



Dwellers of the Spirit Lake

Seven giant tepees greet visitors at Shakopee's new Hocokata Ti cultural center

The Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community's new Hocokata Ti cultural center rises over the prairie in Shakopee, Minnesota, about half an hour from Minneapolis. It's easy to see how the building, with a wall of windows overlooking a stream and seven enormous tepees, got its name. *Hocokata ti* (*ho-cho-kah-tah-tee*) is a term for the lodge at the center of a village or camp in the Dakota language.

Inside, visitors find a 3,805-foot public exhibit called Mdewakanton: Dwellers of the Spirit Lake. Videos show community members telling traditional stories of how the earth, water and sky were created. Displays cover the history of the Dakota people up to the present and include tools, beadwork and a 200-year-old canoe raised from nearby Lake Minnetonka.

Kids can scramble into a replica

tepee or work on an interactive beading display. Items in the collection come from the tribal community, the Scott County Historical Society, and some are on permanent loan from the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian. The center's lovely gift shop should not be missed.

Hocokata Ti spokesman Andy Vig says he hopes the center will help visitors gain a better understanding

PHOTOS: SHAKOPEE-MDEWAKANTON SIOUX COMMUNITY



Far left: Exhibits expand visitors' understanding of native culture. Left: Part of the Mystic Lake Casino complex, Dakota Meadows RV Park provides paved RV sites with electric, water and sewer hookups.



Opened last summer, Hocokata Ti cultural center conveys the history of Minnesota's native people in their own words.

of the Dakota people in history and in modern life as well. A tour of this new cultural center complements the other activities for visitors here on tribal land.

For example, Mystic Lake Casino Hotel, about 3 miles from the cultural center, is Minnesota's largest gaming and entertainment facility. The tribe's organic grocery store, Mazopiya, sells community-made honey and maple syrup, along with an

array of products from Minnesota Native American vendors. And every August hundreds of native dancers from around the United States and Canada gather here to show off their skills and celebrate at the Wacipi Pow Wow.

"We're still here," says Vig. Here and thriving. — *Terri Peterson Smith*
www.shakopeedakota.org/culture/hocokatati

📍 **STAY AND PLAY** Adjacent to Mystic Lake Casino and about 3 miles from the Hocokata Ti cultural center, the full-service Dakota Meadows RV Park offers 122 back-in and pull-through sites, and is open year-round. www.dakotahmeadows.com

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