

2 Rivers Circle

no. 2 april 2026 Mendota Dakota Friendship Group

Hau and Han to all our friends and relatives.



March potluck at Rita's house.

Bdote: A Birthing Island / A history of Minnesota's Sacred Landscape / You are Here Episode 2 Link **[Bdote: A Birthing Island | A History of Minnesota's Sacred Landscape | You Are Here Episode 2](#)**

2 Rivers Circle is a name chosen by a group formed after the breakup of the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Tribal Community. We were a faithful remnant that wanted to stay together and find a purpose. 2 Rivers Circle is a reference to the sacred Bedote of the Dakota creation story, and the ancient symbol of the circle—the medicine wheel, sacred hoop, Sun Dance circle.

At our March meeting Sister Kathleen Storms led the group in a reconciliation process. We began with the Dakota ritual song, led by Joseph Bester who said, "whenever you pray or ask in truth, it will be granted to you." Duane Leith and Mike Harley were readers, as was Sharon Lennartson who read a passage on water. We all blessed ourselves and each other with blessed holy water and oil Sam Wasterman had brought. The reconciliation ceremony consisted of a pipe ceremony, naming the moment, acknowledging the land and ancestors, water ritual for healing through relationships, two voices for Truth and Hope (Native and white, recited by Janet and Joseph), communal commitment to next steps, and closing blessings. The ceremony was powerful and appreciated and was sent out to all in need of reconciliation. Thank you, Sister Kathleen, for this important healing work.

Arvol Looking Horse Blesses NYC City Horses on March 22



Arvol Looking Horse led prayers and blessed the working horses of New York City during Equinox weekend. At the ceremony a letter to the City which Arvol wrote for March 2014 was read. It's still an important message:

"All My Relations!

Honoring the Sunka Wakan Oyate (Horse Nation) in the past known as Wakiya Oyate. The Welcome Back Wakiya Oyate-Thunder Ceremony has always been held on March 21st on Mato Paha or Bear Mountain, by the Lakota, in order to honor the important role the Horse Nation has as Keepers of the Thunder and Lightning.

Because there is an international effort to respect the Mini Wic'oni "The Water of Life", it was decided to unite our prayers and our energy and hold this important event for the Horses in NYC on March 22, on United Nations Water Day.

Today the Horse Nation is being dismissed as having no worth any longer in this Society. There is no-where for them to roam free, and in places where they feel they have worth along with the humans, they are being dismissed and replaced. Along with the Buffalo, they have been massacred, with no respect for their spiritual energy they give to this Turtle Island. If the assault of the Horse Nation is allowed to continue, this disrespect can affect the blessings from the Wakiya Oyate (Thunder Beings).

Today we are faced with many global challenges that affect the Mini Wic'oni in order for its medicine to be pure. We are at the time where these challenges can affect the survival of the generations to come; we need to pay attention. I humbly ask People of All Nations to open your hearts and minds to this important information of how all things are connected. The future generations and all life upon Mother Earth depend on you to offer your thoughts and prayers on this day with us in the Sacred Hoop of Life, where there is no ending and no beginning!

Ana-h'opta po

Hear my words!"

Chief Arvol Looking Horse

Cold Water Encampment Dismantled

Mni Owe Sni Bdote Camp. Jon Stegenga of MPR News reported that the camp went down on March 22. It went up on February 9 across from the Whipple Federal Building in protest to recent federal immigration operations and in pursuit of designated space for re-establishing a ceremonial space. The land has been co-managed by the National Park Service and the four Dakota tribal nations who wrote letters asking the young leaders to disperse.



During its short life, the camp was the center of intense debate among Indigenous communities about who is granted access to the land and the appropriate uses of sacred sites. For the past two decades, MN Dakota tribal nations worked with the federal government to gain recognition of the site as a Traditional Cultural Place. Tribes were concerned the protest camp would disrupt future plans. Camp organizers were frustrated that it was taking so long to allow a viable space near traditional sacred sites for people to gather. The camp's spokespersons have said repeatedly that the camp served as a safe place for people to gather, recover, and provide mutual aid and was open to anyone in the wake of the ICE surge.

Link to MPR article by Melissa Olson: [Prayer camp Mni Owe Sni near Whipple Federal Building to close midweek | MPR News](#)

No Kings on March 28 brought attention back to Minnesota as 120,000 people came to the State Capitol, plus all the other smaller protests around the state. 3,100 events were held world-wide, eight million people turning out in the United State.

People have multiple reasons for protesting: immigration policy and actions of Trump's ICE officers during the MN Surge, including the murders of Renee Good and Alex Pretti; the dismantling of the Federal government; the economy; the incompetence of this administration; and now Trump's war with Iran. Another No Kings will be held on May 1, focusing on Labor.

