

# 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.



**“In Lakota country, we have this blessing of having abundant open spaces and abundant beauty all around us.”**

**Kevin Locke, Lakota Dancer, Musician & Cultural Ambassador**



To find out more about the *Oceti Sakowin* Essential Understandings, the WoLakota Project, and to see Elder interviews, visit [www.wolakotaproject.org](http://www.wolakotaproject.org)



# 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.”



**“It is our way of life...we learned it through our father... because all Indian religion was outlawed for lots of years...and when you could do it out in the open again, he was one of the first ones who brought the Sundance back to our area.”**

**Dr. Nadine Eastman, Superintendent, Tiospa Zina Schools**



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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.



**“There is a difference between speaking our language as a fluent speaker, and being able to actually teach it. We feel humbled that we are on the track of a teaching way that’s being proven effective through the mouths, minds and spirits of our children.”**

**Jesse Taken Alive, Elder, Standing Rock Nation**



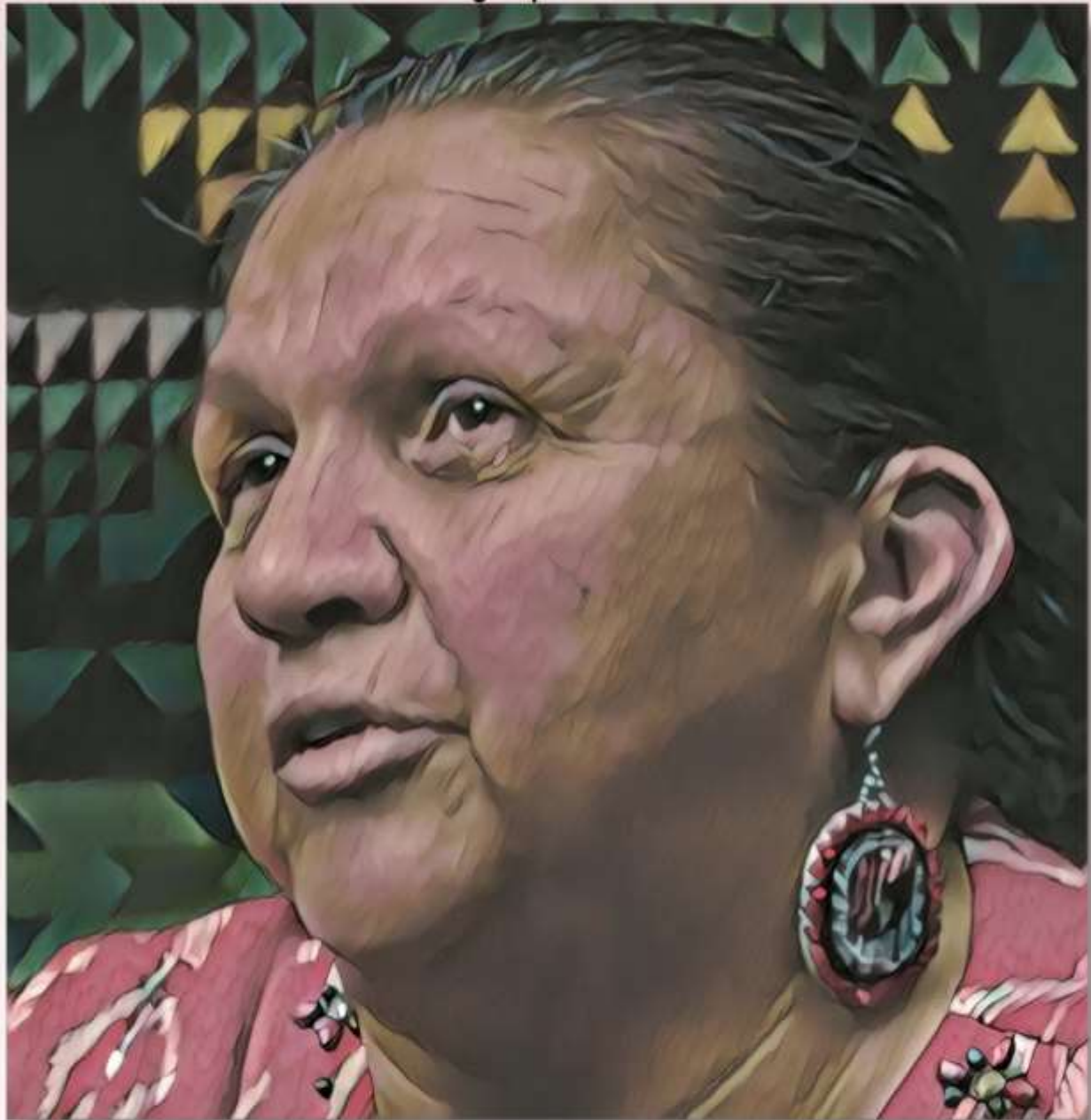
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# Oceti Sakowin Essential Understanding 4

## 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.



**“This little boy says, ‘So, you can really be my grandma?’ I said, ‘Sure I can...a long time ago the ancestors said that anybody older than you is your Elder, so I can be your grandma!’ ‘Oh cool!’ he said, and he gave me a hug.”**

**April Fallis, Elder, Crow Creek**



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# Oceti Sakowin Essential Understanding 5

## ORAL TRADITION & STORYTELLING

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.



