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## 1. Homelands

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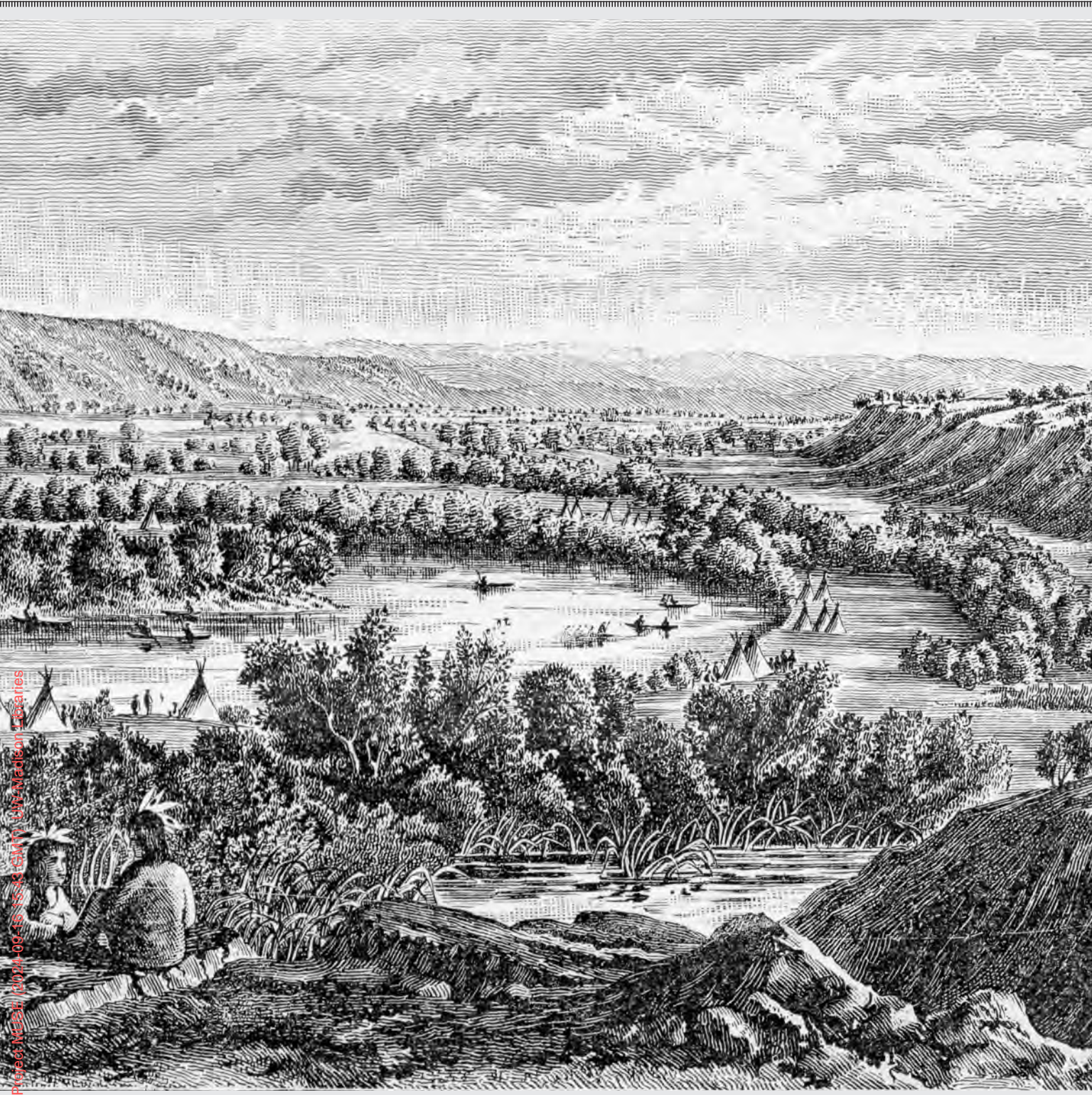
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## CHAPTER ONE

# Homelands

“The power of the Dakotas had always dwelt in the land, from the great forest to the open prairies. Long before the white man ever dreamed of our existence, the Dakota roamed this land.”

Wanbdi Wakiya

**M**ni Sota Makoce. The land where the waters are so clear they reflect the clouds. This land is where our grandmothers’ grandmothers’ grandmothers played as children. Carried in our collective memories are stories of this place that reach beyond recorded history. Sixteen different verbs in the Dakota language describe returning home, coming home, or bringing something home. That is how important our homeland is in Dakota regardless of where our history has taken us. No matter how far we go, we journey back home through language and songs and in stories our grandparents told us to share with our children.

“Back home” implies a return, a cycle of returning, as if it is expected, natural, a fact of life. Families gather around kitchen tables and remember the generations before us or journeys we make to or away from home. It is there, back home, where we are trying to return, where we belong, where the landscape is as familiar as our childhood beds and our mothers’ hands, where our roots are the deepest. It is there, back home, where we hear the repeated stories that make us who we are. 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.

