



## SVDN Council Corner

Submitted by: Councillor Melissa Hotain



Han Mitakuyapi, I am providing an update on my portfolios and general information.

### **Brandon Indian Residential School (BIRS) Project**

The BIRS Team recently held a series of meetings in July, including community meetings in SVDN, Brandon, and Winnipeg and age group focus sessions. The purpose was to provide and seek feedback on the return of ancestors, return of cultural belongings and the protection of sacred sites. I joined some of these sessions to make

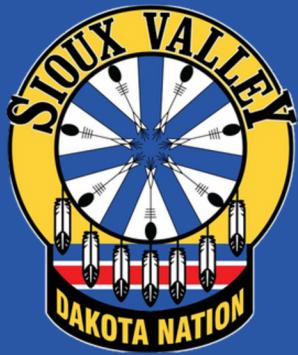
presentations and provide the context for these discussions.

In conjunction with these discussions, I provided a presentation on the importance of research, the difference between Indigenous and Western research, recent research conducted in SVDN and the importance of the development of our own research protocol for future research opportunities. Feedback was provided and there will be another session scheduled in late August to contribute to the development of the protocol. I participated in a leadership update with the Province of Manitoba and other First Nations organizations on the development of provincial legislation in July. Each First Nation, Inuit and Metis regional organization is conducting their own engagement to contribute to future legislation.

On July 19, I joined Chris Mancuso and Kate Dector, two members of our BIRS team in making presentation at the National Site Search Forum in



Ottawa. The forum was hosted by Nishnawbe Aski Nation for technical staff and program representatives to share information, experiences, challenges and emerging practices. We shared information on our experiences to date in the



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## Council Corner Cont...

four pillars of: advocacy to protect sacred sites, technical training, capacity building, and improving searches. Chris and Kate also hosted a Wakanhezan Wokiksuye Makoce - Sacred Children Micro-Workshop, a hands-on demonstration for participants.



On August 5th, we hosted representatives from God's Lake First Nation at the BIRS site, they included members of their project team and survivors as they begin their research on their children that never made it home. Our BIRS team shared information that they conducted and collected to help them start their own project. The group visited the site and the United Church to view the picture collection.

### Education

The end of June was about celebrating all our graduates at all age levels. I was pleased to witness the Early Years Awards Day and provide welcoming addresses at the Grade 12 and Mature Grade 12 graduations along with other members of council in attendance. Each year that our children and youth advance and graduate is a success for us all. As in previous years the Grade 12 high school graduates go on a group trip, this year they were joined by the Youth Council on a road trip to Banff located on the traditional territories of the Stoney Nakota people.

In June one of our SVDN Knowledge Keepers was honoured at the 24th Annual Keeping the Fires Burning Event in Winnipeg. Each year various First Nation, Inuit, and Metis regional organizations nominate a Knowledge Keeper to be presented this award. This year Wanbdi Wakita was honoured by Ka Ni Kanichihk, and when a member of our Dakota Nation is honoured, we share in this celebration and provide a table for family and friends to witness the event. We presented him with a beaded medallion to acknowledge this important achievement.



### SVDN Annual Wacipi

Another year has passed hosting our annual wacipi, we were fortunate to have good weather and many visitors and dancers in attendance. We give thanks to all who contributed to the planning, preparation, ongoing maintenance, and clean up of the site, including the Events Committee, Public Works, Lands, Summer Students, and Security. We also thank the head staff who ensured the powwow ran smoothly. I have heard requests to bring back a community led powwow committee as was traditionally done to conduct fundraising as a family honoured their member(s) that were selected. This is an important part of our culture and traditions to be remembered and practiced.



## **Intergovernmental Relations and Implementation Dept (IRID)**



### Children and Families Law

#### **Sioux Valley Dakota Nation Community Engagement – Fall 2025**

##### The SVDN Team:

Adrian Ironman, Self Government Coordinator  
Nicole Ironman, I.R.I.D. – Administrative Assistant  
Amanda Ledoux, I.R.I.D. – Records Technician  
Daniza Depaola, I.R.I.D. – Communications Specialist

Lily Blue, I.R.I.D. – Process Officer  
Nicolas Pompana, I.R.I.D. - Process Officer  
Laura Chaske  
\*New Bill Taylor - Communications Specialist

### Background/Objective

On May 30, 2025, SVDN had provided the membership an opportunity to vote on the Proposed SVDN Children and Family Law. The results were as follows:

Votes “YES” – 76

Votes “NO” – 171

Spoiled ballots – 3

250 Sioux Valley members came out to vote (12.8% voter turnout).

54 voted from off-reserve (5% of our off-reserve membership voted).

