

NDNAEU 1: Sacred Relatives

How We Relate to Everything

Native people practice a deep interconnectedness with the land, the resources, the water, all living things and all human beings. Land stewardship, respect for all 2 legged, 4 legged, winged, crawlers and swimmers and a strong belief in the sacredness of all human beings are key elements of our spirituality.



“We are only a piece of this larger concept of spirituality. We are only here to do our little part... and what we do know is that if we have faith in a Creator and the plan for us, then all these things are going to work out.”

Spirit Lake Dakota, Leander “Russ” McDonald

NDNAEU 2: Learning & Storytelling

How We Promote & Sustain Our Cultures, Languages & Traditions

Traditional teaching and the passing on of knowledge and wisdom was done through storytelling, song, ceremony and daily way of life, often incorporating specific gender and age specific responsibilities. These continue to be some of the best modes for learning for both Native and non-Native learners.



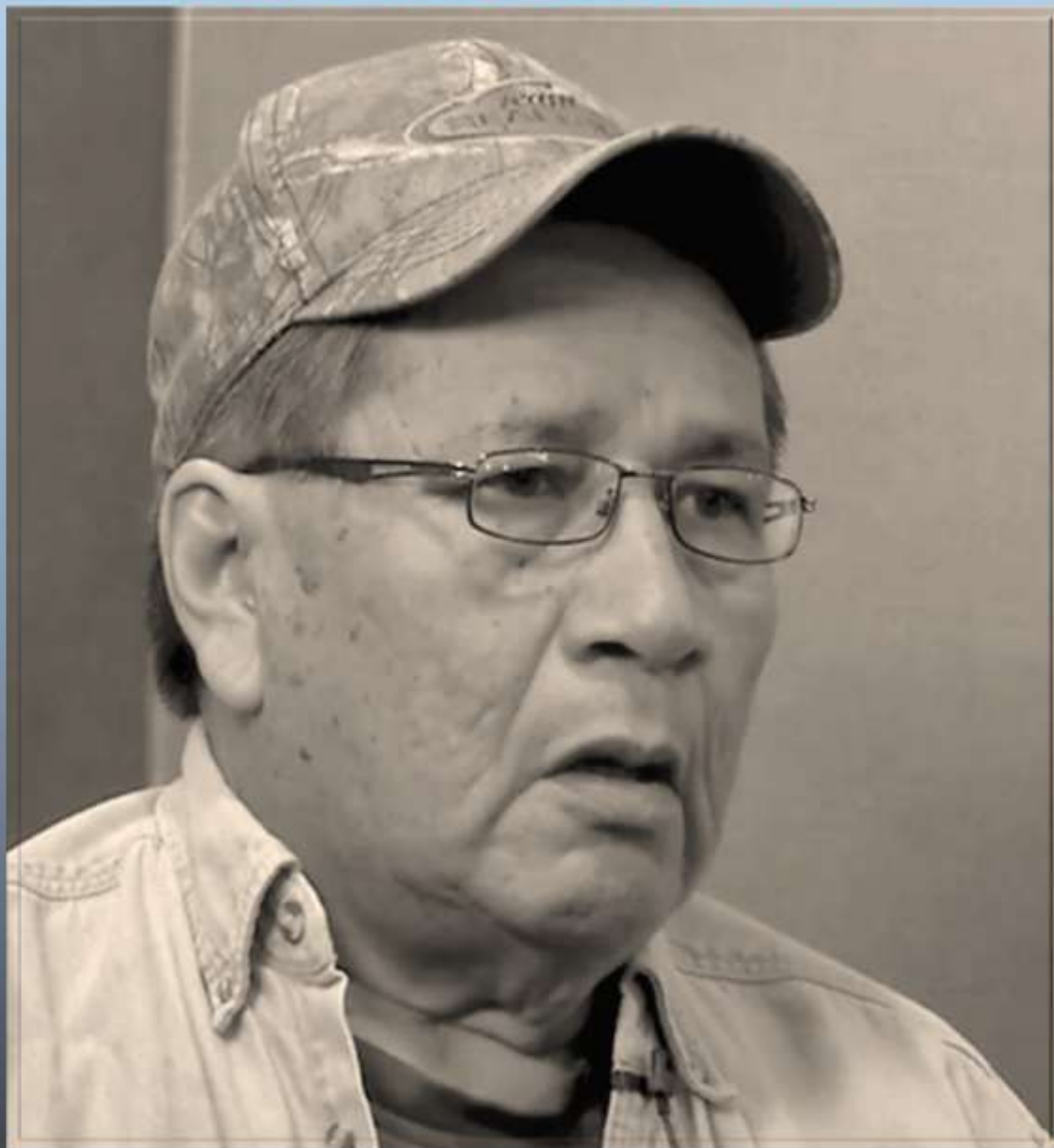
“We always call our little ones sacred, Wakan Hecapi. I’ve always been blessed to teach the sacred. At the same time they’re teaching me. I’m honored to be their teacher.”