Community News

Birthdays: Sarah Sivright , April 8; Riley Tiokasin, April 15; Joe Lenartson, April 23; belated Happy Birthday to Angie Monahan, March 17.

Prayers: Prayers and get well wishes for Joseph Bester who is not feeling well. Continued healing prayers for Sharon. It was great to have her at the Honoring our Ancestors.

Congratulations: Congratulations to Duane Leith for receiving the tribal pipe that belonged to Jim Anderson. Anderson passed it to Lon Navarre and Lon to Duane. Duane now has responsibility for care of this ancestral pipe.

Deaths: Joey Browner (1960 - 2026), Dakota and former Vikings player. [Joey Browner - Wikipedia](#)

Some News from MMDTC:

Secretary Danielle Ross met with Angela Fogt, the attorney who has handled issues relating to the 501(c)(3) and the former tribal leadership. The former leadership has not contacted the current Tribal Council since September 2025, nor have they taken any action against the tribe. Pursuing legal actions against the former leadership at this time will be costly and is unlikely to yield the return of any assets. Given MMDTC's current financial situation, pursuing further legal measures against the former leadership of the community at this time would not be a wise allocation of the tribe's financial resources. Fogt will keep the MMDTC information and the records of the work that has been done if the tribe should decide to pursue legal actions against these individuals in the future. (source: MMDTC communications)

Honoring the Ancestors ceremony, March 22



The Mendota Dakota community came together for an important moment at the Honoring the Ancestors ceremony on March 22, 2026.

Several years ago, Tribal Chairman Jim “Red Sky” Anderson gave the tribal *canunpa* (sacred pipe) to Lon “Walks With the Wolf” Navarre. Lon took this role very seriously. As a former tribal council member, he cared for the pipe with respect and honored what it represents to the people. Recently, Lon felt it was time to pass this responsibility to the next generation.

In a small and meaningful ceremony, the *canunpa* was given to Duane “Red Wolf” Leith, a cultural advisor for the Mendota Dakota Tribal Community, as well as a sun dancer and water pourer. Joseph Bestor led the ceremony. Men sang on the big drum, and Duane lit the sacred fire.

About 30 tribal members and friends attended. Former Chairwoman Sharon Lennartson shared, “I feel sad that Lon will no longer be the pipe keeper, and at the same time I know Duane is the right person to carry it now and he will do it in a good way.”

During the ceremony, Joy Sorenson Naverre shared a story remembered by Claudia Anderson, the widow of Jim Anderson, connecting the pipe to the STOP Highway 55 movement. When people stood together to protect Coldwater Springs and the four oak trees, they were in prayer with the pipe when an officer came to confiscate it. Jim didn’t want to let it go and wasn’t sure what to do. At that moment, Grandpa Harry Charger, sun dance chief from Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, called him and said, “What’s happening, nephew?” Jim explained, and Harry told him, “Let them take it.” An officer named Ketrich took the pipe. About a year later, that same officer contacted Jim and asked him to take it back. He said his life had been difficult since taking it and asked for forgiveness. Jim accepted the pipe. After that, the officer had deep respect for Native traditions, and he and Jim became friends.

Bonnie and Dan the Oakman also shared that during the effort to protect the four oaks, Dan drew the oak leaves and acorns for the pipe. Jim carved those designs into the *canunpa*, tying it to that time of resistance. This story reminded everyone that the *canunpa* carries living history.

Passing the pipe from Lon to Duane is not just about handing over a role. It is about continuing tradition, spirit, and strength. The *canunpa* remains a sacred connection to the ancestors and a guide for future generations.

Ceremonies:

Inipi: Saturday, April 11, at the Dupuis House, 1357 Sibley Memorial HW, Joseph Bester presiding.

Full Moon Walk: April 3 at Fort Snelling Park. ICE Out Full Moon Walk at Sacred Coldwater Springs. Friday, April 3, 2026. Gather at the National Park entrance, 7pm. Park on the Hwy 55 access road.

Drumming: There is drumming on Friday nights, April 10th and 24th. Drumming will **start at 6:30** with food and socializing afterwards. Community Room of the Sanctuary at West St. Paul, 1746 Oakdale Ave., West St. Paul, MN 55118.

Next 2 Rivers Meeting: April 12, 2 p.m. at Rita Chamberlain's, 3328 Roll LN, Eagan.

