

# Why Treaties Matter

Self-Government  
in the Dakota and  
Ojibwe Nations



Educator Guide for Grades 6-12

## A Deep Connection to Place

A partnership of the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council and the Minnesota Humanities Center

Suggested for use with *Why Treaties Matter: Self Government in the Dakota and Ojibwe Nations*

**BANNER TITLE****BANNER #**

- We Have Always Been Sovereign Nations 2
- A Deep Connection to Place 3

*Why Treaties Matter* educator guides are intended as supplementary resources for your curriculum or stand-alone as lessons. This guide contains estimates of preparation and instructional time, a materials list, background information, preview strategies, assessment options, extension activities, a vocabulary list, web resources, bibliography, and related reading.

**PREPARATION TIME**

Two hours depending on previous familiarity with the subject

**INSTRUCTIONAL TIME**

Two class periods depending on the number of activities selected

**MATERIALS**

- Dakota and Ojibwe Kinship Terms ([Appendix A](#))
- Student Reading: “A Dakota Narrative” by Ramona Kitto Stately ([Appendix B](#))
- Study Questions ([Appendix C](#)) and suggested answers ([Appendix D](#))
- Dakota and Ojibwe Place Names in Minnesota worksheet ([Appendix E](#))
- Video: A Dakota Creation Story, Waziyatawin  
<http://humanitieslearning.org/resource/resourceDetails.cfm?id=1333>
- “An Ojibwe Creation Story as Told to William Whipple Warren” ([Appendix F](#))
- Vocabulary List ([Appendix G](#))
- Samples of origin stories

## TEACHER BACKGROUND

*A Deep Connection to Place* introduces students to worldviews of the Dakota and Ojibwe people. The Dakota phrase *Mitákuye Owásin* (All My Relatives) means not only families, but includes relationships with other humans, plants and animals, the Earth itself, and the sun, moon, and stars. For the Dakota and Ojibwe people, the universe is composed of living beings. Within this universe, humans seek balance and harmony with all life forms.

Kinship terms are used for members of a family based on their generation, gender, and birth order. For the Dakota, families form a larger family called *tióšpaye*, a group of close relatives that includes grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. The tribal nation is composed of several *tióšpaye* bound together in kinship. The Ojibwe people extend kinship nationwide with the *doodem* (clan system). A clan is a family group within a tribal nation who descend from a common male ancestor. The animal, bird, and fish names of clans are metaphors for these lineages. Children are born into their father's clan and retain their clan affiliation throughout their lives.

Plants and animals are also considered relatives. The Earth is Mother, the sun, Father, and the moon, Grandmother. Both the Dakota and Ojibwe people refer to the rock as Grandfather who lived on this Earth long before humans arrived. This kinship-based view of the universe is similar to what Western scientists call "ecology." In this view, all living forms are related and evolve from the same basic structure. In a worldview where everyone and everything is related through kinship, living beings take care of one another just like members of a family nurture and care for other family members. "A Dakota Narrative" by Ramona Kitto Stately ([Appendix B](#)) eloquently explains the connection she feels with family, community, and the universe.

*A Deep Connection to Place* can also be understood through Dakota and Ojibwe origin and migration stories. As a place of origin, the *bdóte* (where two waters come together) of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers is especially sacred to the Dakota people. An origin story of the Ojibwe, tells of humans emerging from the water and forming the original clans of this tribal nation. A migration story shared by many Ojibwe explains that as people left the East in response to conflict and prophecy, they searched for a place where food grows out of the water – a clear reference to *Mníótota's* abundant *manoomin* (wild rice). For more information, see *The Mishomis Book* by Edward Benton-Banai and *A History of the Ojibwe People* by William Warren (both are listed in the Related Reading section).

Cultures have origin or creation stories, as well as migration stories which explain how the people came to the place they consider their home. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the creation of the Earth in six days and the Garden of Eden are creation stories, and the exodus of the Jews from Egypt is a migration story. The stories of the Dakota and Ojibwe people, and those of other cultures, link humans to their surroundings and provide a deep sense of place.

