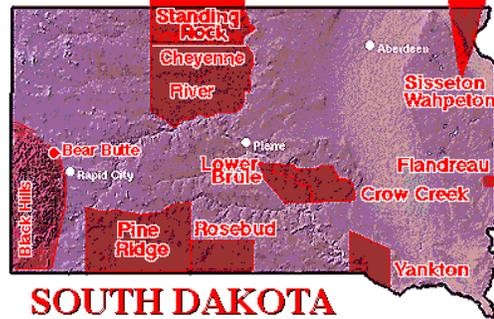


Instrument:

Lakota Drum, "Rhythm of the Heart"

Country:

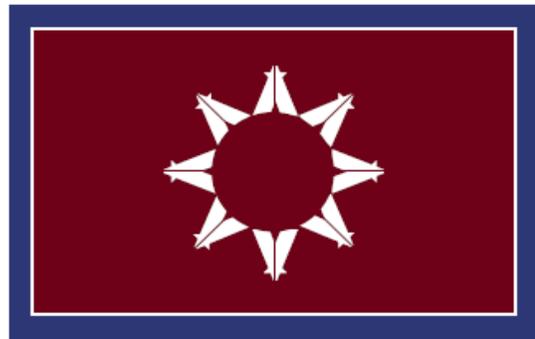
United States, South Dakota, Lakota people



Lakota Pine Ridge Reservation

Lakota Flag:

Red symbolizes the blood shed by the Lakota (lok-ho-tah) in defense of their land, and also the idea of "red men." Begun in 1961, this Oglala flag uses a deep blue fringe bringing in colors of the United States flag. A circle of eight teepees represents the eight Pine Ridge Reservation districts.



Size and Population:

The Pine Ridge Reservation, home of the Lakota, is an area of 3,100 square miles in southwestern South Dakota, a state that has 77,116 square miles. As of July 2004, the Lakota population on this reservation is estimated at over 20,800, and South Dakota's population is estimated at over 764,000. There are almost 40,000 enrolled members of the Lakota people. Today there are 554 Native American tribes recognized by the Federal Government with around 1.4 million people living in or around 314 reservations.

Geography and Climate:

South Dakota, named after the Dakota Indians, has four major land regions. The Drift Prairie is to the east, with its low rolling hills and glacial lakes. The Dissected Till Plains, with rolling hills formed by glaciers and many streams, are in the southeast. The Great Plains cover most of the central and western state with rolling hills and rugged valleys. The Missouri River and its tributaries cut through this region from the north to south. The Black Hills consist of low mountains and deep canyons and thick pine forests in the west central region. The Missouri River is the state's most important river, with its branches draining most of the state.



Nation Area:
Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota

The climate in South Dakota generally ranges from 74° F in July to 16° F in January, but the state has had extremes of hot (120° F) and cold (-58° F). The annual rainfall is 18 inches.

Background and History:

It is generally accepted that the original inhabitants of the Americas came from northeast Asia across the Bering Strait over 15,000 years ago and then migrated throughout the Americas. Lakota people trace their immediate ancestry to the area that is now Minnesota in the late 1600s. Under pressure from their Cree and Chippewa enemies who had acquired firearms, the north-central Minnesota Lakota left behind their forest economy of hunting, fishing and their gathering lifestyle and moved westward to pursue buffalo with newly acquired horses. They became expert horsemen and built an economy on trading, buffalo, and hunting. In 1682, France claimed land that included South Dakota, and sixty years later, the first white men visited the area of South Dakota. Having crossed the Missouri River after 1750, the Lakota discovered the Black Hills, an area that became their spiritual center. The United States bought the area of South Dakota from the French through the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 and soon after that the Lewis and Clark expedition made contact with the Lakota on the Missouri River. The first permanent white settlement at Fort Pierre on the Missouri River in 1817 was followed 30 years later by the major westward migration of white settlers moving into the area of Plains Indian country. At that time millions of buffalo, necessary for Lakota survival, abundantly roamed the plains. After 1825, the federal government began a policy of removing Native Americans to the west, and some tribes did not agree.

