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Wokini Initiative: The New Beginnings Newsletter

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## The New Beginnings Newsletter, January 2021

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# THE NEW BEGINNINGS NEWSLETTER



SOUTH DAKOTA  
STATE UNIVERSITY

**WOKINI  
INITIATIVE**  
A NEW BEGINNING  
South Dakota State University®



## **The U.S. Dakota War and the Dakota 38**

In the early 1800's, large numbers of white settlers began pouring into the land that the Dakota called Mni Sota, "the land where the sky is reflected in the water." This area, which would later become the state of Minnesota, was slowly stripped away from the Dakota by settler encroachment. In 1851, prominent Dakota leader Taoyateduta, Little Crow, negotiated the Treaty of Mendota. This treaty and the treaty of Traverse des Sioux, ceded much of what is now southern Minnesota to the US government in return for established reservation lands along the Minnesota

River, agricultural supplies, food, and annuity payments (Meyer [1967](#) and Anderson [1986](#)). The reservation land was home to 6,000 Dakota and was 10 miles wide and followed alongside 120 miles of the Minnesota River (Carlson and John 2015).

With their territory significantly limited by treaties, the Dakota could no longer support themselves in their traditional ways and became dependent on goods, services and annuity payments stipulated in treaties. However, the goods and annuities promised in the treaties were not reliably supplied by the government. Often, the annuities were paid directly to traders who sold food to the starving Dakota on credit at exorbitant prices (Chomsky 1990). The annuities and food were also withheld to apply political pressure to the Dakota. In 1857, the Indian agent withheld goods to pressure the Dakota into pursuing an outlaw band of Dakota (Anderson 2010). The Dakota understood this system to be unfair and demanded that the annuities be given to them directly. In the year of 1862, the annuities were late, and the traders cut off credit to the Dakota. To make matters worse, the fall harvest of 1861 was poor due to an infestation of cutworms and the winter that year was particularly harsh. By 1862, the Dakota were starving and in a desperate situation (Anderson 2010).

With tensions rising on the reservation, the stage was set for conflict. On August 17, 1862, four Dakota hunters killed 5 settlers in Acton, Minnesota after being harassed and denied food (Carlson and John 2015). Instead of turning the four young men over to white authorities many young Dakota urged their leaders to initiate war against the white settlers. That evening, the council decided it would go to war, despite the reluctance of many Dakota. The next day, the Dakota attacked the Redwood agency, officially begging the conflict (Chomsky 1990).

The war lasted 37 days, consisting of battles fought between the Dakota and the U.S. army as well as between citizen soldiers and the Dakota. The war resulted in the deaths of 77 American soldiers, 29 citizen-soldiers, approximately 358 settlers, and an estimated 29 Dakota (Chomsky 1990). The war ended after the Dakota who opposed the war took control of the camp and the hostages and offered their surrender to the U.S. army. On September 26<sup>th</sup>, 1200 Dakota men, women and children were taken into custody and many more groups surrendered over the course of the coming weeks (Chomsky 1990).

After the war, 303 Dakota warriors were found guilty for their involvement (Meyer 1967). The trials of the Dakota were largely unfair and unjust. For one thing, they were not given the legal protections normally given to a sovereign nation at war but were instead tried as individuals. Because so many were convicted, only five minutes could be spent on each trial and the evidence given against any individual Dakota was often dubious for several reasons. Many witnesses at the trials gave incriminating evidence of others in the hopes of getting their own sentences reduced. In addition, there was little, or nothing done by the military tribunal to overcome cultural and linguistic barriers that prevented the Dakota on trial from fully understanding what they were being tried for and the consequences of the verdict (Chomsky 1990).

Lincoln doubted the quality of the evidence against the 303 'guilty' Dakota, but he was also aware that the settlers in Minnesota demanded retribution. He selected 40 Dakota from the list to be publicly hanged (Wingerd 2010). This hanging took place on December 26<sup>th</sup>, 1862 in Mankato, Minnesota and was the largest public execution to ever take place in the United States (Wingerd 2010).

Today, this historical event is remembered through the Dakota 38+2 Memorial Ride, a 330 mile horseback ride from Lower Brule, South Dakota to Mankato, Minnesota. The theme of the ride is healing and reconciliation. It provides an opportunity for the descendants of white settlers, many of whom will see the ride pass through their town, and the descendants of the Dakota to reflect on the complex and shared history of this region.

In honor of the riders and to commemorate the Dakota who were killed, Dakota State University in Madison, SD hosts an annual feed to provide a traditional meal for the riders. This also provides the opportunity for staff, faculty, students, and community members to learn the true history of the Dakota 38 + 2 and it's importance to Indigenous culture as well as try some traditional foods. SDSU's Wokini Initiative will partner with DSU to host this event beginning December 2021. This annual event was canceled this year due to Covid-19.

