

A sepia-toned photograph of a bison standing in a field. The bison is facing right, with its head slightly turned towards the camera. The background is a blurred field of grass. The title text is overlaid on the bottom right of the image.

Wahpeton Dakota Nation Community History

Cover Photo: "American bison Apache". Photograph courtesy of Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C., USA.

Background photo on pages 1-2: Wahpeton Dakota Nation traditional territory landscape. Photo credit: Miranda Buffalo

Historic Photo on page 3: Mr. and Mrs. Joe Omani



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Background photo on pages 1-2: Wahpeton Dakota Nation traditional territory landscape. Photo credit: Miranda Buffalo

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A GREETING MESSAGE FROM CHIEF LEO J. OMANI, PHD

The content within this document provides a summative of the history pertaining to Wahpeton Dakota Nation. It is derived from both the Shore Gold and SaskPower Traditional Land Use Studies, including that of previous written sources corresponding to Wahpeton Dakota Nation.

A word of thanks is offered to the consultants of the Integral Ecology Group, including the individuals from Wahpeton that worked on the Shore Gold and SaskPower Traditional Land Use Studies. Further, a word of thanks is also offered to the Elders of Wahpeton Dakota Nation that agreed to participate in the studies mentioned.

In closing, this document can now be used by the Wahpeton Dakota Nation to enhance the ongoing effects of Wahpeton Dakota Nation to come to terms with the Crown pertaining to the Numbered Treaties, and/or a new Modern Treaty Agreement.

~ Chief Leo Omani, Ph.D., Wahpeton Dakota Nation





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Wahpeton Dakota Nation

Wahpeton Dakota Nation Community History

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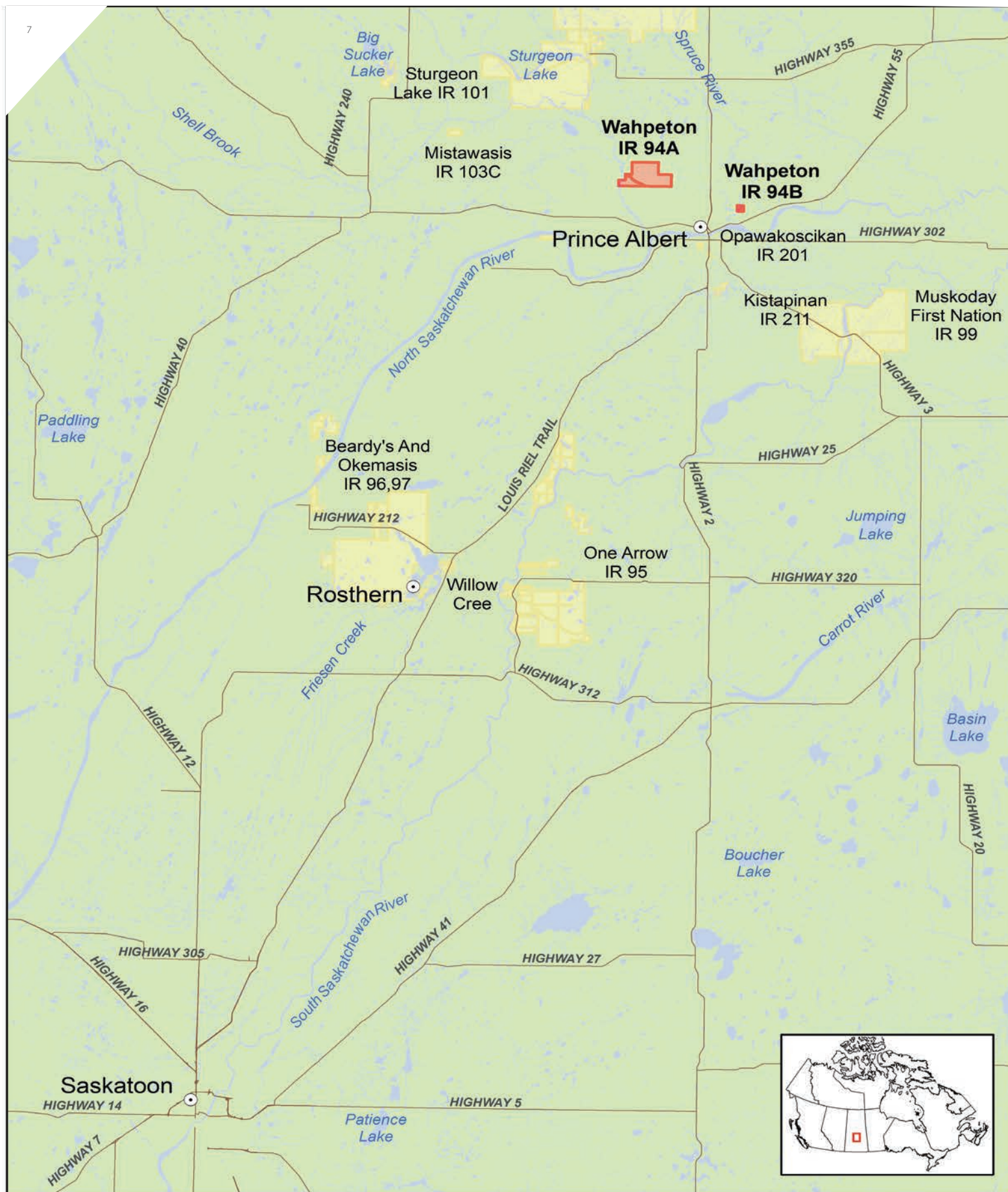
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Wahpeton Dakota Nation Reserves

INTRODUCTION

The Wahpeton Dakota Nation is a First Nation community with a traditional territory that includes central Saskatchewan. Most Wahpeton members today reside on the Nation's main reserve, about ten kilometres north of the city of Prince Albert. The region is on the cusp of the boreal forest, where plains and farmland begin to give way to stands of trembling aspen and rolling hills.

Wahpeton Dakota oral history tells us that the Dakota Nation has called this land home since time immemorial. Oral and written histories document the relationships the Dakota have had with other First Nations in the region, and with European and other newcomers through the fur trade, military alliances and conflicts, personal interactions, and encounters with the Canadian State. Although many First Nations could recount a similar history, the Dakota stand in a unique relationship with Canada having never signed a treaty.

This document looks at the many interconnected historical narratives of the Dakota in Canada, and considers them specifically in the context of some of the political challenges facing the present-day Wahpeton Dakota Nation in their relationship with the Crown.

Community Overview

As of 2012, the Wahpeton Dakota Nation population includes about 500 men, women, and children,¹ belonging mostly to nine major extended families.² As shown on the adjacent map, the Wahpeton Dakota Nation has two reserves. The main community reserve is Indian Reserve (IR) #94A. The band also holds another, smaller reserve, IR #94B. Together, these reserves are about 15 square kilometres³ in size. A Chief governs the Wahpeton Dakota Nation, along with four Councillors elected to three-year terms under the Band Custom electoral system. Dr. Leo Omani is currently Chief.

The majority of Wahpeton Dakota people (about 300) live on the main reserve, while the remainder live elsewhere. Although current census data is not available, Wahpeton Dakota Nation follows the trend of other Canadian Aboriginal communities in experiencing a high birth rate and hosting a large segment of young people.⁴

Many Wahpeton Dakota people speak the Dakota language, although some Cree is also spoken in the community. English, however, has become the main language of education and business, and the percentage of people with fluency in Dakota is declining. In their 2006 census Statistics Canada found that 26.8% of Wahpeton Dakota people had knowledge of Aboriginal languages.⁵

Fig. 1: Wahpeton Dakota Nation Reserves. This map shows the location of Wahpeton Dakota Nation's reserves, IR94A and IR94B, in relation to the cities of Prince Albert and Saskatoon in Central Saskatchewan.

