed actual and proposed expenditures for the sanctuary, with an estimated price tag of \$9.9 million.²⁶ But, LPCP still had no formal nonprofit standing, relying on a fiscal agent and cooperative partners. All of this required tremendous trust and many “handshake” agreements.

One Dream Becomes Reality—Others Follow

Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary opened to the public on May 21, 2005—five years after the *Community Vision* report was adopted. There, State Sen. Mee Moua spoke to an audience huddled during a rainstorm under a temporary tent. As local, state, and federal officials, Dakhóta educators, and representatives of partner organizations listened, she said, “For a project like this to succeed it takes many people getting together under one tent.” She smiled while looking out at the rain and noted that that’s exactly what happened. After the speeches, people gathered around Mayor Randy Kelly to discuss the vacant 36,000 square-foot, Standard Oil building near the sanctuary entrance. They urged the mayor to convince the city to acquire the structure for possible use as an interpretive center. The mayor agreed, and, in the fall of 2005, Sen. Moua submitted a \$5 million bonding request to the Minnesota Legislature.²⁷

An interpretive center would require a new level of planning, funding, and execution. The organization retained Pitz to revise the *Community Vision* document with a proposed acquisition of an additional 1.85 acres of land. In February 2007, Pitz presented schematics for two options: restoring the building or tearing it down and replacing it with a new structure.

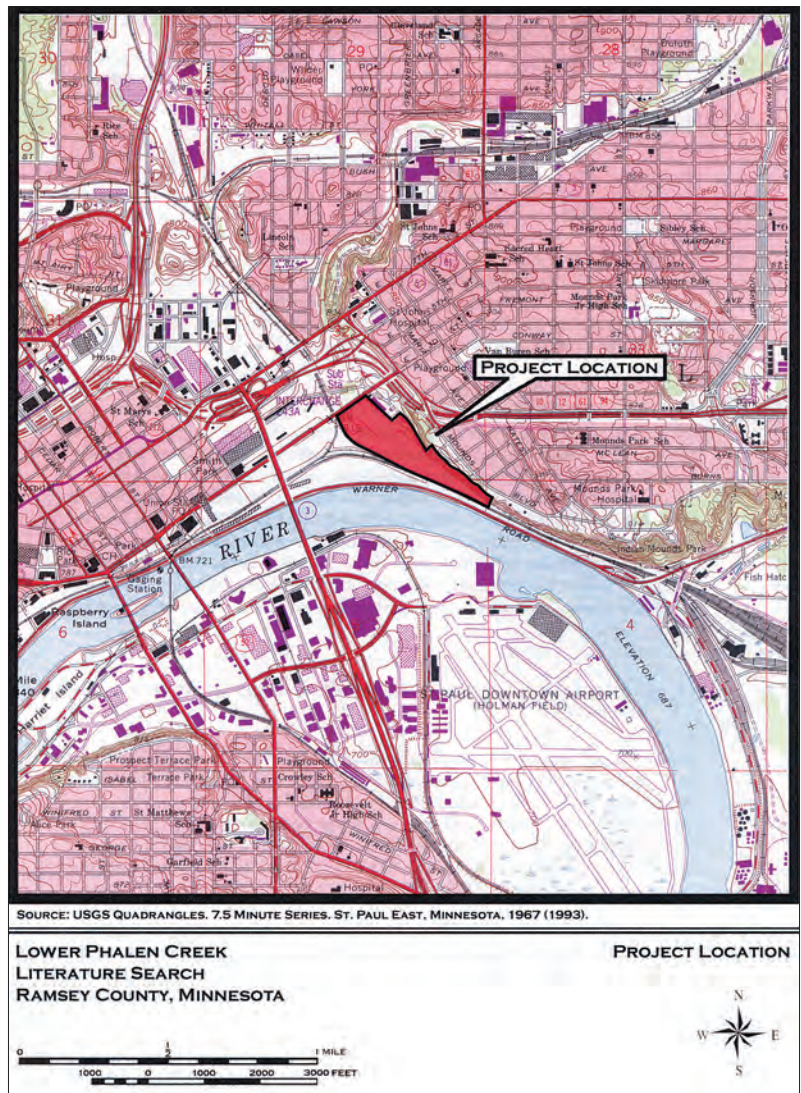
To add to the excitement, LPCP and the city organized a ribbon-cutting for the trail connection at the nature sanctuary’s Bruce Vento Regional Trail. The trail opened beneath the I-94 underpass on July 14, 2007.²⁸

LPCP continued to raise funds for land acquisition and for design and engineering work for an interpretive center. But this was difficult, as no one was yet sure if the center would be located in the existing building or part of a new structure. Nevertheless, St. Paul Riverfront

Corporation, the city, and LPCP teamed up to request \$4.3 million from the legislature. The proposal was approved by the Minnesota House and Senate only to be vetoed by Governor Tim Pawlenty at the end of the 2008 session.²⁹

On the heels of this disappointing outcome, TPL came through again and, within two months, secured funds from the Metropolitan Council to acquire the site and warehouse. The updated *Community Vision* was becoming a complicated vision and would require more than an informal neighborhood group to achieve success. It was clear LPCP had to become a formal nonprofit organization approved by the Minnesota Secretary of State and Internal Revenue Service. In 2010, LPCP prepared the necessary documents for a successful transition.³⁰

This USGS map was included in a 2001 literature search prepared by 106 Group to document archaeological resources. It highlights the project location at the bend in the Mississippi River. In *Lower Phalen Creek Project Archives*.





This 1914 Standard Oil building was an empty, abandoned eyesore. The city purchased it in 2009. For a time, LPCP had hoped to remodel the structure as an education center at the edge of Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary. *Courtesy of Dan McGuiness.*



Members of the 2006 Lower Phalen Creek Project Steering Committee helped bring the vision of Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary to life: *(back, L-R): Amy Middleton, Paul Mohrbacher, Weiming Lu, Christine Baeumler, and Dan Ganje; (front, L-R): Dan McGuiness, Karin DuPaul, Sarah Clark, and Carol Carey. Courtesy of Dan McGuiness.*

A New Mission

In early 2011, LPCP adopted a new mission statement to “strengthen Saint Paul, Minnesota’s East Side and Lowertown communities by developing and maximizing the value of local parks, trails, ecological and cultural resources and connections to the Mississippi River.” For the first time, LPCP specifically included “cultural resources” in its mission. However,

there was no specific mention that this was and remains Dakhóta land, stating only that the organization would be “inclusive,” and it would “honor the legacies of the past.”³¹

On March 9, 2011, LPCP held its first meeting with an official board composed of past steering committee members—Paul Mohrbacher, Chip Lindeke, Dan McGuiness, and Carey as chair. Sarah Clark was retained as executive director

In 2007, a small crowd of LPCP members, neighbors, activists, legislators, bikers, hikers, and members of other organizations celebrated the opening of an extensive trail hub through the sanctuary. Dignitaries standing just behind the ribbon include Weiming Lu, Kathy Lantry, Mee Moua, and Sheldon Johnson. Mayor Chris Coleman, Sue Vento, and Betty McCollum, among others, stand at the back of the stage. *Courtesy of the office of Rep. Betty McCollum.*



on contract. That day, the group approved documents needed to file for formal nonprofit status.³²

The first five years of the formal organization's existence were difficult as LPCP struggled to develop plans for the interpretive center. The team eventually realized the Standard Oil building was far larger than LPCP needed. Further evaluation showed it would be too costly to restore and operate unless there were other interested investors. There were none. So, in June 2014, LPCP agreed, in consultation with the city and the Dayton's Bluff Community Council, to remove the warehouse.

Under the leadership of Cynthia Whiteford, a new LPCP board member and retired TPL executive, the city and LPCP executed a formal development agreement calling for LPCP to oversee fundraising, design, and construction of a new center. LPCP would operate the center under a long-term lease with the city. Council President Lantry urged approval of the agreement on February 25, 2016. LPCP hired Melanie Kleiss as its first fulltime executive director.³³

Dakhóta Land/ Dakhóta Leadership

Over the years, members of LPCP began to build relationships with members of local Native American communities. LPCP learned more about the significance of Wakanj Tipi and the land around it. Slowly, this longer and more complete history of the cave and Dakhóta presence on the site and in the region unfolded. It took endless conversations and years of trust-building. It was not easy. Many Native Americans were unsure of non-Native motives. In 2017, LPCP crafted and adopted an updated mission statement "to engage people in honoring and caring for our natural places and the sacred sites and cultural value within them."³⁴ This act acknowledged the significance of relationships between land, water, and people. It was a turning point for LPCP and the genesis of the idea of becoming a Native-led organization.

Under Board Chair Daniella Bell and Executive Director Kleiss, Thomas Draskovic, an enrolled member of Standing Rock Nation and a teacher at the nearby American Indian Magnet School joined the board in 2017, and Mishaila Bowman (Sisseton Wahpeton Oyáte) joined the LPCP staff in 2018. That same year, the organization

renewed efforts to obtain state funding, rallying allies and neighbors to participate in an organized Day at the Capital. Significantly, both Native and non-Native supporters testified before the House Capital Investment Committee in support of funds for Wakanj Tipi Center. This time, the bonding bill, including \$3 million for the center, was passed by the legislature and signed by Governor Mark Dayton.³⁵

In March 2019, Kleiss stepped down, and the board hired recently appointed board member Maggie Lorenz as interim executive director and center director. Lorenz, an enrolled member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa with maternal ties to the Spirit Lake Dakhóta Nation, quickly drew praise as a leader and communicator thanks to her relationships with both Native and non-Native communities.³⁶

With Lorenz at the helm, LPCP recruited and elected new board members—Patrice Kunesh of Standing Rock Lakhóta descent and Dr. Kate Beane, a citizen of the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe.³⁷ Twenty years after the LPCP was created by mostly white neighborhood activists, Native board and staff members became the majority and took on critical leadership roles.

One significant driver in this shift came as a result of Lorenz's involvement in a Native American movement called Reclaiming Native Truth, a national initiative created by the First Nations Development Institute to "foster cultural, social and policy change by empowering Native Americans to counter discrimination, invisibility and the dominant narratives that limit Native opportunity, access to justice, health and self-determination."³⁸

At a staff retreat that fall led by Indigenous Collaboration, Inc., Native and non-Native participants sought answers to many questions: What does it mean to be Native-led? What does it mean to be an ally or collaborator? How does LPCP talk about itself? Who are "we"—including our organization, staff and board, and plant and animal relatives? Do our mission, vision, values, and goals change now that we have become Native-led?³⁹

During the retreat, the board promoted Lorenz from interim to fulltime executive director and center director. Soon, a five-year vision and messaging plan was developed to move the organization forward. The McKnight Foundation

provided support to LPCP to take a first step in implementing this vision by organizing and cohosting a “We Are Still Here Minnesota” conference in St. Paul in March 2020.⁴⁰

In June, Franky Jackson (Sisseton Wahpeton Oyáte) a 106 compliance officer for the Prairie Island Indian Community, and Glenn Johnson, an executive with Mairs & Power investment firm, joined the board. To complete fundraising for the center design, Bell and Kunesh cochaired a capital campaign committee to raise \$10 million by the end of 2022. LPCP set the stage for this final push by hosting an event on Monday, October 11, 2021—Indigenous Peoples’ Day. More than 350 guests turned out to the biggest and most culturally and ethnically diverse gathering ever at the sanctuary.⁴¹ Scores of state and city leaders and speakers, artists, and performers from across the community joined to dedicate three acres of the sanctuary as the future site of Wakan Tipi Center. Minnesota’s Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan (White Earth Nation), St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter, and other dignitaries joined Lorenz in thanking everyone for their help in restoring this space.

Representatives from Native American, African American, Hmong, and Latinx communities, along with people of white, non-Native heritage attended. Lorenz noted:

This place is holy and mysterious, and the ancestors of the spirits have chosen this

time to reclaim this place. Everybody that is here today, they have chosen you as their helpers. We are all here to make this happen.⁴²

Her comments echoed those of Sen. Moua seventeen years earlier at the opening of Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary: Here we are, all under the same tent. Both women spoke from the heart while standing at a place that has been sacred to the Dakhóta for thousands of years.

LPCP Becomes WTA

By early 2022, through consultation with Native elders and non-Native leaders and after several internal discussions, LPCP formally agreed to change its name to Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi. The word “awanyankapi” has several meanings, including, “They look after/protect Wakan Tipi.”⁴³ The board agreed that a Native-led organization with its focus on Dakhóta land, water, and people, should move forward with a Dakhóta name.

Finally, in August 2022, with additional funding from the state, WTA and the city broke ground for Wakan Tipi Center. It was another incredible milestone moment for the organization and the community. On a sunny morning, about fifty board, staff, donors, elected officials, partners, and community members gathered to celebrate and acknowledge this sacred next step.



Prior to the groundbreaking ceremony for Wakan Tipi Center at Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary in August 2022, guests were invited to participate in the spiritual tradition of smudging. Here, Thomas Draskovic, a teacher at the American Indian Magnet School, cleanses his hair and body with the sage smoke rising from a shell held by Nicky Buck. Buck is a member of the WTA steering committee. Draskovic serves on the board.



Many of those who gathered for the groundbreaking included (*third row, L-R*): Rose Whipple, Čhanțémaza (Neil McKay), Chip Lindeke, Ben Gessner, Barry Hand, Franky Jackson, Prairie Island Council Member Michael Childs Jr., Sam Wegner, Prairie Island Council President Johnny Johnson, Jim Rock; (*second row, L-R*): Maggie Lorenz, Mishaila Bowman, Fern Naomi Renville, Ying Vang-Pao, Nicky Buck, Prairie Island Council Vice President Shelley Buck, Dan McGuiness, Prairie Island Council Member Valentina Mgeni, State Sen. Founng Hawj, State Sen. Mary K. Kunesh, State Sen. Sandra Pappas; (*first row*): Tanağidan To Wiñ (Tara Perron). *Both photographs by Wolfie Browender, courtesy of Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi.*

The ceremony was highlighted by the words of Lak'hóta elder, Jerry Dearly, who led a prayer and offered a song for the success of the project. This future Wakanj Tipi Center—which is scheduled to open in 2025—will serve to *reveal* history. But it also will *make* history as it leads by its own examples and creates an important gathering place for all people to communicate and learn from each other through programs and exhibits centered around urban conservation and restoration, cultural connections and healing, and environmental education.

And so, in a span of twenty-five years, Lower Phalen Creek Project's mission, values, leadership, and organizational culture transformed as people from different walks of life listened and learned from one another. This metamorphosis was more than learning about the complete and often erased history of people and place. It required acknowledging and celebrating the truth that Dakhóta people—resilient and courageous—have always been here and are here today with a renewed sense of purpose.

The change for the organization was gradual but increasingly intentional. Longstanding Board Member Lindeke recently reflected:

I don't think there was a specific turning point . . . but when we started to focus more on the Wakanj Tipi Cave, getting Native support for our work and, in the

process of naming the building project, I think we definitely were moving towards a more Indigenous focus . . . I think this move was happening, and we didn't realize exactly that it was happening.⁴⁴

A Sacred Responsibility

The future is bright for this land and the original peoples who were given to this place. For Dakhóta people, it is not about ownership or rights, but it is a sacred responsibility to care for the land, water, and natural world that was gifted by the Creator. Colonization has interrupted this tradition, and yet, nothing has been lost. Dakhóta elders will remind the younger generation often that although some of the old ways had to be put down, they are still waiting there to be picked up—when the time is right. For Dakhóta people in Minnesota, the time is now and the work of Wakanj Tipi Awanyankapi will ensure that Dakhóta people have the space, freedom, and safety to pick up these teachings and step back into their rightful roles as the caretakers of their homelands.