Indeed, the stories—oral histories and oral traditions—are reflected in the place names of this region where Dakota people have lived for millennia and where they still maintain powerful connections to the land. Place names around us—Maṅkato, Owotaṅna, Winuna, Shakpe, Mni Sota—repeat these stories. Existing in different versions, carried forward by multiple storytellers, the message is the same: Mni Sota is a Dakota place.

For Dakota people, stories are often tied to places in the landscape and the skies rather than to groups of people or specific bands, which were fluid and mobile. While common misconceptions perpetuated in European and later American historical accounts portray the Dakota as nomadic people, we were in fact purposeful in our seasonal migrations, following ancient and rhythmic cycles. That rhythm included not only when to harvest wild and cultivated foods and the best time to hunt and trap so the meat was good but also when to tell stories. Ceremonies were conducted and stories told based upon generations of observing the constellations.

No clear boundaries seem to exist between many of these stories and which group they “belong” to unless they are associated with a specific place, person, or historical event. There are many stories, many perspectives, and many generations of oral tradition to be told and re-told. In “Grandmother to Granddaughter: Generations of Oral History in a Dakota Family,” Waziyatawiṅ stresses that “these are not merely interesting stories or even the simple dissemination of historical fact. They are, more importantly, transmissions of culture upon which our survival as a people depends. When our stories die, so will we.”<sup>1</sup>

The stories gathered here represent a broad base of knowledge of Dakota people from every band—Bdewakantunwan, Wahpekute, Wahpetunwan, Sisi-tunwan, and Ihankunwan—that span Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Manitoba. To add to the body of knowledge represented by more widely known storytellers and tribal historians, we sought out elderly fluent speakers and traditional people who were willing to share what they knew about the land. Over a period of three years, we conducted interviews with many Dakota people who were eager to share the stories they knew because they had not been asked to tell them before. Our collaborators ranged in age from thirty to one hundred years old. With other accounts taken from nineteenth- and twentieth-century oral history collections, we have brought together numerous stories and multiple viewpoints of this place and our people into a continuous narrative. At once singular and collective, they create an account of Dakota history from “beyond remembering” to today. They endure as Dakota stories and histories of how we came to be in this land, Mni Sota Makoce, how we are a part of this land, and what our responsibilities are to each other and to our Ina. Through these stories we are taught how to live, and through these stories we will continue to live.<sup>2</sup>

## Otókáhe / The Beginning

[ ERIN GRIFFIN ] **Stories and theories** written by explorers, missionaries, historians, and anthropologists locate Dakota origins in numerous places. One version is that Dakota people came from the North. Some Dakota accounts gathered from missionaries suggest that Bde Wakąj (Spirit Lake, or what is known today as Mille Lacs) is the origin place and the center of the earth. Reports from early French explorers give details about Dakota people and their activities around this region. Other accounts place Dakota people even farther north than Bde Wakąj. Nineteenth-century missionary Stephen R. Riggs suggested that Dakota people lived as far north as Hudson Bay and the Arctic Ocean. Similarly, missionary Samuel W. Pond proposed that Dakota people once lived so far north that they knew of “the habits of the Esquimaux, for whom they had a name, calling them ‘Eaters of raw food.’”<sup>i</sup>

While there is no question that the Dakota nation traveled and spread out over great distances, claims of Dakota origins in places other than Mni Sota Makoce conflict with Dakota oral narratives and ultimately undermine Dakota connections to the land. Mni Sota is the original homeland of the Dakota, and our own oral history of the events of our creation remains the most important to us. This region was the home of Dakota people generations before us, and for generations after us it will remain our homeland. We are told that we were brought here to this land from the stars to the place where the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers meet. This place known as Bdote is our place of genesis. We have recognized Bdote as the center of the earth and of all things, and historical accounts tell of it as a meeting place where massive gatherings of lodges took place annually. From here, our Oyate expanded into the four bands of Mdewakąjtuŋwaŋ, Waŋpekuŋe, Waŋpetuŋwaŋ, and Sisuŋwaŋ and over time spread

out across much of what is today Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Nebraska, into Iowa and Wisconsin, and the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta in Canada.<sup>ii</sup>

Though the bands were spread out, Dakota life was dictated by kinship, which is the essence of Dakota culture. According to Dakota anthropologist Ella Deloria,

The ultimate aim of Dakota life, stripped of accessories, was quite simple: One must obey kinship rules; one must be a good relative. No Dakota who has participated in that life will dispute that . . . Without that aim and the constant struggle to attain it, the people would no longer be Dakotas in truth. They would no longer even be human. To be a good Dakota, then, was to be humanized, civilized. And to be civilized was to keep the rules imposed by kinship for achieving civility, good manners, and a sense of responsibility toward every individual dealt with.