196 voters on-reserve (20% of our on-reserve membership voted).

Five mailout ballots were sent out, no ballots were returned.

\*Calculated according to our current voting population as of May 26, 2025 which was 1,954 (962 on reserve, 992 off reserve).

It is the goal of SVDN to create a greater awareness of this proposed Children and Families Law and the importance it has on our children, our community and our Dakota way of life. As Dakota people, we have always looked out for one another in the past and had traditional ways of parenting and family systems. As Dakota people, we look for guidance to develop and promote this law which will respect our traditional Dakota knowledge, Dakota Oyate worldviews, our Dakota Oyate family roles and responsibilities and Dakota Oyate parenting principles.

The proposed SVDN Children and Families Law is designed to tailor fit our Dakota culture and lifestyle. Our goal is to have our own law that will keep our children within the community. Children would be placed with Dakota foster parents or with Dakota family members. This would reinforce our Dakota beliefs, culture, language, traditions in these children who would know what it means to be part of a family and extended family as it was in the past.

### Goal

SVDN would like to continue the consultation and input on the Proposed SVDN Children Law Family Law. SVDN will continue to hold community engagements in person and on-line, conduct home visits and media reports. A detailed workplan and schedule will be provided in the next few weeks. A tentative vote is scheduled for November 13, 2025, which will take place at the same time as the SVDN General Election.

Please reach out if you have any questions.

SVDN

Intergovernmental Relations and Implementation Department

## Residential School Missing Children Investigation



We are pleased to share this latest update from the Brandon Indian Residential School Missing Children Investigation (BIRS-MCI). Over the past few months, our team has continued to make meaningful progress on many important initiatives. In this edition, we look back at our recent site safety improvements, share highlights from the GIIWE engagement sessions on developing SVDN protocols and recommendations for new provincial legislation, and provide updates on national presentations and ongoing fieldwork. We are also excited to announce upcoming community gatherings, including a feast and preliminary report sharing, and our annual Orange Shirt Day event at the Brandon IRS grounds.

### Caring for the Land: Site Safety Improvements at Brandon IRS

SVDN Lands Department and BIRS-MCI team, in partnership with Indigenous Service Canada representatives and technical experts, recently undertook important site cleanup and safety improvements at the Brandon Residential School grounds. As part of the Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) process, work crews addressed a number of hazards across the site to ensure a safer environment for community members, visitors, and ongoing site searches. Remediation activities included careful identification and infilling of open holes, which posed a risk of trips or falls. Exposed wires and leftover concrete debris were cleaned up and properly secured or removed to prevent injuries. Old metal poles that no longer served a use were dismantled and taken off-site, and unused hydro poles were safely taken out of service, further reducing electrical and physical hazards.

These improvements are a crucial step forward in making the school site safer for current and future access, enabling respectful ceremonies, research, and community-led healing.



Site cleanup in progress – a backhoe removes large pieces of historic foundation and piles debris along the west edge of the property.

Site Cleanup in progress – BIRS-MCI team metal detecting along the west edge of the property.

### Hekakiya Wotakuya Tiyata Awichaunkupta - Bringing our Ancestors Home:

### GIIWE Engagement Sessions – Charting a Path for Repatriation and Protection

Our BIRS-MCI team recently hosted a series of GIIWE engagement sessions focused on the return of Ancestors and the safeguarding of our sacred heritage sites. These sessions come at a pivotal time, as the Province of Manitoba is working to develop a new, stand-alone legislation dedicated to the return of Ancestors, and cultural belongings, as well as the protection of Sacred Sites. Manitoba specifically reached out to SVDN for guidance and recommendations, recognizing the value of hearing directly from the community on these important issues. Our engagement process included open sessions in Sioux Valley Dakota Nation - Veteran's Hall, Winnipeg, and Brandon, inviting participation from all community members. These open forums created space for vital conversations about developing SVDN-specific protocols for welcoming home Ancestors, returning cultural belongings, and protecting Sacred places for future generations. Following these open gatherings, focused group discussions were held with Elders, adults, and youth to gather deeper insight from different perspectives within the Nation.

