



Those Whose Dance Awakened Us: An Eco-cultural Relationship between the *Isanti Dakota* and *Pte Oyate*



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Introduction

The cultural identity of a people stems from the roots of a space-based recognition of an ancestral relationship. **Recognizing relationality in responsible stewardship** is a way in which tribal people continue to live generationally. For tribal people who live in the lands of the Midwest, a vital source of this relationality is the Buffalo Nation.

Buffalo are a cultural keystone species significant to the livelihood of creation and has given birth to the culture, language, ceremonies, dances, songs, and sustenance to the **Dakod Wicohan, Ways of Living as a Relative**. Buffalo are a source to living as a *Dakota*, their biology and structure as a family is resembled in Dakota communities, homes, and in individual lives. *Dakota* have learned to walk beside and with the Buffalo Nation.



Figure 1. Female Buffalo mother and calf. Isanti Dakota woman and child imprisoned at Ft. Snelling as a captive from the Dakota resistance in 1862.

Tribal-Buffalo Eco-Cultural Relationships

The movement of reintroducing bison herds into tribal communities as a way of honoring relationship, security, and cultural education is a renewal of spiritual guidance and initiates place to space relationship. **Native self determination efforts have shaped cultural teaching methods** in present day bison herds in tribal communities (Haggerty et al. 2018). The objective is to open space within tribal communities for the Buffalo Nation to be present in always remaining among and with the people and the lands in which they now reside. **Buffalo are a cultural keystone species for ecological balance** which is revealed by spatial co-existence.

Why is this Research Important?

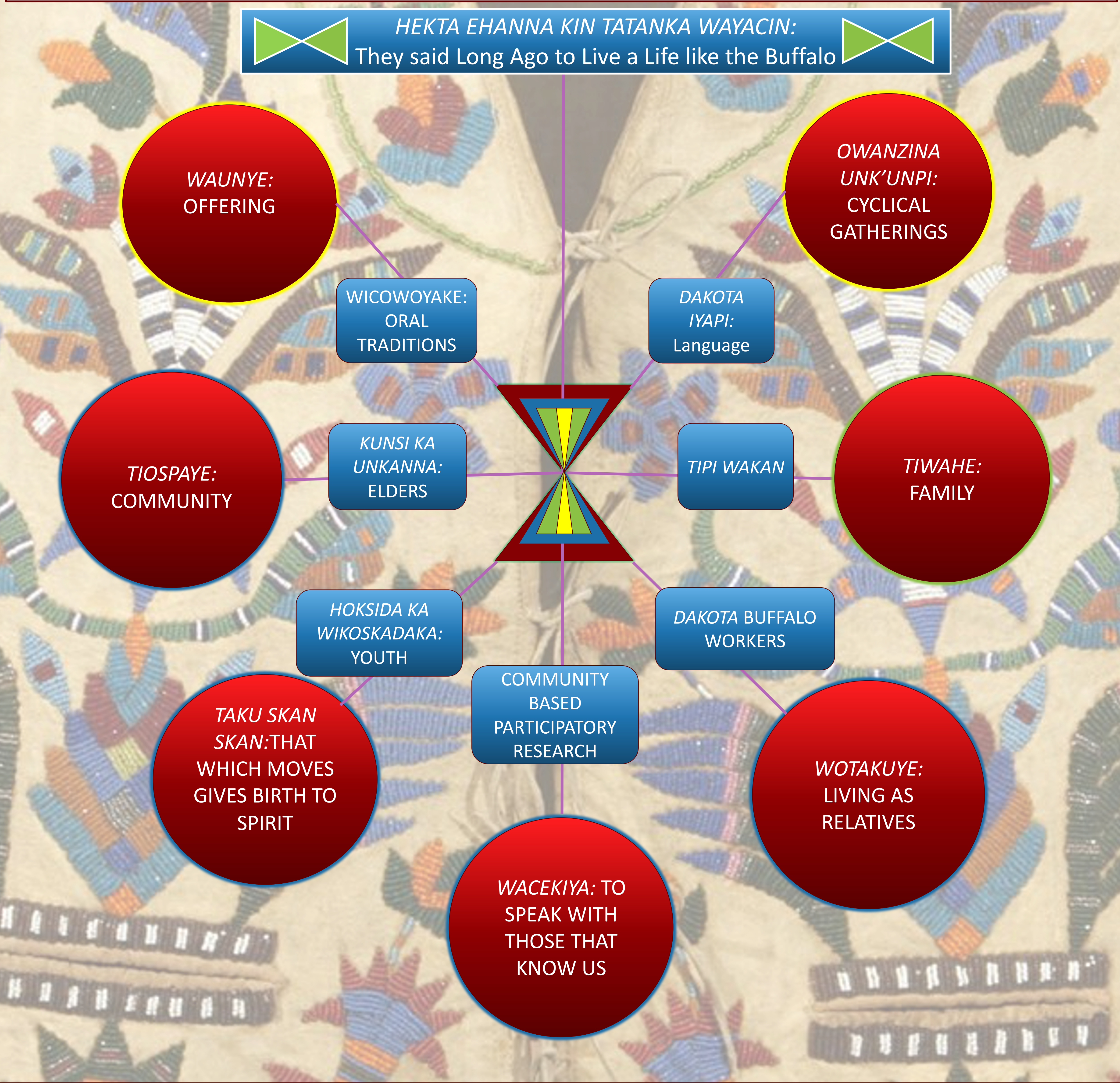
- Cultural Vitalization
- Buffalo are cultural keystone species for Ecosystem
- Generational Relational Accountability
- A shared exile, recognizing home in each other



