

## Lesson 2: Mitakuye Owas'ih: Dakota Worldview

**Main Idea:** A central part of the Dakota worldview places Dakota people in a special relationship with others and with the land.

### Essential Questions:

- What does the Dakota worldview of *mitakuye owas'ih* (“we are all relatives”) mean?
- What relationship do Dakota people have to the land in Mni Sóta Maḵoce?
- Why does it matter to learn certain Dakota names and phrases?

### Learning Goals (Students will know that):

- All of us have a worldview that comes from our family and communities.
- Dakota people have a unique worldview called *mitakuye owas'ih*.
- The ‘relatives’ in the phrase *mitakuye owas'ih* include people who are not necessarily related by blood or family ties and includes even plants and animals.

### Students Will Be Able To:

- Define and interpret what *mitakuye owas'ih* means.
- Practice pronouncing *mitakuye owas'ih*
- Learn how to say in Dakota that they are from Mni Sóta Maḵoce.

### Student Tasks:

Dakota Interviews Reflection

Go through a short Dakota language lesson

### Assessment Tools:

Reflective dialogue about what we mean by worldview in general

Dakota interview reflection worksheet

### Main Lesson Activities (all times are suggested as a guide):

1. Review naming Mni Sóta Maḵoce – 5 min
2. Introduction to the idea of a worldview - 5 min
3. Introduction to concept of *mitakuye owas'ih* – 5 min
4. Dakota interview and discussion – 20 min
5. Learn to say “I am from Minnesota” in Dakota – 10 min

### Prior Knowledge Activated:

Lesson 1

Personal, family, and community worldview

## 2.1 In the Classroom

Learner Resources	Teacher Materials
<p><b>Media Resources:</b> Login by clicking Login button or going to: <a href="http://dakotawicohan.org/my-account/">http://dakotawicohan.org/my-account/</a> - <b>Username:</b> DW - <b>Password:</b> dakota123 Then go to: <a href="http://dakotawicohan.org/lessons/mitakuye-owasin-dakota-worldview/">http://dakotawicohan.org/lessons/mitakuye-owasin-dakota-worldview/</a></p> <p><b>Dakota Community Interviews:</b> - Myrna Weston, Walter LaBatte, Jr., Glenn Wasicuna, Beth O'Keefe (4:03 minutes)</p> <p><b>Dakota language in this lesson:</b> - <b>Dakota</b> – <i>friend or ally</i> - <b>demataŋhaŋ ye/do</b> – <i>I am from (here)...</i> - <b>mitakuye owas'inq</b> – <i>all my relations; we are all relatives</i> - <b>Mni Sóta Maŋoce</b> - <i>land where the waters reflect the skies</i> - <b>Mni Wiconi</b> – <i>water is life</i> - <b>wicooyake</b> – <i>historical or personal stories</i></p>	<p><b>Handouts:</b> - Dakota Interviews Reflection Worksheet - Dakota Language: I'm From Minnesota Worksheet</p> <p><b>Vocabulary:</b> (add to ongoing wall chart or student notebooks) - <b>worldview:</b> <i>the ways that a person, community, or society sees, understands, and makes sense of life; the lens through which you look at the world</i> - <b>relationship:</b> <i>the connection between two or more people or things; relationships can be strong or weak or good or bad, etc.</i> - <b>relative:</b> <i>someone to whom you are connected usually (but not always) by blood and family ties</i></p> <p><b>MN 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Social Studies Standards Alignment:</b> 6.3.4.10.1 Describe how land was used during different time periods in Minnesota history; explain how and why land use has changed over time.</p>

### Recommended Additional Reading for Instructors      Other Instructional Materials

- *Mitakuye Owas'inq* - end of lesson
- *Soul of An Indian*, by Charles Eastman, Chapter 1
- *Speaking of Indians*, Chapter 4: Kinship's Role in Dakota Life

### Northern Lights Connections

- Chapter 1: What is Your Story?

## 2.2 Review Mni Sóta Maḵoce

Ask students to recall what the Daḵota words “Mni Sóta Maḵoce” mean.

