Prairie Pod Transcript

Season 6, Episode 57: Mni Sóta Maḳoće (The Land of the Dakota) Part 1: History and Cultural Connections to the Prairie

Hosts: Megan Benage, South Region Ecologist, Mike Worland, Nongame Wildlife Biologist, Minnesota DNR

Guests:

Gabe Miller, Environmental Program Manager, Prairie Island Indian Community; Ferin Davis Anderson, Supervisor of Environmental Science and Land Department, Michael Kurtz, Cultural Interpreter/Naturalist, Will Crawford, Manager of Dakota Language and Cultural Resources, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community; Cheyanne St. John, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer/Director, Lower Sioux Indian Community; Samantha Odegard, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, Amanda Wold, Environmental Director, Upper Sioux Community

Podcast audio can be found online at mndnr.gov/prairiepod

Transcript:

((music playing))

Megan: Hey Prairie Pod listeners, I'm Megan Benage, regional ecologist with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Marissa Ahlering: And I'm Dr. Marissa Ahlering, lead scientist with the Nature Conservancy in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota.

Sara Vacek: I'm Sara Vacek, wildlife biologist with the U.S. Fish Wildlife Service, based out of the Morris Wetland Management District.

Mike Worland: And I'm Mike Worland. I'm a wildlife biologist with the Minnesota DNR Nongame Wildlife Program.

Megan: We are part of the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Partnership, and we're here to help you discover the prairie.

Marissa: Discover the prairie.

Sara: Discover the prairie.

Mike: Discover the prairie.

((music playing and sounds of birds chirping))

Megan: Hey, welcome back Prairie Pod. I'm here with my co-host, Mike Worland and we are in person today.

Mike: Hello Megan. Yeah, it is so nice to be in person. It is weird, but it's wonderful.

Megan: It is, and we've got an amazing group of guests today. I'm super excited.

Mike: Yeah. I am too. This is going to be a day where I am in total learning mode. I mean I am always in learning mode, but this day in particular I am going to walk out of here with a lot more knowledge. I know.

Megan: I know. Me too. We should just jump right in—

Mike: Yeah.

Megan: Because in this episode we want to hear everything we can from our guests. So, just a quick note that it is November 9, 2022, when we're recording this. We're just letting you know the recording date to give some context to some of the discussions that we're going to have today. So, we are very excited because we are joined by staff from the four Dakota tribal communities. The way these episodes are structured is it's two parts. So, today we're going to cover Dakota historical and cultural perspectives and connections to the prairie, and then next week, we'll be right back here to talk about how Dakota people in Minnesota are managing and conserving the prairie today. In both episodes, we're going to feature traditional ecological knowledge, and I could not be more excited and honored to learn from our guests here today.

Mike: Absolutely.

Megan: Sam, we're going to start with you if that's ok. Will you introduce yourself for us?

Samantha: Sure, I'm Samantha Odegard, the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for Pezihutazizi K'api (The Place Where They Dig For Yellow Medicine) or Yellow Medicine Nation.

Amanda: Hello, my name is Amanda Wold; I'm an environmental director for the Pezihutazizi Oyate (Yellow Medicine Nation), the Upper Sioux Community here in southwest Minnesota.

Gabe: Hi my name is Gabe Miller; I'm the environmental program manager for the Prairie Island Indian Community, Tinta Wita.

Ferin: ((speaking Anishinaabe)) Boozhoo aaniin Ferin Davis Anderson nindizhinikaaz. Indinawemaaganidog. Hello, my name is Ferin Davis Anderson. I am the supervisor environmental sciences for the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community in our Land and Natural Resources Department.

Will: Hello, my name's Will Crawford. I work with the Dakota Language and Culture. And I'm here on behalf of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Dakota Oyate.

Michael: ((speaking Lakota)) Háu! Ṫaśuŋka Ópi emaciyapi. I am Michael Kurtz, the cultural interpreter and naturalist for the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community and I live out on the prairie at Hoćokata Ti (cultural center).

Cheyanne: Hello, my name is Cheyanne St. John. I serve as the tribal historic preservation officer at Caŋśa'yapi Otunwe, Lower Sioux Indian Community in southwest Minnesota.

Megan: All right, thanks so much for introducing yourselves. So, we know your titles, we know your names, we know your Tribal Nations that you are with, but we want to give our listeners a little bit more of an understanding of what you do because there's so much more than just a title for all the good work that you all are doing. Okay, so we're going to go around the room so we can get a little bit more of an understanding of what you all do and the good work that you're doing and we're going to go in the opposite order and so we're going to start with Cheyanne.