By 1861, Congress created the Dakota Territory, which consisted of what are now the states of North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming and Montana. In response, Lakota Chief Red Cloud waged war from 1866-68, the most successful Indian war fought against the U.S. government. This war ended with the Fort Laramie Treaty, which guaranteed the Lakota possession of what is now the western half of South Dakota, including the Black Hills, along with much of Montana and Wyoming. By 1870, the buffalo herds in this area had diminished to crisis levels for Plains Indians, killed in part by forces of the U.S. government. After Custer announced the discovery of gold in land that had been given to the Lakota, the resulting influx of white settlers brought about the Lakota War in 1875 and the Battle of Little Big Horn in 1876. In 1877, the U.S. government took back the Lakota Black Hills and millions of additional acres, thus breaking the Fort Laramie Treaty. Continued rebellion by the Lakota against U.S. Government and its policies was now difficult to maintain because buffalo had all but disappeared and the Lakota now lived on handouts from the federal government. By 1888, the Oglala Lakota had moved onto the Pine Ridge Agency (Reservation).

After South Dakota became a state in 1889, the government reduced the size of Lakota reservation land and attempted to force the tribes onto smaller reservations. When this failed, the cavalry caught Lakota leaders and a group of 300 others and in 1890 massacred them at the area called Wounded Knee. Historically, this event marked the end of armed conflict in the Indian Wars. From that time to the present the Lakota people have struggled with poverty, poor health, and despair. In 1973, armed Lakotas seized the village of Wounded Knee and occupied it for 71 days over a tribal leadership dispute. A 1980 U.S. Supreme Court decision ordered the federal government to pay South Dakota Indian tribes 122.5 million dollars for land seized by the government in 1877. To date, this has not been accepted by the Lakota nation. In 1999, Shannon County, South Dakota, home of the Oglala Lakota's Pine Ridge Reservation, was identified as the poorest area in the country. Despite this, the Lakota survive with their cultural identity still intact.

Culture:

Even though there are hundreds of North American tribes, they can generally be placed in two main cultures, Northern and Southern. The Lakota, which means “people who are spiritually harmonious,” are Northern Oglala. Sometimes called Tetons or “prairie dwellers,” they have seven bands or subdivisions that all speak similar dialects of the Lakota language. Two of the most famous Native Americans were Oglala Lakota, Chief Red Cloud and Chief Crazy Horse, both of whom resisted the loss of their traditional culture and lands.

The medicine wheel design is an important part of Native American culture. Colors, animals, and human qualities are linked to the four global directions in the design. In a standard interpretation, the east is represented by the yellow and the elk or white tail deer. The west represents the black, the horse and thunder. The north is represented by the red and the buffalo. Finally, pointing south is white, the eagle and all other animals. There are four human qualities represented including wisdom, generosity, courage or valor, and love. The heavens are represented by all winged animals and the earth by subterranean animals like the mole. All of these ideas are sung about in song texts. These designs are often used as decoration on the drum (see Lakota Frame Drum image in Resources section). The circle is also expressed in all Lakota dancing, for example, the Lakota hoop dance.

Drumming represents the heartbeat of people. Men traditionally “sit at the Drum” or play the Drum. Women stand behind so they can be heard and sing the important high notes. Some songs have words but many have “vocables,” a word that does not have meaning or is just a sound. Vocables are usually a syllable made up of a vowel that is combined mainly with *w*'s or *h*'s (hay, yay, yah, we, wi, wo, wu). Songs are usually in two parts, with the second a repeat of the first. The singers are usually also drummers and the lead singer is often the lead drummer. It is an honor to be the lead singer/drummer, the person who starts and controls the song and dance. Good singers place the words or vocables between drumbeats as often as possible called “singing off beat.” The term “harmony” refers to how singers adjust the strength of their drum strokes so no one will play louder than others at the drum. This music is learned at an early age.

Music: Instruments & Rhythms

Instruments: Among the Lakota there are four categories of musical instruments: voice or *ho* (ho), drums or *bu* (boo), flutes and whistles or *jo* (jo), rattles or *hla* (hla-swallow the h). The powwow or “gathering” requires the large bass drum. For smaller events, like a sweat lodge, a singer will use the hand or frame drum. The Lakota Drum, or *cancega* (chan-cheh-gah--and swallow the g), is made in the traditional way from a tree trunk (or octagonal frame) with skin drumheads, but a modern band drum with plastic drumheads might also be used. To get a low tone the drumheads are kept somewhat loose and sometimes muffled with tape. Drumsticks are tree branches or fiberglass fishing rods with wool tips and covered in leather or colored tape. The *cancega* is considered the sacred center for tribal ceremonies as a gift for prayer from the Great Spirit. Even for social gatherings it is treated with respect. It is thought of as a living entity and even given food by drum keepers. Once a year or so, the drum keeper puts on a festival and everyone will eat on behalf of the drum. Four foods would be prepared, including a meat (deer or buffalo), fruit (wild berries), vegetable (corn), and water. Some food would be ceremonially placed next to the Drum.