As part of this effort, we have also reached out to institutions to begin the important work of repatriation. This includes engagement with the Manitoba Museum and the University of Winnipeg to search their collections for SVDN cultural belongings, and working with the University of Manitoba about the return of three Dakota Ancestors.

## Residential School Missing Children Investigation...cont

We are also seeking the return of approximately seventy SVDN items, such as beadwork, moccasins, audio recordings of interviews and songs, and photographs from the Canadian Museum of History in Ottawa.

The guidance and reflections shared in these sessions will help shape our recommendations to the Province and inform protocols that honor the wishes and teachings of the community. Thank you to all who contributed their voices and wisdom to this important process—we will continue sharing updates as this work moves forward.



## Brandon IRS Investigation Team Shares Expertise at National Site Search Forum

Members of the BIRS-MCI team and Councillor Melissa Hotain, recently attended the National Site Search Forum, held July 22–24 in Ottawa and hosted by Nishnawbe Aski Nation. This was a technical gathering that brought together IRS search teams and professionals from across Canada to share knowledge, resources, and best practices in the important work of locating unmarked graves and undertaking site investigations.

Our team was proud to participate in the forum by presenting a session on technical “good-way” practices for Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) surveys and continuing training and advocacy work for protecting these Sacred Sites. We also led a micro-workshop, where we demonstrated how to set up survey grids and provided hands-on guidance in using GPR equipment. The experience offered a meaningful chance to connect with other teams, exchange ideas, and help build collective technical capacity across search projects nationwide.

We thank Nishnawbe Aski Nation for hosting this much-needed event and for supporting ongoing dialogue and learning in this urgent and sensitive work. We also extend our thanks to Dr. Richard Smith for assisting with the workshop and providing survey supplies.



Councillor Melissa Hotain, Kate Decter and Chris Mancuso present in Ottawa

## Fieldwork Site Surveying Update:

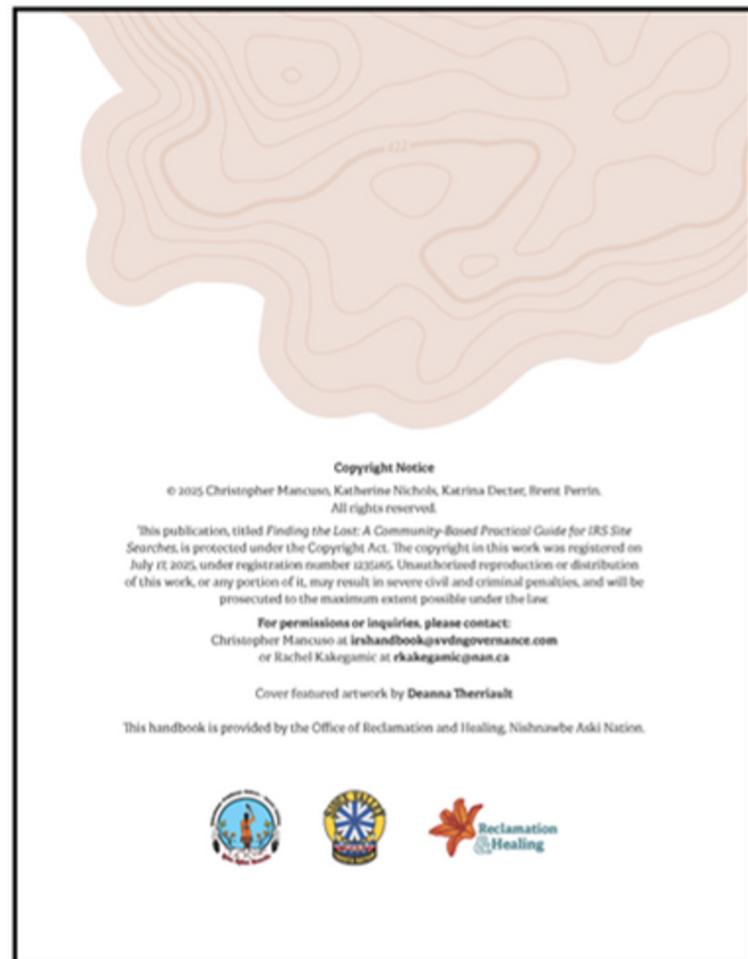
Since starting site surveying in the Spring, our team has made significant progress on the site investigations at BIRS-S-04. We have prepared the area for surveying by clearing vegetation, carefully leveling the ground to ensure effective coupling with the GPR unit for accurate data collection. LIDAR and drone photography has been completed with detailed imagery of the site being collected. We are in the process of conducting geophysical surveys using GPR, magnetics (MAG) and electromagnetic induction (EMI) surveying to identify potential areas of historical soil disturbance and unmarked graves.