In indigenous traditions, stories often include sacred characters that can only be talked about in the winter season when the spirits of these beings are sleeping. Even among tribal nations who do not experience winter, there is a season for storytelling. Among the Ojibwe people, to request a story, one must give the storyteller a pinch of tobacco which they place on the earth to honor the spirits in the stories. These traditional stories generally fall into two classes: stories that took place when the Earth was new, and stories that happened in historic or contemporary times. Migration stories are closer to what Western scholars call "history."



Finally, this connection can be seen by the myriad of Dakota and Ojibwe place names for towns, cities, counties, rivers and lakes, and even the state name which is derived from the Dakota language.

*Note: Dakota words in this lesson are written using Standard Dakota Orthography. This is the writing system used by over 10,000 Dakota and Lakota children in North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Nebraska, and is now being implemented in Minnesota. It standardizes the pronunciation for second language learners.*

## LESSON

Out of respect for Dakota and Ojibwe traditions, this lesson should be planned for the winter season.

**Preview Strategies:** Use the KWL model – ask students what they already know (K) about the origin of Americans Indians and how long Native people have lived on this continent, as well as how long indigenous people have lived in Mníŝota. Ask them to name the two tribal nations whose homelands are in this place we now call Minnesota. Write down their answers. Then ask what they would like to know (W), and finally, at the end of the lesson, ask what they have learned (L) from the student reading, the study questions, the video(s), the vocabulary, the kinship exercise, the place names worksheet, and the stories.

### Activities:

- Introduce students to the concept of kinship and the kinship terms they use for their immediate and extended family members by brainstorming kinship terms and writing them down so all students can see these terms. They will notice that in the American kinship system people are distinguished by generation and gender, but cousin is a general term with no gender distinction. Then provide them with a list of kinship terms used in Dakota and Ojibwe families ([Appendix A](#)). Students discover what term would be used for them, given their gender and birth order, in a Dakota and Ojibwe family and they share this information with the class.
- Students read “A Dakota Narrative” by Ramona Kitto Stately ([Appendix B](#)). They answer the Study Guide Questions ([Appendix C](#)) and discuss what they learned in class. Suggested answers are included ([Appendix D](#)).
- Students complete the Ojibwe and Dakota place names worksheet ([Appendix E](#)). They indicate all the place names that are correctly pronounced, incorrectly pronounced, or changed.
- Students watch the video by Waziyatawin, telling a Dakota creation story, and then read the Ojibwe origin story ([Appendix F](#)). Students identify aspects of origin stories and locate another one. They make a photocopy of the story and create a cover page illustrating an aspect of the story.



**Assessment:** Students demonstrate they understand the deep connection to place the lands of Minnesota hold for the Dakota and Ojibwe people through: identifying themselves in the Dakota and Ojibwe kinship systems, completing the Dakota and Ojibwe place names worksheet and using words from vocabulary list, answering the study questions that accompany the student reading, discussing a deep connection to place, and through locating a creation story and illustrating an episode of the story.

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Students explore stories from their own background and discuss how these stories create a connection to place.
- Students explore names and naming practices in a variety of cultures including those of the Dakota and Ojibwe people.
- Students find an example of Dakota or Ojibwe art and explain how the art expresses a connection to place.
- Students explore the science of ecology and describe parallels between Dakota and Ojibwe worldviews.

**Vocabulary:** See the vocabulary list included in this guide ([Appendix G](#)). You may wish to modify the list based on your knowledge of your student’s needs or the subject you are teaching. Pretesting vocabulary individually, or in small groups, or with your entire class can be an effective preview strategy.

