

Cultural Reconnection Through Story

Using the Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings
and Interviews with Oceti Sakowin Elders



Oceti Sakowin [oh-CHEH-tee shaw-KOH-we] means “Seven Council Fires”
and refers collectively to the Lakota, Dakota and Nakota people.

USING THIS GUIDEBOOK / JOURNAL

The Resource: This guidebook/journal was created through a partnership between the SD WoLakota Project and the SD Humanities Council. It is an accompaniment to Lakota/Dakota/Nakota elder videos created through the SD WoLakota Project and an overview of the Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings (OSEU). The OSEU were written by Lakota/Dakota/Nakota elders in SD to provide information for both Native and non-Native people to learn what the elders feel are the most important things to know about the culture and language of the people indigenous to this place.

The Process: The accompanying DVD contains a set of elder videos representing elders from all nine tribal nations in SD. We encourage individuals and small groups to watch the videos and then reflect on the questions that go with each video. Each question is an invitation for individuals to reflect on their own personal connections to the stories shared in the videos. We suggest taking time personally to write about the questions followed by opportunities to share the reflections in small groups. Once in small groups, the following learning model shows the process we encourage to develop understanding of one another. Deep listening not only to each other but also to our own inner teachers followed by deep sharing helps us to place human beings before their “doings” allowing us to understand each other as the unique individuals we are.



About the Cover Artist: Merle Locke

Merle is an Oglala Lakota artist who resides in Porcupine, South Dakota. His paintings are very symbolic in nature depicting traditional tribal scenes and imagery. The symbolism of the cover painting for the *Oceti Sakowin* Essential Understandings and Standards Project is representative of several meanings. The *Oceti Sakowin* tradition of oral teaching among generations is depicted by showing an elder in the center. The elder is surrounded by seven people who represent different generations. The people, as well as the seven tipis, represent the *Oceti Sakowin* (Seven Council Fires). The dragon flies represent hope and prosperity with the thoughts of bringing goodness to the tribes and people.

“The hope is that citizens who are well educated about the Oceti Sakowin history and culture will be more likely to make better decisions in the arena of Indian issues and to get along better with one another.”

- Lakota Scholar, Dr. Craig Howe 2010

OSEU AT A GLANCE

OSEU 1: LANDS & ENVIRONMENT

The original land base and natural resources of the *Oceti Sakowin* [oh-CHEH-tee shaw-KOH-we] were under communal stewardship prior to immigrant settlement. Oceti Sakowin have a distinct and unique interrelationship with the environment that is essential to South Dakota.

OSEU 2: IDENTITY & RESILIENCY

There is variety and resiliency among individuals within the *Oceti Sakowin* [oh-CHEH-tee shaw-KOH-we] Oyate [oh-YAH-tay] (people) as identity is developed, defined and redefined by entities, by organization, and by people. A continuum of tribal identity, unique to each individual, ranges from assimilated to traditional lifestyle. There is no “generic American Indian.”

OSEU 3: CULTURE & LANGUAGE

The origin, thought and philosophy of the *Oceti Sakowin* [oh-CHEH-tee shaw-KOH-we] continues in the contemporary lifestyles of Tribal members. Tribal cultures, traditions and languages are incorporated and observed by many Tribal members both on and off the reservations.

OSEU 4: KINSHIP & HARMONY

Oceti Sakowin [oh-CHEH-tee shaw-KOH-we] kinship systems provide a framework for both individual and group behavior. Its unwritten rules promote harmony, compromise, a sense of order, and group cohesion.

OSEU 5: ORAL TRADITION & STORY

History told from the *Oceti Sakowin* [oh-CHEH-tee shaw-KOH-we] perspective, through oral tradition and written accounts, frequently conflicts with the stories told by mainstream historians. An analysis of multiple perspectives reveals history in a more inclusive and accurate way.

OSEU 6: SOVEREIGNTY & TREATIES

Federal policies and treaties put into place throughout American history have affected *Oceti Sakowin* [oh-CHEH-tee shaw-KOH-we] people adversely. Tribes as sovereign nations have the authority to enter into government to government relationships. Currently, the relationship between each tribe, their state(s), and the federal government is not the same for each tribe.

OSEU 7: WAY OF LIFE & DEVELOPMENT

The essential philosophy of the *Oceti Sakowin* [oh-CHEH-tee shaw-KOH-we] wicoun [wee-CHO] (way of life) is based on the values of the Oceti Sakowin which have created resiliency of the Oyate [oh-YAH-tay] (people). Tribal communities have put considerable effort into education and economic development, Tribal universities and colleges, wellness centers, cultural traditions, and language revitalization.

OSEU 1: LANDS & ENVIRONMENT

The original land base and natural resources of the Oceti Sakowin [oh-CHEH-tee shaw-KOH-we] were under communal stewardship prior to immigrant settlement. Oceti Sakowin have a distinct and unique interrelationship with the environment that is essential to South Dakota.

OCETI SAKOWIN ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 1 EXTENDED DESCRIPTION

Oceti Sakowin (historically, known to some as the Sioux Nation) is a Native confederacy speaking three different dialects: the Lakota, Dakota and Nakota. The Lakota are the largest of the three groups, composed of seven bands living primarily in South and North Dakota. The Dakota or Santee, composed of five bands live primarily in South Dakota, Minnesota and Nebraska. The Nakota, composed of three bands live primarily in South Dakota and Montana.

Native inhabitants of America did not have a concept of individual land ownership. This was an intrinsically foreign concept to the customs and beliefs of *Oceti Sakowin*. *Oceti Sakowin* land was enjoyed and used in common by all members of the tribe for survival and sustenance. Communal tenure was a principle and norm of each tribe who established boundaries in the territories on which they lived. They defended these boundaries from encroachment by other tribes and later by foreigners. Every member of the tribe born into the group had a lifelong right to live on that land and became a custodian to preserve and protect the land for the future generations.

Oceti Sakowin were nomadic and moved from area to area in their territory when needs arose. Europeans brought with them laws governing private land ownership that conflicted with traditional tribal customs and communal land tenure. Land loss and the creation of reservations for Oceti Sakowin could be traced to the aftermath of European immigrant contact.

Immigrants continued to push west into Oceti Sakowin home lands resulting in wars and major battles. Treaties were signed, by tribes and the U.S. government, and subsequently broken mostly because of land issues. A government to government relationship was established to protect the rights and resources under tribal stewardship and is still supported by the United States Constitution.

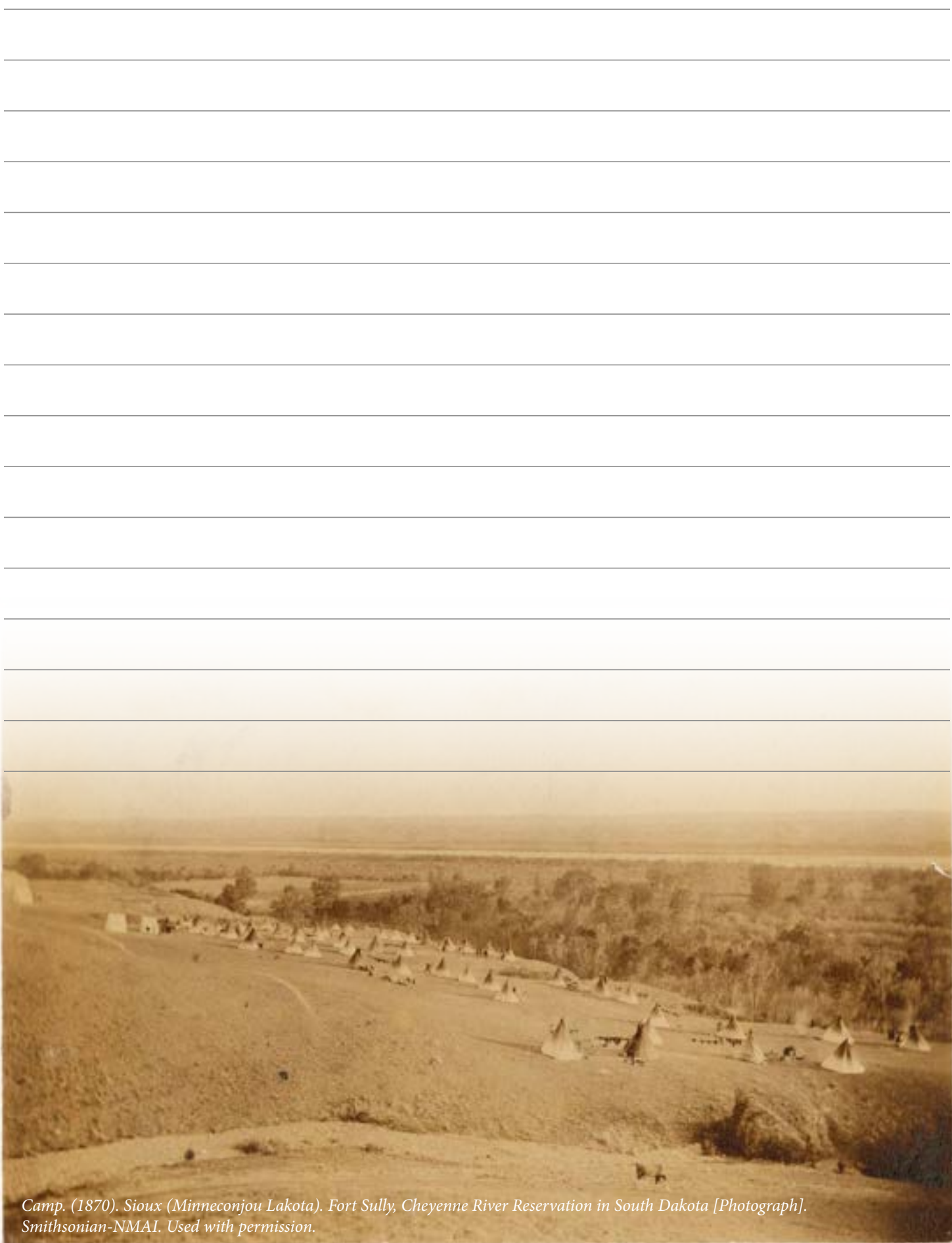
Oceti Sakowin tribal groups' broad philosophical and holistic view on communal land enterprise and philanthropy continues. Sharing and giving for the benefit of all, are concepts that are deeply rooted in the culture of Oceti Sakowin. In the midst of great adversities, the resiliency of the *Oceti Sakowin* indicates a proud people, still living, and striving by their centuries old modes and manners through generations, keeps them the great people they are today. Communal practices, processes and land holdings are still an all-encompassing traditional culture of the Oceti Sakowin. (L. Whirlwind Soldier 2012)



left: Infant is playing. (n.d.). Infant is playing with toy in front of tipi. Fort Sully, Cheyenne River Reservation, S.D. ca. 1870. [Photograph]. Smithsonian-NMAI. Used with permission.