A person’s relatives were not limited to the nuclear family; instead, Dakota kinship allowed for something much larger. A father’s brothers were counted as one’s fathers; a father’s sisters were aunts. A mother’s sisters were counted as one’s mothers and her brothers would be uncles. Correspondingly, their children would be considered one’s brothers and sisters. According to this practice, no matter how distant, a relative would be claimed. This inclusiveness was *tiošpaye*, the extended family. Following kinship rules was a way of life, far more complex than just knowing one’s relations. In this way, a Dakota person could undoubtedly find a relative almost anywhere when traveling within the Dakota nation. Kinship rules also provided a sense of security and an acknowledgment of the laws by which the people were governed.<sup>iii</sup> ■

## HOW WE GOT HERE



It is through our stories that we all understand where we come from, regardless of heritage or background or religion. “Mythology, next to language,” said missionary Stephen R. Riggs, “affords the most reliable evidence as to the origin or relationship of a people; for peoples have been slow to change their gods.” While *mythology* may have negative connotations in today’s society, it is through myths that we try to explain the unexplainable or to understand a time before we were in existence. The similarities in those stories, according to early-twentieth-century Dakota oral historians, indicate that “the Dakota and the white man must be closely related, since they tell nearly the same story about creation.” Throughout human culture, creation stories provide an explanation of how the world began.<sup>3</sup>

### THE CREATION OF OUR SOLAR SYSTEM

Hekta ehaṅna, long ago, our people were camped together. The chief wanted to know if there was an end to this land and called his council. They chose four young men—tall, strong, fast, not yet with women—gave them extra moccasins, and sent them toward the direction of the setting sun to find the answer. The young men traveled for a few days and then slept on the side of a hill. Not on the top, not on the bottom, but the middle. If they came straight down, it might appear to someone watching from across the way that they were hostile. So they descended back and forth across the hill to seem friendly.

Early in the morning, one young man awoke to a noise. “Wake up,” he said, “I thought I heard something.” They looked down the hill. A strange man, strange because he was not Dakota, was sitting there facing the other way, toward where the sun sets. He wore a white blanket and had hair on his face. One of them said, “Let’s go see this mysterious man. There’s a reason we came across him.” As they were trying to decide what to do, the man said, “Hiyu po! Taku ociciyakapi kte bduhe do. Come on down here. I have something to tell you.”<sup>4</sup>

To hear this stranger speak their language was unexpected, and the young

## Not One Creation Story, but Many

[ WAKIṆYAN̄ ZI SAPA, CURTIS CAMPBELL ] “So depending on where you live at or how you’ve grown up, each place had their creation story. There were different types of values that came out of these different histories of the creation stories. I don’t hold any one of them above the others; they’re all equally

important. And there’s no right or wrong among any of them. But that’s the way it is, you know. You go further down south, down river and go further north, either way, we’re all the same people. We’re all Dakota people, you know.”<sup>iv</sup> ■

men were uncertain about what to do next. One wanted to continue on their original journey and reminded the others they still had a long way to go. Another thought it was a trick to lure them into a trap and that it couldn't be good. While they were talking, the stranger again said, "You four up there, come down here. I have something to tell you." They suddenly realized the stranger knew their language and, despite facing away from them, knew there were four in their party. Then one young man whispered, "This is unexplainable. He must be a sacred being." They agreed to go and talk with him.

The man had a small fire going and said, "You sit here on the south side. I have something to tell you." Then he spent all day teaching them about the world where they lived. He spoke of how the suns—there were many suns, not just one—the stars, the moons, and the planets were put together and how they were to work together. The stranger explained how all of these things came to pass. And the young men said he told them, after he had talked all day, to remember his words:

These things I am telling you, always remember these as long as you can in the future, tell each other every year, every generation, and your grandchildren and your great-grandchildren, continue telling each other . . . Those who walk with commitment, they will walk in that path of what they remember.

### **THE CREATION OF THE EARTH**

When the world was created, Kuŋši Maka, Grandmother Earth, was just a rock, and she was chosen to hold life. The moons, the planets, the stars, and the sun agreed to help her with the task she had been given. Before the earth was made there was water everywhere; no land was to be seen. The Creator then made the animals that have fur and those that swim in the water. This was the beginning of everything.

While the world was still covered in water, the Uŋktehi, a powerful water spirit, sent some of the animals down into the water one by one to reach the bottom to find some clay. Many animals tried but were unsuccessful and died in the effort. The muskrat took his turn, dove into the water, and after a long time surfaced with a paw full of clay. From this small amount, land was made and placed on the turtle's back.<sup>5</sup>

Dakota oral traditions also describe how uŋktehi battled with the waŋinyan, or thunder beings, who caused storm winds and lightning. Uŋktehi would churn up the surfaces of rivers and lakes, creating whitecaps and rolling waves, until the Sun brought peace to the world again, holding a rainbow, like a flag of many colors, in his hand. The uŋktehi could travel along underground waterways from Lake Traverse and Big Stone Lake along the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers to Țaŋu Wakaŋ Tipi. Dakota people were familiar with the routes and may have also used them for safety and escape when required.<sup>6</sup>



*Dakota men seated in the “profound deliberation” of a council were the subject of a painting by George Catlin, who visited southern Minnesota in 1835 and 1836. The exact location is not recorded, but the scene resembles some of the islands of wood in the region’s prairies.*

#### WE ARE A PART OF THIS LAND



The search for the origin of humans in this world is a shared quest in almost every culture. Many of the stories that explain where we came from involve not only the creation of a body from the dust or mud of the earth itself but also the element of a spirit or breath from the Creator.