### Web Resources (all links were active at time of publication):

Bdote Memory Map [www.bdotememorymap.org](http://www.bdotememorymap.org)  
The Ojibwe People's Dictionary <http://ojibwe.lib.umn.edu/>  
Dakota Dictionary Online (U of M) <https://filemaker.cla.umn.edu/dakota/>  
Intersecting Ojibwe Art Curriculum <http://intersectingart.umn.edu/>  
Ojibwe Waasa-Inaabidaa - "We Look in All Directions"  
(a six-part historical documentary series for public television featuring the history and culture of the Anishinaabe-Ojibwe people of the Great Lakes) <http://www.ojibwe.org/>  
The National Museum of the American Indian <http://nmai.si.edu/home/>  
Bemidji State University, American Indian Resource Center [www.bemidjistate.edu/airc/](http://www.bemidjistate.edu/airc/)

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### RELATED READING

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**KINSHIP TERMS**

**Dakota Children’s Kinship Terms**

Dakota children are given names according to their exact birth order. There are five names for boys and five names for girls. Parents name children after the fifth, any name they choose.

<b>᠋᠋) Hokšídaŋ Čažépi</b>	<b>Boys Names</b>
<b>᠋᠋) Čhaské</b>	First Born Boy
<b>᠋᠋) Hápaŋ *</b>	Second Born Boy
<b>᠋᠋) Hepí</b>	Third Born Boy
<b>᠋᠋) Čhatáŋ *</b>	Fourth Born Boy
<b>᠋᠋) Haké</b>	Fifth Born Boy

<b>᠋᠋) Wicianna Cazepe</b>	<b>Girl’s Names</b>
<b>᠋᠋) Winúna</b>	First Born Girl
<b>᠋᠋) Hápaŋ *</b>	Second Born Girl
<b>᠋᠋) Hápstiŋ*</b>	Third Born Girl
<b>᠋᠋) Waŋske *</b>	Fourth Born Girl
<b>᠋᠋) Wiháke</b>	Fifth Born Girl

**Ojibwe Brother and Sister Kinship Terms**

*Terms brothers and sisters call each other is based on their gender and birth order*

- ᠋᠋) Older Brother= Nisaye (Nisayyay)**
- ᠋᠋) Older Sister= Nimise (Nimisay)**
- ᠋᠋) Younger Sibling= Nishiime (Ni-shee-may)**

**STUDENT READING:****A Dakota Narrative” by Ramona Kitto Stately**

Anpetu kin de owasin, cante wasteyan nape ciyuzapi ye. Damakota k’a Ramona imakiyapi ye. De Dakota ia, lupseyusewin miye ye.

On this day, I greet you with a good heart and a handshake. I am Dakota and in English I am called Ramona. As a Dakota, I am known as Lupseyusewin or “the woman who holds or steers the reins.”

This is the Dakota language and those are words that have been etched within this place, this land for thousands of years. The Dakota have been referred to throughout colonized history as the Great Sioux Nation. Our nation traditionally spanned across a huge area of what today is called Minnesota, North Dakota, Nebraska, and Iowa and we separated into seven bands we referred to as council fires. I come from the Wahpekute Isanti (Santee) whose traditional homeland is the Mankato or Blue Earth area of the Minnesota River Valley.

I currently live in the Minnesota River Valley 60 miles north of my traditional homeland. I have been pulled to this place like a magnet because of its beauty, energy and life force that can only be described as my deep connection to the land. This magnetism that attracts me to this place is only one of the reasons I live here. The other is that it is my right as a Dakota person to live in my homeland even though the current legislation actually forbids it. When the Dakota were exiled from this place in 1862, the then governor Alexander Ramsey was quoted as saying “The Sioux Indians of Minnesota must be exterminated or driven forever beyond the borders of the State.”

And so they were.

My life’s journey and work in Indian education is with and for my people and the Dakota *Wičóħa’ŋ*; restoring our spiritual lifeways. These lifeways can still heal the generations of assault to a people who were torn from their homeland, if we can reclaim it. I am guided to bring as many of my Dakota relatives with me on this journey. We have a symbiotic relationship to this land, and those lifeways have been taken away and legislated by those who came here looking for their freedom. As those immigrants gained their freedom, we lost ours.