Right: Tipi. (1884). Brule Sioux (Sicangu Lakota) Rosebud Reservation, South Dakota at the bequest of De Cost Smith [Photograph]. Smithsonian-NMAI. Used with permission.





Camp. (1870). Sioux (Minneconjou Lakota). Fort Sully, Cheyenne River Reservation in South Dakota [Photograph]. Smithsonian-NMAI. Used with permission.

OSEU 1: LANDS & ENVIRONMENT

“OTIWOTE” “MAKOCE” AND “WIZIPAN” WITH DUANE HOLLOW HORN BEAR (ROSEBUD) 4:38

1. Do I know the specific place where I was born? Do I have a special relationship with that place?
2. Are there places that I have a special relationship with? Where are they? Why do I have a special relationship with them?
3. Are there special places I would be willing to fight for?
4. Who are the people I learn wisdom from?
5. What things might be easier to see in “relationship” ways than in “ownership” ways? What makes the difference?
6. Do I have a place, a person, or some other thing that is my “wizipan” or a container for all I need? Where, whom or what is it?
7. What might happen if people feel like they have no wizipan, or that their wizipan is empty?
8. Are there ways that I “give back” to some place, person or thing that acts as my wizipan?



EMERGING AND EVOLVING AS RELATIVES WITH JACE DECORY (CHEYENNE RIVER) 3:26

1. What is my view or definition of spirituality?
2. What is my relationship with the various rocks, plants and animals I come into contact with? Do I feel a kinship in any way to them? Which ones?
3. What experiences have I had in connection with caves, caverns or being underground? How have those experiences affected me?
4. Are there ways that I have “emerged” from one place or stage into another? What are those ways?
5. Are there ways I have evolved?
6. What do I believe about various theories of evolution?
7. What places are sacred to me or to people in my family?
8. If I see something or someone as sacred, how does it change the ways I relate to that person or thing?
9. How might seeing others as sacred but just taking “other forms” help me to develop deeper understandings of myself and the world around me?



OSEU 2: IDENTITY & RESILIENCY

There is variety and resiliency among individuals within the Oceti Sakowin [oh-CHEH-tee shaw-KOH-we] Oyate [oh-YAH-tay] (people) as identity is developed, defined and redefined by entities, by organization, and by people. A continuum of tribal identity, unique to each individual, ranges from assimilated to traditional lifestyle. There is no “generic American Indian.”

OCETI SAKOWIN ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 2 EXTENDED DESCRIPTION

Environment has a tremendous influence on Oceti Sakowin lifestyles. There is a distinct difference between the tribes who live in the woodland areas and those who live on the plains. Much like all other cultural groups in American society, individual differences within tribal groups vary. Variations of individual differences within any cultural group are influenced by assimilation into society at large, language other than the Native language, upbringing, personal relationships, life experiences, and socioeconomics. However, assimilation efforts by the United States government and religious organizations as early as 1790 contributed to drastic changes in tribal society and to individual differences.

Americanization policies were based on the idea that when indigenous people learned (European-American) customs and values they would be able to merge tribal traditions with European-American culture and peacefully join the majority society. After the end of the Indian Wars, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the government outlawed the practice of Native American traditional religious (spiritual) ceremonies. It established boarding schools and children were taken from their homes and families and attendance in boarding schools was mandatory. In these schools the children were forced to speak only English, study standard subjects, attend church, and leave their traditions behind. (Adams, David Wallace 1995)

These mandated policies created forced change for individuals and individual Oceti Sakowin families. The boarding school system contributed greatly to the erosion of tribal culture that reverberates into this century, causing many social dysfunctions and in some cases disillusion in American society. After 1890 the tribes continued to resist forced assimilation passively, by simply refusing to forfeit their cultures. The spiritual ceremonies went underground and were held in secrecy. Oceti Sakowin language was still spoken in the home when children returned from boarding school. However, not all families resisted the changes; some willingly accepted the assimilation policies of the government and religious organizations.

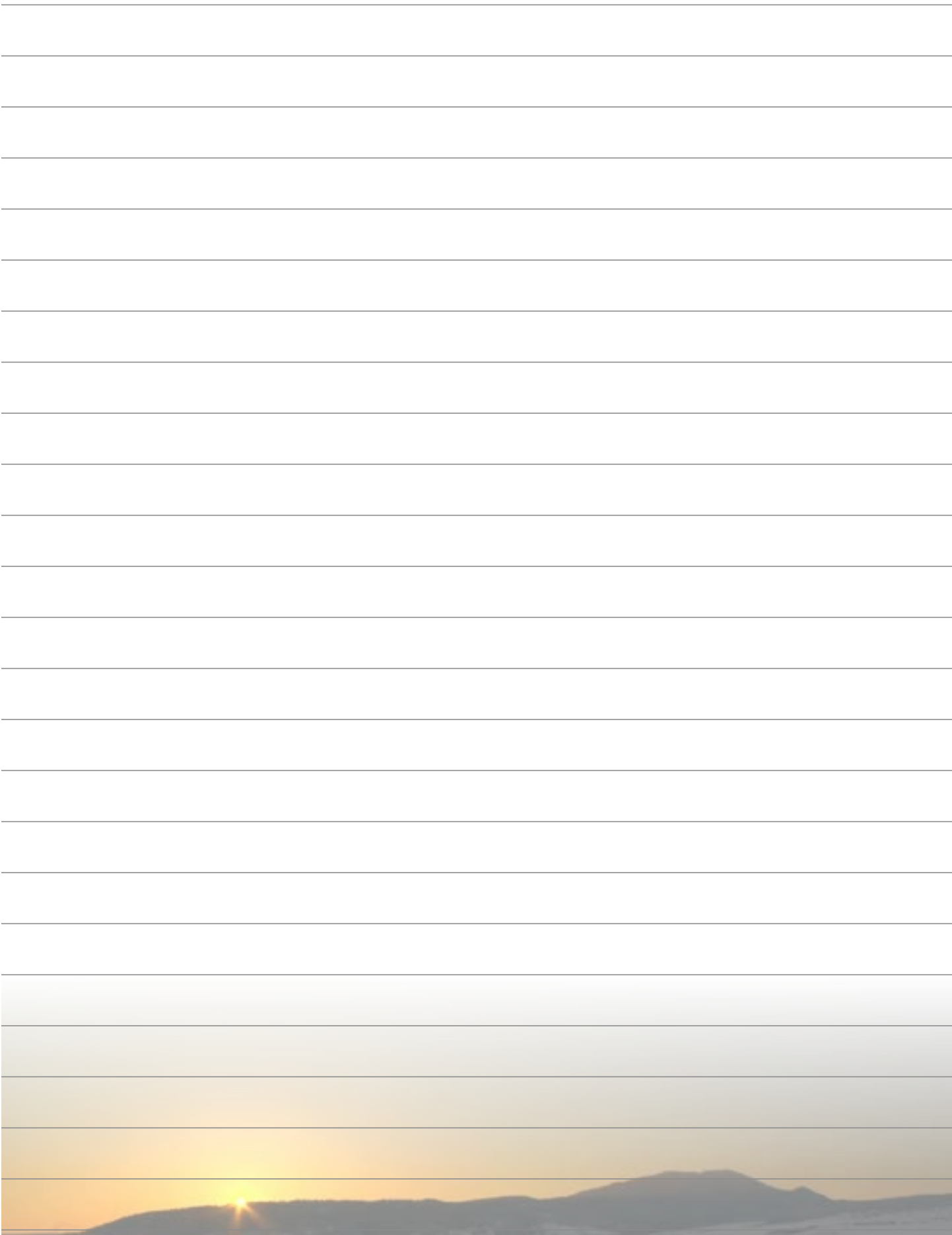
Despite individual differences that do exist within tribal groups, Oceti Sakowin people strongly identify with their tribal group through enrollment into the tribe, common origin, history, culture, and language.

If the general public assumes that there is a “generic American Indian,” then that assumption carries with it society’s visible injustice of stereotyping, racism, and other forms of prejudice and discrimination. In South Dakota, it is most respectful to say “Oceti Sakowin,” or, depending on the dialect group from which they come, to say “Dakota,” “Nakota,” and “Lakota” people.



As a country of diverse cultures we have cultural knowledge that we can share positively and constructively with each other. By honoring and respecting each culture’s perspectives, ideas, differences, and similarities we can create a better, stronger, and more peaceful American society. (L.Whirlwind Soldier 2012)

Woman with two children cooking in 1950’s style kitchen. (1956). Mrs. Floyd Roubideaux, with her two children in the kitchen of their apartment. Mrs. Roubideaux’s family was originally from Rosebud, South Dakota, and came to Gary in January of 1956, where Mr. Roubideaux was employed as a trainee for a steel company. The family, Sicangu Lakota, lives in one of the housing projects on the out-skirts of Gary, Indiana. [Photograph]. Smithsonian- NMAI. Used with permission.



