

SAKATAH



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South Central
COLLEGE



SAKATAH STAFF

Students

Danielle Abbe

Evan Nigon

Elena Hayden

Advisors

John Reinhard

Kirstin Cronn-Mills

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One Day upon the Prairie

The winds came and the sky darkened to shades without explanation

Electricity cracked across the sky

Until the sky was once again light.

As the rain cascaded

Like a waterfall

Down on the sproutings of spring

Relentless to drown or maybe to help grow?

The newest signs of warm nights to come.

The explosion of thunder

Rang through the bodies of the prairie

As they nestled up with their little ones

And trembled for the comfort of a clear sky.

Grace Withrow

The One

I would marry you with paper rings. The papers from when we took a chance on us, for the first time in a new place. The paper where the man stays suspended by rope forever because we couldn't guess a five-letter word, even after cheating. The papers where we sketched a living room from the walls in, of our dream home. The papers on which you painted strong, unwavering oak trees to remind me of something I forgot. The papers from when I blew that stop sign because I was distracted by your uncontrollable laughter in the passenger's seat. The paper of congratulations I got for a job well done, a job I couldn't have done without you. The paper that mapped our first road trip across the country. The trip when your grandma said, "If you can make it through such a trek, you can make it through anything." And as we crossed the border back to where we came from, I decided she was right. We could fill libraries with these pages, but for now we hold them close, dreaming of the next chapter.

Grace Withrow

brushstrokes

you paint your picture bright blue
pretty sky and all
but when looking at mine, what color looks back at you?
it is not bright orange like the leaves in fall
it is not lavender like that gorgeous flower
instead it is a dark red
turning a shade more vibrant by the hour
almost as loud as the sound of a fire alarm
making you squint your eyes similarly to how you may cover your ears
but maybe you will one day see that I am green
slowly getting brighter every year

Mikaiya Dymeck

Reminiscing

Driving by Lake Mazaska in the early
evening, watching the sun go down,
remembering the day we ran around the park
playing hide and seek. I hid behind that river
birch tree, pretending you couldn't see my
big brown eyes peeking around the trunk at
your goofy grin. At work, while playing
Candyland with my client, all I can think is
how much fun we always have, and how I'm
longing for you to come home quicker. You
saved me from the nightmares I was
facing daily in that house with my father,
whisking away my cries the sound of a
screeching harp, turning them into a
beautiful strum. Missing you is like a child
lost in a large crowd without their mother,
reaching for a hand to hold.

Mikaiya Dymeck

Get It Out

Sit down and take a deep breath

Tell yourself it's okay when it really isn't.

Try not to blame yourself as it's not your fault

and block out any thoughts or flashback from that time.

Hide your shaky hands and convince everyone you're fine.

Wipe the sweat off and tell yourself it's normal.

Remind yourself you're never alone.

There are always people there to help you.

Drink your water slowly but as much as you can.

Try to keep your energy and stay awake until you're home.

Even though this place is not "home" you will be okay.

Get rid of that cloud above your head for goodness sake.

Mikaiya Dymeck

Decisions

You ask what I will become. A question that makes me think of when I was a kid playing Red Light, Green Light. Make a move, one that is accepted, and don't make it too late. Maybe I fear planting roots, like an acorn that's fallen much too close to its mother. Unable to grow in the shadow of a much wiser oak. I will wither without sun. But if I wait till you aren't watching, I may just become a bird, and sing my own song. Or join a rock band and play the drums, or float down the Mississippi until I am too far for you to reach.

Lauren Stroup

In the House Across the Street

A lamp sits patiently,
waiting for night to fall.
Its light goes unnoticed
until the sky turns dark.
Through the seasons
it stays.
Its amber glow
fills the absence of light
but never reaches
further than the windowsill.
I think to myself,
I'd like to own a lamp like that
someday

Lauren Stroup

A Familiar Ride

It's 100 degrees and I am in jeans. Who in their right mind puts on jeans when it's this hot? Not me, but this time I'm forced to because my idiotic cousins suggested we go for a ride in the middle of the day. I'm spending a week in Mound City, South Dakota, to visit my dad's brother and his family on the 4th of July. This is the one time a year my family has to see them, and I always hate coming here. We live in Springfield, Illinois, which feels like a completely different world from Mound City. At home there is always something to do, and there are no open fields. If you want to go somewhere it's most likely right around the corner. But in Mound city it's just open land, which is why my uncle owns horses, but I can't imagine that horses give you enough to fill your life. I am only here for a week, and I get bored out of my mind within the first day.