As an additional update, we are excited to share that work has begun on a community-based practical handbook for conducting IRS searches for unmarked graves. Designed as a resource for other communities undertaking this work, this handbook will include sections on archival research, LIDAR, GIS mapping, and more. The first completed chapter—focusing on GPR data acquisition—was unveiled at the recent National Site Search Forum. To date, the GPR data acquisition chapter from this handbook has been distributed to 20 communities and Indigenous organizations across Manitoba and Ontario, with further requests leading to a planned second round of printing. We are grateful for the interest and look forward to sharing more as this resource develops.

## Residential School Missing Children Investigation...cont



**Left:** Chris Mancuso & Kate Decter teaching a GPR acquisition workshop. **Middle and Right:** Ling Jin, Ashley Austin, and Chris Mancuso – calibrating the GPR prior to the survey and conducting the GPR survey.



## **Residential School Missing Children Investigation...cont**

### **Upcoming Events:**

***Hektakiya Wotakuya Tiyata Awichaunkupta - Bringing our Ancestors Home Feast and Preliminary Report Sharing (Sept 25th):*** We warmly invite all community members to join us at Veterans Hall on September 25th for a special Feast and Preliminary Report Sharing event.

This gathering is an opportunity for the community to come together, enjoy a meal, and hear about the early findings from our recent surveys, focus groups, and open engagement sessions. We will be sharing preliminary results that will shape SVDN's draft recommendations to the Manitoba government for its new stand-alone legislation on the repatriation of Ancestors, cultural belongings, and protection of Sacred Sites.

***Orange Shirt Day (Sept 30th):*** Please join us for Orange Shirt Day on September 30th at the Brandon Residential School grounds. This annual gathering is an important time to honor Survivors, remember the children who never returned home, and stand together to support truth and healing.

We encourage everyone to wear orange in recognition of the ongoing legacy of residential schools and show that every child matters. This year we will be again doing a blanket ceremony for SVDN residential school survivors. If you haven't received a blanket, and are an SVDN IRS survivor, please reach out: [birsinvestigation@svdngovernance.com](mailto:birsinvestigation@svdngovernance.com), Phone: 204-717-1528

As we move forward together, your voices and participation remain essential to this important journey of truth, remembrance, and healing. Please stay connected for future updates, opportunities to engage, and ways to contribute as we continue this work with humility and respect.

Many thanks to each of you for standing with us and honoring the children and families at the heart of this work.

-Brandon IRS Missing Children Investigation

## **Dakota lapi Program**

Hau Mitakuyapi!

Here is a quick update on what the Dakota lapi program has been doing to keep busy the past few months. I started working with a company out of Calgary, Alberta called Contego Group along with Sioux Valley's Communication Department. Contego Group is a software company and together we are working on developing our own Dakota lapi App that Sioux Valley Dakota Nation will own. This will allow us to update and adjust the app as we see fit. We are hoping to have something out and accessible before the years end. This will be something that will be worked on for years to come.

We plan on doing monthly surveys on how you think the app is doing, what you would like to see changed or added to the app such as different words and phrases. The app will also be available offline and include games for kids. We would like to include as much Dakota words as possible for the dictionary. Not only words, but we will be working with elders who would like to be recorded pronouncing the words. This will allow you to hear the proper pronunciation of different words and phrases. This app will be very user friendly, and we hope to have something up and ready for the community by the years end.

We are currently waiting for funding to start our Dakota lapi Classes, camps, teachings and other fun activities for the community. Keep an eye out for postings on Dakota lapi classes in the near future and we hope to see you all there.

Pidamayaye do!

