

Dakota Makoce Na Mni Okiciyaka: Dakota Land and Water Acknowledgment Statement

As part of our commitment to address the unresolved legacy of genocide, dispossession, and settler colonialism, Hennepin County acknowledges that the magnificent land and vibrant waterways from which our institutions benefit, are located upon the cultural, spiritual, and indigenous homeland of the *Dakota Oyate* (Dakota Nation). The Dakota people originated at the confluence of the *Mnisota Wakpa* (Minnesota River) and *Haha Wakpa* (Mississippi River).

For millennia, the *Dakota Oyate* acknowledged and embraced the immeasurable expanse of our circular world as *Unci Maka* or Grandmother Earth. This beautiful, terrestrial grandmother provided the Dakota warm shelter when it was cold. She gave them shade when it was hot. She fed them when they were hungry and gave them water when they were thirsty. She is still the first role model to all her grandchildren - the two-legged, the four-legged, those that fly, those that crawl, those that rise from the ground, and those that flow. *Unci Maka* unwaveringly remains a nurturing and compassionate matriarch to present and future generations.

The Dakota people's wise growth and ever-evolving relationship under *Unci Maka's* guidance enabled them to flourish. Their lives were immersed in and inseparable from the unique powers and varying gifts inherent in all parts of her natural world. Their daily prayers to the totality of life always concluded with the declaration *Mitakuye Oyasin*, another reverent acknowledgement of creation, meaning *All My Relatives*.

Furthermore, we recognize that a prominent term of endearment within Dakota society, that is descriptive of the innumerable lakes and rivers within the Dakota homeland, is the placename *Mnisota Mokoce* or the *Land of Misty Waters*. In this realm, the Dakota became a sovereign nation; a sovereignty that predates the sovereignty of the United States. The sovereignty status of the Dakota remains today. The four cohesive sub-divisions of the *Dakota Oyate* responsible for the stewardship of this land are the *Bdewakantunwan* (Village of the Sacred Lake), *Sisitunwan* (Village of Fish Scales), *Wahpekute* (Village of Shooting Leaves), and *Wahpetunwan* (Village of the Leaves) bands.

Hennepin County calls attention to the Dakota people's ongoing connection to this special place. Today, our county institutions continue to benefit from the unfavorable treaties, military campaigns, and settler colonialism, which encouraged white newcomers to settle and colonize Native American territory. The county played a role in shaping the history of Dakota people. This was enabled by laws, such as the Homestead Act of 1862 which brought 75,000 settlers to Minnesota in the first three years of its enactment, resulting in the displacement and starvation of Dakota people. Atop this, the heinous 1863 Dakota Removal Act coercively displaced and removed Dakota and HoChunk people from Minnesota after a brutal incarceration at Ft. Snelling.

Therefore, Hennepin County acknowledges the capacity for today's county institutions to work more closely and reparatively with the Dakota people, whose homeland we occupy; the Ojibwe and HoChunk peoples, whose traditional homelands border the Dakota homeland in northern and southern Minnesota; and all First Nations Peoples who currently live in or interact and associate with Hennepin County in a broader context, in creating transformative partnerships and alliances, convening conversations to explore possibilities, creating increased engagement and consultation with the Native American community, organizing events and workshops on Indigenous history, culture, and contemporary issues, and looking at the potential for developing land and water-based projects together.