Spirit Lake Dakota Elder, Oliver Gourd

NDNAEU 3: Sharing & Generosity

How We Promote & Sustain Our Cultures, Languages & Traditions

Native people have rich traditions of sharing and generosity which include gifting, shared meals, Pow Wow gatherings, shared living spaces and care for relatives, including the environment, natural resources and waters.



“In Dakota Way, when somebody asks you for something you are not supposed to say no. It’s a way of taking care of your elders and those who are in need.”

Spirit Lake Dakota Elder, Kenneth Jerome Hill

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“Feed somebody when you’ve got a visitor....Even if you only have bread, coffee and tea...feed them.”

Spirit Lake Dakota Elder, Violet Smith

NDNAEU 4: Sense of Humor

How We Promote & Sustain Our Cultures, Languages & Traditions

Native people have a rich history of shared sense of humor that includes teaching stories involving Iktomi, Maymaygwisi and Nanabozhoo. These stories and this unique sense of humor continue to support our resiliency and cohesiveness.



“I think that a sense of humor is very valuable, and it’s helped our people to overcome for hundreds of years... Sense of humor leads to that resiliency... to help people think about something other than themselves and to get lightened in the heart and the mind-- to put one foot in front of the other and move on.”

Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Elder, Debbe Poitra

NDNAEU 5: Tribal Policies, Treaties & Sovereignty

How We Respond to & Contribute to All of Society from Local to Global

Native people practice self-determination, developing tribal policies and practicing political activism. Despite a history of US policies and Treaties that have often been detrimental, Native people are members of sovereign nations that predate the US government.



“We are Native American People, if America wants to succeed by totally assimilating us, our language will be taken from us...we will just be Americans. That is our fight, we don’t want to just be Americans.”

Hidatsa Elder, Charles Moran

NDNAEU 6: Native Contributions

How We Respond to & Contribute to All of Society from Local to Global

Native people continue to contribute to all levels of society from local to global in diverse fields including medicine, science, government, education, economics, art, music, and many more.



“They (oil companies and mainstream society) need to learn why the land is so significant. It may look to them like we are putting up a big fuss, the problem child, but it’s way deeper than that – the environment is a part of us, the land, Mother Earth...I’m going to help facilitate this process so mainstream society can understand.”

Lorraine Davis, Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate

NDNAEU 7: Native Identity

Who We Are

Individual and communal identity is defined and supported by shared Native languages, kinship systems, Tiospaye, Clan structures, traditional teachings, values, sacred laws and ceremonies. A continuum of tribal identity, unique to each individual, ranges from assimilated to traditional lifestyle. There is no “generic American Indian”.



“God didn’t make me to talk Latin, that’s why I can’t remember it. I remember my Dakota. He made me Dakota. I never did forget my language.”

Spirit Lake Dakota Elder, Demus McDonald