#### THE SPIRIT ROAD

Dakota people are called Wicāŋłipi Oyate, Star People. Our spirits come from the Creator down the Caŋku Wanagi, the “spirit road,” more commonly known as the Milky Way. At death, we return where we came from along that same road. In the PBS series *The Elegant Universe*, physicist Michio Kaku discussed the theory of the moment of creation when a star explodes and becomes bits of matter that float into space and are drawn to another star to form planets and ultimately life. He explained that life comes from light and energy and therefore we are made of stardust. But as Dakota people, we knew that. Our creation stories tell us that long ago we came to this earth along the Milky Way.<sup>7</sup>

## **BDOTE**

The place of first creation is at the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers, where the Dakota people came from the stars to be on the earth. Two bluffs were formed from the earth, one called *Caške Taŋka* and the other *Caške Cistiŋna*. The Earth opened herself in that way, and from the mud the Creator made the first Dakota man and woman. Because Dakota were made from the Earth, she is called *Ina*, mother. In 1720 a French account recorded that the Dakota “say that the first *Sciou* and the first woman of their tribe came out of the earth, which brought them forth on the prairie below St. Anthony Falls.” This statement is perhaps the first written record of the importance to the Dakota of the area around *Bdote*. More than one hundred years later, missionary Stephen R. Riggs wrote, “The *Mdewakanton* think that the mouth of the Minnesota River is precisely over the center of the earth, and that they occupy the gate that opens into the western world.”<sup>8</sup>

The importance of water is significant. In the beginning, the water—*Mni*—was pure, part of the land, and therefore part of the people. It was the first medicine given to our people because water keeps everything alive. Water that comes from within the earth is pure and as such is considered *wakaŋ* or sacred. This region where the rivers come together plays a significant role in the history of the Dakota people in *Mni Sota Makoce*, as it contains *Ťaŋu Wakaŋ Tipi*, *Mni Sni* or Coldwater Spring, and *Oheyawahi* or Pilot Knob.

In this place, the Dakota people flourished. We respected our homeland and our Creator. Our numbers increased. Our winter camps became villages, and we became the people of the *Oçeti Šaŋowiŋ*, the Seven Council Fires.<sup>9</sup>

## **ĤE MNI ÇAŊ**

As the people spread out from *Bdote*, a cultural hub was established at *Ĥe Mni Çaŋ* (Barn Bluff, near present-day Red Wing) on the Mississippi River. Fog often rises up from the rivers in this area, and it was known as *I saŋ ti*, “where they live under the fog.” Each group of people possessed a great spiritual strength and had their responsibilities to the larger community. The *Bdewakaŋtuŋwaŋ* were the spiritual people who lived by the water, as did the *Sisituŋwaŋ*, the medicine people. The *Walipekute* were warriors who protected the medicine people. *Walipeŋtuŋwaŋ* people were dwellers in the forest, and the *Ihaŋktuŋwaŋ* lived at the edge of the great forest. *Ihaŋktuŋwaŋ* were scattered at the edge of the forest. It was to this hub that people from the east and north came. Some decided to stay and lived among the Dakota. Others visited for a while, then left and went west and south. Dakota people also left with them.<sup>10</sup>

Many people lived in that area, working together, gathering medicines, and hunting, year in and year out. The land belonged to everyone, and everyone used it in harmony. Then there were disagreements about who should pick

## Bdote Mni Sota / Mouth of the Minnesota River

**The area of Bdote** (or Mdote) Mni Sota is located at the mouth of the Minnesota River where it flows into the Mississippi midway between the downtowns of Minneapolis and St. Paul. It is, according to Dakota oral traditions, a place of creation. The mouth of the Minnesota's broad valley is located in a break in the high banks of the Mississippi corridor, a gorge deeply carved by the Falls of St. Anthony in its million-year journey up the river. This place was Bdote Mni Sota: bdote meaning "mouth"; mni sota referring to the clarity of the water and its reflection of the sky. The exact boundaries of Bdote Mni Sota are hard to determine. Sites generally considered to be within this sacred district include Mni Sni (Coldwater Spring) and Oheyawahi (Pilot Knob). Some Dakota include Ṭaḳu Wakaḅ Tipi (Carver's Cave) and Mounds Park within this region as well.<sup>v</sup>

In 1689 a French document claiming possession of the region mentions a Mantanton Dakota presence at the mouth of the Minnesota River and also suggests the possibility of a village site there. The later village known as Black Dog may have been located near the mouth of the Minnesota River before Fort Snelling was built. Trader James H. Lockwood, who arrived in the Upper Mississippi region in 1816, wrote, "There was another small band who had their village at Mendota, which signifies the meeting of the waters, whose chief was called Black Dog." After the construction of Fort Snelling, Indian Agent Lawrence Taliaferro resisted attempts by various Dakota to locate a village there, perhaps thinking he would be forced to show favoritism toward those villagers.<sup>vi</sup>

A 1960s construction project led to a new river channel connecting the Minnesota to the Missis-