Practice individually and as a class saying Mni Sóta Maḵoce aloud.

[find at: Daḵota Wicohan New Pilot Learner Resources: Lesson 1: Mni Sóta Maḵoce: Our Homeland <http://dakotawicohan.org/lessons/lesson-1-mni-sota-makoce-our-homeland/>]

What else do they recall from the first lesson about the Daḵota homeland?

What does Daḵota mean?

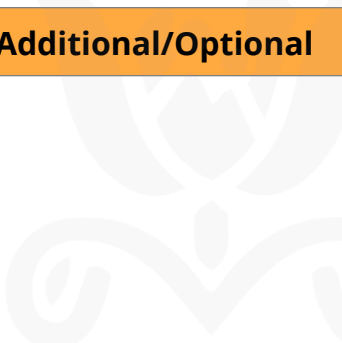
## 2.3 Introduction to Idea of a Worldview

Review main idea, essential questions, learning goals and any vocabulary for the day.

For Teacher	For Students	Additional/Optional
<p><i>Our worldviews shape the ways that we see, understand, and make sense of our experiences in the world. Our worldview and values may originate from our ancestors and the culture in which we grow up. Sometimes our worldview shifts with new experiences and interactions.</i></p> <p><i>A worldview can be defined as the ways that a person, community, or society sees, understands, and makes sense of life. One way to think about worldview is that it is the “view” or “window” from which we see the world.</i></p>	<p><b>What is a worldview? Is there just one?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Add “worldview” to the ongoing vocabulary chart/notebook.</li><li>• Brainstorm “worldview” meaning as a class or have students pair and share first.</li></ul>

For Teacher	For Students	Additional/Optional
<p><i>Our worldviews usually influence our attitudes, decisions, and behaviors. Across the globe and within Mni Sóta Maḵoce different people and different communities have unique worldviews. Worldviews are often shaped by people's history, their religious beliefs, their politics, and their economic and social status, that is, how much or how little money or power they have.</i></p> <p><i>Sometimes it is hard to define our own worldview because we live so much inside it we cannot see it. And we often assume that other people see the world in the same way that we do. One way to start to figure out our own worldview is to consider someone else's.</i></p> <p><i>Let's consider a commonly held Dakota worldview, and we can see how it fits with or feels different than our own.</i></p>		<p>An example of a commonly held worldview that is influenced by religion might be that "God created everything."</p> <p>Another example of a commonly held worldview: "Each person needs to rely on him or herself to get ahead."</p>



For Teacher	For Students	Additional/Optional
<p>Mitakuye owas’inq shapes the worldview of many Dakota people, and we will look more closely at how it influences their relationship to nature, including Mni Sóta Maḵoce.</p> <p><i>Another important principle in a Dakota worldview is that there is never just one right answer. There are multiple right answers and multiple good paths. Even within Dakota communities you may find differences in how Dakota people define and live out their worldview. For instance, different Dakota people teach the same idea using different stories.</i></p> <p><i>Dakota people don’t necessarily need non-Dakota people to believe the same things that they do. In fact, Dakota people are pretty good at including all sorts of beliefs as part of their worldview. Some Dakota people go to a Christian church and some Dakota people attend a church that follows a mix of Christian and traditional Dakota beliefs. And still other Dakota people continue to practice Dakota spiritual ways.</i></p>		 <p><i>For example, you might hear a Dakota person start a sentence with “What I was taught....” instead of saying “This is true and the right way.” One way to think about it is having different recipes for the same dish.</i></p>

For Teacher	For Students	Additional/Optional
<p>Listen to the pronunciation of <b>mitakuye owas’iŋ</b> on the student website and practice saying the phrase as a class.</p> <p><a href="http://dakotawicohan.org/lessons/mitakuye-owasin-dakota-worldview/">http://dakotawicohan.org/lessons/mitakuye-owasin-dakota-worldview/</a></p>	<p><b>Why do you think it matters to learn the Dakota phrase for this worldview instead of just learning it in English?</b></p>	<p>There are many possible answers, but it is good for students to consider that learning an idea in its original language might be the truest way to understand it—that is, nothing is lost in the translation. Learning something in its original language also helps you remember where it came from. And finally, since the Dakota language is unfamiliar to most of us, we are all learning it together—this “equality” can be useful when trying to wrap our heads around more complex subjects.</p>