OSEU 2: IDENTITY & RESILIENCY

CRAYONS & SHELTERBELTS WITH KEVIN LOCKE (STANDING ROCK) 6:55

1. What things do I remember drawing as a child?
2. Do I still draw or doodle? What sorts of things do I draw now?
3. What might someone learn about me from looking at my drawings or doodles – either as a child or now... or both?
4. Do I believe my purpose is to be a Blessing or to provide Beauty? Or do I see my purpose as something else?
5. What are/is MY...
 - a. Solid Foundation
 - b. Overarching Goals
 - c. Light of Knowledge
 - d. Warmth of Love
 - e. Soft Breezes
 - f. Gentle Rains
6. Has anyone been a “shelterbelt” for me in some of these ways?
 - a. Love
 - b. Compassion
 - c. Truthfulness
 - d. Trustworthiness
 - e. Continuity
 - f. Constancy
 - g. Dependability
7. Who might you be “sheltering” and in what ways?



CHOOSING TO WALK THE RED ROAD WITH APRIL FALLIS (CROW CREEK) 6:53

1. Do I have any special ceremonies that are important to me or to my family? What are they?
2. Do I ever remember my dreams? How do I feel about the importance of dreams – are they helpful? Do they contain lessons?
3. What do I think a healthy view of money is? How do I view money in my life?
4. Do I have anyone I go to seeking wisdom or advice of some sort? Who is that person and how did I choose him/her?
5. What are my personal thoughts on the way to find the best “path” for my life? How has that path been for me so far?
6. What beliefs do I have concerning the afterlife or reincarnation? What beliefs do I have concerning relatives or friends who have died?



OSEU 3: CULTURE & LANGUAGE

The origin, thought and philosophy of the Oceti Sakowin [oh-CHEH-tee shaw-KOH-we] continues in the contemporary lifestyles of Tribal members. Tribal cultures, traditions and languages are incorporated and observed by many Tribal members both on and off the reservations.

OCETI SAKOWIN ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 3 EXTENDED DESCRIPTION

Oceti Sakowin origin, thought and philosophy continues to be vibrant, strong and taught to the younger generation today. It is an abstract perspective of living in harmony with creation. Oceti Sakowin philosophy is embedded in the Oceti Sakowin language, in the origin stories, in the values and ethics, in the kinship system and social relationships, in the relationship with the environment and with all living things. It is a way of teaching the values of respect, honor, responsibility, positive family and personal relationships, humility, reciprocity, sharing and much more. This is a way of thinking about creation, the universe and the people.

The relationships among the people, the Creator, Mother Earth, and all of nature was, (and still is) significant in the lives of Native peoples. The Oceti Sakowin Oyate believe that all things are part of the great whole. As such, plants and animals become our relatives. Respect for plants and animals was, (and still is) shown by thanking the spirits of these elements for the gifts of themselves, which provide for the physical needs of the Oyate. The Oceti Sakowin Oyate hunted and gathered plants and animals for food and clothing, only when necessary. Nothing was wasted, as this would be disrespectful of the gifts given to sustain life. (Eastman, 1976; Standing Bear, 1975) (D.LeBeau 2012) "Only take from the land what it is willing to give." Never take more and always give back in some way. Most indigenous people know and understand this concept.

Traditionally, Oceti Sakowin people express their traditions and reinforce this tightly woven relationship with the world through teachings, examples, ceremonies and prayers. It is integrated into ideas, experiences, wisdom, traditions, language and customs. This existential relationship with the environment has evolved through direct experience and contact through centuries of interaction with ecosystems and the environment at large.

In Oceti Sakowin cosmology, "everything in the natural world has relationships with every other thing and the total set of relationships makes up the natural world as we experience it" (Deloria, 1992). For that reason, the prayer--Mitakuye Oyasin—meaning "All my relatives." We are all related and not only are we related, we are closely linked in a symbiotic relationship. This familial circle of life ties the Oceti Sakowin to all life forms-- everything above, everything below, everything between. (V. Douville, 2010) (D.LeBeau 2012) To teach and understand that creatures, man, animals, birds, insects, reptiles, plants, water, and air are integral to the survival of the people and earth as we know it is the heart of the culture. Mitakuye Oyasin reflects the physical, mental, spiritual, emotional and intuitive relationship that the Oceti Sakowin has with all aspects and elements of the environment.

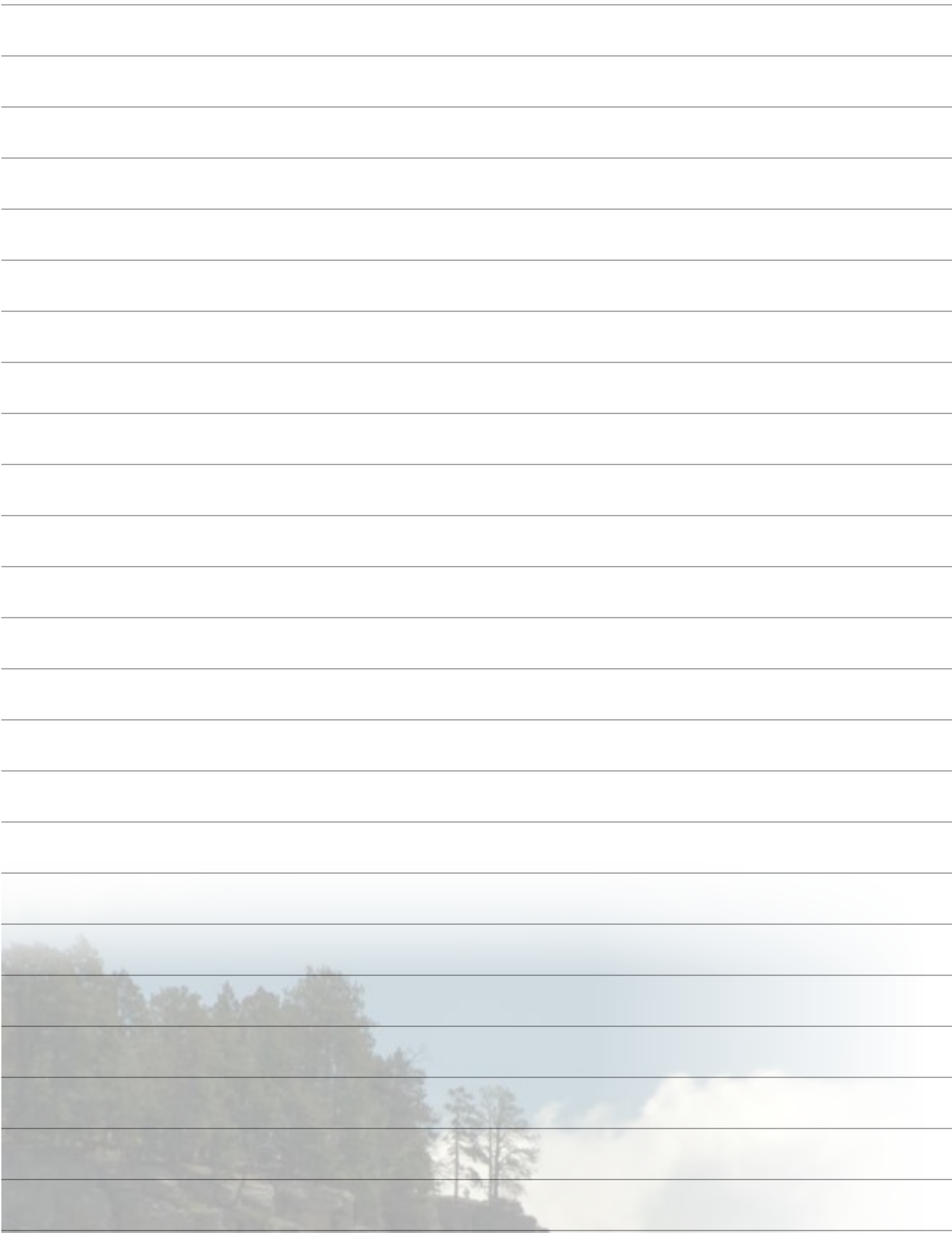
There is a clear distinction between spirituality and structured religion. Spirituality is an experience that is lived on a daily

basis. There is no word for religion in the Lakota, Dakota, or Nakota language. It is "doing it in a good way, with dignity, integrity and honor, and with honesty." (Ida Hildebrand)

In understanding Oceti Sakowin perspective we must teach all children to better understand, respect and honor the environment, natural resources and to work in collaboration, cooperation and to develop a partnership to preserve that which will sustain the coming generations. Acknowledgement and acceptance that there is wisdom in the traditional knowledge and teachings of indigenous people will teach children stronger and more comprehensive environment practices that could very well ensure their future. This is an opportunity to recognize similarities while honoring and respecting the differences in cultures, traditions and beliefs. (L. Whirlwind Soldier 2012)



Child in traditional clothing. (1922). Gift of Charles P. Eaton [Photograph]. Smithsonian-NMAI. Used with permission.



OSEU 3: CULTURE & LANGUAGE

OUR FOUR VALUES WITH VICTOR DOUVILLE (ROSEBUD) 4:28

1. How do the following values shape the way I interact with the world around me?
 - b. Generosity
 - c. Courage
 - d. Patience
 - e. Fortitude
 - f. Compassion
 - g. Humility
 - h. Caring
 - i. Respect



10. What values are important to my family and to me? Why?
11. Where have I learned about values? How were they taught?
12. Does age impact the way I interact with those around me? Why or why not?
13. Have there been times in my life when I had to be resilient? In what ways?

LEARNING CRAFTS FROM GRANDMOTHER WITH PEARL KENNEDY-COLOMBE (LOWER BRULE) 3:34

1. What is my experience in doing crafts?
2. Are there crafts or ways of doing things that I learned by watching?
3. What is my favorite pass time?
4. Do I enjoy being creative? Why or why not?
5. Have I ever learned to make things that come from my cultural heritage?
How are those things different from learning to do crafts in general?
6. How can learning how and creating crafts help people today?
7. What are positive things that come from cultural crafts?



OSEU 4: KINSHIP & HARMONY

Oceti Sakowin [oh-CHEH-tee shaw-KOH-we] kinship systems provide a framework for both individual and group behavior. Its unwritten rules promote harmony, compromise, a sense of order, and group cohesion.

