

4.7 Core Dakota Values

This is not a complete list of Dakota values but many of these values are an important part of Dakota identities and teachings. Many different individuals and communities, not just the Dakota, share them.

Wóuŋsida – Humility. Dakota worldview begins with humility, an understanding founded in our origin stories. When we comprehend mitakuye owas’iŋ, we acknowledge that we are but one small part of the universe. We were created with gifts to work together, not have dominion over anyone or anything.

Wauŋsida - Compassion. The foundation of our Dakota spiritual lifeways was the concept of Wauŋsida, compassion. It teaches us to treat everyone as a wotakuye, relative, and as such we were to be compassionate with one another, to be a good relative. Everything you do is done in a good way—from using the language in a respectful, kind way, to your actions—to not make anyone feel bad.

Wóbdieic’iya – Positiveness. Dakota values, language, and actions should stem from positiveness. If we understand that everything we do and say affects each other and the universe around us (mitakuye owas’iŋ), then we want to make sure that our words and actions embody a positive attitude and that we are doing our best.

Wóhoda/Oho’da – Respect. Dakota view the land as their relative. The land has shaped Dakota people. When we understand that the land and all the creatures that live on the land, in the air, and water offer us gifts, and we act responsibly towards these relatives, then we demonstrate respect. Also, with respect, we can appreciate the unique gifts each person has as an individual.

Wóksape – Wisdom. Putting into practice the value of wisdom means having the knowledge, ability, and teachings to know how to recognize these values— and not just use, but live these values. For example, Dakota people have long identified significant places through language and story throughout Mni Sóta Maŋoce. These place names are based upon significant gifts or resources offered and significant events at specific sites and places. Experience and connections to Mni Sóta Maŋoce have provided insights that remain relevant today. Learning about and sharing these insights appropriately exhibits wisdom.

Wóokiya – Helpful. From birth Dakota people are taught their role in the family and community. Each person is bestowed special gifts from the creator that are nurtured and honed into strengths that need to be exercised. Each gift is also a responsibility, the proper use of these gifts support a healthy and well-working family and community.

Wówaçiq̄nya – Dependable. Individual dependability is part of being a good relative and being an ally or friend. Our communities function well when we can depend upon one another to live our values and carry out our responsibilities. Furthermore, Daḡota people depend upon their stories to provide teachings and valuable lessons. Daḡota people are reminded through stories how and how not to behave and act.

Wóinina – Silence. Daḡota people have learned the value of quietness during times of struggle and significant change. Daḡota people draw upon the strength of silence for resiliency during difficult times. Through silence, inner peace and fortitude can be gained; insight and lessons can be gathered; continued spiritual strength is maintained.

Wóohitika – Courage. It takes courage to be resilient and strong despite challenges. Daḡota people do not view themselves as mere victims but as resilient and strong people, drawing upon a courage that has been practiced by Daḡota people for generations to resist, persist, and adapt.

Wówaçiq̄taḡka – Patience. Despite significant attacks on Daḡota life ways, Daḡota people are reclaiming their Daḡota values and life ways. It requires significant patience and fortitude to continue on. Patience for oneself and patience with others is needed in order to not feel defeated.

Wówaditika – Bravery. When we understand the Daḡota worldview, when we're learning to be a good relative to Mni Sóta Maḡoçe, to oneself, to family, and community, it requires bravery to meet the challenges to do something different—to live within mitakuye owas'iq̄.

Tehiḡda – Cherish, Value, Love. Value what you already have. Love one another in a good way. Cherishing something, like the Daḡota language, includes the actions of both love and protection.

Wówah̄ba – Gentleness. When we have compassion and respect for one another, we should approach in a gentle manner. Behaving with noninterference can be an expression of gentleness. For example, when addressing conflict, one should remember that we are all related.

Wówiçake – Honesty. To hold honesty high is honorable. Our language is sacred and we should always be honest in order to respect the gift of language and honor the words we say.

Oḡaḡwaḡte – Generosity. We must show compassion towards each other and share what we have. In the Daḡota way, our character is measured by how well we take care of one another.

Wówaḡake – Strength. We ask for strength in prayer and everyday life so we can live through all the values described here. Living our wiçoḡaḡ is not easy. It takes great strength to live one's values.

*In addition to conferring with Daḡota elders, some material is adapted from other sources, including Daḡota Wiçoḡ'aḡ & University of Minnesota.