Cheyanne: Thanks Megan, part of the work that I do for Caŋśa'yapi includes historic preservation, which is primarily compliant in regulation for the Section 106 process. But I also serve as the director for the Caŋśa'yapi cultural department, and we have several sub-departments under that umbrella, which includes managing the historic site, a tribal stewardship department, which is management and supervision of our tribal cultural specialists or tribal monitors, and we do, we are involved with our Dakota language programs, and partner often with pretty much anything associated with culture and language within our community. So we have some excellent relationships that have been formed both internally and with our local and state communities.

Mike: Thanks so much, Cheyanne. Ferin, would you mind talking about what all three of you do for the Shakopee community?

Ferin: Yeah, sure. So, I work for the Land and Natural Resources Department, and I'm on the terrestrial side, and we also have a water resources side, but a lot of the work that we do on my side is habitat management. And so we manage a lot of prairies, and forests, woodlands, wetlands, and a lot of habitat restoration that goes into that because at Shakopee, we're in a really urban area, so a lot of the land has been converted for other uses. So habitat restoration is really important for the community and being a

good steward of that community. And then Will and Michael, they work at our cultural center called Hoċokata Ti, which was actually just built a few years ago, and I really like to work with their programs because incorporating some of the stuff that they do into our land management is so important. So, Michael, he does a lot of plant walks and bird walks, and that's awesome, and Will, he's able to provide us Dakota language, which is so important for, you know, cultural revitalization, which is tied into land management, too. So that's some of the stuff that we do at Shakopee.

Megan: Thank you, Ferin. Gabe.

Gabe: Yeah, so for Prairie Island, I manage the land and environment department for Tinta Winta. Anything and everything has to do with environment or natural resources, our department covers. So environmental services, environmental policy, we do habitat management, invasive species work, we have a water resource department as well that, and we're right on the Mississippi, so it's a very important part of the work we do is monitoring and trying to work with outside entities on those issues. Outside of my own department, we also have a THPO office, a Tribal Historic Preservation Office. We also have a Language and Cultures department, too, and our department works a lot with those other groups within Prairie Island, you know, trying to work in siloes and so that our work reflects the cultural resources and work that all the other departments do. We also have a gardening program at Prairie Island that's developed in the last couple of years that very, very important to the community. It's been a great educational opportunity for outside public to learn about you know, Dakota Culture and values and medicines and all that, sorta things.

Amanda: So as the environmental director for the Upper Sioux community, I work for the Office of Environment, and currently I am an office of one. (Laughs) So as you can imagine, there is quite a bit going on. We, similar to Prairie Island, we do some programming under EPA funds, so we have Clean Water Act funds, the 106 program, we do water quality sampling within the Minnesota River Basin, especially the waters that are coming into the tribal community. We also have GAP funding, so the General Assistance Program funding that we use for a variety of programs, whether that be solid waste, hazardous waste mitigation, things like that. And then we apply for a lot of funding to do different programs, so in projects, and that covers a lot of our natural resources component, so similar to the other communities here, doing the work with invasive species removal, prairie restoration, oak savannah restoration, community outreach, and then outreach and education I think is a component that we're trying to work on. It's been challenging with COVID, (laughs) so that's been pretty exciting, though, because we are doing some programs, or planning to do some programs around wild rice restoration. So thank you.

Megan: Thanks, Amanda. Samantha.

Samantha: And as a tribal historic preservation officer, I review projects, federal projects that might have an effect on our cultural resources. Things have expanded since then and we're doing a lot of consultation within the state, too. And in addition to that, I am also the director of the department. We oversee language programming, Dakota Arts Program, a lot of work with digitalization and archival work are things that we deem important that we want to preserve for our future generations. And I get to do a lot of

work actually with Amanda when it comes to looking at the resources within the Upper Sioux community and trying to restore some of our prairie lands and our medicinal plants.

Mike: Okay. Thanks everybody for giving us some more details. I mean, you made the point like the native point and in relationship with the prairie, I mean, we've certainly touched on quite a bit before with the bison, for example, and it does get mentioned throughout the podcast. But really focusing on it has been a super important objective for us, and we're finally getting to that today. It's almost impossible, I think it is impossible to talk about prairie without talking about that native person connection, and.

Megan: Traditional knowledge, Mike. I think the only way we're really going to save the prairie and we're going to be successful at it that we're going to really meet our conservation goals is by working together. Because to me, then you have two pillars of strength working together, and prairie is so complex. I'm not going to know it all by the time I've done, no person is going to know everything there is to know about this amazing community because there's just so many things happening that we don't even understand or know. And so we've got to be better at sharing our knowledge, passing our knowledge along to each other, and building bridges. And I think some of that starts right here, I hope.

