



AKTÁ LAKOTA

Museum & Cultural Center

- an outreach of St. Joseph's Indian School -

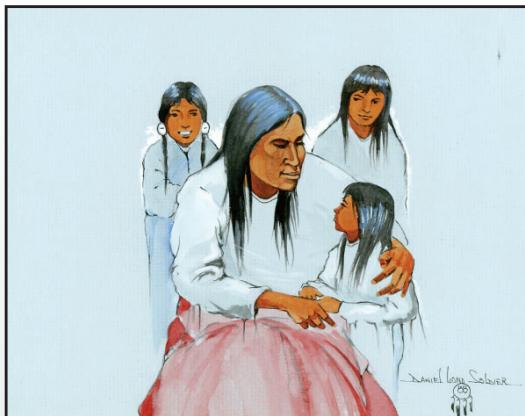


NATIONALLY RENOWNED CENTER OF AMERICAN INDIAN ART

THE TRADITIONAL ART OF TEACHING

Storytelling has always been central to Lakota life and to many Native Nations. Long before history was written down, knowledge was shared through spoken word—passed from generation to generation through carefully remembered stories. Elders used these narratives to teach history, cultural values, and ways of living in balance with the world around them.

These stories did more than preserve the past. They guided relationships, reinforced respect for kinship and leadership, and expressed a deep connection to the land and to the animals that sustained the people. Storytelling often engaged all the senses, woven together with song, music, movement, and spoken word to create shared moments.



of learning and understanding. At the Aktá Lakota Museum & Cultural Center, we honor this living tradition by sharing stories that continue to shape Lakota identity today. While oral storytelling is less common than it once was, many Native storytellers and authors have worked to preserve these teachings by listening to elders and carrying their words forward. Through exhibitions, programs, and educational initiatives, the museum remains committed to ensuring these voices and lessons endure—connecting past, present, and future generations.

Photo credit: artwork by [Daniel Long Solider, Oglala Lakota](#) © 1988

LAKOTA MOON CALENDAR - WÍYAWAPI WÓWAPI HANWÍ

Waníyetu — *The Cold and Dark Moons (Winter)*

In Lakota culture, winter marked the beginning of a quieter, more reflective season. Families typically remained in a single campsite throughout the winter months, creating a sense of stability and closeness. During this time, women focused on crafting and repairing clothing, while men traveled on expeditions to protect the camp and ensure its safety.

Although winter required hard work, it was also a season of enjoyment and connection. Children gathered near the warmth of the fire to listen as grandparents shared stories, passing on history, teachings, and values. Elders used this time to reflect on the past, while families enjoyed games, dancing, and social gatherings that strengthened community bonds.

The winter moons reflected both the environment and lived experience:

- **Waníčokan Wi** — *Moon When the Deer Shed Their Horns*
- **Wiótehika Wi** — *The Hard Moon*
- **Cannápopa Wi** — *Moon When Trees Crack from the Cold*
- **Ištáwičayazan Wi** — *Moon of Sore Eyes (Snow Blindness)*

Lakota people, like many American Indian Nations, observed time through a deep relationship with the natural world. Their calendars were guided by the [cycles of the moon](#), dividing the year into thirteen moons, each lasting 28 days. These moon names reflect careful observation of seasonal changes and reinforce the enduring connection between people, land, and sky.



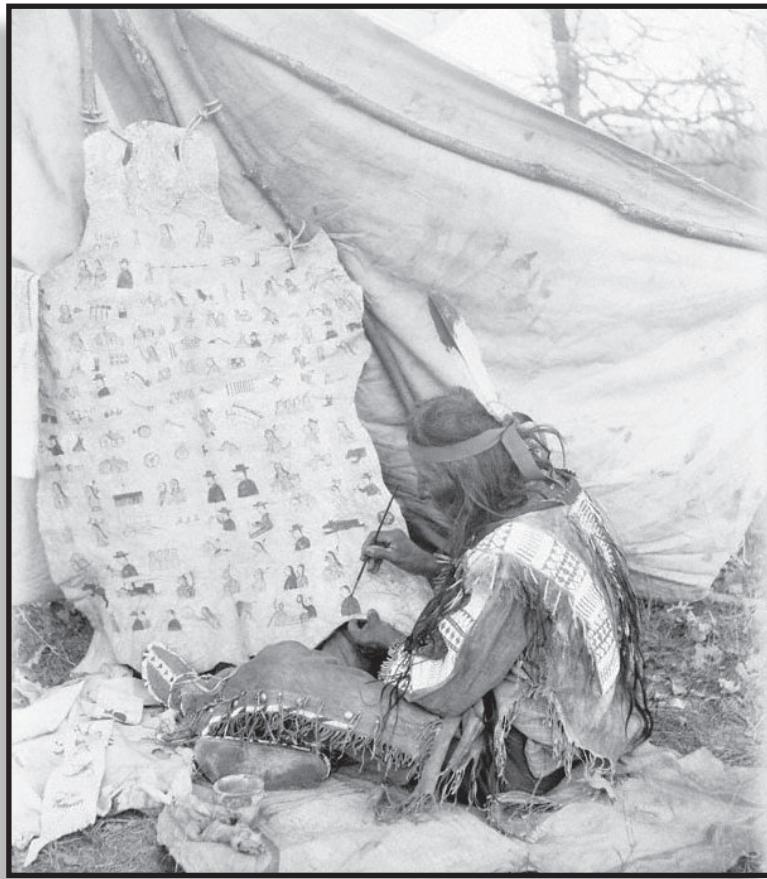
Waníyetu: *The Cold and Dark Moons (Winter)*

