

Amy Ellen Mahtiya To Winyan Blue Sky Woman Crooks-Larca journeyed to the Spirit World on April 1, 2012, but her life continues on with her family and her community.



For more information about the Dakota, Hočokata Ti [ho-cho-kah-tah-tee] the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community's (SMSC) cultural center and gathering space, is worth visiting. The public exhibit, "Mdewakanton: Dwellers of the Spirit Lake," enhance the knowledge and understanding of the Mdewakanton Dakota people and their history. Hočokata Ti is at 2300 Tiwahe Circle, Shakopee, MN 55379. (952) 233-9151.



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**Amy Ellen
Mahtiya To Winyan
Blue Sky Woman
Crooks-Larca
1946-2012**

Compiled and written by David R. Schleper, Shakopee Heritage Society © 2021



Amy Ellen Mahtiya To Winyan Blue Sky Woman Crooks-Larca was born on November 13, 1946 in Pipestone, Minnesota, daughter of Amos L. Crooks (1919-1999) and Rosemma Coursolle Crooks (1925-2003.). She was a member of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community. Her brother was Glynn Allyn Crooks.

Amy served as chairperson, vice-chairperson, and secretary/treasurer of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community Business Council.

She married Robert Larca, and they had six children: Tracy, Cyndy, Terry, Tricia, Melinda, and Terri Lynn, according to the McNearney Funeral Home in Shakopee at www.mcnearneyfuneralhome.com.

Amy Ellen Mahtiya To Winyan Blue Sky Woman Crooks-Larca died on April 1, 2012.

Dakota cultural practices have changed over time. There are many reasons for many reasons for this: historical trauma, such as genocide and forced assimilation during the boarding school era (1860-1978) in which children were forcefully separated from their families, and their language and cultural practices were forcefully separated from



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their families, and their language and cultural practices were brutally suppressed, the introduction of Christianity and the suppression of traditional ceremonies, and demographic changes beginning with World War II as many young Native people moved away, served in the military, and raised families outside of the tribal nation, according to <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/understanding-grief/201710/death-and-bereavement-among-the-lakota>.

People do not die, they walk on. Walking On implies a continuation of a journey rather than an endpoint on a linear path.

Like many Dakota Indians, a Traditional All Night Wake happened on Wednesday, April 4 at the Glynn A. Crooks residence, according to the **Minneapolis Star Tribune** on April 4, 2012,. It included a prayer service lead by Spiritual Leader Danny Seaboy. The family of the deceased feeds everyone in attendance. At least one family member has to stand by the body at all times.

The rituals and ceremonies are an important part of the grieving process and are meant to encourage the spirit

into the afterlife. The Dakota do not have a fear of death or of going to an underworld. They do believe in a spirit world, *Wakan Tanka*, in the sky in which the deceased are free of pain and suffering.

A Christian ceremony is usually performed. Afterward, a medicine man performs a more traditional ceremony with prayers, songs, and a drum group.

After each ceremony, friends and family take turns paying their final respects to the deceased by giving her "spiritual foods" called *wasna* or pemmican to help the spirit on its travels. Gifts for the spirit, such as knives and shawls, are also placed in the casket before burial.

In Prior Lake, the funeral happened on April 5, 2011 at the Tiowakan Spiritual Center at the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community. The Tiowakan SMSC Spiritual Center is a beautifully designed and welcoming church in Prior Lake. It is a diverse and inclusive Christian church. People are given the opportunity to share their testimony.

Officiating was the Reverend Marlene White Rabbit Helgemo.