*This engraving of a view from the area of Fort Snelling looking up the Minnesota River valley, with the mouth of the river in the foreground, was based on an earlier watercolor by military officer and artist Seth Eastman.*



sippi River adjacent to Pike Island. This adjustment changed the mouth of the Minnesota, creating a back channel where the old river mouth had been. What used to be the east bank of the river and the location of the first U.S. military camp in 1819 is now known as Picnic Island and is accessible by road within Fort Snelling State Park.<sup>vii</sup> ■

*The mouth of the Minnesota River, at left, underneath the Mendota Bridge, viewed from an airplane in 1935, shows the river as it was before a channel was cut through the bend at the river's mouth, to the right, in the 1970s. The land cut off by this channel is now Picnic Island in Fort Snelling State Park.*



medicine in the area. Some of the Dakota claimed that area, and other people said it had always been theirs. The argument escalated until they were ready to fight one another. The two groups faced each other to do battle over the contested ground.

The ground started to shake. A mist rose up out of the area, and the people fell unconscious to the ground. After a while, as the mist started to lift, they came back to their senses and remembered they were ready to do battle. But as they looked at their opponents, they saw that they were separated by a valley with water running through there. The Creator had shown them this land was given for everyone to use and not to fight over it. From that moment on they called those Dakota groups, all the different villages regardless of which side of the river they were on, Kiyuksa. And so they lived that way, going back and forth across the river since both groups had relatives on both sides. And they realized their argument over the land was foolishness and nothing can be settled through fighting.

And so the people continued to live up and down the river until they fell away from the Creator and no longer knew how to behave. The unktefi were called upon to flood the land and cleanse it of the people's disrespectful actions. Flood stories, numerous across the world and among the many indigenous groups of North America, usually result from a violation of cultural or religious mores. As explained by Dakota oral traditions, the people were restored to land in different places, and the blood of those who perished became the sacred red stone from which our ceremonial pipes are made to this day.

## Oċeti Šaċowin / The Seven Fires of the Dakota

**Šunġi, Reverend Gary Cavender** relates that “In our Creation myth we the Dakota, the Seven Fires of the Dakota, came from the belt of Orion—the seven planets of the belt of Orion, the seven stars—and arrived at the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers, and so in some respects it is our Eden, and the land around there is sacred as well.”<sup>viii</sup>

Dakota people belonged to one of the seven fires, or bands, that made up the Oyate, or Nation. Each band was designated by where they lived or what their responsibilities were. ■



*In a Dakota creation story, the Seven Fires of the Dakota or Oċeti Šaċowin came from the constellation of Orion, which includes seven major stars.*

|               |             |  |
|---------------|-------------|--|
| Bdewakątuŋwaŋ | Mdewakanton | The spiritual people who live by the water   |
| Sisituŋwaŋ    | Sisseton    | The medicine people who live by the water  |
| Wahpekute     | Wahpekute   | The warriors who protected the medicine people and could shoot from among the leaves |
| Wahpeŋtuŋwaŋ  | Wahpeton    | The people who live in the forest  |
| Ihaŋktuŋwaŋ   | Yankton     | The people who live at the edge of the great forest                                  |
| Ihaŋktuŋwaŋna | Yanktonai   | Those scattered at the edge of the forest  |
| Tituŋwaŋ      | Teton       | Dwellers of the plains   |

## Pipestone Quarry, Pipestone National Monument

Dakota tradition maintains that when the Creator sent the Ujktehi to flood the earth, the people who perished had forgotten how to behave as human beings. Their blood became the sacred red stone which is still used today for our ceremonial pipes used for prayer. Archeological evidence indicates that indigenous peoples have been excavating the stone for three thousand years. By the 1700s, the Dakota controlled the quarry, located in Pipestone County in southwestern Minnesota. Joseph Nicollet stated that the Dakota name for “this very sacred quarry” was “iyanska K’api; that is to say, the place where one digs the red rock,” or “Chanduhuppa Shak’api—there where one digs the red pipes.” An early written reference to the pipestone quarry and its importance to the Dakota occurred in Pierre Le Sueur’s notes from around 1700, where he recorded that the “Hinhanctons” (Ihanktunwan or Yanktons) were known as the village “of the stone (because of a red stone quarry that is found near them in the middle of a prairie).”<sup>ix</sup>

In his journal of a visit to the Minnesota River region in 1766–67, Jonathan Carver wrote that on the plains between the Minnesota and Missouri rivers was “a large mountain of red marble where all the neighbouring nations resort for stone to make pipes of. Even those who hold perpetual wars in all other parts meet here in peace.” His later published narrative reported that in addition to using the stone to make the bowls of their pipes Indian people mixed “the red stone powdered” with the blue clay which Le Sueur had sought on the Blue Earth River, “to paint themselves different colors” for use when involved in “their sports and pastimes.” Among the first non-Indians to write an account of visiting the quarry was the artist George Catlin, who in 1836 recorded the area and the process of quarrying in a series of paintings, at the same time managing to obtain false credit for “discovering” the quarry, which

led geologists to name pipestone *catlinite*. In 1838 Joseph Nicollet recorded the Dakota names for the quarry, noting that the Dakota told him the quarry “was opened by the great spirit of thunder, and one cannot visit it without his rumblings, and the lightings and storms that accompany them.” Nicollet and his party, which included the explorer John Charles Fremont and the Odawa French trader Joseph Laframboise, spent several days in the area of the quarry, leaving their names carved on a rock. In 1849 the Minnesota territorial legislature sent a slab of pipestone to be used in the construction of the Washington Monument, accompanied by a letter from Representative Henry H. Sibley objecting to Catlin’s claim to have been the first white man to visit the quarry and to the use of the term *catlinite* to refer to the rock. He made the point that a Dakota term for the rock was *inyan sa* or red stone.<sup>x</sup>

