

**2016-2017**  
**BIENNIAL REPORT**





Dakota Wicohan



Working on the school curriculum evaluation project at Redwood was very rewarding. Providing youth with an opportunity to talk about their experiences of being an American Indian student in the school system was special. The students supported one another, discussed experiences of racism, and talked about pride in their Dakota culture. Also, seeing the positive impact the curriculum had on Native and non-native students' sense of belonging was wonderful. Dakota Wicohan has made a huge impact in its local community and across the state. Dakota Wicohan facilitates positive identity in its youth. It provides them with a sense of belonging to their Dakota culture, which helps them be successful in all aspects of life. Dakota Wicohan is also changing the way people see and interact with Native Americans through its documentary, curriculum, and outreach programs.

*-Heather J. Peters, Ph.D., LP, CMPC  
Associate Professor of Psychology  
University of Minnesota Morris*





Dakota Wicohan was founded in 2002 to revitalize Dakota as a living language, and through it, transmit Dakota lifeways to future generations. With our elders growing older, and our young people becoming increasingly disconnected from our community, the risk of losing our language, traditions, culture and lifeways remains very real.

We have learned that for our children, understanding where they came from and having pride in their heritage sets them on a path to good health – nourished in mind, body and spirit.

Dakota Wicohan engages our youth in programs that build confidence and self-esteem, grounded in rich cultural tradition, and makes the future bright for some of Minnesota's most at-risk kids.

The kids who participate in our programs, including horse, lacrosse, traditional dancing, drumming and singing – all interwoven with Dakota language – graduate high school. Many go on to college. They not only survive – they thrive.

Our programming opens a door to a world beyond a handheld screen. It preserves our past, giving us the strength to tackle the problems of the future.





## ◆ Message from the Director and Board Chair 2016-2017

Han Mitakuyapi-Greetings Friends and Relatives,

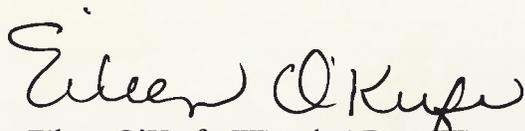
The story of the *Shade Tree*, shared by our Maori relatives in Aotearoa (New Zealand) was a source of inspiration for the Dakota Wicohan founders in 2002 – that we plant the seeds of the trees that may never shade us but will shade our grandchildren. Fifteen years later, we still gain strength from this story. We know that all our efforts are like a stone in the water and the ripple that it makes. We may never see the ripple reach the other side of the lake, but we know that it does. Those on the other side of the lake may never know who threw the stone that caused the ripple, but they see it just the same.

The seeds of hope that we've planted for the greater healing of our Dakota Oyate (nation of people) continues to bear fruit today as we watch our Dakota language, our traditional arts and our lifeways flourish around us. We are grateful for this; grateful that we've played a part in the development of a new generation of teachers and artists and leaders and horsemen and horsewoman who can carry all of us forward into the future. This is the fruit of our labor of love and humility over fifteen years as a community-based, non-profit organization, and an incubator of intergenerational knowledge – the nest from which Dakota knowledge, language and lifeways is nurtured.

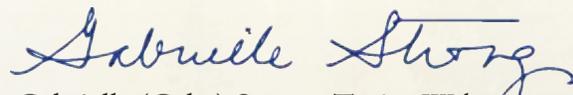
Over the course of 2016 and 2017, reminders of the continued importance of grassroots, community-based efforts also manifested in our collective conscious. There is great value to the unfiltered voice of community-based organizations, and as such, Dakota Wicohan continued to support the voice of the larger collective of the Oceti Sakowin, the pre-colonial, pre-reservation unity of the Seven Council Fires; what is now commonly known as the Great Sioux Nation. We did this through our support of not only Dakota language and lifeways renewal in Minnesota, but through our support of environmental and water protection efforts across our aboriginal homelands. And we did this with many allies of other cultures and communities.