*Mnísota Makhóčhe* is a Dakota word meaning the land where the water is so clear it reflects the clouds. Mnísota is a Dakota place. In all teachings “reflection” is a recurring theme. Everywhere we turn, we see evidence of a people who made this place their home for thousands of years through the surviving place names. These place names are visual descriptors of the places they name, even though today they are mispronounced or translated incorrectly. One example is the word *Makhátho* (Mankato) which translates to Blue Earth. If you travel to the water’s edge of the Minnesota River, you will see what appears to be just mud. But if you pick it up and smear it in your hand, it is blue and is used as a natural earth paint. The naming of this place gives valuable information to the people. Language is the core of a people, and each word was very intentional and held very specific descriptors. So important were these words, that a Dakota child was not given a name right away. At birth, names were given based on gender and birth order. For example, a first born son was automatically *Chaské* and a first born daughter was *Winúna*. The eventual name given told you something very specific about the child. Our universal kinship values are so strong that the name for mother and the name for the earth are the same: Ina. All Dakota words are intentional and all of them remind us of the importance of our reciprocal relationship to this land, *Mnísota Makhóčhe*. One of the most familiar phrases in the Dakota language is *Mitákuye Owásin*, meaning we are all related.

Ancient cultures have watched the sun and stars for centuries in order to understand their world. The earth is reflected in the sky and many ancient cultures reflected the perfect positioning in the sky elements in designing their personal spaces to pay homage to that knowledge. Once we understand this philosophy, the connections began to come clear and we see proof of this everywhere. Careful documentation of this star movement has helped to predict seasons and weather patterns that are necessary to know to help in their agriculture and their ceremonies.

All of the old cultures had spiritual occasions on the equinoxes and solstices. For the Dakota people, our relationships do not only exist in families, they extend out to the entire universe. Teachings from our knowledge of constellations tell us that we come from the stars and from the earth, *Iná Makhá* (*Uŋčǐ Makhá* is the more traditional word, meaning Grandmother Earth). The knowledge of the stars gave the Dakota cues on seasonal movements that were purposeful for their sustainability. Understanding their sense of place told them when to plant, hunt and fish. This concept is not new to ancient cultures who understood the concept of *mitákuye owásin* (we are all related).

In order to understand and relate to the Dakota people, one must understand the differences in European American and Dakota cultural values. One important question we must consider is “what is our relationship to the material world?” The driving force behind Dakota society is the embodiment of the concept of harmony with nature: taking time to look at all that is meaningful to the Dakota, the unity of man and nature emerges as the original idea. This idea is in sharp contrast to the individualized viewpoint exemplified by Western man’s beliefs that he was set apart from nature and that nature should be shaped to his “will.”

As indigenous people we have always valued our mother earth, father sky, and our winged and four legged brothers and sisters. If we watch them, we will learn valuable lessons about this sacred place we reside. So we create respectful and emotional relationships with the animals, always understanding they have something special to teach us. Within these relationships, we come to admire and respect the special traits that our animal relatives have and they guide us in our dreams and our daily life. We know that certain animals were meant for our very sustenance and we did not take these gifts lightly. The Ojibwe clans were named after animals and their characteristics and they guided the people in their life path and in their democracy. The buffalo gave the Dakota all they needed to live, and because of that, were named the *Pte Oyáte* or Buffalo Nation. One of the oldest ceremonies on the continent, the Sun Dance, reflects the immense way the relationship with the buffalo was honored.

The Dakota and Ojibwe model their appreciation for beauty in their surroundings, and in all they do, beauty must be reflected back into the universe. There is no word for art in any of the indigenous languages. As utilitarian items were made, they were made beautiful, out of reverence and respect and show the value of our relationships to the earth in them. Much of the quill work reflects important medicines (floral designs) that maintained good health and animals that are held in high esteem. Knowledge was shared and embedded in the lifeways, the beadwork and quillwork, and the Dakota and Ojibwe viewed this effort as one more way to transmit knowledge.