The Yankton treaty, signed in Washington, DC, in April 1858 and ceding Yankton lands in present-day South Dakota, contained in Article 8 the provision that the Yanktons “shall be secured in the free and unrestricted use of the red pipe-stone quarry, or so much thereof as they have been accustomed to frequent and use for the purpose of procuring stone for pipes; and the United States hereby stipulate and agree to cause to be surveyed and marked so much thereof as shall be necessary and proper for that purpose, and retain the same and keep it open and free to the Indians to visit and procure stone for pipes so long as they shall desire.” A federal Indian school established at Pipestone in 1893 led to litigation involving the Yanktons, who objected to its creation without their permission, for which they ultimately received damages. In 1937 the Pipestone National Monument was established to preserve the quarry and surrounding area. Federal regulations limit quarrying to members of federally recognized tribes.<sup>xi</sup>

**Mille Lacs is called** Bde Wakąj by the Dakota, which is sometimes translated as “Spirit Lake.” The name indicates that the lake was a particularly important sacred space, one associated with a portion of the Bdewakątuwąj people, whose name may have come to refer to a larger group than in its original designation for Mille Lacs. Missionary Stephen R. Riggs wrote of the Dakota belief that there was a fearful Țąku Wakąj (that is, UȚktehi) in the lake that appeared at planting time. The Bdewakątuwąj “dreamed of it and no more feared it.” A similar explanation appears in the Lakota accounts collected by James R. Walker.<sup>xii</sup>

The full relationship of the Dakota to Mille Lacs is difficult to document completely. Knife Lake is located near the southeast shore of Mille Lacs, at the headwaters of the nearby Snake River, in present-day Kanabec County near its border with Mille Lacs County. This lake is said to have been known to the Dakota as Isąti mde, referring to a place where stone was found to make the knife blades the Dakota used before they acquired metal goods. This name may be the origin of the term *Santee*, which was applied to all the eastern Dakota, particularly by western peoples. Father Louis Hennepin, in his account of a visit to the region in 1685, called the people he visited the *Issatis*. Jean-Baptiste Louis Franquelin’s 1697 map of the Minnesota region and Pierre-Charles Le Sueur’s records show multiple Dakota villages on Mille Lacs and in the surrounding region. They were accessible through a variety of rivers and portages connecting the lake to the Mississippi, St. Croix, St. Louis, and other rivers.<sup>xiii</sup>

The Mille Lacs area was rich in resources. Some ethnohistorians have suggested that large rice harvests are enough to explain its importance as a population center, but the maple groves along the south shore, the plentiful fish in the lake, the fur-bearing animals in the swamplands, and many other resources contributed as well. Archaeologist Mary K. Whelan, in an analysis of the animal and plant remains at Mille Lacs, found Late Woodland- and



Two maps by Jean-Baptiste Louis Franquelin, from 1685 and 1688, provide the earliest French records of the Dakota presence at Bde Wakąj or Mille Lacs Lake, identifying the lake first as the “Lac des Sioux” or Lake of the Sioux and later as “Lac de Buade,” from the family name of Louis de Buade, Comte de Frontenac, the Governor General of New France during this period. The second map also names the lake “Issatis,” an early version of the name *Santee*, applied to eastern Dakota communities.

early historic-period sites suggesting the people living there could reside in the area year round. In contrast, Dakota sites on the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers were more likely summer villages. In the winter, the Dakota of these villages moved into the woods to live in small family groups.<sup>xiv</sup>

Archaeologist Jacob Brower, who traveled around Mille Lacs in 1900, mapped the locations of a number of mound groups as well as what he described as ancient village sites. At the end of his journey, he noted in his diary, “it is now my deliberate opinion that the nation of mound-builders who constructed the earthworks at Mille Lacs were the ancient Sioux villagers who for unknown ages occupied the shores of that lake.” At Garrison in May 1900, Brower surveyed an “ancient earthwork” consisting of embankments hundreds of feet long that formed a kind of enclosure. Such an earthwork surrounding a village site may explain Franquelin’s term

for the Quiocpeton, or a nation refermé, suggesting an enclosed village.<sup>xv</sup>

Few of the mounds and earthworks Brower identified at Mille Lacs were excavated, and many have been destroyed. In any case, correlating these locations with Dakota groups in the seventeenth century is problematic. The most thorough excavations have occurred in the area of the three lakes below the outlet of Mille Lacs. Douglas Birk and Elden Johnson support the idea that the Dakota people at Mille Lacs resided in a series of small permanent villages throughout the area. Large gatherings might have occurred at particular times of the year, but contrary to Father Hennepin's suggestion, there was probably no single "great village" on the lake's shore. Perhaps he referred to those several villages, taking them to be united as one.<sup>xvi</sup> ■