OCETI SAKOWIN ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 4 EXTENDED DESCRIPTION

The Seven Council Fires maintained an organized government with each Council Fire autonomous, yet with an allegiance that unites the seven tribes in a cohesive relationship. These open, egalitarian, classless and cooperative tribes formed for the collective good, for nation building, preserving identity, ethnic solidarity and cohesiveness. Tribal life includes a philosophy of life, history, cultural and social rules, rituals, ceremonies, traditions, social organization and democratic government.

The Seven Council Fire's social structure has significant social and kinship distinctions that are divided into four cooperative units. A tiwahe, which is the nuclear family, includes a mother, father, children and grandparents. The tiospaye which is the extended family, consists of three or four generations includes uncles, aunts, and cousins, children of brothers, sisters and cousins. The tiospaye is very similar to a community with many relatives and other members who are invited to join them. The oyate is the entire tribal group including those in a tiwahe, tiospaye, ospaye and oyate. We wotakuye is the extended families, the blood relatives. The hunka kagagapi is the adoption or making of relatives. Tiospaye is the identifying of spiritual clanship. Oyanke means Dakota community and oyate is the tribal identity.

To the Seven Council Fires, kinship is one of the most important concepts. This strong close-knit kinship system is filled with respect and cooperation that binds tribal members together as a collective unit, and is theoretically all-inclusive. This is central as it is the foundation for a sound development of a stable society. This social structure has significant social distinctions among individuals that establish a strong cultural and ethnic identity.

It is believed that it takes a village to raise a child. Adults in the tiospaye have the social responsibility for the upbringing of all village children. Children are still taught the importance of sibling relationships, responsibilities and role behaviors within the family and within the tribe. Positive behaviors are modeled to create and encourage a favorable character and to demonstrate core values that foster an emotional climate for healthy child development. The child is expected to imitate the positive behaviors of their relatives. One must always be a good relative.

The close kinship system cultivates specialized interaction between children and adults. Each individual has a valued role in the family that is instilled from birth. The rules imposed by kinship were many. The rules of etiquette include using kinship terms when speaking to others. It is considered rude to plunge into conversation without using the polite term of kinship. The kinship system continuously gives children lessons and examples of good behavior, independence, problem solving, family and tribal responsibility, courage, generosity, fortitude and wisdom.

This solid foundation creates high expectations, a strong family and tribal bond, unity and identity. It is a philosophy of "we," cohesion of interconnectedness and not a belief that an individual's needs are more important than the needs of the whole. This social structure ensures that every person contributes to the moral and physical well-being of the tribe.

The Oceti Sakowin kinship system not only creates a nation with a strong moral structure, but creates a philosophy linking kinship components to spiritual beliefs that embraces the world around them. The concept of 'Mitakuye Oyasin' teaches respect for the earth and all life forms and to become stewards of the land.

The people of the Seven Council Fires fitted every detail of existence together in the village for the people, for all living things, and respect for the environment through kinship. (L. Whirlwind Soldier 2012)

McFtridge, Arthur. (1900). Women holding their children at Rosebud, South Dakota. From left: Rose Black Bear, Emma Hand, Lucy Feather Man, Mary Attack Him. From left the children's names are Annie or Charlie Black Bear, unidentified, David Feather Man and Emily Attack Him [Photograph]. Smithsonian-NMAI. Used with permission.





OSEU 4: KINSHIP & HARMONY

COUSINS AND RELATIVES WITH DONALD MONTILEAUX (PINE RIDGE) 4:37

1. What is my relationship with my extended family like?
Do I have cousins that I grew up with? If so, what was that experience like?
2. Have I experienced the renewing of kinship through telling stories with my family members? How do those stories deepen kinship relationships?
3. Have I experienced a sense of safety with my family? Why or why not?
4. Don talks about being able to tease each other about things within his family, but that it is not tolerated from anyone outside of the family. Have I ever experienced something like that? Is there a specific story of that kind of experience in my family?



KINSHIP SYSTEMS WITH LYDIA WHIRLWIND SOLDIER (ROSEBUD) 3:09

1. Who is someone who has been a role model for me in my life?
What things have I learned from him/her?
2. Are there relationships within my family that are special to me because of the way we relate to one another? Special names, etc.?
3. Have I learned about my family history? How? What have I learned?
4. Have I ever spent time away from my family for an extended period of time? How did it impact me?
5. How did I learn to treat my relatives?



OSEU 5: ORAL TRADITION & STORY

History told from the Oceti Sakowin [oh-CHEH-tee shaw-KOH-we] perspective, through oral tradition and written accounts, frequently conflicts with the stories told by mainstream historians. An analysis of multiple perspectives reveals history in a more inclusive and accurate way.

OCETI SAKOWIN ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 5 EXTENDED DESCRIPTION

One major concern of American Indians is that in written history, notes, and early notes, observations and first impressions of the Tribal people were interpreted, judged, and visualized into the European concept or Western way of thinking. When these observations and first impressions did not fit into western culture and concept of how things should be, we were judged as being uncivilized. (A. White Hat 2012)

From the time of first contact and into today's society there have been misrepresentations found in literature, movies, and other forms of popular culture that reinforce cultural misunderstandings. To add to the misconceptions, those in positions to write history determine what and how Oceti Sakowin history is written.

Oral tradition encounters resistance from scholars because it has been labeled as being unverifiable. Historians often label and misrepresent oral tradition as "just stories" and subjective information. This viewpoint has allowed valuable information from the indigenous people to be lost. Oral tradition is a way that knowledge is transmitted from one generation to the next. Oral tradition is a way to transmit history, literature, law, culture and traditions of the people. Oral tradition is the first form of education; it shapes and structures thought patterns, expression, social relations, and values shaping culture and behaviors. Just as important, it is a way to retell memories and histories by those who experienced historical eras and events. It is a way of passing down wisdom learned from mistakes and successes of elders.

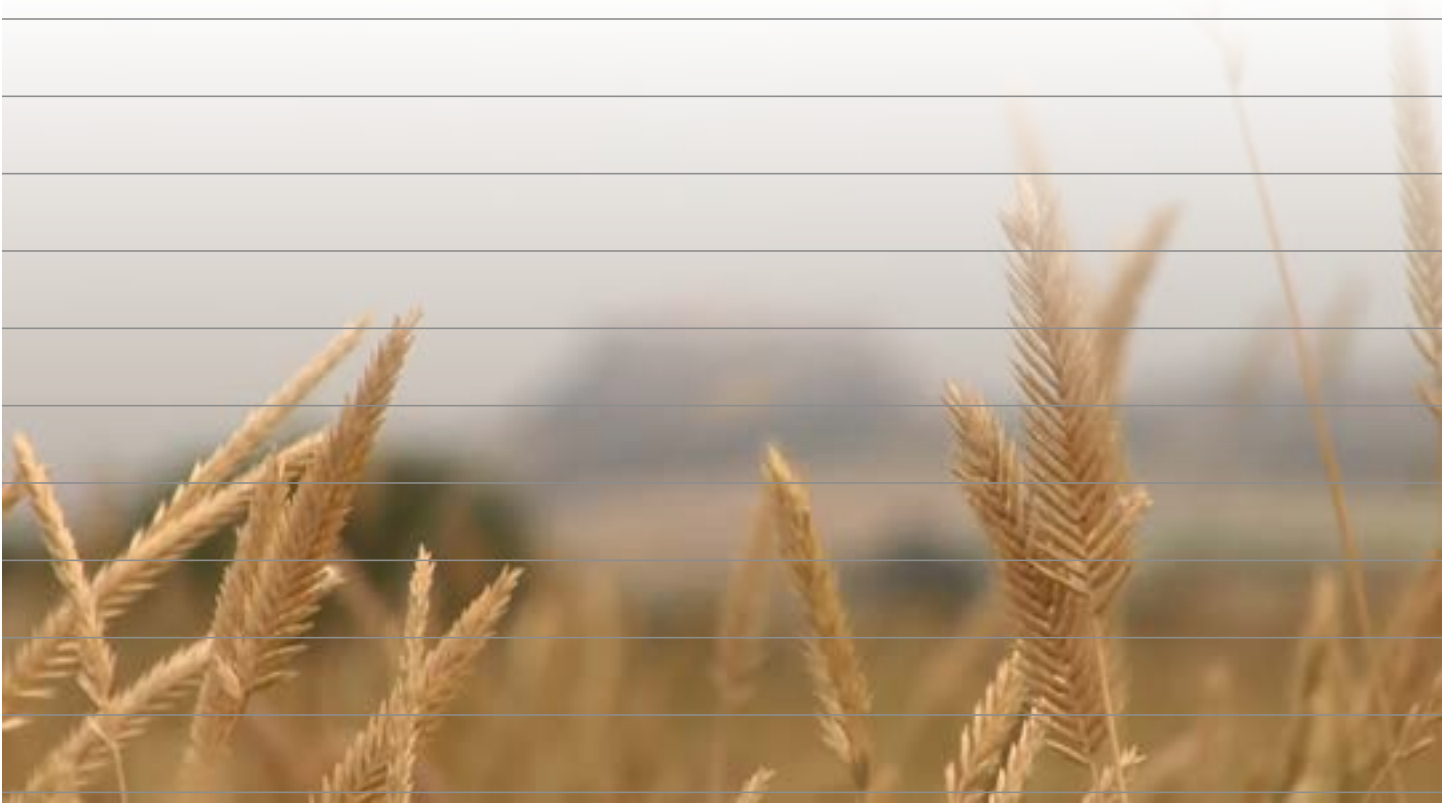
Currently, historical perspective, oral tradition and written accounts about the Oceti Sakowin are being revisited and examined for accuracy, validation, and inclusiveness. The Oceti Sakowin people have long integrated literacy into their culture, and yet did not sacrifice their high regard for their historical oral tradition.