As one of our early mentors advised, this work is not for the faint of heart. Our tribes, our communities and our families face many challenges. But we continue to be fortified by the embracing of our humble efforts, and the receptiveness to the concepts and ideals that make communities strong. And so, we will continue to teach, to ride horseback, to create our beautiful artistry, sing our songs of truth and meaning, speak our language, and share our lifeways with an open heart and open mind. We'll continue to strive to live with *Wo'Dakota*, which is to honor one another as relatives, to honor our relationship to our land and Mother Earth as the source of life, and to live and teach with the next generation in mind. We will continue planting those seeds of the trees that may never shade us, and to continue watching the ripples move toward the other side of the lake.

In unity and gratitude,



Eileen O'Keefe, Wicanhpi Duta Win,  
Program Director, *Lower Sioux Indian  
Community/Mdewakanton*



Gabrielle (Gaby) Strong, Taniya Wakan  
Win, Board Chair, *Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate/  
Mdewakanton*





Working with Dakota Wicohan is rewarding on so many levels. Not only do I get to learn my language and culture, I also have an opportunity to make a positive difference in my community.

--Dylan Jubera,  
Dakota Wicohan Office Assistant

## ◆ Youth Itancanpi (Leadership) Programs

The Wikoska (young woman) Program is for girls in grades 9-12 to be positive role models and hone their leadership skills. Our Wikoska girls plan programming for our Wiciyenna (young girl) participants (grades 5-8). Activities include team building games, bringing in speakers on topics of interest to the girls, traditional Dakota art classes, field trips, and cultural teachings. The Wikoska girls meet with 12 to 14 Wiciyenna girls weekly, guided by Dakota Wicohan staff.

Our Koska Program (young men) for boys in grades 5-12 meet weekly at the Dakota Wicohan offices for drumming and singing, and playing lacrosse. We introduced a lacrosse camp in 2018 that ran for two weeks in June. On average, 14 youth (boys and girls) attended to work on their skills and scrimmage. Lacrosse is also known as the Creator's Game, as the Creator gave the game

to us for entertainment and for healing. Our lacrosse camp is led by youth mentors – young adults who have graduated from DW's youth programming.

A unique youth program – and far and away our most popular – is our Sunktanka Wicayuhapi (They Care for Horses) program, in partnership with the Wasake (Strong) Ranch outside Morton, MN. Conducted as the state's only indigenous 4H club, Sunktanka gives our youth an opportunity to work with horses, learning horse care and riding skills. Sunktanka participants have the chance to join or support the Dakota 38 + 2 Ride that commemorates the 38 Dakota warriors hanged on December 26, 1862 in Mankato in the largest mass execution in American history. Our Sunktanka youth have the option to show the horses at the Redwood County Fair each July.



Consider this curriculum an amazing opportunity and I would highly recommend it to anyone who teaches 6th grade MN history. Students were extremely engaged throughout the curriculum. We had rich discussions and the students asked amazing questions!

--Minnesota 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher



## ★ Curriculum Development

We've developed a grassroots indigenous curriculum project, Mni Sóta Mak oce: The Dakota Homelands. This project meets the recently expanded Minnesota state educational standards that require Dakota content be included in curricula within all major subject areas for K-12 students. The *Mni Sóta Mak oce* (MSM) curriculum contains 10 multi-media lessons for sixth graders. Our intent is to teach students to be better stewards of the land in Minnesota by learning about the indigenous context, including Dakota Indian values and environmental principles.

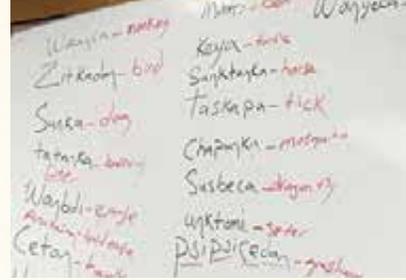
The curriculum contains ten experiential, story-based lessons, with online and print materials including:

- ★ Oral interviews with Dakota elders and Dakota youth.
- ★ Traditional Dakota teaching stories about the relationship between humans and the land.
- ★ Examples of how the Dakota language communicates Dakota values and worldviews regarding land and the land's inhabitants.