Now I'm somewhat glad I got to go on this ride because I'm not sure what I would be doing if I were back at the house, and I'm not sure I want to know either. The horses start to stall, and my cousins being passing around a water bottle. I ask for some, thinking it's water, but I should have known better being that I am with three teenage boys. I twist off the cap and immediately smelled vodka and twist it right back on.

The boys started making fun of me being that we are all close in age and I should be willing to take a couple sips but there is just no way that I am drinking straight vodka. Especially on a scorching summer day when all I want is water.

Half an hour later and we arrive at a riverbed. After a couple hours of riding, I could not be more ecstatic to see water. I was starting to get annoyed with the horse flies, probably more than the horses at this point. I quickly hop off butterscotch, my horse, and tie him to the nearest tree so I could splash some water on my face. I wanted to stop and look at the flowers growing along the riverbed like I do every year, but the boys started yelling at me.

“Lexi, let’s go! No one cares about flowers, and we are going to be late for dinner!” the eldest yelled from his horse.

I rolled my eyes and yelled, “You can wait five minutes for me to look at the flowers!”

“I know all you can think about is your stomach, but your stomach is just going to have to deal with the fact that I only get to see these flowers once a year and I not missing my opportunity just because you’re hungry!”

These flowers are different from the ones back home. They are wild and just have more life to them unlike the

stupid potted ones in Springfield. This is the one and only thing I like about South Dakota, the beauty in nature you find here. There is no way you can find it anywhere else. Everything is raw and natural. At home you can tell that a human messed with the flowers, the trees, even the grass. Just to make it look “pretty” which does the exact opposite of what they are looking for. It looks out of place and gross. At this riverbed you can tell no one has touched anything, and everything just seems greener. The raw beauty in wildlife has more exuberance than anything you will ever see.

Alyse Williamschen

A Summer Day When You Are Eight

This is the place where every kid wants to run wild and make friends. Dream of becoming a firefighter, a pro athlete, or a movie star. It's the place where you can find kids filling their time in the summer, and as an eight year old kid, the park is the only place you get to do whatever you want. Join a game of T-ball, tag, or play Ring around the Rosie with the people who share the same thoughts as you. If someone spots a frog it's now everyone's life mission to try and capture the frog. If someone suggests we explore the "forest" then everyone is running around the poles pretending they are tall oak trees. Here, no idea is a bad idea. Maybe we started a rock band, and everyone finds a random object that would represent their instrument. That frog that was spotted a little bit ago has been completely forgotten and now everyone is brainstorming ideas about what our band will be called. But then someone sees the streetlights come on, and everyone must be home before dark. So the day ends with screams of "see you tomorrow!"

Alyse Williamschen

Ode to Trees

Because of you
the air is pure,
and the wind shakes your hand.

You protect every critter
from the scorching hot sun,
slowly feasting on their flesh.

The bluebell flowers
look up at you,
admiring your long branches.

You tell us when
the sky will cry,
and when the clouds
decide to take a vacation.

When the Woodpecker knocks on your door,
you open up.

Dearest tree,
even as you grow old,
your job is never done.

Karis Forster

Sunflowers

I saw a field,
And it reminded me of us.
always chasing the sun.
Only the sky knows our secrets,
and hears our whispers.

I wonder if those sunflowers
were also taught
they needed a man to bloom.
But you
are not a man,
and with you
I am a richer field.

When the moon,
steals the sky,
we lay our heads to rest.
Side by side,
hand in hand,
long after the sun says
goodnight.

