

# VIDEO SCRIPT

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**Telling Stories**

**PREPARED FOR: Dakota Pathways Series**

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**PRODUCER: Jim Sprecher**

**DRAFT: FINAL RECORDED VERSION**

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FADE IN:

Open

Re-creation—a group of people gathered around a fire with one person obviously telling a story—gesturing animatedly—as others listen intently. Then dissolve to someone typing on an early 20<sup>th</sup> century typewriter.

Re-creation—little girl in Indian dress of the 1870s playing make-believe games running through a field on Yankton Reservation. Dissolve to historic photo of Zitkala-Sa as a young woman.

Sunset on Yankton Reservation, along the Missouri River. Hear re-created voice of Zitkala-Sa:

Re-creation—Elders eating supper around a fire; little girl next to her mother. Then girl whispers in mother's ear.

Re-creation of an elder beginning to tell "Iktomi and the Ducks." Show little girl's face listening with delight—their faces are illuminated by flickering firelight. Hear the storyteller's voice:

Nat. Sound Up and Under.

Narrator: South Dakota has been home to countless storytellers through the years. Some of these storytellers were also writers, and many created their stories for young people.

Gertrude Simmons Bonnin loved hearing stories of Iktomi—the Trickster—when she was a little girl growing up on the Yankton Reservation. As a young woman, she wrote a book of these stories and a book about her childhood. Listen:

Re-creation of Zitkala-Sa: I was always glad when the sun hung low in the west for then my mother sent me to invite the neighboring men and women to eat supper with us.

I ate my supper in quiet, listening patiently to the talk of the old people, wishing all the time that they would begin the stories I loved best. At last, when I could not wait any longer, I whispered in my mother's ear, 'Ask them to tell an Iktomi story, mother.'

Storyteller: Iktomi lives alone in a tipi upon the plain. One day he sat hungry within his tipi. Suddenly he rushed out, dragging after him his blanket. Quickly spreading it on the ground, he tore up dry tall grass with both his hands and tossed it fast into the blanket.

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Dissolve to re-creation—Iktomi ties all four corners of blanket in a knot, throws the bundle over his shoulder, shades his eyes from the sun while peering far away into the lowlands. Munches his own cheeks.

"Aha!" grunted he, satisfied with what he saw.

Wild ducks in a marsh.

A group of wild ducks were dancing and feasting in the marshes.

Re-creation—Iktomi follows a winding footpath. He looks like a stooped Dakota man. Props himself up with a cane and pretends to stagger along beneath his burden.

"Ho! Who is there?" called out a curious old duck, still bobbing up and down in the circular dance.

Ducks quacking, flapping their wings while swimming in a marsh.

"Ho, Iktomi! Old fellow, pray tell us what you carry in your blanket. Do not hurry off!" "Stop! Stay! Show us what is in your blanket!" cried out other voices.

Cut back to storyteller gesturing.

"My friends, I must not spoil your dance. Oh, you would not care to see if you only knew what is in my blanket. Sing on! Dance on!"

Cut back to ducks.

"We must see what you carry!" they shouted in both his ears.

Cut back to re-creation of Iktomi holding bundle over his shoulder.

"My friends, tis only a pack of songs I carry in my blanket."

See little girl's face re-acting to story.

"Oh, then let us hear your songs!" cried the

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Book cover of Old Indian Legends.  
(Julia has copy of book.)

curious ducks.

Narrator: That curiosity, and Iktomi's trickery, results in disaster for the ducks. The whole story is found in the book, Old Indian Legends.

Historic photo of an older Zitkala-Sa in Indian dress, grinning broadly.

As an adult, Gertrude gave herself the name "Zitkala-Sa," which means "Red Bird" in Lakota. She used this name when she wrote books and articles.

Re-creation—White father and child reading the book together.

Zitkala-Sa said she wrote the book Old Indian Legends because she wanted to share the stories with people who were not American Indian.

Re-creation—12-year-old girl in a bonnet and period dress playing a game like jacks.