Mike: Yeah, well put. Let's get into some questions, shall we, for our guests, and - -

Megan: Absolutely.

Mike: - - let's hear from them. So our first question, just really giving some context for the listeners, just talking about the historical role that prairie has for Dakota in Minnesota. Cheyanne, so yeah, if you wouldn't mind, please give us some historical perspectives for your community, what has prairie meant to the Dakota. Yeah. How does prairie fit in with your community and its importance?

Cheyanne: That's a good question, and just to clarify that, I would be responding with some of the stories and information that have been told from the Caŋṡa'yapi community not representing, of course, an information as response as collective, you know, for the entire Dakota nation, of course. But I think it starts with understanding that Dakota people were seasonal movers, and their relationship with the, or their independent philosophy and worldview, and how they interacted and responded with the landscape around them. So they had a different understanding and relationship with the natural environment, and so part of that included this respect for balance and understanding a deeper understanding for symbiosis, what affects one thing will affect another. And so each of their practices that were implemented as part of their life ways reflected that. So there wasn't overharvesting, overhunting, and I think you have to start the conversation from that with that focal point in mind.

Megan: Thanks for that, Cheyanne. I think that's super helpful. Sam, could you expand that on that for us?

Samantha: Yeah. I think Cheyanne was touching on most everything that I wanted to say, but I think the way to look at it is it was really a coexistence and a relationship with the land and the prairie, even though I think a lot of times there was decades of

misinformation or miseducation that made it sound like we weren't utilizing it, it was just vast open space, but that's far from the truth. We would gather our food, our medicines, almost everything that we needed would come from the prairie, and if it wasn't something that we were directly using, it was feeding the bison and elk and other animals that we would also feed off or use for shelter and supplies. And in turn, we helped take care of it. Like Cheyanne, we'd move, we wouldn't overharvest in certain areas. We would even use fire to help manage it. And there's also a bit more to it. So it's not just those resources because everyone kind of tends to look at everyone tends to just look at it as what monetary things or what resources they can get from it, but with this coexistence, there was also more. We also have very similar cultural and spiritual sites out in the prairie as well.

Mike: You know, so what I'm hearing, I think it's important to cover this again, the Dakota were, they were land managers, and they were really employing techniques that we had found value in, and that they are important and useful. Not over-foraging, not overharvesting, and fire, the bison, all these things are super important for the prairie, the Dakota recognize that.Megan: I think one of the things that might help folks kind of break this down into their minds because we do often think about humans as being separate from the natural world, but we're very much integrated and part of it. I think if we just think from basic ecology, right? Like diversity and connection are the two pillars of our world.

Mike: Megan, I know we have all these guests, and we want to hear more from them, but can you talk more about the complexity of the biomes and the state in their uniqueness? So give us a little more context for this.

Megan: I will just talk about biomes briefly because I like the alliteration, and because I really, this is about traditional knowledge today. So, I think all I really want to say is that Minnesota lies at the center of four major North American ecological regions. Sometimes they're called provinces or biomes, and we think about these as the aspen parklands, which also has a lot of prairie in it, not just aspen, prairie grasslands, deciduous forest, and coniferous forest. If we're talking about provinces, then we would be looking at eastern broadleaf forest, tallgrass prairie, tallgrass prairie and aspen parklands, or Laurentian mixed forest. They're really just the same thing, it just depends on who you are. So we're in a unique spot in Minnesota where we have these unique, rich natural heritage, and that's all I'm really going to say about biomes because I think it sets the stage for how Dakota people moved across landscape in terms of all of these different natural heritage elements that they were interacting with at different points of time, and I really want to hear more from Sam and Cheyanne describing the original and ancestral territories of Dakota people. And this time, Sam, how about we start with you?

Samantha: All right. This is actually one of my favorite things to talk about. And again, I like to reeducate people on what they've been taught, and the Dakota people as part of the Oceti Ŝakowiŋ or the Seven Council Fires that people most commonly identify as Sioux, we had a vast territory, and we moved around within it, although as Dakota, we are recognized as being more to the eastern part of that. And when I started this work, my elders explained to me what our homeland was, was from the Great Lakes to the

Rocky Mountains from about Missouri up into Canada. And that's huge. That's bigger than a lot of countries, and some maps actually show it going beyond that. If you look at the map that MHS has on the US Dakota War website, that's even bigger. And then I think another good resource that people can look at is there's a map called, I'm not sure what it's called, I know the link, it's like native-land.ca, it's actually interactive map that helps break it down a little bit more, and it shows indigenous people all over the world, but you can focus on our area.

