A Dakota Creation Story

I. Curricular Areas:

Geography,
Social Studies
Minnesota History

II. Learner Goals:

Students will develop and acknowledge an understanding of traditional American Indian land-related values and special relationships to land that formed the foundation for Indian cultural identity and sense of place on earth. Secondly, this lesson will convey to the student that the study of geography is not merely the memorization of State capitals or the location of countries on a map.

III. Learner Outcomes:

Students will be able to:

1. Identify Bdote on a map.
2. Discuss how the Dakota origin story may teach traditional land ethics.

IV. Background Information:

In this lesson, the students will learn one of the origin stories of the Eastern Dakota, the Bdewakantonwan or Mdewakantonwan who lived in Minnesota. They will also look closely at the land ethics usually found within creation stories and how these beliefs relate to the identity of the tribe.

American Indian tribes, like many other peoples, have explanations for how they originated as a distinct, unique people. Many stories tell of powerful beings that created peoples’ place in the world. The origin stories relate how the universe and the earth were created and how time and space were established. Inherent in the story is a reverence of place or location in which ancestors of the tribe were created. From these stories, tribes derived laws, values, traditions and ceremonies. Many origin stories stressed kindness, generosity, cooperation and respect for the earth. In these stories, the universe could not be created without these teachings.

Many tribal individuals consider their beliefs important everyday elements that contribute to rich tradition and cultural heritage. These stories are represented in ceremonies and teachings. They are passed on to each new generation. The beliefs and traditions connect people to the land, plant life, all living creatures, and to the mysteries of birth, life, death and the spirit world. Many native people closely compare these
connections to the connections they have with family and relatives.

There are as many different origin stories as there are different cultures and peoples. In this lesson, the students will learn one origin story of the Eastern Dakota who lived in Minnesota. They will also look closely at the land ethics usually found within creation stories and how these beliefs relate to the identity of the tribe.

Materials:

Review the Creation Story with students. It can be found on Page 17 of “What Does Justice Look Like?” The Struggle for Liberation in Dakota Homeland, Waziyatawin, PhD.

V. Student Activities:

1. Locate Bdote on a map

2. List one of the land ethics you found within this story. Is this still a value of today’s society? Why or why not?

3. Research the area of Fort Snelling and write a paragraph discussing the connection of Bdote to the Dakota people and Fort Snelling to Minnesotans today.

Resources:

The Bdote Memory Map is a beginning resource for giving Minnesotans a deeper understanding of where we live. It is an interactive website.

www.Web.mac.com/alliesms/Memory/BDOTE.html
A Story of Dakota Creation

A Story of the Dakota Nation (Dwellers by Mystic Lake)

First, however, I want to share with you a story. This is the creation story of the Dakota. It is a story of the humanity of everyone. It is a story of justice. In the end, it is my hope that we might re-experience the sense of moral indignation and humble, profound awe that we once possessed.

Jan 10, I am going to ask you, the reader to join me on a journey into that deadened place. I want you to contemplate it. All dream with sorrow, outrage, guilt, and despair. All dream with grief, outrage, guilt, and despair.

It is not to dwell in this history because it has the potential to permeate our attention. Indeed, even non-colonized people brought to our attention. Indeed, even non-colonized people.

Colonized people.

Because the difficulties of everyday living as colonized people are immense and American Indians have felt the brunt of it. We have felt the brunt of it. And the brunt of it.

The Sioux Indians must be exterminated or driven forever beyond the borders of the state.

How Minnesotans wrested the land

—Governor Alexander Ramsey, 1862

¿What Does Justice Look Like?

The Struggle for Liberation in Dakota Homeland

Waziyalawin, Ph.D.
The pirogue next to me, having played its part, was now abandoned. I turned to the right and we steered to the left. The canoe was now our only means of transport. We moved swiftly along the river, the current carrying us towards our destination. The sky was clear, and the sun shone down upon us, giving us hope for the journey ahead.

As we approached the community of inhabitants, we could hear the sounds of their daily activities. The children playing, the women washing clothes in the river, and the men working on their fields. The air was filled with the scent of freshly cut grass and the aroma of cooking food.

Upon our arrival, we were greeted warmly by the community leaders. They explained that the pirogue would be used to transport goods and people to and from the community. They also informed us that the river was a vital source of water and food for the local community.

We spent the day working alongside the locals, learning about their way of life and culture. We shared meals with them, playing games, and listening to their stories. It was a rewarding experience to see how the community valued the river and the pirogue.

As the day came to an end, we gathered around the fire, sharing stories and songs. The children were happy and excited, and the adults were content and relaxed. It was a perfect end to a perfect day.