Another girl, Laura, grew up in South Dakota about the same time as Zitkala-Sa. For a while, she and her family lived in the just formed town of DeSmet.

Historic photo of Laura as an older woman.

Later in life, Laura wrote nine books about her childhood and early adult life, and about her husband's. These books are called the "Little House" series.

Show book cover then dissolve to exterior of surveyors' house in DeSmet.

In By the Shores of Silver Lake, Laura describes seeing the house her family lived in their first winter at DeSmet. It was the surveyor's house, and you can visit it today. The house may seem small to us, but to Laura it felt like a mansion:

Re-creation—The door opening into the lean-to and a girl peeping in.

Recreated Laura Ingalls Wilder voice-over:

The largeness of the empty house seemed to

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Re-creation—Laura tiptoeing across the lean-to and opening a door on its far side. Looking at the large front room.

wait and listen. It seemed to know that Laura was there, but it had not made up its mind about her. It would wait and see. Against its walls the wind made a lonely sound, but that was outside the house.

Show three shut doors. Then interior of bedroom.

The surveyors had left their stove! It was a larger stove than the one that Ma had brought from Plum Creek.

View up steep, narrow staircase—open up to attic.

Spaced on the wall beyond it were three doors. All of them were shut. Laura tiptoed across the wide floor, and softly opened one door. There was a small room, with a bedstead in it. This room had a window, too.

Pan main room.

Softly Laura opened the middle door. She was surprised. Steeply up in front of her went a stair, just the width of the door. She looked up, and saw the underside of a slanting roof high overhead. She went up a few steps, and a big attic opened out on both sides of the stairs.

Different historic photo of Laura.

Laura thought that there must have been a great many surveyors to need so much space. This would be by far the largest house she had ever lived in.

Re-creation—man in 1890s period dress setting type on old printing press, dissolving to historic photo of

Narrator: Laura Ingalls Wilder's books have been translated into 26 languages and have sold millions of copies.

In 1890, when Zitkala-Sa and Laura were still in their teens and twenties, L. Frank Baum was running a newspaper in Aberdeen.

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Aberdeen.

Re-creation—children gathered around Frank on street corner.

Historic Wizard of Oz book cover dissolves to illustration from the gopher story. (See South Dakota History magazine.)

Sunrise over prairie near Aberdeen.

Re-creation—a gopher whisking its tail.

Re-creation—Frank telling story on Aberdeen corner doing funny voices for the gopher characters.

Illustrations from gopher story.

Children growing up in Aberdeen at that time might have heard some of Frank's stories in their beginning stages before he wrote them down. He would often gather a group of children around him on the street corner to listen to his yarns.

Although his world famous book, The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, begins in Kansas, here is a story he set in South Dakota called "The Discontented Gopher."

Re-creation of L. Frank Baum: Mama Gopher stuck her head out of the burrow and sniffed the clear, sweet air...before her lay a broad sweep of Dakota prairie, whose dull brown color the spring was tinting with suggestion of emerald.

Mama Gopher whisked her bushy tail, thoughtfully stroked her nose with her front paw, and uttered a little chirruping cry: "Britz come here! Kritt! Zikky!"

The time has come for you three youngsters to start out in life and seek your own fortunes. I went yesterday to the Gopher Fairies and implored them to grant a gift to each of my three offspring. But the fairies are busy and have many demands, since the gophers are so numerous now in existence. Yet they granted me a single magic talisman which is contained in one of the three nuts you see before you.

Each one selected a nut; Britz and Kritt cracked theirs first. Nothing but a nut in each. Then

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Zikky cracked his nut and a tiny golden ball rolled out.

“This ball,” said his mother, “will grant you one of two things: Contentment or Riches. Which will you select Zikky?”

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“Riches to be sure!” cried the young one promptly, “for there can be no contentment without riches.”

Prairie near Aberdeen.

Narrator: But Zikky learns riches aren't all they're cracked up to be, and in this story he loses everything.