Daniel W. McGuiness is a native of southern Minnesota and has lived in St. Paul's Highwood neighborhood since 1986. He is retired from a fifty-two-year career protecting natural and cultural resources on and along the Mississippi



In May 2023, at a Wakanj Tipi Center Exhibits Unveiling at Metro State University, Wakanj Tipi Awanyankapi Executive Director Maggie Lorenz (*third from left*) and Curator and Director of Programs Ben Gessner (*far left*) presented star quilts to some members of the WTA steering committee. These include (*L-R wearing quilts*): Fern Naomi Renville, Mishaila Bowman, Juanita Espinosa, Tanağidan To Winj (Tara Perron), Cole Redhorse Taylor, and WTA Board Chair Dr. Kate Beane. Pictured in far back is Marisa Cummings, president and CEO of Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center and the event emcee. Steering committee members not pictured include Čhantémaza (Neil McKay), committee chair; Franky Jackson; Samantha Odegard; Leonard Wabasha; Cheyanne St. John; Nicky Buck; and Darlene St. Clair.



At this year's WTA Pollinator Festival, guests learned about plant and animal relatives on a walk at Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary led by Liyah Archie, one of the Wakanj Tipi Indigenous Summer Youth Program participants. This is one of over seventy programs hosted each year by the organization. *Both photographs by Wolfie Browender, courtesy of Wakanj Tipi Awanyankapi.*

and St. Croix Rivers. McGuiness has volunteered with the Lower Phalen Creek Project/Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi since 2003. He currently serves on the capital campaign and governance committees.

Maggie Lorenz (Pabaksawin or Cut Head Woman) serves as the executive director of

Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi. She is Dakhóta and Anishinaabe and an enrolled member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Ojibwe. She also has maternal ties to Spirit Lake Dakhóta Nation. Lorenz has spent her career in the fields of education, cultural resiliency and healing, and environmental justice.

NOTES

1. Program for Wótakuye Gathering for Wakan Tipi, annual fundraiser for Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi, September 14, 2023, St. Paul, Minnesota.

2. Jim Rock, Program for Wótakuye Gathering.

3. Nick Ferraro, "From eyesore to urban oasis," *Pioneer Press*, May 22, 2005, C1.

4. Gwen Westerman and Bruce White, *Mni Sota Makece: The Land of the Dakota* (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2012), 219-220.

5. *Wakan Tipi Center Final Visitor Interpretive Experience Plan* (St. Paul, MN: 106 Group, January 5, 2022), 6; See "Treaty with the Sioux, 1837," in Charles Joseph Kappler, ed., *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties 2* (Washington, DC, US Government Printing Office, 1904), accessed through Oklahoma State University Libraries Digital Collection, <https://dc.library.okstate.edu/digital/collection/kapplers/id/29573>; Westerman and White, 127, 156-160; "Swede Hollow: A Capsule History of a Famous Saint Paul, Minnesota Landmark," report, The Saint Paul Garden Club, 1976, <https://www.stpaul.gov/sites/default/files/Media%20Root/Parks%20%26%20Recreation/Swede%20Hollow%20Capsule%20History%20-%201976.pdf>; Steve Trimble, "A Toast to the Old North Star Brewery," *St. Paul Historical*, <https://saintpaulhistorical.com/items/show/6#>.

6. Gary J. Brueggeman, "Beer Capital of the State: St. Paul's Historic Family Breweries," *Ramsey County History* 16, no. 2 (1981): 12.

7. Michael P. Malone, *James J. Hill: Empire Builder of the Northwest* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996); "Railroads in Minnesota, 1862-1956," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1986), section E, 8; Marjorie Pitz, *A Community Vision for Lower Phalen Creek* (St. Paul, MN: Lower Phalen Creek Project, July 2001), 16. Today, train lines still operate adjacent to and west of Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary but not on sanctuary land.

8. John Halter, interview with author, September 2, 2023.

9. "Daylighting Phalen Creek," Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi website, <https://www.wakantipi.org/daylighting>.

10. "Daylighting Phalen Creek;" "Brief History of Swede Hollow," Friends of Swede Hollow website, <http://www.friendsofswedehollow.net/about-us.html>.

11. *Urban Watershed Profile: A Look at Phalen Creek*

(St. Paul, MN: Citizens for a Better Environment, February 1997), 10; *Restoring Lower Phalen Creek: A Strategy for Revitalizing an Urban Watershed* (St. Paul, MN: Citizens for a Better Environment and Friends of Swede Hollow, June 1997), 3; *Metro Greenprint—Planning for nature in the face of urban growth* (St. Paul: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, December 1997), 42.

12. Frederick Melo, "After 33 years, St. Paul Riverfront Corp. to close in July," *Pioneer Press*, April 26, 2018, <https://www.twincities.com/2018/04/26/after-33-years-st-paul-riverfront-corporation-to-close-in-july>; Weiming Lu, "Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary: Empowerment towards a Community Dream," in *The Tao of Urban Rejuvenation: Building a Livable Creative Urban Village* (Edina, MN: Beaver's Pond Press, 2013), 132-133; Pitz, 3. Some other collaborating organizations not already noted include Railroad Implementation Task Force, District 5 Payne-Phalen Planning Council, Dayton's Bluff District 4 Community Council, and Upper Swede Hollow Neighborhood Association.

13. Dan McGuiness, personal knowledge as member of the board.

14. Curt Brown, "Back to nature in St. Paul," *Star Tribune*, November 22, 2002, A1, A17; Lu, 135-136.

15. "Swede Hollow Greenway Redevelopment Wins Major Support," *Lowertown Bulletin*, Summer 1999.

16. Pitz, 14; Lu, 133-136; "Vento, Bruce Frank," Minnesota Legislative Reference Library, <https://www.lrl.mn.gov/legdb/fulldetail?id=10686>; Scott Nichols, "City decides to condemn land if BNSF railroad doesn't sell," *East Side Review*, November 12, 2001.

17. Pitz, 36-41.

18. Pitz, 55.

19. Pitz, 56.

20. Karl J. Karlson, "Green revolution," *Pioneer Press*, November 25, 2001.

21. *Voluntary Investigation and Cleanup: Voluntary Response Action Plan, Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary* (St. Paul, MN: Landmark Environmental, LLC, 2001), 1-2. BNSF maintained a railroad facility on the property, and Standard Oil and the former St. Paul & Duluth Railroad operated storage facilities there. A gas plant was also located on site. Investigations uncovered "lead, mercury, arsenic, chromium, total cyanide, benzo(a)pyrene" and other toxins in the soils. In addition, the property contained fill materials—glass, brick, coal, slag, and concrete.

22. *Determination of Eligibility of Carver's Cave (21RA27) and Dayton's Bluff Cave (21RA28), Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary Project, St. Paul, Ramsey County, Minnesota* (St. Paul, MN: 106 Group, January 2023), 1-78; "Standard Oil Co," *St. Paul City Directory* (St. Paul, MN: R. L. Polk & Co., 1916), 1935.

23. *Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary at Lower Phalen Creek: Natural Resource Management Plan* (St. Paul, MN: Emmons & Olivier Resources, Inc.; MMC Consulting, Inc. and Lower Phalen Creek Staff; and Ingraham & Associates), December 14, 2001.

24. *Determination of Eligibility of Carver's Cave (21TRA27)*, 78. In 2021, LPCP initiated efforts to seek official listing of the site on the National Register, a process that continues at the time of publication of this article.

25. Brown, A1, A17; Mary Abbe, "Making Over the Mississippi," *Star Tribune*, June 15, 2003, B10; Dennis Thompson, "From Brownfield to Greenspace: Creating the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary," *Cleanup Review* 14, no. 2 (August 2005): 1-2; Tom Sweeney, "A St. Paul Sanctuary," *Star Tribune*, July 23, 2006, B3.

26. For more information, see "Steering Committee Reports," in the LPCP/WTA archives.

27. Personal recollection of the author, who attended the event, May 21, 2005; Lu, 139.

28. Beth L. Podtburg, "Biking, hiking celebration marks addition of a new trail link to St. Paul's mix," *Star Tribune*, July 14, 2007, B3.

29. Jackie Crosby, "Project aims to unite nature, urbanization," *Star Tribune*, May 9, 2006, B3.

30. Sarah Clark, "LPCP Incorporation Materials," in LPCP First Board Meeting Binder, LPCP Archives.

31. Clark, "LPCP Incorporation Materials."

32. "LPCP First Meeting Minutes," LPCP Board of Directors, March 9, 2011.

33. Frederick Melo, "Kathy Lantry toasted at her last St. Paul City Council meeting," *Pioneer Press*, February 26, 2015, <https://www.twincities.com/2015/02/26/kathy-landry-toasted-at-her-last-st-paul-city-council-meeting/>; Saint Paul City Council Meeting, February 25, 2015, https://stpaul.granicus.com/player/clip/2772?view_id=37&redirect=true.

34. "LPCP Meeting Minutes," LPCP Board of Directors, December 16, 2017.

35. "Lower Phalen Creek Project," Corvus North, LLC, <https://www.corvusnorth.com/more-client-spotlight.html>; "Capitol Investment Hearing, Minne-

sota House of Representatives, <https://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hjvid/90/890490>.

36. "Wakan Tipi Center," *TPT Almanac 2022*, 7, <https://video.tpt.org/video/wakan-tipi-center-39062/>.

37. "Patrice H. Kunesch," Administration for Native Americans website, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ana/about/bio/patrice-kunesch>. Patrice Kunesch recently stepped down from the WTA, as she is now "Commissioner of the Administration for Native Americans, at the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services." She also serves as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Native Affairs and as chair of the HHS Intradepartmental Council on Native American Affairs; Kate Beane is the executive director of the Minnesota Museum of American Art. She has a PhD in American studies from the University of Minnesota. She and her family have been leaders in the Twin Cities' community for many years.

38. Dan McGuiness, *Business Plan: Wakan Tipi Center at Bruce Vento Nature Center* (St. Paul, MN: Lower Phalen Creek Project, August 2019). This document is a good source of background and historical information about LPCP and the creation of WTA; "Reclaiming Native Truth," First Nations Development Institute website, <https://www.firstnations.org/projects/reclaiming-native-truth-a-project-to-dispel-americas-myths-and-misconceptions/>; Another good source is IllumiNative at <https://illuminatives.org> and their X (Twitter) site, @IllumiNative. These two organizations have helped LPCP/WTA board and staff find reliable information and guidance.

39. *Lower Phalen Creek Project/Wakan Tipi Center: 5 Year Vision and Messaging Plan* (Denver, CO: Indigenous Collaboration, Inc., October 2019), 15-17.

40. *Lower Phalen Creek Project/Wakan Tipi Center: 5 Year Vision and Messaging Plan*, 29-32.

41. Zoë Jackson, "St. Paul land dedicated for Wakan Tipi center," *Star Tribune*, October 12, 2021, B1, B3.

42. Zoë Jackson, "St. Paul dedicates land for future Dakota cultural, environmental center," *Star Tribune*, October 11, 2021, <https://www.startribune.com/st-paul-ceremony-honors-future-dakota-center/600105720/>.

43. See notes from LPCP archives from a special forum, "Acknowledging people and place at Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary," February 23, 2022.

44. Chip Lindeke, email correspondence with author, April 13, 2022.

Dakhotá Iápi: A Brief History in Three Parts

Editor's Note

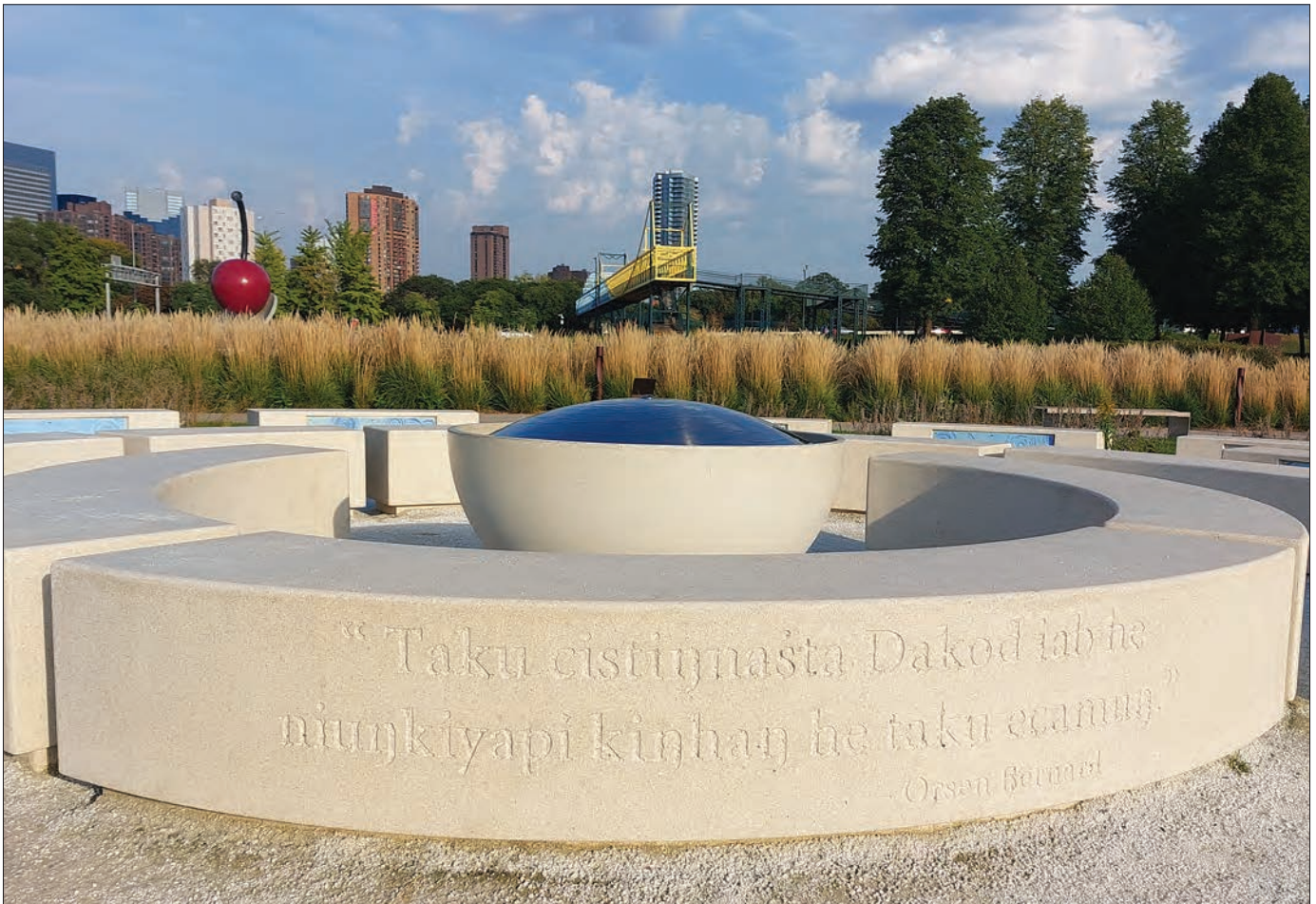
The following is a brief, three-part history of the Dakhóta language written by five University of Minnesota students who are studying the language through the school's Department of American Indian Studies. In their work, they have incorporated important concepts and constructs recognized and advanced by Native scholars, community members, and elders that illustrate and define Dakhóta history.