WAHPETON DAKOTA NATION HISTORY

Wahpeton Dakota oral history tells us that ancestors of the Wahpeton Dakota Nation have occupied the area in which they now reside since time immemorial.⁶ These ancestors are the *Wahpetonwan*, which translates as “Camping Among the Leaves.”⁷ Current Chief Leo Omani, whose PhD dissertation included oral history interviews with Dakota Elders, has indicated that this name, *Wahpetonwan*, is a reference to the boreal forest where the Wahpeton Dakota live.⁸

Archaeological findings in Wahpeton Dakota traditional territory also document the presence of indigenous peoples’ long-term pre-contact occupation of the region.⁹ Recent studies have identified many archaeological resources, of which the “overwhelming majority of sites are precontact [predate the arrival of Europeans in the area].”¹⁰

As early as 1885, there were 350 Dakota families in the Prince Albert area.¹¹ However, many left because of tensions during the 1885 Northwest Rebellion. During the Rebellion, Prince Albert residents urged the Wahpeton Dakota to stay within city limits to protect them from harm.¹² Eventually, all but 35 or 40 Dakota families left the Prince Albert area as a result of the Rebellion.¹³

In 1890, a Dakota man living in the area of Prince Albert requested land for the Dakota remaining there.¹⁴ Other Wahpeton Dakota people were residing in and around the town of Prince Albert at the time. Many of the town’s people supported locating a reserve close to the town; however, the Canadian government wanted the reserve situated farther away from Prince Albert. In 1894, the Canadian Government provided reserve land consisting of five-and-one-half sections of land (approximately 8.8 square kilometres), which is today the main

Wahpeton reserve, IR #94A.

Another quarter section of land was set aside in 1917 adjacent to the city of Prince Albert, which is today the community’s smaller reserve, IR #94B.¹⁵ The Federal Government’s 1894 provision of Wahpeton IR#94A was allocated as 80 acres of land for every five people of the Wahpeton Dakota.¹⁶ In contrast to Wahpeton, those First Nations that signed Treaty Six in 1876, which includes the Prince Albert area, received 640 acres per family of five. To this day, the Wahpeton Dakota Nation’s reserves are considerably smaller than many other reserves in Saskatchewan.

During the early 20th century, Wahpeton Dakota people were required to get permission from the Indian Agent to leave the reserve.¹⁷ This made it difficult for Wahpeton Dakota people to get wage work on neighbouring farms, because without written permission to leave reserve, many farmers refused to hire them.¹⁸ In the same time period, if an Aboriginal person were off reserve for 10 days, the police would locate them and take them back.¹⁹

In his oral history recordings, Wahpeton Dakota Elder Samuel Buffalo explained how the Indian Department made economic development difficult:

*The [Indian] Agent used threatening tactics to prevent men from working together... The iron brand with I.D. initials, meaning Indian Department, registers the Dakota reserve stock as crown property. When a Dakota wanted to market or butcher a steer, he must have permission. Quite often the Agent refused to issue the permit. The vegetables, poultry, and hogs are recorded. The Indian Agent’s rules decreased the farm developing interest.*²⁰

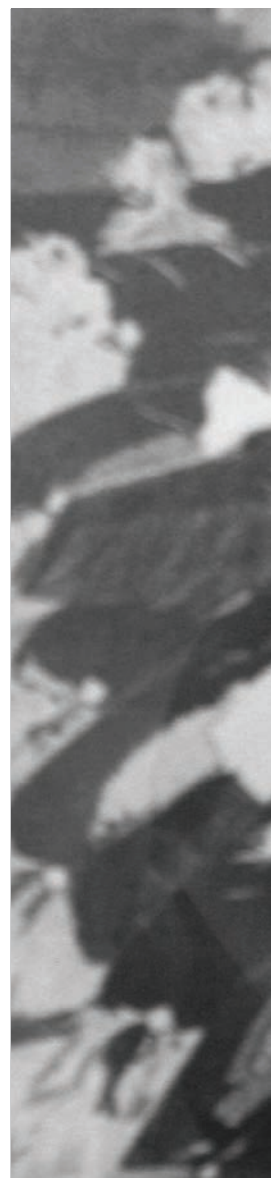




Fig. 2: This drawing of former Chief, Herbert Flying Buffalo, was done by Edwin Buffalo. Photo credit: Miranda Buffalo.

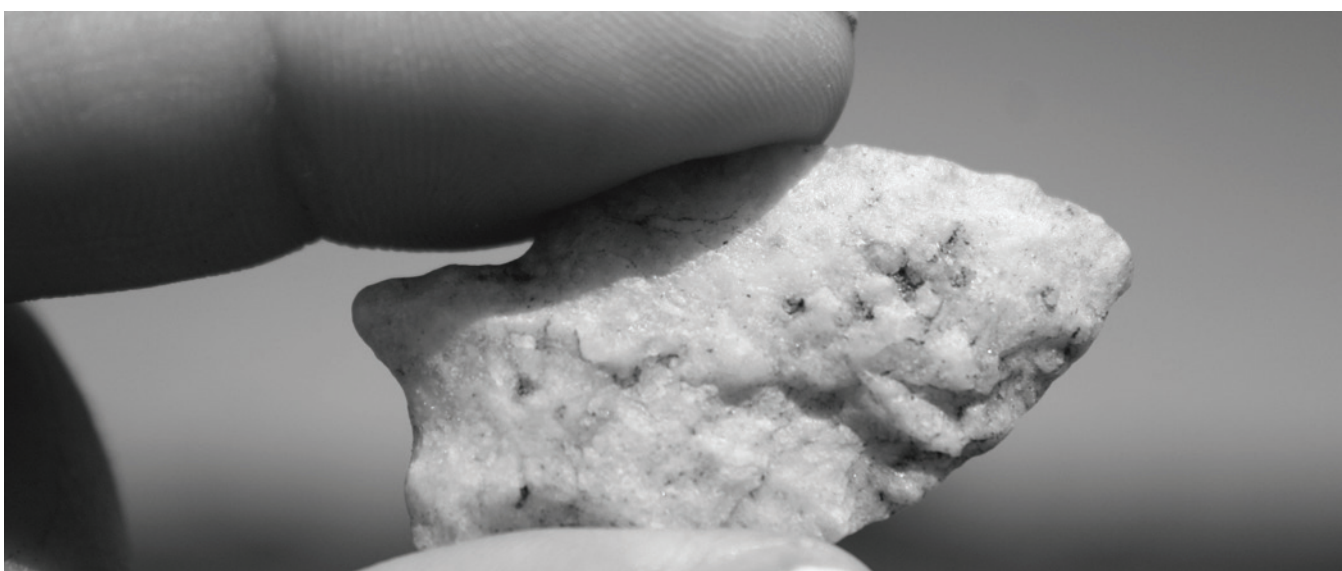


Fig. 3: Community Researcher Miranda Buffalo discovered this arrowhead near Wahpeton Dakota Nation's main reserve. Photo credit: Miranda Buffalo.



Fig. 4: Historic Photograph of Wahpeton Dakota Nation Students from the Mission School on Wahpeton reserve #94A in the 1920s. In the same time period, Wahpeton Dakota people were not allowed to freely come and go from the reserve.

Another institution that greatly impacted the Wahpeton Dakota Nation during the 19th and 20th centuries was residential schools. Wahpeton Dakota Elder Samuel Buffalo recalls the residential school experience:

The home mission and school prohibited Dakota language on their premises. A student was punished for speaking their Dakota language. The children were told to avoid certain persons or families because they engage in Dakota traditional activities. These doings

*were called 'evil doers practice.' Food rations were issued to the old-age folks but if one was dedicated to the Dakota ceremonies, his needed rations will be reduced for punishment. This type of treatment, by favouring one group and neglecting the other one, has divided the people.*²¹

Over the last 100 years, the families of the Wahpeton Dakota Nation have found the lands that once supported their traditional practices have been increasingly taken up by urban and agricultural de-



velopment. They began, as a result, to depend on wage labour for more of their survival. Wage labour for the Wahpeton Dakota has come mainly from Prince Albert, the nearest city to their reserves. Though many Dakota traveled to Prince Albert to live and find work in the 1800s,²² for much of the following century, Prince Albert's economy was depressed, and prospects for wage labour in the city were scarce.²³ It was common for Wahpeton men to cut firewood and sell it to residents of Prince Albert. One Wahpeton Dakota person recalls that his

father would "always carry a rifle with him, in case he ran into game" while cutting firewood to sell to the townspeople of Prince Albert.²⁴ However, this practice ended in the late 1940s and 1950s when Aboriginal children were taken away to residential school.²⁵

During the 20th Century Wahpeton women were often hired as housekeepers in the town of Prince Albert. Additional wage labour opportunities came with the opening of Penitentiaries in the early 20th century in Prince Albert, and more recently in close

proximity to Wahpeton. In the early 1960s, the Prince Albert Pulp Mill opened, providing jobs for people in the area.²⁶ Over time Wahpeton people have become increasingly dependant on wage labour as there now remains only a patchwork of forested lands and clean waterways where they can hunt, fish, and gather food plants, berries and medicines.



Fig. 5: John Waditaka and Maggie Flying Buffalo at a tent pitched for the berry picking season. Photo from 1941.

Fig. 6: Pictured here are Rita Parenteau and Rose Flying Buffalo.



