



AKTÁ LAKOTA

Museum & Cultural Center

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



NATIONALLY RENOWNED CENTER OF AMERICAN INDIAN ART

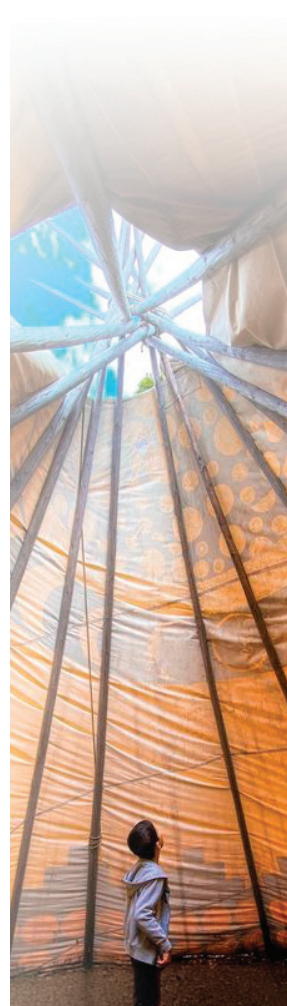
EXPERIENCE THE HEART OF LAKOTA CULTURE

Each year, thousands of visitors travel to South Dakota to experience the beauty of the Black Hills, the Badlands, and the Missouri River. Along the way, we invite them to discover another of the state's greatest treasures—the rich history, culture, and living traditions of the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota people.

Located on the campus of [St. Joseph's Indian School](#), the Aktá Lakota Museum offers an authentic and engaging look at the people who have called the Northern Plains home for generations. As an outreach of the school, the museum shares the stories of Native people from their own perspective, beginning long before European contact and continuing through the present day.

Visitors journey through exhibits that explore traditional lifeways, spirituality, art, and history, while also examining the lasting impact of trade, treaties, boarding schools, and government policies. The museum concludes with Continuity and Change, an inspiring exhibit that highlights the resilience, achievements, and vibrant cultures of Native communities today.

Whether you're visiting South Dakota for the first time or returning to explore more of its history, the Aktá Lakota Museum offers a meaningful experience that deepens your understanding of the people, traditions, and stories that continue to shape this region.



FIND PEACE IN THE MEDICINE WHEEL GARDEN



Enhance your visit to the Aktá Lakota Museum with a walk through the **Medicine Wheel Garden**—a peaceful outdoor space that celebrates the connection between nature, spirituality, and Lakota culture.

Inspired by the teachings of the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota people, the garden features native plants and a tranquil water feature, symbolizing water (Mni Wicóni) as a source of life, healing, and renewal. The circular design reflects the values of balance, harmony, and the interconnectedness of all living things.

Whether you're pausing for quiet reflection or seeking a deeper appreciation of Indigenous traditions, the Medicine Wheel Garden offers a beautiful and meaningful complement to your museum experience.

SHARE THE CULTURE WITH NATIVE-INSPIRED GIFTS

For generations, beadwork has been an important form of artistic expression for the Lakota people. More than beautiful decoration, each design tells a story—reflecting identity, heritage, and cultural values passed from one generation to the next.

With the introduction of glass beads through European trade, Lakota artists expanded their creative expression while preserving traditional techniques. Today, beadwork continues to thrive as a vibrant art form, with contemporary artists honoring the past through intricate patterns, meaningful symbolism, and exceptional craftsmanship.

The Aktá Lakota Museum is proud to support Native artists by featuring their handcrafted work in our museum gift shop. From hand-beaded jewelry and accessories to one-of-a-kind gifts, every purchase helps celebrate American Indian artistry and supports the preservation of Lakota cultural traditions.

Whether you're looking for a meaningful keepsake or a unique gift, we invite you to visit our gift shop or browse online. Share the beauty of Lakota artistry while supporting Native artists and the museum's mission to honor and preserve Lakota culture.

Shop online at shopping.aktalakota.org or visit us during your next museum trip.



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SUMMER ON THE PLAINS: THE SEASON OF BLOKÉTU

For the Lakota people, **Blokétu**—*summer*—was a season of abundance, movement, and community. As the buffalo herds traveled across the Northern Plains, families followed, establishing new camps wherever food and resources could be found. Every member of the camp had an important role in ensuring its success.

Women were responsible for packing and transporting the family's belongings, preparing meals, gathering plants and other essential resources, and raising the tipis that became the center of each new camp. Their knowledge and leadership kept families organized and thriving throughout the season.