Also, we've included many Dakhóta words in the text with English translations. However, we have not translated everything and encourage readers to use the new Dakhóta dictionary mobile app—Dakhód Iápi Wičhóie Wówapi. In a state with an incredible number of place names derived from the Dakhóta language, this

app can help you translate and may inspire you to learn more about the language and culture. We invite you to scan a QR code below, download the free app to your phone, and look up definitions as you read.



Download the free Dakhóta dictionary app using QR codes (left: iOS; right: android).



Okkiyapi translates to "help one another." It is the title of a public art installation at the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden. Angela Two Stars highlights the relationship between Dakhóta language and culture across Minnesota. *Courtesy of Ramsey County Historical Society.*

Dakota lápi: A Brief History—Part 1

We Speak Dakota

Dakhóta Uŋkíapi

DEACON DEBOER

We owe the name Minnesota to the Dakhóta oyáte (people). Yet, many of us say our state’s name without a thought to its meaning in the original Dakhóta lápi (language). Long before statehood, this land, extending beyond current borders, was and still is known to the Dakhóta as Mnísoṭa Makhóčhe (where the waters reflect the skies or heavens).¹

It is important to recognize that Indigenous presence and relationships go hand in hand with language and place. Our original spoken language is crucial to Dakhóta identity and spirituality. Through it, we tell our creation story and our histories of Kap’óža (Kaposia) and Imnížaska Othúnjwe (St. Paul). Here, the land below the white sandstone bluffs that once was a safe space for our ancestors was degraded by a railroad—a railroad that decimated Wakhán Thípi (Wakan Tipi), a sacred gathering site for Dakhóta people and the dwelling place of Uŋktéhi.

As we interpret our early oral histories of this land and its people, we must acknowledge the spiritual pollution that has overshadowed places like Owámniyomni, Mniówe Sni, Bdóte, and Wíta Thánka through settler colonialism.

Stripping sites of Indigenous names strips them of their Indigeneity and context and can lead to the erasure of spiritual significance, relationships, and history. For that reason, it is vital to find ways to decolonize names and narratives that have formed within contemporary historical interpretations.²

One way to do this is by learning, sharing, teaching, and speaking Dakhóta lápi and improving upon its original orthography. That way, we can build stronger Indigenous relationalities that stem us to the land and our identities throughout Mnisóta Makhóčhe.³

In this first section, we examine the history of our spoken Dakhóta lápi, its conversion into written form, and its near erasure in the boarding school era.

Dakhóta lápi—In the Beginning

Očhéthi Šakówin Oyáte (People of the Seven Fires Council) is a confederation of seven tribes that existed centuries before tribal members were forced off their land following the US-Dakota War of 1862 and treaties were abrogated by the State of Minnesota in 1863.⁴ Today, many

DAKHÓTA		
Bdewákhanṭhunwan	<i>Dwellers at the Sacred Lake (or Spirit Lake)</i>	Mdewakanton
Sisíṭhunwan	<i>Dwellers of the fishing/marshy grounds</i>	Sisseton
Waḥpékhute	<i>Shooters among the leaves</i>	Wahpekute
Waḥpéthunwan	<i>Dwellers among the leaves</i>	Wahpeton
NAKHÓTA		
Ihánkṭhunwan	<i>Dwellers at the end</i>	Yankton
Ihánkṭhunwanna	<i>Little dwellers at the end</i>	Yanktonai
LAKHÓTA		
Thíṭhunwan	<i>Dwellers on the prairie</i>	Teton

For a list of Dakhóta place names and a link to Dakhóta values, go to <https://rchs.com/publishing/catalog/ramsey-county-history-fall-2023/>.



Joseph Renville's early life began at Kap'óža. He later worked from a mission in Lac qui Parle far to the west. *Original watercolor by Seth Eastman (1846-1848), courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.*

of our people reside in Minnesota and North and South Dakota. Relatives also live in communities in Montana, Iowa, Nebraska, and Saskatchewan and Manitoba, Canada. Though similar in some ways, the culture and traditions are unique to each oyáte and reflect their reciprocal relationships to the lands they steward.

The languages are also unique to each respective band. Members of the Očhéthi Šakówinj speak three variations or dialects—Dakhóta, Lakhóta, and Nakhóta. Traditionally, these were spoken languages—with no written records in the precolonial era.⁵



This replica of the original Lac qui Parle mission was built by the Works Progress Administration in 1942. The original building served as a Christian mission. Here, Joseph Renville worked with missionaries until his death in 1846 to transform the traditional oral Dakhóta language into writing. *Courtesy of McGhievers, Wikipedia Commons.*

This article focuses on the Dakhóta people and their language. In the past, the Dakhóta were called Sioux. The term may be derived from the Ojibwe word *Naadawesi*, meaning little snake; the plural is *Naadawesioux*. It was most likely misinterpreted by French fur traders. Some believe it is derogatory—insinuating a viper or enemy. Others consider it a description of the people living along the “winding snake river.” The four principal Dakhóta-speaking bands are Bdewákhantunwan, Sisíthunwan, Waǰpékhute, and Waǰpéthunwan. Because the Bdewákhantunwan Dakhóta lived primarily in what is today eastern Minnesota when Euro-Americans invaded their land, the Dakhóta language was the first to be converted from spoken to written word.⁶

On a Mission

In 1803, President Thomas Jefferson wrote of his vision for the Upper Mississippi River Valley in a private letter to William Henry Harrison, governor of the Indiana Territory, which encompassed parts of Mnísota Makhóčhe:

... to promote this disposition to exchange lands which they have to spare & we want, for necessaries, which we have to spare & they want, we shall push our trading houses, and be glad to see the good & influential individuals among them run in debt, because we observe that when these debts get beyond what the individuals can pay, they become willing to lop th[em off] by a cession of lands. . . in this way our settlements will gradually circumscribe & approach the Indians, & they will in time either incorporate with us as citizens of the US. or remove beyond the Missisipi [sic]. . . it is essential to cultivate their love. as to their fear, we presume that our strength & their weakness is now so visible that they must see we have only to shut our hand to crush them . . . should any tribe be fool-hardy enough to take up the hatchet at any time, the seizing the whole country of that tribe & driving them across the Missisipi, as the only condition of peace, would be an example to others, and a furtherance of our final consolidation.⁷

Today, 220 years after Jefferson wrote this letter, history teaches us that colonizers achieved their quest for land and power using many avenues—one of which was “put[ting] God’s thoughts into [Native] speech” by transforming a traditional oral language into written word. This happened across the nation, including in Mnísota Makhóche, where four missionaries and a translator made their marks on Dakhóta history with both good and, in some cases, ill-intended hearts.⁸

Joseph Renville (1779-1846) was born at Kap’óža near the Ĥaĥá Wakpá (Mississippi River), close to today’s City of St. Paul. Renville’s father, Joseph Rainville, was French. His iná (mother), Mniyuhe, was a Dakhóta wínyaŋ (woman). After living with his iná until he was ten, young Joseph’s father escorted his son to a Roman Catholic mission at a Red River settlement in what is now Winnipeg, Canada, to be educated in western ways of knowing. This early example of assimilation would eventually lead to new heights of classroom structuralism in the boarding school era.

Upon his return to his Dakhóta family, Renville wished to see the people around him adopt Christianity. His wife, Tonkane or Mary/Marie Little Crow (1789-1840), a Bdewákhax̄thux̄wan Dakhóta, also was born at Kap’óža and was the first Dakhóta wínyaŋ to become a Christian in the region. In 1825-26, Renville established a trading post—Fort Renville (originally Fort Adam)—in far-western pre-territorial Minnesota as an agent for the American Fur Company (previously Columbia Fur Company).⁹

Within the next decade, and, at Renville’s invitation, Christian missionaries Dr. Thomas S. Williamson (1800-1879), Samuel William Pond (1808-1891), his brother Gideon Hollister Pond (1810-1878), and Stephen Riggs (1812-1883) would arrive at Bdé Ieúdaŋ (Lake that Speaks or Connects), a dwelling site of Dakhóta people and their ancestors. Here, they helped establish a Christian mission—Lac qui Parle—where they would begin to forever transform Dakhóta íapi.¹⁰

The Pond brothers first arrived in Michigan Territory (1833-36) in 1834 as eager missionaries who wished to work with the Dakhóta. They’d been listening to and trying to learn and interpret the language by writing down spoken words

and phrases using an improvised mostly English (Roman) alphabet. Although the brothers were, at the time, not commissioned to do this work, Indian Agent Lawrence Taliaferro assigned them to settle between Lake Harriet and Lake Calhoun (Bdé Makhá Ská). This area was home to Maĥpíya Wičhašta and Ĥeyáta Othúŋwe (Cloud Man’s Village). Maĥpíya Wičhašta and his people had been working with Taliaferro to adopt “modern” agricultural methods. The Ponds helped with the farming. Between 1835 and 1839, another missionary—Jedediah Stevens—joined the brothers. He established a school for the Dakhóta children to, among other things, teach them English. This endeavor was not particularly successful.¹¹

At about the same time, Dr. Thomas S. Williamson, an ordained Presbyterian minister, and wife, Jane, traveled from Ripley, Ohio, to the Minnesota River Valley on order of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to work with the Dakhóta. Before long, they partnered with Renville at Lac qui Parle Mission in 1835. Accompanying the couple was Sarah Poage, Mrs. Williamson’s sister, and Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Huggins.

Soon, the work of gaining the friendship and confidence of the Dakhóta families began. Church services were first held in the Williamsons’ home, where Poage opened a school. Mr. and Mrs. Huggins taught farming methods on forty-acres across the St. Peter River. Dakhóta wínyaŋ tended to the plant relatives, and wičhásta did much of the hunting.¹²

Beginning in 1836, the Ponds divided their time between Ĥeyáta Othúŋwe and Lac qui Parle. Congregational minister Rev. Stephen Riggs and his wife arrived from Ohio a year later to provide additional assistance in creating what would eventually grow to nearly fifty publications in the Dakhóta language—referred to by some scholars as “the first Dakota library.”¹³

Alphabet, Bible, Dictionary, Treaty

Our object was to preach the Gospel to the Dakotas in their own language, and to teach them to read and write the same until their circumstances should be so changed as to enable them to learn the English. Hence we were led to study their

To see a Dakhóta alphabet, an example of Dakhóta words using each letter, and definitions, go to <https://rchs.com/publishing/catalog/ramsey-county-history-fall-2023/>.

language and to endeavor to arrive at a knowledge of principles.¹⁴

The Pond Brothers “contrived” the first Dakhóta alphabet in the winter of 1834-1835 from their small cabin near Lake Calhoun, taking an existing oral language with structure and descriptive beauty and creating a written language rooted in a Roman alphabet based on western belief systems and colonial values. Using an alphabet from one culture to capture the sounds and nuances of the language of another did not work well and resulted in an incomplete orthography. Samuel Pond acknowledged that “there are sounds in the language which no English letter or combination of letters can be made to express. . . . We took such letters from the English alphabet as are not needed in Dakota, and gave them new names and new powers.” And, of course, in the process of translation, language loss went hand in hand with identity loss—another function of assimilation.¹⁵

Beginning in 1836, the Ponds began collaborating with their mission friends at Lac qui Parle. Using the Pond alphabet, and through the combined efforts of Renville, Williamson, and Riggs, early Bible work was translated through an extremely complicated process. According to

Sichánŋu Lakhóta scholar Sarah Hernandez, the translations went from: “Hebrew or Greek (written) to European French (written) to Canadian French (spoken) to English (spoken) to Canadian French (spoken).” Then, Renville would slowly repeat and spell the Dakhóta words as the missionaries wrote them down for the new Bible.¹⁶

This work resulted in a slew of cultural and religious misunderstandings. One of the most difficult translations was that of the Holy Spirit. Because of difference in beliefs, there was no direct translation, so the missionaries created and defined the Holy Spirit in a language that is spiritually different. Waziyatawin, a Waǰpéthuŋwaŋ Dakhóta scholar from Phežihutazizi K’ápi notes, “By assuming control over the written language, missionaries were able to appropriate Dakota words and assign new meanings, which served to linguistically internalize for Dakota people the missionaries’ racist and ethnocentric attitudes.”¹⁷

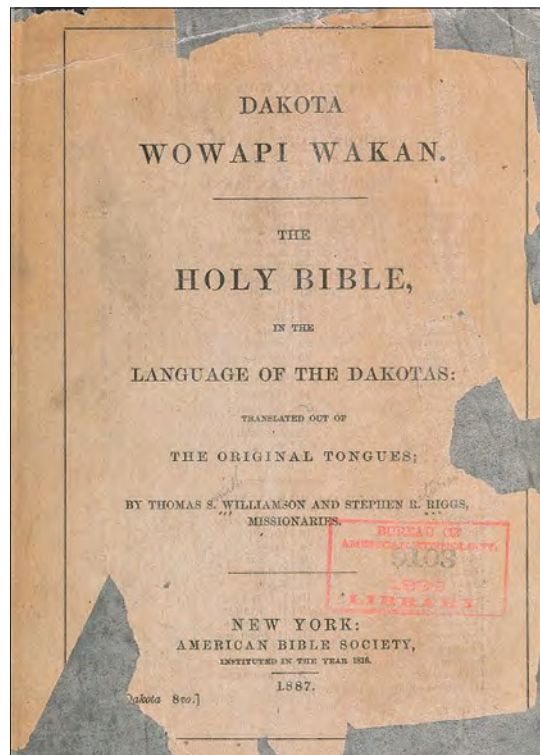
Translating the Bible, prayer books, and hymnals into Dakhóta íapi would initiate the conversion of many Dakhóta spiritual identities—as was intended. Hernandez adds, “These (mis) translations helped Christianize and colonize Dakota language, literature, life, and ultimately land.” After over four decades, the complete Wówapi Wakhán was finally translated and published.¹⁸

As the men labored over biblical translations, Riggs compiled lists of Dakhóta words and definitions, working to construct the written Dakhóta-English dictionary many are accustomed to using today. It was first published by the Smithsonian Institution in 1852.¹⁹

Between 1850 and 1852, the mission under Gideon Pond, as editor, began publishing a monthly Dakhóta/English-language newspaper, *Dakota Tawaxitku Kin* (*The Dakota Friend*), printed at the offices of two territorial St. Paul newspapers—the *Minnesota Chronicle and Register* and then the *Minnesota Democrat*. It was the second Indigenous-language publication in the US and the first in Minnesota Territory.²⁰

The four-page paper was meant “. . . to lead the poor Dakota youth to the love of reading, of civilized habits, and of the Christian doctrine . . . and to share news with the “white population . . . in regard to the Dakotas . . . for a more just understanding of their character and wants.”²¹

The missionaries began their translation work by focusing on sections of the Wówapi Wakhán (Bible) including “The History of Joseph” in the Book of Genesis, or the Gospels of Luke and John, for example. The full translation took decades to complete. *Courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution.*



The first English news item—first issue, first page—noted a murder trial involving two “Chippewa” men. Another article on the same page, “The Flight of the Sisitonwan Sioux from Traverse des Sioux,” lightheartedly reported that two cows decimated a Native man’s crops. The piece poked fun at the man’s despair. Many articles had racially charged bulletins depicting Dakhóta men involved in drinking and “immoral” behavior. Of course, Pond, as missionary, heavily promoted Christian-based lessons, an additive to the assimilation process. Finally, the publication came at an uneasy time of immense change for Dakhóta people, as government officials and the missionaries, who had been living with the oyáte for decades, were beginning conversations of land seizure on a momentous scale through documents such as the 1851 Treaty of Traverse des Sioux, which ceded more than 24 million acres.²²

When it came to some treaties, including the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux, Gideon Pond and Riggs translated the document from English to Dakhóta. With their power as translators and having gained the trust and kinship of Dakhóta leaders, the missionaries helped convince the Dakhóta that the treaty was “in the best interest of their people.” Perhaps, for this reason, Alexander Ramsey, Minnesota’s first territorial governor and its second governor, described Riggs and Pond as “useful auxiliaries to the government, and, in a thousand ways, of incalculable service to the Indian.”²³

These intentional manipulations happened time and again based, in part, on the fundamental difference between Dakhóta wičhóh’anj (lifeways) and western ways. The Dakhóta valued their relationship with Uŋčí Makhá (Grandmother Earth), whereas, settler colonizers saw land as property. Indigenous scholars and others believe missionaries took advantage of these differing viewpoints and understandings.