THE DAKOTA OYATE AND THEIR TERRITORY

I think [the land has] always been important, because of our spirituality. Our parents taught us that we are connected to the earth, that it's our responsibility to take care of the earth, that the earth - we call it the "Maka" - is not owned. Nobody owns the land, we are only here to take care of it, to take what's necessary from the land, and to protect the land. Always protect the land. This is what my grandpa said. This is your job. When you grow up, you have to take care of the land. This is what I was told by my grandparents. Spiritually, with our ceremonies, it's always land. It's always land and animals. It's birds. All of our prayers are that way. All of our prayers have to do with the land, animals, birds, and every living creature. That's instilled in us as Dakota people.

~ Wakanya Najin (Cy Standing)

The Dakota *Oyate* continue to keep traditional ceremonies that maintain a connection to territory and land.²⁷ The Dakota *Oyate*'s seven sacred ceremonies pre-date European contact, and are still celebrated and considered of high importance to the Wahpeton Dakota Nation.²⁸

The use of the sacred prayer pipe reaffirms this connection.²⁹ Lame Deer, a Lakota holy man, stated that in using the sacred prayer pipe:

*[The pipe's] stem forms a bridge from earth through man through our bodies, to Wakan Tanka, the grandfather spirit. As the pipe is filled with our sacred red willow bark tobacco, each tiny grain represents one of the living things on this earth. All of the Great Spirit's creations, the whole universe, is in that pipe.*³⁰

The seven sacred ceremonies include the Sundance, the pipe ceremony, and the making of a relative ceremony, all of which uphold a connection to the land.³¹ The making of a relative ceremony is indicative of the Dakota *Oyate*'s traditional concept of treaty.³² The ceremonies take place during the part of the summer months when lightning is active.³³

First contact between the Dakota *Oyate* and Europeans likely happened in the early 1600s. The history of the Dakota in Canada as described by non-Dakota scholars differs markedly from the oral history passed down by the Dakota

Dakota Oyate

Oyate (pronounced oh-YA-tay) is an ancient Dakota term that can be translated as "nation."³⁴ In contemporary terms, it is understood to refer to the Dakota/Nakota/Lakota peoples together as a collective nation. Wahpeton Dakota people prefer Dakota *Oyate* as an inclusive term for their whole nation to the terms "Dakota," "Nakota" and "Lakota."



Fig. 7: Community member Rose Flying Buffalo attending a winter festival in La Ronge, Saskatchewan in the mid-twentieth century.



Fig. 8: Pictured here from left to right are John Waditaka, Eva Waditaka, Archie Waditaka, Ruth Waditaka, and Maggie Flying Buffalo. John and Maggie are Archie's parents. Eva and Ruth are Archie's sisters. This photograph was taken in the 1940s.

people themselves.³⁵ A central disagreement has to do with territory. Dakota in Canada maintain their traditional territory has always included part of what is now Canada. However, the Canadian government considers the Dakota in Canada to be “refugees,” descended from the Dakota that came to Canada to escape hostilities south of the US border in the 1860s. While some Dakota did come to Canada at that time, research by Omani³⁶ indicates that these people came to live in areas that were always within the traditional territory of the Dakota Oyate.

Oceti Sakowin

The Dakota Oyate's governmental structure is called the *Oceti Sakowin*. Prior to European contact, the area now known as the Cypress Hills was one location that the *Oceti Sakowin* would meet.³⁷

The Dakota Oyate are one of the indigenous peoples of North America, and historically shared a large territory, including North America's bison range with many other Aboriginal peoples.³⁸ Within this territory, prior to European contact, the Dakota Oyate “were one of the most populous nations on the continent.”³⁹ However, due to the fur trade and European-introduced epidemics, the Dakota Oyate's population decreased drastically from the time of first contact. In addition to oral history, there are written historical accounts, treaties signed between the Dakota Oyate and the French and British Crowns, Dakota language place names, and archaeological sites that all support the Dakota territorial claim.

Some of the misunderstandings and misconceptions about the history of the Dakota in Canada arise from the various, and frequently mistaken, ways in which the Dakota Oyate has been described in scholarship and popular culture. The most commonly used term imposed on the Dakota Oyate by European settlers is “Sioux,”⁴⁰ a term that derives from the French fur trader word “Nadouesioux” meaning “people of an alien [different] tribe.”⁴¹

There have been more than 100 recorded names⁴² applied to the Dakota Oyate, and to the groups that comprise it, by non-Dakota authors. The many names can obscure the unity of the Dakota Oyate as a cultural-linguistic group with a shared territory.⁴³ The federal government of Canada simultaneously holds that the Nakota (historically referred to as “Stoney”) have traditional territory within Canada, and that the Dakota (and Lakota) do not. However, Omani's research indicates that the Dakota/Nakota/Lakota peoples have together comprised the Dakota Oyate since before Confederation, and the Dakota Oyate have always had a shared territory that includes part of Canada.⁴⁴

Omani's map⁴⁵ (see Figure 11 on page 20) shows the extent of the Dakota Oyate's traditional territory as covering much of North America, reflecting a seasonal round that the Dakota Oyate followed long before contact.⁴⁶ Historically, the Dakota Oyate followed the bison, which they used extensively for food and other purposes. So important to the Dakota were bison that the explorer Pierre Esprit Radisson in 1660 referred to the Dakota as “the nation of

the beef.⁴⁷ Omani indicates that they were also known in centuries past as the “buffalo people.”⁴⁸

Historically, the vast range of the bison, or the Great Bison Belt (see Figure 10 on pages 19-20), encompassed an area extending beyond the plains of the continent, on both sides of the 49th parallel, from the Yukon, through the North West Territories, the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, and then into the U.S.A., moving south all the way down near the Gulf of Mexico.⁴⁹ The historian Jessica Palmer has noted that the Dakota language family encompassed a similar area:

[I]n total land mass, the Siouan [Dakota] language family alone encompassed over two million square miles ... [including] the Canadian provinces of Saskatchewan, Alberta, Manitoba, and into Ontario ... [and] more than fifty percent of the continental United States, or twenty-four of the forty-eight states”... [Those states being] “Missouri, Arkansas, Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Kansas, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, and Colorado ... [including] Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, and Louisiana.”⁵⁰

Dakota Elders interviewed by Omani also reported that the territory of the Dakota *Oyate* has always been this large.⁵¹ The Dakota *Oyate* used the major rivers and other bodies of water throughout their territory to secure an extensive trade network with many other Aboriginal peoples in North America.⁵² Recent research⁵³ and Omani’s interviews with Dakota elders recorded navigational and cultural knowledge of the rivers and their tributaries, including their Dakota names.⁵⁴

Over lifetimes spent on the land, the importance of specific locations is solidified through the act of giving names to places. These names represent layers of cultural and historical knowledge and memory tied to the land. In this way, place names are evidence of long-term habitation of the land by the Dakota *Oyate*. In addition to those place names in Figure 12 on page 21, Chief Leo Omani presented the following examples in his PhD dissertation:⁵⁶

Names for the Dakota Oyate

In addition to Sioux, Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota there have been many names used by non-Dakota people to describe the Dakota *Oyate*. The anthropologist Raymond DeMallie provides more than 100 synonyms for the term Dakota *Oyate*.⁵⁵

- Lake Winnipeg is known in Dakota as *Bde Wakan* and translates as “Sacred Lake”;
- *To-Wa-Mde* is the Dakota name for Great Slave Lake;
- *Tanka-Wakpa*, translates as “Great River” in reference to the Qu’Appelle River that connects to the Assiniboine River.

In addition to Omani’s research on Dakota language place names in Dakota *Oyate* traditional territory, he recorded place names held by neighbouring Aboriginal nations that refer to the Dakota’s presence in the area. The Cree hold some of these place names. For instance, one Cree Elder reported that the area known in English as Cumberland House is called *Pwottah Nootintonihk* in Cree, which translates as “the Sioux Battle Ground.”⁵⁷ Another Elder noted that a Reserve at Deschambeault Lake named *Kimosom Pwatinak*, translates from Cree to English as “Grandfather Dakota Land.”⁵⁸ This same Cree Elder also had knowledge of several Dakota place names in central and south Saskatchewan.⁵⁹ The government of Canada has acknowledged through Treaty that other First Nations in Saskatchewan have had territory in the area prior to contact with Europeans. In this way, place names held by neighbouring Aboriginal nations support the Dakota’s territorial claim put forth by Omani.

DAKOTA LINEAGES
AND DIALECTS

Dakota *Oyate* is comprised of seven lineages, or bloodlines. These seven lineages are all within the same linguistic group, although some dialect differences exist.