Karis Forster

A Chance

Hunting is one of the first jobs that our ancestors ever had. Hunting provides the possibility for human life in regions that otherwise would have no possibility of survival, such as the far reaches of the arctic to the north. Today, hunting is still an integral part of the lives of many native groups. To these people, hunting is not just a way of obtaining sustenance, but a connection to their ancestors, to the point where they have fought for their rights to hunt and fish in their ancestral methods for animals that no one else is allowed to hunt, such as whales in the Pacific Northwest as well as netting salmon from platforms far above the flowing rivers.

My hunting is not so cultural and not so deeply rooted but it brings me solace nonetheless, my first years hunting I would hunt deer with a muzzleloader. This season took place in the cold of Minnesota November, as I sat and waited in a stand in the trees for hours at a time the cold and the silence played tricks on the mind, the slightest ruffle of leaves. Is it a deer? No, it's a single bird hopping through the leaves. Then, suddenly, after hours the sounds of footsteps, differentiated from the bouncing of squirrels and the movement of leaves from the occasional bursts of

wind, I look. This is the first deer I've seen in three days. It trots into view, it comes to a stop directly in front of my stand, my firearm raised I gently pull the trigger. Only nothing happens, there is no thunderous explosion, only the sound of the hammer falling onto the primer and then nothing, did I load the gun wrong? Is the primer just a dud? No matter the reason the result is the same the deer stares at me, not recognizing as I am still as a board, but knowing precisely where the sound came, I don't move, I watch as the deer returns to its course, slowly wandering off into the distance. This is how hunting is meant to be, no second chance, no guarantees, just a chance, for both of us.

Daniel J. Wager

Grandpa's Saturday

Fix the tractor
 And learn new swear words
Drive to the auction barn
 Maybe stop off at a bar
Sit on the deck
Go for coffee at church
 Juice for me
Go to so and so's to get such and such
Check the crops
Pick up parts
 For the broken tractor
Feed the cows
Stop at the convenience store for a snickers
Talk with the guys
 “How's the crop?”
 “Storm's coming?”
Nap in the chair
Go on a drive to somewhere
 Listen to polka music
Watch grandpa read the newspaper
 Read the comics
Mow the lawn
Water the cows
Ride in the tractor
 Fall asleep

Evan Nigon

My Grandparents

My grandparents used to live in Wisconsin, nestled in a hilly area near Durand. Every year around Christmas, my family would visit and stay with them. My grandparents graciously welcomed all of the extended family to stay with them until after Christmas. Their farm, situated in this hilly area, was surrounded by pine forests and isolated from neighbors for miles. Despite not being farmers themselves—my grandfather was a retired train conductor and my grandmother a painter—they had barns, tractors, and even an old rusted steam engine that my cousins and I would play on.

On Christmas Eve, the younger ones, myself included, would eagerly search through the barns in hopes of finding a toboggan. When we found one, we would cram as many of us onto it as possible, often resulting in crashes. But we loved every moment of it.

One of my favorite childhood memories was venturing out in the middle of the night when the house was brimming with family, warmth, and love. I would climb up a great hill in the darkness to look down on the house, gaining a real perspective of life around me. Through the deep snow, I charged up the hill, and upon reaching the summit, a complete dome of stars came into view. Looking down over the moonlit valley, smoke billowed out of the chimney of the house.

I was struck with awe at this picturesque sight. I hardly noticed that I wasn't alone on the hill; so at peace was I in the moment that I didn't notice a wolf in a nearby clearing. At the time, I thought it might have been white, but looking back, it was too dark to tell. The wolf had noticed me and had likely watched me strenuously climb the hill. Initially, fear gripped my lungs, but as I held its gaze and felt the cold December air pass through me, I began to feel as though everything would be okay. Turning to look down at the valley again, I could hear my aunt playing the piano, smell the honey ham my grandmother was cooking, and hear the distant laughter of my cousins enjoying whatever new game they had come up with. Even in this moment of potential danger, I could feel nature urging me to be at ease.

Kristian Karnes

Awake

There's never been a city more awake than me,
Though my body's windows
Match those of the boarded-up buildings on 6th Street.

My eyes glazing over from the lack of sleep
Confirm my suspicions that, no,
There has never been a city more awake than me.

I would get on my knees and beg and plead
For a moment of isolation or hope—
To be like the boarded-up buildings on 6th Street.