Mike: Cheyanne, would you care to build on that?

Cheyanne: Yeah. I think Sam had some really excellent points. They're kind of providing the idea of the lay of the land as it was. I think an important key piece, too, to remember is some of the relationships that Dakota people had to endure as part of ceding of their territory. So, although their territory was vast, there were encounters that had, you know, began to take place as early as the late 1600s and early 1700s that, you know, over time we see started receding those territories. So right now, what is known as the Seven Council Fires that moved across those territories are now restricted to what is known as the state of South Dakota and Minnesota. So, you can imagine being able to freely move across that huge landscape to now being restricted to tiny tracts of land in these two states. So, it goes that's a very expansive change over a series of centuries.

Mike: Cheyanne, what is the official Dakota name for Minnesota? Can you say that?

Cheyanne: Mni Sota Makoce and then we have our language experts here who could maybe expand on that.

Mike: Good hosting, Cheyanne. Yeah, so let's move into that. Will, would you mind starting and just talking more about the Dakotan seasonal patterns in their movement? Before you do, though, can you talk about what that Mni Sota Makoce what that means, its interpretation?

Will: Yeah. The name Mni Sota Makoce, as many of you may know, the name the state of Minnesota is in Dakota, we say Mni Sota and that is not one of the traditional names for this area per se, it was a postcolonial contact term given to the area. Our boundaries are not specified by the state boundaries as Dakota people, as Cheyanne and Sam said earlier, our territorial lands, our homelands expanded out to a wide, vast region. So our Dakota homelands are not restricted to the state of Minnesota borders. Yes, to your question about Dakota people and our seasonal patterns of where we live, as we mentioned, our territorial lands are vast, and where we lived during the different seasons changed. So during the cold winter months, we would usually live in the woodland areas commonly in Mni Sota. And during the summer months, the warmer summer months, there were a lot of hunting expeditions, trips that went out to the vast prairie, which is now known as South Dakota and North Dakota as well as Nebraska. Those hunting trips could last anywhere from a couple months to several years. And there were hunting patterns that were done throughout the different years and as Dakota people, we also gathered with our Lakota and Nakota relatives that lived out there in the prairie regions.

Mike: Turn it over to Michael, if you would want to expand on that.

Megan: But so before we go to Michael, I just have a follow-up question just to make sure our listeners understand because I think this gets confusing for some folks. So can you explain a little bit the difference between Dakota, Nakota, and Lakota?

Will: Because Sam mentioned earlier, we call ourselves the Oceti Ŝakowiŋ, that is the Seven Council Fires, we have seven separate nations under the Oceti Ŝakowiŋ, and we speak three different dialects, those dialects being Dakota, Nakota, and Lakota, and again, Seven Council Fires, speaking three different dialects, the largest of those three would be the Dakota as we make up four of those seven. The Nakota make up two of those seven and the Lakota only one of those seven.

Megan: Thank you. That's really helpful. Michael, do you have more that you would like to add?

Michael: Yeah. So what Sam, Cheyanne, and Will all shared with those Seven Council Fires, they all had these seasonal cycles, but depending on where they were, which was like a very wide range, they shared a lot of these resources, they shared a lot of the land, our values are very important like respect, you want to respect the lands, and they're not going to over utilize them like we've been talking about before, you are connected to this landscape, you are a relative, whether you are a Tatanka, a bison, a bald eagle, the Dakota were all related, we're all made out of the same things, the grass, the prairies, the trees, you're not going to destroy one tree just to do something or utilize the land. Everything is kind of saved for kind of like seven generations, we have those teachings, we don't want to overharvest or overhunt, and a lot of these lands as well, utilizing the lands, but you don't own the land. We never look at it as ownership. You don't own all the kind of prairie or the bison, you're just kind of living in coexistence with them, so we may have been, especially down here with our community, in Shakopee we would have been gathering the wild rice maybe one season, or harvesting the maple sap, we're always looking ahead, making sure we're not wasting the resources, it's always about protecting and saving it for our future relatives, and sharing it not just with our Dakota people, we are very connected with a lot of the other tribes before we were all pushed and pitted against each other, which we'll be kind of going into soon as well.

Megan: I also love the foundation being that everything is related, everything is your relative. And just, again, to make a connection for folks who are maybe wondering about this a little bit more, this is the foundation of ecology, this is the basics of how our world was built. We are all connected to everything. It's just like we said earlier, that clean air, that clean water, we're integrated into the systems that are around us. You are always in the system that connects us in this world, and so I love that for Dakota people, that philosophy or ideal is relative. We are all related.