On many pieces of Dakota artwork, we see the lodge or tipi. This is the very center of our universe. For the Dakota, the home is our heart and the center of what we hold sacred. The tipi poles reach out into the sky and point to and connect us to where we came from. Vine Deloria Jr., in his book *Power and Place*, explains that our knowledge comes from a millennium of experience and memory. There are so many teachings from the lodge itself, just looking at all the protocols and symbolism in this one thing is very revealing. Each and every act, each lodge pole placed upon the one before it, tied together, had meaning and specific intent.



**STUDENT READING STUDY QUESTIONS:**  
**“A Dakota Narrative” by Ramona Kitto Stately**

1. Where are the specific homelands of Ramona’s Dakota band?
2. According to Ramona, how did Governor Ramsey feel about the Dakota?
3. What do you think Ramona means when she says “As these immigrants gained their freedom, we lost ours”?
4. What does Minnesota mean in the Dakota language?
5. According to Ramona, what is the difference between Dakota and European American values with regard to the land?
6. Why are formal names not given to Dakota children at birth? What names are used?
7. Why did the Dakota watch the movement of the stars throughout the year?
8. According to Ramona, what symbolism surrounds the Dakota tipi?
9. How does Ramona explain why there is no word for “art” in Dakota?

### SUGGESTED ANSWERS TO STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS “A Dakota Narrative”

1. Where are the specific homelands of Ramona’s Dakota band?  
**Ramona’s people were from the Blue Earth area near Mankato. She lives 60 miles from that location in the Minnesota River Valley.**
2. According to Ramona, how did Governor Ramsey feel about the Dakota?  
**Governor Ramsey called for their extermination from the earth, which is a statement calling for genocide.**
3. What do you think Ramona means when she says “As these immigrants gained their freedom, we lost ours”?  
**Ramona wanted to work with her own people to help them restore their spiritual life ways and help heal Dakota who lost their homeland.**
4. What does Minnesota mean in the Dakota language?  
**The water that is so clear it reflects the clouds.**
5. According to Ramona, what is the difference between Dakota and European American values with regard to the land?  
**Dakota people believe in the concept of harmony with nature, while European Americans see nature as something apart from themselves, to possess.**
6. Why are formal names not given to Dakota children at birth? What names are used?  
**Formal names are not given at birth because such names are created to fit the characteristics or behavior of the child. They are first given kinship names based on their gender and birth order in the family.**
7. Why did the Dakota watch the movement of the stars throughout the year?  
**Dakota people watched the movement of the stars very carefully because the stars indicate the seasons and weather patterns and predict when to plant crops and conduct ceremonies.**
8. What symbolism surrounds the Dakota tipi?  
**Ramona explains that the tipi symbolizes our heart and the center of what Dakota people hold sacred.**
9. How does Ramona explain why there is no word for “art” in Dakota?  
**Ramona explains that there is no word for art because every utilitarian and ceremonial object Dakota people made/make reflects the beauty of the universe.**

## A SENSE OF PLACE

Dakota Phrases	Their Meaning
mni	water
tanka	big
haha	curling(ribbon-like)
sota	cloudy or clear
mato	bear
mde	lake

**Minnesota means** \_\_\_\_\_

**Minnetonka means** \_\_\_\_\_

**Minnehaha means** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mahtomedi means** \_\_\_\_\_

Ojibwe Phrases	Their Meaning
misi	big, spread all over
zibi	river
noka	ancient word for bear

**Mississippi means** \_\_\_\_\_

**Nokasippi means** \_\_\_\_\_

*Pronunciation guide. Dakota words- minni (mih-nih), tanka (tahnka)\*, haha (hah-hah), sota (soh-tah), mato (mah-toe), mde (mday) Ojibwe words: misi (misi), zibi (zibee) noka (noh-kah) \*n is nasalized as in the word "ink."*