I live entertaining on a projector's blinding screen
And over time the bulb weakens its glow,
But there will still never be a city more awake than me.

Guilt overflows when I am the cause of a scene
And it's those certain moments that evoke
The need to be a boarded-up building on 6th Street.

The sky is polluted from light and there's few stars to see
How easily things could happen to go,
But there's never been a city more awake than me,
Even as I am the boarded-up buildings on 6th Street.

Elena Hayden

Could you see me ruining things?

Could you even imagine?
I fantasize about hurting you worse, but
I'd never let it happen.
And I'll keep letting you have me
In all of your twisted ways,
Though you wring out my limbs until skin breaks.
The wounds will ache and
You'll watch them bleed—
Yet I'm the one to lick them clean.
So let's be done,
We'll never speak
Just make it fast and make it sweet.

Elena Hayden

Inheritance

My biggest connection to a landscape isn't the Grand Canyon or an Island with a private waterfall, but it's what my family and I call "The Woods." This piece of land has been in our family for many years. It's a part of a very small town called Russell, which is in the southwest part of Minnesota.

I would spend most of my summers down in our forest, surrounded by trees that were there even before that town was established a couple of miles away. The air tasted sweeter there and the sun shone brighter as well. There was never a worry or negative thought, even when we would float in the river that ran through our property and one of us would fall off our tube into the murky water. Or when me and my cousin would get our shoes stuck in the mud and had to form a mini human chain to retrieve them; one hand on bulky rock by the riverbed while the other held the fate of having to go back and change clothes. We were fearless and never let the unpromised safety of an adventure slow us down.

We would spend our days looking under the rivers rocks for crawfish and hop from one small island to another, finding bones of animals from who knows where; only the river would know. Climbing up low branches of trees and try to look for unsuspecting creatures such as the deer that prominently use to run this land. We would pack our idea of a lunch which consisted of the promised sandwich and chips and sometime juices if we could get away with it. After eating we would use bread scrapes and old water bottles to create crawfish traps, and they worked, which looking back our ingenuity was pretty advanced. We would cut up the bottles and poke holes for the water to pass through the trap and not push it down stream, and we would use a lighter to attached pieces of plastic to the bottle, welding it to be stronger.

The forest and river never made me feel uneasy, even with huge snapping turtles lurking in the rivers murky water and the coyotes that were probably watching the deer as much as me and my cousin were. I will spend a lifetime admiring the complex landscape that my grandparents loved long before I did, and always being thankful that they decided to pass it down to me.

Avery Dressen

Those Ramadan Summers

Ramadan is a special time of year for Muslims all around the world. As a child, Ramadan was a magical time for me, filled with cherished dreams that brought joy into my life. I remember starting to fast when I was about six years old, even though my mom advised against it. She knew I was doing it to fit in with the others, rather than for any genuine spiritual reasons. Despite her warnings, I tried to keep up with the fast, but I always broke it halfway through the day. My mom always saw through my attempts, even when I lied about it.

As I grew older, around the age of ten, my perspective on Ramadan changed. It wasn't just about fitting in anymore. I began to appreciate the spiritual discipline and sense of accomplishment that came with each day of fasting. I set a personal goal to complete entire days of fasting, but although I completed the little challenges, I still missed a day here and there. The best part of the month was sitting around the table with my family after sunset and eating iftar (the meal eaten by Muslims at sunset to break their fast during Ramadan). We enjoyed foods like samosas, the staple dish of the month; soft, flavorful rice; chicken seasoned to perfection; and a salad with every veggie known to man. These dishes my mom and siblings whipped up were always limited edition—because they were prepared exclusively during Ramadan—so I savored every bite, knowing that after the month ended, we would return to the same old, same old.

I'd like to remember those days that are forever ingrained in my mind, the hot summer days when I would long for water but remembered I was fasting, and the restless summer nights when I would hang out with my friends at the mosque until Tarawih and Tahajjud (long prayers during the night). My parents also let me stay up for suhoor (the meal consumed early in the morning before sunrise by Muslims during the month of Ramadan), and leading up to the meal, my siblings and I would spend time playing cards and various psychological games. To this day, I believe that's where I developed my sense of competitiveness.

