

# Lesson 3: Mitakuye Owas'iq: Our Relative the Land

**Main Idea:** Mitakuye owas'iq teaches that humans are a relative of the land and of all things that exist on the land, in the air, and in the water.

**Essential Question:**

- How does viewing the land as your relative change your relationship to it?

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

- The Dakota people treat the land with respect because they view the land and all who live on it as a relative.
- In the Dakota language we can find clues to a commonly held Dakota worldview.

**Students Will Be Able To:**

- Introduce themselves in Dakota.
- Identify how Dakota language introductions reflect the Dakota worldview of mitakuye owas'iq.

**Student Tasks:**

Discuss what it means to view the land as a relative

Dakota Interview Reflection

Learn Dakota language

**Assessment Tools:**

Dakota interview reflection

Dakota Language: "They call me..."

Exit slip

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

1. Review saying "I am from Mni Sóta Maŋoce" and mitakuye owas'iq – 5 minutes
2. More about the idea of the land as relative (mitakuye owas'iq in action) - 5 minutes
3. Dakota interview and worksheet – 15 minutes
4. "They call me" 15 minutes
5. Exit slip/homework with names

**Prior Knowledge Activated:**

Lessons 1 and 2

Personal, family, and community worldview

## 3.1 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/lesson-3-mitakuye-owasin-our-relative-the-land/">http://dakotawicohan.org/lessons/lesson-3-mitakuye-owasin-our-relative-the-land/</a></p> <p><b>Dakota Community Interviews:</b>            - Yvonne Leith (1:53 minutes)</p> <p><b>Dakota language in this lesson:</b>            - <b>mitakuye owas'in</b> – all my relations; we are all relatives            - <b>Mni Sóta Maḵoḱe</b> - land where the waters reflect the skies            - <b>dematanḥaḥ ye/do</b> – I am from (here)...            - <b>emakiyapi ye/do</b> – they call me</p>	<p><b>Handouts:</b>            - Relatives Diagram            - Yvonne Leith interview transcription and translation + questions            - Dakota Language worksheet: emakiyapi ye/do “They call me...”</p> <p><b>Vocabulary:</b>            (add to ongoing wall chart or student notebooks)            - <b>relation:</b> someone or something with whom you are in a relationship; a part of your family circle            - <b>relative:</b> someone to whom you are connected usually (but not always) by blood and family ties</p> <p><b>MN 6th Grade Social Studies Standards Alignment:</b>            6.4.4.15.1 Compare and contrast the Dakota and Anishinaabe nations prior to 1800; describe their interactions with each other and other indigenous peoples. (Before European Contact).</p>
<p><b>Recommended Additional Reading for Instructors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Living in Harmony - end of lesson</li> <li>- <i>Land Water and Language</i> - at MNopedia.org <a href="http://www.mnopedia.org/land-water-and-language-minnesota-s-first-people">http://www.mnopedia.org/land-water-and-language-minnesota-s-first-people</a></li> </ul>	<p><b>Other Instructional Materials</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lydia Conito (1:18 minutes)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Northern Lights Connections</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chapter 3: Early Dakota</li> </ul>	

## 3.2 Review saying “I am from Mni Sota Makoce” and Mitakuye Owas’iŋ

Practice individually and as a class saying Mni Sóta Maḵoḵe *demataŋhaŋ ye* (for females) or Mni Sóta Maḵoḵe *demataŋhaŋ do* (for males) aloud.

[audio link: <http://dakotawicohan.org/lessons/mitakuye-owasin-dakota-worldview/>]

Practice saying **mitakuye owas’iŋ**. *Do you remember what it means in English?*

[audio link: <http://dakotawicohan.org/lessons/mitakuye-owasin-dakota-worldview/>]

Ask students what else they recall from the previous lesson about *mitakuye owas’iŋ*.

### **Dakota language lesson set up:**

Ask students to respond and post their responses so you can refer to it later in the lesson.

- *Does anyone in the classroom speak a language other than English?*
- *If so, how do you introduce yourself in that language?*
- *How is it translated into English?*

Let students know that they will return to this question of how people introduce themselves in languages other than English.

