

Lakota/Dakota Tribe

Commonly referred to under the name “Sioux”

http://aktalakota.stjo.org/site/PageServer?pagename=alm_homepage

Culture

On the wind-swept plains of South Dakota, you can almost imagine what life was like hundreds of years ago ... at the time when the Sioux called this land their own.

Their lives were lived close to the land and nature. Because of this, they felt all things - from the sun's rays to the smallest ant - were the work of **Wakan Tanka**, the *Grandfather Spirit*. The sun, sky and winds were all part of the Great Spirit.

Beliefs and Traditions

Traditionally, Lakota history was passed from generation to generation through the beautiful art of storytelling.

Elders shared tales with young ones to preserve the culture and ensure the continuation of a people.

Today, we share a small selection of stories with you - our family and friends - in hopes of spreading understanding and education about a culture in need of our support.

Four Lakota Values

Wacantognaka, the Lakota word for *generosity*, means to contribute to the well-being of one's people and all life by sharing and giving freely. This sharing is not just of objects and possessions, but of emotions like sympathy, compassion, kindness. It also means to be generous with one's personal time. The act of giving and not looking for anything in return can make you a better person and make you happy.

Giveaways have always been part of Lakota society. At important events, the family gathers their belongings and sets them out for any person in the community to take. "What you give away, you keep; what you keep you lose" is an old Lakota saying.

No matter what race or nationality or tribe, people have found when you reach out to help others in your community, you become less focused on yourself and more in harmony with the world.

Wotitakuye, or *kinship*, is one of the important values coming from the **tiyospaye**, the *extended family*. It includes the ideas of living in harmony, belonging, relations as the true wealth and the importance of trusting in others. It is one of the values that made the **tiyospaye** work.

Family is the measure of your wealth. They will support you in good times and in bad times. For a Lakota, you belong to a **tiyospaye** through birth, marriage or adoption. Your family even extends out to your band and the whole Lakota nation. Whenever you travel somewhere, you can expect to be welcomed and supported as if you were in your own immediate family.

In traditional Lakota society, **wotitakuye** was a little different from what it is today. The Lakota were a warrior and hunting society. This meant the men might not return when they went out to fight or to hunt. So, the network of relatives ensured the women, children and elders would not be left alone. In these times, generosity was the way of life, and resources were meant to be shared.

Wacintaka, or *fortitude*, means facing danger or challenges with courage, strength and confidence. Believing in oneself allows a person to face challenges. Fortitude includes the ability to come to terms with problems, to accept them and to find a solution that is good for everyone.

One of the first lessons a Lakota child learned in the old days was self-control and self-restraint in the presence of parents or adults. Mastery and abilities came from games and creative play. Someone more skilled than oneself was viewed as a role model, not as a competitor. Striving was for achieving a personal goal, not for being superior to one's opponent. Success was a possession of the many, not of the few.

Fortitude may require patience, perseverance and strength of mind in the face of challenges. It involves having confidence in oneself and the courage to continue even when all odds are against you. Fear still exists, but you proceed in spite of fear.

Woksape - *Wisdom*: The knowledge and wisdom of old people is very important for the well-being of the Lakota people. This is understood to be something sought and gained over the course of one's entire life, but not just by adding years to one's life.

Wisdom has to do with understanding the meaning within natural processes and patterns. It means knowing the design and purpose of life.

It also has to do with understanding and living the spiritual values and beliefs upon which one's culture is founded and being able to share these with others. Wisdom means being able to incorporate the sacred way of life into one's own life and to respect and honor all life. It means being open to the dreams of the day and the night when spiritual direction may come to a receptive child or adult seeking wisdom.

Famous Chief

Tataŋka Iyotaŋka
Sitting Bull
Huŋkpapa Lakota
(ca. 1831-1890)

Sitting Bull was a Hunkpapa Lakota and holy man. Under him, the Lakota bands united for survival on the northern plains. Sitting Bull remained defiant toward American military power and contemptuous of American promises to the end.

Named Slon-ha, Slow, by his parents, the future leader was born around 1831. His birthplace was on the Grand River in South Dakota at a place the Lakota called "Many Caches" for the number of food storage pits they had dug there.

Later in life, the boy called Slow was given a more fitting name ... **Tatanka-Iyotanka**. The leader's name describes a buffalo bull sitting intractably on his haunches. It was a name the holy man would live up to throughout his life.

Sitting Bull's Youth

As a young man, Sitting Bull became a leader of the Strong Heart Warrior Society. Later, he became a distinguished member of the Silent Eaters, a group concerned with tribal welfare.

He first went to battle in June 1845 - at age 14 - in a raid on the Crow. There, he saw his first encounter with American soldiers. The US Army had mounted a broad campaign in retaliation for the Santee Rebellion in Minnesota ... a rebellion in which Sitting Bull's people played no part.

