2012 Dakota Commemorative March

**For Immediate Release**

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Healing Minnesota Stories

 **Nov. 13 Ceremony to Remember Dakota People on the Forced March of 1862**

Minnesotans are invited to participate in a ceremony to honor and remember the approximately 1,700 Dakota women, children and elders put on a 150-mile forced march to imprisonment following the Dakota-U.S. War of 1862. The ceremony is an opportunity to remember and reflect on a horrific part of Minnesota history that is rarely told or taught. The captive Dakota families had not participated in the fighting and had surrendered at the end of the war. From Nov. 7-13, troops marched them through southern Minnesota en route to their imprisonment near Fort Snelling. Along the way, they were assaulted by angry townspeople and soldiers. An unknown number of Dakota were killed. They were then held under brutal conditions at a concentration camp, where approximately 300 died during the winter of 1862-63.

The ceremony will be held Nov. 13, 12:30 p.m., near the Fort Snelling State Park Visitors Center in Mendota Heights, the site of the concentration camp of 1862-63. (Note: This is not Historic Fort Snelling, but the State Park.) The ceremony is being organized by a group of Can sa yapi Otunwe (Lower Sioux Indian Community) women, who are leading a seven-day, 150-mile commemorative march to remember and grieve the families on the original march. While the exact route of the original march is uncertain, the commemorative march route will pass through New Ulm, Mankato, St. Peter, Henderson, Belle Plaine, Jordan, Shakopee and Bloomington. The Nov. 13 ceremony at Fort Snelling State Park marks the end of their walk.

The organizers have issued an open invitation for other Minnesotans to join them in the ceremony. Healing Minnesota Stories, a project of the Saint Paul Interfaith Network (SPIN), is helping to organize support for the commemorative march, and is encouraging people of faith to participate in the closing ceremony.

“The broken promises and wrongs done to American Indians have been invisible,” said Tom Duke, one of Healing Minnesota Stories’ organizers. “Churches and all faith communities can play a key role in promoting and experiencing healing by opening themselves to their own history, making amends, and listening to the stories of Native people at events such as this.”

The commemorative march is a spiritual and reflective experience for participants. The group will stop roughly every mile place a prayer flag in the ground. The flag will have the names of two Dakota families from the march of 1862. The names will be read aloud, and walkers will offer prayers and tobacco.

Non-Dakota people are invited to participate in the last leg of the walk, Nov. 13, as well as the ceremony. They are asked to register for whatever parts of this day’s events they wish to participate in by going to the following link: <http://www.2012dakotamarch.eventbrite.com/>. This will help in planning the day’s event. Orientation for all non-Dakota people will be provided at the beginning of each point where they will be joining the march or ceremony.

For more information, see “[Dakota Commemorative March](http://www.facebook.com/DakotaCommemorativeMarch?ref=ts&fref=ts)” on Facebook, or follow the walk on Twitter at **@2012DakotaMarch.** Also see [Healing Minnesota Stories](http://healingmn.blogspot.com/).

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**Note to Reporters/Editors:** A support van will follow the walkers. Reporters trying to reach the organizers during the commemorative march can call the van at 612-964-2984.

**Proposed photo caption:** Prayer flags that honor Dakota ancestors from the forced march of 1862.