### 3.3 More about *mitakuye owas'į* or the idea of the land as relative

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

For Teacher	For Students	Additional/Optional
<p><i>As we learned earlier, mitakuye owas'į translates to "All my relations" or "We are all relatives." For the Dakota people that means that we are all relatives and connected to each other. This sense of having relatives and being connected goes beyond our immediate family, in fact, it even extends to the land and all of the creatures that live on the land, in the air, and in the water. Let's think about that idea some more, especially the idea of what it means to be a good relative to someone. Good relatives take care of each other and help each other.</i></p> <p><i>A central part of living with the worldview of mitakuye owas'į is to recognize that we are dependent on the land and all the relatives living within the land. We feel a responsibility to look after the land and all its creatures as if they are family.</i></p>	<p>Respond to these questions by writing your answer in your journal or on a separate piece of paper or by discussing with someone else.</p> <p><b>What are some examples of people treating each other as good relatives, even if they are not actually related by blood?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prompt students as necessary with examples below.</li> <li>• Create visual collages for classroom that show student thinking.</li> </ul> <p><i>Ask students to think about times when people reach out to strangers to help them in times of disaster or extreme violence.</i></p> <p><i>You can also ask students to think about examples in school—what does it mean to be a good relative in the halls? or in the cafeteria?</i></p>

For Teacher	For Students	Additional/Optional
<p><i>Take a moment to ask students to brainstorm some specific “relatives” that are not people. These would be relatives that they know or see everyday that live on or are part of the land of Mni Sóta—that is, relatives that are not people. This list could include animals, birds, insects, plants, trees, rivers, streams, lakes, rocks, and minerals.</i></p>	<p><b>1) Brainstorm specific relatives who are part of the land that you know or see everyday.</b></p>	<p>This list could include animals, birds, insects, plants, trees, rivers, streams, lakes, rocks, and minerals.</p> <p>Having students work through these questions step by step might help them start to use the mitakuye owas’iŋ worldview as a way of more actively considering their relationship to the natural world around them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the Relatives Diagram in supplemental materials if you like.</li> <li>• You can also ask students to start building a paper or digital visual collage with magazine images or images they find online. Students can work in groups to create these.</li> </ul>

For Teacher	For Students	Additional/Optional
<p><i>How do you take care of these relatives? How do they take care of you? Thinking about the land as our relative is something we will keep exploring in other lessons.</i></p>	<p><b>2) Next brainstorm ways you take care of these relatives.</b></p> <p><b>3) Now brainstorm ways that they take care of you.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have students respond in small groups.</li> </ul> <p><i>Examples: Taking care of the flowers and plants in the park by not picking them. Being grateful that they are there and giving you something back by living there and being there for others.</i></p> <p><i>Not putting graffiti on rocks; rocks take care of us when we use them to build things or when they create natural flood barriers along a river bank, for instance.</i></p> <p><i>What else can you think of?</i></p>

## 3.4 Dakota Interview and Reflection

### For Teacher:

*Every language supports and expresses the values and worldviews of the community that speaks it. We will investigate how the Dakota language supports the worldview of mitakuye owas'iny, of connectedness and relationship. Let's listen to someone speaking in the Dakota language and consider how the language supports the worldview of mitakuye owas'iny.*

*Dakota is a language spoken by many, but there are only a handful of Dakota language speakers who speak Dakota as their first language. We have a very special opportunity to hear and learn some Dakota language through these videos.*

Listen to Yvonne Leith interview (2:36).

Find at Lesson 3: *Mitakuye Owas'iny: Our Relative the Land*

<http://dakotawicohan.org/lessons/lesson-3-mitakuye-owasin-our-relative-the-land/>

*Ms. Leith was an elder, teacher, and American Indian grassroots organizer and activist from the Upper Sioux Dakota Community who passed away in 2013. Upper Sioux is one of four Dakota communities in Minnesota. It is in Granite Falls, Minnesota on the Minnesota River. In Dakota this place is often referred to as Pežutazizi K'api, which means, "they dig for yellow medicine."*

See handout for transcription and student response worksheet

After listening and watching more than once, discuss with students all or some of the following questions:

- *What kinds of relatives does she name?*
- *What do you think Pežutazizi K'api? and Caŋšayapi refer to?*
- *What do you notice about how she names herself and others?*

*It is common for Dakota people to introduce themselves by introducing their families and talking about all the people to whom they are related.*

### Optional/Additional

Have students watch and listen to the video of Lydia Conito (1:18 minutes), a Dakota elder who talks about speaking in Dakota and mitakuye owas'iny.

[Find at Lesson 3: *Mitakuye Owas'iny: Our Relative the Land*

<http://dakotawicohan.org/lessons/lesson-3-mitakuye-owasin-our-relative-the-land/>]

Ask students: How does the Dakota language connect her to her values?

### 3.5 “They call me” Language Lesson

Let’s learn how to introduce ourselves in Dakota and see how the Dakota way of sharing one’s own name also reflects the Dakota worldview of *mitakuye owas’iŋ*.