## 2.5 Dakota Interview(s)

*Let's watch a video clip of a Dakota community member sharing his/her understanding of the Dakota worldview of mitakuye owas'iny. This sort of historical and personal story is called wicooyake in Dakota.*

*Listen to the pronunciation of wicooyake on the student website and practice saying the phrase as a class. [find at Lesson 2: Mitakuye Owas'iny: Dakota Worldview <http://dakotawicohan.org/lessons/mitakuye-owasin-dakota-worldview/>]*

*Wicooyake are Dakota stories that tell us important information about Dakota experiences. We will listen and watch many wicooyake in this unit. Each speaker has a unique perspective.*

Mitakuye owas'iny video (4:03) featuring four different speakers from four different Dakota communities: Myrna Weston from Flandreau; Walter LaBatte, Jr. from Upper Sioux; Glenn Wasicuna from Sioux Valley, Beth O'Keefe from Lower Sioux  
[find at Lesson 2: Mitakuye Owas'iny: Dakota Worldview - <http://dakotawicohan.org/lessons/mitakuye-owasin-dakota-worldview/>]

After listening and watching the video guide learners through a short reflective dialogue using some or all of the questions below. Record and post student responses so you can add to the class definition of *mitakuye owas'iny*. See the worksheet at the end of this lesson for one example of how students may organize their responses. Additionally you may want to have students divide into small groups and assign each group a different speaker on which to focus their responses.

- *What did you hear each person saying about mitakuye owas'iny?*
- *What else did you hear or notice in this interview?*
- *How does what you heard expand our definition of mitakuye owas'iny?*



## 2.6 I am from Minnesota

### For Teacher:

*As we learned in the previous lesson, Mni Sóta Maḵoce means “Land Where the Waters Reflect the Clouds.” This region features lots of water: lakes, rivers, streams, ponds, and creeks. This region has so much water that the entire landscape reflects the skies. Water is an important aspect of how Daḵota people relate to their homelands. Many Daḵota believe Mni Wiconi which translates to “water is life.” Daḵota define themselves in relationship to water and the land. Many Minnesotans define themselves in relationship to water, too.*

*Think about a body of water in this region that you know. What relationship do you have to this place? What do you do there? If you recognize that you are a relative of this land then this statement, “I am from Minnesota,” means something deeper. When we say that we are “from” someplace we understand that this is part of our identity as individuals and as a larger community of “Minnesotans.”*

Now let’s practice saying “I am from Minnesota” in Daḵota.

Hand out worksheet.

Find pronunciation video at Lesson 2: Mitakuye Owas’iḡ: Daḵota Worldview - <http://dakotawicohan.org/lessons/mitakuye-owasin-dakota-worldview/>

Have students practice saying that they are from Minnesota in the Daḵota language. Pair students to practice saying “I am from...*Dematanḡaḡ... .*”

Discuss changes in learners’ perception about living in Minnesota—a Daḵota place name—now that they understand its meaning and can say where they are from in Daḵota.



## Lesson 2: Mitakuye Owas'in: Dakota Worldview Dakota Interviews Reflection Worksheet

**After watching the video one or two times respond to the questions below.**

*What did you hear each person saying about mitakuye owas'in or his or her relationship with the land? Write your answers below in the boxes provided.*

*Details about mitakuye owas'in:*

*How do these Dakota people compare to how you think Native people look? Where did you get your idea about how Native people look?*

*Details about their relationship with the land:*

*What else did you hear or notice in the interviews?*



## Dakota Language: I'm From Minnesota Worksheet

Mni Sóta Maḵoḱe are the words used by Dakota to describe this land as the Land Where the Waters Reflect the Clouds. Mni (sometimes one will see Mini, this is also a correct spelling) means water; Sóta means clear, but not perfectly so, slightly clouded or sky-colored; and Maḵoḱe means a place, land, or country.

