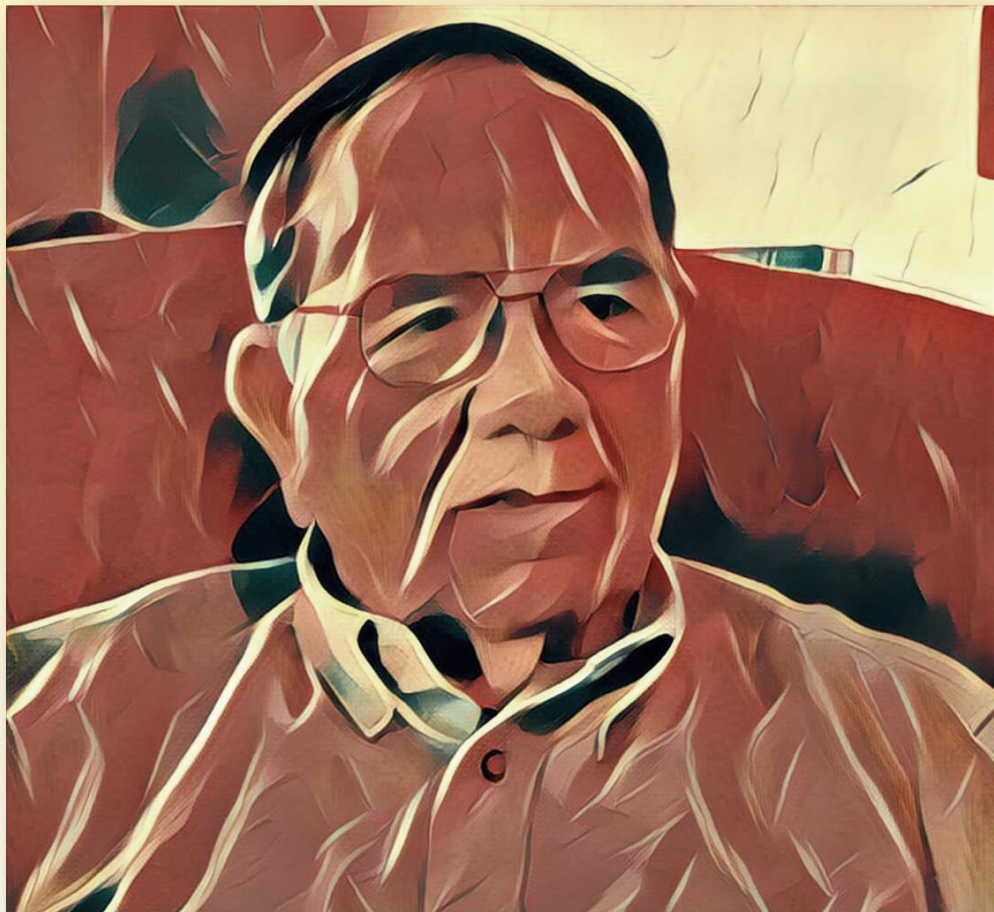


Oceti Sakowin Essential Understanding 1

LANDS & ENVIRONMENT

The original land base and natural resources of the *Oceti Sakowin* [oh-CHEH-tee SHAW-koh-we] were under communal stewardship prior to immigrant settlement. *Oceti Sakowin* have a distinct and unique interrelationship with the environment that is essential to South Dakota.



“I think the interconnection with the people has been very important to make the connection to the land. All the people are the ones who make it worthwhile to be in a certain area.”