1. Proposal to have people responsible: a treasurer, revolving door meeting leaders, a secretary, newsletter staff.....
2. Core Values. Come up with a list of core values that will help us meet our community goals. Example from Starhawk for her group: "The Movement We Need, and it looks at five core human needs: safety, belonging, value, agency and meaning, and how we can build stronger forces for social and environmental justice when we meet those needs in positive ways."
3. Financial Report. In Feb. we raised \$128, in March \$90, at the Honoring Ancestors \$113, for a total of \$326. We need a Treasurer to take charge of the finances.
4. Volunteering for other organizations and churches who are doing service and feeding people work. Example: First Nations' Kitchen which already has a kitchen which prepares meals and has a food shelf.
5. Activities and Events we can do to build community:
 - ~Attend Shakopee or Prairie Island powwows as a group.
 - ~Check out Blue Hummingbird Art collective
 - ~Do art together at Tammy Ortega's shop in Minneapolis on Saturdays.
 - ~Attend a Sun Dance
6. Continue our education in Dakota philosophy, history, arts and crafts.



Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi

Invites us for the Wakan Tipi Center grand opening. The event will feature reflections from partners, drum group Toká Máza, and a shared meal.

The registration link is now live on at wakan tipi.org/events. RSVP's encouraged for food counts but not required to attend!

Date: **Friday, May 29th**

Schedule:

11:00am - 12:30pm: Remarks & Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

12:30pm - 2:00pm: Doors open, explore, mingle, feast!

Location: 590 4th St E, Saint Paul, MN 55106

The cultural site features 450 million-year-old limestone and sandstone bluffs, spring-fed wetlands, excellent bird watching, rich Native American history, and beautiful views of the downtown skyline and Mississippi River.

Wakȟaŋ Tȋpi Restoration

After a century of industrial use, the land lay vacant and blighted until a coalition of East Side and Lowertown residents formed the Lower Phalen Creek Project, now called [Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi](#), and worked with the City of Saint Paul to launch an effort to purchase the 27-acre land and restore it.

- * Bluff restoration work at the Wakȟaŋ Tȋpi and Wičahapi began in April 2004.
- * Stormwater that previously flowed into the Mississippi River via storm sewers, is now recaptured by native plants and is stored in three separate clear water ponds and adjacent wetlands.
- * Limestone rock slabs previously used in railroad operations form a waterfall, stone bridge, stairway and ponds. Mulch, incorporated into existing sterile soil, promotes the growth of new plantings.
- * Restoration priorities in 2005 focused on combating invasive species, slope stabilization, erosion control, and planting 7.5 acres of native trees.
- * Learn more about ongoing [Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi](#) projects, including the [Wakan Tipi Center](#) and the [Phalen Creek Daylighting Project](#).

Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi & Wakan Tipi Center [Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi](#) is a Native-Led, East Side environmental stewardship nonprofit centered in Dakota values. Founded in 1997 by community activists, the project area stretches from Lake Phalen to the Mississippi River and throughout the East Side River District.

Named [Wakan Tipi Center](#) to honor the significance of Wakan Tipi Cave as a Dakota sacred site, the mission of Wakan Tipi Center is to serve as an intergenerational gathering place that honors Wakan Tipi and the maȟa paha as Dakota sacred sites. The work here connects people to this sacred landscape through immersive experiences in Dakota history, lifeways, language, and values.

The building features an exhibit hall, classrooms, ceremony space, a community gathering area, a teaching kitchen, and teaching gardens to showcase and expand the value of the sanctuary as a place for cultural healing, life-long learning, and inspiration. The Wakan Tipi Center is opening to visitors in Spring of 2026.

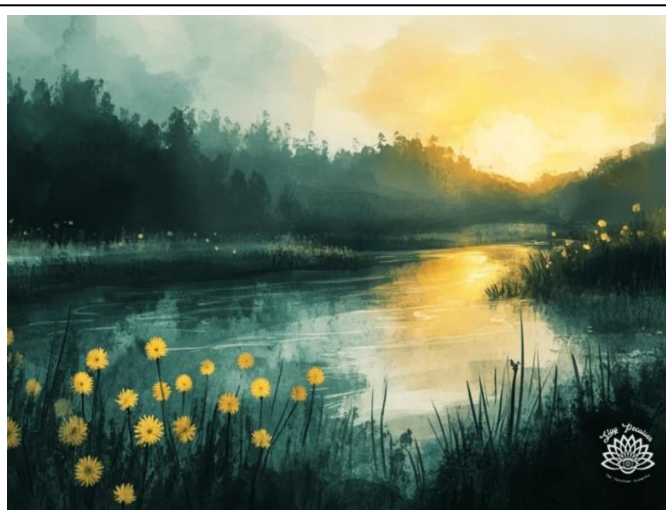
Closing Prayer:

Grandfather,
Look at our brokenness.

We know that in all creation
Only the human family
Has strayed from the Sacred Way.

We know that we are the ones
Who are divided
And we are the ones
We must come back together
To walk the Sacred Way.

Grandfather, Sacred One,
Teach us love, compassion, and honor
That we may heal the earth
And heal each other.



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