Listen to Vanessa and Glenn introduce themselves in Dakota.

[Find at Lesson 3: *Mitakuye Owas’iŋ*: Our Relative the Land

<http://dakotawicohan.org/lessons/lesson-3-mitakuye-owasiŋ-our-relative-the-land/>]

Hand out and review the worksheet **Dakota Language: Names**.

For Teacher	For Students	Additional/Optional
<p>Group students together into groups of 2 or 3. Play the clip several times, while students learn and practice introducing themselves in Dakota. Have students fill in the blanks on the worksheet as they practice.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You might want to revisit the meaning of <i>mitakuye owas’iŋ</i> with students before this discussion of subject and pronouns.</li> <li>Prompt students as necessary with more questions, listed below.</li> <li>Use the worksheet for students to take notes.</li> </ul>
<p>Regroup and discuss the different worldviews present in “my name is...” and “they call me.” Which subject comes first in those phrases, for instance?</p>	<p><b>Which pronoun comes first in the following two phrases?</b></p> <p><b>“My name is...”</b></p> <p><b>“They call me...”</b></p>	<p><i>The first pronoun is the subject of the phrase. What does that difference mean between “my” and “they?”</i></p> <p><i>In English, you claim your name as something that is yours: “My name is...” In Dakota you say who you are by saying what others call you.</i></p>



For Teacher	For Students	Additional/Optional
<p>Let students know if they don't arrive at this insight that the difference in how one introduces oneself in English vs. Dakota shows the difference in how a person is supposed to relate to others. In Dakota, a person is defined by others. Their status and place is always visible to others.</p> <p><i>Note how the Dakota way of sharing names reflects the Dakota worldview of mitakuye owas'ini. What worldview do you think is reflected in the English way of introducing yourself?</i></p> <p>Refer back to the questions about who speaks a language other than English and how they introduce themselves in that language. Have students consider how these other languages compare with English and Dakota introductions.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Does anyone in the classroom speak a language other than English?</i></li><li>• <i>If so, how do you introduce yourself in that language?</i></li><li>• <i>How is it translated into English?</i></li></ul>

For Teacher	For Students	Additional/Optional
<p><i>Who calls you by your name? Who is “they” in your life? In the Dakota way of thinking, who are your “relatives”? Family? Friends? Teachers? Bus Drivers? What is the relationship that comes with using your name? There are more people in your circle than those you may typically call a “relative.” A relation is someone you are in relationship with.</i></p> <p>Close with everyone introducing themselves in Dakota.</p>	<p>Fill out Exit Slip answering the questions:</p> <p><b>1. Who calls you by your name in your life?</b></p> <p><b>2. What kind of relationship do you have with these people? Is it close or distant? How familiar are they with you? How are you related to them?</b></p>	<p>Post questions for students to respond to on a separate sheet of paper. If there is not time to do an Exit Slip have students take the questions home and bring their list back the next time.</p> <p>This discussion with students may include who knows your nicknames and who is allowed to call you by that nickname, who is not, etc.</p> <p>Note: A pronunciation guide to the Dakota alphabet is provided at the back of this lesson plan and on the learner resource webpage.</p>



## 3.6 Relatives Diagram

### Student Worksheet



1. In the left circle, list relatives who are part of the land that you take care of in some way.
2. On the right side, list relatives who take care of you.
3. Draw a line to connect relatives that show up in both lists.

**1) Relatives I take  
care of:**

**2) Relatives that take  
care of me:**

## 3.7 Yvonne Leith Interview

### Transcription:

Daḳota ia, **Mazaokiyewiḡ emakiyapi ye.** Wašicuḡ ia, Yvonne Leith de miye. Oceti Šakowiḡ etaḡhaḡ. Bdewakaḡtoḡ k'a Wahpetowaḡ hemaca. Mihunḡkake Harry Leith eciyapi tka Daḳota ia, Waḡaḡ Hdi Duta eciyaypi, k'a, ina waye Lucinda Flute eciyapi. K'a, ate waye deced Pežutazizi K'api etaḡhaḡ tka ina waye Sisitonwaḡ héciya taḡhaḡ hi, tka. K'uḡši k'a uḡkaḡna saḡpa, kuḡši Annie Roberts eciyapi k'a, deced Pežutazizi K'api etaḡhaḡ tka. Uḡkaḡna mitawa, unkaḡna sáḡpa James Leith eciyapi tka Caḡšayapi héciya taḡhaḡ hi. Uḡkaḡna sáḡpa som sáḡpa Inyaḡ Máni Hokšida eciyapi he. Kuḡši som sáḡpa Isabelle Roberts Wašicuḡ ia, tka Daḳota ia Mazaokiyewiḡ eciyapi tka he caže tawa maḡ'u.