Table 1 below shows the dialects of the seven lineages of the Dakota *Oyate*, the names of each lineage in Dakota, and the English translation of each name. The names of the seven lineages refer to the areas in which each group in the past resided.

Table 1: Dialect Differentiation & Synonymy of the Seven Bloodlines of the Dakota <i>Oyate</i> (Adapted from Omani 2009: 9)
<p>Dakota dialect, e.g. <i>Damakota</i> (an ancient term that has fallen out of common usage), which translates as “I am Dakota.” This dialect is spoken by the following bloodlines (literal translations of each name follows in parentheses):</p> <p>(1) the <i>Mdewakantonwan</i> (Camping Amongst a Sacred Lake);</p> <p>(2) the <i>Sisitonwan</i> (Camping Among Swamps);</p> <p>(3) the <i>Wahpetonwan</i> (Camping Among the Leaves); and</p> <p>(4) the <i>Wahpekute</i> (Shooters Among the Leaves).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ethnographic and historic literature has referred to the Dakota dialect and the speakers of this dialect as Santee and Isantee.
<p>Nakota dialect, e.g., <i>Namakota</i>, (an ancient term that is rarely used today), which translates as “I am Nakota” and is spoken by:</p> <p>(5) the <i>Ihanktonwan</i> (Camping at the End);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Non-literal Euro-American & Euro-Canadian imposed terms: Yankton• Non-literal Euro-Canadian imposed terms: Assiniboine <p>(6) the <i>Ihanktonwanna</i> (Camping at the Very End).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Non-literal Euro-American imposed terms: Yanktonais• Non-literal Euro-Canadian imposed terms: Stoney
<p>Lakota dialect, e.g., <i>Lamakota</i>, (an ancient term that is rarely used today), which translates as “I am Lakota”, as spoken by:</p> <p>(7) the <i>Titonwan</i> (Camping Amongst the Prairie);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Non-literal Euro-American & Euro-Canadian imposed term: Teton

Fig. 9: Tom Standing is shown here with his saxophone.



Table 2: Historical Timeline of Dakota People

Until 1600s	Dakota <i>Oyate</i> Territory as described in Figure 11 on the far right.
1600s	Dakota people first encounter European travellers.
1658-1750	Dakota <i>Oyate</i> and French Crown sign six treaties.
1753	First fort at what would become Fort à la Corne Forest built by Monsieur de la Corne.
1763-1817	Dakota <i>Oyate</i> and British Crown sign seven treaties.
1781-1782	Smallpox reduces Dakota <i>Oyate</i> 's population in Canada from 25,000 in 1781 to 4,200 at end of 1782. Neighbouring Aboriginal groups move into area previously occupied by Dakota and intermarry with survivors.
1812	King George III Pre-Confederation Treaty Medal given by British Crown to father of Wahpetonwan Chief Hupa Yakta. ⁶⁰ See Figure 14 (page 25).
1821	Hudson Bay Company and (HBC) North West Company amalgamate.
1821-1861	Dakota trade furs at Red River HBC post.
1850	HBC establish fort at La Corne Forest.
1860	Dakota and Cree sign peace treaty at Fort Garry, Manitoba.
1862	Chief Little Crow and followers participate in U.S. – Dakota War of 1862. They cross the border into Canada, although the Chief and many others later return to the U.S.
1866	Community of Prince Albert founded.
1867	First residential school opens in Prince Albert area.
1871	Manitoba's Treaty Commissioner, Wemyss Simpson, pronounces all Dakota "American Indians," and therefore not eligible to sign treaty with the government.
1875	James Smith Cree Nation arrives in Saskatchewan from St. Peter's reserve in Manitoba.
1876	Battle of Little Bighorn in Montana. Lakota Chief Sitting Bull and his followers cross the border into Canada following the battle. Neighbouring First Nations sign Treaty 6. Dakota Nations are excluded.
1881	Lakota Chief Sitting Buffalo and most followers return to U.S.
1885	There are 350 Dakota families living in the Prince Albert area.
1894	Order-in-Council sets formula for reserve establishment at 80 acres of land for every five people of Wahpeton Dakota Nation. Wahpeton reserve established. ⁶¹
Early 1900s	Wahpeton people not allowed to leave reserve without written permission from Indian Agent.
1917-1919	Epidemics reduce Dakota population near Prince Albert from roughly 300 people to 30 people. ⁶²
1995	Last residential school closes in Prince Albert area.

Figure 10: Pre-Contact Bison Range in North America (Compiled from Feldhamer *et al.* 2003, van Zyll de Jong 1986, Stephenson *et al.* 2001. Reproduced from Wikipedia: "Bison Original Range Map")

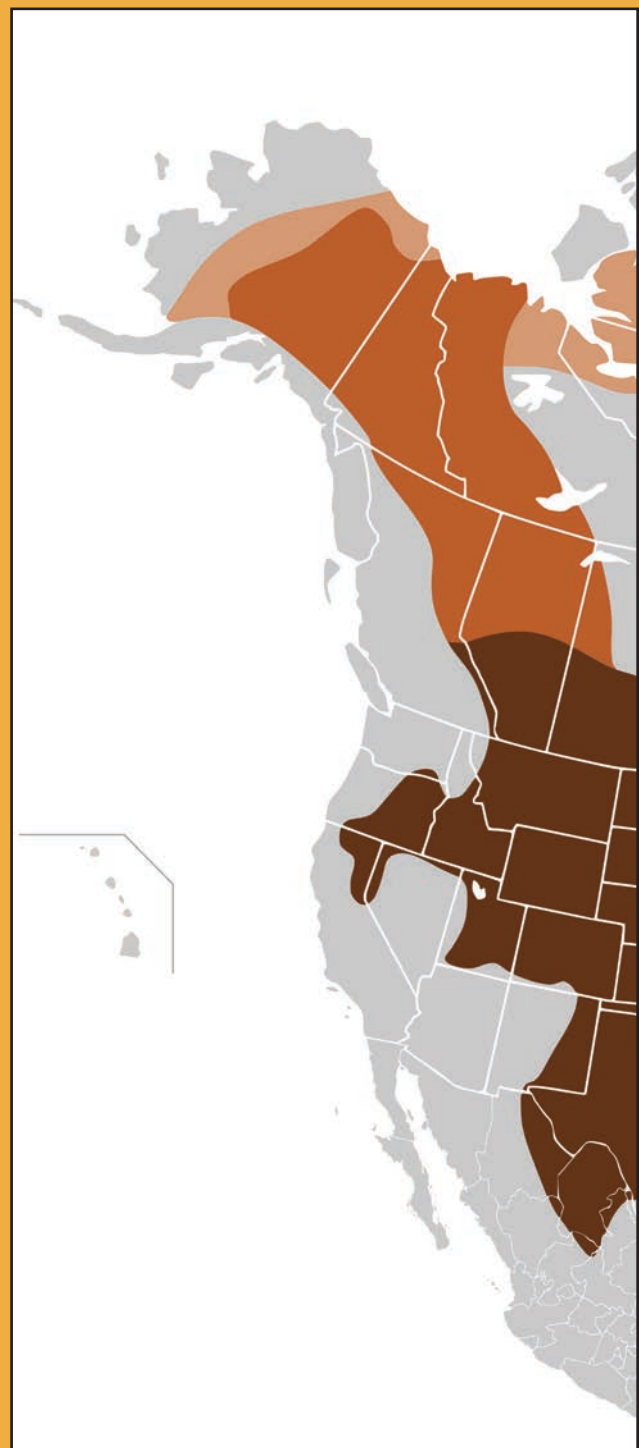




Figure 11: Traditional Territory of the Dakota Oyate (Reproduced from Omani 2009:23)

Figures 10 and 11 illustrate the similarity in area of the pre-contact range of the bison and the Traditional Territory of the Dakota Oyate. In Figure 10, the lightest brown shows the range of the extinct Holocene bison (*Bison occidentalis*), the medium brown shows the range of the Wood bison (*Bison bison athabasca*), and the dark brown shows the range of the Plains bison (*Bison bison bison*). The range of the Plains bison historically included the Prince Albert National Park region (COSEWIC 2004), which is to the north of the Wahpeton Dakota Nation reserves.