Over 1500 students were taught the curriculum in 2016-2017, and we aim to streamline the process for training teachers on the curriculum and make it available across more of the region in coming years.

“This project really reached out to me and made me feel more connected to *mini sota makece*. I also feel as like I'm more connected to my culture and made me feel like I should value it more. I feel as if I'm also more united with the people around me and I also feel like I should respect others' beliefs and culture differences.

--6<sup>th</sup> Grade Student



## ★ Language for all generations: Unskatapi! (Let's Play!)

In 2016 we introduced Unskatapi! (Let's Play!), an 18-month program that served between 70 and 80 community members of all ages. Unskatapi! met weekly at the Lower Sioux Community to share a meal and a game, utilizing the Dakota language. Three Community Language Leaders directed the program and lessons to engage families in a fun way.

There are many reasons our participants give for attending classes at Dakota Wicohan. When surveyed, 65% of Unskatapi! youth said “to better understand their culture” was their number one reason why learning Dakota is important to them. Roughly 80% of the Unskatapi! adults point to the availability of DW language classes as their primary encouragement to learn, even as they gain confidence in their emerging skills. Participants state that they value language as a way to keep the Dakota culture alive and also to speak to their elders. It's clear that early access to Dakota language is well absorbed by our youth, while it takes adult learners a longer time to feel comfortable with their skills. Teaching language in songs, prayers, and during other activities helps with knowledge retention.

## ★ Adult programming

### Tawokaga (*Making Beautiful Things*) Arts Program

Dakota Wicohan nurtures Dakota art and artists in southwestern Minnesota through supporting our program that enables a continuous focus on the arts in our community. We utilize a Master, Assistant, and Apprentice model, where the Master artist teaches apprentices, who then become assistants to aid in future classes. We also host beading circles to encourage working together, sharing and community; Paint and Story workshops; and Art Events including art shows and special presentations.

In 2016-2017, Master Quilling Artist Davis Louis worked with two Assistants and eight Apprentices. Master Brain Tanning Artist Walter “Super” LaBatte instructed two Assistants and two Apprentices. Quilting Master Artist Joyce Luckow shared her star quilt-making knowledge with four Apprentices, and Master Artist Ruby Minkel taught an additional star quilting course to four Apprentices.

**Twice monthly beading circle** – over 20 participants worked on projects ranging from beaded moccasins, beaded horse ornaments, and medicine bags, and proficient beader Kateri O’Keefe attended to assist with projects.

**Paint and Story workshops** – Vanessa Goodthunder led two community workshops for over 18 youth and adults. Vanessa told the story of how the Sunktanka came to the Dakota people while participants painted a visual interpretation.

### Art Events

- ★ April 2016 – Art Show at the Lower Sioux Agency in partnership with the Lower Sioux Community.
- ★ November 2016 – Artist Showcase at the 2016 Dakota Wicohan Annual Event
- ★ July 2017 – Presentation by James Star Comes Out on traditional horse regalia





We were honored to host Master Artist James Star Comes Out in July 2017 to do a workshop on Traditional Horse Regalia (Sung Wokhoyaka). Horse regalia creation utilizes many art skills taught at Dakota Wicohan, including leather brain tanning, beading, and quilling. 20 adults and 25 youth attended. The horse regalia workshop included a presentation, slides, Dakota language songs, drumming, demonstration and a hands-on class. Elders who attended were reminded of the horse regalia they last saw in their childhood.

Due to the interest this workshop generated, we have now launched a series of classes in our master/apprentice teaching model for a more sustained class experience.

In all of our programming, we work to remove barriers to participation. We provide free transportation to and from our activities, and in some programs, we provide stipends to participants to encourage project completion. In our commitment to nourishing mind, body and soul, and recognizing that many of our families live with food insecurity, we carry on the Dakota custom of sharing meals together. DW provides nutritious meals or snacks at all of our activities.



