

Dakota  Wicohian

In our own way, quietly and with humility.



2018-2019

BIENNIAL REPORT

Dakota  Wicohan



Dakota Lifeways

“Dakota Wicohan is our family’s culture rock! If it wasn’t for Dakota Wicohan we wouldn’t have anywhere to go for Dakota language, youth activities, and traditional art activities.”

Priscilla Gruendemann - parent.



Message from Program Director and Board Chair - July 2020

Han Mitakuyapi - Greetings Friends and Relatives

As we share this message looking back over the many accomplishments, celebrations and even the struggles of the past two years, we remain in a global pandemic. It is a strange yet exhilarating time as racial justice, and with it, Indigenous justice comes to the forefront of our national discourse and reckoning. For Indigenous peoples and for Dakota Wicohan, this has been the continuous and tireless work to reclaim language, lifeways, and land. This is what we've always been committed to. This is what we have always strived to do, in our own way, quietly and with humility. This is the everyday struggle of grassroots efforts; of families and communities who continue to keep their home fires burning. The warmth and the light from these family fireplaces can also be a beacon and provide the embers to be shared with others.

It is with deep gratitude that we share the milestones of our most recent journey.

The creative power and beauty of Dakota artistry grew and manifested through the reclamation of several artistic practices. Among them was the Horse Regalia tradition. As we've cherished our relationship to the Horse Nation, we've nurtured the dream to honor them in a way that hasn't been seen in our area for many years. Once a spark of creative yearning, is now a steady flame as we continue to mentor, teach and share our Dakota traditions and creative practices and the meaning behind them.

We appreciate the allies who have joined us, as we work to honor our land and lifeways. Those who recognize the importance of clean water, the importance of environmental sustainability, of earth-based lifeways. We helped carry water, we rode for the protection of clean water, the lifeblood of our mother, the earth and our people. We defended women, children and young girls from the harms of community denial and complicity in predatory abuses and violence.

And through all of this, we continued to love our Dakota language, to learn our language. To understand the meaning rooted in our beautiful language. Our language will continue to feed us, to provide the concepts and instructions for living with earth and in relationship to all things.

We extend our gratitude to all of our supporters, to those who believed in us and for those who doubted. You are all an important part of our journey. Our strength, our fortitude and determination is fueled by our love of our Dakota Wicohan – the Dakota Way of Life.

Mitakuye Owasin – We Are All Related,

Eileen O'Keefe
Mdewakanton Dakota – Lower Sioux Indian
Community Program and Finance Director

Gabrielle (Gaby) Strong
Mdewakanton, Sisseton, Wahpeton Dakota – Sisseton
Wahpeton Oyate
Board Chair



Dakota TaWokaga - Dakota Artistry

Horse Regalia Arts Reclaimed

We rolled out our Advanced Horse Regalia Master/Assistant-Artist programming that reclaims and sustains the value of Dakota artistry in relationship with the horse. The teachings of honoring the horse as a cherished relative were shared through several communities in southwestern Minnesota. James Star Comes Out (Titonwan, Oglala Lakota) served as our Master Artist, mentoring Assistant Artist Kateri O'Keefe (Lower Sioux). Master Artist James Star Comes Out shared his extensive knowledge and background on traditional horse regalia. Artists made a plan for their own pieces, materials and designs, including leather, paint on canvas, wool, cloth, quilling, fabric applique, buffalo hide/hair, featherwork and beadwork.



The Traditional Horse Regalia workshops for adult apprentices resulted in the creation of regalia for our horse herd. This beautiful art form is being revived through these efforts. The Sunktanka Wicayuhapi (They Care for Horses) youth were included in this project, and they, too, were able to make a mask for the horse they ride and care for.

Dakota Wicohan hosted a "Dress the Horses" day at the Wasake Ranch and at the 2019 Redwood County Fair Arena. These were very important days for our herd and an opportunity to honor the horses and show the work of our community of devoted artists. The Redwood Falls Parade also provided an opportunity to showcase our Horse Regalia, during which Dakota Wicohan earned First Place in the Non-Profit Organization Category. Seeing our horses dressed in traditional regalia was a first for many.

In 2019, we continued providing masters/assistants/apprentices and community members expanded opportunities to share, teach and build upon traditional yet endangered Dakota art forms of quilling, beading and hide tanning. The introduction of Horse Regalia at Dakota Wicohan has sparked interest in those who would like to learn beading and quilling for the first time.