### MILLE LACS

After the flood, some of the people lived under the water at Bde Tanja or Bde Wakaj. One day, a young boy and his sister were walking together. The boy looked up and saw mniyomni to, a blue whirlpool, above them and reached up for it. The whirlpool pulled him up to the surface and threw him out onto the shore, a beautiful place of trees and hills. His sister followed the bubbles of the mniyomni, reached up, and was also thrown ashore. She followed her brother's footprints, eating roots and berries along the way, and picked up a small stone to suck in order to quench her thirst. Amazed at the beauty of the place, she was distracted and swallowed the stone. It traveled through her body and was born a child called Inyan Hoksida, Stone Boy. This is how the people walked out of the lake and became people who walk on the land again.

### BIG STONE LAKE

When the unjktehi were called on to flood the land, the eagle picked up a young woman who was clinging to a tree and took her to where a large rock stood out from the water. He placed her on Inyan Tanja, the big rock, and showed her that the water from there—the center of the earth—flowed in all directions,

## Owamniyomni / Falls of St. Anthony

**The Dakota called this place** Owamniyomni or “whirlpool.” Father Louis Hennepin is given credit for naming the Falls of St. Anthony. In an account of his trip in 1680–81, Hennepin provides the first written record of the Dakota view of the falls. He noted that one of the Dakota in his party climbed an oak tree and made an offering of a beaver robe decorated with porcupine quills, saying, “You, who are a spirit, grant that our tribe pass by here tranquilly without mishap. Grant that we may kill many buffaloes, destroy our enemies, and bring here captives, some of whom we will sacrifice to you.”<sup>xvii</sup>

More than a hundred years later, Jonathan Carver reported that a Winnebago, that is, Ho-Chunk “prince” who had come to the region to visit the Dakota accompanied him to the falls and made an offering of his pipe and the ornaments he was wear-

ing, throwing them into the water while asking for the Great Spirit’s protection during their travels.<sup>xviii</sup>

Though incomplete, these descriptions indicate the veneration in which the falls were held and the sense that they housed a powerful being or beings. Gideon Pond wrote that a sudden flood of water over the falls in the 1820s following the breakup of ice was attributed to Uṅktehi, and that a soldier who was carried away from the cabin below Fort Snelling had served to feed this being.<sup>xix</sup>

The falls were used in the late nineteenth century for water power for flour milling and other purposes, hastening the destruction of the falls, which were destined, in any case, to disappear for geological reasons. The falls today bear little resemblance to those of 150 years ago. ■



*Owamniyomni or the Falls of St. Anthony was a site for ceremonies by Dakota people long before Father Louis Hennepin named it in 1681. Jonathan Carver recorded this view of the falls in 1778, prior to the extensive engineering that destroyed its earlier form.*



*The Bdewakantjwaj Dakota village found lowest on the Mississippi River was that of the Kiyuksa band, at Wabasha's village or Wapasha's Prairie, shown here in a Seth Eastman watercolor from the 1840s, now the location of the city of Winona.*

to the north and east and to the south and west. From there the people again multiplied and flourished.

#### **OWAMNIYOMNI AND SPIRIT LAKE**

Some of the Dakota people went to Owamniyomni, called St. Anthony Falls, for ceremonies because of the power associated with the falls along *Háha Wakpa*. From there was a road to Spirit Lake in what is now known as Iowa. The people would walk or ride horses, and soon the different groups of Dakota spread out to the south and west of *Bdote* and lived all through the prairies, where they hunted buffalo and elk. Many villages were established around Spirit Lake. The *Wapiya Wicašta*, the medicine people, talked for quite a while about the times when the people would be short of food because so many of them lived in that area.