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The Lakota year is divided into 13 moons. Each moon is 28 days long, and every day represents something sacred:

Two days for the Great Spirit
Two days for the Mother Earth
Four days for the Four Winds
One day for the Spotted Eagle
One day for the Sun
One day for the Moon
One day for the Morning Star
Four days for the Four Ages
Seven days for the Seven Rites of the Sacred Pipe
One day for the Buffalo
One day for the Fire
One day for the Water
One day for the Rock
One day for the Two-legged People

THE WINTER COUNT: A VISUAL RECORD OF LAKOTA HISTORY



A Winter Count is a traditional Lakota method of recording history through images, preserving cultural memory and significant events across generations. Well-known for their depth and continuity, Lakota Winter Counts often span decades, offering a remarkable visual record of tribal life.

Each year was represented by a single pictograph that captured the most meaningful event experienced by the community—whether a historic moment, a natural occurrence, or a defining achievement. During the

winter months, when families gathered together, Plains Indian communities reflected on the year that had passed and selected an image to represent it. Because this process took place in winter, the practice became known as “counting by winters.”

A respected community historian, often referred to as the keeper of the Winter Count, was responsible for remembering and recording these events. Guided by the council of elders, one image was chosen each year to stand for the entire year and its story. Over time, as new pictographs were added, the Winter Count grew into an extraordinary chronological archive.

Originally painted on buffalo hides, Winter Counts later appeared on materials such as ledger paper as buffalo became scarce in the late nineteenth century. The images were arranged in sequence—often beginning at one side of the hide and continuing across its surface—creating a visual timeline meant to be shared and explained through storytelling.

When paired with the Lakota oral tradition, a [Winter Count](#) became far more than a calendar. It served as a living historical record—one that preserved memory, honored experience, and carried the tribe’s legacy forward through both art and story.

Photo credit: John A. Anderson Collection, Nebraska Historical Society

MUSEUM HAPPENINGS

EMPLOYEES EARN "GREAT FACES" RECOGNITION

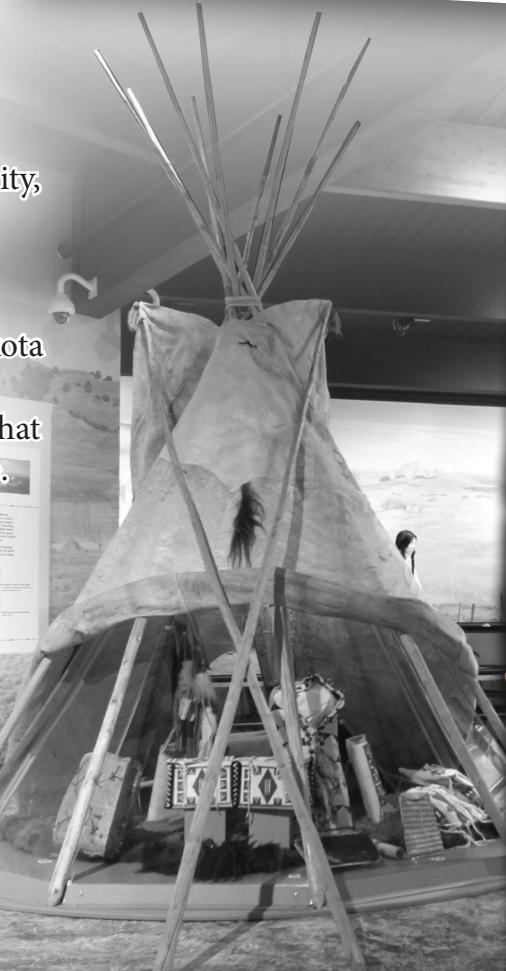
The Aktá Lakota Museum Employees Earn "Great Face" Recognition

The South Dakota Department of Tourism has recognized two members of the Aktá Lakota Museum & Cultural Center team with the [2025 Great Face Award](#), honoring individuals who exemplify exceptional hospitality and service.