According to Hernandez, evidence suggests that Riggs intentionally mistranslated words in the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux: “sell” and “cede,” for example. He also helped translate what is today called traders’ papers—an addendum to the treaty added at the last minute and unbeknownst to Dakhóta leaders—“that forfeited more than half of the Dakhóta annuities to fur traders.”²⁴



Boarding School

In the early years of colonization, the missionaries worked to write the language down to teach it and Christian doctrine to the Dakhóta people. Yet, in a matter of decades, the US government would ultimately begin to strip access to the language completely—through federalized boarding schools.

In 1879, the first off-reservation boarding school opened in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. The school’s founder, Lt. Col. Richard H. Pratt, stated bluntly that the institution’s primary goal was to “kill the Indian and save the man.” Families dependent on federal assistance had little choice but to send their children to this and other schools. There, hair was cut, children were dressed in “American” clothing, and they were punished if caught speaking their traditional Indigenous languages.²⁵

Earlier this year, the Minneapolis-based National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition shared an updated listing of 523 boarding schools in the US that existed at some point since the 1880s. This list includes twenty-four in Minnesota, eighteen in North Dakota, and thirty-five in South Dakota. From 1884-1892, the Archdiocese of St. Paul, as it was known then, ran the Catholic Industrial School in Clontarf, Minnesota (near New Ulm), until federal funding for the school was pulled.²⁶

Regeneration

Despite manipulation of the language and then attempts to extinguish it, some Dakhóta families continued to speak and share the language, keeping the fires burning and keeping tradition, culture, and kinship alive.

Gideon Pond edited the *Dakota Tawaxitku Kin* newspaper from 1850 to 1852. He added the sketch to the masthead in May 1851. After the first twelve issues, Pond expressed worry over publishing costs and waning interest of Dakhóta readers. The last issue ran in August 1852. By then, it was clear that the ratification of the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux would force the Dakhóta further west. *Courtesy of Library of Congress.*

Šišókaduta (Joe Bendickson) on the Boarding School Era^a

Transcribed and edited with permission from an interview conducted at the University of Minnesota on November 1, 2021.

They would take our children away as early as six or seven years old, and they would take them sometimes thousands of miles away from their home and put them in these boarding schools that were funded by state and federal governments. They were run by religious denominations—different religions denominations—and, so, because of that, it was a combination of religious training and also western education. When you went there, you were told to cut your hair, take all your traditional clothing—they threw that away—and you couldn't speak your language. If you did, you were punished. A number of our people refused to go along with that. They tried to run away, and they'd be captured, brought back.

A lot of our people died at these places. There's graveyards at a lot of these schools, and now they're finding unmarked graves at a number of these places. So, I'm sure there's even more unmarked graves, and we'll be discovering that in the future here.

And after you got out of these schools, a lot of times, the children were about seventeen, eighteen years

old. By that time, they had forgotten their language. They had forgotten their culture and their traditions. They would go back home, and they would feel lost because they were no longer part of the world that they left—that Dakota world. But, yet, they didn't fit into the Euro-American world because of the color of their skin and who they were, so they weren't accepted, really, anywhere. A lot of times, it led to depression, maybe substance abuse problems and even, maybe, domestic problems. Before that, those things were really unheard of in our communities . . . and we live with a lot of those problems today because of the boarding schools.

Because of the trauma they suffered in these schools, a lot of these people, when they went back home, they refused to speak their language, and then, even though they probably still knew how to speak [some of] it, they wouldn't teach it to their children. . . . Thank goodness some of them refused to do that, and we can kind of think of those as our heroes today because they kept the language alive.

For more information about Šišókadúta, see page 34.



Students work at their desks around the turn of the twentieth century at this boarding school, possibly at Beaulieu near White Earth. *Courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.*

To hear Šišókadúta speak about boarding schools, go to <https://rchs.com/publishing/catalog/ramsey-county-history-fall-2023/>.

While the Pond alphabet/orthography was incomplete and incapable of capturing the nuances of the spoken language, it is the foundation of our written language. Still, Dakhóta first speakers and linguists realized that without correction, important elements of the spoken language would be lost, so other spelling systems have been adapted to better capture specific sounds and nuances, including orthographies and work by Ella Deloria, Albert White Hat, and others. In the 1980s, a Lakhóta man, Leroy Curley (Cheyenne River Sioux), also devised a forty-one character alphabet using the phases of the sun and moon.²⁷

These efforts to better capture our language and all its intricacies are crucial because the history and future of Mnísota Makhóche for Dakhóta people is rooted in Dakhóta íápi. We must remember that as wáǵačhaŋ (cottonwood) is dependent on annual flooding for regeneration, our language depends on our daily use and

continued efforts at improvement so that it may be passed on to the next seven generations and never forgotten.

Hello my relatives, I greet you with a kind heart and a handshake. In English, my name is Deacon DeBoer. I am Dakhóta and wašiču. I grew up on the land where they dig for the Yellow Medicine along the Mnísóta Wakpá (Minnesota River) and Čhetáŋ Wakpádaŋ (Hawk Creek), near present-day Granite Falls. Now, I live in Minneapolis and am a graduate student at the University of Minnesota in the heritage studies and public history program studying historical preservation and cultural resource management. My areas of focus include applying traditional ecological management and constructing frameworks of indigeneity and reciprocity that can be modeled in relation to the historical memory of the landscape, as well as decolonizing narratives through truth-telling and Dakhóta íápi kin.

NOTES

1. Mnísota Makhóche extends beyond the modern borders of Minnesota and is the ancestral and contemporary homeland of the Dakhóta people, the Anishinaabe, and other Indigenous peoples. While our publication traditionally focuses on the history of Ramsey County, the history of the Dakhóta and sacred sites highlighted in this issue extend throughout and beyond the Twin Cities area.

2. Waziyatawin, *What Does Justice Look Like? The Struggle for Liberation in Dakota Homeland* (St. Paul, MN: Living Justice Press, 2008), 14.

3. Sandra Littletree, Miranda Belarde-Lewis, and Marissa Duarte, "Centering Relationality: A Conceptual Model to Advance Indigenous Knowledge Organization Practices," *Knowledge Organization* 47, no. 5 (2020), 414. Relationality is "... the acknowledgement that we all exist in relationship to each other, the natural world, ideas, the cosmos, objects, ancestors, and future generations, and furthermore, that we are accountable to those relationships."

4. For information on the US-Dakota War of 1862, see <https://www.usdakotawar.org/>.

5. "Oceti Sakowin Nation," Smithsonian: National Museum of the American Indian, <https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/plains-belonging-homelands/oceti-sakowin#>.

6. "The Sioux: Background Info," University of Minnesota, Duluth website, <https://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/tbacig/studproj/a1041/mnansx1800/sioux.htm>; "Sioux Native Americans: Their History, Culture, and Traditions," *Native Hope* (blog), August 1, 2021,

<https://blog.nativehope.org/sioux-native-americans-their-history-culture-and-traditions>; Sarah Hernandez, *We Are the Stars: Colonizing and Decolonizing the Oceti Sakowin Literary Tradition* (Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 2023), xiii.

7. Thomas Jefferson, letter to William Henry Harrison, February 27, 1803, in *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-39-02-0500>, [Original source: *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* 39, November 13 1802-March 3 1803, ed. Barbara B. Oberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 589–593]; "Indiana Territory," *The Indiana Historian*, 1999, 2–8. Thomas Jefferson wrote to William Henry Harrison in 1803. Harrison was governor of Indiana Territory—formed in 1800 when Congress split the Northwest Territory. Jefferson noted this letter was intended to be "unofficial, & private [so that] I may with safety give you a more extensive view of our policy respecting the Indians, that you may the better comprehend the parts dealt out to you in detail through the official channel, and observing the system of which they make a part, conduct yourself in unison with it in cases where you are obliged to act without instruction."

8. Sarah Hernandez, xiii.

9. Rev. E. D. Neill, *A sketch of Joseph Renville: a 'Bois Brule' and early trader of Minnesota* (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society, 1872), <https://www.loc.gov/item/18008726/>.

10. "File Summary," Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Dakota Mission collection [microform]

1862-1928, <https://researchworks.oclc.org/archivegrid/collection/data/71380047>; “Lac qui Parle Mission,” Minnesota Historical Society website, <https://www.mnhs.org/lacquiparle>.

11. Hernandez, 34; Mark Dietrich, “Cloud Man, the Dakota Leader, and his Life and Times,” *Ramsey County History* 36, no. 1, (2001): 4, 7-11. A young girl from New York—Jane DeBow (Gibbs)—accompanied Rev. Stevens. While Stevens was not particularly successful teaching the English language to the Dakhóta (nor did he bother to learn the Dakhóta language), Jane, as a child, did learn to speak it, which would help her reconnect with Dakhóta friends when she and her husband established a farm north of St. Paul. RCHS has operated this historic site since 1949.

12. “Takoo Wakan to Christian Faith: 126 Years Mission to the Dakota Indians,” pageant program, July 15-16, 1961, 1-4, from the collection of the Johnson/Rouillard family, relations of author Deacon DeBoer.

13. Hernandez, 30.

14. S. R. Riggs, “Preface,” *Grammar and Dictionary in the Dakota Language* (Washington, DC: The Smithsonian Institution, 1852), xiii.

15. “The History of the Dakota Mission,” Pond Dakota Heritage Society, <https://ponddakota.org/the-story/history-of-the-dakota-mission>; “The Narrative of Samuel Pond,” reprinted in Theodore C. Blegin, “Two Missionaries in the Sioux Country,” *Minnesota History* 21, no. 1 (1940): 25; Šišókadúta, conversation with editor, October 17, 2023.

16. Hernandez, 39.

17. Hernandez, 40; Waziyatawinj, 53.

18. Hernandez, 43, 41; Thomas S. Williamson and Stephen R. Riggs, *Dakota Wowapi Wakan: The Holy Bible in the Language of the Dakotas* (New York: American Bible Society, 1880); The Pond Dakota Heritage Society provides a listing with links of many of the missionaries’ Dakhóta translation works over decades, including Gospels, hymnals, reading books, and catechisms. See <https://ponddakota.org/resources/dakota-language-resources/dakota-translations>. The complete Bible was published after decades of work and is one of only six complete editions published worldwide in an Indigenous language.

19. J. W. Powell, “Note by the Director,” in Stephen Return Riggs, *A Dakota-English Dictionary* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1890), 5.

20. “*Dakota Tawaxitku Kin*, or, *The Dakota Friend*,” Minnesota Historical Society, <https://www.mnhs.org/newspapers/hub/dakota-friend>; “*Iápi Oaye* – Vital Statistics Listing,” South Dakota State Historical Society,

<https://history.sd.gov/archives/iapioaye.aspx>. The first Dakhóta-language monthly newspaper was *Iápi Oaye*. Missionaries started the paper in Greenwood, Dakota Territory. It was later produced in Santee, Nebraska. The paper ran almost seventy years (May 1871-March 1939—the longest running Indigenous-language newspaper in US history).

21. “*Dakota Tawaxitku Kin*, or, *The Dakota Friend*,” Gideon Pond, “Prospectus of the Dakota Friend,” *Dakota Tawaxitku Kin* 1, no. 1, (1850): 4; Gideon Pond, “To Subscribers,” *Dakota Tawaxitku Kin* 1, no. 12, (1851): 3.

22. “Two Chippewas for murder” and “The Flight of the Sisitonwan Sioux from Traverse des Sioux,” *Dakota Tawaxitku Kin* 1, no. 1, (1850): 1; “Traverse des Sioux,” Minnesota Historical Society, <https://www.mnhs.org/traversedessioux/learn>.

23. Hernandez, 50.

24. Hernandez, 51. See Gwen Westerman and Bruce White, “Treaty of Traverse des Sioux: Three Versions,” in *Mni Sota Makoce: The Land of the Dakota* (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2012), 173-182. See Gwen N. Westerman, “Treaties Are More Than a Piece of Paper: Why Words Matter,” *Government Law Review* 10, no. 1 (April 27, 2017): 305-309, <https://www.albanygovernmentlawreview.org/article/23989-treaties-are-more-than-a-piece-of-paper-why-words-matter>.

25. Sarah Doran, “How many Native American boarding schools were there in Minnesota?” *Star Tribune*, September 30, 2022, <https://www.startribune.com/native-american-boarding-schools-minnesota/600211771/>.

26. “List of Indian Boarding Schools in the United States,” National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, <https://boardingschoolhealing.org/list/>; To learn about this organization, go to <https://boardingschoolhealing.org/about-us/>; Maria Wiering, “Archdiocese ran rural Indian boarding school from 1884-1892,” *The Catholic Spirit*, April 26, 2022, <https://thecatholicspirit.com/news/local-news/archdiocese-ran-rural-indian-boarding-school-from-1884-1892/>.

27. Šišókadúta, conversation with editor.

Note for sidebar on page 18

a. “Šišókaduta (Joe Bendickson) on the boarding school era,” transcript of recording, in Šišókaduta A keeper of the language,” University of Minnesota News & Events webpage, <https://twin-cities.umn.edu/news-events/sisokaduta-keeper-language>.

