

Dakota Makoce k'a Mni Okiciyaka

As presented at the October 16, 2024, Committee of the Whole

Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment - Short Statement

The Metropolitan Council acknowledges that the land we currently call Minnesota and specifically the seven-county region is the ancestral homeland of the Dakota Oyate who are present and active contributors to our thriving region. As part of the Metropolitan Council's commitment to address the unresolved legacy of genocide, dispossession, and settler colonialism and the fact that government institutions, including the Metropolitan Council, benefitted economically, politically, and institutionally after the forceable removal of the Dakota Oyate, the Metropolitan Council is dedicated to instilling Land, Water, and People Commitments in regional policy. These commitments support the Dakota Oyate, the eleven federally recognized Tribes in Minnesota, Ho-Chunk Nation, and the American Indian Communities representing over 150 diverse Tribal Nations that call the seven-county region home.

Recommendations for use:

- Read at the start of every Council meeting and meetings of the Council's Committees
- Include in public facing planning documents and adopt as part of Imagine 2050
- Include in new employee onboarding/orientation and all employee continuing education
- Adapt for use at Council buildings and facilities including Robert Street, Heywood, and the Metro Plant. This could take many forms including a plaque on the wall or interpretive art pieces and should reflect the purpose and audience of the building.

Dakota Makoce k'a Mni Okiciyaka:

Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment – Long Statement

The seven-county region sits upon a creation site of the Dakota Oyate, where Mnisota Wakpa (Minnesota River) and Haha Wakpa (Mississippi River) converge on a sacred site called Bdote (where the rivers meet). Mni Sota Makoce, also known as Minnesota, holds immense significance as the origin of Dakota identity, languages, stewardship practices, and ways of life. For the Dakota people, there is not a separate creator and creation, a belief that is meaningfully encapsulated in the saying "Mitakuye Oyasin," which translates

to "we are all related." This interconnectedness guides the original instructions the Dakota hold for the land, their traditions, and their place within the broader circle of existence. It is the spiritual source from which the Dakota Oyate originated and where they committed themselves to conserve, transmit, and steward their ancestral lands and ways of life for the next seven generations. For countless generations, Mni Sota Makoce (The Land of Mist) has always been the primary identity shaper for the national character and life of the Dakota Oyate.

Violent settler-colonial policies- such as the passing of the Homestead Act, which facilitated the influx of settlers into Dakota lands, and the 1863 Dakota Removal Act, which resulted in the systematic incarceration and forced displacement of most Dakota people from Minnesota- historical injustices, and traumas inflicted upon the Dakota community have had far-reaching and enduring impacts seen today. Despite the legacy of genocide, Tribal Nations' sovereignty and right to exist as distinct Nations - Dakota, Ho-Chunk, and Anishinaabe - persist to this day.

The Metropolitan Council acknowledges that the land we currently call Minnesota and specifically the seven-county region is the ancestral homeland of the Dakota Oyate who are present and active contributors to our thriving region. As part of the Metropolitan Council's commitment to address the unresolved legacy of genocide, dispossession, and settler colonialism and the fact that government institutions, including the Metropolitan Council, benefitted economically, politically, and institutionally after the forceable removal of the Dakota Oyate, the Metropolitan Council is dedicated to instilling Land, Water, and People Commitments in regional policy. These commitments support the Dakota Oyate, the eleven federally recognized Tribes in Minnesota, Ho-Chunk Nation, and the American Indian Communities representing over 150 diverse Tribal Nations that call the seven-county region home.

We are dedicated to ensuring a rights-based approach in our partnerships and decisions and promoting the wellbeing of the Dakota, Ho Chunk, and Anishinaabe Nations, as well as American Indian communities in the seven-county metro region. We will adhere to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act and Minnesota Private Cemeteries Act, and actively pursue restoration of Dakota Lands where feasible, recognizing the importance of returning lands to their rightful stewards.

Summary of the Commitments

As part of Land, Water, and People Commitments, the Metropolitan Council is dedicated to the following:

- The Metropolitan Council will adopt an overarching Tribal Relations Policy that includes a recognition of history and impact, commit to supporting staffing and resources to adequately partner with Tribes and American Indian communities, commit to organizational education, develop a current Tribal Consultation and American Indian Community Engagement Policy, and support organizational change to implement the commitments throughout the organization and with partners across the region.
- The Council will adopt policies supporting the wellbeing of American Indian communities as a part of the regional development guide, Imagine 2050, affirming the priorities of the American Indian Advisory Council and commitments in the Regional Parks and Trails System Policy, Water Policy, Transportation Policy, Housing Policy, and Environmental Justice Framework, specifically.

Recommendations for use:

- Create a Council webpage about American Indian and Tribal relations that includes the long statement.
- Use the long statement where recognition or moments of reflection are appropriate and needed, and in organizational education.
- Include as part of educational resources for employees, residents, and local governments.