Dakota Reflections on the River

Writings from Dakota people in the Dakota language and in English. Presented by the Dakota Language Society and Allies: media/art
Each of the following writings is presented in two languages; first in the Dakota language and then in the English language.

The Dakota language is in the Dakota font developed by the University of Minnesota, which also sponsors the Dakota Dictionary Online http://fmdb.cla.umn.edu/dakota/. The font can be downloaded for your use at the same link.

These writings were collected from Dakota community members for a public reading event in the exhibit Cloudy Waters; Dakota Reflections on the River, held at Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, MN in the fall of 2004. The Dakota Language Society and Allies: media/art produced this event and the collection of writings.

Translations to Dakota were provided by Glenn Wasicuna, if not provided by the writer. Sisokaduta (Joe Bendickson) provided final edit of Dakota language. Writers are identified as they identified themselves on their writing. All are Dakota, unless otherwise identified. The writers range in age from 10 years to elder and reside from the east coast of the U.S. to western Canada.

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Each piece is presented in two languages, first in Dakota and then on the next page in English. Each is shown in the Table of Contents with the Dakota title and then the English language title.

Please feel free to print copies of this collection. Please send a message letting us know how you are using the writing. Info@alliesmediaart.com or

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Wakpa Awaciįpi

River Thoughts

Christine Romney

The river is itself. It knows where it is going. It flows to the music. It is music. The eagle flies in. He hears the music. The rest of the birds play. Chase one another. Up and down. They sing for one another. It’s nice to see the fun. The river keeps flowing.

Nurturing and ambivalent. It seems to be aware. That it is a home. A possibility. When the wind sounds, the river hastens. A dance forms on top of the water. Moves swiftly and disappears. The surface becomes a ballroom for the insects. Bees and dragonflies. Watch out for the rain. The day is cloudy. Even if it rains, the river will catch the tears. It will make the river stronger. As the evening approaches, a heron sweeps above the water, looking for his evening meal. The night creatures are looking for their chance. The bats are hungry. Even though it is dark, the river can still see. And it still flows. Still knows.
Wihambdapi Kiŋ de Henaḥ Héçetu Kte

*A Dream To Come True*

Wambdi Wapaha Miye / Glenn Wasicuna

“… śünkwaŋeŋ shake kiŋ iŋyaŋ akan kpekpeya ihaŋ upi henali nawaŋ’un. Ḥ’añhiya hoḳudkiya upi, ṭañhdakiŋyaŋ upi. Paha uŋnapteya çaŋ nina óta he, paha kiŋ nakuj etuda liçe, wiçašta nupiŋ ikčokapi tka śünkwaŋeŋ ṭemnipi ówamna, nakuj ṭaha ówamna, nakuj waŋzi akičita mniho na kanuŋpi nina tke waŋ un he ówamna. Taku nina ikowape he taku owas ininaŋ he. Paha hoḳudkiya okalibog upi seçece…”


A Dream To Come True

Wihambdapi Kiŋ de Hnah Hecitu Kte

Wambdi Wapaha Miye / Glenn Wasicuna

“…the sound of the horses hooves on rock, moving slowly, sideways down the heavily wooded steep hill is still sharp, each side making a different sound, the smell of the perspiring horses against the leather leggings, and the heavy wool cloth of the warriors pungent. What was so eerie about this scene was the stillness, like they were floating down the side of the hill toward each other…”

This is part of a dream I had as a young man when walking through a valley these two factions ascending toward each other and I remember very vividly that these two groups of warriors were going to fight. There was determination on the faces of these men. I looked to both sides as they slowly advanced down the steep incline. On my right was a warrior with an eagle feather fastened straight up between two huge braids of thick black hair. There were others but I couldn’t see them. On my left was a soldier dressed in blue with a sword sheath hanging diagonally across himself and his horse. There were also others with him but I couldn’t see them. Throughout all of this I remembered being detached completely. I felt no connection between the two groups. Just that these two groups were intent on fighting each other. My overwhelming feeling was “…NO…” I don’t want them to fight.