ROOTS OF RHYTHM - CHAPTER 7: A LAKOTA DRUM FROM NORTH AMERICA

Rhythms: There are four basic rhythms used for dance songs. These are expressed at the pow wow, the main social event that is open to all tribes and the public. There are seven basic Lakota dances that use four basic rhythms representing the four directions: (1) Regular Beat – steady pulse but can have slight syncopation—every two beats come slightly closer together; (2) Honor or Parade Beat – the sound of a heart beating, soft, loud..., at certain points in a song to honor the dancers or honor the memory of a person; (3) Two Beat or Round Dance Beat—a steady two beat pulse with heavy syncopation—every two beats are very close together; and (4) Combination Rolling Beat and Fast Regular—a fast drum roll, a pause, then a fast steady beat. Other terms are “One Beat” – the main drum rhythm of a tribe and “Half Beat” rhythms from other tribes that go slower or faster. The lead drummer can signal changes or the song’s end with heavy strokes.

The dances that use these rhythms are: Traditional—for many tribes; Flag—a national anthem with no dancing; Veteran’s—for any veteran; Sneak Up—a dance of surprising an enemy/animal; Round—for couples; Honor—to honor anyone; and the private, sacred Sundance.

Listen & Play Along: *Use *Roots of Rhythm* CD Notes to support this section.

Note to teachers: if instruments are not readily available, consider having students make their own (a general activity for making drums can be found in the Roots of Rhythm: Introduction section) or encourage them to improvise - using everyday items such as buckets, containers, phone books, desk tops, etc., as instruments. Rhythms can also be created with body percussion including hand clapping, foot tapping, finger snapping, etc.

Listen to Track 59 of the Roots of Rhythm Companion CD to hear the heartbeat sound of the Lakota Drum. After listening, cover your ears with the palms of your hands and listen to your heartbeat. This is the basic beat of the Native American drum. Does it speed up and slow down? Is it steady? Are all beats the same loudness? Does it sound like what you just heard?

Now it’s time to play a Lakota Drum. First, you’ll need a frame drum: use a large frame drum and add a handle, if it does not already have one, with some packaging tape in the shape of a plus sign attached to the frame (see Resources section). If you don’t have a drum, you can use a thick phone book.

Once you have an instrument to play, listen to Tracks 58-59 of the *Roots of Rhythm* Companion CD to hear two basic rhythms of the Lakota Drum. Then, listen to Tracks 60-63 of the *Roots of Rhythm* Companion CD and play along with four rhythms that you hear. Continue to play along with the CD and play with each rhythm, and listen for the leader’s signal that can end a rhythmic segment (heard on Track 64). Please note: these four rhythms are notated using a dot notation in the Resources section.

ROOTS OF RHYTHM - CHAPTER 7: A LAKOTA DRUM FROM NORTH AMERICA

Lakota Drum:



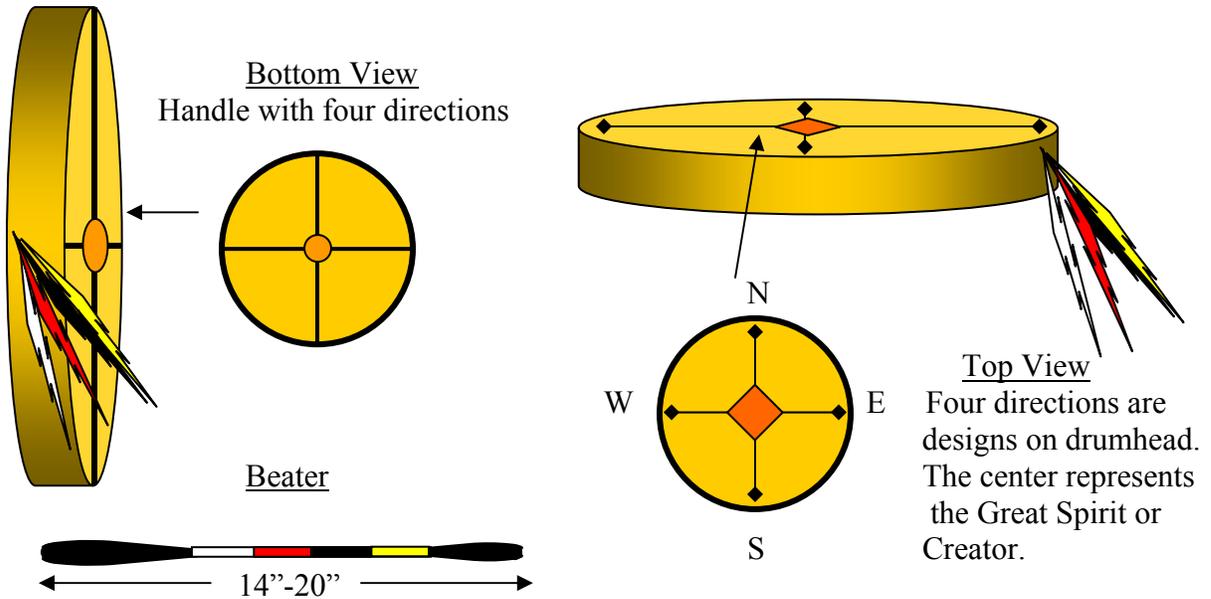
Handle Side.



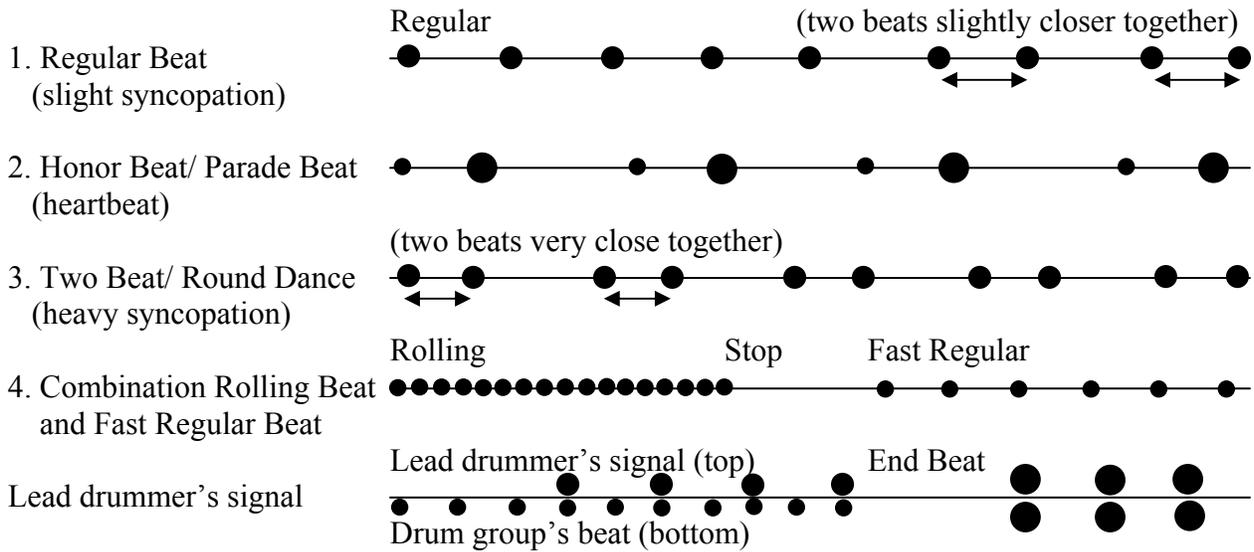
Photographs by Craig Woodson.

Resources: Lakota Frame Drum Rhythms

Lakota Frame Drum



Lakota Dance Rhythms



Note:

1. The dot size is the loudness, the bigger the dot the louder the drum stroke: ● ● ● ●
2. The distance between dots is the rhythm.
3. All hits are with the right or left hand, and in performance the drummer switches hands.
4. Slight syncopation means that every two beats come slightly closer together. Heavy syncopation means that every two beats are very close together.
5. Signals are louder beats given by the lead drummer for a change in the rhythm or the end.