Mike: Yeah. Excellent point, Megan. Sam, if you don't mind, we'll go to you. I'm thinking about how this cultural and historical perspective and how it links up to today, what is, I guess my question boils down to what is your perspective on how these historical events have shaped the current relationship that Dakota have with the prairie today.

Samantha: Okay. So before I get into that, I want to kind of touch back on what Michael said about what we don't have the same sense of ownership. We don't own the land.

Actually, what I've been taught is that we belong to it, that we might have fought, might have done things to hold territories or something like that, but it wasn't in that same sense that most people recognize it today. And in that sense, we talk about history, then we start getting into Europeans coming over in the time of treaties and everything, that whole concept was so foreign, and it led, it was part of, I shouldn't say it led, it was part of what was so wrong about that era and that timeframe and treaties themselves. And one of the main things that it did was it separated us from that. So if our whole life is entwined with nature and we're confined to a small space, we're not able to go and gather our food, our medicines, hunt the animals that we use for sustenance, that it shifted our entire way of being, and that was the intent. It disconnected us from a big part of who we are, and so for a long time, it kind of put us like in this survival mode, like we're living off of whatever we could, what commodities, that kind of stuff, but now we're trying to get back into that relationship that we used to have. We have more of a chance to do that now than maybe even my mother's generation or my grandmother's generation. And we're having to, even in that short amount of time, we're having to make a stronger effort to relearn some of that traditional knowledge, as you put it, although I think we'll talk about this later on, but there's a difference I think in even when we say traditional knowledge, people still kind of slightly describe it as something else, but it was also very scientific and it was based on that understanding and observation. As part of talking about that forced removal, I think it's important also to mention I know that our listeners are going to listen to us another season, but actually it was 160 years this week, November 7th through 13th that was part of our literal forced removal from our homelands. They were our people, our relatives were marched actually through New Ulm where we're sitting here today, and I felt like it was important to state that because that's part of that separation that disconnect because that would have for many of our relatives, that was the last time they ever saw their home. So we have to, like a lot of other people, we have to unlearn this certain way of thinking, one way of thinking, and so we're actually having to purchase land back so that we can actually have access to prairie and reestablish as much as we can, and start to teach our people of all ages, but especially the younger ones, and hopefully that they can start off with a stronger connection than we did.

Megan: I also really like that you brought forward the point about traditional knowledge is science, and it absolutely is. And I 100% agree with you that we need to think about it that way. All science really is, is looking at the world and observing, like learning through observation, and who was doing that before settlers arrived? Native people. And so I think that's a really important point. Michael, do you have anything you'd like to add?

Michael: Yeah. So before we were removed as well in the, which was about 160 years ago, there was kind of like a trickle down effect with all these treaties even before these treaties were signed, the westward expansion here in the United States, you can see kind of a lot of our animal relatives moving out of the area. A lot of elk in this area, river valley, even on the prairie. We even had grizzly bears at one point in Minnesota out on the prairie, and they were pushed out. In 1805, we had the first official unofficial treaty, and that was kind of the start of the encroachment on our land. It was never officially ratified by our United States President, and then when you divide the state up in 1825,

you can see over the years the next couple treaties, especially once you get to 1851, you have 35 million acres lost by the Dakota. That is really the prairies are getting kind of removed from our territory and now in the control of the United States. So now you have these European settlers coming through, they have a completely different worldview, a completely different look on the prairie, and now that's where the shift comes in place, and then 160 years ago when we were removed, we have no control at all on these prairies here in our traditional homelands, and in our Dakota language as well, kind of you look at that our connection with that prairie, we don't have a word for wilderness. And here when you have now Minnesota becomes a state in 1858 and over the next couple of years, you kind of have like the taming of the wilderness, the kind of the removal of not only our Dakota, but the buffalo and the wilderness is kind of being converted, a lot of our prairies are kind of being destroyed at this time for farmlands at a rate it just keeps accelerating and accelerating. And unfortunately, what happened here, but like Samantha was saying, the bringing back of these prairies, buying back land is very important because that was all prairie land in that kind of southwestern corner of Minnesota, a very large prairie in fact.