### References

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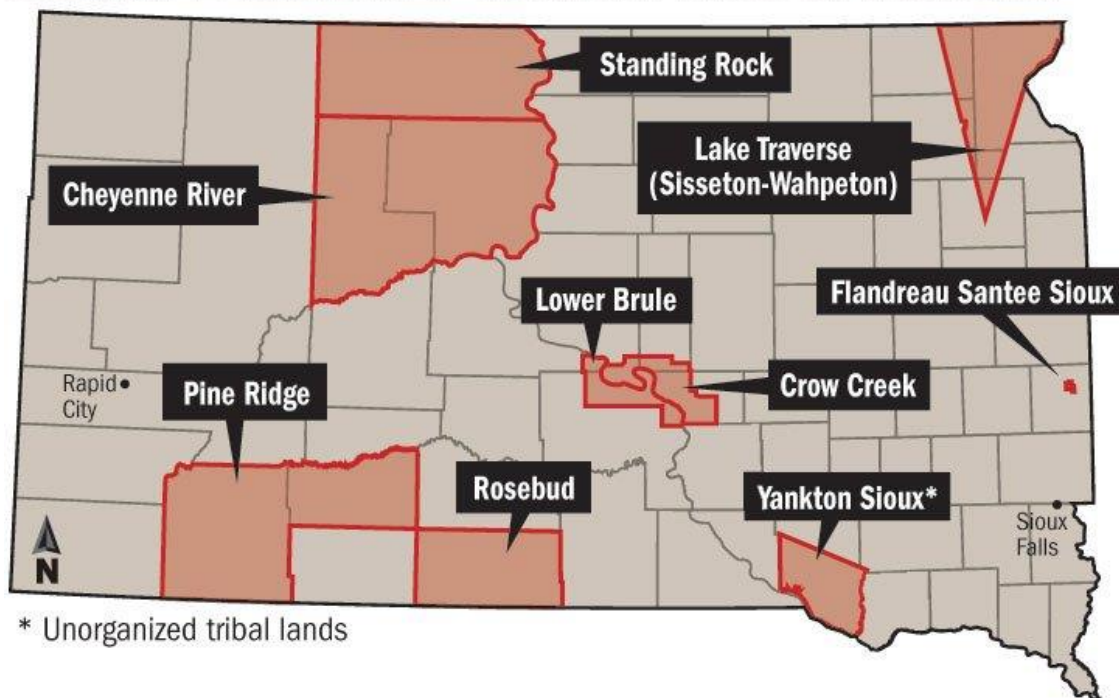
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## South Dakota's Indian Reservations



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**American Indian Student Center**

## **Program Coordinator**

South Dakota State University American Indian Student Center is offering an exciting career opportunity as an American Indian Program Coordinator. We are looking for a creative and innovative professional to join us. This is a 12 month, full-time, benefit-eligible position. This position is supervised by the Director of the American Indian Student Center.

For more information on this position and to apply, click [here](#).

## **College Access Liaison**

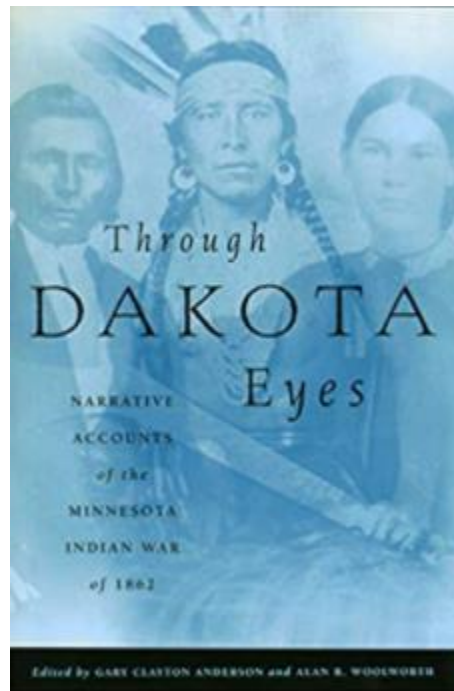
South Dakota State University (SDSU) is currently seeking a self-motivated and organized College Access Liaison to lead a grant-funded innovative project based out of Lower Brule Community College (LBCC) in Lower Brule, South Dakota (SD). The successful applicant will coordinate the grant program entitled Igluwiyea (ee – Glue – wee – yea – yah), meaning “Prepare oneself”. The position will facilitate the Igluwiyea program in collaboration with project partners to provide outreach to local tribal high schools and LBCC students to increase student knowledge of college preparation programs, tribal career opportunities, postsecondary and advanced degree options, and college financing. The liaison position will create sustainable resources and provide student instruction on access and pathways to higher education and degree attainment for American Indian students. The liaison will travel to and work effectively with high school administrators, teachers and manage project tasks and objectives in accordance with the project’s fast-paced timeline. This is a 12 month, full-time, benefit-eligible,

grant funded position. This position is supervised by the Wokini Program Director at SDSU.

For more information on this position and to apply, click [here](#).

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## Book of the Month



## Through Dakota Eyes

"This volume brings together an invaluable collection of vivid eyewitness accounts of the Minnesota Indian War of 1862 and its aftermath. Of greatest interest is the fact that all the narratives assembled here come from Dakota mixed-bloods and full-bloods. Speaking from a variety of viewpoints and enmeshed in complex webs



of allegiances to Indian, white, and mixed-blood kin, these witnesses testify not only to the terrible casualties they all suffered, but also to the ways in which the events of 1862 tore at the social, cultural, and psychic fabrics of their familial and community lives. This rich contribution to Minnesota and Dakota history is enhanced by careful editing and annotation."—Jennifer S. H. Brown, University of Winnipeg

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## Lakota Word of the Month

Waníyetu (snow time) Winter

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