Dakhoṭa íápi Today

EILEEN BASS, JUSTIS BROKENROPE, AND AVA GRACE,
WITH DEACON DEBOER

... I do what I do so that I can go to any Dakhoṭa place and speak Dakhoṭa with children and actually have a conversation. So, whatever it takes to get to that: one idea amongst many is creating community. If you want to learn German, you can go to Germany. But if you want to learn Dakhoṭa, there's no land base ... where that's the only thing you see, hear, and experience. But, we can create that. Whether it's a mobile community, whether it's in our homes, whether it's in a classroom. ... It'd really be nice just to have a place to shoot the breeze in Dakhoṭa.¹

This reflection by Čhaṇṭémaza (Neil McKay), a University of Minnesota language instructor, illustrates the hunger of many Dakhoṭa in the Twin Cities to hear their language spoken while walking around town; see it written on street, park, and business signs; find it celebrated in the arts and literature; and understand that their sacred language is being strengthened by a growing number of second-language learners. This is crucial because—the reality is—there is just ONE first-language speaker still living in Minnesota. Without action, the threat exists that Dakhoṭa íápi (language) could someday disappear.²

First-Language Speakers/ Second-Language Learners

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and even until recently, some scholars and Native speakers believed Dakhoṭa íápi could face extinction through proselytism by Euro-Americans, forced removal from tribal lands, and mandated residential schooling.³ In the early to mid-twentieth century, many first-language speakers purposely chose not to teach it to their children out of fear of punishment or added trauma. As a result, many youngsters grew up knowing little about their native tongue.

In the last fifty years, however, interest in Dakhoṭa íápi has blossomed, as youth and their

relatives become more involved with initiatives core to identity building across Mnísota Makhóčhe and the incorporation of Dakhoṭa wičhóh'ar (lifeways) and values into their daily lives.

Čhaṇṭémaza, University of Minnesota

Čhaṇṭémaza (Bdewákhahṇṇwan Dakhoṭa and a citizen of Spirit Lake Nation) is the senior Dakhoṭa language instructor in the University of Minnesota's Department of American Indian Studies. Since 2000, he's taught American Indian history and Dakhoṭa linguistics and language and has compiled a book of Dakhoṭa verbs with Harlan LaFontaine, with another on the way.⁴

Like most Dakhoṭa speakers today, Čhaṇṭémaza began learning the language in earnest as a young adult. He explains: "So, '95 is when I started becoming conversational ... when I started taking [classes] at the U. . . , I wasn't aware of anything else going on in the Twin Cities." But, in fact, since the 1970s, the University of Minnesota (UMN) has offered Dakhoṭa language classes within the American Indian Studies department, and language revitalization efforts continued to grow—slowly—over the next two decades.⁵

By the mid-1990s, about forty fluent, first-language Dakhoṭa speakers lived in Minnesota. A handful were sharing their knowledge with

others. For example, Čhaŋtémaza, remembers Franklin Firesteel (Sisseton-Wahpeton Dakhóta) taught at the university, and Jerry Dearly taught language classes in the late 1990s in and around St. Paul. Today, the Lakhóta elder is well-known as a favorite emcee at wačhípi (powwow).⁶

Šišókaduta, Dakhóta lápi Okhódakičhiye

Joe Bendickson grew up in St. Paul and attended Central High School. He was one of a handful of Native American students there. As a child, he knew some Dakhóta words. After he asked his grandfather for a Dakhóta name—Šišókaduta—his interest in the language intensified. As a twenty-year-old, he attended a Dakhóta language table with his mother. Čhaŋtémaza, the instructor, encouraged the young man to apply to the University of Minnesota. In the fall of 1999, Šišókaduta began his formal learning journey. Čhaŋtémaza was, again, the instructor.⁷

Šišókaduta later taught at UMN—for fourteen years, recently stepping down to work on a book with first-language speaker Dr. Rev. Clifford Canku. While teaching, Šišókaduta worked with Čhaŋtémaza and others to add more Dakhóta classes to the syllabus and helped increase enrollment in these classes by 150%, eventually resulting in the addition of a Dakhóta language major. Last year, he partnered with University Housing to create a Dakhóta Language House trial program that ran through the 2022-2023 school year and may be adopted permanently in the future.⁸

Šišókaduta believes Dakhóta language should be taught at every UMN campus:

It is a part of Dakhóta heritage, and Dakhóta learners should be able to pass it on. . . . Teaching, in a way, is its own art form. Hopefully, . . . people will become teachers and fill more positions. . . . That's kind of how you have to grow it.⁹

Thomas Draskovic, American Indian Magnet School

One student who became a teacher is Thomas Draskovic (Húŋkpapha Lakhóta and Waŋpé Khuté Dakhóta). He has taught K-4 Lakhóta language and American Indian Studies (AIS) to students through eighth grade for twenty-one years

at the American Indian Magnet School (AIMS) at 1075 Third Street East (built 1925 in St. Paul as the original Harding High School).¹⁰

AIMS, which opened in 1992, is part of St. Paul Public Schools and is located on the city's East Side in a building once shared with a K-8 World Cultures Magnet School. Educators, community members, and elders created the AIMS program “to provide an American Indian perspective . . . rooted in American Indian culture, traditions, values, history, and art . . . and to welcome students of all backgrounds to a diverse school community.”¹¹

In its first year, American Indian enrollment was 37.3% of 209 students. Enrollment peaked in 2009 at 42.2% (136 of 332). When the World School closed several years ago, AIMS absorbed most of its students, increasing overall enrollment to 626 students. In 2022, thanks, in part, to COVID-19, enrollment dropped to 524, with fifty-nine American Indian students (11%); 31% Asian; 21% Hispanic; 17% two or more races; 14% African American; and 6% white. Most students live in the Dayton's Bluff area and attend the school based on location. Some students are bussed from around the Twin Cities.¹²

One focus of the school is its language emphasis: “Incoming students have the option of taking Dakhóta/Lakhóta or Ojibwe classes, as these are the historical languages of the original stewards of this land,” Draskovic says. The students participate in powwows, drum and dance circles, and cultural fairs, including an All-Indigenous Nations fair, which celebrates the diversity of students and staff:

Indigenous doesn't just mean Native. It means [we all] originated from somewhere. We celebrate that because we are all related. Our school provides a place that lives the thought of a circle universe. We teach students about the sacred hoop of life with no beginning, no end, and unbreakable bonds. The more people who are in that circle, the more strength through the greater collection to learn and succeed together.¹³

Not long ago, a Hmong student gave Mr. D, as kids call Draskovic, a new name—Teng (*Toob*), which translates to “the light.” Their teacher

tries to provide light to his students—offering encouragement as they move from his Lakḥóta classes to Dakḥóta instruction in the upper grades. School administration encourages students to continue American Indian language classes at Harding High School. If they do, they may earn AIS certification upon graduation. A few students pursue more language in college.¹⁴

Draskovic knows it can be challenging to learn a new language. He describes his knowledge as a youth as “passively fluent.” His mother and aunts spoke Lakḥóta. He understood them, but, “as an adult, I felt shameful—not worthy—to speak the language—I was afraid to make mistakes.” His mother, Grace Draskovic, encouraged him:

How else will you learn if you don't say it? Of course, I will correct you; that's the only way you will learn. Be vulnerable. Be humble. Remember your virtues. Be brave. Step into a space knowing I'm here to help you.¹⁵

Draskovic smiles. “That's what she taught me and what I try to teach my students.”¹⁶

Dakḥóta Ojibwe Language Revitalization and Preservation

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Minnesota Legislature convened a group to study and address the reality that Indigenous languages central to Minnesota could die out. The committee consulted with eleven tribal nations, educators, legislators, first-language speakers, second-language learners—including Šišókadúta—and others to better understand the issues and develop answers toward a Dakḥóta Ojibwe Language Revitalization and Preservation plan. Findings were presented in a 2011 report.¹⁷

The group spent years conducting interviews, visiting immersion schools, creating and analyzing surveys, and reviewing laws, statistics, and educational pedagogy. From this work emerged a clearer understanding of the need for language revitalization, best practices, current and future roadblocks, and recommended steps forward. The team found that dozens of language tables and classes at high schools and higher education institutions existed, but there were few licensed and trained fluent teachers;



nor were there solid curricula or proven frameworks in place.¹⁸

The team did uncover examples of successful immersion programs that helped revive Indigenous languages in New Zealand and Hawaii. This information inspired Šišókadúta to create an immersion class for preschoolers. Funding took years to manifest, as did locating a physical space. Other local immersion centers, including Wičḥóie Nandagikendan and Bdote Learning Center, shared valuable insights. Ultimately, the University of Minnesota Child Development Laboratory School provided a space for Dakḥód'iapi Wahóḥpi (Dakḥóta Language Nest), beginning in 2022.¹⁹ Šišókadúta reflects:

All you have to do is get it started. If you keep the door open every year, you can make it better and better. Maybe . . . thirty years from now, we can [say] ‘remember when we started a language nest in 2022?’ We'll be telling stories about it.²⁰

Brenda Toscano, Dakḥód'iapi Wahóḥpi

Dakḥód'iapi Wahóḥpi, affectionately called “The Nest” and designed for the youngest of language learners, is beginning its second year—more than doubling from five to eleven students. Brenda Toscano, a Lakḥóta first speaker with training in Dakḥóta, is the lead teacher. She's assisted by recent UMN graduate Justis Brokenrope and interns, who, themselves, are learning the language as they work with the littles.²¹

Thomas Draskovic teaches at the American Indian Magnet School and works with Interfaith Action's Department of Indian Work Youth Enrichment Program. He is a board member at Wakan Tipi Awanyanjapi and a guitarist and lead vocalist with the local Native American *Pretendians Band*. Courtesy of Thomas Draskovic, Interfaith Action of Greater Saint Paul, and St. Paul Public Schools.

Each morning at Dakhód'íapi Wahóǰpi, Circle Time begins with prayer and smudging, singing and dancing, and listening to stories. Here, lead teacher Brenda Toscano (Pine Ridge Indian Reservation) helps a child count in Dakhóta. Teacher Justis Brokenrope (bottom left foreground) and intern Eileen Bass (seated, far right) also take turns instructing before the youngsters eagerly head to the gym. *Courtesy of Ramsey County Historical Society.*

Toscano, at the end of a busy Monday, appeared a bit tired after spending part of the day in the light rain. “The school is nature-based,” she explains. “The kids learn outside as much as possible—speaking, playing, making leaf collages—no matter the weather.” Yet, every morning, Toscano is rejuvenated when smiling, eager preschoolers tumble into the classroom, happy to see her and Brokenrope. She believes this semester should be easier now that she, Brokenrope, and their supervisors have learned what works and what doesn’t.²²

Also, last March, the two traveled to Hawaii to observe immersion language classes that have developed and improved over decades. The instructors returned home inspired and with new ideas—repetitive lessons, consistent schedules, and plans to encourage students to converse and serve others during lunch—a practice that can carry over to their families.²³



The teachers at Dakhód'íapi Wahóǰpi are seeing progress. Last year, one student grew frustrated over a hand-washing exercise. He could have protested in English, emotions taking over. But he shared his feelings in Dakhóta. In another instance, two boys bickered over a toy, arguing in Dakota íapi. “Justis and I looked at each other,” Toscano recalls. “Should we break up the fight?” They did not. Instead, they encouraged the children to solve the dispute using their Dakhóta words.²⁴

Thinking back to the Hawaii trip, Toscano remembers a teacher who had been a first-language student at that same school years ago. That’s Toscano’s dream for her students. “I want to help develop more teachers—first-language speakers who can keep Dakhóta íapi going—because it really is a race against time.”²⁵

Tales of Two Wínyanj

Tanaǰidan To Win, Businesswoman and Author

Tanaǰidan To Win (Tara Perron) understands the important and complicated concept of hdukíni (revival) as it pertains to Dakhóta íapi. Tanaǰidan To Win, whose name translates to Blue Hummingbird Woman, has studied Indigenous languages as an adult at Metro State University and incorporates them into daily life. “I had to let go of processing life, thought, and emotions through the English language all together, which seemed much harder as an adult.”

I believe my biggest sacrifice was comfort . . . I had to learn patience with myself. It was important to continuously remind myself I didn’t need to know everything right away. In learning and using Dakhóta íapi in everyday life, I noticed there was an emotional attachment to every word that left my mouth. There was more connection to the world around me. I spoke with intention and gratitude.²⁶

Despite Tanaǰidan To Win’s efforts and those of other second-language learners, it’s easy to become discouraged, especially upon realizing that there are so few first-language speakers to converse with new students so they can hear

how words should sound with their original accent and inflection.

And that is a key issue. Šišókaduta emphasized that “one of the problems we have to overcome as people who didn’t grow up speaking the Dakhóta language is that we sound like English speakers. And Dakhóta people have a different accent. . . . Younger people come to the University, they learn here, and then they try to talk and it sounds like they’re speaking from a book.” That is why Šišókaduta, along with Raine Cloud—a Dakhóta language documentation journalist—and a group of interns, began work a few years ago on a UMN/Sisseton Wahpeton College collaboration—the Dakhóta Audio Language Journal. When it eventually goes online, learners will be able to hear the words and the singing of elders. The journal will preserve their voices, their experiences, their thoughts on their language, and their advice.²⁷

This journal is a valuable tool for language learners, but one might wonder, why bother learning a language that very few speak? Tanaǵidan To Win answers:

In the beginning . . . , I would speak to my sons, pets, even to my father once he took his [final earthly] journey. Even if it was a few words. [These Dakhóta words] gave me strength, faith, and hope. They felt carried in many ways. I knew my Até could hear me through the language.

Later in my language journey, I realized how powerful, and alive our language is. . . . It has deepened my connection to the world around me. I think before



Tanaǵidan To Win (Tara Perron), a Dakhóta and Ojibwe mother of two boys, owns Blue Hummingbird Woman, a St. Paul gift shop that reflects her Dakhóta name. She’s also a children’s book author. *Courtesy of Ramsey County Historical Society.*

I speak, because our language is alive, and I want to bring my good energy to the life and strength of the language. I gift that when I speak to my relatives.²⁸

She also gifts her growing knowledge of the language to others as a children’s book author. Tanaǵidan To Win’s books, *Takóža: Walks with the Blue Moon Girl* (2019) and *Animals of Khéya Wíta (Turtle Island)* (2022, with a second similar book in Ojibwe), tell educational stories in English, while incorporating Native words. The opportunity to see children’s books written in Dakhóta and Ojibwe brings hope to the arduous process of breathing life into the language.²⁹

Advice to Second-Language Learners

One of the most important things is to love each other. There are several ways to express that. Úŋšíkičhidakab. Waštékičhidakab. A lot of times, we get lost in ourselves, so we don’t understand what other people are going through. It’s hard to learn the language especially with the anxieties that come with that. Just have love for each other. If you do that, then when people are learning the language . . . it’s going to be easier to create new speakers of the language. Some are going to be teachers, but not everyone is going to be a (formal) teacher. If we love each

other, we’ll let people do what they’re good at. But if they can speak the language when they have kids, hopefully they’ll teach their kids the language.