On the morning of March 29, 2004 Leonard Wabasha and I were driving on Highway 61 heading east for Winona from Red Wing. The river bluffs continued for miles and being on the passenger side I almost had to look straight up to see the STEEP HILL, the ROCKS, and the TREES. Around the halfway point I commented to Heplan (Dakota for 2nd male in the family): “I don’t know what I’m looking for and I keep expecting to see something”. To which he replied: “I know what you mean”. We were on our way for a scheduled meeting at the Winona city council building with others to further plan this summer’s homecoming celebration that will bring Dakota people back to the land of their ancestors. What I was feeling that morning during the drive were my ancestors to my right slowly inching their way down the bluffs not to fight but to greet a fellow Dakota who has come back to the homelands. The soldiers to my left weren’t there because the water was there… mni wiconi…the water of life…
Wicaňpi Wakpa
River of Stars

Gaby Tateyuskanskan

Maȟpiya k’a unčaŋtepi k’a wičaŋlípi hena ičikoyakapi
Wičaŋlípi oyate nína waniyetu ótaŋi k’a nakun’ ksapapi
Hanyetu kíŋhaŋ omanípi
Péta s’e yapi
Ikce wičaŋta čaŋte wókiłksuye iḵoyake
Wakpa I’háha he wówaciŋ iža yecece
Isaŋti wóabdakeda táku wák’áŋ he išñana
Wičak’u okili he čiŋpi
Wičaŋlípi taŋni kíŋhaŋ wóabdeza ahi
Unktomi wajna ake nahmanna ták toŋunj
Wanaqiye
Wayušice
Telike
Haŋwi hi k’a dowanj nakun wásaŋwiçaŋye
Mni ed unj
Wówaŋake he mni ed ižaŋžaŋ
Wóihänje wanice

Wičaŋlípi: Star
Isaŋti: Eastern Dakota
Haŋwi: Moon
Maŋa Ina: Mother Earth
River of Stars

Wicalipi Wakpa

Gaby Tateyuskanskan

The prairie night sky ties the heart to a river of stars
Wicanhpi the oldest of many wise ancestors
moves in the night sky
resembling so many flickering fires to light the way

Human hearts are drawn to ancient ancestors
like a river’s current
A river of dreams carries hope
The Isanti long for the night’s gift of a deep sense of peace

The rising of a star brings the dawn to the river’s edge
Unkown to the human heart Trickster’s spirit child
has been placed in a cradleboard
A child larger than life grows more grotesque
It’s mouth devouring whole Isanti villages
At the end of the weary day the bruised heart cannot bear such a child

Hanwi rises in the night dancing with devotion through the seasons
Singing the power of nature and encouraging the youngest of creation
The beauty of her spirit moves in ancient waters
Fortitude is made visible by a river’s mirrored surface
reflecting into eternity
Where we live on Maka Ina is never in one place

Wicanhpi: Star
Isanti: Eastern Dakota
Hanwi: Moon
Maka Ina: Mother Earth
Iapi Odowan