Storytelling is the most studied of Native oral tradition. Oral tradition includes creation stories, tribal historical accounts, legends, and stories that teach proper behavior and lessons of life. Though traditionally, Oceti Sakowin languages were purely oral, they did employ a form of writing in cave/wall etchings, shirt wearer shirt designs and in their annual Winter Counts. A Winter Count is a history of a people that contained the most important event of the year. That important event was depicted by a symbol or a pictograph which told the entire story of that event. There are many ways in which oral tradition can be used in the classroom through oral interviews, review of literature, archives, books, articles, journals and reports. Museum visits, drawings, photos and maps may be collected and studied. Education will be much better as a result of the commitment to meaningful engagement. Studies of oral tradition can raise consciousness, resolve differences, create compassion, and empower. (L. Whirlwind Soldier 2012)



Phelps, Roy. (1912). Pretty Bird standing outdoors for profile portrait at Sioux Powwow, July 4, 1912, Rosebud Reservation, South Dakota [Photograph]. Smithsonian-NMAI. Used with permission.

Lined writing area consisting of 18 horizontal lines.



OSEU 5: ORAL TRADITION & STORY

WHO GETS TO TELL THE STORY? WITH JOSEPH MARSHALL III (ROSEBUD) 4:02

1. Have I ever been in a situation where I felt someone else was controlling the “story” that was being told about me? If so, how did that feel? How did I deal with the situation?
2. Are there things I was taught in school that I found out later were a bit different in reality? If so, what were they? How did I react when I discovered the fuller picture?
3. Do I have any personal “oral” history that has been passed down to me generationally? What part of that oral history might I be willing to share?
4. Have I ever been to visit a physical place that confirmed something I had only heard about through stories?
5. How might these kinds of oral histories impact my sense of identity? How might they impact my family’s sense of collective identity?



THE STORY OF THE CHILD & THE HAIRY MAN WITH DELORES TAKEN ALIVE (STANDING ROCK) 3:55

1. Is there a time in my life where I was lost? What did I do? Did anyone help me?
2. Did I feel protected as a child? Why or why not?
3. How do parents learn how to “parent?” What might cause difficulty in becoming a good/strong parent? What were my own parents like when I was growing up?
4. Do I know stories that explain why things happen the way they do? What are they?
5. What is a favorite story of mine? Why is it my favorite?
6. Has someone ever taken me in when I felt alone?
7. Have I ever taken someone in when they were alone?



OSEU 6: SOVEREIGNTY & TREATIES

Federal policies and treaties put into place throughout American history have affected Oceti Sakowin [oh-CHEH-tee shaw-KOH-we] people adversely. Tribes as sovereign nations have the authority to enter into government to government relationships. Currently, the relationship between each tribe, their state(s), and the federal government is not the same for each tribe.

OCETI SAKOWIN ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 6 EXTENDED DESCRIPTION

When teaching Oceti Sakowin history, culture, federal policies, and treaties, it would be appropriate to examine each in a chronological order. This chronological approach makes it easier to study the origins of treaties, federal policies, and where they lead today.

Confederacies such as the Iroquois, Muskogee and Oceti Sakowin are prototypes of tribal organizations. Tribal sovereignty can truly be examined by studying how these confederacies were organized and how they functioned. The three basic parts of tribal sovereignty are its function, its organization and its purpose.

Both tribal sovereignty and age of discovery are important to the Oceti Sakowin because they established how colonial powers initially recognized tribal sovereignty.

The unique way each Oceti Sakowin Band retains its tribal sovereignty are powerful elements of survival, how it evolved to its present form, and where it will eventually evolve. The current and historical facts about this topic are supported by the incredible amount of information available. Moreover, oral tradition has come into its own by responding to the historical facts from an Oceti Sakowin viewpoint. This would include winter counts, recordings and videos of elders and others sharing stories and information, and written accounts of history using primary documents.

There are different perspectives on tribal sovereignty. For example, one perspective focuses on the idea that tribes are not truly sovereign because they lack the model of sovereignty, especially when compared to the United States model of sovereignty. This is clearly based on the interpretation of Supreme Court Chief Marshall's idea of the "domestic dependent nations" concept. (V. Douville).

One of the key events in the Age of Discovery is the legal groundwork created by Emmerich Vattel to address the ownership of tribal land. This will have a lasting impact of how the United States viewed treaties, land acquisition, and the right of discovery concept.

The key link is the case of Rosebud Sioux vs. Kneip and its potential to emerge in the future with jurisdictional implications, impacting issues such as courts, seatbelts and water rights. There are also other issues such as the Cobell lawsuit involving the trust status of land ownership and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) mismanagement of land. Trust land monopolized by the BIA and Federal Government raises some key issues of Vattel's interpretation of ownership of tribal lands.

Differing perceptions exist concerning the idea that the land issues were settled in the past by the simplest method, "Might Makes Right." On the other hand, the attitude by some tribal members is that since the government dealt from a "weak" position--having been defeated at the "Battle of One Hundred Slain" (1866)—the US simply "signed" treaties like the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty. After the US government wrote the treaty, some Lakota chiefs and leaders used thumbprints or oral consent using a pipe. Sometimes soldiers or government agents signed for the Lakota person. The treaty ceded a large land base from the Lakota and Dakota. In the end, the tribes lost out because in signing the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty, authored by the Federal Government through the military branch, the Oceti Sakowin unknowingly made major concessions because gold was discovered in the Black Hills.

The treaty-making period lasted from 1805 to 1871, according to the Federal Government, or from 1805 to 1934, according to the tribal elders of the Oceti Sakowin. Treaties are still in effect when land claims are discussed. The impacts of the treaties are still evident in the continued funding of each tribal nation today. Benefits to tribes from treaties should not be connected to tax or welfare, but rather as a replacement for a lifestyle that was lost by coercion. Treaties should be viewed as applied in the U.S. Constitution and the interpretation of Supreme Court Chief Justice Marshall.

Some non-tribal members have a negative perception of the usage of tax dollars for funding tribal needs. Taxation is an unpopular subject. This is countered by a positive feedback by tribal perceptions and historians who are using facts to show that treaties are legitimate and that the federal government should be held accountable for renegeing on treaty obligations.

Federal policies can be divided into three parts: congressional acts, judicial decisions based on interpretations of the laws, and executive orders. Moreover, pre-federal policies should be included because they are regarded as formative, including the Marshall trilogy, the creation of the BIA, as well as various policies. One such policy is the long-range mission of the United States to transform the tribal members into citizens of the United States starting with treaties of friendship to get the tribes to recognize United States sovereignty over them. The policy also included taking land by war whenever necessary, placing tribes on reservations, breaking up reservations into individual holdings, and acculturating/assimilating tribal members.

It is most imperative for all learners to ascertain a complete understanding of the past to show how the concept and practice of federal policies applies in today's context and how this same concept and practice will apply in the future.

When the tribal perspective is included in government policies, better discussions can only lead to positive outcomes based on critical thinking. Most of the negativity comes from the paternalistic attitude of the BIA, an agency that manages tribal trust lands. The evolution of the BIA shows how this organization still has a stranglehold on the Oceti Sakowin members and other tribal groups, until the modern times when this grip has somewhat loosened.

The Oceti Sakowin has survived the gamut of federal policies that are designed to destroy the traditional base of knowledge and practice. The tribes have survived the dark past envisioned by a man who knew what was best for Native people, "Kill the Indian and save the man." (Captain Richard H. Pratt 1892).

Today, our endeavor is to save the Oceti Sakowin history and culture and destroy the stereotypes. (V. Douville 2012)



Woman with two children cooking in 1950's style kitchen. (1956). Mrs. Floyd Roubideaux, with her two children in the kitchen of their apartment. Mrs. Roubideaux's family was originally from Rosebud, South Dakota, and came to Gary in January of 1956, where Mr. Roubideaux was employed as a trainee for a steel company. The family, Sicangu Lakota, lives in one of the housing projects on the out-skirts of Gary, Indiana. [Photograph]. Smithsonian-NMAI. Used with permission.



Grabill, John C.H. (1891). Albumen print of soldiers on horseback looking at numerous tipis in distance, entitled "Gen. Miles and staff are viewing the largest hostile Indian camp in the U.S. near Pine Ridge, S.D." [Photograph] Smithsonian-NMAI. Used with permission

OSEU 6: SOVEREIGNTY & TREATIES

BOARDING SCHOOL “ROSE PUMPKINSEED” WITH SIDNEY BYRD (FLANDREAU) 4:11

1. What memories do I have of bedtime?
2. Do I have any strategies for remaining connected to the people I love who are far away?
3. What are the things – objects, smells, sounds, etc. – that remind me of “home?”
4. What are the sources of my bravery in hard or difficult times?
5. In what ways does solitude help or hinder me when dealing with a struggle?
6. Have I ever had a “Rose Pumpkinseed?” Have I ever been someone’s “Rose Pumpkinseed?”
7. Have I had an experience that “made the difference” for me?



1851 TREATY & 1892 AGREEMENT WITH FAITH SPOTTED EAGLE (YANKTON) 4:35

1. What do I know about the treaties that impact Native people?
Were any of my relatives treaty signers? How does that impact me today?
2. What is my experience with broken promises, both promises made to me and promises I have made?
3. What role has “blame” played in my life and relationships?
What kind of impact has it had?
4. Are there things that I am in denial about in my life? Am I prepared to deal with them?
Do I have a plan for dealing with them?
5. What role has “forgiveness” played in my life and relationships? What kind of impact has it had?
6. Are there any things that I have felt like the “steward” or “keeper” of that were taken from me? How did I deal with this?



OSEU 7: WAY OF LIFE & DEVELOPMENT

The essential philosophy of the Oceti Sakowin [oh-CHEH-tee shaw-KOH-we] wicoun [wee-CHO] (way of life) is based on the values of the Oceti Sakowin which have created resiliency of the Oyate [oh-YAH-tay] (people). Tribal communities have put considerable effort into education and economic development, tribal universities and colleges, wellness centers, cultural traditions, and language revitalization.