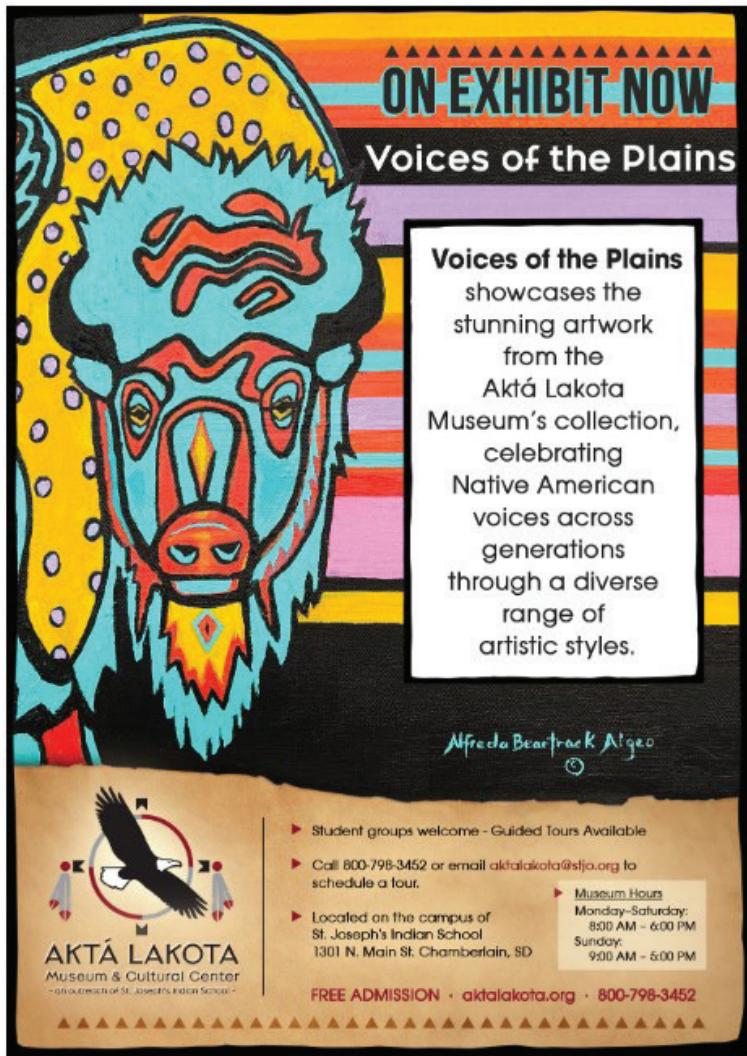
Wanda Bunker, Historical Center Coordinator, was recognized for the warmth and kindness she extends to every visitor, helping ensure that each guest feels welcomed and valued from the moment they arrive. Linnea Schindler, Store Manager, also received the Great Face designation. Now in her third year, Linnea has helped create a welcoming and vibrant museum store through her strong relationships with Native artisans and her friendly, engaging presence.

"Both of these ladies are truly the face of the Aktá Lakota Museum & Cultural Center," said Museum Director Dixie Thompson. "They exemplify hospitality, professionalism, and knowledge for everyone who walks through our doors."

In addition to these individual honors, the Aktá Lakota Museum & Cultural Center also received a [South Dakota Great Place Award](#), recognizing businesses that go above and beyond for guests and employees alike.