We’re human; we’re imperfect. If we love each other, we’ll forgive each other. If we love each other, we’ll respect each other for what we’re good at. To all the people out there, help each other, take care of each other, love each other, and if you do these things in a good way, then it’s just going to keep growing and get better every year.^a

—Šišókaduta

Angela Two Stars, Artist and Curator

Artist Angela Two Stars (Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyáte), also a second-language learner, has, since 2014, taken the lessons she has learned and “[incorporated] Dakhóta phrases into her artwork . . . to draw awareness to the plight of Native American languages and the current efforts being made to revitalize them. . . . [She uses] the power of art to create positive change and raise awareness of the endangered status of Indigenous languages.”³⁰

In 2020, the insistent efforts of Očhéthi Šakówinj community members Syd Beane, his daughters Dr. Kate Beane and Carly Bad Heart Bull, and other language activists and allies, with local government support, renamed Lake Calhoun in Minneapolis. It is now Bdé Makhá Ská. Soon, a callout to create public art that would highlight the original site of Ĥeyáta Othúnjwe and honor Maḥpíya Wičhašta led to a collaboration by Mona Smith, Sandy Spieler, and Two Stars.³¹

To complement a welcoming, decorative railing featuring native crops, circles, and Dakhóta words, Two Stars, director of All My Relations Arts, designed simple, stamped images of a bear, an eagle, a bison, rice, and other Dakhóta relatives along a cement path. As she developed her ideas, she considered the public using the site and space. She thought about the daily visitors who would be exposed to the Dakhóta language through her art.³²

I wanted people to be able to say simple Dakhóta words based off the visual that

Artist Angela Two Stars' bison is one of many stamped sidewalk images that walkers see when they pass the Native American public art installation at the edge of Bdé Makhá Ská. Courtesy of Angela Two Stars.



they're seeing. I saw this guy walking with some friends, and he looked up and said, 'Hey, waḥbdí (eagle).' So, I was like, yes! I got you to speak the Dakhóta language. It doesn't need to be the Native-specific audiences to appreciate Dakhóta art.³³

In 2021, Two Stars installed her work, *Okciyapi*, in the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden outside the Walker Art Center. It is a nod to the Dakhóta water relative. Divided in seven sections to represent the Očhéthi Šakówinj, the piece resembles an expanding ripple across a calm lake and incorporates Dakhóta values as a way to move language revitalization forward and help Two Stars and others heal.³⁴

My grandpa (Orsen Bernard) told me that okciyapi stands for 'help each other.' That's the advice he gave whenever he was asked, 'What would you tell people. . . [who] are trying to learn the language?' He'd always say, 'Help each other.'³⁵

Elevating Language Through Technology

Dakhóta Iápi Okhódakičhiye

In 2014, several members of the Dakhóta community founded Dakhóta Iápi Okhódakičhiye (Dakota Language Society or DIO), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit focused on developing Dakhóta language materials “. . . for easily accessible language learning.” Its purpose: help second-language learners gain proficiency with the assistance of multilevel, written *Dakhóta iá Wóhdaka Po! Speak Dakota* textbooks and audio CDs. They collaborated in their endeavors with The Language Conservancy (TLC), an Indiana-based nonprofit that works with Native communities to combat language loss. DIO developed weekend family immersion camps and a Dakhóta Language Summer Institute, and they began to think about how technology could assist them in their efforts.³⁶

In 2021, DIO leaders, including Šišókaduta—the organization's linguistic director—worked with TLC to launch the long-awaited Dakhód Iápi Wičhóie Wówapi, an online dictionary app featuring 28,699 Dakhóta words and definitions, along with a downloadable Dakhóta keyboard.

With funding assistance from the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council, it took six years to compile the words and definitions and partner with female and male first-language speakers, including Dr. Rev. Canku, to create precise audio recordings of each word to accelerate learning. The app debuted in February 2023. “We’re using modern technology to save our ancient languages,” Šišókaduta said in an interview with *MPR News*.³⁷ The organization is now looking to launch an e-learning platform in the years to come.

Dawí (Huhá Mazá) and Marlena Myles, Innovators

Of the many Dakhóta values, Dawí (Huhá Mazá), a descendant of Santee Dakhóta, believes wóinina (silence and stillness), is the most important. Without it, one cannot attain other virtues. And, so, the Dakhóta language media producer has listened. Then, he has acted—to literally give voice to the language through digital technology and media content, most recently in collaboration with St. Paul-based artist Marlena Myles.³⁸

Myles (Spirit Lake Dakhóta, Mohegan, Muscogee) is a digital artist and illustrator known throughout Minnesota and beyond for her innovative animations, book illustrations, fabric fashion design, educational and historical community murals, and augmented reality work.³⁹

With Pixel Farm and Todd Boss, Myles created the GPS-based *Dakota Spirit Walk*, available on the Revelo AR app. The walk at the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary is an augmented reality public art installation using 3D animation and shares oral traditions of the sacred places there. Dawí voiced the parts of the spirits Wakínyan (thunder being), Ínyan (Grandfather Stone), and Uŋktéhi (water serpent). He did the voice acting for Myles’ *Dakota Sacred Hoop Walk* at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum in Chaska, as well.⁴⁰

Dawí, who studied at UMN and has taught the language and collaborated with DIO on a number of projects, also works with Myles to produce Dakhóta language content for her new Wíyouŋkihipi (We Are Capable) Productions company—a publishing platform for Očhéti Šakówiŋ artists and writers.

A lot of Marlena’s projects . . . coloring books, the digital media on her website, or



on the Wíyouŋkihipi Productions website, [most] everything’s accessible and free—there’s free audio, the app for the augmented reality’s free . . . , that has an immense impact on accessibility, which is one of the main issues that we face with language learners. We have a population that’s exploded to ten times the amount of people since colonization. So, the . . . way we can reach thousands of people without having large grants is through online digital media.⁴¹

Dawí is especially proud of the collaborative work he did as a language researcher and audio producer on Myles’ Dakhóta Land Map series, which includes maps of Minneapolis and St. Paul; the Minnesota River Valley; and Prairie Island, Red Wing, and Winona. The colorful maps incorporate Dakhóta place names from 1861—the year philosopher and naturalist Henry David Thoreau visited the state from Massachusetts—along with familiar landmarks people will recognize in 2023. On the Marlena Myles website, visitors can not only explore these maps but also hear Dawí pronounce the names in Dakhóta. According to Dawí, the maps

The Dakhóta Iápi Okhódakičhiye (Dakota Language Society) introduced its new language dictionary app to the public in 2023. Courtesy of Dakhóta Iápi Okhódakičhiye.

To link directly to the Dakhóta Land Map series, go to <https://marlenamyl.es/project/dakota-land-map/>.

and coloring pages “are resources that [parents] can introduce to their children” to learn about the past and present day.⁴²

On a more serious note, the Dakhóta land maps are especially important when looking back at the history of the language and the culture of Očhéthi Šakówiŋ Oyáte. Mapping has historically served as a critical tool for imposing non-Native authority over Indigenous spaces. Early maps created by settler colonists not only shaped public histories but settler senses of belonging in lands that were gained through treaty-breaking, land grabs, and ethnic cleansing. Indigenous forms of remapping and renaming assume that language and place are intertwined. It is only through recovering and restoring Dakhóta and Lakshóta place names and histories that historical truths about Očhéthi Šakówiŋ presence and settler erasures of that presence can be told.⁴³

Illustrator Marlena Myles partnered with Dawí on this Dakhóta land map of Minneapolis and St. Paul. The map identifies sacred Dakhóta sites and villages and important geological landmarks such as lakes and rivers in addition to today’s popular sports arenas, the airport, the zoo, the Minnesota State Capitol, and more. *Courtesy of Illustrator Marlena Myles and Translator Dawí.*

We Are All Relatives: Sharing Dakhóta Iápi

For the Dakhóta people, the history and future of Mnísota Makhóche is rooted in Dakhóta iápi—thanks to the many Dakhóta iápi ikíčhize wíchásta (Dakota language warriors). That is the role Čhantémaza, Šišókaduta, Thomas Draskovic, Brenda Toscano, Tanağidan To Wiŋ, Angela Two Stars, Dawí, Marlena Myles, and first-language speakers and second-language learners in the Twin Cities’ Dakhóta community have taken on to ensure their language doesn’t perish. With funding, training, additional teachers, ally support, continued implementation of new technologies, and more, it is hoped Dakhóta iápi will strengthen, grow, and become part of the everyday lives of the next generations of Dakhóta children and adults and extend into the larger community through

Dakhóta Thamákhoče
Bde Óta Othúŋwe & Imnízaska Othúŋwe
Minneapolis & Saint Paul

We are on Dakota homelands.

This map tells the story of the past, present and future of Dakota people and Dakota language in the Twin Cities.

Historic Dakota Villages & Sacred Sites	Rivers, Lakes & Other Bodies of Water
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Āyáta Othúŋwe (Village) Kap óza Othúŋwe (Village) Wakháŋ Thípi (Spirit Cave) Oréyawahe (Pilot Knob) Bdóte (Confluence) Iyagáá (Red Rock) Maŋpiya Róta Wiŋ Wíte (Grey Cloud [Woman] Island) Wíta Tháŋka (Pike Island) Wíta Wášté (Nicollier Island) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wíta Tópa Bde (Lake of the Isles) Bde Makhá Ska Bde Umán (Lake Harriet) Mní íá Tháŋka (Lake Minnetonka) Mníhaŋa Wakpádan (Minnehaha Creek) Wakpá Tháŋka (Mississippi River) Mní Iŋpáyedan (Marquette Falls) Mníéwe Sní (Coldwater Springs) Mnízaska Wakpá (Minnesota River) Owámniyomni (St. Anthony Falls)

Other Locations

Thabákáta Otkád Thípi (Bostertball Arena), Odéwag Thípi (Concert Hall), Thabákhoŋapi Otkád Makhéche (Football Field), Bde Óta Othúŋwe Wáŋkaŋe Owépaŋa Thípi (Minneapolis Institute of Art), Mnísota Wáŋkaŋe Wáŋkátuya (University of MN), Mnísota Makháŋbaŋe Thúŋkádíŋayapi Thípi (Minnesota Capitol Building), Čhákáŋa Thakáŋpa Otkád Thípi (Hockey Arena), Thabáŋhapi Otkád Makhéche (Baseball Field), Isáŋthanka Akíchito Thípi (Fort Snelling), Isáŋthanka Mazáŋpiya Tháŋka (Largest Shopping Mall), Wátakíyag Otnáŋig (Airport), Wamáníta Otkáŋe Thípi (Zoo), Othúŋwe Hemáni thathó (Green Line Train), Othúŋwe Hemáni Thá (Blue Line Train)

Bde Óta Othúŋwe (Minneapolis, Village of Many Lakes)
Imnízaska Othúŋwe (St Paul, Village along the White Cliffs)

Eháŋna Wícháháŋapi (Burial Mounds)

There are over 12,000 burial mounds ranging from a hundred to several thousand years old in the state of Minnesota. Many are located in the Twin Cities including at Oréyawahe (Pilot Knob), Mound Springs Park, Indian Burial Mounds Park, Maŋpiya Róta Wiŋ Wíte (Grey Cloud Island) & surrounding Mní íá Tháŋka (Lake Minnetonka).

*Makhá Thó Otkéwíchayapi Wákíksuye - Every December, Dakota and allies honor through memorial runs & horse rides the 38+2 warriors who were hanged in Mankato, MN on Dec. 26, 1862.

https://marlenamyles.es
Illustrated by Marlena Myles | Translations by Dawí

continued cultural diversification, education, and recognition. Čhaŋtémaza's wish as stated at the beginning of this piece could then become reality.

Hello my relatives. My name is Eileen Bass. I'm Húŋkpapha Lak'hóta, Sac and Fox, and Mvskoke Creek. I'm enrolled as Sac and Fox of Oklahoma. I study Dakhóta language because I live in Minnesota.

Hello my relatives. My name is Justis Brokenrope. I grew up in Nebraska, have lived in Minneapolis for the last eight years, and am an enrolled member of the Síčhánġu Lak'hóta tribe. Currently, I am a teacher at the Dakhód'iapi Wahóŋpi—the Dakhóta Language Nest.

My name is Ava Grace. I am Oglála Lak'hóta from Pine Ridge. I was born in Minneapolis and have lived here all of my seventeen years. I attend the University of Minnesota, studying Dakhóta language and journalism.

NOTES

1. Čhaŋtémaza, interview with Justis Brokenrope, June 6, 2023.

2. Diane Wilson, "Carrolynn (Carrie) Schommer: Dakota First-Language Speaker and Educator," Phillips Indian Educators website, http://pieducators.com/wisdom/carrie_schommer; Brenda Toscano, interview with editor, September 26, 2023. According to Brenda Toscano, who is a first-language Lak'hóta speaker, it is believed the only living first-language Dakhóta speaker still living in Minnesota as of November 2023 is Carolyann (Carrie) Schommer, who taught at the University of Minnesota and continues to promote language revitalization programs. See also <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wpYJNY9kh8I> to hear reflections by Schommer.

3. "Status of Dakota Language," Dakhóta Iápi Okhódakičhiye website, <https://dakhota.org/status-of-dakota-language/>. Additional information provided by Ava Grace.

4. Čhaŋtémaza/Brokenrope interview; "Neil McKay," University of Minnesota College of Liberal Arts webpage, <https://cla.umn.edu/about/directory/profile/mckayo20>; "Cantemaza (Neil McKay)," University of Minnesota Grand Challenge Curriculum webpage, <https://gcc.umn.edu/GCCfaculty/Cantemaza>.

5. Čhaŋtémaza/Brokenrope interview.

6. Čhaŋtémaza/Brokenrope interview; Franklin Firesteel Obituary," Legacy website, <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/legacyremembers/franklin-firesteel-obituary?id=27063138>. To see Jerry Dearly as a wačhípi emcee, go to <https://www.facebook.com/SoDakPB/videos/344232882817884/>.

7. "Status of Dakota Language," Jennifer Nguyen; "Cherish the Language: Investing in Dakota at UMN," University of Minnesota American Indian Studies webpage, <https://cla.umn.edu/ais/news-events/story/cherish-language-investing-dakota-umn#>; "Šišókaduta, interview with Eileen Bass, August 15, 2023; Čhaŋtémaza/Brokenrope interview. Over the years, various organizations and schools hosted language tables, including the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Lower Sioux Indian Community, Upper Sioux Community, Prairie Island Indian Com-

munity, Church of All Nations, Anishinabe Academy, and the Minneapolis American Indian Center.

8. Nguyen; "250220217–Dakota Language B.A.," University of Minnesota Programs, <https://umtc.catalog.prod.coursedog.com/programs/250220217>; Šišókaduta/Bass interview; Sarah Weissman, "Living in the Language," Inside Higher Ed website, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2022/09/16/university-minnesota-offers-ojibwe-and-dakota-housing>; Author Deacon DeBoer was one of two students who participated as a resident in the Dakhóta House trial.

9. Šišókaduta/Bass interview.

10. Thomas Draskovic, interview with editor, September 21, 2023.

11. "About Our School," American Indian Magnet School website, <https://www.spps.org/domain/6834>; Draskovic/editor interview.

12. "Enrollment information for American Indian Magnet School," School Digger website, original source: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Dept of Education.

13. Draskovic/editor interview.

14. Draskovic/editor interview.

15. Grace Draskovic, as remembered by Thomas Draskovic, in Draskovic/editor interview.

16. Draskovic/editor interview.

17. Šišókaduta/Bass interview; *Dakota and Ojibwe Language Revitalization in Minnesota*, report, Volunteer Working Group on Dakota and Ojibwe Language Revitalization and Preservation, presented to Minnesota Legislature, February 15, 2011, 3.

18. *Dakota and Ojibwe Language Revitalization in Minnesota*, report.

19. Šišókaduta/Bass interview; Čhaŋtémaza/Brokenrope interview.

20. Šišókaduta/Bass interview.

21. Toscano/editor interview. Justis Brokenrope is also one of the authors of this article.

22. Toscano/editor interview; "Dakhód'iapi Wahóŋpi—Dakota Language Nest," University of Minnesota Child Development Laboratory School website, <https://lab-school.umn.edu/language-nest-program/>.