Lowell Amiotte, Oceti Sakowin Elder & Educator



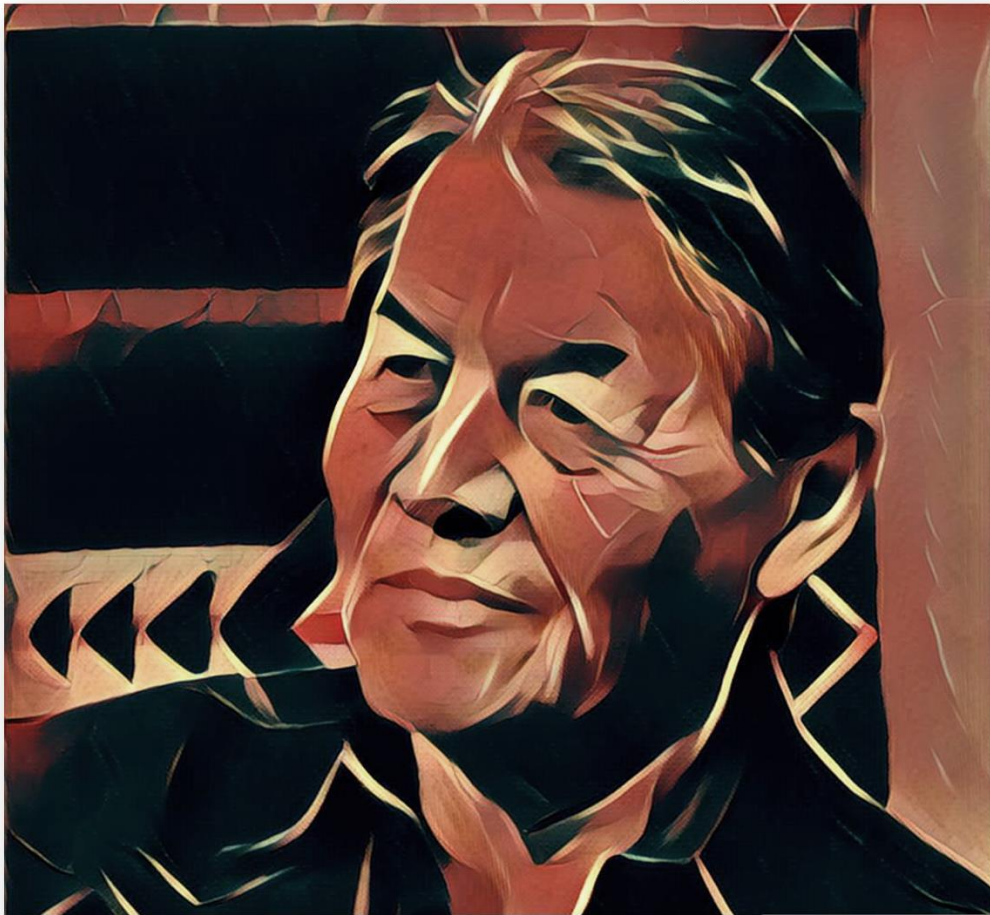
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Oceti Sakowin Essential Understanding 2

IDENTITY & RESILIENCY

There is variety and resiliency among individuals within the *Oceti Sakowin* [oh-CHEH-tee SHAW-koh-we] *Oyate* [oh-YAH-tay] (people) as identity is developed, defined and redefined by entities, by organization, and by people.

A continuum of tribal identity, unique to each individual, ranges from assimilated to traditional lifestyle. There is no “generic American Indian.”



“Part of our resiliency is all the ways we are different—that variety, even among our own selves. The Lakota are different than the Nakota and the Dakota. They chose to stay on the east side of the river and we went west and scattered ourselves all over the place. Variety’s a good thing.”