OCETI SAKOWIN ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING 7 EXTENDED DESCRIPTION

The essential thought and philosophy of the Oceti Sakowin wicoun (way of life) is based on values that are centuries old. Communal way of life has ensured that the Oceti Sakowin will continue for generations to come. The foundation on which survival is based are the Oceti Sakowin values woohitika (bravery), wowacintanka (fortitude), wacantognaka (generosity) and woksape (wisdom).

The Oceti Sakowin are proud people with a rich heritage and many famous patriot chiefs. They were known to be hunters and eminent warriors of the plains and woodlands of present day Minnesota and South Dakota. Men gained prestige through exemplified values and virtues throughout their lifetime deeds, reflected in the honor of tribe and family. Women possessed family lodges and all it contained. A close knit family unit is central; the children are held as deep spiritual gifts.

Tribal values are intrinsically rooted in tribal sovereignty and land preservation. Today, tribal councils still place high value on revitalizing Oceti Sakowin wicoun (way of life). As economic interests frequently conflict with tribal tradition and culture, careful consideration is given to the types of businesses that the tribes allow onto reservations.

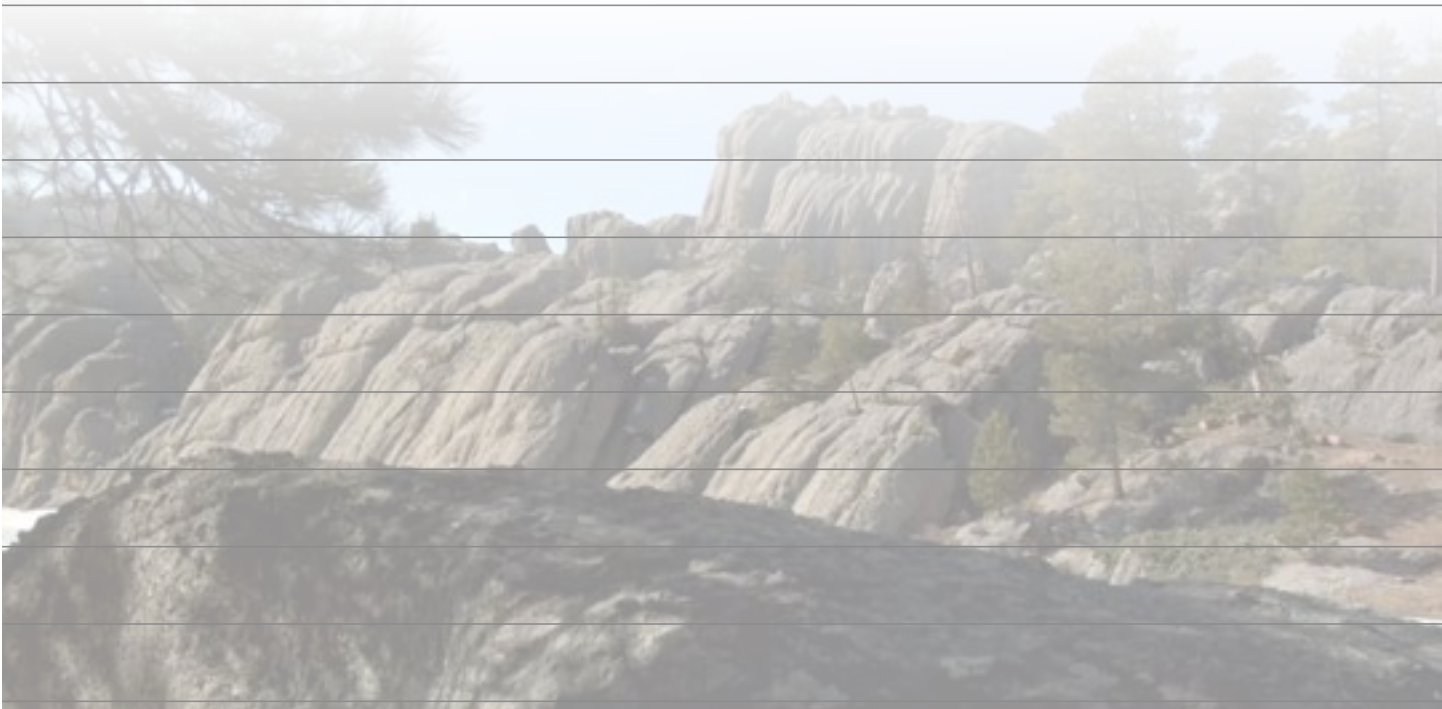
In an effort to address high unemployment rates, tribal councils are continually looking at economic development opportunities such as wind and solar energy, development of tribal lands, conservation of natural resources and tourism.

Education is at the forefront of these initiatives. Since 1970 Native nations banded together forming the American Indian Higher Education Consortium. Beginning with two and four year programs, the higher learning offerings have expanded into graduate degrees and are on the threshold of offering doctoral programs. They offer degrees in a variety of areas such as: nursing, education, business administration, social sciences and Native American language and studies.

The Oceti Sakowin are still here, still proud, still strong and in the face of many injustices have entered this century with fortitude and with their values intact, to reinforce their beliefs in tribal life and with determination to overcome and build better lives for their children. (L. Whirlwind Soldier 2012)



Dinwiddie, William. (1896). Sioux (Oglala Lakota) Delegation. Phillip Wells (Interpreter), Little Wound, George Fire Thunder, James A. George (Attorney), Kicking Bear, Captain Thunder Bear [Photograph]. Smithsonian- NMAI. Used with permission.



OSEU 7: WAY OF LIFE & DEVELOPMENT

MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE “70%” WITH JESSE TAKEN ALIVE (STANDING ROCK) 8:29

1. Have I ever found myself in the “70 percent” or failing something I was trying to learn? How did I deal with it?
2. What experiences do I have of trying to learn something that was not being taught in the best way for me?
3. What was my school experience like? What might have made it better for me?
4. Are there things from my experiences from school or learning in general that affect me today in positive ways? Negative ways?
5. How do I learn best?
6. What are the things I enjoy learning most about? What kind of opportunities do I have to continue learning about them?



ADDRESSING MISCONCEPTIONS WITH DRS. JOHNSON & EASTMAN (SISSETON WAHPETON) 3:04

1. What do I know about the migration of my own family? How did I get where I am today from where the first members of my family that I know lived?
2. Are there certain characteristics or “myths” that are told about the people from my cultural background? What are some positive and negative examples and how have they impacted me?
3. What are my experiences with poverty? How have those experiences affected me?
4. How might growing in understanding of the services provided to people in my state help me understand my neighbors better?



OSEU 7: WAY OF LIFE & DEVELOPMENT - STORYTELLING

THE STORY OF STAR BOY WITH DUANE HOLLOW HORN BEAR (ROSEBUD) 5:18

1. Are there stories that I have been told that have helped me to learn a lesson?
2. How do stories help me to understand important issues in my life?
3. Who tells or has told me stories?
4. What are some of my experiences of storytelling?
5. Do I know of a story that is similar to Star Boy? Who are the characters and what did I learn from it?



THE STORY OF IKTOMI AND THE DUCKS WITH VELMA KILLS BACK (PINE RIDGE) 4:07

1. Do I remember a story I was told to explain how something happened or came to be?
2. Do I identify more with the ducks or with Iktomi? Why?
3. Am I easy to fool? Have I ever taken advantage of someone who was easy to fool? How did it turn out?
4. Can I remember being told certain examples of how others made mistakes to help me shape my behavior?
5. How has my behavior been shaped by my own mistakes?



OCETI SAKOWIN (SEVEN COUNCIL PLACES)

Content provided by Victor Douville 2012

The Oceti Sakowin, the Seven Council Places, has a complex history that is not known by many today. It is an elusive organization that seemingly has no beginning and no profound understanding of when it began to unravel. Perhaps it is still in flux and changing to fit the contemporary needs of today. Oceti is translated as a stove or fireplace however, the term does not convey anything about fire or flame or a light. The focus of the meaning has more to do with the hearth which signifies the autonomy of a home. The established home requires a hearth owned by the Unci or the appropriate female. When defining the meaning of Oceti it is important to note that it is the contraction of makoce ti, which is synonymous for, Unci Maka (Grandmother Earth) Ocaje (name or lineage) ti (to live in an abode). Thus there is an establishment of a matriarchal lineage which indicates tracing lineage from the mother's side.

The meaning of Sakowin is all digits of one hand and the thumb and pointing finger of the other hand or seven. The number seven is a cardinal number for the Oceti. The number seven is based on the sum of two other cardinal numbers which are considered spiritual numbers; these numbers are three and four. The significance of the number seven is also depicted through the clan system. Oceti Sakowin clans, as a standard were based on the number seven. All clans have seven extended families; each family has seven members. When a clan reaches seven extended members then the eighth member separates.