## SVDN Education



### Sioux Valley School June/July Highlights

June was a busy and vibrant month at Tatiyopa Mazawayawa Tipi, filled with exciting events, learning experiences and community celebrations. Here's a recap of some of the highlights.

The month of June was a busy month for both Elementary school and High school. Kindergarten and the grade one class attending a learning fieldtrip to Brandon as part of their social studies unit. They visited, the Green spot, Brandon city Police and the Co-op Bakery. The kindergarten to grade 8 went on a school wide field trip to Souris, Manitoba. The students enjoyed the swimming pool and waterslide and a movie. Summer solstice feast was held at the Elementary school site for grades Kindergarten to grade 8. All staff and students were fed and enjoyed each other's company. Awards day was held at the Elementary school on June 24th at 10am, for grades kindergarten to grade 8. Parents and community members were invited to attend. The Battle of little Bighorn committee members planned a celebration and activities for all the students. They engaged in activities and traditional games, such as moccasin games, archery, teepee set up and storytelling, just to name a few. This celebration honors a pivotal moment in our history as Dakota people. The event took place on June 25th and 26th 2025 to end off the last day of school for students.

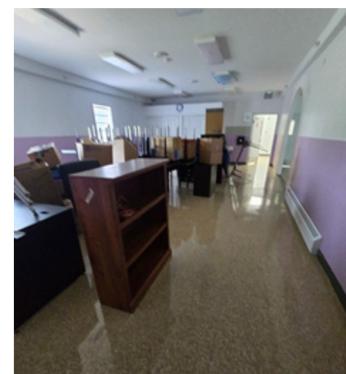
High school had many activities as well in the month of June. A huge Congratulations to all graduates of Sioux Valley High School! We are incredibly proud of your hard work and achievements. We wish you all the best in your future endeavors. SVHS Class of 2025- Jayda Beardy, Rylie Bell, Sydney Blacksmith, Bradley Bone, Aaron Elk, Marcus Ironman, Meadow Leaming, Feather Smoke, and Memphis Taylor.

Also, a special congratulations to ALL Graduates of Sioux Valley: Provincials schools, Adult Education, Post-Secondary. This a wonderful well-deserved achievement. We are so proud of everyone's hard work and dedication. We wish everyone the best as you begin the next chapter in your lives.

As everyone is aware, our High School has been moved back to the community. We are happy to announce that we have 6 double wide modular homes that have been converted to classrooms. Each building has a classroom, 1 wheelchair accessible bathroom, another bathroom, staff room, storage room and computer room. These will be delivered to the community on August 6 and will be surrounding the old pool hall. The old pool hall will be converted to administration offices. We are looking forward to the upcoming 2025-2026 school year.

During the summer months maintenance and custodial teams keep our school shining. While students and teachers enjoy their well-deserved summer break, a dedicated team of professionals is hard at work behind the scenes at Sioux Valley School. Our custodial and maintenance staff are unsung heroes of the summer, undertaking a massive amount of work to ensure our school is clean, safe and ready for the new academic year. Our maintenance/custodial team has taken this opportunity to tackle projects that are simply not possible during a busy school year. From deep-cleaning every classroom and hallway to stripping and waxing floors, the work is labor intensive and thorough. The team is also handling essential tasks repairing things, repainting walls, and moving furniture and classroom items back into the classrooms. We extend a huge thank you to our entire custodial/maintenance/casual staff for their incredible dedication and for making our school a place we can all be proud of.

School Administration,



## SVDN Petro-Can

The new financial year has been progressive and it's a good opportunity to share the development as a follow up to report in April- May 2025 edition #35. We had a successful Customer Appreciation Day as planned. Some of the winners are:

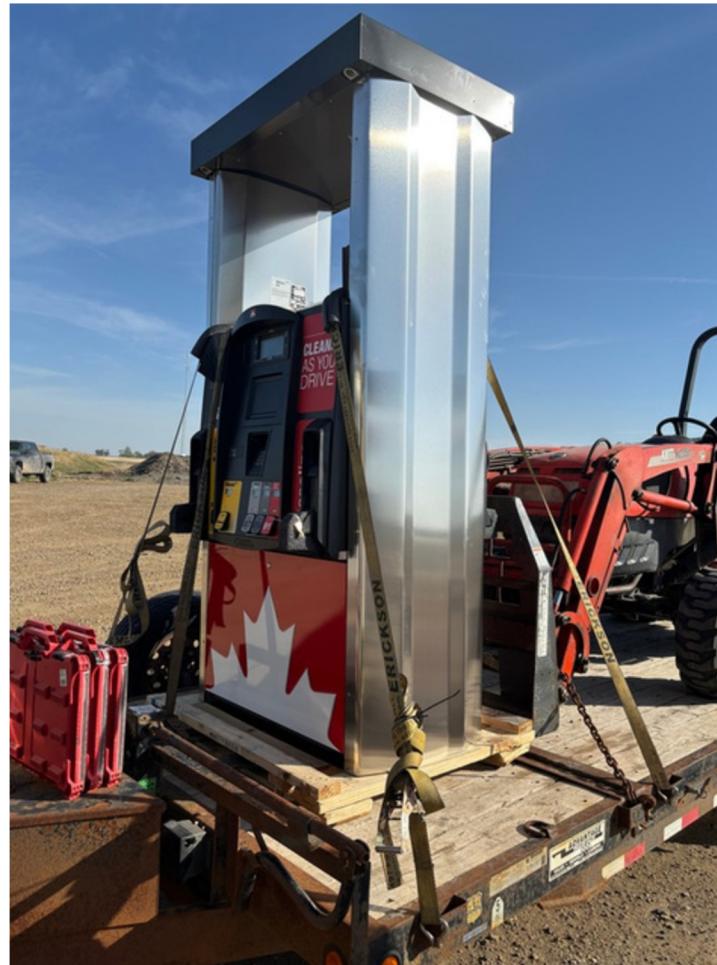
- Lori Coughan
- Evelyn Pratt
- Carlos Wasicuna
- Chelsea Kennedy
- Charlene Allan
- Laurie Krockier

In addition to the Customer Appreciation Day and all the activities around it, we brought him FW1 marketing for cleaning of vehicle lights, shiny the tyre rims etc., chip truck and Lemonade stand. All these activities and the exceptional customer service by the team; sustained customer patronage. Specifically, 2025 POW WOW event at the community and events in the neighbourhood has been a great support to business patronage.

On May 13, 2025, we received and installed a new diesel dispenser pump as replacement for the accidented pump 9&10. After the installation of the new pump, we reinforced the protection concrete in the whole diesel pump area to avoid future occurrence of the accident. Very important, the North area of the gas station (Trailer/Semi Park) was tarred in July courtesy of Chief and Council; and this really changed the look at the diesel pump area for better (pictures attached).

As we run through the 2nd half of summer, we planned to organize one more Customer event and this will be 1st Friday in September 2025. Details will be communicated to the community and all our esteemed customers.

Since this community and its environs is our trade area, we hereby encourage community members to continue to patronize SVDN Petro- Canada because we are competitive both on fuel and store items and this our own little way of giving back to the community.



**Dakota Oyate Lodge**

Summer has been in full swing at the Lodge, and the Residents and staff have been making the most of the season!

We started the season with a well-attended fundraising BBQ in June. The weather held out, the food was excellent, and we were grateful to see so many friendly faces come out in support. One of the highlights for many Residents was the trip to the Dakota Oyate Wacipi. For the Residents, this isn't just an event; it's a deeply meaningful gathering that honours their culture, their ancestors, and the resilience of their people. Being able to attend, hear the drums, see the dancers, and be surrounded by the spirit of community was a powerful experience.

We also took a fun trip to the Reptile Gardens, where Residents bravely mingled with some wild (and scaly) creatures.

Birthday celebrations have kept us busy too, along with pet visits, baby snuggles, and lots of laughs.

Our recreation calendar has been packed with games and activities. Bingo is always a favourite, but checkers, balloon tennis, and backyard Jenga have all sparked some friendly competition.

Scenic drives and ice cream outings have been a big hit on warm days, and our regular exercise classes help keep everyone moving and feeling their best.

Residents have been enjoying the sunshine whenever they can—whether it's a walk, a visit on the patio, or simply taking in the warm summer breeze.

Thank you to everyone who continues to support the Lodge and everyone who calls it home.