After we got bored of the games, we would eventually play hide and seek in the dark, watch movies, and accidentally wake up our parents right

on time for suhoor. Different from the meals my family cooked for iftar, suhoor was always Soor, which is a kind of stiff cornmeal mashed with fresh milk, butter, and sugar, and presented with a hole in the middle filled with more milk (or even a type of fermented milk). I didn't enjoy suhoor for multiple reasons—first, the lack of variety, and the annoying feeling of bloating followed by early morning nausea—but not eating suhoor was worse, and there were plenty of nights where I went to sleep and was never awoken for it. I felt drained and empty the next day, and I would never want to share this experience, not even with my worst enemy.

Ramadan is not celebrated on a fixed date every year but rather changes annually depending on the moon phase. In the previous year, Ramadan began on March 22nd and ended a month later. This year, it is expected to start on either March 10th or 11th. I hope it falls on the latter date because it's also my 17th birthday, and it would be an interesting experience to fast on my birthday. However, as time goes by, Ramadan will gradually move towards winter, bringing with it new challenges and compromises. Despite this, my goal for this Ramadan is to cherish the experience, even if it doesn't quite resemble the ones from my childhood.

Issa Mohamed

Ode to Google Maps

Always calm and collected,
ready,
like the time I drove from coast to coast,
and always finding the fastest path,
but giving options to explore more routes.
Never yelling at me
 when I make a wrong turn,
never giving up on me,
or telling me to slow down
 no matter how fast I'm going
Letting me know about any
speed traps
traffic backups
 icy roads
 and other hazards up ahead.
Giving me an ETA, so I can let my mom know when I'll be there,
because she's always worried when I drive.
Giving me verbal commands,
 so I don't have to go on my phone when driving,
 and crash,
 again.
But most importantly,
thank you for staying calm,
being my friend,
and showing me the way.

Tyler Sheehan

Exploring Arkansas

When I first moved to Hot Springs Village, Arkansas, I was eight or nine years old, and I couldn't get enough of the new landscape. Every day my siblings and I were outside exploring our new environment. There wasn't grass anywhere, but yards were full of rocks. We lived in the Ozark mountains, and this was normal. The trees were very tall, much taller than anything we have here, but they were very skinny. You could probably hug four to five of them and still clasp your hands. Also, there were big and sometimes giant boulders scattered everywhere. Our adventures always started in the woods behind our house, and we would usually end up at the lake. This was our favorite spot, because of all the wildlife. Through the woods we carried a stick for spider webs and were mindful of snakes because they were everywhere.

Once at the lake the first thing that always caught my attention was the hundreds of baby turtles, so small they fit in your palm, swimming through and walking all around the water. Then there were all the different fish that you could see so clearly due to the water being almost invisible. There were always birds of all shapes, sizes, and colors flying all around us and landing very close. There were so many deer that were used to humans they would come super close to us, almost within touching distance and they always wanted to have a staring contest with me. When we walked along the water down to where it became more of a creek, I would always flip over some bigger rocks I would find to look for crawdads, and I usually was satisfied with my finds. This lake was the spot to be built due to all the biodiversity and abundance of life to take in. The walk home was the most exciting part of the adventure, because after the sun goes down all the snakes move onto the pavement to absorb the leftover heat from the sun's rays. The walk home was also the most beautiful part. Due to us kids having to head home once it started getting dark, we got to watch the sunset every night over the Ozark mountains and those tall skinny trees.

Madelyn Davenport

When I turn my back, what do you do?

Do you have time to move?

Or do you have to wait until I leave the room?

When you're left alone, do you get things done?

Or do you sit there collecting dust?

If I shut off the lights, can you see in the dark?

Or would you prefer if my room had those light up stars?

When I wake up in the morning, how do you not get caught?

How do you always return to the same spot?

Is the Toy Story movie accurate?

Does Little Bo-Peep actually count her sheep?

Does Barbie always end up with Ken?

Or does she go with the light up robot toy instead?

Gigi Hullett

The yarrow does not speak.