ON EXHIBIT NOW - VOICES OF THE PLAINS

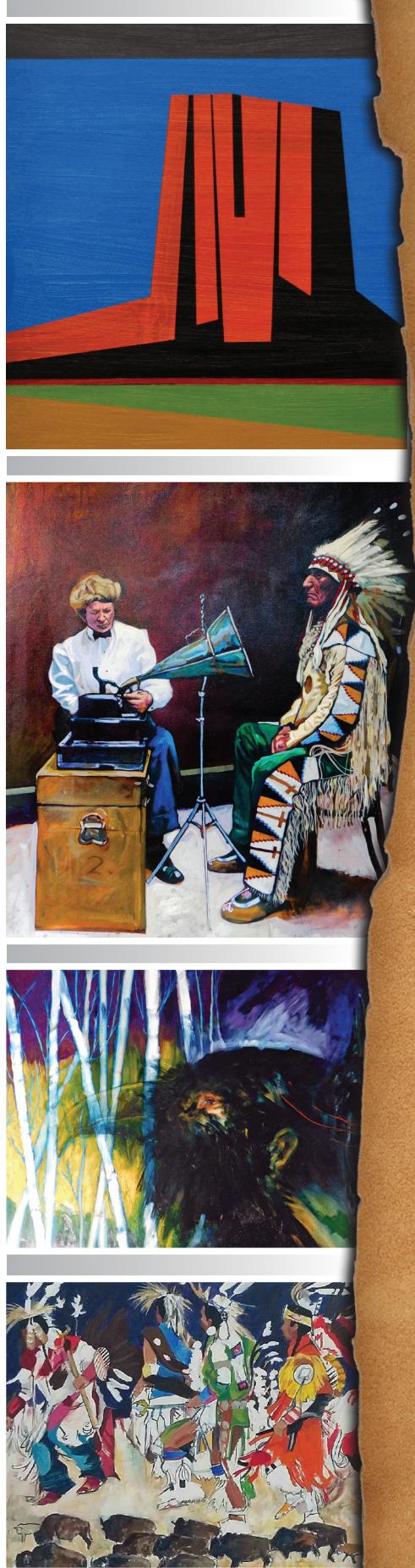


Voices of the Plains features artwork from the Aktá Lakota Museum's permanent collection, highlighting the creativity, resilience, and enduring spirit of artists connected to the Northern Plains. Spanning generations, styles, and media, this exhibition offers a powerful look at the depth of Native expression.

Each piece tells a story — reflecting cultural identity, lived experience, and the ongoing dialogue between tradition and innovation.

Voices of the Plains also reflects the museum's continued commitment to honoring Native American voices and strengthening its growing collection that preserves and shares the art and history of the Northern Plains peoples.

Exhibit is curated by David A. Meyer III.



YOUTH ART MONTH - 2026



March is Youth Art Month, a nationwide initiative dedicated to advocating for arts education and recognizing the creativity and commitment of student artists and their teachers. At St. Joseph's Indian School, the month serves as an important reminder of the lasting impact art education has on the young people we serve.

David Meyer, who teaches art at St. Joseph's, shared that Youth Art Month is celebrated in many ways across grade levels. "Different teachers celebrate it in different ways," Meyer explained. "At the elementary level, we have incorporated special activities into their curriculum, and in the past, we've also created art-themed projects leading up to our annual art show."

This year, Casey Walsh, Curator at the Aktá Lakota Museum, played a key role in organizing the Youth Art Month exhibition. Working closely with David, Walsh took the lead in selecting and preparing student artwork for display, creating a meaningful gallery experience for our students and visitors.

St. Joseph's students of all ages participated in the exhibition. Meyer believes art plays a vital role in healing, and that the exhibition offers a meaningful opportunity—one that can serve as a stepping stone for students interested in pursuing art—while inspiring confidence and pride in their creative accomplishments.

A special opening reception for students, their families, and staff will be held during the month. The [Celebrate Youth Art Month exhibition](#) will remain on view through March 31.



NATIVE INSPIRED GIFTS — SHARE THE CULTURE

The Aktá Lakota Museum Gift Shop proudly supports local and regional American Indian artists by offering a thoughtfully curated selection of authentic, handcrafted items. From intricate beadwork and jewelry to vibrant pottery, star quilts, books on Native history, greeting cards, and creatively designed apparel, every purchase helps sustain Native artistry and cultural traditions.

Whether you're shopping for a special gift or treating yourself, the museum store offers meaningful items that celebrate creativity, heritage, and connection.

[Visit our online store here!](#)



VISIT THE AKTÁ LAKOTA MUSEUM AND ST. JOSEPH'S INDIAN SCHOOL

Experience the richness of Lakota culture with a visit to the Aktá Lakota Museum & Cultural Center and St. Joseph's Indian School. Winter hours are Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (CST). The museum is closed on weekends and national holidays. Admission is free, and donations are always appreciated.

Visitors are welcome to explore the museum at their own pace or request a guided campus tour by speaking with the receptionist upon arrival. For additional information, please call **800.798.3452** or email aktalakota@stjo.org.

Plan your visit today and discover the enduring stories, traditions, and teachings shared through the museum's exhibitions and programs.

Learn more at <https://aktalakota.stjo.org/>





GENERAL MUSEUM INFORMATION



Aktá Lakota Museum & Cultural Center

St. Joseph's Indian School
1301 North Main Street
Chamberlain, SD 57325
Phone: 1-605-234-3452
Toll Free: 1-800-798-3452
E-Mail: aktalakota@stjo.org
Online: <http://www.aktalakota.stjo.org/>



Summer Hours

May – October
8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.; Monday - Saturday
9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.; Sunday

Winter Hours

November – April
8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.; Monday - Friday
Closed weekends and National Holidays

Memberships and Affiliations

ABA – American Bus Association
NTA – National Tour Association
ASDM – Association of South Dakota Museums
SDSHS – South Dakota State Historical Society
AAM – American Association of Museums
IACA – Indian Arts & Crafts Association
MPMA – Mountain Plains Museum Association
AASLH – American Assoc. for State & Local History

- Interactive Displays
- Medicine Wheel Garden
- After Hours Tours by Appointment
- Bus/RV Parking
- Handicap-Accessible
- Guided Tours Available Upon Request

FREE ADMISSION
Donations Welcome



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