Figure 2. Buffalo herd relocated from the North Rim of Grand Canyon to Tribal Nations through ITBC initiative. The Santee Sioux tribe was included in receiving some of the relatives into their care. 2019. Cottonwood Tree Leaves symbolizing a bridge of ceremony between the nations.

Research Question

How does an eco-cultural relationship between the *Isanti Dakota* and Buffalo Nation of the Santee Sioux Tribe of Nebraska represent practices of shared reciprocity?



Community Based Participatory Research

Community Based Participatory Research is a methodological approach that whereby the community and researcher decide together the information to be shared for the recognition of Indigenous knowledge in academic spaces.

By meeting an understanding of the necessary voice to be shared with academic research, decolonizing methods of analysis and data collection can interpret Indigenous Research as Ceremony. By implementing Indigenous knowledge approaches to share what is approved by the consent of the community is holistic in direct engagement by the people. Methods are subject to change based on the involvement of Santee Sioux Tribe community.

The vision is to engage in partnership with community to relate the Dakota worldview in the practices of reciprocity with the Buffalo Nation in *Isanti Makoce*.

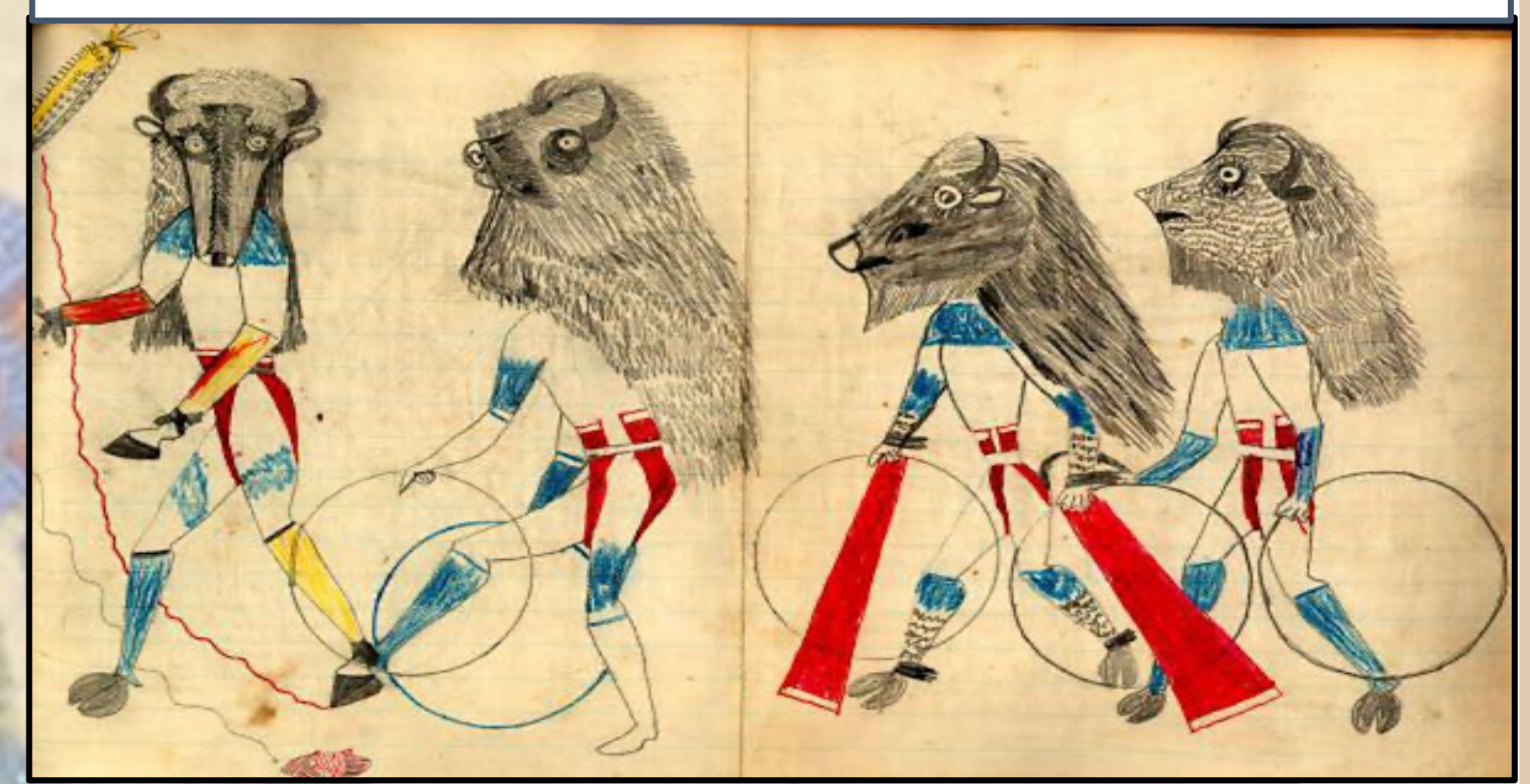