Megan: We know too in what's now the state of Minnesota we had 18 million acres of prairie at one time, and now we have just 250,000 acres, which is just over 1% left. And so when we think about that, it's very important to reconnect as much prairie as we possibly can. Because remember those two pillars, right, diversity and connection, are the things that drive our natural world and health of our natural world. And so every patch of prairie matters when you're talking about having 1% left. And we also know that when we reconstruct prairies, they're not as perfect as they were built the first time because prairies are so complex, and so to figure out all of those pieces and fit them back together is a worthy and noble effort, but it is incredibly challenging, and we learn every single day, so there's nothing like preserving and protecting a remnant prairie. And I think when we were talking offline here a minute ago, Gabe brought up a really great point that it's not just about having prairie, we also need healthy prairie, and in order for a prairie to be healthy and resilient, it needs to be connected to other prairies. And so you can think of prairie like people, right? We learned this during the pandemic that when we lose that connection to each other, it really foundationally affects our lives, and the same is true for prairie. It needs to be connected to other prairies to maintain resiliency. Cheyanne, do you want to sum all this up for us?

Cheyanne: Sure. I can maybe just from my perspective, what I had heard from Will, Sam, and you, Megan, was in relation to the history I think it's safe to say that we recognize that there has been like this settler colonialist ideology that's been manifested throughout these eras of time. We see it throughout the onset of contact through the treaty era, we see it through the policymaking era. How it has served as a catalyst to disconnect Dakota people from their land. And now we see these different efforts to try to reestablish, keeping in mind, though, that there were Dakota bands, villages, individuals that have never lost that connection, and that is why we have traditional ecological knowledge still today. And why we strive so hard to preserve that and perpetuate it. So I just wanted to say that much just from my perspective, but what I was hearing. Thank you.

Mike: Yeah. Cheyanne, really appreciate you making that point, yeah, and thanks for summing that up. Will, if you wouldn't mind, this kind of builds on that question from a slightly different perspective, but would you mind talking about how historical and traditional landscape changes like people have been talking about here, how those affect the worldview and philosophies of the Dakota?

Will: Yes. And before I do that, I want to just briefly go over why those changes have happened to us as Dakota people. Michael's mentioned earlier about the different treaties that have happened to us, Cheyanne just also mentioned to about some of the policies that also has been put in place. After the treaties that happened, the forced removal of our people from what is now known as the state of Minnesota, it was illegal to be a Dakota person in Minnesota at one time. And so we were forced on to reservations and many of our people were forced into boarding schools, residential schools, which can also be referred to as concentration camps, where it was illegal for us to speak our language, learn about our culture, exchange our knowledge about our culture, and anything that has to do with that at all. And they wanted us to be farmers rather than people that coexist with our environment around us. It was illegal to practice our cultural and spiritual ways until 1978, which was the American Indian Religious Freedom Act. So even before that time, it was kind of up to the Indian agent on those reservations decided what, if at all, we can practice regarding our Dakota culture. So if the Indian agent saw us go out onto the prairie and harvest something or take care of something, and then maybe use those in our cultural ways, could have been bad or also those people could have been reprimanded for doing those such things. So all of that really affected, of course, our knowledge transmission within our Dakota communities after that time period when we were finally allowed to practice our culture, practice our spirituality, speak our language again, it affected everything our transmission of our knowledge, our ability to practice certain things, but even today to this day, we still have limited access or even restricted access to land. We're restricted to going on to lands within our tribal boundaries. Again, our traditional homelands, we're restricted to what our boundaries are today. We had vast access to many of the different prairies and landscapes across our territorial lands. So that has affected us today of what we can do and how we can do it. So yeah, that's a little bit I wanted to bring up for that point.

Cheyanne: I think Will made some excellent points about the different impacts that the Dakota people had to endure. Keeping in mind that despite all of the policy and the trauma, that was pointed out, you know, things like the Indian Religious Freedoms Act in 1978 really would not have had an impact on traditional practitioners, on traditional Indians. They would have continued to practice their ceremonies, they would have continued to speak their language, they would have continued to gather their medicines wherever those places were if they were outside of the boundaries of the reservation, they would have taken that risk to do that, and that's why we have the oral stories that we have today and we have the ecological knowledge that we have today, the cultural information, and stories that we have today is because of those risk takers and those people that fought against assimilation and being acculturated.

Samantha: I think it's important that we specify what that means when they took those risks, is that there were laws on the books that allowed for our people to be killed on sight. There's five or more of us here in some places just for being here, we could have

been shot. So when we had people that were going, still trying to go to those places or even our relatives that first came back to Minnesota, they literally did it at risk of their life. If not their life, even with our traditional practices, they could have easily been committed to an institution. So when we talk about that they did it at risk, like we're seriously, it was at risk for their life or the life of their family.

