

Acknowledging This Sacred Dakota Land

Mnisóta Makhóčhe, the land where the waters are so clear they reflect the clouds¹, extends beyond the modern borders of Minnesota and is the ancestral and contemporary homeland of the Dakota people. It is also home to the Anishinaabe and other Indigenous peoples, all who make up a vibrant community in Mnisóta Makhóčhe. The Ramsey County Historical Society acknowledges that its sites are located on and benefit from these sacred Dakota lands.

Dakota people are the first people of Mnisóta Makhóčhe and have lived here for thousands of years.² In the nineteenth century, Dakota lands were greatly diminished by a series of one-sided treaties that continue to benefit the United States government and the descendants of those who immigrated to Minnesota.³ These treaties were knowingly mistranslated, and land and annuities promised to the Dakota were stolen and never received.⁴ In 1862, war broke out between some Dakota and the Governments of the United States and Minnesota. As a result of that war, Governor Alexander Ramsey (namesake of Ramsey County) called for all Dakota people in Minnesota to “be exterminated or driven forever beyond the borders of Minnesota,” their homeland.⁵ This codification of genocidal State policy resulted in the violent and forced removal of Dakota people from their homeland, included offering bounties for killing Dakota men, women, and children and years of exterminatory military campaigns.⁶

Yet the Dakota people have survived this attempted genocide and the ongoing attempts to erase their histories and culture through assimilation practices, including sending Dakota children to boarding schools and erasure by omission of Dakota history in curriculum in educational institutions.

Ramsey County Historical Society is committed to preserving our past, informing our present, and inspiring our future. Part of doing so is acknowledging the painful history and current challenges facing the Dakota people just as we celebrate the contributions of Dakota and other Indigenous peoples.

We pledge to honor the Dakota and other Indigenous peoples of Mnisóta Makhóčhe by:

- continuing to share an accurate historical curriculum at Gibbs Farm that covers the seasonal life of the Dakota of Ĥeyáta Othúnwe (Cloud Man's Village) at Bdé Makhá Ska;
- developing improved language for signage and curriculum that more accurately describes colonization;
- providing a platform for Dakota and other Indigenous partners to showcase their work at our physical sites through virtual programming, exhibits, and publications;
- maintaining relationships with Dakota community members and organizations;
- supporting Dakota and other Indigenous-owned businesses;
- providing space for traditional and contemporary Dakota cultural activities and events;
- and by advocating for the respectful and equitable treatment of Dakota people, culture, and history.

¹ Translation from Westerman, Gwen and Bruce White, *Mni Sota Makoce*, 2012, pg. 13.

² Gibbon, Guy, *The Sioux: The Dakota and Lakota Nations*, 2003, pg. 46.

³ (1805 [Pike's]; 1827 [Traverse des Sioux and Mendota]; 1858; 1867)

⁴ Westerman, Gwen and Bruce White, *Mni Sota Makoce*, 2012, pg. 197-198.

⁵ September 9, 1862 Alexander Ramsey's speech to the Minnesota legislature.

⁶ In early 1863 Congress enacted the Dakota Removal Act as well as other acts that revoked all treaties between the Dakota and U.S. Government. Although not adhered to, this Act of Congress still exists today.

(<https://www.usdakotawar.org/history/aftermath/exile>) (www.argusleader.com/story/news/politics/2019/12/19/south-dakota-tribes-making-second-attempt-repeal-1863-dakota-removal-act/2694034001/)

⁶ Routel, Colette, “Minnesota Bounties On Dakota Men During The U.S.-Dakota War”, 2013.

^{6b} Waziyatawin, *What Does Justice Look Like?*, 2008, pg. 37-62.

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