Figure 3. Black Hawk's Ledger Art of the Buffalo Dance Ceremony

WONIYA WAKAN: A Source of Life

BUFFALO IN ISANTI MAKOCE
Bison Herd Size: 30 head
Santee Sioux Tribe of Nebraska Members: 1041, 400 on Reservation
Santee Sioux Tribe Size: 9,449 acres
Location: Knox County in Northeast Corner of Nebraska, North Border: Missouri River, 17 miles to South, 13 miles East to West
ITBC: The Intertribal Buffalo Council - 69 Tribes
Santee Sioux Tribe of Nebraska is a Member

ISANTI DAKOTA PRACTICES OF RECIPROCITY
A practice that helped Dakota to share and sustain this bond is **Dakota Ecological stewardship**. This can be defined as living in responsible use, protection, and spiritual connection with creation; the relationships which have instructed *Dakota* in ways of living within a natural environment. Isanti Dakota Ecological Stewardship is presented in the center model, a model that resembles the original camp structure of the *Oceti Sakowin: Dakota, Lakota, ka Nakota* people. *The Dakod Wicohan* noted in these spaces are to share the resemblance of how the *Pte Oyate* taught the Dakota to live, and through culture their honor is reciprocated. Presented in this poster board are the original stewards of the land, the *Pte Oyate* and one of their many children the *Dakota Oyate*.



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