One might've placed it on the stone below the doorway of a friend's home,
One might've picked apart the small white bunches of its blooms,
One might've sent children out to gather it for the sick soldier's tea,
One might've tied it with ribbon and placed it near a sunny window for a sweet
breeze.

The yarrow does not bloom on the plains.
Snowy dusts of pollen and scent are hidden in caches seldom found,
The last of the yarrow silent in backyards and overgrown woodlands,
Only dry patches of light dirt between broken sidewalks remain of the plains,
There are no children to run amuck and hide in the tall grasses.

The yarrow does not speak,
but I wonder what it would say,
and I wonder what it has seen.

Danielle Abbe

There isn't much to tell.

The blue ribbon of the metal shines against the brass knob of my dresser drawer.
Each time I dress in the morning, the gold circle clinks dully against hardwood.
You were proud, once, it tells me.
The dresser drawer is empty.
You are proud no longer, the medal informs me as I push the heavy wood up and force
the rollers back onto their tracks.
I dress from the cloth pile of garments pushed to the wall against my bed.
I pick up my bag and take a last look at the space I call my own.
You can accomplish things, you know, the medal tells me, reproaching like a mother.
I leave.

The paper below a drumming pink eraser attached to a number two pencil is ripped.
Pink flecks run across the straight blue lines, the marks of unfinished thoughts.
I am happy, the smudged graphite reads.
The drumming stops and I erase the words.
I was happy, the paper says.
The tip of the pencil dulls and my fingers move.
My hand colors a dirty gray, and in my haste to write, the tip breaks.
But when I was younger, I was alone a lot, the pencil writes.
I crumple the paper but the words still sting.

My thumbs make pretty clacks on the phone screen.
The letters enlarge, the send button whorls, and I breathe a sigh.
I'm busy, the phone sends.
I look up.
“Let's try to do your homework here,” she says.
Her blouse is loose and shining under the blinding window sun.
My palms sweat against the bottom two inches of my sleeves and soak into the ribbing.
“Tell me about your parents,” she insists.
She pushes the paper towards me and I pick up a pen from the cup.

Danielle Abbe

And Then I Kept Walking

I feel the wind. I feel how it tangles my hair, and pelts my face, screaming in my ear something I cannot understand. I feel the drop in temperature and the specs of dust sticking to my skin, and the way it tries to push me over, and how my eyes start to dry and water, and the air starts to push itself into my lungs and my breath is no longer my own and I just need to stop.

So, I stop.

I stop and I feel.

I feel goosebumps rise and fall on my arms as each wave of air washes over me. I feel my skin push tighter against my face and my arms and my legs and for once I am whole. I hear the trees; how they sound like a crowd of cheering people all congratulating me for an accomplishment I'm not sure I've even accomplished. Perhaps it's simpler than I think. Maybe it's for nothing at all.

My chest rises and falls and flows in tandem with the breeze, and I swear for a second, I become one of those cheering trees. I am a Maple and my billowing hair is nothing more than leaves, waving in the wind. I am an Oak and my feet ground me like strong sturdy roots. I am a Cedar and I hold this moment for what feels like forever but is more like a blink of an eye or a thought passing from neuron to brain to muscle. As quick as the flick of a finger.

The cheering dies down. I take a bow and I run my fingers through my hair. It seems the wind has knit my hair into a sweater to help me keep warm, as if apologizing for its presence.

I understand why the trees cheer when the wind comes.

Abby Cloutier

Till Life Do Us Part

I don't want to be buried in a casket or burned to ash

Dig me a hole in a clearing
Deep enough to where the rain won't wash me away
But close enough to the surface that my body can feel the sun
through the warming dirt
Let me feed the grass and the deer and the people
Let my flesh be found in a seed, consumed by a black bird
For that seed to become a Willow
And my blood be rained down upon the land
To paint it red with life

Let my bones become soil
For that soil to become stone
A stone that will foster a fossil of another life
lived and lost

Let my love be buried beneath a willow
And when what weeps becomes nothing but fungus
Let them rise from the ground and weep
As long as the earth allows it

Abby Cloutier