Poem

Terri Yellowhammer

Ikce winyaŋ ni un kŋ təkú kiyapi he? Ktepi
Wóyataŋinpi ed lieyata tŋjiŋ śni owapi
Nakunŋ pazopi śni
Ikce winyaŋ ŋəmnipi kĩŋhaŋ wašicu winyaŋ wánji
Héćed wawunjakapí séçece
Waŋna waniyetu nuŋpa kte iyeypí hetaŋhaŋ
Wakpa mahed
Iṣyaŋ śpan ayuskapi
Tuwe kći un tka he icuiŋ séçece
Telike čaŋte hęći
Waniyetu wi tẹhau lice séçece
Tókiya iyaye (he nína tẹhau)
Aŋpetu kŋ hena iyayeyanjke
Wanukta śni eyapí (unšiyepí śni)
țiŋcaŋ iyeypí
Mní mahed naliimapí
Wihambde bduhe k’a
Wóikope k’a wóikiksuye
Hena iwecicu
Hanjetu ktepi hehan
Mahpiya wáníʒí akan éwahnake
K’a tókanya yewaye kte
Tuwe tåku ikicic’u he
Waŋna kasika yanke
Tka hena waŋna tåku owas sam iyaye
Tka nakuŋ wóiŋape k’a wóabdakeda wɑŋ yuŋe
De wówauŋpe wɑŋ bduhe:
Wakpa kĩŋ he nağı wɑŋ yuŋe. Iža ni
Wówashake yuŋe
He awaŋyaŋke k’a unʃida he sdodwaye
Iyeypí hehaŋya awaŋyaŋke
Poem

Odowan

Terri Yellowhammer

what worth is the life of
an Indian woman
her murder
relegated to the back pages of the newspaper
and local cable stations
it really takes three Indian women
to equal a single white woman

****
soon it will be two years since her body was found
in the river
weighted down with bricks
an ex-lover's attempts to hide
what he did
such suffering, our hearts
long winter months
the silence of her absence
her son another year older (a long time in the life of a tiny boy)
each day becoming the next
then
a fluke, they called it (not us)
her poor sweet body
found,
hidden in the river

****
I dream that I
could take her fear and pain
the night she was killed
turn it into a cloud
and lift her
up
away from the
rage, him.
caged now, by prison bars and cement
too little, too late
but there is refuge, and calm
and I remember this teaching
from our ancestors:

the river has a spirit
a life of its own,
a power.
and I know
it held her
took care of her
until it was time for her to be found
Wakpa ężawačin

The Rivers Reflections

Sandra Turpin

Mahapuspi ębic’iye k’a hokutkiyę ahiŋtuwe k’a waic’ihdake.
Caŋ kahuŋhunje k’a akta etunjwe.
Zitkapída kiŋyaŋpi k’a opta etuwanpi.
Wamaninca oiyakapi k’a owas wayakapi.

Wakpada kiŋ Iliaha k’a waic’ihdakapi wicaye.

Sáŋpa hunja waŋ máni ye k’a póskid yuze.
Wiça waŋ máni ye k’a awiyukcaŋ.
Wiŋyaŋ waŋ įnyaŋke k’a wóiksuye waŋ yuhe
Siceca waŋ waadi k’a wóiwuŋe óta yuhe

Wakpada Iliaha k’a waic’ihdakapi káŋe

Waniyetu hena ye k’a waştedake
Wóiçaŋca içaŋe k’a ayataŋpi
Wósdojye iyukaŋ k’a ozikiye
Wićiŋı ye k’a pakințe

Wakpa Iliaha k’a táku owas sdodye
The Rivers Reflections

*Wakpa Tawaciŋ*

Sandra Turpin

The sky moves, sits still and looks down at its reflection.
The trees wave, sits still and looks over the reflection.
The birds soar, sits still and look onto the reflection.
The animals scurry, sit still and look upon their reflection.

The river flows, sits still and mirrors reflection.

A grandparent strolls, sits still and embraces the reflection.
A man walks, sits still and contemplates his reflection.
A woman jogs, sits still and remembers in her reflection.
A child climbs, sits still and wonders about the reflection.

The river flows, sits still and provides reflection.

Time travels, sits still and admires from reflection.
Nature grows, sits still and drinks with reflection.
Knowledge evaluates, sits still and rests upon reflection.
Life continues, sits still and cleanses through reflection.

The river flows, sits still and knows what’s in the reflection.
Wíyukpi k’a nakuŋ owaštecake

A Fun Day In The Sun

Maṭoska / Sampson Bendickson

Aŋpetu waŋ nína owaštecake k’a hokšida yámní tãŋkád škatapi, Mississippi ikiyeda.