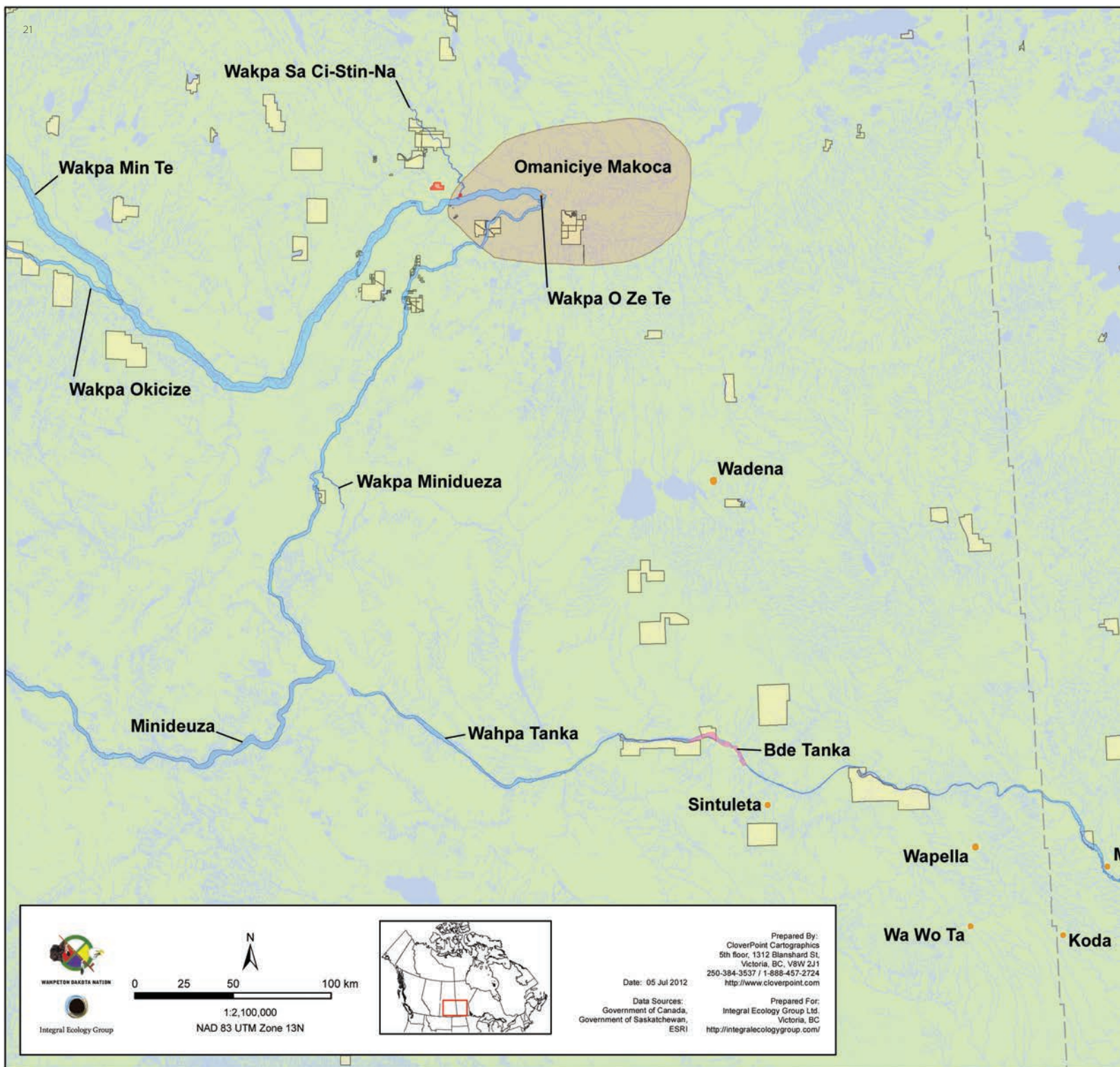


Figure 12: Wahpeton Dakota Nation Place Names Map. This map shows some of the Dakota place names held by the Wahpeton Dakota Nation in what is now central Canada.

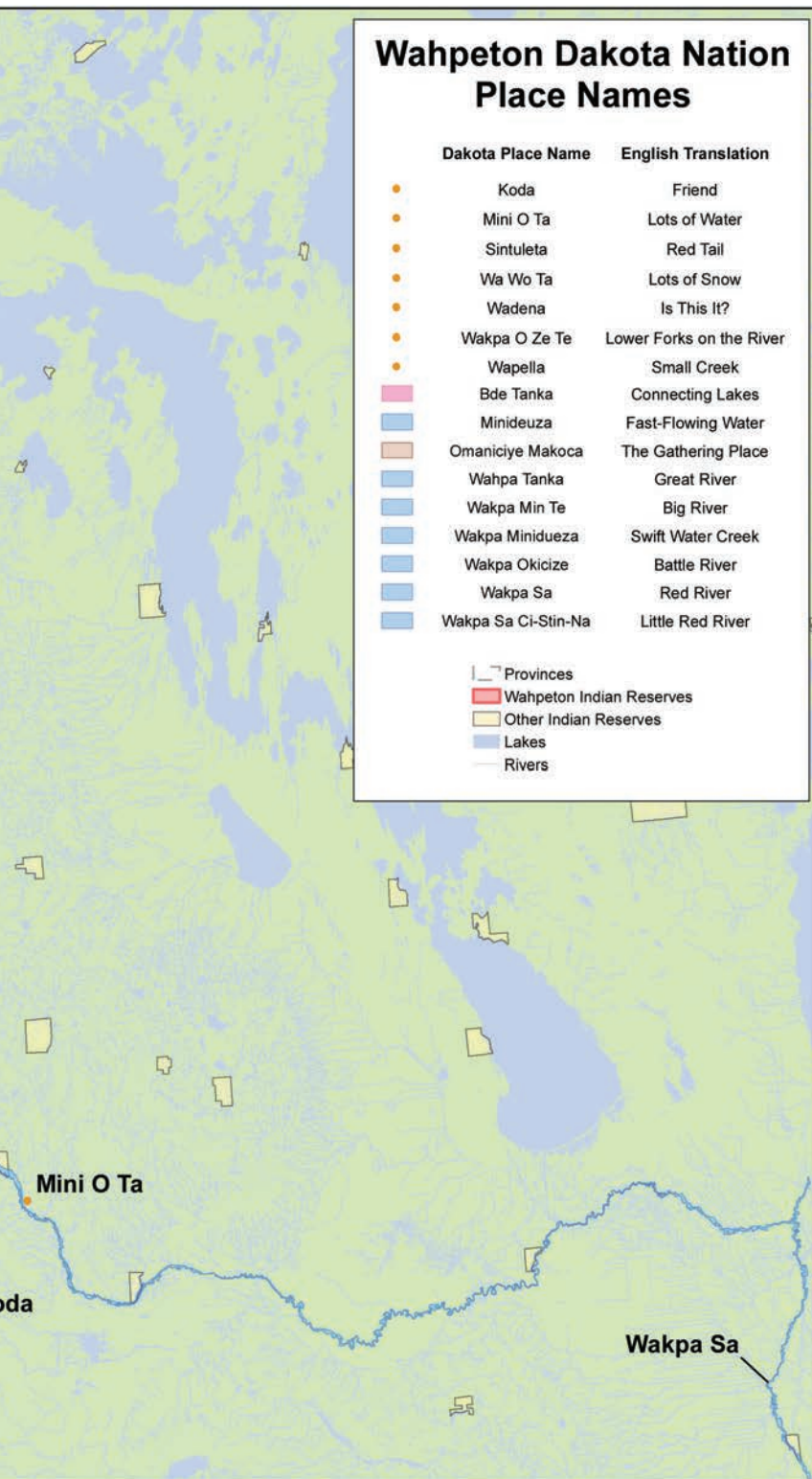
Names attached to the landscape preserve Dakota cultural and geographical memory. In an even more literal sense, however, petroglyph sites are physically inscribed with Aboriginal presence. Chief Omani argues that several petroglyph sites in Saskatchewan clearly depict Dakota cultural elements, and as such support oral history records of Dakota occupation of much of Saskatchewan for centuries past.⁶³ Two such Dakota petroglyph sites

depicting people are the St. Victor Petroglyphs, and a petroglyph boulder near the city of Weyburn.⁶⁴ In interviews conducted by Omani with the Woodland Cree Elders and Swampy Cree Elders of northern Saskatchewan and Manitoba, six ancient Dakota Rock Paintings were verified, with two cited as Dakota pipes near and along the Churchill River in northern Saskatchewan and Manitoba.⁶⁵ Additionally, Stonechild writes that the Stanley Mis-

