



A Sacred Dakhóta Site Inspires Community Renewal

From Lower Phalen Creek Project to Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi

DANIEL W. MCGUINNESS, WITH MAGGIE LORENZ, PAGE 1

By the Numbers . . .

In the 1970s, land below St. Paul's white bluffs along Phalen Creek to the Mississippi was a mess: toxic soils, polluted water, an abandoned dump site—all on what is sacred Dakhóta land. East Side activists assembled as the Lower Phalen Creek Project (LPCP), and with help from other organizations, created a community vision to transform the site, daylight sections of the creek, and build the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary. Along the way, members better understood the sacred and historical importance of the land around them. They connected with and listened to Dakhóta community members and invited Dakhóta leaders to the board. Under Dakhóta leadership, the vision of the group transformed, as did the organization's name—Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi (WTA). Daniel W. McGuiness, an early member of LPCP, and Maggie Lorenz, executive director of WTA, share this history in "A Sacred Dakhóta Site Inspires Community Renewal: From Lower Phalen Creek Project to Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi" on page 1. Below are a few facts about WTA in 2022:

Events hosted by Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi:

- 18** Urban Restoration & Conservation
- 26** Cultural Connections & Healing
- 29** Environmental Education

Volunteers and volunteer hours:

442/1,299

Funds raised to daylight a section of Phalen Creek:

\$3.3 million

Funds raised to build Wakan Tipi Center:

\$13.2 million

Native trees/shrubs planted:

72

Trash removed:

2,500+ pounds

SOURCE: Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi, 2022 *Annual Report*, August 2023.

ON THE COVER



Lower Phalen Creek Project transformed a toxic site into a nature sanctuary. Soon, the organization now known as Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi will build its long-planned Wakan Tipi Center. Here, Mishaila Bowman, with longtime ties to LPCP/WTA, leads a group of bird watchers through the sanctuary. *Courtesy of Lower Phalen Creek Project and Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi.*

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Message from the Editorial Board

As part of environmental reclamation, a process called daylighting brings waterways previously channeled through underground pipes above ground. It returns water to its natural state, restoring ecological balance. Daylighting can appropriately describe this issue of *Ramsey County History*, as we present articles by and about Dakhóta people and their sacred connection between land and language (iápi)—what has been lost and what has been brought back into light.

In the Dayton's Bluff area, neighbors sought to reclaim Phalen Creek from the damage wrought by human impact. As this group revived the creek, they learned more about its meaning to Dakhóta people and how it is a corridor to the Mississippi and flows by a sacred meeting place—Wakan Tipi. Working patiently to overcome pollution, neglect, and the history of conflict and loss, what started out as a creek reclamation project transformed into something bigger. Dakhóta iápi was nearly *another* casualty of westward expansion. In Dakhóta tradition, land and language go hand in hand, and much like the land of the Dakhóta, their language began to disappear. A young generation of Dakhóta language learners and scholars show us what it means to care for their spoken and written word. Our everyday language in Minnesota includes many Dakhóta place names, words we say without thinking of their meaning. We have the capacity to learn much more about the land and language of Mnísota Makhóche—the place we all call home.

Anne Field
Chair, Editorial Board

The Ramsey County Historical Society thanks former Board Member James A. Stolpestad and affiliate AHS Legacy Fund for supporting the design of this magazine. Publication of Ramsey County History is also supported in part by a gift from Clara M. Claussen and Frieda H. Claussen in memory of Henry H. Cowie Jr., and by a contribution from the late Reuel D. Harmon. Sincere thanks to Harlan Boss Foundation for the Arts for their financial support.

Imagining a Future that Doubles Our Impact

Campaign to Transform Gibbs Farm

CHAD ROBERTS, RCHS PRESIDENT & CEO

Minnesota is blessed with abundant cultural resources. Among them is Gibbs Farm—the unique gem Ramsey County Historical Society (RCHS) is honored to care for and operate. No where else in Minnesota do 15,000 students get to spill off a bus and walk back in time through prairie grasses taller than they are. Here, they learn about the Jane and Heman Gibbs family and the people of *Hëyáta Othúnjwe* (Cloud Man's Village). They see farm animals, participate in educational skits, and create a take-home craft common to either Dakhóta or immigrant culture. The unique, hands-on programs at Gibbs Farm address dozens of state educational requirements, and the way we instruct uses proven, effective techniques that resonate with students and teachers.

This matters because educators know, we know, and researchers around the country know that quality field trip programs like Gibbs Farm help students achieve success.

Gibbs Farm has been operating at full capacity for years as a seasonal site. As we look to the future and the needs of schools, seniors, and others in our community, it is clear we can be of service to so many more if we have the facilities to do so.

We have spent years planning for a future where 30,000 students will benefit from Gibbs Farm field trips every year—a future that includes student access to an after-school program centered on our shared history to help close the achievement gap. This future will feature new, fully accessible spaces where individuals of all ages and abilities may experience the farm and where our community partners can add their programming to ours to reach new audiences. All of this requires a year-round education building, and that is what we intend to build in the next few years.