Hehan, çaŋmahed ípi. Máni ŋpi. Ùŋzogo ptepteceda ŋpi héça mni ikiyeda kahdayeda mánipi. Táku waštédakapi k’a tãŋkapi kiŋhan táktókuŋpi kte hena iwohdakapi. Aŋpetu waŋ nína wašte k’a çaŋ k’a peži háŋskaska k’a tóna ape akikutuŋžapi. Tiyata huŋkake waŋna içañtešicapi k’a waŋna owičadepi kte. Úŋkáŋ wawičyakapi. Çaŋku ohna kupi. Wóhdag, iyokpiya.


Çaŋmahed máni ŋpi naka táku töked mni kahdaya içaže hena sdodyapi. Waŋna hecalí máni kte kiŋhan ŋzogo háŋska ŋpi kte. Táku waŋzi sdodyapi he hašbe ée.
A Fun Day In The Sun

Wíyukpi k’a Nakun Owaštecake

Matoska / Sampson Bendickson

It was a warm sunny day and the three young boys were out playing near the Mississippi. They were running around getting into all sorts of mischief. The Sun was hot and that day but the air was cool near the river. Two of them were brothers and the other was one of their cousins. Hanging out together with each other was all that they needed. Having a good time in the shades they came across a small bird that was left all by itself so they thought that they could care for it by building it a bird house. The bird was very lonely and did not have any thing to eat. They left that bird with a place to rest and they went on with their playing.

Next, they went on to exploring the woods near the river walking around not paying attention to what they were walking through. Since they only had shorts on they were trying to stay cool closer to the river. Walking and talking about things that interested them and what they wanted to be when they grew up. It was such a beautiful day out that they were wandering through the woods and the tall grass that they lost track of time. Their folks were starting to worry, and they were about to start looking for them. When they saw them walking along the road just talking and having fun.

The three of them had been looking at different plants and trees and were wondering what they were. They were tired from all of the walking around and were definitely getting exhausted from the sun. They headed right to the well pump and got themselves a quick drink of water. Then it was time to go, getting in the car and sitting down for the trip back to the Twin Cities was a nice break for them since they were really tired. Falling asleep on the way home and not waking up until they got home. When they got home and woke up they had discovered that they were all very itchy. Walking along the river with just their shorts on, they had walked right through some poison ivy. That ruined the rest of their day and a couple more.

Having explored the wooded area along the river did teach them about all of the growth along the river. They learned that they shouldn’t just walk through the woods with their shorts on and that they should wear long pants. But they will always remember what poison ivy looks like since they walked right through a big patch of it.
Mni Ikciyapa

Headwaters

Paula Kostman

Macistinha hehan wakpada hed waniwe
Stunka ikceka unkita wapi ihakab u cee
Alipeya unkiyayepi kinhaj
Waniyetu kinhaj iš hed màza okaze unkicunji

Wakpa he nina telike
Indigo Girls odowan waj “Mni sota etañhanh hiyu…
K’a zaptanj iyahe kinhaj opta idade kte.” eya dowanji

Wakpa he ed waji iyecece
Maçuñake hanj hed waku
Woambdekeda wacij kinhaj hed bde
Mat’è kinhaj hed waku kte

Mni ikciyapa hed bde kte
Hed tå ku owas etañhanh
Taku owas hetañhanh
Hektakia tohanjjan ka sowaćake ñawa he miža hetañhanh iwacu
Headwaters

*Mni Ikciyapa*

Paula Kostman

The river where I swam as a child
Where our mongrel dog would follow our boat out
When we left him behind on the beach
Where I ice skated on frozen rivulets along one of its channels in winter

That river is what they call might
An Indigo Girls song says, “It starts in Minnesota…
At a place where you could walk across
With five steps down”

That river is what I call home
It’s where I came back to when I wearied
It’s where I go to be at peace
We will become one when I leave this body for good

I am going to the headwaters
I am going to the source
I am going to the very beginning
As far back as it goes to find out where it gets its strength

And where I get my own
Mnisota kaiš Mniśota

Mnisota or Mnishota

Caňtemaza / Neil McKay


Hello my relatives! I am Ironheart. I come from the Holy Lake Nation of Dakota people. I am an enrolled member of the Spirit Lake Nation of Dakota. I was born here in Minnesota.

