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History of the Council Fires

Oceti Sakowin Oyate

Seven Council Fires People

The proper name for the people commonly known as the "Great Sioux" is Oceti Sakowin, (Och-et-ee Shak-oh-win) meaning Seven Council Fires.

The Seven Council Fires are:

- Mdewakantonwan – Nation by the Sacred Lake
- Sinsintonwan – Nation of the Marshland
- Wahpetonwan – Nation Among the Leaves
- Wahpekute – Nation of Shooters Among the Leaves
- Ihanktonwan- Nation at the End of Horn
- Ihankowana- Nation at the Little End of Horn
- Tintatonwan – Nation of the Plains

The Seven Council Fires were conceived by Seven Brothers. These Seven Brothers made an agreement to always take care of, be true to and be there for each other and their families. They therefore are the Fathers of the Seven Council Fires Nation. Today descendents of the Seven Council Fires People can be located on reservations and reserves in South Dakota, North Dakota, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan.

Oyate

People

According to our history, the Oceti Sakowin came from the Black Hills, literally emerging from the Earth at a place called Wind Cave in the Paha Sapa or Black Hills of Unci Maka (Grandmother Earth). The Oceti Sakowin considers the entire Black Hills region sacred and also refers to this place as "the heart of everything that is." This creation story reveals the strong kinship and inherent sense of belonging and shared origins with their lands. When a child is born, they are not only born to parents and a family, but they are born into a relationship with Wakan Tanka (God), into a relationship with the Oyate (People), and with the land, thus one's duties to kin are equal to one's duties to the spiritual and natural world. This bond with nature and responsibility for all living things can be found in the saying "Mitakuye Oyasin", "We Are All Related!"

The Seven Council Fires People believe that all of creation is a part of the circle of life. Every act has an effect on everything within the circle. A virtuous act has a positive power that is multiplied through the circle benefiting all creation. This is in essence Wolakota which is the foundation of Wotitakuye (Kinship).

The purpose of Wotitakuye or kinship lies in Wolakota, a spiritual way of life, based on the Seven Sacred Laws and Seven Sacred Ceremonies that were given to our People by Wakan Tanka or God. Wolakota is a life of peace, friendship, brotherhood and sisterhood, integrity, and wholesome, healthy relationships between and among the relatives within and of the Nation, within and of each family circle (Tiwahe), within and of each extended family (Ti-ospaye), within and of the Bands/Tribe (Ospaye), and within and of the Seven Council Fires (Oceti Sakowin) as a whole. Wolakota is a wholesome relationship and respect between human beings and all forms of life and the spiritual connection with God and their surroundings.

Oceti Sakowin Wotitakuye

Seven Council Fires Kinship

Wotitakuye or in English "kinship", is central to the way of life of the Oceti Sakowin Oyate or Seven Council Fires People and one of the greatest most endearing customs of our nation. The ways of the Seven Council Fires teaches that kinship is of great importance and extensive in terms of caring and responsibility. As children we are taught, one must obey kinship rules; one must be a good relative to his/her people... This conception of relatives influences the way home, family and community social relations work. Where aunts are often considered mothers, uncles called father and cousins are considered brothers and sisters. The Seven Council Fires people teach that there is strength in relationship to each other, relationships within the council fires will remain true to each other and their relatives. Even in severe difficulty the people of the Seven Council Fires will come together

