De Dakóta Makóče
This Is Dakota Land
Winter Edition
Our elders teach us that what is on earth is in the stars, and what is in the stars is also on earth. As Dakota people, we come from the star nation — the Wičaȟpi Oyate — and to the stars we return, our spirit traveling through the Milky Way to its place in the spirit world.
The stars also guide us in our lives on earth. For generations, Dakota people have relied on our knowledge of the relationships between the stars, the moon, the plants, the animals, and our Uŋčí Maka — our Grandmother Earth — to mark the changing of the seasons.
Dakóta Seasons

WETU SPRING

BDOKETU SUMMER

PTANJYETU FALL

WANÍYETU WINTER

For more information visit https://bit.ly/2I1yXEk or scan the QR code
For Dakota people, winter is the season for learning through storytelling. Storytelling can happen at anytime of the year, but when the air is cold, the snow is falling, and the days are shorter, children sit around the warm fire as their grandparents tell them stories. It is a perfect way to pass the long, dark winter evenings.

Do you tell stories with your family?
Dakóta Winter Months

November
Thahéčapšuŋ wi
Deer Antler Shedding Moon

December
Čhaŋkáphopa wi
Tree Popping Moon

January
Withéḥi wi
Hard Moon

February
Wičhá thawí
Racoon Moon

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This moon marks the beginning of winter for many nations. In the Dakota language, Thahé means deer antler and Čapšúnŋ means to shed. It is also called Wíhnipi wí, or hunting moon, as members of the Očéti Šakówiŋ in this area moved their winter camps wherever the deer roamed.
Čhaŋkáphopa wi
Tree Popping Moon - December

During this time of the year, the air begins to turn very cold and the trees make a beautiful popping sound. This is often helpful to hunters as they can get close to animals without them hearing. Čhaŋkáphopa wi is also a moon of creativity as our people make the most beautiful clothes and moccasins out of porcupine quills and beads.
January is called hard moon as it is the coldest and hardest time of the year when the snow and ice are crusted on the ground. By this time, the small deer-hunting parties have returned, making sure everyone in the tiyóšpaye (family) have meat for the winter. Our people relied upon buried corn, dried berries, rice reserves, fish, and wasná - dried pounded buffalo, elk, or deer meat combined with chokecherry patties.
Wičhá thawí
Raccoon Moon - February

February is the moon when raccoons start to make families. It is also the perfect time to play thakápsiča ('ball play on the ice') or lacrosse. Thakápsiča is known as Creator's game, not only because it is a game of great fun, but because it was used to resolve village conflicts. Children would also go skating and sledding with elm bark strapped to their moccasins and sleds made out of buffalo ribs.
For generations, Dakota people have cared for and been cared for by the waterways that exist in Imnížaska (Saint Paul). A long time ago, Dakota people would rely on mníowe - fresh water springs - for medicine, ceremonies, washing, and purification. There are many mníowe in these areas like Mni Owe Sni (cold water springs) and the one found in Wakaŋ Tipi/ Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary, all of which are sacred to our people.
Traditionally, Dakota people would use a mníowe (spring) for bathing in the winter. However, if there were no springs in sight, our people would cut holes in the ice, despite the freezing temperatures, and would jump in with all clothes on to then huddle up next to a warm fire to dry off.
Not only is cold water swimming effective for bathing, but it has been shown to have many other benefits like boosting your immune system, activating your endorphins, reducing stress levels, and regulating your circulation!

Did you know many of the fresh water springs stay the same temperature of about 50º F year-round?
FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

Dakota people have been weathering the winters for generations. Though climate change and colonization continue to shift the relationships between humans, land, plants, animals, and water - our people continue to live with our teachings; making medicines and foods, playing games, passing down stories, and nurturing the coming generations.
Congratulations - you made it all the way through! We hope you enjoyed these Story Strolls created by Lower Phalen Creek Project, a local Native-led environmental nonprofit on the East Side, in partnership with Capital Region Watershed District and Saint Paul Parks and Recreation.

To learn more visit lowerphalencreek.org/resources

For more information and to walk through the story strolls online visit https://bit.ly/2l1yXEy or scan the QR code