I went to Spirit Lake three years ago. I spoke with Dakota woman and men elders. We talked about many things and then one elder woman asked me, “Where do you work?” “I work at the University of Minnesota,” I answered and then those that know the Dakota language, the old ones, talked about the word “Minnesota.” One male elder said, “What does Minnesota translate to (in English)?” “Clear water,” one answered. “We the Dakota people lived in Minnesota in the past. When we think fondly of Minnesota. In the mornings, there is mist above the water. And that’s why I think in the past, they called the land “smoke on the water or smoky water.”
Wakpa Kiksuyapi

*Remembering The River*

Naomi Keeble
Sisituŋwaŋ Wažipešuŋwaŋ Daŋota

Minnesota he Mni óta eyapi. Oyakapi eçeyataŋhaŋ Missisippi River he mnisota. Missouri River oilaŋha k’a yušoše. Enanakiya mnisota k’a nakuŋ mnišoše. Œi waŋ ehdepi Missisippi River kahdaya. Œi mahed ahaŋna wičiçaŋya mnayapi k’a pazo ehnakapi. He Minneapolis k’a Saint Paul ićokaya. Hnahi hed he sdodwayne sni. Šiceca kiŋ hena hed awičuŋyaŋpi čee.


Remembering The River

Wakpa Kiksuyapi

Naomi Keeble
Sisitunwan Walipetunwan Dakota

Minnesota is really Mni Ota. Many waters. They used to say the Mississippi river was clear, Mni Sota. And the Missouri river ran into it and muddied it up. Mni Shota. The Missouri was always muddy and cloudy. Where they met there would be patches of clear water and patches of muddy water. There was a historical site along the Mississippi, a building with artifacts, kind of a museum, between Minneapolis and St. Paul. I don’t know if it’s still there or not. We used to take our kids there.

I used to go visit my sisters Effie and Verna in Minneapolis. They moved there to get jobs. They call that Relocation. The BIA gets you a job and moves you to the big city, orientates you, and then you’re on your own. After they moved there I’d go visit them a lot. Sometimes they would come back to visit Sisseton, but not often. I was a community health worker and sometimes they’d send me there for a workshop. So I’d stay with my sisters for the weekend and they would take me around town, sightseeing. Sometimes we would go on a boat on the river. We’d visit the Minnesota and Mississippi river, go on rides on a barge. Along the way it would stop for us to eat lunch, and look at gift shops.

The river wasn’t as polluted then, with nice clear waters. I could look down and see fish, and beavers, and otters swimming and diving up and playing in the water, and they’d come up alongside the riverboat and look at you. Some places there were rushes growing in the river. We always went on the boat for a whole days ride. My sister lived there so she always knew where to take us. Sometimes on a ride the boat would stop at Fort Snelling, where they would have soldiers parade and shoot for us, like a show. The boat ride would take the whole day and we would go all the way to Kansas City. There we’d get coffee and look around, and turn around and head back where we came from. That would take the whole day, going down the river to Kansas City and back.
Wówašake Duhe

You Have Strength

Naida Medicine Crow

Tohaŋtu kinhay yáceya yačíŋ cée
Otelike
Tókeca uŋ táku owas telika he?
Wíçoíçağé iyayayákapi
Otaŋkapi nakun
Takomni waš’agya uŋk’unpte

Oyate ištamnipi táwapi s’e maŋaju
Wakpa étkiya
Wótakuye we s’e
țawačíŋ sutaya uŋk’unpte
Maŋoce de uŋkitahyangpi
Mni naŋi táku óta wanyake
Tóhni tákuda akituŋže šní