Oceti Sakowin is a cohesive tribal society consisting of seven tribes known as the Seven Council Fires. These Seven Council Fires are divided into three linguistic dialects: Dakota, which includes the Sissetonwan, Wapekute, Wapeton and Mniwakantonwan/Bdewakantonwan; Nakota which includes the Iyanktonwan and Iyanktonwanna; and Lakota which includes the Oglala, Hunkpapa, Itazipcola, Hohwoju/ Mnikowoju, Sihasapa, Oohenunpa and Sicangu. (V. Douville 2012)

Original Terms	Change	Adaptation Today
Mdewakantonwan Spirit Lake Dwellers (Mde, lake; Wakan, spirit; tonwan, to dwell or live at)		
<i>Bdewakantonwan</i>	<i>Bdewakanton</i>	<i>Mdewakanton</i>
Wahpekute Leaf Shooters (Wahpe, broad leaf/forest; kute, shoot)		
<i>Wahpekute</i>	<i>(soft h sound)</i>	<i>Wa(h)pekute</i>
Wahpetonwan Forest Dwellers (Wahpe, broad leaf/forest; tonwan, live/ dwell)		
<i>Wahpetonwan</i>	<i>Wahpeton</i>	<i>Wa(h)peton</i>
Sisitonwan Fish Scale Dwellers (Sisi, smell of fish scales; tonwan, to live at or dwell)		
<i>Sisitonwan</i>	<i>Sisiton</i>	<i>Sisseton</i>
Ihanktonwan Dwellers at the End of the Village (Ihanke, at the end; tonwan, to live at)		
<i>Ihanktonwan</i>	<i>Ihankton</i>	<i>Yankton</i>
Ihantonwanna Little Dwellers at the end village (Yanktonnai) (Ihanke, at the end; tonwan, to dwell or live at; na, junior status)		
<i>Ihantonwanna</i>	<i>Ihanktonna</i>	<i>Yanktonai</i>
Tintantonwan Plains Dwellers (Tintan, prairie or plains; tonwan, to dwell or live at) (Teton is the anglicized version of tintan or titon)		
<i>Tintanotonwan</i>	<i>Titon</i>	<i>Teton</i>

THE TINTANTON OR TETON

Content provided by Victor Douville 2012

After the Tintanton or Teton moved away from Minnesota and onto the Plains, these “L” speakers or Lakota formed their own seven council fires. Their own seven council fires were based on how the fire was carried from principal band to band. Since they could not carry the hearths that were stationary in a tipi tanka like the Santee had, the fire or embers were carried in a shell and only the parent or lead band of that division possessed it. This mobile hearth was called peta, hence Peta Sakowin. The fire was a symbol of sovereignty and wherever this makeshift hearth was placed it was home territory.

Oyate	Prior Name	Time Acquired	Acquired At
Hunkpapa	Inkpapaya	Prior to 1700	S. Minnesota

1 Hunkpapa: Camp at the Horn(s) (Hunkpa, at the end; pa, the head) (Camp at the horns)

The Hunkpapa got their name from their position in the camp circle. They are regarded as the anchor of the Lakota organization and placed at the horn or horns of the camp’s east opening.

Itazipco	Sanun	1725	Missouri River Valley
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2 Itazipcola: Without Bows or Sans Arc (Itazipa, bow; cola, without) (no bows or Sans Arc)

The Itazipco were designated as the pipe keepers of the original pipe and because they held the spiritual covenant of the people, they could not handle or make bows, the weapons of death. When they formed their own band, they were unable or unwilling to make bows to defend themselves. Hence, enemy tribes knowing they were without bows, attacked them. Another version is when a fight broke out among the Sanun, the opposing sides threw down their bows and arrows and attacked each other.

No Bows were younger than the Hunkpapa but were allotted this space for their protection, they were not allowed to make bows, they had holy men and the original pipe

Mnikowoju	Mnisa/Unkceyuta	1700	Red River
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3 Mnikowoju: Planters by the River (Mni, water; ikanyela, near; woju, plant) (Planters near the water)

The Mnikowoju received their name from the time when they grew and planted crops. The other divisions scoffed at the idea of a hunter society turned planters or farmers; this was considered women’s work. They discouraged this practice.

Oglala	Oglalahca	Prior to 1700	Minnesota
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4 Oglala: Scatter Their Own (O, noun prefix; glala, scatter their own) (scatter their own)

The Oglala got their name from an incident when two leaders argued and one threw ashes or dirt in the other’s face. Both leaders and their people separated. Since then they were designated as one who scatters or divides their people.

Oohenunpa	Wanawega	1750	Missouri River Valley
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5 Oohenunpa: Two Boilings or Two Kettle (O, noun prefix; wohan, cook or boil; nunpa, two) (two kettle)

The Oohenunpa received their name when they were caught in an early spring blizzard that forced them to stay in one place for more than several days. As a result of this, the band nearly starved to death and saved themselves by discovering a cache of corn that they boiled in two kettles.

Oyate	Prior Name	Time Acquired	Acquired At
Sicangu	Cokatowela	1762	Brule Creek

6 Sicangu: Burnt Thigh or Brule (Sican, thigh; ogu, burnt) (burnt thigh or Brule)

The Sicangu received their name from the time when they were migrating to the Missouri River in 1762. On route to the river, a band called Cokaton-towela or Cokatowela (blue in the middle camp) settled down for the night and were awakened by a prairie fire that swept through their village destroying their camp and killing many horses. The people saved themselves by jumping in the nearby small lake and creek. The next morning when they examined themselves, most of them were burnt severely about the thighs. The other Lakota called them Sicangu.

Sihasapa	Tizaptan	Prior to 1725	Upper Vermillion
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7 Sihasapa: Black Foot (Siha, soles of the foot; sapa, black) (Black sole foot)

The Sihasapa acquired their name when they walked through miles of scorched earth. When they reached the Missouri River, they noticed that the soles of their feet had worn through their moccasins and were smudged by the burnt ashes.



Assembly. (1881). Assembly for exchange of presents Oglala, Sioux. Pine Ridge Agency, South Dakota [Photograph]. Most likely a give-away. Smithsonian-NMAI. Used with permission.

CURRENT LOCATIONS OF OCETI SAKOWIN BANDS

Content provided by Victor Douville 2012

South Dakota

- Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe: *Hohwoju, Sijasapa, Oohenunpa & Itazipco*
- Crow Creek Sioux Tribe: *Lower Ihanktonwanna*
- Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe: *Mdewakanton, Wahpkute & Wahpeton*
- Lower Brule Sioux Tribe Kul Wicasa: *Sicangu*
- Lower Sioux Community: *Mdewakanton & Wahpekute*
- Oglala Sioux Tribe-Pine Ridge: *Oglala*
- Rosebud Sioux Tribe-Rosebud: *Sicangu (Heyata or Upper)*
- Standing Rock Sioux Tribe: *Hunkpapa, Papaksa & Upper Ihanktonwanna*
- Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe: *Sisseton & Wahpeton*
- Yankton Sioux Tribe: *Ihanktonwan*

Minnesota

- Prairie Island Mdewakanton Tribe: *Mdewakanton & Wahpekute*
- Shakopee Mdewakanton Tribe: *Mdewakanton & Wahpekute Upper*
- Sioux Community: *Mdewakanton, Wahpeton & Sisseton*

North Dakota

- Spirit Lake Tribe: *Sisseton, Wahpeton & Upper Ihanktonwanna*

Montana

- Ft. Peck-Assiniboine-Sioux Tribe: *Hunkpapa, Assiniboine, Upper Ihankton-wanna or Papaksa, Sisseton, Wahpeton, Mdewakanton & Wahpekute*