**“It was from the old men telling me that I was able to write the Wounded Knee story, the massacre. The White Man always called it a ‘battle.’ It was not a battle... eighteen Congressional Medals of Honor awarded? ...for massacring defenseless women and children?”**

**Sidney Byrd, Elder, Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe**



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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.



“...treaties we signed with the US Government, over 200...and they were never kept. The tribes on the Northern Plains gave up ninety million acres for those treaties- for those benefits for health and education...and people think we get that ‘free’, they think the government gives us a paycheck every month. For the next thousand years the government could give us free health care and education and they still won’t pay for what they took from us.”

**Lydia Whirlwind Soldier, Sicangu Lakota Elder**



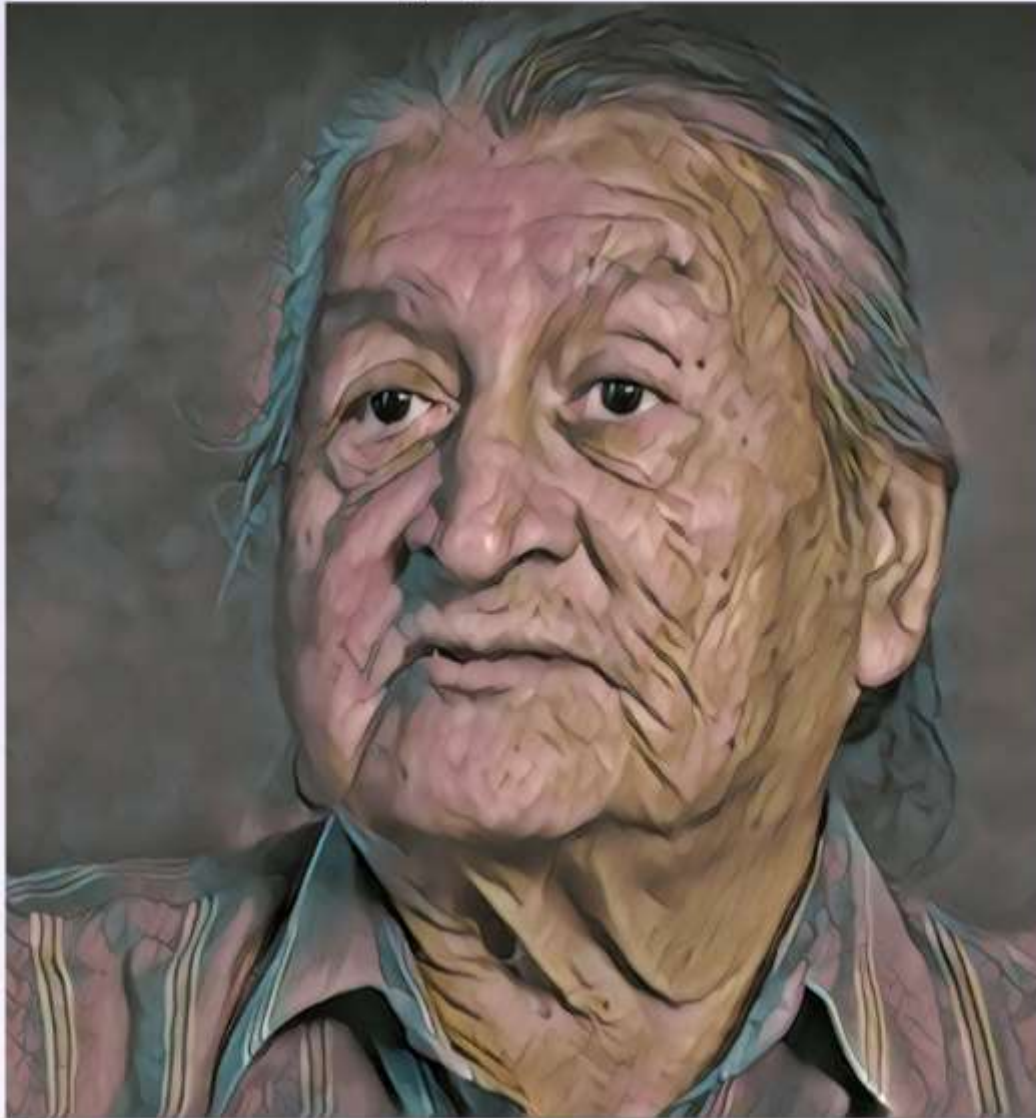
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# Oceti Sakowin Essential Understanding 7

## 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.



“They’re trying to figure out why we have this ninety percent unemployment, this low income rate...they say, ‘You guys should be dead!’ but it’s our relatives that go and share- the Tiospaye’s still there... that’s why we’ve survived all these years... I’m in the center of my family, the nucleus, and all our grandchildren and sons come to us when they need things.”

**Victor Douville, Sicangu Lakota Elder**



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