Oḵodakićiye, asniic’iya po
He wówašake mni iḥaša s’e
óhiŋni sutaya nauŋžínpi kte
You Have Strength

Wowašake Duhe

Naida Medicine Crow

SOMETIMES YOU WANT TO CRY....
LIFE CAN BE A STRUGGLE AND YOU ASK YOURSELF
WHY? MUST I
DEAL WITH ALL THIS PAIN AND HARDSHIP?
AS GENERATIONS PASS US BY.
AND OUR ELDERS CONTINUE TO DIE.
WE MUST REMAIN STRONG.

RAIN FALLS LIKE THE TEARS OF OUR NATIONS-
RUNS STEADY INTO THE RIVERS,
LIKE THE BLOOD OF OUR RELATIONS.
OUR SPIRITS MUST REMAIN STRONG AND FREE.
FOR WE WILL ALWAYS BE A PART OF THIS EARTH.
THE SPIRIT OF THE RIVERS HAS SEEN MANY THINGS,
AND NEVER FORGETS THE ARTOCRITIES WE HAVE ENDURED.

AS DAKOTAH RELATIVES THE TIME TO HEAL COMES WITHIN
OURSelves.
AND IN OUR STRENGTH, LIKE THE RIVERS STEADY AND FLOWING....
WE WILL ALWAYS PREVAIL.
Psň Oyate
Wild Rice People

Marci Alegria Hawpetoss
Menominee Nation

tiyata waƙi
Menominee Indian Reservation heçiya
Mni wiçoni Psň Oyate
 tà wiŋni, wahmunŋkapi, hokuwapi, wayuŋpi
Wiçoni k’a wičacakize šni
Oiyokpi
Táku owas uŋ wižiŋcapi kte yuhapi
Waniyetu haŋyetu osni tŋa wóskate ečunŋpi
tıwahe, kodapi, wabdenicapı
Wiyuskiŋ yuhapi
óhiŋni waƙi
Mni sota
Mážaska tōkca šni
K’a tıwahe, kodapi wabdenica
Wiyuskiŋ yuhapi
Ikce wiťašta wašakapi
U.S. Indian Policy
Menominee Reservation
Termination/Restoration
Sovereignty Erosion
Land Corrosion
Sanña
Oŋpe tōb wiyoŋpewatakiya
Mni sota ed ikce wiyanja
ťançaŋ wiŋyugota woyanzaŋ ktéra, eye
“…ikce wiyanja hemaça k’a maƙoçe ded oyate makte wačinŋpi…”
De ibdukenja: uŋkiye ded ťokaheyu uŋhipi tŋa de maƙoçe ed oyate uŋkte
wačinŋpi
Yuškiŋya uŋpi kta kecinŋpi
Wild Rice People

Psin Oyate

Marci Alegría Hawpetoss
Menominee Nation

I return to the place of my childhood,
To the Menominee Indian Reservation
To the Clear water sustenance of my Wild Rice people
To the deer hunts, trapping, fishing & harvesting:
Life & Liberty
Where
Happiness was no Pursuit
To real wealth, accumulated
And stored for cold winter nights and warm celebrations
For families, friends, and those without
No one was without
Happiness
I continuously return to the place of my childhood
Where I find clear waters clouding
Perhaps
Real wealth is no longer important
&
Many families, friends and those without
Are Without
Happiness
Our original sustenance is depleting
U.S. Indian Policy
Menominee Reservation
Termination/Restoration
Sovereignty Erosion
&
Land Corrosion
4 hours west
In “Mini Shota” an Indian Woman,
Cancer Survivor says:
“I am an Indian, and this world is killing me”
As I reflect, I think:
We are the first people, and this world is killing us
In pursuit of Happiness-
The Evening River