Joseph Marshall III, Oceti Sakowin Elder & Author

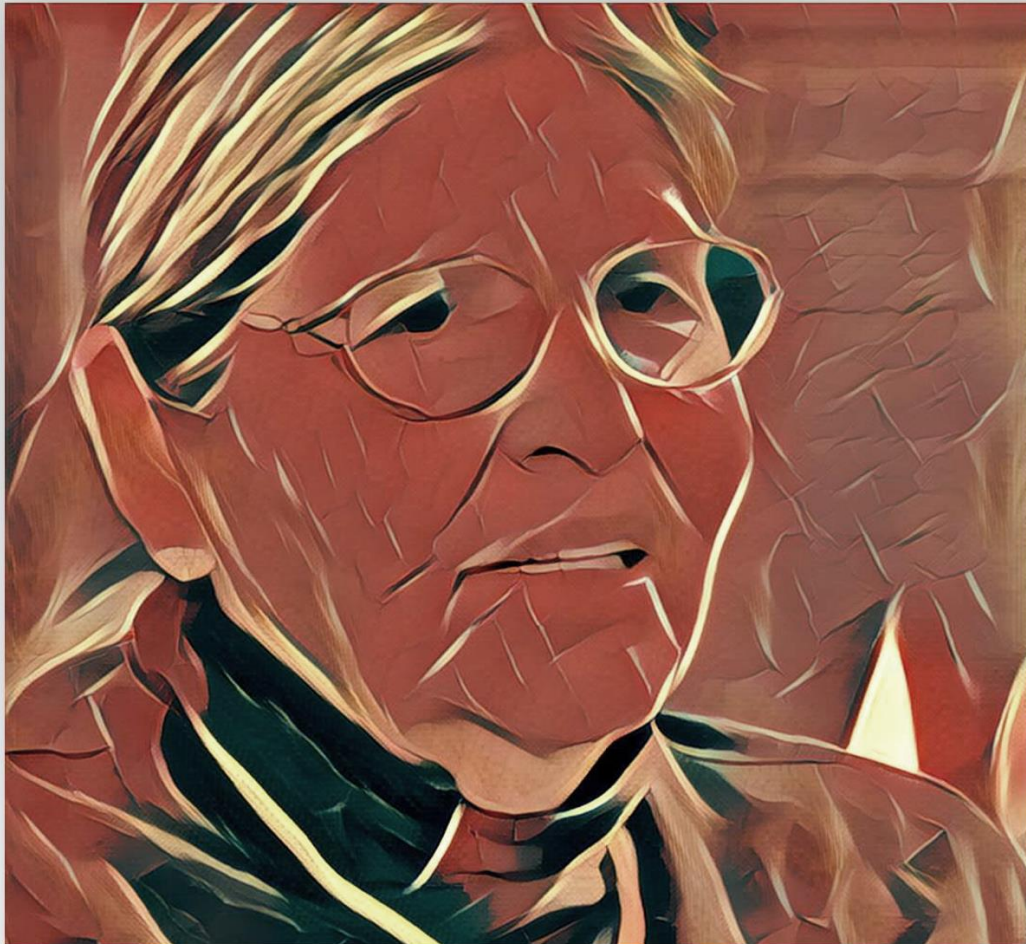


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Oceti Sakowin Essential Understanding 3

CULTURE & LANGUAGE

The origin, thought and philosophy of the *Oceti Sakowin* [oh-CHEH-tee SHAW-koh-we] continues in the contemporary lifestyles of Tribal members. Tribal cultures, traditions and languages are incorporated and observed by many Tribal members both on and off the reservations.



“Knowing another language and seeing the world through that language is different. When I learn different Lakota words and try to translate them to others in English, it’s not the same. It loses so much... but it is part of your identity, and if you think it’s important to know a language then you’ll do it.”

Jace DeCory, Oceti Sakowin Elder & Educator



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Oceti Sakowin Essential Understanding 4

KINSHIP & HARMONY

Oceti Sakowin [oh-CHEH-tee SHAW-koh-we] kinship systems provide a framework for both individual and group behavior. Its unwritten rules promote harmony, compromise, a sense of order, and group cohesion.



“When you take on a relative willingly and by choice, that relationship is even more sacred, it’s even more of a commitment. Now, you... by some circumstance, are bringing a relative into your Tiospaye... that relationship is one that is very spiritual, but also one of commitment.”

Stephanie Charging Eagle, Oceti Sakowin Elder & Educator



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Oceti Sakowin Essential Understanding 5

ORAL TRADITION & STORY

History told from the *Oceti Sakowin* [oh-CHEH-tee SHAW-koh-we] perspective, through oral tradition and written accounts, frequently conflicts with the stories told by mainstream historians. An analysis of multiple perspectives reveals history in a more inclusive and accurate way.



“The stories guide you and help you to learn. They help you to understand the relationships with what happened in the past. And there are times when we have to grieve our past. We have to be able to practice the virtue of perseverance and to be able to pick our head up and to say our prayer... and to go on.”

Duane Hollow Horn Bear, Oceti Sakowin Elder & Educator



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Oceti Sakowin Essential Understanding 6

SOVEREIGNTY & TREATIES

Federal policies and treaties put into place throughout American history have affected *Oceti Sakowin* [oh-CHEH-tee SHAW-koh-we] people adversely. Tribes as sovereign nations have the authority to enter into government to government relationships. Currently, the relationship between each tribe, their state(s), and the federal government is not the same for each tribe.



“The laws, regulations, religion, everything that was brought here... we weren’t used to that. We were used to the Indian way of prayers and way of life. We never were used to the European laws... these were man-made laws we could never understand. Our law is the Law of Nature, and you never could go wrong with the Law of Nature.”

Dave Bald Eagle, Oceti Sakowin Lakota Elder



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Oceti Sakowin Essential Understanding 7

WAY OF LIFE & DEVELOPMENT

The essential philosophy of the *Oceti Sakowin* [oh-CHEH-tee SHAW-koh-we] *wicoun* [wee-CHO] (way of life) is based on the values of the *Oceti Sakowin* which have created resiliency of the *Oyate* [oh-YAH-tay] (people). Tribal communities have put considerable effort into education and economic development, Tribal universities and colleges, wellness centers, cultural traditions, and language revitalization.



“Reciprocity. We have to give back what we take from the earth. We’re not doing that. And so we’re experiencing all this change—atmospheric changes that are happening. We believe in a Creator who made all of this for us, so when we take that belief and then we see all these changes happening around us... we have to stop and say, ‘whoa, let’s slow down...’”

Gladys Hawk, Oceti Sakowin Elder & Educator



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