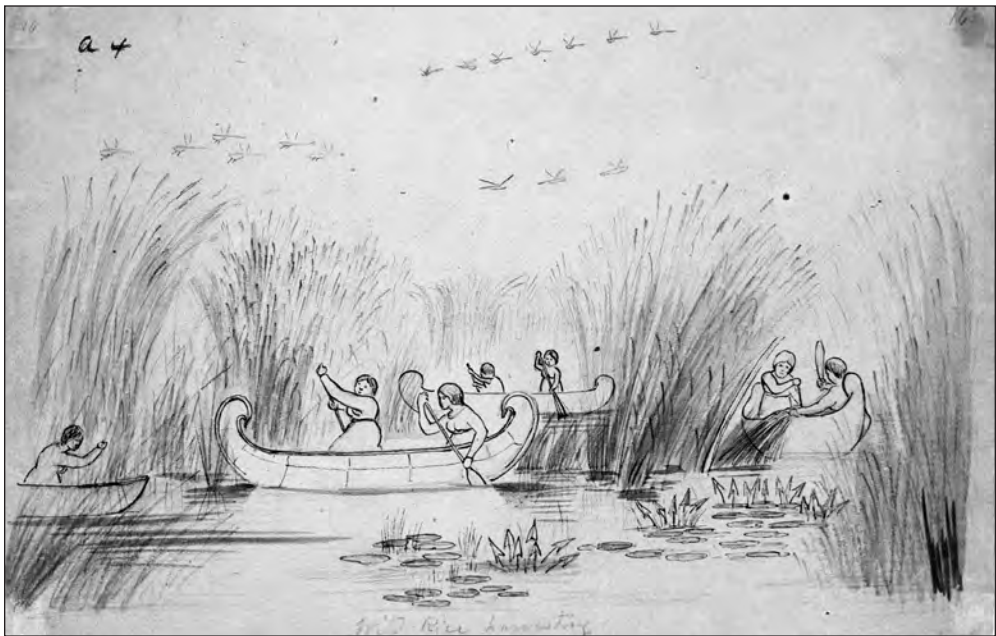
They remembered that long ago they had been told that at the bottom of the lake was a person who could help the people survive. So they asked the families there to send one of their daughters to volunteer to go into the lake. Some of the people did not believe in the old story and did not want to sacrifice their young girls for such a futile task. However, there were people who did believe what the *Wapiya Wicašta* were saying. One family stepped forward with their daughter.

They told the young girl to swim to the bottom, where she would meet someone who would help her. A lot of people thought she would drown because it was an impossible task. But she and her family believed, and she went with the *Wapiya Wicašta* in a small boat to the middle of the lake. They told her what to do and said they would be waiting there for her to return. So she went

into the water and swam toward the bottom. There she saw a woman dressed in white buckskin who held a bowl in each hand. The woman said, “These will help your people. When you plant them, they will grow and then you can eat them.” The young girl took the gifts from the woman and swam up, up, up to where the Wapiya Wicaŝta were waiting for her. They took her out of the water, and she placed the bowls in their hands and explained what the woman had told her.

The gift was seeds of corn: four male seeds in one bowl and four female seeds in the other. The young girl instructed them to plant the seeds one row male, one row female, one row male, one row female. And they would grow and the people would not run out of food again. There was a big crowd along the shore, with her family and those others who were sure she was going to drown. The medicine people explained to everyone how to plant the corn. From those first rows they planted, they harvested some and they saved some of the seeds to plant the following year.

The Dakota people from that time forward would have plenty of corn. Because the holy being, the sacred woman, lived there under the water and gave them the gift of corn, they called it Spirit Lake. They gave thanks to the creator and held the first green corn dance. The road between Spirit Lake and St. Anthony Falls was well traveled by Dakota people from that time forward.



*Dakota women made use of birch-bark canoes to harvest wild rice throughout the Minnesota region, as archaeology, tradition, and written sources tell us. This view—which would likely have been accurate for the Dakota and neighboring Ojibwe, who both used such canoes for this purpose—was drawn by artist and scientist Robert O. Sweeny in the 1850s.*

## MNI SOTA MAKOCE



The Dakota spread across the land from Ĥe Mni Çañ throughout the northern Great Plains. Evidence of their pottery can be found in what is now western Wisconsin, Minnesota, western Ontario, and eastern Manitoba dating from 1150 CE. By the early eighteenth century, the Dakota controlled the areas around Lake of the Woods and Rainy Lake, hunting and traveling as far east as Kaminstikwia, near Thunder Bay, Ontario, and as far northwest as the head of the Churchill River in Saskatchewan. According to Cree history, the Dakota came north along the Ballantyne River, known by the Cree as Puatsipi or Dakota River, on raids against the Cree and Assiniboine long before 1774, when the Hudson's Bay Company established its first inland post.<sup>11</sup>

One of the earliest written accounts of the migration of Dakota people away from the Mille Lacs area was recorded in Dakota language by Wambdi Oçiya in 1837. Writing to the missionary Thomas Williamson, Wambdi Oçiya said,

From the beginning when the Dakotas grew, the present Chippewa country belonged to the Dakotas, they say . . . My fathers told it thus. What is called Knife Lake was the Mdewakantons planting ground, they say; and Wazina Ha Wakpa [Pine Bark River] used to be the land of the Wahpetons, they say. They planted there, they say . . . but for some unknown reason, they came here and remained, because there was much buffalo on the open prairie, and the Chippewas came and took up their home there, it is said. Because all the wise men are now dead, nobody mentions these things, and so it is.<sup>12</sup>

Moving to where the game was more plentiful, and isolated in the deep woods of the Upper Mississippi, the Dakota knew about the French from their interactions with the Ojibwe and Odawa long before they actually met them for the first time. By the early 1800s, trade goods began to filter in through the Ojibwe and Odawa, including iron pots, knives, blankets, and guns, so that by the time French voyageurs entered the Upper Mississippi Valley, “the Dakotas had no reason to be either shocked or frightened. They had no illusions that these were superior beings sent by the Great Spirit, though they were deeply impressed by their wondrous technology.” It is no surprise, then, that they were called Wašicuŋ, or people who had done well for themselves. And events were set into motion that would change the face of Mni Sota Makoce forever.<sup>13</sup>