Grass Mountain II © 1997
Robert Penn, Sicangu Lakota/Omaha
(1946-1999)

Children learned by observing and participating alongside their families. Girls practiced the art of quillwork while helping gather firewood and carry water, gradually taking on responsibilities that prepared them for adulthood. Boys developed hunting skills by tracking small game and learning the patience, observation, and discipline that would one day serve them as providers.

Men focused on hunting buffalo and other large game, crafting bows, arrows, and other tools, and protecting the camp. Their work helped provide food, clothing, shelter, and security for the entire community.

Summer was also a season of celebration and spiritual renewal. Families gathered for ceremonies, social events, and communal celebrations that strengthened kinship ties and honored long-held cultural traditions. These gatherings offered opportunities to share stories, pass on knowledge, and celebrate the relationships that held the community together.

Rather than measuring time by months, the Lakota observed the changing seasons through the natural world. Each summer moon reflected the plants, animals, and activities that marked that time of year

- **Wípazuka Wašté Wi** — *Moon of the Juneberries*
- **Čhanpásapa** — *Moon When the Chokecherries Are Ripe*
- **Wasúton Wi** — *Moon of the Harvest*

These moons served as reminders of nature's rhythms, guiding daily life and connecting each generation to the land. Through careful observation of the seasons, the Lakota passed down knowledge that sustained both their people and their enduring relationship with the natural world.

A NEW OUTDOOR EXHIBIT CONNECTS VISITORS TO LAKOTA CULTURE

Visitors to the Aktá Lakota Museum are now welcomed by a new outdoor exhibit that celebrates the beauty, artistry, and enduring traditions of the Lakota people.

Set against the backdrop of the Missouri River, the painted tipi offers more than a picturesque landmark—it provides an opportunity to learn about one of the most recognizable symbols of Plains Indian life. For generations, the tipi served as a practical home for Lakota families, designed to be quickly assembled, taken down, and transported as communities followed the buffalo across the Northern Plains.

The tipi's vibrant design reflects the rich artistic traditions of the Lakota, where colors, patterns, and symbols often carry personal, cultural, or spiritual meaning. Positioned on the museum grounds, the exhibit invites visitors to experience these traditions in an outdoor setting that echoes the landscapes where Lakota families once lived.

The outdoor exhibit complements the museum's indoor galleries by encouraging guests to reflect on the connection between the Lakota people, the land, and a way of life shaped by resilience, community, and respect for nature.

Whether you're visiting for the first time or returning to explore something new, we invite you to stop by the tipi, enjoy the beautiful river view, and discover another chapter in the living story of Lakota culture.



MODERNITY MEETS TRADITION: REAL TRADISH OPENS AT THE AKTÁ LAKOTA MUSEUM

The Aktá Lakota Museum & Cultural Center is pleased to present **Modernity Meets Tradition: Real Tradish**, a new exhibition that celebrates the enduring creativity of Lakota artists and the evolving nature of cultural expression.

Drawn from the museum's permanent collection, the exhibition explores how contemporary Native artists honor traditional Lakota values while embracing modern materials, subjects, and artistic techniques. The result is a compelling collection of works that demonstrates tradition is not something confined to the past—it is a living practice that continues to inspire, adapt, and thrive.

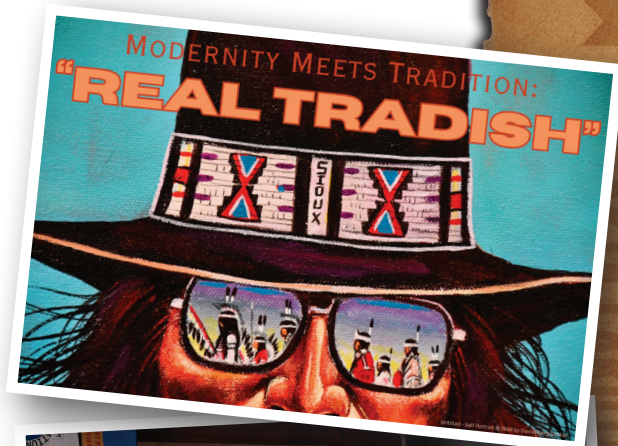
Visitors will discover artwork that blends time-honored symbolism with contemporary perspectives, revealing the many ways Lakota identity is expressed in the 21st century. From bold paintings and intricate mixed-media works to innovative interpretations of traditional forms, each piece reflects the resilience, creativity, and cultural continuity of the Lakota people.