“ The use of the horse regalia was a common practice that was utilized for a giveaway in honor or in remembrance of a relative, identification of a warrior society, or used for ceremonies such as the horse dance or simply to parade in celebration. Unfortunately, over time, this practice has become almost obsolete and unknown by most among the Oceti Sakowin (Seven Council Fires), aka Great Sioux Nation.

– Master Artist James Star Comes Out



## ★ Recognition

In December 2016, Dakota Wicohan was honored with the Eagle Award at the 29th Annual Minnesota American Indian Chamber of Commerce (MAICC) Awards Banquet. MAICC's mission is to promote, advocate, and create economic prosperity on behalf of American Indian businesses, organizations, professionals, and tribal enterprises in a global market. It was humbling to be recognized in this gathering of Native American business and tribal leaders, from every tribe and from all corners of Minnesota.



The Dakota language is dying out and there are very few fluent speakers left in the community. The work that Dakota Wicohan is doing is great. They gave me a chance to make a difference in my community. They also offer a positive learning environment and a safe place for youth to learn and have guidance in their lives. I can honestly say Dakota Wicohan helped me be more of a leader. DW gave me an opportunity to step up and play my part in the cultural revitalization movement happening in my community. They are getting youth and adults out of their comfort zone and reminding people our culture is important and that we are in this together.

*--Trinidad Rangel, Former Drum Group Instructor*

## ★ Staff Highlights

2016

- ★ Dakota Language & Sledding Event at Upper Sioux Community
- ★ Damakota! Event at Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
- ★ 4H Family Fun Day!
- ★ “Sung Nagi Kici Okiju: Becoming One with the Spirit of the Horse” by Jon Eagle Sr at Wasake Ranch
- ★ Fort Yates Horse Camp
- ★ Dakota Wicohan Float in the Morton MN 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade
- ★ Redwood Falls Annual Parade
- ★ Inipi Dress Making hosted by Lower Sioux Community
- ★ Crow Creek Youth Rodeo
- ★ We MN Event at the Xcel Energy Center -- Statewide Youth Event
- ★ Lower Sioux Community Healthy Run Event
- ★ 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Tobacco Prevention and Wellness Symposium
- ★ Dakota Language Obstacle Course -- teaching youth Dakota Language



- ★ Wiciyenna Halloween Party
- ★ Annual Allies Event -- youth presented on programming and showed the horses
- ★ NB3 Fit Day at Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community

## 2017

- ★ Beginner Snow Shoe Hiking
- ★ Native Star Language by Jim Rock
- ★ 4H Family Fun Night
- ★ Cultural Presentation at the MN Council of Social Studies
- ★ Women's Foundation Conference
- ★ 4H Volunteer Trash Pick Up
- ★ Lower Sioux Health Dept. Dinner
- ★ Lower Sioux Drug & Alcohol Awareness Event
- ★ Dakota Language Obstacle Course -- teaching youth Dakota Language
- ★ Annual Dakota Language Bowl in the Twin Cities
- ★ Dakota Wicohan Information Booth at the Lower Sioux Health Fair
- ★ Dakota Truth Telling at Bdote Fort Snelling, MN
- ★ Lacrosse Stick Making Workshop
- ★ Lower Sioux Community Summer Youth Work Program
- ★ Art Night at the Museum -- Lower Sioux Agency & Redwood County Museum
- ★ Archery Camp at Lower Sioux Community
- ★ 2 Week Wild Rice Gathering at Cass Lake MN
- ★ #Code Purple: Suicide Awareness & Prevention with Native Youth Activist Faith Holyan
- ★ Lower Sioux Community Summer Youth Work Program
- ★ Program Information Booth at the Lower Sioux Community 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Wacipi
- ★ Dakota Lab Squad Dakota Language Graduation Banquet
- ★ Redwood Falls Annual Parade
- ★ Dakota Wicohan Float in the Morton MN 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade
- ★ Sisseton Pow Wow and Youth Rodeo
- ★ Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community Culture Camp
- ★ Lower Sioux Sundance
- ★ Indian Relay Races at Shakopee Canterbury Downs
- ★ Wild Rice Harvesting at Leech Lake
- ★ Color Run -- Diabetes Awareness & Drug and Alcohol Abuse Workshop at Upper Sioux Community
- ★ 4H Horse Clinic
- ★ Columbus Day -- Indigenous Awareness Day at the MN State Capitol
- ★ Health Run at Lower Sioux Community
- ★ Tobacco Prevention Youth Conference
- ★ New Year's Eve Lock-In at Upper Sioux Community