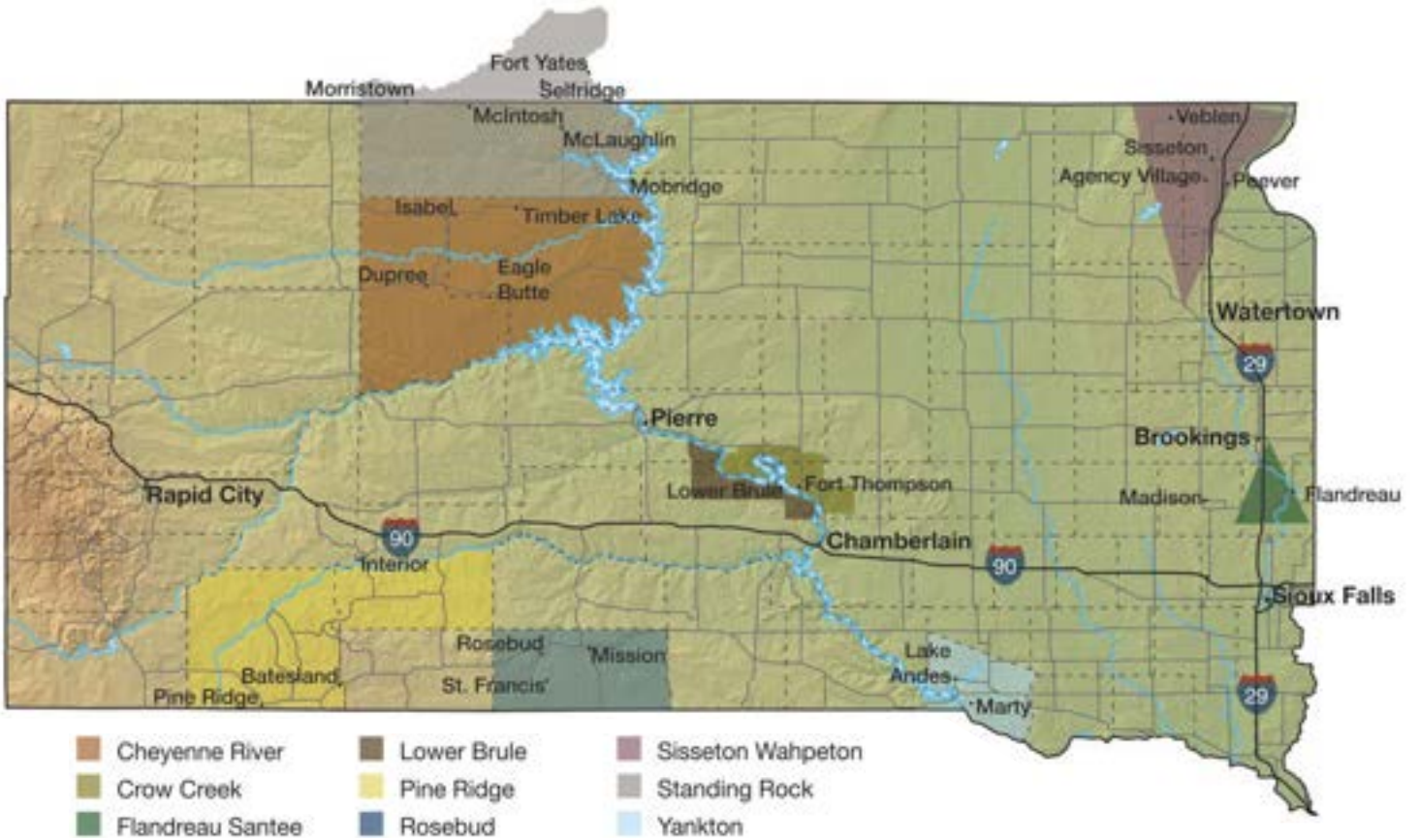
Nebraska

- Santee Sioux Tribe: *Mdewakanton & Wahpekute*



SOUTH DAKOTA RESERVATION MAP

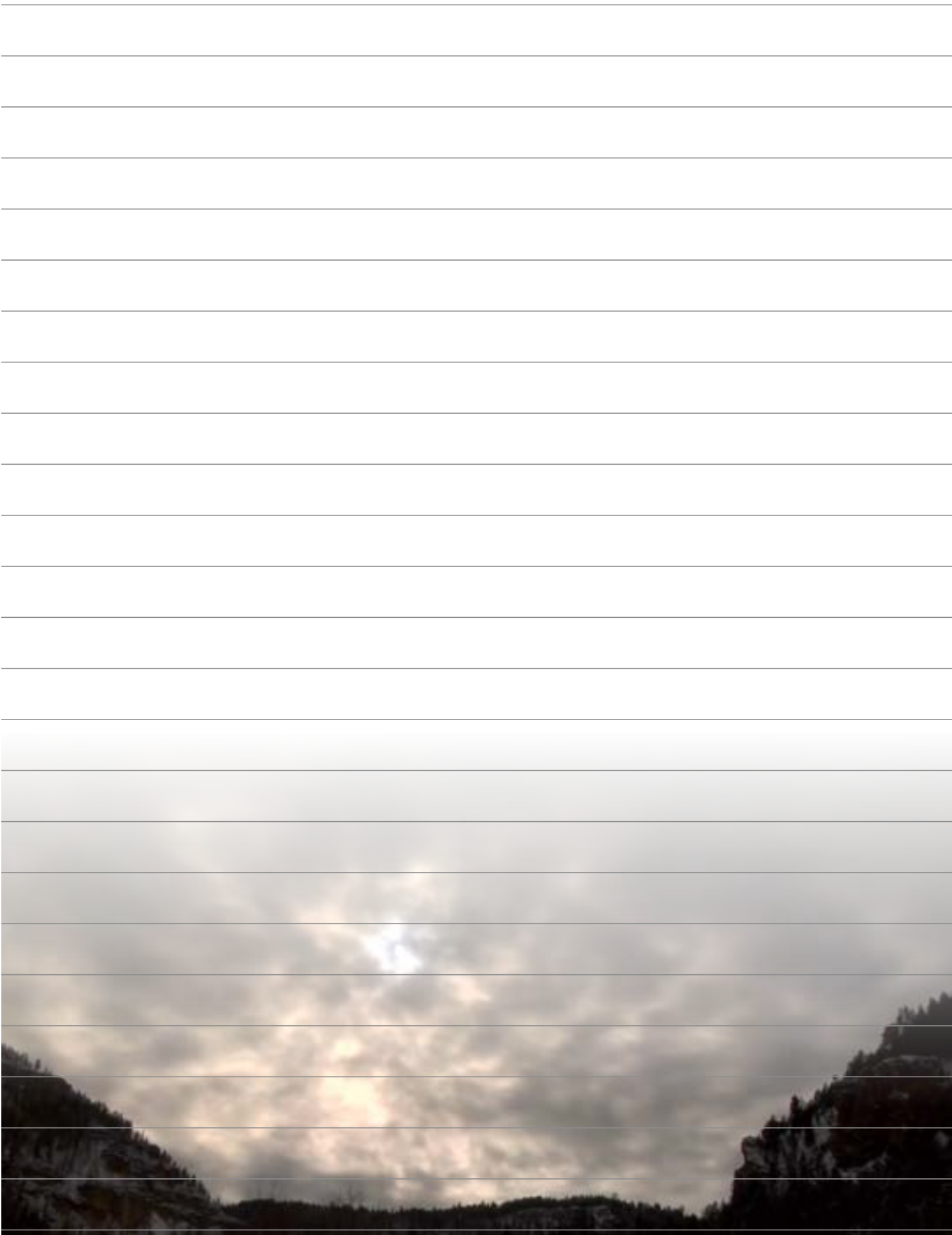
South Dakota Tribal Government Relations 2010 - Reservation Map



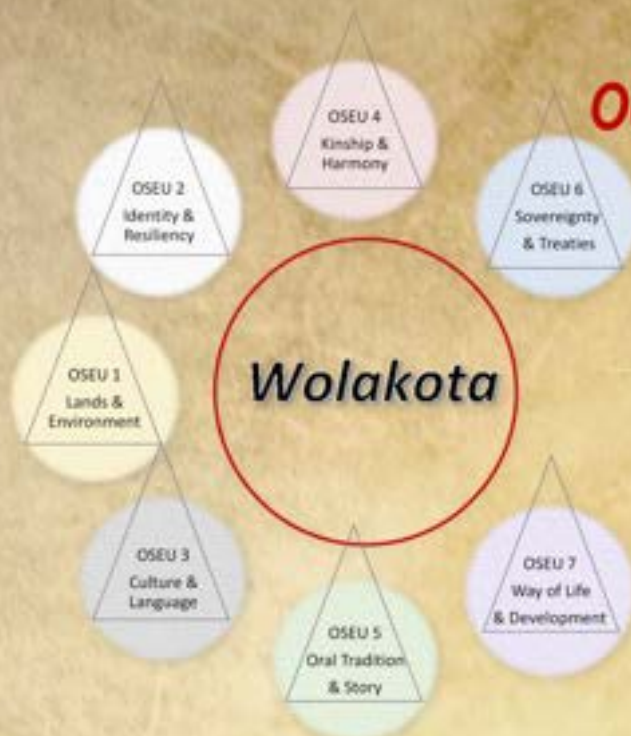
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- **Iktomi**: Trickster
- **Imperialism**: The creation and maintenance of an equal economic, cultural and territorial relationship between states and often in the form of an empire, based on domination and subordination. (Wikipedia 2011)
- **Manifest Destiny**: The nineteenth Century belief that the United States was destined to expand across the North American continent from the Atlantic seaboard to the Pacific Ocean. (Wikipedia 2011)
- **Mitakuye Oyasin**: All my relatives
- **Oceti Sakowin**: (Camp Fires) (Seven) {Seven Council Fires}
- **Oyate**: People
- **Reservation**: A territory reserved by the tribes as a permanent tribal homeland. All reservations were created through treaties in South Dakota.
- **Sinte Gleska**: Spotted Tail
- **Tiwahe**: The immediate household or family
- **Treaty**: An express agreement under international law entered into by actors in international law, mainly sovereign states and an international organization. A treaty may also be known as an international agreement, protocol, and covenant among other terms. Regardless of terminology all these forms of agreements are under international law equally considered treaties and rules are the same. A treaty can be loosely compared to a contract; both are means of willing parties assuming obligations among themselves; if either party fails to live up to their obligations it can be held liable under international law. (Wikipedia 2011)
- **Tribal Sovereignty**: Tribal sovereignty in the United States refers to the inherent authority of indigenous tribes to govern themselves within the borders of the United States. The federal government recognizes nations as “domestic dependent nations” and has established a number of laws attempting to clarify the federal, state and tribal governments. The constitution and later federal laws grant to local sovereignty to tribal nations yet do not grant full sovereign equivalent to foreign nations, hence the term “domestic dependent nations”. (Wikipedia 2011)
- **Winter Count**: Pictorial calendars or histories in which tribal records or events are recorded. (Wikipedia 2011- see for more)





The Seven *Oceti Sakowin* Essential Understandings



"That's the way I try to live my life– in Wolakota– in peace, in balance, in harmony. It's a philosophy, it's a way of life...every day, when you walk on earth, you try to live in balance with whatever task you have at hand."

--Oceti Sakowin Elder, Jace DeCory

OSEU 1: Lands & Environment

The original land base and natural resources of the Oceti Sakowin (pa-CHEN-see SHAW-ah-see) were under communal stewardship prior to immigrant settlement. Oceti Sakowin have a distinct and unique interrelationship with the environment that is essential to South Dakota.

OSEU 2: Identity & Resiliency

There is variety and resiliency among individuals within the Oceti Sakowin (pa-CHEN-see SHAW-ah-see) Oyate (pa-YAH-see) (people) as identity is developed, defined and redefined by entities, by organization, and by people. A continuum of tribal identity, unique to each individual, ranges from assimilated to traditional lifestyle. There is no "generic American Indian."

OSEU 3: Culture & Language

The origin, thought and philosophy of the Oceti Sakowin (pa-CHEN-see SHAW-ah-see) continues in the contemporary lifestyles of Tribal members. Tribal cultures, traditions and languages are incorporated and observed by many Tribal members both on and off the reservations.

OSEU 4: Kinship & Harmony

Oceti Sakowin (pa-CHEN-see SHAW-ah-see) kinship systems provide a framework for both individual and group behavior. Its unwritten rules promote harmony, compromise, a sense of order, and group cohesion.

OSEU 5: Oral Tradition & Story

History told from the Oceti Sakowin (pa-CHEN-see SHAW-ah-see) perspective, through oral tradition and written accounts, frequently conflicts with the stories told by mainstream historians. An analysis of multiple perspectives reveals history in a more inclusive and accurate way.

OSEU 6: Sovereignty & Treaties

Federal policies and treaties put into place throughout American history have affected Oceti Sakowin (pa-CHEN-see SHAW-ah-see) people adversely. Tribes as sovereign nations have the authority to enter into government to government relationships. Currently, the relationship between each tribe, their state(s), and the federal government is not the same for each tribe.

OSEU 7: Way of Life & Development

The essential philosophy of the Oceti Sakowin (pa-CHEN-see SHAW-ah-see) Wicouit (see-CHIC) (way of life) is based on the values of the Oceti Sakowin which have created resiliency of the Oyate (pa-YAH-see) (people). Tribal communities have put considerable effort into education and economic development, Tribal universities and colleges, wellness centers, cultural traditions, and language revitalization.