

Ramsey County Historical Society

Our Commitment to
Diversity
Equity
Accessibility
Inclusion

June 15, 2021

***Woven together
humanity, history
of one, of many***

***Acknowledging pain
facing hurt, past and present
owning history***

***Tackling biases
entrenched, embedded, deep-set
a call to action***

***Past, present, future
building our community
so history rings***



Our Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, & Inclusion

Mission

Preserving Our Past, Informing Our Present, Inspiring Our Future

Values

Authenticity: We strive for historical accuracy in all our programs and activities.

Innovation: We consciously seek new ways to educate and create unique programming.

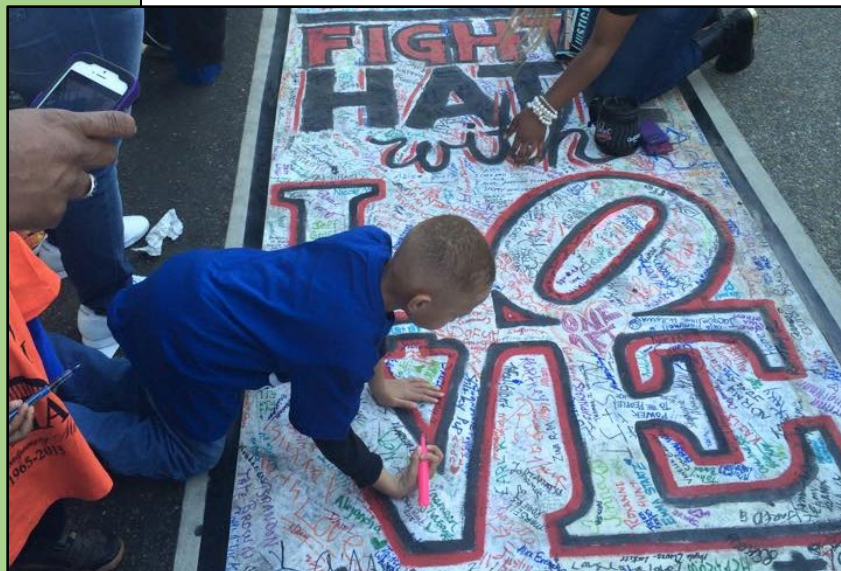
Inspirational: We raise awareness of our past and how that informs our understanding of our present and future.

Integrity: We adhere to the highest standards as a nonprofit organization in all our operations.

Respect: We provide experiences that respect our collective heritage and the diverse cultures of our community.

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Dear Reader,

Ramsey County Historical Society (RCHS) is committed to *preserving our past, informing our present, and inspiring our future*. The “our” repeated three times in our mission is intentional—we exist to serve everyone in our community to the best of our abilities.

For most of its 72 years, RCHS has viewed itself as a neutral party, preserving and presenting community history. To be sure, we strive to preserve and present the facts of history without prejudice, but to pretend we do not have some biases would be disingenuous—we are humans—and flawed at that.

As an organization established, governed, and largely staffed by people of European descent for most of its history, the stories that were most accessible to the organization were Eurocentric. Unsurprisingly, this has resulted in some significant omissions in our work, omissions that we are now doing our best to avoid.

In 1998, RCHS started to address one such critical omission—the story of the Dakota people in the region. Building relationships with Dakota Elders led to the addition of tours and programs telling the stories of the people of Heyáta Othúŋwe (Cloud Man’s Village) from the perspective of the Dakota. These programs persist today with the continued guidance of Dakota advisors. The Society has also been committed to seeking out and adding programming that would not have been on its radar a decade ago. Quite frankly, we had been missing out on some extraordinary and fascinating history, and because we missed it, so did many of our members. If you have been attending History Revealed programs or read *Ramsey County History* magazine, you have seen the additions that are helping tell a more complete story of Ramsey County.

We are committed to moving forward and telling our community’s stories—as many of them as we can. Thank you for joining us as we explore all parts of Ramsey County.

Sincerely,

Chad Roberts
President
Ramsey County Historical Society

Ramsey County Historical Society Statement on Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion

The Ramsey County Historical Society acknowledges that the lives, pain, and accomplishments of many individuals and communities have been ignored, marginalized, or even erased throughout the history of Ramsey County. We recognize that institutionalized, systemic racism and discrimination persists today and traumatizes our fellow human beings, and that RCHS has been a part of these systems that continue to harm members of our community.