Lindsay Peterson

Iṣyan wáŋzi ihnumáh akta nihi kte
Uŋsi yakikičidapi kte
Ahaŋzi u iwaŋkapi k’a haŋwi iyakipapi
Mnišota ničínca dowaŋ
 Çaŋhiŋna máni hiyaye k’a hoŋaŋ aŋa iyaye ičan ništimbe
Wakpa kiŋ de ite niṭawapi kiŋ hena owas waniyakapi k’a sdodye
Nakuŋ táku owas naŋ’uŋ k’a mičínçapi unšikapi eye
Mni wičoni he táku owas yuťeca
Mississippi inauŋnipapi maka puze kaiš mníťaŋ
Woakiŋna nakunwauŋpipi kaš
Mni wičoni wačiŋ iṣyanpí
Maŋoce kiŋ wačiŋ niye iṣyan oyate
Kiŋ hena nína pinidapi
The Evening River

Htayetu Wakpa

Lindsay Peterson

A lonely stone caught in your motion may travel your shores-
and with each toss and turn,
it will be softened by the reach of your arms.
As twilight approaches, the stone turns in, and the old moon awaits.
Mnisota, the womb or your creation, first whispers a lullaby
and orchestrates a symphony of new life and old.
A motion that rocks you to sleep with the muskie’s wavering tail
and the loon’s paddling webbed feet.
These funny, friendly faces of yours
create for the river a world within a world,
where the noises of the shoreline
are muffled in the echoes of your underworld.
They create tiny ripples that reach your shore
and send life that cuts through the land-
like a snake in disguise.
Renewing.
The Mississippi, our backbone and our strength
through drought and flood,
famine and time of plenty.
Your unchanging waves have taught hope and renewal and commitment to this land.
The Earth will remember your perseverance
to the wandering stone, and to the people,
and you will be tanked for your kindness.
Mni Šota
Minnesota
John Peacock

Paha héciyatahaŋ
Mni šota iwaŋkam
Mnidote ed
Maŋosmaka ţanŋka waŋ yaŋke
Wašicunj ikceka k’a Šagdašiŋ hed wahmunŋkapi
Úŋkaŋ Isanŋtaŋka kiŋ opeṭuŋ çée
Dakota Çápa siŋte cažeyatapi kiŋ he
Čuŋwiŋtku ţawapi yuze
Čiŋhiŋtku wiwazica ieska ţunŋkanšida miŋwa sam yuze
țakožapkaku ţawa ńci miŋwa Zitkatataŋka (Ziŋašaŋka),
wamdenica héça itewičayuňdoňdokapi wóyazaŋ etanŋhaŋ awaŋyaŋke kta icu,
Hiŋ opeṭuŋ çée Fred yuze. Detanŋhaŋ we sąŋpa šota.
Cloudy Waters

*Mni Šota*

John Peacock

From high bluffs

Over cloudy waters

Where 2 rivers forked

Ran a wide prairie valley

Trapped by French, British,

& an American Fur Company Trader

the Dakota called Cha-pah-sin-tay (Beaver Tail)

after his country marriage to one of their daughters.

His son’s mixed-blood widow remarried my great grandpa.

His grandson adopted my Blackbird grandma, a smallpox orphan

Who married Fred the furrier, my grandpa. Cloudier than water is blood.
Mnišota Wakpa Wókiksuyapi

Reflections Of The Minnesota River

Jennifer Bendickson
Sisituŋwan Walpeŋuŋwan Dačota

Little Minnesota River weksuye kiŋhaŋ ahaŋna ṭokaheya omaksiyakapi he weksuye.

Reflections Of The Minnesota River

*Mnisota Wahpa Wokiksuyapi*

Jennifer Bendickson
Sisseton Wahpeton Dakota

I guess when I think back about the Little Minnesota River I can recall when I first heard about the river. It was when I was just a young girl maybe 7 or 8 years old. My parents took me with them when they went to visit some of their older relatives. The older relatives lived east of Sisseton. Sisseton was where my parents lived. I do not recall exactly where we went to visit. But I remember that in the back of their house was a small stream. Which is where both my brother, sister and I immediately went. We played near the stream occasionally throwing rocks and grass in the water to watch them float down stream.