Wahpeton Dakota Nation Place Names

Dakota Place Name	English Translation
Koda	Friend
Mini O Ta	Lots of Water
Sintuleta	Red Tail
Wa Wo Ta	Lots of Snow
Wadena	Is This It?
Wakpa O Ze Te	Lower Forks on the River
Wapella	Small Creek
Bde Tanka	Connecting Lakes
Minidueza	Fast-Flowing Water
Omaniciye Makoca	The Gathering Place
Wahpa Tanka	Great River
Wakpa Min Te	Big River
Wakpa Minidueza	Swift Water Creek
Wakpa Okicize	Battle River
Wakpa Sa	Red River
Wakpa Sa Ci-Stin-Na	Little Red River

	Provinces
	Wahpeton Indian Reserves
	Other Indian Reserves
	Lakes
	Rivers



Dakota Written on the Land

Pictographs are a form of writing that use pictorial symbols for words and phrases. Wahpeton Dakota Elder Samuel Buffalo noted during an oral history interview that “our [Dakota] ancestors advanced and developed pictorial writing.”⁶⁶ Several Dakota academics⁶⁷ “have also confirmed the existence of a pictograph writing system amongst the Dakota people.”⁶⁸

sion Elders, who are Woodland Cree, know the pictographs on the rocks of the Churchill River as *Pwata* writing, or Dakota writing, *Pwata* being the Cree word for Dakota.⁶⁹

First contact between the Dakota and Europeans likely happened in the 1600s. In 1658, perhaps within the lifetimes of the Dakota people who first encountered Europeans, the Dakota Nation began the process of treaty-making with European powers. These were known as the Peace, Friendship and Trade Treaties. These support Omani’s claim for a larger Dakota traditional territory. Between 1658 and 1750, the Dakota *Oyate* signed six separate Peace, Friendship, and Trade Treaties with the French Crown,⁷⁰ and between 1763 and 1817,⁷¹ they signed seven treaties with the British Crown. These treaties were to be overlooked when the Dakota First Nations in Saskatchewan were later denied participation in the treaty-making process in the late 19th century.

In addition to archaeological sites, oral history, and place names, evidence for the Dakota having territory within Canada comes from historical records from the fur trade. Omani cites several early instances of Hudson’s Bay Company journals referring to the Dakota in what is now Saskatchewan.⁷² Prior to 1750, fur traders had already identified the Missouri Coteau, a geographic feature that includes much of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, and North Dakota, as “Sioux Country.”⁷³ The Missouri Coteau is the region within the larger traditional territory of the Dakota *Oyate* where the reserves of Wahpeton Dakota Nation, Whitecap Dakota Nation, Standing Buffalo Dakota Nation, and Wood Mountain Lakota Nation are located.⁷⁴

The location of one early fur trading fort, built in 1753,⁷⁵ was still recalled by a Wahpeton Dakota elder interviewed by Omani- located in a forest to the east of the present-day Wahpeton reserve, this forest would later come to be known as the Fort à la Corne Forest. This elder located this fort by reference to Dakota place names: just past the *Wakpa-O-Ze-Te*, or “lower forks on the river,” at the intersection of the North Saskatchewan and South Saskatchewan rivers.⁷⁶ The historian Peter Douglas Elias noted that prior to 1774, the

Dakota were as far north as the Churchill River.⁷⁷

Because of the fur trade, members of the Dakota *Oyate* were exposed to European diseases. Stone-child estimated the Dakota *Oyate's* population in Canada to be 25,000 immediately prior to the smallpox epidemic of 1781, and only 4,200 by the end of 1782.⁷⁸ This drastic loss left areas within the Dakota *Oyate* territory sparsely populated and both European settlers and other First Nations people moved into many of the areas where members of the Dakota *Oyate* had previously lived⁷⁹. For instance, Cree and Salteaux, who signed Treaty 4 in 1874, as well as Treaty Six in 1876, moved into the territory of the Dakota *Oyate* and intermarried with Dakota, Nakota, and Lakota who had survived the smallpox epidemic.⁸⁰

The present distribution of reserve lands and communities throughout their traditional territory reflects the Dakota *Oyate's* post-epidemic population. Omani writes that because of the depopulation from this epidemic, four of the Dakota *Oyate* lineages, including the Wahpetonwan, moved from what is now north and central Saskatchewan and Manitoba into central and southern Saskatchewan and Manitoba.⁸¹

One Wahpetonwan *tiyospaye*, or extended family group — the ancestors of Chief Hupa Yakta *tiyospaye* — migrated into the region surrounding the Lake of the Woods where, today, the corners of Ontario, Minnesota, and Manitoba intersect, as well as the broader area where Saskatchewan and North Dakota also share boundaries.

This *tiyospaye* followed the bison within this territory, and “always returned to what is now known as Canada.”⁸² It is from Chief Hupa Yakta and his *tiyospaye* that the contemporary Wahpeton Dakota are descended.⁸³

After this epidemic, the journals of fur traders in the 1790s to 1820s also include numerous mentions of Dakota people living north of the 49th parallel, in what is now Manitoba, near the Souris, Red, and Assiniboine rivers.⁸⁴

More evidence of Dakota presence in what is now Canada comes from their involvement in the War of 1812. In this war, the Dakota fought alongside the British, against the United States.⁸⁵ Oral history evidence provided by Wahpeton Dakota Elder Robert Goodvoice gives a Dakota account of the conflict:

*[T]here was a huge Dakota camp. And they heard the white men were fighting. The white men from the south and from the north, they were fighting. But the Dakotas had no intentions of joining them. They stayed away. They stayed out of trouble. Until one morning, five men, they were Wasitius, white men, came to the camp... [and] said to them that they would like the Dakotas to help him fight against the oncoming enemy. He told him that when the war stopped, from that time on, they would be friends, they would look after the Dakotas and they would be friends. So the Dakotas, they agreed to that. And then they started. ... [U]ntil one day, this white man that asked for the Dakota's help came to them again and told them to stop. Don't bother them at all. The war is over. They made arrangements that they are not going to fight no more. So the Dakotas, they obeyed this white man and they didn't fight no more, they stopped. And they stuck around there, wherever the war ended, they stayed there and moved about you know, the same as they did in the other place. They made camp here and there and hunt and make their living here and there. And they stayed there.*⁸⁶

Wahpeton Dakota oral history recounted by Robert Goodvoice indicates that some Dakota were given medals to commemorate their help to the British in the War of 1812, some of which have been passed down to current members of the Wahpeton Dakota Nation.⁸⁷ Goodvoice describes that one of the chiefs who was given a medal, Wahanata, moved to the U.S. and signed treaty with the U.S. government. He was given land in the U.S., not very far south of Brandon, Manitoba.⁸⁸ Goodvoice also recounted that the Dakota were promised seven boatloads of supplies after their help in the war, and additional supplies when those were used up.⁸⁹

Less than a decade after the War of 1812 ended, in 1821, the Hudson's Bay Company and North West Company amalgamated, and in 1850, the Hudson's Bay Company established their own fort near the