### 1. How do you say Minnesota in Dakota? Practice saying “Mni Sóta Maḵoḱe”

### 2. How do you say you're from Minnesota in Dakota?

In Dakota, we say:

Vanessa: *Mni Sóta Maḵoḱe demataḡhaḡ ye.* I am from where the waters reflect the clouds (Minnesota).

Or

Vanessa: *Mni Sóta demataḡhaḡ ye.* I am from Minnesota.

Glenn: *Mni Sóta demataḡhaḡ do.* I am from Minnesota.

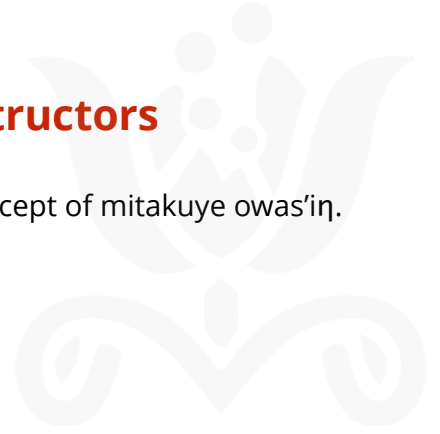
Notice there is a different ending for females and male in Dakota. “Ye” is used by females, and “Do” is used by males.

### 3. Now you try! Practice telling someone else that you are from Minnesota in Dakota.

## 2.7 Suggested Background Reading for Instructors

These readings provide additional information on the Dakota concept of mitakuye owas'in.

- 1 *Mitakuye Owas'in*, by Teresa Peterson
- 2 *Soul of An Indian*, by Charles Eastman, Chapter 1
- 3 *Speaking of Indians*, Chapter 4: Kinship's Role in Dakota Life



## 1 Mitakuye Owas'in

by Teresa Peterson

Mitakuye Owas'in, in general, means "all my relations." In summary, this construct of relationality is the Dakota worldview or paradigm. All things are in relationship, therefore all things matter. With this understanding, the way that we interact with all things, including people, the land, all living things matter. In *Mni Sóta Maḵoce: The Land of the Dakota*, Westerman and White (2012) offer insight into the term mitakuyapi, my relatives.

When Dakota people greet each other they often say, as Dakota historian Chris Mato Nunpa did at the beginning of a 2006 article, "Hau Mitakuyapi. Owas'in cantewasteya nape ciyuzapi do!" This means, "Hello my relatives. With a good heart I greet you all with a handshake." Particularly important in this greeting is the term *mitakuyapi*, or "all my relatives," which acknowledges the central place the Dakota's sense of living in deep and extended kinship with each other has in their culture, a meaning close to their hearts. This kinship leads Dakota to accept the obligation of attending to the well-being of their relations in a way that defines them in their interactions with each other and the land. For them, to carry out this obligation they are called upon to embody wóohoda (respect) in their actions. This expresses a deep and pervasive sense of respect for the bonds of kinship that starts with the land that gave them birth and is their home (p 133).

The idea identifying people as relatives and for that matter, all things within our universe is based upon relationality, how one sees themselves connected to all living things. The Indigenous worldview is based upon relationality. Relationality is a common term used in the discourse of Indigenous epistemology and by Indigenous scholars. It is best described by Indigenous scholar Wilson (2008), "If Indigenous ways of knowing have to be narrowed through one particular lens, then surely that lens would be relationality. All things are related and therefore relevant" (p 58). Relationality describes not just relationships to each other but how everything is interconnected, interrelated (Battiste, 2002; Hill, 2006).

Dakota worldview can be summed up as Mitakuye owas'in , loosely translated from Dakota as "all my relatives." It is so engrained within Dakota culture, that, in fact, most often, Dakota prayers end with Mitakuye owas'in; an equivalent to Amen!

For Dakota, Mitakuye owas'in , "all my relatives", provides a sense of belongingness. Research indicates the importance of belongingness in education and student success, retention and health. Teaching and learning systems can draw upon the Dakota philosophy, that we are all connected, mitakuye owas'in (Deloria, 1998; Brendtro et al, 2002).