Eventually we went back to the house and it was then that my mother introduced us to what she said was one of her grandpas. He was gray haired, wore glasses and had a cane. He was thin and seemed fragile. She said his name was Henry Red Star. Of course we were shy and didn’t say too much to him. But he left his impression on me because I still remember him and the house with the stream in back to this day.

When we talked about the stream in back of their house my mother said, "That’s the Little Minnesota River". At the time it really didn’t mean anything except that it was a name. But later, we went on a trip to Minneapolis to visit my mother's sister. The trip followed the Little Minnesota River all the way to the Twin Cities. When I saw the little stream turn into this huge flowing river. I marveled at how something like this could happen. I felt the strength of river and was proud that the Dakota had lived along this river and had camped by it for centuries.
Wóyakapi ṭokaheya

The Beginning Story: Mağazuwakpa

Heather Rachel Johnson
Metis/Blackfoot


The Beginning Story: Mağazuwakpa

Woyakapi Tokaheya

Heather Rachel Johnson
Metis/Blackfoot

My life is a continuous episode of the Twilight Zone. One day the director yelled ‘cut!’ And I was sent back to an alternative universe in which I came. My 1974 VW bug was transporting me back into that world. A place where tall concrete skyscrapers morph into small ornate buildings. Streams of cars give way to casual citizens strolling about. Elements rearrange themselves creating a town where progress had come in limited form.

“The town of Baudette welcomes you,” the sign read. The clear sound of FM radio becomes static. Hum of steady steam of heat pushing through the vent intensified. The soft inhale and exhale of my breath. Uncomfortably I shift. Glancing at the review mirror to see if the universe was watching. She was. THUD! CRASH! My spaceship made its grand re-entry into the ditch. Looking out I notice the faint signs of a trail, a road I had gone down many times as a child and teen. Now, twenty year later, I find myself repeating the past. Mağazuwakpa, mağazuwakpa, mağazuwakpa I whisper as I climb out of the car. I run. The whispers are soon drowned out by sound of Mağazuwakpa’s laughing bubbles. I stop at the river’s edge looking out at the majestic landscape of her watery veins, the life force behind all things. Many generations ago Wağazuwakpa brought my family here. Through the years the river breathed life into our blood and we took care of her. My relatives have journeyed away forcibly or by choice, but Mağazuwakpa stays in our veins. Calling us home. And I now have returned to the beginning, to my world, to the place where I am from, Mağazuwakpa.
Laughing River

Hāhawakpa

Gianna Strong
Sisseton Wahpeton Dakota Oyate

Long ago the Dakota elders and the young ones use to meet down at Harriet Island for gatherings. Hāhawakpa means laughing river. Us Dakota people called the Mississippi River Hāhawakpa. After all these years we still call the Mississippi River Hahawakpa. Along the side of Hāhawakpa were little villages where the Dakota people lived. It wasn’t at all dull. Mother nature grew green and blue. It wasn’t dry. And the grass wasn’t brown. It grew fresh and green. Kapoza was another village. Little Crow was the Chief of Kapoza. His Dakota family also lived there with him. Imnižaska means White Bluffs. That’s what grew along the side of the Hāhawakpa River. Hāhawakpa started out as a very small creek. It started up North. Then it got bigger and bigger as it went South. No matter what happens to the Mississippi River we will always call it Hāhawakpa River. Hāhawakpa still flows beside Harriet Island. As a young Dakota girl Hāhawakpa is a very sacred place to me because my Dakota family grew up there. Their village and their home was down there. And their family and relatives, cousins, nephews, nieces, and their brother and sisters all lived down there as a big happy family.