As you undoubtedly know, RCHS is also trusted to preserve archival materials and artifacts that help tell the history of Ramsey County—right now that is 4.5 million items we care for and curate. Part of the campaign includes building a collections preservation facility that will meet our community's needs for decades to come. We expect to break ground on this building in the fall of 2024.

Our Capital Campaign

We have been engaged in the quiet phase of a capital campaign to raise the funds for these projects for several years. Ramsey County has already committed \$7.2 million for the project, and RCHS is raising \$6 million from individuals, foundations, and corporations (having secured \$3.7 million so far). Because Gibbs Farm serves students from all across Minnesota and impacts our entire region, we have asked the State of Minnesota to provide \$9.9 million for the project, as well.

Over the next two years, there will be opportunities for you to help us double our reach and care for the materials that tell the stories of the people and places of Ramsey County. Learn more about the **Campaign to Transform Gibbs Farm** at <https://rchs.com/campaign-for-gibbs-farm/>.

This architectural rendering by design firm HGA gives future visitors to Gibbs Farm a peek at the proposed educational building. *Courtesy of Ramsey County Historical Society.*



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RAMSEY COUNTY History

A PUBLICATION OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Preserving our past, informing our present, inspiring our future.

The Ramsey County Historical Society (RCHS) strives to innovate, lead, and partner in preserving the knowledge of our community; deliver inspiring history programming; and incorporate local history in education.

The Society was established in 1949 to preserve the Jane and Heman Gibbs Farm in Falcon Heights, which the family acquired in 1849. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974, the original programs told the story of the Gibbs family. In 2000, with the assistance of a Dakota Advisory Council, RCHS also began interpreting Dakota culture and lifeways, now telling the stories of the remarkable relationship between Jane Gibbs and the Dakota people of Ĥeyáta Othújwe (Cloud Man's Village).

In 1964, the Society began publishing its award-winning magazine *Ramsey County History*. In 1978, the organization moved to St. Paul's Landmark Center, a restored Federal Courts building on the National Register of Historic Places. An expansion of the Research Center was completed in 2010 and rededicated in 2016 as the Mary Livingston Griggs & Mary Griggs Burke Research Center.

RCHS offers public programming for youth and adults. Visit www.rchs.com for details of upcoming History Revealed programs, summer camps, courthouse and depot tours, and more. The Society serves more than 15,000 students annually on field trips or through school outreach. Programs are made possible by donors, members, corporations, and foundations, all of whom we appreciate deeply. If you are not a member of RCHS, please join today and help bring history to life for more than 50,000 people every year.

Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, & Inclusion

RCHS is committed to ensuring it preserves and presents our county's history. As we continue our work to incorporate more culturally diverse histories, we have made a commitment to diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion that is based on this core idea: RCHS exists to serve ALL who call Ramsey County home. To learn more, please see www.rchs.com/about.

Acknowledging This Sacred Dakota Land

Mnisóta Makhóche, 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 Makhóche. RCHS acknowledges that its sites are located on and benefit from these sacred Dakota lands.

RCHS 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.

Find our full Land Acknowledgment Statement on our website, www.rchs.com. This includes actionable ways in which RCHS pledges to honor the Dakota and other Indigenous peoples of Mnisóta Makhóche.



Cozy Winter Crafts at Gibbs



Cozy Coloring
Wednesday,
November 15th
5:30-7:30pm



Candle Making
Saturday,
December 2nd
12:00-3:00pm



Floral Ornaments
Wednesday,
December 13th
5:30-7:30pm

Visit RCHS.com
for more information or to register.



What a Night...



Pathways GALA

Thank you to all our donors and sponsors!
Together, we raised \$70,000 for
Gibbs Farm.

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Dakhóta Iápi: A Brief History in Three Parts

This year, Dakhóta language scholars from the University of Minnesota—Eileen Bass, Justis Brokenrope, Deacon DeBoer, Ava Grace, and Heather Menefee, with their instructor Šišókaduta (Joe Bendickson)—have worked with Ramsey County Historical Society to write about Dakhóta Iápi (Dakota language). The piece begins on pages 12 and 13 with an early history of the language following settler colonization and extending through the boarding school era. It continues with a collaborative segment highlighting current language initiatives and the positive effects these have for both the Dakhóta and non-Indigenous communities in establishing themselves in Mnísota Makhóche history. The article culminates with words of encouragement to Dakhóta language teachers and second-language learners from Dr. Rev. Clifford Canku, one of the few remaining first-language Dakhóta speakers and a holder of traditional knowledge.

—Deacon DeBoer



Dakhóta language is present and celebrated throughout the Twin Cities at parks and in public art—as seen at Bdé Makhá Ská through work created by Mona Smith, Sandy Spieler, and Angela Two Stars; at the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden installation, *Okciyapi*, also by Two Stars; and at the newly opened Unčí Makhá Park (Grandmother Earth Park) in St. Paul. *Courtesy of Ramsey County Historical Society.*