### Translation:

In Daḳota, they call me Mazaokiyewiḡ. In English, I am Yvonne Leith. I'm from the Seven Council Fires. I'm Bdewakaḡtoḡ and Wahpetowaḡ. They call my parents Harry Leith but in Daḳota they called him Waḡaḡ Hdi Duta (Red Lightning) and they called my mother Lucinda Flute. My father was from Pežutazizi K'api (They Dig For Yellow Medicine) but my mother arrived from over there at Sisseton. My grandma and grandpa - My grandmother they called Annie Roberts and she was from Pežutazizi K'api. My great grandfather, they called James Leith, he arrived from over there at Caḡšayapi (They Paint the Trees Red). My great grandfather, they called Inyaḡ Máni Hokšida. My great grandmother, Isabelle Roberts in English, but in Daḳota they called her Mazaokiyewiḡ and she gave me that name.

### Steps:

1. Watch and listen to the video first without reading along with the transcript.
2. Now watch again and this time try to follow along by reading the Daḳota transcription above.
3. After listening and watching, please respond to the following questions. Pair up with someone if you like and fill out your responses together:

- What kinds of relatives does she name?
- What do you think Pežutazizi K'api? and Caḡšayapi refer to?
- What do you notice about how she names herself and others?
- Why do you think she wants to tell us about all those other people?

## 3.8 Dakota Language: Name

### "They Call Me" Worksheet



#### How do you introduce yourself in Dakota and in English?

In Dakota, we say, "emakiyapi" or "they call me." In English we say, "my name is."

Circle the first pronoun in each of the following phrases:

They call me

My name is

What do you notice about the **subject** of these two sentences? The subject of a sentence is the person, place, or thing that is doing or being something, in this case, the pronouns that start the phrase.

Now underline the verbs in each phrase.

Notice how "they call me" shows an action on the part of others.

Notice how "my name is" shows ownership by a single person.

What is the subject in "emakiyapi" or "they call me"? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the subject in "my name is"? \_\_\_\_\_

The word order is also different in Dakota and in English. For example:

Vanessa: *Vanessa emakiyapi ye.* They call me Vanessa.

Glenn: *Glenn emakiyapi do.* They call me Glenn.

You: \_\_\_\_\_ emakiyaypi (ye or do).

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

Females: \_\_\_\_\_ *emákiyapi ye.*

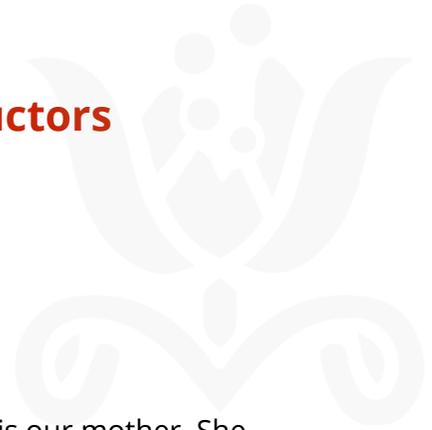
Males: \_\_\_\_\_ *emákiyapi do.*

Note: Accent is on the second syllable—má.

Now you try! Practice telling someone your name in Dakota



## 3.9 Background Reading for Instructors



### 1. Living in Harmony

Dakota teachings provide an understanding that the earth is our mother. She provides just as a mother would and our respect should be as such. Therefore living in harmony with the earth only makes sense. Westerman and White (2013) provide further explanation, “So deep is that connection to the land that the word for *mother* and for the earth are the same in the Dakota language: Ina” (p. 13).

The Indian Land Tenure Foundation further provides a distinction of living in harmony versus dominion over the land.

In order to understand and relate to the Dakota (Sioux) people, one must first understand the differences in cultural values. One important question we must first know the answer to is: “What is this man’s relationship to the material world?” The driving force behind Dakota society was the embodiment of the concept of harmony with nature: Taking time to look at all that was meaningful to the Dakota, the unity of man and nature emerged as the original idea. This idea is in sharp contrast to the individualized viewpoint exemplified by Western man's beliefs that he was set apart from nature and that nature should be shaped to his “will” (The Four Seasons of the Dakota <http://www.lessonsofourland.org/lessons/four-seasons-Dakota>).

For additional reading on how the Dakota have been shaped by the land, read *The Land, Water, and Language of Minnesota’s First People* by Teresa Peterson and Walter LaBatte, Jr. at <http://www.mnopedia.org/land-water-and-language-minnesota-s-first-people>