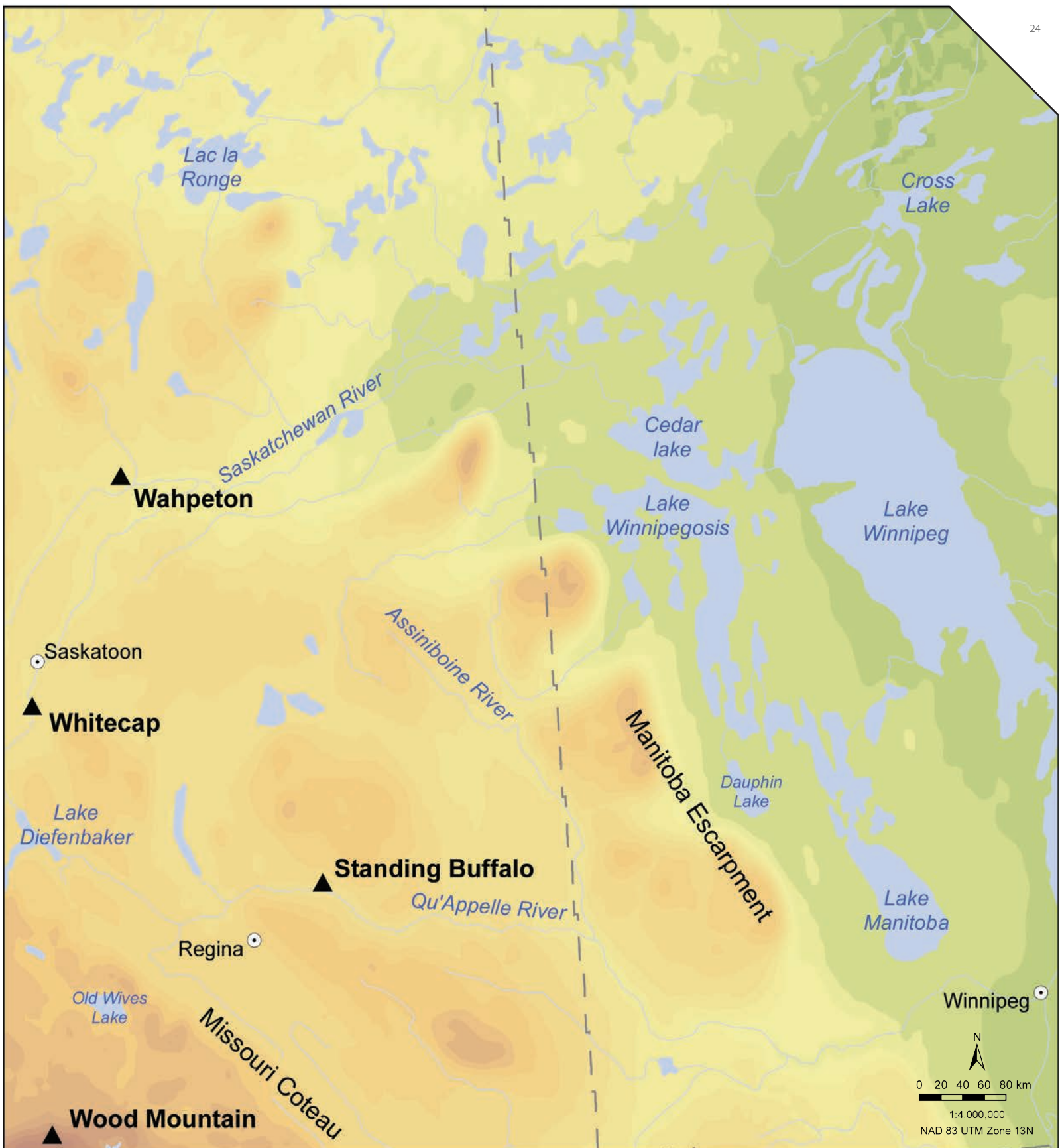


Fig. 13
Dakota / Lakota Reserves
in
Saskatchewan, Canada

Elevation (m)

1 - 50	250 - 300	500 - 550	750 - 800
50 - 100	300 - 350	550 - 600	800 - 850
100 - 150	350 - 400	600 - 650	850 - 900
150 - 200	400 - 450	650 - 700	900 - 950
200 - 250	450 - 500	700 - 750	950 - 1,000

- ▲ Dakota / Lakota Reserves
- Cities
- Provinces / States
- Lakes
- Rivers



Date: 09 Jul 2012

Data Sources:
 Government of Canada
 Government of Saskatchewan
 ESRI

Prepared By:
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Fig. 14: This photograph shows one of the King George III Pre-Confederation medals given to the Dakota Oyate for their assistance to Britain during the War of 1812.

present Wahpeton Dakota reserves, in the Fort at La Corne Forest. Hudson's Bay Company journals also note that the Dakota traded from 1821 to 1861 at the Red River settlement "often."⁹⁰ Additionally, Morrison writes that there were "many Dakota winter villages North of the 49th Parallel... along the valleys of the Souris, Assiniboine, Qu'Appelle and Lower Red River in what are now southern Manitoba and Saskatchewan."⁹¹

However, the War of 1812 was by no means the end of conflicts involving the Dakota and the U.S. Differences in the approach of American and Canadian in-

terests began to influence Dakota movement within their territory. Two years after the signing of a peace treaty between the Dakota and Cree at Fort Garry, Manitoba in 1860,⁹² the U.S. – Dakota War of 1862 broke out in Minnesota. After the war, the State of Minnesota placed a bounty that eventually reached \$200.00 on the head of every Dakota man, woman, and child. The Daily Republican, Winona, Minnesota, USA, September 24th, 1863 announced:

*The State reward for dead Indians has been increased to \$200 for every redskin sent to Purgatory. This sum is more than the dead bodies of all the Indians east of the Red River are worth.*⁹³



Fig. 16: The late Robert Goodvoice, a Wahpeton Dakota Elder, made a number of important Wahpeton Dakota oral history recordings. This photograph was taken in 1984. Photo credit: Shirley Goodvoice.

It is not an overstatement to call the actions of the U.S. government an attempted genocide. Because of this, some Dakota people crossed the border into Canada. Oral history from Robert Goodvoice indicates that this was a time when many Dakota people became “scattered” throughout their territory, as families were forced to split up.⁹⁴ These included Chief Little Crow and his followers, as well as Chief Standing Buffalo and Chief Whitecap, and their extended family groups, or *tiyospayes*. Chief Standing Buffalo and Chief Whitecap and their *tiyospayes* had historically followed a seasonal round that took in both sides of the 49th parallel. In fact,

one historian wrote that in the winter of 1863-64, the Dakota were likely the most numerous group of people in the Canadian northwest,⁹⁵ which became known as the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta.⁹⁶

However, in that same decade, hostilities emanating from the US side of the border caused the Dakota to shift their focus to year-round residency in what is now Manitoba and Saskatchewan.⁹⁷ The U.S. government wanted to send troops into Canada to pursue the Dakota who crossed the border, but the Canadian govern-

ment did not allow them to do so.⁹⁸ Wahpeton Elder Robert Goodvoice recounted that two prominent Dakota people living in Canada were kidnapped and taken to the U.S. in this same time period.⁹⁹

Wahpeton Elder Samuel Buffalo gave an oral history account of the persecution of Dakota people by the U.S. army:

....[A] small party of Dakotas were involved. They fought with white settlers now known as the Minnesota Massacre. Soon after, the U.S. army retaliated against the whole Dakota nation. Many sub-bands had no knowledge of the fight that took place in Minnesota but the U.S. army attacked any native encampment as long as they were Dakota.¹⁰⁰

It is against this backdrop of international hostilities that the Dakota were denied the opportunity to sign treaty in Canada. American officials took exception to the Crown's refusal to allow them to pursue the Dakota who fled the U.S. – Dakota War into Canada. This was a delicate international matter, and denying treaty to the Dakota in Saskatchewan and Manitoba proved a useful means for the Canadian government to maintain good relations with the United States.¹⁰¹ As such, in 1871, Manitoba's Treaty Commissioner Wemyss Simpson pronounced all Dakota "American Indians":

*They [the Sioux] are, properly speaking, American Indians, and many of them are refugees from America, excluded on account of the part they took in the Minnesota Massacre.*¹⁰²

It is worth noting here Treaty Commissioner Simpson's choice of words. He stated that "many" Dakota were from the U.S., not "all". However, the Canadian Government took the position that all the Dakota in Canada were from the U.S. and therefore not able to sign treaty with the British Crown.¹⁰³ This was despite the seven Peace, Friendship & Trade Treaties the Dakota Oyate and the British Crown had *already* signed, from 1763 to 1817.¹⁰⁴ As the Dakota were now considered "American Indians," Alexander Morris, the main crown negotiator of treaties three through six, echoed the sentiment of Treaty Commissioner Simpson, and wrote that the current reserve lands of the Dakota in Canada

were provided "as a matter of grace and not a right."¹⁰⁵

Two years later, in 1863, Chief Little Crow returned to the U.S. and was murdered for a bounty on his head. Military conflicts between the Dakota Oyate and the U.S. would continue, the year 1876 seeing the Battle of Little Bighorn in Montana.

On August 23 1876, the same year as the Battle of Little Bighorn, the James Smith Cree Nation, a neighbouring First Nation to the Wahpeton Dakota, became signatories to Treaty Six, despite having arrived from Manitoba only one year earlier. When the Cree and other neighbouring First Nations were offered treaties in the late 1800s, the Dakota were not included.

Following the battle of Little Bighorn, Lakota Chief Sitting Bull and his followers crossed the border into Canada.¹⁰⁶ While Lakota Chief Sitting Bull¹⁰⁷ and many of his followers did return to the U.S.A. in 1881,¹⁰⁸ some stayed and intermarried within the Dakota Oyate, or among other Aboriginal groups in the Canadian northwest.¹⁰⁹ For example, the Lakota Chief of Wood Mountain, Little Knife, had a British King George III 1812 Pre-Confederation Medal¹¹⁰ and was not part of the Battle of the Little Bighorn in Montana in 1867.¹¹¹

These conflicts between the Dakota Oyate and the U.S. government coloured Dakota relations with the Canadian federal government in treaty discussions. Although Dakota Chief Little Crow and Lakota Chief Sitting Buffalo and many of their followers had returned to the U.S. in 1881, their temporary presence in Canada further cemented the mistaken notion that the Dakota were "American Indians", and led the Canadian government to exclude from treaty talks even the resident Dakota Oyate communities that had not taken part in the U.S. – Dakota War or the Battle of the Little Bighorn.¹¹²





chiefs and U. S. Officials.
 Kicking Bear. 12 W. F. Cody, Buf-
 falo Bill
 Good Voice. 13 Maj. J. M. Burk.
 Thunder Hawk. 14 J. C. Craiger.
 Rocky Bear. 15 J. McDonald.
 Young man afraid of his horse.
 American Horse.
 Jan. 16, '91. Photo and copyright
 11, 1891, Deadwood, S. D.

