

Lakota Language Bowl

On Friday, March 26th, St. Francis School is hosting a Lakota language bowl in conjunction with their Teca Wacipi Okolakiciye powwow.

The language bowl will start at 9a.m. and the Teca Wacipi Okolakiciye powwow and hand-game tournament will begin at 1p.m.

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NDSU Launches Dakota Studies Initiative

Last summer, North Dakota State University began posting a flyer around campus. In big bold letters, it proclaimed, "Dakota Studies: It's part of our name." The rest of the flyer told students about the new course offerings in Dakota Studies, to complement the university's long-standing Native American programs in engineering and pharmacy.

Courses during the 2009-2010 academic year include Dakota Language I & II, Dakota Tribal History, Dakota Tribal Culture and Dakota Religious Studies. The classes are open to all students for credit.

The courses are taught by assistant professor of practice Clifford Canku (pronounced chahng-KU), an experienced teacher of Dakota courses at Sisseton-Wahpeton College in Agency Village, S.D., University of Minnesota-Morris and Southwestern State University in Marshall, Minn. He is an enrolled member of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate. He has a bachelor's in

sociology from University of Minnesota-Morris, and a master of divinity from the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary in Iowa. He also holds an honorary doctorate from the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore.

"When we were first looking to recruit someone, it was just for Dakota language courses," said Bruce Maylath, a professor of English. "Then when we were referred to [Canku], we discovered a gold mine He's qualified to teach sociology, anthropology and religious studies. It's interesting how he compares Christianity and Dakota spirituality. He's grown up with both."

Canku sees himself as in the fifth stage of life—an educator who wants to give back to the people what he was given. He designs his own curriculum for Beginning Dakota Language I and Dakota Language II. He wants young people to have opportunities and a strong foundation.

Teresa Black Cloud, an English Education major from Bismarck and an enrolled member of the Standing Rock Oyate, is taking Canku's course in Dakota Religious Studies.

"Learning the traditions and language of the Sioux people is important to me as a Lakota student and woman," she said. "I hope I will be able to share what I have learned from Dr. Canku's class throughout my life and become more involved with my identity as a Native American. I feel like I have been given a great chance to become closer to my culture."

"NDSU is a strategic place for doing Native American studies," Canku said. "We want to establish a healthy presence for Native American students at NDSU so that NDSU can be a great asset to the surrounding tribes of Native Americans." Canku lives on campus during the week through the Faculty-in-Residence program and conducts culture-sharing events with students in the residence halls.

"Part of my job is to coordinate events that are happening locally so students can feel home away from home, a sense of belonging," Canku said. He is set to teach for one year, but hopes are to have him continue as long as he is able.

"I feel very privileged to have Dr. Canku as an instructor," said Black Cloud. "Dr. Canku is knowledgeable about Indian culture—traditional and modern aspects—and truly cares about his subject area. Often in class, when discussing Native American ideals, he asks us how they may be connected to or different from our own life and personal experience.

The class not only surrounds Dakota life but also allows students to feel fully involved in the learning experience. I also feel very lucky to have Dr. Canku as a mentor or someone who I can identify with. He understands, first hand, the instances of strength and struggle as a Native American person. I admire his dedication to keeping the Dakota language and history alive."

The Dakota courses were established as part of former President Joseph Chapman's goal to reach out to tribal colleges in the state to set up articulation agreements so students can earn associate degrees at their tribal colleges and continue on toward four-year degrees at NDSU.

"[NDSU has] a lot of resources that we could benefit from, dealing with the future of our young people," Canku said. "To couple those things together would be a real benefit for Native Americans."

Black Cloud agrees: "I believe it to be a wonderful experience to explore culture, whether it is part of your own or one that may be unknown to you. NDSU has recognized that the culture in the surrounding area and on the university campus is influenced by the history of the Native American people. This is an advantage that the University has; the diversity existing in the region gives students endless opportunities to learn about this unique area, and also a unique people: the Sioux people."