We had an excellent opportunity to expose our community to a wide range of Dakota arts with the "Horse Nation of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ" exhibit at the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia). This traveling exhibit curated by Lakota artist Keith Braveheart emphasized the relationship and importance of the horse with Dakota/Lakota/Nakota people. Dakota Wicohan's community of artists, families and youth participated in several ways, including visiting the exhibit, and seeing the work of Dakota Wicohan artists within the Mia exhibit. This included the featured artwork of Program Director Eileen O'Keefe, and Cole Redhorse Jacobson, a graduate of the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. Mia also invited Dakota Wicohan and Sunktanka Wicayuhapi to co-present during a horse-themed Family Day. We brought three of our horses and showcased our Horse Regalia. We formally dressed a horse for the crowd of spectators. The youth sang songs and presented the work of Dakota Wicohan. The youth showed their horsemanship skills, their knowledge, and made us proud with their thoughtful sharing!



Advanced Horse Regalia

Dory Stands participated in our Advanced Horse Regalia program. She was inspired to design and construct horse regalia to honor her granddaughter Aiyana. Aiyana fell in love with DW's Sunktanka Wicahyuapi (They Care for Horses) Program and started riding. Aiyana had been riding her horse Anpa (Dakota for daybreak or sunrise) in all the local parades, the county fair. Aiyana has done an excellent job working with her horse, and has taken responsibility to help take care of him.



When Dakota Wicohan hosted Master Regalia Artist James Star Comes Out for a special regalia workshop in 2017, Dory fell in love with the regalia, and the seed was planted. From the moment Aiyana got her own horse, Dory had a dream of making regalia for Anpa to honor her granddaughter and the bond between Aiyana and Anpa.

Aiyana loves the beautiful regalia made by her grandmother, and is excited to bring Anpa out to more places, and showcase the regalia at the fair and local parades for others in the community to enjoy.





Dakota Itancanpi - Dakota Leadership

Dakota Youth Leadership Itancanpi Program is our leadership program primarily for Dakota youth living in and around Lower Sioux and Upper Sioux Communities in rural SW Minnesota. Our program is open to all youth, including youth enrolled in other tribes and non-Native youth. Youth begin the program in fifth grade and remain active through college. Youth share kindness, support, and encouragement with one another. They show increased commitment, responsibility, and a sense of giving back to the community.

Program outcomes include:

- ✦ Improved decision-making skills
- ✦ Growing preparedness and knowledge of Dakota language and lifeways (through program participation, trainings, and community service).
- ✦ Improved wellbeing (Wicozani) improved sense of belonging and increased leadership in the community
- ✦ Youth are true to themselves, live healthy Dakota lifeways, and are prepared to be culture bearers.



“Being a part of Dakota Wicohan is really like having a second family. We all grow and learn together. I’ll always be thankful for Dakota Wicohan for showing me our cultural teachings and for including me in our Dakota ways.” –Tala Burnes

Highlights from our Youth Programming

GirlsBest Economic Summit 2018

Dakota Wicohan was invited to attend the 2018 GirlsBest Economic Summit in Bloomington, MN. Youth Alexis and Neveah were selected as they are two of the most senior members of the Wikoska/Wiciyenna program. The summit was mostly about women empowerment in an economical and overall sense. The goal was to inspire more women bankers, business owners and leaders in the community. This idea is even more essential when it comes to Indigenous Peoples.



Sunktanka Wicayuhapi Riding

The Sunktanka Wicayuhapi is a 4-H club local to the Redwood County area, and the only Native 4-H club in the state. This group regularly meets at least a few times a week to practice and develop their horse riding skills. They also prepare and practice for various horse riding competitions. The comradery established in this group is exceptional. Youth often grow and develop spiritually, culturally, mentally and physicaly at a faster rate when working together. We must not forget the important life skills that can be taught when working with horses. This youth group has become more and more advanced at horse riding with each passing year. The Sunktanka Wicayuhapi is easily the most successful program at Dakota Wicohan.





Lacrosse Camp

Our Lacrosse camps are popular with our youth. Since Lacrosse has Native American origins, we think it is essential to nurture that interest.

“I really liked learning about Lacrosse. This was my first time playing and I wish we didn’t have to end camp. I can’t wait until Fall for another camp.”

–Vanessa Redday, 12 yrs old.



Redwood County Fair

Our Suntanka Wicayuhapi youth show their horses at the Redwood County Fair each year. This opportunity allows the youth to exhibit their horse skills and knowledge and shows the level of responsibility they have while caring for the horses for the whole four days the horses are boarded at the fairgrounds. Families and staff attend game day and cheer them on while they compete. Each youth decorated their own horse stalls and did a Suicide Prevention Presentation for fair spectators where they sang a Traditional Dakota song.

Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) Field Trip

Dakota Wicohan staff and youth traveled to the Minneapolis Institute of Art to attend “The Oceti Sakowin Horse Exhibit.” This exhibit featured a collection of over 100 artistic pieces gathered from various people of the Oceti Sakowin or Seven Council Fires. This exhibit focused on the role of the Sunktanka (Horses) and how the horse came to have a huge role in shaping the history, spirituality, and culture of the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota people. We provided transportation from the Lower Sioux Community and back. Our youth volunteered to sing a traditional Horse Song for all the attendees.