Stacks of books in a modern library. People—both adults and children—reading. Dissolve to Jean Patrick.

Why do so many people care about stories, and remember and treasure them all their lives? And what is it about South Dakota's people, animals, and land that makes for good stories? Jean Patrick has thought about those questions. She's a modern-day author, living near Mitchell, who writes for young readers.

Jean Patrick, at work both as a writer and on her rural home place. Also her books and their illustrations, especially Cows, Cats and Kids, If I Had A Snowplow, and her new Mount Rushmore book. If it can be arranged, maybe also cover shots of Jean at an in-school reading.

Jean Patrick interview: Why storytellers have a power to stick with us (perhaps referencing the writers already discussed: Zitkala-Sa, Wilder, Baum). How South Dakota shaped Jean's writing, why she likes writing for young people, and how there are fiction and nonfiction stories that sometimes spring from the same sources.

Pamela Hill Smith's book, Ghost Horses.

Narrator: Other authors who have written about South Dakota in recent years are Pamela Smith Hill...

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Townsley's book, Dakota Dreams.

Janet Howe Townsley...

Veglahn's book, The Buffalo King.

and Nancy Veglahn, who wrote about bison being saved from extinction right here in South Dakota.

Map illustrating Goble's trans-Atlantic move.

Paul Goble was born in Great Britain but moved to South Dakota...

A couple colorful Goble book covers: The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses and Death of the Iron Horse.

to write and illustrate stories about American Indians on the Great Plains.

Photos of Charles Eastman, Boston in the late 1800s, Pine Ridge then, and his book, Indian Boyhood.

Good as these writers are, we shouldn't forget our authors of the past, including Charles Eastman. Like Zitkala-Sa, he was among the first writers to help the nation understand American Indian life. Eastman earned a medical degree from Boston University, returned to South Dakota to be a doctor at Pine Ridge, and to write.

Badger Clark portrait.

Badger Clark is another author from the past, best remembered for his poetry.

Badger Hole at Custer State Park.

Badger made a living traveling the country, sharing poems with audiences. In his travels, he knew people thought life in South Dakota was very hard—more so than was the case—so in this poem he made a joke out of that kind of thinking.

*POP-UP FACT: Visitors can still drop by Clark's old home—the Badger Hole at Custer State Park*

Historic photos of homesteader dugouts and dust bowl images.

Re-created Badger Clark voice-over:

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South Dakota dust blowing,  
dissolving to snow swirling in air.

Dissolve to beautiful Custer State  
Park Black Hills landscape.

Virginia, and some of her book  
covers: Jimmy Yellow Hawk, The  
Chichi Hoo-hoo Bogeyman.

The Trickster And The Troll cover.

Any stills of the ceremony, or the  
actual medal.

"We lack sophistication;  
Our lives are all frustration,  
We South Dakotans, so some writers say.  
According to those novels we mostly live in  
Hovels.  
And all our days are dun and drab and gray.  
We flounder in futility,  
Punch-drunk to imbecility"

"From dust and debt and drought and dying kine,  
Aridity, frigidity—"

"Yet I, in my stupidity,  
Have lived here fifty years and like it fine."

Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve is a living South  
Dakota author both children and adults enjoy.  
Her books are certain to be read far into the  
future, here and across the nation.

One, The Trickster and the Troll, puts a twist on  
the Iktomi character Zitkala-Sa knew, by putting  
him into stories with a Norwegian troll.

Her writing earned Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve  
the National Humanities Medal, presented by  
President Bill Clinton in 2000. She was the first  
South Dakotan awarded that honor.

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Virginia.

Collage of recent editions of South Dakota books—brightly colored.

Close.

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Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve interview: Why the state and the rest of the world needs South Dakota stories, and why each generation needs to produce storytellers.

Narrator: As time moves on, storytellers help us understand South Dakota's remarkable past. And the best stories are as satisfying after a hundred years as they were when brand new.

Closing Music.

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