Fig. 16: "Indian chiefs and U.S. officials. 1. Two Strike. 2. Crow Dog. 3. Short Bull. 4. High Hawk. 5. Two Lance. 6. Kicking Bear. 7. Good Voice. 8. Thunder Hawk. 9. Rocky Bear. 10. Young Man Afraid of His Horse. 11. American Horse. 12. W.F. Cody (Buffalo Bill). 13. Maj. J.M. Burk. 14. J.C. Craiger. 15. J. McDonald. 16. J.G. Worth. Taken at Pine Ridge, Jan. 16 [18]91". Photograph courtesy of Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C., USA.



Fig. 17: The late Wahpeton Dakota Elder Samuel Buffalo made a number of recordings of Wahpeton Dakota Nation oral history.

CONCLUSION



Fig. 18: Pictured here are Herbert Flying Buffalo and Reverend Dr. Moore. Herbert Flying Buffalo was hereditary Chief of the Wahpeton Dakota Nation.

Due to international tensions following the U.S. – Dakota War, the community of Wahpeton, like other Dakota communities within Saskatchewan, has been misunderstood by some scholars to be a community of “refugees”, who came to Canada to escape persecution in the United States. This view was further cemented when some Dakota *Oyate* members came north after the Battle of Little Bighorn. However, research by Omani describes a persistent oral history tradition of the Dakota people that describes how the pre-existing territory of the Dakota *Oyate* came to be intersected by the U.S. – Canada border.¹¹³ As such, it is inaccurate to consider the coming together of Dakota people to form the community of Wahpeton as a group of U.S. “refugees” travelling beyond the borders of their habitual territory.

The Dakota, including ancestors of the Wahpeton Dakota Nation, have lived in the area of Prince Albert since before the migration in the 1860s.¹¹⁴ Dakota people from the U.S. who in the 1800s made their way north to escape persecution were coming to stay with their own

people, who had previously occupied and continued to occupy a traditional territory that includes the area around what is now Prince Albert, Saskatchewan.¹¹⁵ According to Omani, the Dakota were excluded from the treaty process in Canada not because they lacked ancestral roots in the country, but because it was politically expedient for the government of Canada to maintain good relations with the U.S.¹¹⁶

In citing the comments of Chief Justice Lamer of the Supreme Court of Canada in *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* [1997] 3 S.C.R. 1010 (S.C.C.), as it pertains to the shared territory of Aboriginal peoples, Omani has stated that the combined Dakota *Oyate* oral history, and other documentary evidence shows that the Dakota *Oyate* occupied what is now Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta “before, during, and after the signing of the numbered treaties.”¹¹⁷ For this reason, Omani states that the Canadian federal government’s position that the Dakota and Lakota should be excluded from the treaty process because they were ‘American Indians’ is untenable.¹¹⁸

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FURTHER READING

Ethnohistorical research conducted with the Dakota people in Canada is sparse. However, the following sources provide cultural, historical, and other information that is relevant to the Wahpeton Dakota.

- **Dr. Leo Omani, current Chief of the Wahpeton Dakota Nation**, completed his doctoral dissertation in 2010, entitled “Perspectives of Saskatchewan Dakota/Lakota Elders on the Treaty Process within Canada” (Interdisciplinary Studies, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon). In this work, Omani interviewed elders from the Wahpeton Dakota Nation and other Dakota/Lakota First Nations within Saskatchewan to ascertain the implications of the treaty-making process in Canada for the non-treaty Dakota First Nations in Saskatchewan. Omani provides recommendations to improve the political position of Dakota/Lakota First Nations within Saskatchewan in their treaty negotiations with the Crown. Though the focus of this dissertation is on Dakota Elder’s perspectives on the treaty process, the interviews conducted during this research process contain a rich body of information regarding Dakota history and culture. The authors of the current report owe much to Dr. Omani’s work, especially the argument he advances that Dakota have traditional territory within the current borders of Canada.
- **Recordings of Wahpeton Dakota Nation oral history** include “An Oral History of the Wahpaton [sic] Dakota”, ten volumes of which were completed by Wahpeton Dakota Elders Robert Goodvoice, and Samuel Buffalo, with the assistance of Dan Beveridge (1977, Part of the Indian History Film Project. Ten volumes. In Saskatchewan Archives, Indian History Film Project. Saskatchewan Archives Board, Regina), in which the stories of Dakota Elders in the area of Prince Albert were recorded. These ranged in topic from the origin of the Dakota Nation, the War of 1812, and the Dakota people of Wahpeton having followed a hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering lifestyle since time immemorial, and taking up permanent residence in the 1870s near the city that became known as Prince Albert. Wahpeton Dakota Elders Samuel Buffalo and Robert Goodvoice together also completed an additional four volumes of “An Oral History of the Wahpaton [sic] Dakota” (1977, Part of the Indian History Film Project. Four volumes. In Saskatchewan Archives, Indian History Film Project. Saskatchewan Archives Board, Regina), with Robert Goodvoice (see above). The topics of these recordings ranged from combating difficulties encountered on reserve, to the Dakota in Canada, to raising and educating children, among other topics.
- **Books about the Dakota in Canada** include Gontran Lavolette’s *The Dakota Sioux in Canada* (1991, Winnipeg, Manitoba: DLM Publications), which provides a broad overview of the history, stories, and general cultural information and customs of the Dakota people within Canada. James Howard’s *The Canadian Sioux* (1984, Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press) describes aspects of Dakota life within Canada, including economy, social life, philosophy and religion, ceremonies, and other topics. David McCrady’s *Living With Strangers: The Nineteenth- Century Sioux and the Canadian-American Borderlands* (2006, Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press) considers the history of the Dakota in North America in relation to their territory and the Canada – U.S. border. James R. Walker’s *Lakota Belief and Ritual* (1991, Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press) includes descriptions of Lakota beliefs, stories, customs, ceremonial practices, as well as other information, though not related specifically to Dakota in Canada.

- **Traditional Land Use Studies (TLUS)** - Wahpeton Dakota Nation has completed two TLUS in recent years: one for the Shore Gold Star-Orion South Diamond Project in 2011 (Wahpeton Dakota Nation; Omani, L. J.; Behr, T. K.; and Hazelbower, J.) and one for SaskPower's Shore Gold Diamond Mine Transmission Line in 2012 (Wahpeton Dakota Nation; Omani, L. J.; Behr, T. K.; and Hazelbower, J.) Both of these TLUS were completed with the assistance of the Integral Ecology Group, and each TLUS included 12 TLU mapping interviews with knowledgeable land users.
- **Ethnoecological and ethnobotanical sources** related to the area around Prince Albert, Saskatchewan include Jeremy Pittman's thesis entitled "The Vulnerability of the James Smith and Shoal Lake First Nations to Climate Change and Variability" (2009, MSc Geography thesis, University of Regina, Saskatchewan). Pittman investigates this subject through office-based and onsite interviews, and onsite mapping. There are also two reports published by other researchers that draw upon the interviews completed by Pittman. These are Ermine, W., Sauchyn, D., Vetter, M. and Hart, C.'s "Isi Wipan – Climate: Identifying the impacts of climate change and capacity for adaptation in two Saskatchewan First Nation communities" (2007, Final Project Report to Prairie Adaptation Research Collaborative and Natural Resources Canada, Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation Directorate) and Ermine, W., Sauchyn, D. and Pittman, J.'s "Nikan Oti: The Future – Understanding adaptation and capacity in two First Nations" (2008, Final Project Report to Prairie Adaptation Research Collaborative and Natural Resources Canada, Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation Directorate). Christina Clavelle's Master's thesis entitled "Ethnobotany of Two Cree Communities in the Southern Boreal Forest of Saskatchewan" (1997, MA thesis, Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, University of Saskatchewan), is a record of the James Smith and Shoal Lake Cree Nations' use of plants for a variety of purposes.

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Notes



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