The Mni Sota Makoce Curriculum project continues to expand into 6th grade schools and classrooms statewide. We have worked hard to understand the impacts of the curriculum on students through an embedded research project and we are nearing the completion of data analysis. In the future, we hope to expand our impacts through developing lessons for younger students.

Darlene St Clair



Dakota Makoce - Dakota Land

Mni Sota Makoce Dakota Curriculum: Between our first training in 2017 and the end of 2019, we have trained over 100 teachers, administrators, Indian education staff, and pre-service teachers in urban, rural, suburban, and tribal Minnesota. In 2018, we completed a wraparound research project highlighting data gathered from 6th grade students who participated in the curriculum. This rich source of qualitative and quantitative data will provide important feedback and direction to improve the curriculum, training, and teacher support and will affirm *Mni Sota Makoce* as an evidence-based intervention. The curriculum is housed online which allows for ongoing refinement and the easy addition of new resources and tools. Publicizing the curriculum project is an ongoing effort but new processes were developed in 2019 to connect with more schools in Minnesota. Students and teachers who have participated attest to their greater understanding of *Mni Sota Makoce* as a Dakota place—a homeland that Dakota people continue to cherish.

Dakota Wicohan youth, adults and staff participated in the Dakota Water Walk and Prayer Ride, offering prayers for Mother Earth and her Mni Wic’oni, water of life. The walk supported environmental justice and honored missing and murdered indigenous women. The walk was an opportunity to help our families and youth learn the importance of ceremony and cultural practices related to the water, to kinship and to being stewards of the earth. Through these efforts, we continue to uphold Dakota teachings and concepts including the protection of the earth as our Mother and the sustainable lifeways that Indigenous Peoples have always known. The next seven generations are relying on us to leave something good for them.

Dakota Wicohan was an Environmental Justice Organization Inaugural Signatory to the Equitable and Just National Climate Platform, a bold and historic platform that highlights a shared vision and calls for national climate action that confronts racial, economic, and environmental injustice.



Northern Spark

The Wikoska/Wiciyenna youth group participated in the 2018 Northern Spark Art Festival, as organized community opposition to the Line 3 Pipeline that is proposed for northern Minnesota. The Line 3 Pipeline is believed to be a liability to treaty lands, wild rice beds and Minnesota lakes. The youth performed a lightly choreographed skit, voicing their own thoughts and concerns regarding the environmental impact of Line 3.



This event was based on funktivism or “fun activism.” Our youth had fun while at the same time standing up for their beliefs in the political world and within an environmental justice arena.



NACDI Art Festival

Our youth participated in the Native American Community Development Institute - Indigenous Peoples Day Celebration of 2018. This was a gathering of many Native American organizations, tribes and artists to showcase talent in many forms and to give honor to Native American people. Rory Wakemup, an artist with Wakemup Productions, produced a play with a Star Wars theme that speaks on the fight with drugs and alcohol on our people. This is something the youth truly enjoy and they were able to meet and speak with other Native American artists and community leaders. Their participation taught them about important issues our people face and that they, too, have a voice. This event strengthened their sense of belonging and was a great way to meet other youth in the broader community.



Dakota lapi - Dakota Language

Unspeakiyapi (We Teach Him/Her)

Dakota Wicohan provides a fun, supportive and engaging opportunity for Dakota youth to learn the Dakota language through weekly activity nights, including assisting with the planning and production of a monthly language lesson video for distribution on YouTube and social media. Our Youth Coordinators, Butchie Eastman and Gianna Strong, met weekly with our *Unspeakiyapi* participants after school. We've adapted popular games such as Go Fish and Yahtzee utilizing the Dakota language.

Drum Group

Learning and singing traditional Dakota songs is a great way to learn the Dakota language.

“Dakota (indigenous) language, values and lifeways offer a sustainable future for all. With language and culture, youth are prepared to stand strong for life. Previous staff and program participants continue to use what they learned in Dakota Wicohan and contribute their skills and knowledge throughout the community.”

Mary Peters, Dakota Wicohan Board Member





Measuring Our Effectiveness

We have in-house data collection and reporting procedures in place, including the Dakota Lifeways Questionnaire (DLQ) that we developed with input from the community that tracks language skills, understanding of Dakota traditions and lifeways, and how this deeper connection results in a greater sense of Wicozani (well-being) for youth and adults. Evaluation of our youth leadership program reveals that our youth experience statistically significant positive changes. We have long known that 100% of our participants graduate from high school, but our ongoing data collection confirms further impacts. Dakota youth who participate in our programming demonstrate increased wellbeing (Wicozani) and reported increased importance of wellbeing to their quality of life.