**SVDN Family Fun Day (National Indigenous Peoples Day)**

On June 21st, 2025, Sioux Valley Dakota Nation held its Annual SVDN Family Fun Day for all members to participate and celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day. Sioux Valley Dakota Nation's Planning Committee took several months to plan, organize and coordinate this years event, which again took place in the park, Pow Wow Arbour, and school baseball diamond. The day kicked off at 1pm with registration and early youth events taking place. Sioux Valley members, as well as some fire evacuees from other communities, all took part in the day's activities. There was something for everyone. Youth activities, bouncy castles, baseball, basketball, volleyball, wagon rides, foam party, mini mechanical bull, and all kinds of little games and prizes for all in attendance. The day came to a close with on stage performances from the Roadside Prophets and Econoline Crush as well as a spectacular fireworks display. With over 400 registered and over 600 in attendance throughout the day, we hope everyone had a great time and we look forward to next year!



## **SVDN Family Fun Day (National Indigenous Peoples Day)...cont**



## Dakota Oyate Wacipi 2025

Sioux Valley Dakota Nation held it's annual pow wow, Dakota Oyate Wacipi 2025, from July 18th to the 20th, returning it to its traditional time of third weekend in July. This years annual wacipi was organized by the SVDN Events Planning Committee. The EPC ensured constant communications between security, maintenance, public works and event staff (announcers, judges, arena directors) to ensure the weekend ran smoothly. They also received some much appreciated support from the Lands Department and Youth Council, with some much needed beautification of the park. Overall, guests enjoyed the weekend and found some new ideas being implemented, as well as some old traditions being brought back. Moccasin games were held in the gazebo, bouncy house was made available to the youth through Dakota Tiwahe Services, and there was plenty of visiting and laughs shared throughout the weekend with friends and family from all over pow wow country. Registration was handled by C&T Tabulating, who informed us we had just over 360 registered dancers for the weekend. Hoka Sound provided sound for the weekend and PowWows.com managed our Livestream, generating a reach of 507,200 people, watching in 85 countries. Overall, Dakota Oyate Wacipi 2025 was successful weekend. We thank all who helped organize and contribute to the event, and we look forward to Dakota Oyate Wacipi 2026. See you next year.



## Dakota Oyate Wacipi 2025...cont

The full photo gallery can be found at:

[svdngovernance.com/dakota-oyate-annual-wacipi/](http://svdngovernance.com/dakota-oyate-annual-wacipi/)



**Important Numbers**

Emergency (fire, police).....	911
Crisis Help Line.....	1-204-512-0874
Toll Free Crisis Help Line.....	1-888-316-3511
SVDN Administration/Finance.....	1-204-855-2671
SDVN Toll Free Admin/Finance.....	1-866-721-0293
E&T/Post-Sec Fax.....	1-204-855-2436
SVDN FNSO.....	1-204-512-0858
SVDN Health Centre.....	1-204-855-2690
Health Director after hours emergency.....	1-204-316-0221
Health Text Line.....	1-204-512-0883
Medical Van.....	1-204-512-0860
SVDN Housing.....	1-204-674-4914
Housing after hours emergency.....	1-204-574-8043
SVDN Public Works.....	1-204-855-2052
Sanitation.....	1-204-512-0870
South End Water Truck.....	1-204-851-3681
North End Water Truck.....	1-204-512-0852
SVDN Social Development.....	1-204-855-2617
.....	1-204-855-2592
SVDN Governance Office.....	1-204-855-2760
.....	1-204-855-3087
SVDN Governance Toll Free.....	1-866-794-3196
SVDN Sub-Office Building.....	1-204-728-6012
Unit D, 535-34th St. Brandon, MB	
SVDN School.....	1-204-818-0886
SVDN Headstart.....	1-204-674-4632
SVDN High School.....	1-204-729-2770
2320 Louise Ave. Brandon, MB R7B 2C6	
SVDN High School Toll Free.....	1-877-300-9375
SVDN Daycare.....	1-204-855-2431
SVDN Community Centre.....	1-204-542-0456
SVDN Gaming Centre.....	1-204-855-2043
SVDN Petro-Canada.....	1-431-645-1000
SVDN Dakota Tiwahe Services Inc. ....	1-204-855-2205
Dakota Diner.....	1-204-500-1615
Dakota Quick Stop (Gasbar).....	1-204-855-3062
Dakota Oyate Lodge.....	1-204-855-2354
KODA 93.5 Radio.....	1-204-818-7718