23. Toscano/editor interview.

24. Toscano/editor interview.
25. Toscano/editor interview.
26. Tanaǵidan To Win, interview with Ava Grace, May 17, 2023.
27. Nguyen; “About the Dakota Language Audio Journal,” Dakhóta Iápi Okhódakičhiye webpage, <http://dakotalanguagejournal.com/>.
28. Tanaǵidan To Win/Ava Grace interview.
29. Tanaǵidan To Win/Ava Grace interview.
30. “IACB Features Angela Two Stars in a Special Exhibition,” U.S. Department of the Interior, Indian Arts and Crafts Board, press release, April 5, 2019, <https://www.doi.gov/iacb/SIMAngelaTwoStars>.
31. Special thanks to Deacon DeBoer for providing this information; “Celebrate new public art along the shores of Bde Maka Ska on June 8 at 10:30 am,” Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, May 20, 2019, https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/project_updates/celebrate-new-public-art-along-the-shores-of-bde-maka-ska-on-june-8-at-1030-am/. Mona Smith developed a comprehensive website, and artist Sandy Spieler designed a border rail. “Angela Two Stars,” Walker Art Center, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ux7vio5dok> Maǵpiya Wičhašta is the great, great, great grandfather of Angela Two Stars.
32. Angela Two Stars, interview with Eileen Bass, August 4, 2023; “Angela Two Stars,” All My Relations Arts website, <https://allmyrelationsarts.org/about/team/staff/angela-two-stars/>.
33. Two Stars/Bass interview.
34. Two Stars/Bass interview; “Walker Art Center Announces Artist Angela Two Stars as Finalist for Indigenous Public Art Commission in the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden,” Walker Art Center, press release, <https://walkerart.org/press-releases/2019/walker-art-center-announces-artist-angela-two-stars-as-finalist-for-indigenous-public-art-commission-in-the-minneapolis-sculpture-garden>; Euan Kerr, “‘Okciyapi’ celebrates Dakota language and brings some healing,” *MPR News*, October 7, 2021, <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2021/10/07/okciyapi-celebrates-dakota-language-and-bring-some-healing>.
35. Two Stars/Bass interview.
36. “About DIO,” Dakhóta Iápi Okhódakičhiye website, <https://dakhota.org/about-dio/>; “About DIO;” “Dakota (Santee),” The Language Conservancy, <https://languageconservancy.org/languages-we-work-with/>.
37. Šišókaduta, phone conversation with editor, September 27, 2023; Colleen Connolly, “New Dakota language app helps bridge gap between elders and youth,” *Minnesota Reformer*, March 7, 2023, <https://minnesotareformer.com/2023/03/07/new-dakota-language-app-helps-bridge-gap-between-elders-and-youth/>; Robyn Katona, “New app will help preserve and teach Dakota language one word at a time,” *MPR News*, February 15, 2023.
38. Dawí (Huhá Mazá), interview with Eileen Bass, June 15, 2023.
39. “Home,” The Art of Marlena Myles website, <https://marlenamyl.es/>; “Dakota Artist Marlena Myles,” Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, video, <https://www.facebook.com/ShakopeeDakota/videos/1096737747450339/>.
40. Dawí/Bass interview; Jim Walsh, “Honoring history with Marlena Myles’ new augmented reality installation, ‘Dakota Spirit Walk,’” *MinnPost*, December 14, 2021, <https://www.minnpost.com/arts-culture/2021/12/honoring-history-with-marlena-myles-new-augmented-reality-installation-dakota-spirit-walk/>; “Dakota Sacred Hoop Walk,” Minnesota Landscape Arboretum webpage, <https://arb.umn.edu/DakotaSacredHoopWalk>.
41. Dawí/Bass interview; “Wíyouŋkihipi,” Wíyouŋkihipi (We Are Capable) Productions website, <http://wiyounkihipi.com/>.
42. Dawí/Bass interview; Marlena Myles, “Free Coloring Book of Dakhóta Plants & Landmaps of Mnisota,” blog, The Art of Marlena Myles website, April 9, 2020, <https://marlenamyl.es/2020/04/free-coloring-book-of-dakhota-plants-landmaps-of-mnisota/>; “Home: Dakota Land Maps,” The Art of Marlena Myles website, <https://marlenamyl.es/>.
43. Lisa Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip’s War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019); Natalie Diaz, *Postcolonial Love Poem* (Minneapolis, MN: Graywolf Press, 2020); Mishuana Goeman, *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2013); Lisa Kahaleole Hall, “Navigating Our Own ‘Sea of Islands’: Remapping a Theoretical Space for Hawaiian Women and Indigenous Feminism,” *Wičazo Ša Review* 24, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 15-38. Special thanks to Deacon DeBoer for this mapping summary.

Note for sidebar on page 25

- a. Šišókaduta, interview with Eileen Bass, August 15, 2023.

Dakhóta lapi: A Brief History—Part 3

To Those Who Want to Know the Dakhóta Language

Tóna Dakhóta lapi Unspépi Čhínpi Kin

DR. REV. CLIFFORD CANKU

Šišókaduta (Joe Bendickson), Translation

Heather Menefee, Transcription, Research, and Introduction

Interview recorded October 7, 2020, via Zoom

We are grateful to Dr. Rev. Clifford Canku¹ for sharing the following words. This work represents many forms of collaboration, conversation, and mentorship that are rarely acknowledged in academic publications.

Canku has been a teacher and mentor to Dakhóta community leader and instructor Šišókaduta (Joe Bendickson) for many years. They meet weekly over Zoom to visit and record their conversations in the language. Often, Canku prepares remarks on a topic of historical, cultural, religious, or linguistic significance to Dakhóta people. As a teacher for decades and a frequent presenter at conferences, Canku is no stranger to making formal presentations. Šišókaduta and his student Heather Menefee asked Canku for permission to transcribe, translate, and publish an excerpt from one talk for the Ramsey County Historical Society (RCHS) because of its significance for current and future generations of Dakhóta language learners and teachers. In this conversation, recorded during the COVID-19 pandemic, Canku speaks about his personal and spiritual relationship to Dakhóta language. This transcription, followed by an English translation of Canku's commentary, provides an invaluable narrative of a first-language speaker's knowledge, experiences, and hopes for the future.

In an accompanying audio clip (11:21 minutes), available on the RCHS website, readers may listen as Canku speaks. We encourage you to listen to the recording several times. By listening, you may understand more than by reading alone. To support readers who might be



Dr. Rev. Clifford Canku (left) and Šišókaduta (Joe Bendickson) are working on a bilingual book about the Dakhóta lunar calendar, to be published next year. *Courtesy of Šišókaduta.*

unfamiliar with Dakhóta history or language, we offer additional information and context in the endnotes and in an online resource list.

Tóna Dakhóta lapi Unspépi Čhínpi Kin

Háu mitákuyepi, Clifford Canku Senior emákiyapi. Dakhóta wičhášta thánka hemáča nakún waúnspewičakhiya hemáča. Táku wanží anpétu kin de iwówahdaka wačhín. Tóna Dakhóta iápi unspépi čhínpi kin hená, hená, hená iwówahdake kte. Dakhóta waúnspewičakhiyapi kin hená, hená iwóčihdakapi kte do anpétu kin de.

Háu mitákuyepi. Dakhóta iápi waúnspewičakhiya hemáča do. Tókhed awáčanmi he tóna Dakhóta iápi unspéwičakhiyapi owás'ina thewíchwahinda do. Tukhá Dakhóta

wóhdakapi kinhán wačhín k'a nakún wičhóni wašté yuhápi kta, k'a tanyán ní únpi kte do.

Míš-eyá, Dakhóta iápi waúñspewiçhawakhiye çha, nína çhañtéwawašte. Nakún óhiñniyan iyúškinyan, ibdúškin do. He uñ tóna Dakhóta waúñspewiçhayakhiyapi hená tókhed okíhi tanyán çhañtéwawašteya ophíič'iyá po.

Míš wañná waníyetu wikčémna yámni sánpha Dakhóta iápi waúñspewiçhawakhiye do. He waúñspewiçhawakhiye hé, hé çha nína, nína iyómakiphi k'a nakún táku awáçhanmi hená owás'ina akhé Dakhóta oyáte ektá çhañtéwawašteya ewiçhawakiye. Nakún táku awáçhanmi g hená owás'ina Dakhóta iápi kin hená owás'ina aúñšikapi çha thewiçhawañinda. K'a nakún táku ówiçhawakiye kte hená áwiçakhehan mitháwaçhin ohná ibdúze anpétu çha.

Tóna mitákuyepi hená Dakhóta iápi únpi kin hená owás nína táku awáçhinpi kin hená akhé waštéwadake. Táku tuktóhna nihínçiyapi hená ohná wówiçakhe ohná nážinpi. Hená awábdeze. Hená abdesya imáçhağe.

Hehán homákšinna héehanñan, Dakhóta iápi he thiwáhe etánhan unspémakhiyapi. Iná-waye k'a Até-waye, wótakuye mitháwa he, thiwáhe mitháwa hená owás'ina Dakhóta iá únpi. Héçhed akhé hená táku hená wóabdeze waštéšte mak'úpi. Hená nína anpétu kin dé phidáya Uñčí Makhá akán máni waún.

Táku wañží awáçhanmi. Hená thiyáta Até-waye kin hé dowán çée. Hañ'ána çha, hañ'ána odówan ahíyaya. Hehán nakún hañ'ána çha thokáya wóçhekiye eyé. Hehán nakún unkiçtap çha hená iyúha Até táku eçhún kin hená ohóundapi. Até-waye kin hé táku óta unspémakhiye. Táku wañží nína wóphida ewákiye hé táku wakhán ektákiya éwaçhin anpétu çha waún.

Hehán Ehánñ nakún wadówan nakún waçhéwakiye. Hená héçhed akhé unspémakhiye. Héçhed anpétu kin dé hená akhé waníyetu óta wañná Uñčí Makhá akán, akán waní ešta, hená tóhni awéktunñe šni eçée. Hehán nakún Dakhóta iápi unspénič'içhiyapi hená iwówahdaka wačhín.

Dakhóta iápi unspépi kinhán oçhánku wašté ohná mayánipi kte do. Hé sdodwáye do. Oçhánku ikčéka k'a wakhán ohná mayánipi kte do. Táku unñispepi kin hená wówakhan ohná, wówakhan ohna

iphínič'iyapi kte do tukhá Dakhóta iápi kin hé, hé wakhán, wakhán héçha. Hená óta héçhed eyápi nawíçhawañ'un çée.

Wiçhášta Canada ektá Eli Taylor eçiyapi. Wañná thanñ šni, khinhdé. Mañpiya wičhóni oíhanke wániča ektá khinhdé. Hé ía únkhan héçhed unkókiyakapi "Tóna nithéçapi kin dená Dakhóta wóyahdakapi, Dakhóta iápi oçhánku ohná mayánipi kinhán, anpétu çha çhañténiwawaštepi kte do," eyé. "Tóna Dakhóta iápi unspépi kin hená thokáta wičhóni wašté duhápi kte do. Nakún wičhóh'an waštéšte eçhánunpi kte do." Hená, hená hé awábdeze.

Waníyetu óta wañná nakáha théça wiçháthunpi hená wičhóh'an wašté eçhúnpi nakún yuhápi do. Uñgé unšpá wašiču héçhapi tkhá táku Dakhóta iáb chá ížá Dakhóta héçhapi hçe seéçheçe wadáke. Wañná tóna Dakhóta iápi unspépi óta waúñspewiçhakhiyapi héçhapi do. Dakhóta iápi unspéwiçhayakhiye kinhán idúškin, anpétu çha iyúškinyan yaúnpte do. Thokáta Dakhóta iápi unkóspepi kinhán iyónikhipi kte do. K'a nakún wičhóni wašté duhápi kte.

Makhóçhe akán unñipi kin dé éd akhé oyáte óta thókça Dakhóta iápi unspépi çhínpi. Uñgé Wašičupi. Uñgé íš, ungé Hásapapi. Uñgé íš Kisúnna oyáte héçhapi. Hená owás'ina Dakhóta iápi hená unspéwiçhakhiyapi kta, iyéçhetu wadáke do. Tukhá Dakhóta unkiapi kin hé tuktóhna untháwaçhinpi kin hená íçhithokeça. Wašiču k'a nakún tóna Dakhóta héçhapi šni, hená Dakhóta unkiapi kinhán etánhan, táku wašté unspépi k'a nakún nína iyókiphipi kte do.

Héçhed anpétu kin dé éd akhé Dakhóta iápi eçéena akhé unspémič'içhiye nakún wówahdake. Šúnkana kçhi mañké. Hé nakún Dakhóta iá unspéwakiye. Wañná Dakhóta iá wiçhóie ungé unspépi, unspé. Ithóeš wiçhóie, thankád da yačhín he? You wanna go outside? Héçhed, sdodyé seéçheçe. Hehán íš nakun, Nañ'ún wo! Nakpá botínkiya wakántkiya ihdúze k'a wónañ'un, nañ'ún çée. Hehán, napé hiyúmakiya wo! Wañná hé, hé unspéwakiye.

Anpétu kin de hená táku óta unspéwakiye kte hená, hená yukhé kin hená h'anhi tukhá wañná waníyetu. Šúnka théça mak'úpi kin, waníyetu óta tkhá, tkhá Dakhóta iápi unspéwakiye hená, hená

izá unspé čhín. Hená héched mitákuyepi kin táku, tóna wičhá kičhí ní yaúnpi kin hená Dakhóta unspéwičhakiya po. Héched akhé Dakhóta iápi waúnspe unkhithawapi kin hená izá unspépi kta wačhín do.

To Those Who Want to Know the Dakhóta Language

Hello, my relatives, my name is Clifford Canku, Sr. I am a Dakota elder, and I am a teacher. Today, I want to speak about something. I will talk about those who want to learn the Dakota language.² Today, I will be speaking to all of you who are Dakota language teachers.

Hello, my relatives. I am a Dakota language teacher. This is what I think, all those that teach the Dakota language, I cherish them. But I want them to speak Dakota, and I want them to have a good life and so they may live a good, wonderful life.

I, too, when I teach Dakota language, I am very happy. And I am always glad. And so those of you who are teaching the Dakota language, with all your ability, conduct yourself properly.

As for myself, I have taught the Dakota language for over thirty years. I teach the Dakota language, and that's why I'm so happy, and this is what I'm thinking, all of these Dakota people I send my warm wishes. And also, this is what I think, to those of you who speak Dakota, I have compassion and cherish you. And also, I will assist them, these are my deep thoughts, I take them to myself every day.

Those of you, my relatives, who are thinking about using the Dakota language, again I love them. Whatever they are afraid of, they are standing on the truth. I am aware of those; I grew up with an awareness of those things.

And since I was a young boy, I learned the Dakota language from my family. My mother and my father, my relatives, my family, all of them are Dakota speakers. And so again these are the treasured things they gave me.³ Today, with these, I walk gladly on Mother Earth.

I am thinking about something. At home, my father always sang. In the morning, he sang a morning song. And in the morning, first he said a prayer. And again when we awake, and these our father God has done, we honor these. My father taught me many things. One thing for which I want to say I am very grateful is that

every day I am setting my mind toward what is sacred.