Improved Decision-Making Skills

Dakota Wicohan youth established decision making skills while participating in our events and activities throughout 2019. Youth demonstrated Wokape (wisdom) frequently or very frequently; the percentage of youth who would like to demonstrate Wokape (wisdom) frequently or very frequently in their day-to-day life increased 37%.

Growing Preparedness and Knowledge of Dakota Lifeways

The ability to gain knowledge of Dakota Lifeways was incorporated into all of the events and activities in 2019. The youth DLQ documented that the youths' number one reason why learning Dakota was important to them was "to better understand their culture".

Improved Wicozani (Well-being)

Many of the Dakota Wicohan events and activities were based upon improving wiconzani in our youth. Dakota Wicohan held events aimed to improve relationships, boost self-identity, and encourage suicide prevention. Fifty-nine percent of the youth that participated in the DLQ said they frequently demonstrate courage.

Improved Sense of Belonging

The youth DLQ showed the youth have a great sense of belonging within their families and their communities. When describing their sense of belonging, 73% of our youth stated that their family's happiness is part of their happiness and 41% said when they are hurting, their families hurt with them. Our youth feel their community believes they're very important (69%) and that their communities' happiness is part of their happiness (65%).

Youth Demonstrate Increasing Leadership in the Community

Dakota Wicohan offers after school leadership programs for young boys and girls that combined Dakota culture and history with leadership life skills. The goal of these programs was to prepare our youth for challenges they will experience in their cognitive and social development. They enjoyed activities such as nature walks, drum group, learning about tobacco and medicine bags, and celebrating Indigenous Peoples' Day.

Youth are True to Themselves, Live Healthy Dakota Lifeways, and are Prepared to be Culture Bearers

Dakota Wicohan provides a safe environment for Dakota youth to learn how to be true to themselves, live in a healthy way that's true to their ancestry, and prepare to be culturally responsible and aware. These values are reiterated through the youth DLQ questionnaire when our youth reported that they try to demonstrate Wo'wacintanka (patience) frequently or very frequently (53%); Wo'onsida (compassion) very frequently (61%), and Woahoda (respect) very frequently (88%).



Funders

Arthur Vining Davis Foundation	Minnesota Department of Health	Santa Fe Natural Tobacco Company
Common Counsel Foundation	Minnesota Department of Public Safety	Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
Division of Indian Works	Minnesota Indian Affairs Council	Southwest Minnesota Arts Council
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Headwaters Foundation	Native Youth Alliance of MN	Women's Foundation of Minnesota
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Financial Report - Select Totals

	2019	2018	2017
Cash	\$10,994	\$56,274	-\$6,333
Total Assets	\$324,050	\$343,602	\$222,667
Net Assets - Beginning of year	\$260,163	\$125,569	\$114,065
Income	\$401,709	\$574,384	\$495,662
Expenses	\$429,342	\$439,790	\$479,701
Change in Net Assets	-\$27,633	\$134,594	\$15,961
Net Assets - year end			
Unrestricted	\$33,894	\$47,023	\$27,554
Temporarily Restricted	\$198,635	\$213,140	\$98,015
Total Net Assets	\$232,530	\$260,163	\$125,569

	2016	2015	2014
Cash	\$7,136	\$60,360	\$193
Total Assets	\$168,505	\$186,263	\$119,052
Net Assets - Beginning of year	\$176,612	\$101,662	\$204,708
Income	\$470,518	\$525,291	\$652,631
Expenses	\$533,065	\$445,251	\$755,677
Change in Net Assets	-\$62,547	\$80,040	-\$103,046
Net Assets - year end			
Unrestricted	\$41,058		
Temporarily Restricted	\$73,007		
Total Net Assets	\$114,065	\$181,702	\$101,662



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Website

www.dakotawicohan.org

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“Dakota Wicohan is an amazing organization that I am honored to work with both of my own accord and on behalf of Gibbs Farm. While at Gibbs Farm, we mostly cover the historical life of the Dakota people, it is important that we acknowledge that Dakota people are here and present today and contributing so much to our community. That is why it is great to have Dakota Wicohan at Gibbs Farm festivals. One particular memory I have of a Dakota Wicohan program was their Allies Event in 2018. One of the young women of the Wikoska & Wiciyenna Girls Leadership Program teared up while explaining how the program had not only taught her about leadership and her Dakota culture, but also gave her a safe and encouraging place to grow and learn. It is clear, each year that I attend the Allies Event, that Dakota Wicohan is having an outstanding impact on the young people of the Dakota and Indigenous Communities.”

Sammy Nelson, Ally, Gibbs Farm Site Manager