## DAKOTA AND OJBWE PLACE NAMES IN MINNESOTA

Dakota Word	English Word	Meaning
Waziyata	Wayzata	to the North
Mnihaha	Minnehaha	curling water
Mni Sota	Minnesota	clear waters that reflect the clouds
Mahkato	Mankato	blue earth
Mni Tanka	Minnetonka	big water
Mne Ota	Minneota	lots of water
Winuna	Winona	first born, daughter
Chaske	Chaska	first born, son
Sakpe	Shakopee	Little Six, a Dakota leader
Kapoza	Kaposia	those who travel light
Owatona	Owatonna	straight river
Canhasan	Chanhassen	where the sugar sap flows
Wakonia	Waconia	fountain or spring
Wapasha	Wabasha	Red Cap, a Dakota leader

Ojibwe Words	English Word	Meaning
🔊 Misi-zibi	Mississippi	large river
🔊 Ogimaa	Ogema	chief or leader
🔊 Bemijigamaag	Bemidji	where the route crosses obliquely
🔊 Gakaabikaang	Minneapolis	square or hard falls
🔊 Netaawaash	Naytahwaush	twin lakes
🔊 Waabanong	Waubun	east or dawn
🔊 Manoomin	Manomin	wild rice
🔊 Wiinibigoshish	Winnebigoish	sluggish shallow water
🔊 Gaa-miskwaawaakokaag	Cass Lake	place of the red cedar
🔊 Gibaakwa'igaansing	Onamia	little dam
🔊 Gaa-waababiganikaag	White Earth	white earth

**How many places have kept their original Dakota or Ojibwe name?**

**How many places have kept the original name but mispronounced it?**

**How many places have changed the name from its original Dakota or Ojibwe meaning?**

### An Ojibwe Creation Story as Told to by William Whipple Warren 1852

When the Earth was new, the An-ish-in-aub-ag\* lived, congregated on the shores of the great salt water. From the bosom of the great deep, there suddenly appeared six beings in human form, who entered their wigwams.

One of these strangers kept a covering over his eyes, and he dared not look upon the An-ish-in-aub-ag, though he showed the greatest anxiety to do so. At last he could no longer restrain his curiosity, and on one occasion he partially lifted his veil, and his eye fell on the form of a human being, who instantly fell dead as if struck by one of the thunderers. Though the intentions of this dread being were friendly to the An-ish-in-aub-ag, yet the glance of his eye was too strong and inflicted certain death. His fellows, therefore, caused him to return into the bosom of the great water from which they had apparently emerged.

The others, who now numbered five, remained with the An-ish-in-aub -ag, and became a blessing to them; from them originate the five great clans or Totems, which are known among the Ojibways by the general terms of A-waus-e, Bus-in-aus-e, Ah-ah-wauk, Noka, and Monsone or Waub-ish-ash-e\*.

*\*Anishinabag is the term the Ojibwe use to refer to themselves and other Native Americans.*

*\*Catfish, Crane, Loon, Bear and Marten.*







*\*\*Spellings in this story have been left as William Warren wrote them rather than converted to the double vowel orthography.*

## VOCABULARY


### English Words

culture	the way of life of a people that is learned and can be shared
ecology	a study of the relationships between living things and their environment
metaphor	something that actually stands for something else
migration story	a story that explains how people went from one location to another
origin story	a story that accounts for the creation of the Earth and the living beings upon it
symbiotic	a relationship between two entities that results in benefit or dependency
tradition	a custom carried on over several generations
sacred	connected to a spiritual purpose
worldview	a culturally determined way of looking at the world and our place within it

### Dakota Words

 bdóte	where two waters come together
 Iná Makhá or Unčí Makhá	Mother Earth or Grandmother Earth
 Íŋyaŋ	grandfather rock
 mitákuye owásin	all my relatives
 mnísota	a Dakota word meaning waters that reflect the clouds
 tióšpaye	the Dakota extended family
Winyan	women

### Ojibwe Words

 Doodem	translated as clan, this is a descent group based upon a group's relationship to a common ancestor. In the case of the Ojibwe clan affiliation is patrilineal.
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Minnesota  
Humanities  
Center



Indian Affairs Council  
State of Minnesota