And also, I sing and also, I pray. That is how they taught me those things. And again, these are many years I have lived on Mother Earth, even so I will never forget these. And those of you who are learning the Dakota language, I want to talk about that.

If [you all] learn the Dakota language, you all will be walking on the good path. This I know. You will all walk on the ordinary and the sacred road. These things are sacred, and you will be blessed by them. Speaking Dakota is sacred. I have always heard them say those things that way many times.

There was a man from Canada called Eli Taylor.⁴ He has passed away; he went back home. He went back to the land of everlasting life. He spoke and then, he told us, "Those of you who are young, these ones of you that speak Dakota. When you all will walk on the path of the Dakota language, every day you will be happy," he said. "Those who know the Dakota language, you all will have a good life in the future. And you will all do good deeds." I have observed these things.

Many years, now finally the babies who are born, they all do good deeds and have good ways of life. Some are mixed blood, even so when they speak, I consider them real Dakotas. Now many of those who have learned the Dakota language are teachers.⁵ When you teach the Dakota language, you will be glad, every day you will be joyful. In the future, when we have learned Dakota, you will all be content. And you will all have a good life.

On this land where we all live, many different people want to know the Dakota language. Some are white. Some are Black. Some are Asian peoples. All of those who would teach the Dakota language, be alike to each other in speech. But the way we speak the Dakota language is different. Those who are white and those who are not Dakota, when they speak Dakota, they will have learned something good and also, they will be very happy.

So, here again today I am only learning and speaking the Dakota language. I am sitting with my puppy. I am also teaching him the Dakota language. Now he knows a few Dakota words. So, the words, "Do you want to go outside? You wanna go outside?" It seems like he knows that.

To hear Dr. Rev. Clifford Canku speak in Dakhóta and to see a resource list, go to <https://rchs.com/publishing/catalog/ramsey-county-history-fall-2023/>.

And also, “Listen!” His ears stand upright, and he always listens. Also, “Give me your paw!” Now I am teaching him that.

Today, there are still many things I am going to teach him. Slowly there will be room for those things, but it is winter now. They gave me a new dog, and I have not been teaching him for much time yet, but he also wants to learn. In that way, my relatives, teach Dakota to those whom you are with and those with whom you live. I want them, too, to learn our Dakota language in that way.

Dr. Rev. Clifford Canku is the author and editor, along with Michael Simon, of The Dakota Prisoner of War Letters: Dakota Kaskapi Okicize Wowapi (2012). With Nicolette Knudson and Jody Snow, he is also a creator of Tokaheya Dakota Iapi Kin/Beginning Dakota (2010). Canku earned a BA from the University of Minnesota at Morris, and a master of divinity from the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary in Iowa. He has retired after many years as a professor of Dakhóta studies at North Dakota State University and as a Presbyterian minister. He continues

to serve as a teacher, elder, and minister of the Sisseton Wahpeton Dakhóta Oyáte from his home at Kaksíza Hánska.

Šišókaduta (Joe Bendickson) is an enrolled member of the Sisseton Wahpeton Dakhóta Oyáte of Lake Traverse Reservation. He worked as a Dakhóta language instructor at the University of Minnesota for many years until recently, when he began a full-time position as linguistic director and editor at Dakhóta Iápi Okhódakičhiye (DIO), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization of dedicated Dakhóta community members, language learners, and speakers. DIO recently released Dakhód Iápi Wičhóie Wówapi, the first Dakhóta language dictionary app with over 28,699 audio recordings.

Heather Menefee is a student of Šišókaduta, a staff member at Dakhóta Iápi Okhódakičhiye, and a teaching assistant for Dakhóta language courses at the University of Minnesota. As a wašiču (settler) person learning Dakhóta, Menefee assists with projects that support Dakhóta teachers and learners.

NOTES

1. Elder Clifford Canku prefers to be addressed as Dr. Rev. Clifford Canku.

2. “Status of Dakota Language,” Dakhóta Iápi Okhódakičhiye website, <https://dakhota.org/status-of-dakota-language>. Many Dakhóta people are learning, speaking, and teaching the Dakhóta language today as second-language learners. Dakhóta language curriculum is offered in some preschools, elementary schools, community centers, high schools, and colleges in Minnesota and other places that are home to Dakhóta communities.

3. There are fewer than two thousand first-language speakers across the Ochéthi Šakówin, and among the four Dakhóta communities in Minnesota, one first speaker remains; Canku’s parents kept the language alive by speaking with their children and other relatives. Waziyatawin, *Remember This! Dakota Decolonization and the Eli Taylor Narratives*, trans. Wahpetunwin Carolyn Schommer (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2005), 101, 66. Waziyatawin writes that “within Dakota culture the oral tradition has been the primary means through which our historical consciousness has been constructed.” For many generations, US policymakers and settlers attempted to destroy the Dakhóta language and Dakhóta oyáte. This history requires greater public understanding

in Minnesota and beyond. For a list of resources and additional reading material, go to <https://rchs.com/publishing/catalog/ramsey-county-history-fall-2023/>.

4. Waziyatawin, *Remember This!*, 139, 68-9. Eli Taylor was a first-language speaker of Dakhóta from the Sioux Valley Dakhóta Nation. In *Remember This!*, Waziyatawin recorded, transcribed, and shared some of Taylor’s knowledge of the Dakhóta oral historical tradition and recollections of his own life.

5. For a broader discussion of Dakhóta language curriculum development and teacher training programs, please revisit the other articles in this issue. Courses in Dakhóta language are offered by the Dakota Language Program at UMN-Twin Cities, <https://cla.umn.edu/ais/undergraduate/dakota-ojibwe-language-programs>. Dakhóta families with young children can learn about enrollment opportunities and curriculum at Dakhód’iapi Wahóhpi, <https://lab-school.umn.edu/language-nest-program/>. Dakhóta families with older children can learn about Dakhóta language education at the Bdote Learning Center in Minneapolis, <https://bdote.org/>. Additional resources for Dakhóta language learners, including opportunities and training for teachers, are available from Dakhóta Iápi Okhódakičhiye, <https://dakhota.org/>, and Dakota Wicohan in Morton, Minnesota, <https://dakotawicohan.org/>.

Imagining a Future that Doubles Our Impact

Campaign to Transform Gibbs Farm

CHAD ROBERTS, RCHS PRESIDENT & CEO

Minnesota is blessed with abundant cultural resources. Among them is Gibbs Farm—the unique gem Ramsey County Historical Society (RCHS) is honored to care for and operate. No where else in Minnesota do 15,000 students get to spill off a bus and walk back in time through prairie grasses taller than they are. Here, they learn about the Jane and Heman Gibbs family and the people of *Hëyáta Othúnjwe* (Cloud Man's Village). They see farm animals, participate in educational skits, and create a take-home craft common to either Dakhóta or immigrant culture. The unique, hands-on programs at Gibbs Farm address dozens of state educational requirements, and the way we instruct uses proven, effective techniques that resonate with students and teachers.

This matters because educators know, we know, and researchers around the country know that quality field trip programs like Gibbs Farm help students achieve success.

Gibbs Farm has been operating at full capacity for years as a seasonal site. As we look to the future and the needs of schools, seniors, and others in our community, it is clear we can be of service to so many more if we have the facilities to do so.

We have spent years planning for a future where 30,000 students will benefit from Gibbs Farm field trips every year—a future that includes student access to an after-school program centered on our shared history to help close the achievement gap. This future will feature new, fully accessible spaces where individuals of all ages and abilities may experience the farm and where our community partners can add their programming to ours to reach new audiences. All of this requires a year-round education building, and that is what we intend to build in the next few years.

As you undoubtedly know, RCHS is also trusted to preserve archival materials and artifacts that help tell the history of Ramsey County—right now that is 4.5 million items we care for and curate. Part of the campaign includes building a collections preservation facility that will meet our community's needs for decades to come. We expect to break ground on this building in the fall of 2024.

Our Capital Campaign

We have been engaged in the quiet phase of a capital campaign to raise the funds for these projects for several years. Ramsey County has already committed \$7.2 million for the project, and RCHS is raising \$6 million from individuals, foundations, and corporations (having secured \$3.7 million so far). Because Gibbs Farm serves students from all across Minnesota and impacts our entire region, we have asked the State of Minnesota to provide \$9.9 million for the project, as well.

Over the next two years, there will be opportunities for you to help us double our reach and care for the materials that tell the stories of the people and places of Ramsey County. Learn more about the **Campaign to Transform Gibbs Farm** at <https://rchs.com/campaign-for-gibbs-farm/>.

This architectural rendering by design firm HGA gives future visitors to Gibbs Farm a peek at the proposed educational building. *Courtesy of Ramsey County Historical Society.*



RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

President & CEO

Chad P. Roberts

Editor

Meredith Cummings

Editor Emeritus (2006-2018)

John Lindley

Founding Editor (1964-2006)

Virginia Brainard Kunz

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Board of Directors

Mari Oyanagi Eggum

Chair

Robert W. Mairs

First Vice Chair

Elizabeth J. Keyes

Second Vice Chair

Lorraine Griffin Johnson

Secretary

Marc J Manderscheid

Treasurer

Jo Emerson, Tim Glines, Judy Kishel, Debbie Lee, Joe Lutz, Allison Midden, Dixie Nelson, Peter Nguyen, Faith Pon, Chad P. Roberts, Roxanne Sands, Ellen Turpin, Joe Twomey, July Vang, Glenn Wiessner, Helen Wilkie, Lee Pao Xiong

Directors Emeriti

W. Andrew Boss, George A. Mairs, Richard T.

Murphy Sr., Paul A. Verret

Editorial Board

Anne Field, *Chair*, Thomas H. Boyd, Anne Cowie, John Diers, Kate Dietrick, Renoir W. Gaither, John Guthmann, Lisa L. Heinrich, Kyle Imdieke, Laurie M. Murphy, Paul D. Nelson, Richard H. Nicholson, Jay Pfaender, David Riehle, Chad P. Roberts, Linda Schloff, Mark Taylor, Steve Trimble, Mary Lethert Wingerd, Matthew Wright

Honorary Advisory Board

William Finney, George Latimer, Joseph S. Micallef, Marvin J. Pertzik, James Reagan

Ramsey County Commissioners

Commissioner Trista MatasCastillo, *Chair*

Commissioner Nicole Joy Frethem

Commissioner Mary Jo McGuire

Commissioner Rena Moran

Commissioner Rafael E. Ortega

Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt

Commissioner Mai Chong Xiong

Ryan T. O'Connor, Manager, Ramsey County

Ramsey County History is published quarterly by the Ramsey County Historical Society, 323 Landmark Center, 75 W. Fifth Street, Saint Paul, MN 55102 (651-222-0701). Printed in U.S.A. Copyright © 2023, Ramsey County Historical Society. ISSN Number 0485-9758.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reprinted or otherwise reproduced without written permission from the publisher. The Society assumes no responsibility for statements made by contributors.

RAMSEY COUNTY History

A PUBLICATION OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Preserving our past, informing our present, inspiring our future.

The Ramsey County Historical Society (RCHS) strives to innovate, lead, and partner in preserving the knowledge of our community; deliver inspiring history programming; and incorporate local history in education.

The Society was established in 1949 to preserve the Jane and Heman Gibbs Farm in Falcon Heights, which the family acquired in 1849. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974, the original programs told the story of the Gibbs family. In 2000, with the assistance of a Dakota Advisory Council, RCHS also began interpreting Dakota culture and lifeways, now telling the stories of the remarkable relationship between Jane Gibbs and the Dakota people of Ĥeyáta Othújwe (Cloud Man's Village).

In 1964, the Society began publishing its award-winning magazine *Ramsey County History*. In 1978, the organization moved to St. Paul's Landmark Center, a restored Federal Courts building on the National Register of Historic Places. An expansion of the Research Center was completed in 2010 and rededicated in 2016 as the Mary Livingston Griggs & Mary Griggs Burke Research Center.

RCHS offers public programming for youth and adults. Visit www.rchs.com for details of upcoming History Revealed programs, summer camps, courthouse and depot tours, and more. The Society serves more than 15,000 students annually on field trips or through school outreach. Programs are made possible by donors, members, corporations, and foundations, all of whom we appreciate deeply. If you are not a member of RCHS, please join today and help bring history to life for more than 50,000 people every year.

Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, & Inclusion

RCHS is committed to ensuring it preserves and presents our county's history. As we continue our work to incorporate more culturally diverse histories, we have made a commitment to diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion that is based on this core idea: RCHS exists to serve ALL who call Ramsey County home. To learn more, please see www.rchs.com/about.

Acknowledging This Sacred Dakota Land

Mnisóta Makhóche, the land where the waters are so clear they reflect the clouds, extends beyond the modern borders of Minnesota and is the ancestral and contemporary homeland of the Dakhóta (Dakota) people. It is also home to the Anishinaabe and other Indigenous peoples, all who make up a vibrant community in Mnisóta Makhóche. RCHS acknowledges that its sites are located on and benefit from these sacred Dakota lands.

RCHS is committed to preserving our past, informing our present, and inspiring our future. Part of doing so is acknowledging the painful history and current challenges facing the Dakota people just as we celebrate the contributions of Dakota and other Indigenous peoples.

Find our full Land Acknowledgment Statement on our website, www.rchs.com. This includes actionable ways in which RCHS pledges to honor the Dakota and other Indigenous peoples of Mnisóta Makhóche.



Cozy Winter Crafts at Gibbs



Cozy Coloring
Wednesday,
November 15th
5:30-7:30pm



Candle Making
Saturday,
December 2nd
12:00-3:00pm

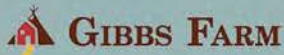


Floral Ornaments
Wednesday,
December 13th
5:30-7:30pm

Visit RCHS.com
for more information or to register.



What a Night...



Pathways GALA

Thank you to all our donors and sponsors!
Together, we raised \$70,000 for
Gibbs Farm.

Sponsors:

Mairs & Power
Jerry Woelfel & Becky Garthofner
Adolfson & Peterson Construction
HGA Architects
Honsa-Binder Printing
Sunrise Banks
Taft Law
Harrington Langer & Associates
Do Good Events



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Dakhóta Iápi: A Brief History in Three Parts

This year, Dakhóta language scholars from the University of Minnesota—Eileen Bass, Justis Brokenrope, Deacon DeBoer, Ava Grace, and Heather Menefee, with their instructor Šišókaduta (Joe Bendickson)—have worked with Ramsey County Historical Society to write about Dakhóta Iápi (Dakota language). The piece begins on pages 12 and 13 with an early history of the language following settler colonization and extending through the boarding school era. It continues with a collaborative segment highlighting current language initiatives and the positive effects these have for both the Dakhóta and non-Indigenous communities in establishing themselves in Mnísota Makhóche history. The article culminates with words of encouragement to Dakhóta language teachers and second-language learners from Dr. Rev. Clifford Canku, one of the few remaining first-language Dakhóta speakers and a holder of traditional knowledge.

—Deacon DeBoer



Dakhóta language is present and celebrated throughout the Twin Cities at parks and in public art—as seen at Bdé Makhá Ská through work created by Mona Smith, Sandy Spieler, and Angela Two Stars; at the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden installation, *Okciyapi*, also by Two Stars; and at the newly opened Unčí Makhá Park (Grandmother Earth Park) in St. Paul. *Courtesy of Ramsey County Historical Society.*