

DAKOTA LAND RECOVERY

2020 – 2021 Reparations Partner Project



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Figure 1:
Earthlodge
frame under
construction at
Zani Otunwe
in Granite Falls,
Minnesota.



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Figure 2:
Dakota volun-
teers from the
Lake Traverse
Sisseton-Wahpe-
ton Reservation
stripping bark
off the columns
for earthlodges
in 2019.

As Dakota people, we consider *Minisota Makoce* (Land Where the Waters Reflect the Skies) to be our ancient homeland and we were the first human beings to call this place home. Yet, in the last two centuries, Dakota people were systematically dispossessed of our homeland and we currently reside on about .01 % (about one-hundredth of one percent) of our original land base within the borders of what is now the State of Minnesota. As a consequence, the vast majority of our people still live in exile.

The *Makoce Ikikcupi* (Land Recovery) project seeks to bring some of our relatives home, re-establish our spiritual and physical relationship with our homeland, and ensure the ongoing existence of our People. Our cultural survival depends on it.

We live in an age when our language sits on the brink of extinction. Our last fluent speakers of Dakota language in Minnesota number less than a handful and are now all over the age of 70. The link to our knowledge about our cultural traditions is quickly fading. If we do not implement a way of living in which our language is tied to our daily activities, our language will die and we will lose valuable survival knowledge.

Further, in the coming months and years, as the globe continues to warm, the environment continues to be desecrat-

ed by industrial civilization, and cheap oil becomes more and more scarce, all populations must consider their future food security. Our physical survival depends on it.

Our dream is to acquire land within our ancestral homeland where we can establish new communities based on sustainability and adherence to our ancient ways of being. We hope to resume our traditional practices of wild-ricing, sugar-bushing, hunting, and foraging, where we can grow our traditional gardens, reconstitute our traditional forms of governance, practice our spirituality, educate our children, and throughout all these activities, speak our language.

Through settler donations to this project, we have now purchased our first parcel of land in pursuit of this dream. We have 21 acres in Granite Falls, Minnesota where we are currently constructing three Dakota earthlodges to create a community we call *Zani Otunwe* (Village of Wellness). Donations will help us purchase construction materials we need for this building. We hope this will be the first village site of many within our *Minisota* homeland.

We appreciate your interest in Dakota land recovery.
Wopida unkenic'iyapi! We give you thanks!

—Waziyatawin, Ph. D