At the heart of history are the experiences of people -- stories told, voices heard, and narratives recounted. Yet, RCHS has not done enough to identify and share stories from every community it serves, leaving many stories untold. RCHS has a responsibility to center the perspectives and lived experiences of Black, Indigenous, and people of color when their stories are shared.

The RCHS Board of Directors, Staff, and Volunteers are united in our commitment to fully integrating the principles of diversity, equity, accessibility and inclusion in all that we do as we fulfill our mission of preserving our past, informing our present and inspiring our future.

In its governance, RCHS is committed to:

- Recruiting, engaging, and retaining a Board of Directors that is reflective of the community
- Ensuring policies and procedures are inclusive
- Fostering a culture of respect both internally and in outreach
- Implementing additional transparency in communications to better encourage and support community feedback and accountability

As an employer, RCHS is committed to:

- Fostering a workplace that respects each individual, seeks and values diverse perspectives, and ensures each employee can actively contribute to fulfilling the organization's mission
- Ensuring that recruitment and hiring practices are inclusive and effective in attracting and hiring diverse candidates

The Ramsey County Historical Society's 27-member Board of Directors is comprised of 25% people of color. The Society is committed to increasing both the diversity and number of board members so that its composition more closely reflects the community it serves.

RCHS is a member of the first cohort of 51 museums across the country to participate in the Facing Change program led by the American Alliance of Museums. The goal of the Facing Change program is to increase the diversity and inclusiveness of museum boards.

As an economic entity, RCHS is committed to:

- Establishing and maintaining a diverse and inclusive network of vendors

As a community service organization RCHS is committed to:

- Empowering community members and organizations to control culturally specific content that prioritizes their lived experience and wisdom
- Expanding collecting and preservation activities at RCHS to incorporate more culturally diverse materials and support the preservation of collections held in trust by community
- Continuing to recruit Black, Indigenous, and other authors of color, and continuing to publish more diverse content in *Ramsey County History* magazine and other platforms
- Ensure RCHS facilities and programs are accessible to all audiences

We recognize that the work requires constancy of effort and is ever-changing. Mistakes made along the journey are opportunities for us to humbly learn and evolve. We authentically face and undertake the work with resolve and energy knowing that equitable and inclusive opportunities for everyone contribute to a just, vibrant community where full stories are told, every voice is heard, and history resonates with us all.

RCHS has been intentional about recruiting new authors and seeking out more diverse history to research and publish. Recent issues of Ramsey County History magazine contain a truly diverse collection of new and unique research touching all communities in Ramsey County.

RCHS's History Revealed program of lectures and tours are presented county-wide. Over its four year-lifespan, 29% of History Revealed programs specifically featured previously under-represented populations.

Defining DEAI at RCHS

- Diversity:** Respecting, acknowledging, and celebrating the range of differences our staff, volunteers, and community members bring to RCHS in terms of race, gender identity, age, religion, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, national origin, culture, language, socioeconomic status, values, and experiences. Working together, our diversity helps us pursue our mission effectively and make strides towards the creation of a more equitable and inclusive community.
- Equity:** Actively creating genuine opportunities for all members of our community to participate in the history of Ramsey County. RCHS works to eliminate the social, cultural, physical, and financial barriers that have prevented equitable community participation in the past.
- Accessibility:** Providing all members of our community equitable access to the history of Ramsey County. This includes ensuring that our facilities, programs, resources, and communications can accommodate a variety of needs along the continuum of human ability and experience.
- Inclusion:** Creating a culture where all viewpoints and values are heard, recognized, appreciated, counted, and connected. RCHS will help foster this connection, and sense of belonging, by embracing the diversity of experiences within Ramsey County.



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Acknowledging This Sacred Dakota Land

Mnisóta Makhóčhe, the land where the waters are so clear they reflect the clouds, extends beyond the modern borders of Minnesota and is the ancestral and contemporary homeland of the Dakhóta (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. 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. These treaties were knowingly mistranslated, and land and annuities promised to the Dakota were stolen and never received. 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. 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.

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.

The staff and board of the Ramsey County Historical Society extend their heartfelt thanks to:

Teresa Peterson,
Dakota & Upper Sioux
Community citizen

Chris Pexa, Ph.D.,
Spirit Lake Dakota Nation

Šišóka Dúta (Joe Bendickson),
Sisseton Wahpeton Oyáte
University of Minnesota

for their support of RCHS and
advice regarding this
statement.

We pledge to honor the Dakota and other Indigenous peoples of Mnisóta Makhóche 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.

