

P1592
SATB



WANISKA

For SATB Voices
A Cappella

Traditional Cree

Arranged by
Brian Tate



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TRANSLATION:

WANISKA PITAPAN OMA: wake up, the dawn is here

ASAY PISISAK INIKA MOWAK: already the birds are singing

I MIYONAKWAN KITASKINAN: it looks good in our land.

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE:

WEYA –way-yah

HEY – hey

YAHA – yah-hah

HAIYO – high-yo

WANISKA - wah-nees-ka

PITAPAN - pee-ta-pahn

OMA - o-ma

ASAY - ah-say

PISISAK -pee-see-sahk

INIKA - ee-neh-ka

MOWAK - mo-wahk.

I – ee

MIYONAKWAN - m'yo-nah-kwahn

KITASKINAN - kee-tahs-kee-nahn

NOTES TO THE DIRECTOR:

Background

Waniska is a traditional Cree song. Although many First Nations/Native American songs may be sung only at specific occasions, I have been told that Waniska may be sung at any time.

The Cree, traditionally traders and hunters, are one of the largest First Nations groups in North America, with over 200,000 members living in Canada alone.

For several seasons, I had the privilege of teaching a vocal ensemble class at "Full Circle," a Vancouver Indigenous performing arts school. There were often visiting artists, and I had the opportunity to learn some traditional songs and dances, and Waniska was one of the songs I was taught.

Singing style

A quick search on YouTube will show that there are many ways of interpreting and performing Waniska. The singer who first introduced me to the song used a sweet, light, lyric singing style. The sound should be lyrical but not too classical; more like folk-singing. Waniska employs a "short fall" at the ends of some phrases. You touch on the pitch and immediately release the breath and the note together in a quick exhalation of air.

Staging

This song offers many opportunities for creative and dramatic staging. The choir could begin the nature sounds in the venue foyer and then enter singing, filing down available aisles. The work could be done in the round, with the entire choir turning outward to "face the dawn" near the end of the piece. If the choir is on stage, they could use movement while singing, and turn to face the "four directions" to close the piece. It is appropriate and visually effective to employ the "all my relations" gesture: elbows at the sides, arms extended with palms up. The director should feel free to be creative with staging to add to the drama of the song. I hope you enjoy this beautiful, powerful song!

BT