## ★ Wopida Tanka Laverne Goodthunder

We would like to recognize Laverne Goodthunder's amazing service to our community as Dakota Wicohan's Youth Coordinator from 2011 through 2017. Dedicated to our work and mission, Laverne loved and cherished our youth and was adored by everyone who met her. Laverne raised her two girls in DW programs and became an honorary grandmother to all of the kids she worked with. We admire her selflessness and humility, always putting the needs of our youth first. Laverne will be greatly missed. We wish her all the best as she continues her work with kids at the new Lower Sioux Head Start Dakota language immersion program, directed by her daughter Vanessa Goodthunder.



## Thank you to our 2016-17 supporters!

Dakota Wicohan extends its heartfelt thanks to the funders and donors listed below who share our values and provide the resources to fulfill our mission.

### Donors

#### Sustaining Donors

Jared Cruz

Mary Mergenthal

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Rebecca Schulz-Jackson

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Walter LaBatte Jr.

Suzanne LeRoy



## \$1-499

A.E. Fuller	Furshong & Petrich Family	Liza Eng	Redwood Valley Funeral Home
Aili Langseth and Robert Mullen Jr	Gayle Dustrud	Loeffler Construction and Consulting	Robyn Hollingshead
Alisa Bednarchuk	Heather Stefanek-Peters and Kevin Stefanek	Lois Schmidt	Ron Brown
Alison Hoyer	Hilda Ladner	Lower Sioux Indian Community	Ronald Adams
Angie O'Keefe	HIS Barber Shop	Lucille Bennett	Ruby Minkel
Anna Newcombe	Jackpot Junction Casino Hotel	Mama's Massage	Running's
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Country Kitchen	Karen Odden	Patricia Blue	Suzanne LeRoy
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Elizabeth Perez			Wayne Bendickson
Elona Street-Stewart and Rev. H. David Stewart			
Florence Dacey			

## Financial Report - Select Totals

	2017	2016
Cash	-\$6,333	\$7,136
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$222,667</b>	<b>\$168,505</b>
<b>Net Assets - Beginning of year</b>	<b>\$114,065</b>	<b>\$176,612</b>
Income	\$495,662	\$470,518
Expenses	\$479,701	\$533,065
<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>\$15,961</b>	<b>-\$62,547</b>
Net Assets - year end		
Unrestricted	\$32,011	\$41,058
Temporarily Restricted	\$98,015	\$73,007
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>\$130,026</b>	<b>\$114,065</b>

## ★ 2016-17 Board list

### Gabrielle Strong

Board Chair (2008)  
*Sisseton Wahpeton & Mdewakanton Dakota*

### Darin Minkel

Treasurer (2015)  
Business Consultant  
*Lower Sioux Community*

### Evelyn Tsinnijinne

At-Large (2015)  
Personal Training & Health  
*Professional Lower Sioux Descendant*

### Mary Erler Peters

Vice Chair (2002)  
Retired  
*Co-Founder*

### Winona Goodthunder

Secretary (2015)  
Minnesota State University Moorehead  
Student & Check and Connect Monitor, Fargo  
Public Schools  
*Lower Sioux Community*

## ★ 2016-17 Staff list

### Eileen O'Keefe

Program & Finance Director  
*Lower Sioux Community*

### Laverne Goodthunder

Youth Worker  
*Lower Sioux Community*

### Dylan Jubera

Office Assistant  
*Lower Sioux Community*

### Doris Stands

Program Assistant  
*Lower Sioux Community*

### Ryan Dixon

Youth Worker  
*Pine Ridge*

## Connect to Dakota Wicohan

### Website

[www.dakotawicohan.org](http://www.dakotawicohan.org)