Will: I just wanted to also add one more point to what I was saying earlier is of how our relationship may have changed with the land or how we live our lives today. Maybe someone may have mentioned using grocery stores today in our modern way of life. When we were forced on to the reservations and living that life, we were also forced to use rations of food, and very limited types of food that were given to us. Food that was never natural in our diets that we never ate before, and has led to a lot of health issues for our people today. And one of the quotes from one of our elders back home said during that time, our biggest enemy was the can opener. So living our life with the landscape, with the prairies, eating the food from the land significantly changed with those rations that we were forced to eat, usually canned food, so things like that.

Megan: It's important to think about how we are connected to this land, and again, in addition to those life-giving things that the prairie is giving us, the air, the water, the healthy soils, it's also giving us food and medicines, which you have all mentioned today. And so I know that that can be something that is abstract for some of our listeners, they may not realize that plants are medicine, they're the original medicines, right? And so again, I think there's a lot to learn here from the land itself and from all of you. We are going to leave you with a teaser here before we jump into our next section of Let's Science. So I mentioned at the beginning this is a two-part episode, right? And so our question that we're going to leave you hanging with are: Dakota people are considered the original stewards of the land, and how are they continuing to do that work today? And we're just leaving that as a teaser because that is what our entire next episode is going to focus on. And so stay tuned. You're not going to want to miss part two because we're going to be dropping some more amazing traditional knowledge on you. All right. Now we're going to move to our next section, Let's Science. And for those of you who haven't listened, this is the part of the podcast where we recommend a book, a blog, or a paper, or any other resource, and it only makes sense that today because we're talking about so much wonderful indigenous knowledge, which is really science, that we're going to reference some of those resources so that you can continue the learning. The learning does not stop here. And so we're going to go around through each community and tell us some of your top picks for resources where if people are eager to learn more, they can. And I hope that they do. And let's start with Ferin.

Ferin: Yeah. Thanks, Megan. So we have a website called Understand Native Minnesota, and the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community has created this campaign to improve the Native American narrative in Minnesota. And so you'll get more in-depth understanding of the state's tribes, their history, governments, and culture, and so you can find that at UnderstandNativeMinnesota.org. And then our secretary treasurer, Rebecca Crooks-Stratton, she also has a podcast, which the information is on the website, the podcast is called Native Minnesota, and she interviews a lot of different people through Indian country, and they try to dispel

common myths and misconceptions about native peoples. And you can find that on Apple Podcasts or Spotify.

Mike: Thank you, Ferin. Cheyanne, would you care to add a couple of resources for us?

Cheyanne: Yes, thank you. One in particular is located right within the boundaries of Caŋṡa'yapi. It's known as the Lower Sioux Agency Historic Site. It's co managed with the tribe and the Minnesota Historical Society. It's a seasonal site open May through October on weekends. We also have another resource that I would recommend. It's a podcast titled The Land. So you can download that through Apple or Spotify. A third resource I would recommend for those interested in reading, we talked a lot about policy and treaty era, so I think if folks are interested in learning more on that area of study to check out Roxanne Ortiz-Dunbar's book titled An Indigenous People's History of the United States.

Gabe: Yeah, a couple of resources I think would be helpful for folks to learn about Prairie Island is we do host a Facebook page that recaps and provides information to outside folks about what's going on at Prairie Island, so regarding our gardening programs, our water resource issues, you know, we try to post information in there just to keep people updated within our community and outside the community. And then just throw out a book that's written by a Dakota author that focuses on native seed keeping, and that's The Seed Keeper by Diane Wilson, who is a Dakota person, so.

Sam: A couple of things that I would like to let people know about is the book In the Footsteps of Our Ancestors. Earlier we talked about the Dakota removal that highlights the oral stories that have been passed down from people's experiences in 1862, as well as how people alive today have remembered that. And there is a group near Upper Sioux that's made up of different members of the Oceti Ŝakowiŋ, it's a nonprofit called Makoce Ikikcupi and we can get a link to that, but they're about land recovery, and that reconnecting to that more sustainable way of life.

Will: Another resource I wanted to mention, if you're looking for something in person is the Culture Center in Shakopee, Minnesota. It's called Hoċokata Ti. Again, the name of it is Hoċokata Ti, and that translates to the lodge at the center of the camp. And at this cultural center, there's a public-facing exhibit that you can attend Wednesday through Saturday. You can check the website or any of the social media pages. There are also public-facing events throughout the year. For example, there was an Earth Day event that was open to the public where traditional ecological knowledge was shared during a couple different presentations throughout the day. So again, just some other resources, Hoċokata Ti in Shakopee, Minnesota. And that is spelled H-o-ċ-o-k-a-t-a T-i.