The next year, Sitting Bull fought U.S. troops again at the Battle of Killdeer Mountain. And, in 1865, he led a siege against the newly established Fort Rice in North Dakota.

Widely respected for his bravery and insight, he became head chief of the Lakota nation in 1868.

Immeasurable Courage

Sitting Bull's courage was legendary. In 1872, during a battle with soldiers protecting railroad workers on the Yellowstone River, Sitting Bull led four other warriors out between the lines. He sat calmly sharing a pipe with them as bullets buzzed around. Sitting Bull carefully reamed the pipe out when they were finished, and casually walked away.

The stage was set for war between Sitting Bull and the US Army in 1874. An expedition led by General George Armstrong Custer confirmed gold had been discovered in the Dakota Territory's Black Hills, an area sacred to many bands. This land was placed off-limits to white settlement by the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868.

Despite this ban, prospectors began a rush to the Black Hills, provoking the Lakota to defend their land. When government efforts to purchase the Black Hills failed, the Fort Laramie Treaty was set aside. The commissioner of Indian Affairs decreed all Lakota not settled on reservations by January 31, 1876 would be considered hostile. Sitting Bull and his people held their ground.

In March, as three columns of federal troops under Generals George Crook, Alfred Terry and Colonel John Gibbon moved into the area, Sitting Bull summoned the Lakota, Cheyenne and Arapaho to his camp on Rosebud Creek in Montana Territory. There, he led them in the sun dance ritual, offering prayers to **Wakan Tanka**, the Great Spirit. Sitting Bull slashed his arms 100 times as a sign of

sacrifice for his people. During this ceremony, Sitting Bull had a vision. He saw soldiers falling into the Lakota camp like grasshoppers falling from the sky.

Inspired by this vision, the Oglala Lakota war chief, Crazy Horse, set out for battle with a band of 500 warriors. On June 17, he surprised Crook's troops and forced them to retreat at the Battle of the Rosebud. To celebrate this victory, the Lakota moved their camp to the valley of the Little Bighorn River. They were joined by 3,000 more Indians who had left the reservations to follow Sitting Bull.

They were attacked on June 25 by the Seventh Cavalry under George Armstrong Custer. Custer's badly outnumbered troops first rushed the encampment, as if in fulfillment of Sitting Bull's vision. Then, the cavalry made a stand on a nearby ridge where they were destroyed.

Public outrage at this military catastrophe brought thousands more cavalymen to the area. Over the next year, they relentlessly pursued the Lakota, who had split up after defeating Custer. Chief after chief was forced to surrender.

Sitting Bull remained defiant. In May 1877, he led his band to Canada, beyond the reach of the US Army. When General Terry traveled north to offer him a pardon in exchange for settling on a reservation, Sitting Bull angrily sent him away.

A Leader Surrenders

Four years later, however, Sitting Bull found it nearly impossible to feed his people in a world where the buffalo was almost extinct. So, he moved south to surrender.

On July 19, 1881, Sitting Bull's young son handed his father's rifle to the commanding officer of Fort Buford in Montana. Through this action, Sitting Bull hoped to teach his son "that he had become a friend of the Americans."

***For the remainder of Sitting Bull's story visit the class website for links to Lakota culture...*

South Dakota Reservations

The Great Sioux Nation

South Dakota is home to more than 62,000 American Indians - many of whom live on South Dakota's nine reservations.

Most of the state's Native American population are affiliated with tribal bands like Oglala, Sicangu, Santee, Brule and others commonly known as the Sioux. These proud, honorable people are also recognized, or named, by their band's dialect - either Dakota, Lakota or Nakota.

South Dakota's captivating landscapes play an important role in the lives of the Dakota, Lakota and Nakota. Each tribe has a unique story that sets them apart from the other Sioux Nations.

The "Sioux" Name and Dialects

The name Sioux comes from *Nadowe Su*, which is Algonquin meaning "Little Rattle." The story, as recorded, says the phrase comes from the rattling sound a snake makes before it bites. French traders and trappers changed the spelling from *Su* to *Sioux* and dropped *Nadowe*. This is how the great **Oceti Sakowin** became commonly known as *Sioux*.

Sioux language has three dialects: Lakota, Dakota and Nakota. These dialects developed because the Sioux were spread out over the vast plains region of North America.

Today, Lakota and Dakota are the two main dialects, with the Nakota being the least frequently used. Speakers of the dialects have no difficulty understanding one another. From these three divisions emerge the Seven Council Fires, or the **Oceti Sakowin**.

Lakota means "allies, friends or those who are united." Dakota comes from the word **Da** meaning "considered" and **Koda** or "friend." Most Lakota, Dakota and Nakota people live on South Dakota's nine reservations. There are also Sioux reservations in North Dakota, Nebraska, Montana, Minnesota and Canada.

Today, as a result of the Indian Reorganization Act, about one-third of the total Indian population lives off reservations in urban areas.