Featured artists include Keith Braveheart, Micheal Two Bulls, Michael Willcuts, Daniel Long Soldier, Donald D. Ruleaux, Dwayne Wilcox, Henry Payer, Nelda Shrupp, Arthur Amiotte, Linda Fallis, and Stephanie Sorbel. While each artist brings a distinct voice and artistic style, together their work illustrates the rich dialogue between heritage and innovation.

Curated by Casey Walsh, the exhibition invites visitors to consider how tradition evolves across generations while remaining firmly rooted in cultural knowledge and identity. Rather than viewing tradition and modernity as opposing forces, *Modernity Meets Tradition: Real Tradish* demonstrates that they exist side by side, strengthening one another and ensuring that Lakota culture remains vibrant for future generations.

Whether you are discovering Lakota art for the first time or returning to deepen your understanding, this exhibition offers a thoughtful and inspiring look at the continuing story of Lakota creativity.

We invite you to experience [Modernity Meets Tradition: Real Tradish](https://aktalakota.org) during your next visit to the Aktá Lakota Museum, where art, history, and culture come together to honor the past while celebrating the future.



0-798-8452 - AKTALAKOTA.ORG

STORY TIME BRINGS LAKOTA TRADITIONS TO LIFE

Each Tuesday morning during the summer, the Aktá Lakota Museum fills with laughter, curiosity, and the joy of storytelling. Children and families gather for Story Time with Unǵí & Lalá, where books become a bridge between generations and stories help preserve the rich traditions of the Lakota people.

As an outreach of St. Joseph's Indian School, the museum offers more than a weekly story hour. Each session celebrates Lakota culture, identity, and resilience through the voices of Native authors. Carefully selected books introduce young readers to themes of family, respect, perseverance, and cultural pride while highlighting the experiences of Indigenous communities.

"Storytelling has always been an essential part of Lakota culture," says Museum Director Dixie Thompson. "For generations, stories have carried the language, history, values, and spiritual teachings from one generation to the next. Story Time with Unǵí & Lalá continues that tradition in a way that is engaging and meaningful for today's children."

Following each story, participants enjoy hands-on crafts and activities inspired by the book. These creative projects reinforce the day's lessons while encouraging children to express themselves, ask questions, and connect more deeply with Lakota traditions.



Story Time with Unǵí & Lalá is held every Tuesday through July at the Aktá Lakota Museum. Families, visitors, and community members are invited to join us for a morning of stories, creativity, and cultural connection.

To learn more about the museum and its educational programs, visit aktalakota.stjo.org.



LEARNING FROM THE LAND: HARVESTING SAGE AND SWEETGRASS

Summer school students recently experienced a meaningful lesson in Lakota culture during a visit to the Medicine Wheel Garden at the Aktá Lakota Museum. Guided by Native Studies Instructor LaRayne, students harvested sage and sweetgrass while learning about the traditional teachings and values connected to these sacred plants.

The Medicine Wheel Garden serves as an outdoor classroom where students connect with Lakota culture through hands-on learning. As they carefully gathered the plants, they learned the importance of harvesting with respect and gratitude—taking only what is needed and honoring the gifts of the Creator.

For generations, sage and sweetgrass have held an important place in Lakota life. Sage is traditionally used for purification and prayer, while sweetgrass is often braided and used in ceremonies to represent kindness, healing, and positive intentions. Learning about these plants in their natural habitats helps students to better understand the relationship among the land, cultural traditions, and community.

Experiences like this bring classroom lessons to life, allowing students to learn not only about Lakota traditions but also from the land itself. Through the guidance of their instructors and meaningful cultural experiences, students continue to strengthen their connection to Lakota values and heritage.



50TH ANNUAL POWWOW & CULTURAL CELEBRATION

St. Joseph's Indian School

September 17–19, 2026 | Chamberlain, South Dakota

For 50 years, St. Joseph's Indian School has welcomed families, alumni, students, and friends to gather in celebration of Native culture, community, and tradition. This September, we invite you to be part of a very special milestone as we celebrate the [50th Annual Powwow & Cultural Celebration](#).

This cherished tradition honors the rich cultural heritage of the Lakota people while bringing together generations to celebrate through dance, music, storytelling, and fellowship. Whether you're returning as an alumnus, visiting for the first time, or joining family and friends, Powwow Weekend offers meaningful opportunities to experience the spirit and traditions that continue to shape our community.

A Weekend of Celebration

The festivities begin on Thursday, September 17, with registration in the Recreation Center, followed by an open house at the Equine Therapy Center. Guests are also invited to participate in Circle of Culture: Alumni Teaching Traditions, where alumni share cultural knowledge, personal stories, and traditional skills in our newly expanded Recreation Center.