Mike: Thank you, Will. And thanks, everybody, for those excellent resources. Megan, should we Let's Take a Hike?

Megan: Absolutely. And just like with Let's Science that we just did, this will be a little bit of a different slant on our normal Take a Hike, where we'll be hearing about important prairie places that Dakota people are connected to. And so we're going to go ahead and start with Sam.

Samantha: Before we get into this, I think it's important for people to remember that most of the places that are going to be talked about today are actually sacred sites to Dakota people. That before they turned into tourist attractions or places for recreation, they were places that we prayed, that we held ceremony, and that we buried our loved ones, that they're ancient, they can predate Christianity and Judaism or even the Greek and Roman empires, and at least one of them is as old or older than Stonehenge. And because of their importance, it's sometimes difficult for us to suggest to just go to these places, as in take a walk and then enjoy the prairie. So when you go there, please remember this. What I said earlier about how we belong to the land, that that is because since the beginning of our time, that as I said, we've prayed here, we buried our dead, we cried for them, and once they're buried, our people returned to the land, we became the land. So just when you're going through these places, just remember what they are.

Cheyanne: Yeah, that was a great summary by Sam. Some of the sites that I wanted to mention that are local to the area of Caŋ̇a'yapi would be the Pipestone National Park. There is also the Jeffers Petroglyphs, which is a Minnesota Historical Society site. I know that they do, they're very active in their prairie management techniques over the last several years. They've been engaged with the tribe. Yeah, those are the two sites that I would mention, and then, of course, keeping in mind that these are sacred places to Dakota people and when you enter them, to be mindful of their relationships that we talked about earlier, and to enter with respect.

Gabe: Yeah, I like to focus on some prairie examples that are near Prairie Island, some places that are reminiscent of what prairies were like on Prairie Island before European settlement. One would be Pine Bend Bluffs SNA in the Hastings area. One of the areas that Ṫípsiŋna, also known as prairie turnip, still grows, and it was the location that Dakota tribes in our area would go for that resource. And then there's also Grey-Cloud Dunes Scientific and Natural Area, which is probably close to what Prairie Island once was that you'd find on the landscape. But these are both scientific and natural areas, so high biodiversity and sensitivity, so.

Michael: Another one right in between, we have between Prairie Island and Shakopee is the Dakota County Parks. And as you listen to this right now, they actually are reintroducing some bison to Spring Lake Park. So right now, they have them over winter, they're going to be in the back of the park, but I think in the early spring, they'll be kind of more present, you'll get a better view of them, but there's a small herd of bison, they are currently being introduced right back on the prairie, so that's like a perfect spot, it's a county park, anyone can go visit that one, and I highly recommend checking out the bison there.

Mike: Very cool.

Amanda: This is Amanda Wold from the Upper Sioux Community, and as someone who is not originally from Minnesota, there's a few places that I have felt have been really helpful for me to connect with the landscape, and most of these are located in Southwest Minnesota. One of the areas that I think of as a very beautiful and unique location is the Morton Outcrops SNA. They're some of the oldest rock exposed in the world, and it's right here in Minnesota, and it used to be the oldest rock that was exposed in the world until Canada and I think Australia beat us out. But still very

incredible place to go connect with. Another location that's unique to Southwest Minnesota is the Birch Coulee Battlefield, and it's a small area, but there is remnant prairie, and it is an interesting place to visit to learn more about the history of Minnesota and that connection with people.

Megan: Thank you for mentioning all of those really amazing places. Any time we're on the prairie is a good day in my book, and I think it's also super appreciated to have those reminders that many of these are sacred sites, and so that when we're moving within the land, that we should be treating it with respect. I am just so grateful that all of you have been here today, so appreciative of your time and your knowledge, and everything that you shared with us. Thank you.

Mike: I agree. Thank you. This has been excellent context and I think it really sets us up well for our next episode, which I'm really looking forward to.

Megan: Absolutely. Thanks for cueing me right up, Mike. So next week, we're going to be right back here with our same set of guests. We're going to be continuing our Dakota Connections with the Prairie Episodes, and we're going to be talking about present-day what is happening as Dakota people are stewarding the prairie, as they're conserving it, and what we can learn from each other. So as always, you can find all of the links and resources that we mentioned today on our website at mndnr.gov/prairiepod. This episode was produced by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources South Region. We are all working underneath the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Partnership. This podcast was edited by Dan Ruiter, and it was engineered by the fabulous Bobby Boos. All right. We'll see you all next week.

Tókṡta aḳe ((saying farewell in Dakota))

Thank you.

((sounds of birds chirping and wind blowing))