

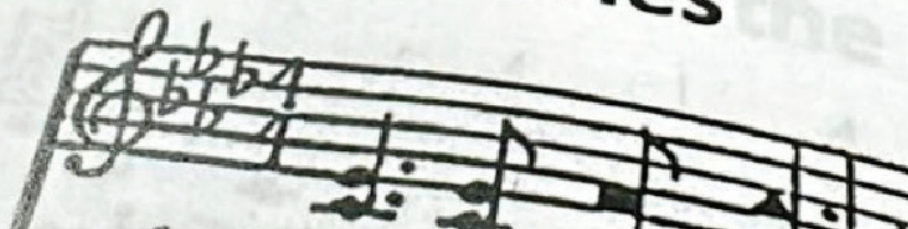


Diamond Willow  
Ministries



Summer 2024  
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Precious Memories the



# TOKSA AKE - SHARING HOPE

In the Dakota Sioux language, “See you later” is expressed as “Toksa ake.” This common salutation reflects a unique cultural nuance: traditionally, there is no word that directly translates to the English “good-bye.” Instead, the comforting idea that we will meet again deeply resonates within our community, especially during **wake and funeral services**.



Wake Service

At Diamond Willow Ministries’ Ikce Oyate Christian Center, Pastors Andrew Thomas and Rod Vaughn often officiate these services. A touching moment we often share is the singing of “Precious Memories.” This song serves as a gentle reminder of the enduring love and cherished memories we hold for those who have passed, reassuring us that they are not truly gone and that we will see them again.



Prairie Burial

These services usually take place at the Ikce Oyate Christian Center, but when more space is needed, we gather at the Tribal Hall. Recently, for four weeks in a row, our community faced the loss of loved ones. During these tough times, families turned to Andrew, Rod, and the rest of our staff for support as we walked alongside them in their mourning and grief. Since 2004, Diamond Willow Ministries has **officiated 145 funerals**, representing **145 opportunities to share the love and hope of Jesus** with hurting individuals and families.

These gatherings, which **typically span three days**, often focus on the comforting words from 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14: “... we do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.” This is a beautiful illustration of a connecting point between the Dakota Sioux culture—“Toksa ake”—and the eternal truths of the Bible.

# TOKATA... COMMUNITY RESOURCE HUB!?

What is this, you may wonder? The term aptly describes the Tokata Youth Center (TYC). When the new TYC building was designed and opened in September 2022, the primary goal was always to make the youth the priority. However, given the significant lack of infrastructure and resources within the communities on the Crow Creek Sioux Reservation, the vision also included the possibility of the facility serving a much broader purpose.



CPR Training

As it turns out, **the TYC is far exceeding our expectations as a resource to strengthen the community!** Rod often jokes, “We should not have put light switches in the new TYC building; just keep the lights on all the time since the building is always full of people!”



Tribal Housing Meeting

Here’s a snapshot of all the ways the Tokata Youth Center serves and blesses the community in addition to its primary function with the youth during TYC activities. **The facility hosts Crow Creek Tribal School’s Alternative School, Chamberlain Public School Summer School, South Dakota State University Community Conversations, South Dakota Public Broadcasting Show Screenings, Monthly Interagency Meetings, South Dakota Department of Transportation Landowners Meetings, Child Protective Services Team Meetings, Community Suicide Survivor’s Support Group, CPR Classes, Free**

**Income Tax Preparation, STEM Events, Chamberlain Public School Family Involvement Nights, Lacrosse Sports Camp, Christmas Toys for Tots Distribution Point, Supervised Visit Site for Social Services, Unci (Grandmother) Society and other Cultural Group gatherings, Community Family Movie Nights, Talking Circle Meetings, and so much more!**

Whew! We're even working on expanding the TYC parking lot to accommodate all this use. What a tremendous impact the new building is having!

Matthew 5:13-16 records Jesus calling his followers to be **"Salt and Light" in the world.** The TYC is certainly fulfilling this calling. All glory to our heavenly Father!

## TOKATA INITIATIVE - 70% OF 2024 GOAL ACHIEVED!

We are thrilled to share some exciting news! Through the grace of God, a Christian foundation has awarded us a matching grant, paving a clear path to paying off the Tokata Youth Center construction loan debt in 2024. This is a tremendous blessing for the youth of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe!

Until December 2024, this foundation will match \$0.50 for every \$1.00 donated to pay off the construction loan debt. If we can raise \$1.2 million, the foundation will contribute an additional \$600,000.

We are well on our way to achieving our goal, with the original \$1.2 million now reduced to \$366,828. Praise God! It is incredible to be 70% of the way to being completely debt-free once again!

Having the entire Tokata Youth Center fully paid for will be a significant blessing. **Being debt-free will allow us to allocate funds to TYC staffing and enhance and expand programming, thereby serving the tribal youth, families, and the community even better.**

For more information, please contact Diamond Willow Ministries' Executive Director, Rod Vaughn, at rod.vaughn@d-w-m.org or on his cell phone at 605-730-0367.



**To learn more about the Tokata Initiative Capital Campaign, use this QR code.**



# CELEBRATING YOUTH MILESTONES

Remember the pride, sense of accomplishment, and pure joy you felt when you received your first paycheck? That special moment is a recurring event at the Tokata Youth Center's office.

The **incredible work** being done with over 420 youth enrolled at the Tokata Youth Center is made possible by the **invaluable contributions of our Youth Mentors**. At any given time, our team includes between 6 and 8 Teen Mentors—older teens and young adults who have grown up attending the TYC and now serve as part-time staff. For most of them, this is their first paying job. Not only do they mentor younger youth and learn valuable life and career skills, but they also get to experience the thrill of **receiving their first paycheck**—a significant milestone on the path to productive adulthood and the fulfillment of their life goals.



*Youth Mentor Receives First Paycheck.*



**Make a  
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