On Friday, visitors can enjoy a full day of cultural enrichment with activities throughout campus, including guided tours of St. Joseph's Indian School, the Health Care Center, and the Aktá Lakota Museum. The day concludes with a cultural performance and an Alumni Thiyóšpaye (extended-family) Social, providing time to reconnect and celebrate together.

The celebration reaches its peak on Saturday as guests tour our student homes before gathering for the blessing of the powwow grounds. At noon, the Grand Entry begins, with dancers and drum groups filling the arena in a moving display of honor, tradition, and pride. The weekend concludes with evening Mass, the presentation of competition awards, and a community meal shared among friends and family.



Dance, Drum, and Tradition

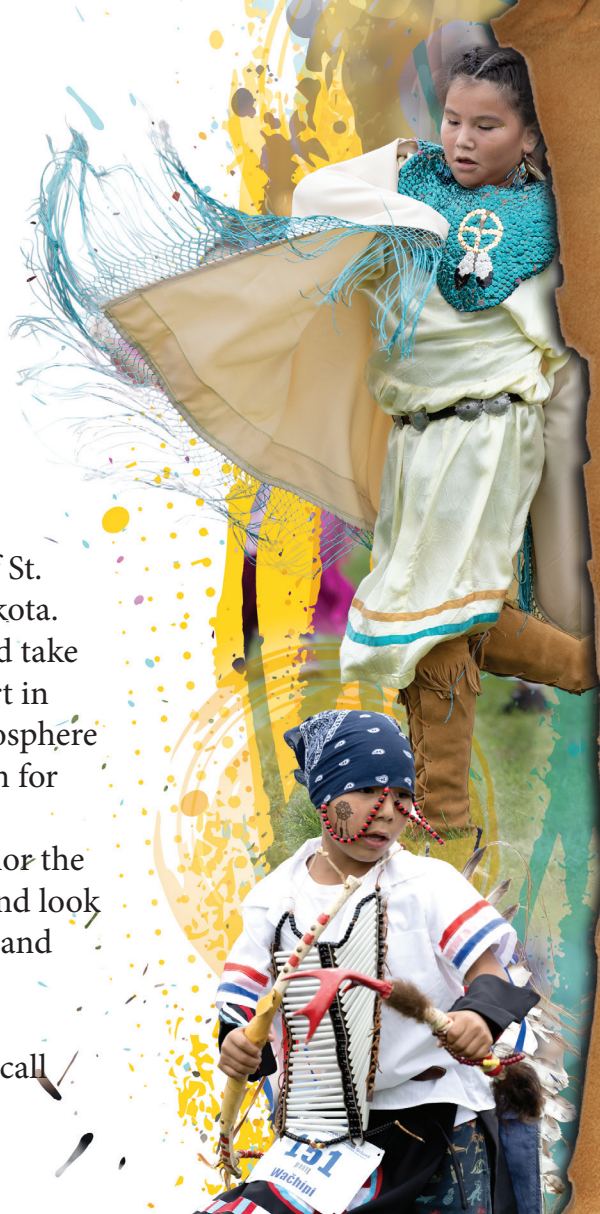
Throughout the powwow, dancers will compete in three age divisions—Tiny Tots, Juniors, and Teens—in a variety of traditional categories, including Traditional Dance, Fancy Dance, Grass Dance, and Jingle Dress. Drum groups from across the Dakotas will also participate in spirited competition, with cash prizes awarded to registered dancers and drum groups.

Everyone Is Welcome

All Powwow activities take place on the campus of St. Joseph's Indian School in Chamberlain, South Dakota. Visitors are encouraged to arrive early, register, and take time to explore the Aktá Lakota Museum, take part in campus tours, and experience the welcoming atmosphere that has made this celebration a treasured tradition for five decades.

As we celebrate our 50th Annual Powwow, we honor the generations who have preserved these traditions and look forward to sharing this weekend with new friends and returning families alike.

For a complete schedule of events, visit stjo.org or call 855-777-3433.



PLAN YOUR VISIT

EXPLORE ST. JOSEPH'S INDIAN SCHOOL CAMPUS

Visitors and group tours are always welcome at St. Joseph's Indian School! Whether you're exploring the campus for the first time or returning with a group, we offer a warm invitation to learn more about our mission, students, and community.

Guided Campus Tours Available

Explore our campus with a personalized guided tour—available by request. To schedule your visit or ask about transportation assistance, please contact us in advance.

- **Call:** 800-798-3452
- **Email:** aktalakota@stjo.org

You may also stop by the receptionist's desk at the museum for more information or to request a same-day tour, based on availability. We look forward to welcoming you!





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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