

Over time, and based on the vision of Norman Melvan Crooks, revenues were then generated for other economic development, tribal welfare, and philanthropy.

SMSC Gaming enterprises, including Little Six Casino, Mystic Lake Casino Hotel, and a connection to Canterbury Park, along with other retail and other business enterprises, including Dakota Mall, Dakotah Meadows Mini Storage, Dakotah Meadows RV Park, Dakotah! Ice Center, Dakotah! Sport and Fitness, *Wozupi* Tribal Gardens, *Mazopiya* (natural food market), Mystic Lake Store at Mall of America in Bloomington, Playworks, Playworks LINK Event Center, Shakopee Dakota Convenience Stores #1 and #2, SMSC Organics Recycling Facility, SMSC Water Bottling Facility, and The Meadows at Mystic Lake (golf course), and *Hočokata Ti* [ho-cho-kah-tah-tee] the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community's cultural center and gathering space for the Community's tribe members through exhibitions, preservation, and education.

Improving Native American narrative in Minnesota schools, and improving Native American nutrition are other new programs that the SMSC is working on.



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



The tribe has donated millions to organizations and causes, and is the single-largest philanthropic benefactor for Indian Country nationally. The Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community also supports the local community, including supporting the Shakopee Heritage Society!

Norman Melvan Crooks died on October 20, 1989. He was buried at Fort Snelling National Cemetery in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The vision that he started as chair in 1969, and the opening of *Little Six Bingo Palace* in 1992, when he was 65 years old, show that vision happens, no matter what the age!



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## SHAKOPEE HERITAGE SOCIETY



# Norman Melvan Crooks

1917-1989



Norman Melvan Crooks was born on May 28, 1917 in Morton, Minnesota, the son of Amos Crooks (1886-1958) and Ellen Marie Felix (1898-1937). Norman Melvan Crooks was in the United States Navy. He married Edith Ross on January 7, 1940, and they had six children: Norman, Stanley, Danny, Michael, George, and Alfred.

The Dakota people have lived in the Minnesota River Valley for centuries. Historically they fished in the river, gathered wild rice from river's edge beds, as well as nuts and roots, and hunted game.

*Bdemayaŋo Oyate* is a federally recognized, sovereign Indian tribe of Mdewakanton Dakota people, located southwest of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, within parts of the cities of Prior Lake and Shakopee in Scott County, Minnesota.

The original 250-acre reservation, between Prior Lake and Shakopee, had originally been set aside by the United States government for the Tribe in 1886 to settle Dakota and other



A statue of Norman Melvan Crooks is located at the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community.



American Indians who sided with the United States during the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862. Tribal members are direct lineal descendants of Mdewakanton Dakota people who resided in village of *Tíniá Otuŋwe* and other villages near the banks of the lower Minnesota River.

Norman Melvan Crooks was one of the founders and first elected chair of the *Bdemayaŋo Oyate* or Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community in 1969. He was a visionary who was instrumental in the Tribe's quest for sovereignty and self-determination.

Life for most of the Dakota people was one of poverty and hardship. Most of the Tribe were living in trailers, often with little water and little support. Norman worked on establishing tribal programs to improve the standard of living for the community. He then decided to bring high stake bingo to Minnesota. Overcoming tremendous odds, Norman borrowed money and invested in the tribe's future in a bingo operation, right in the middle of a cornfield.

In 1982, he oversaw the opening of the Little Six, the community's first bingo hall.

The hall, now called the Little Six Casino, was a precursor to the Mystic Lake Casino, which opened in 1992.

With the location being close to Minneapolis and St. Paul, the Little Six Bingo Palace became a success. It draws from a large population to attract numerous customers for its enterprises. The passage of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act by the United States Congress in 1988 recognized Indian gaming as a visible economic development two for the nation's Indian tribes who were often living in sub-standard conditions.

The original 250-acre reservation is now approximately 2,000 acres of land. Tribal lands are located near Prior Lake and Shakopee, Minnesota.