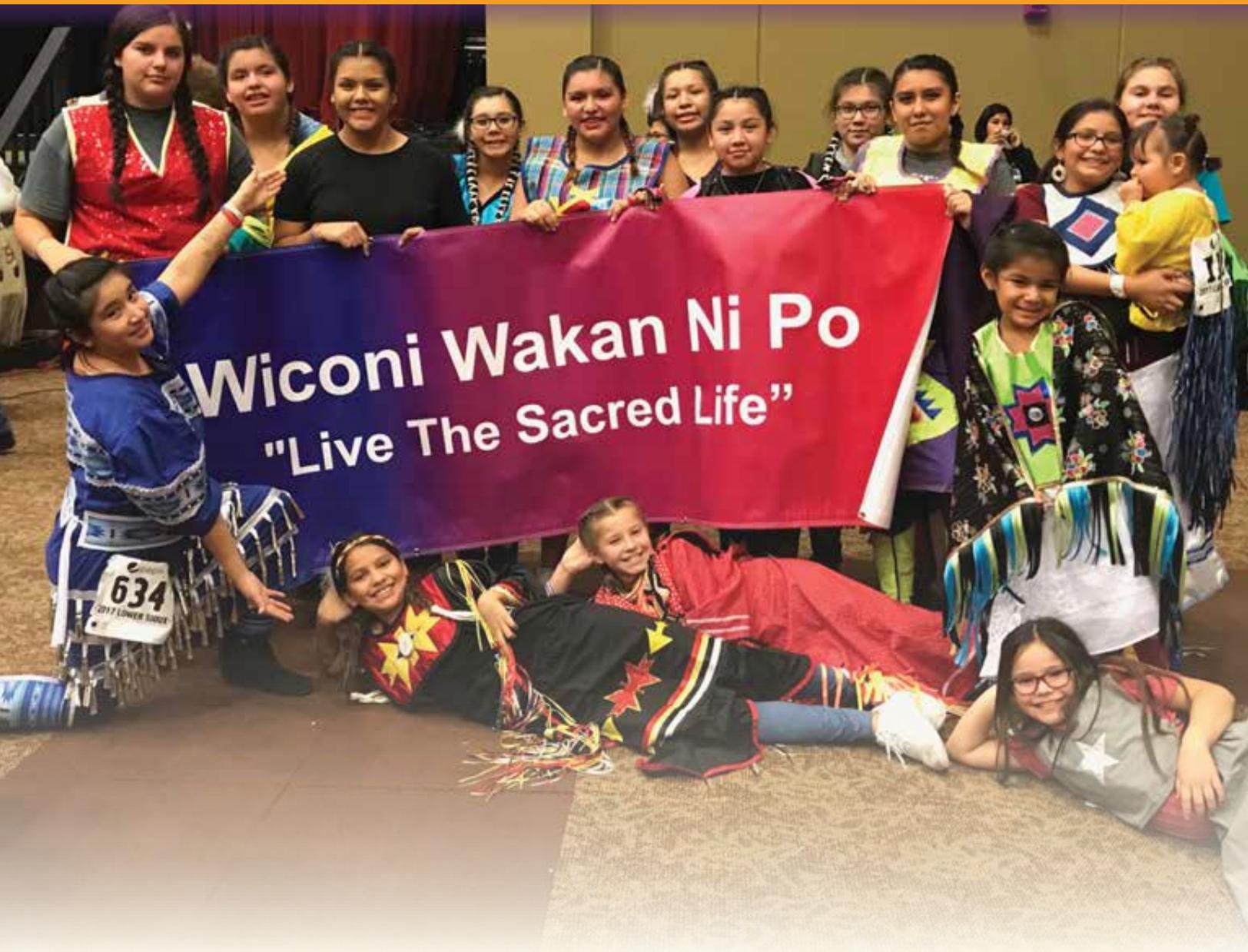
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### Email:

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