Parenting Bundle

AN ABORIGINAL CULTURAL PARENTING PROGRAM MANUAL FOR ALL CAREGIVERS OF CHILDREN

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Acknowledgements

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Opening Prayer

THE PROMISE OF A PARENT
by Albert Dumont ©

Great Spirit, today a new human heart echoes the drumming
of my own heart for I have become a parent and I ask You
at this sacred time to witness a promise I make to my child.

Great Spirit
I promise that in my embrace
And in the gentle songs of our ancestors
That my child will from birth
Know the sound of the wind
Moving through the hills and trees of our territory
And know also the touch of the earth
And the warmth of the sun
And the pureness of the river waters of our homeland
And as the seasons pass, Great Spirit
We will walk together, my child and I
To a place in the forest
Where machinery is not heard or seen
And we will talk there, of the birds
Of the four legged
And of the life living under the surface of lake waters
And we will listen together
At such a place
To the heartbeat of Mother Earth

I promise also, Great Spirit
That when my child becomes a young adult
To hold council with my child
And give to my child the same respect
And dignity that I would have wished
For myself during that time
Of my own life
And always, Great Spirit
I will speak to my child
Of those instructions You have given the human beings
At the time of our creation
And I know if my promise is kept
That my child will grow to become a person
Fully aware of the purpose of life
Of a human being on this earth
And my heart as a parent
Will soar with gladness because of it

Kichi Migwech
Elders
Through conversations and discussion with Elders they have communicated an overall summary of their advice for the caregivers who are about to enter upon their parenting journey through this program. Here is the Elders’ vision for our caregivers.

Our Elders believe that all children are a sacred gift from the Creator and we must give all children unconditional love.

Our Elders say that there is no perfect parent and no perfect child so we must be willing to forgive ourselves and our children for our mistakes.

Our Elders tell us that we must utilize the wisdom of the Elders and community to help deal with parenting challenges.

Our Elders teach us that we must regularly pray for our children and ourselves as parents.

Our Elders encourage us to understand that parenting is a life long journey and we must put our energy into conscious parenting which allows our children to accept personal responsibility for their own lives to develop a healthy sense of self-respect.

Our Elders tell us to teach our children to respect all life including how to value their own.

Our Elders ask that parents develop and listen to their parenting intuition and creatively train their power of observation of their own children.

Our Elders say to openly and honestly communicate with their children, by thinking very carefully before speaking to all children, and when it is needed to respectfully apologize to their children for their mistakes.

Our Elders encourage us to participate in cultural rituals and ceremonies to help strengthen our Aboriginal family identity and to share their family stories and histories with their children.

Our Elders teach us that we must learn how to monitor our levels of control and interference over our children since each child comes to earth to fulfill a higher purpose and share a gift.
The Elders emphasize that our children experience many benefits by learning through our traditional child rearing ways and practices. The Elders share their vision for our children so caregivers strive to develop these qualities in our future generations.

Our Elders believe that children need to experience freedom to discover their higher purpose in life.

Our Elders believe that children need to be taught to respect the sacred space within themselves and others.

Our Elders believe that children need to be free to use humour and play to make life more enjoyable.

Our Elders would like our children to develop a healthy understanding of their own cultural identity and be able to express pride in their language, customs, and traditions.

Our Elders desire that our children are confident and willing to take healthy risks and are capable of accepting personal responsibility for their own behaviors and be taught to think about the consequences of their own actions.

Our Elders wish for our children to be able to handle change and conflict with strength and courage and be willing to ask for help from other family members and express their voices and opinions truthfully.

Our Elders would like that our children have an important connection to grandparents and Elders and know that they are loved and belong.

Our Elders desire that our children appreciate the mysteries of life, develop their observation skills and are comfortable with inwardness and silence.

Our Elders pray that each child knows about their own strengths or gifts and be willing to accept their weaknesses.

Our Elders believe that our children need to be capable of taking on leadership roles in their family, community, and nation.

Our Elders say that each child needs to feel proud about themselves and the resilience of their people.
Introduction
Introduction

Children are given a special place within our communities. We believe that children are our future, and through them our stories, ceremonies, cultures, and Nations will survive.

Aboriginal cultures in Canada have always believed that parenting is a sacred responsibility, and we have always placed great value and emphasis on child rearing. As First Nation, Inuit, and Métis people, we hold many beautiful and important parenting teachings that describe the roles and responsibilities of all community members in raising our children. These teachings, passed on to us by our ancestors, present us with the understanding and the tools to raise our children in a good and healthy way, providing them with the skills and knowledge they will need to fully participate within our communities, and within the greater Canadian society.

However, the history of colonization in Canada has eroded many of the traditional family systems and beliefs in our communities. Assimilationist policies such as the residential school system and child welfare system have had devastating effects on our people. The removal of children from our communities disrupted the sharing and passing on of important traditional teachings, stories, and ceremonies that are essential to balanced families and communities. The legacy of colonization, residential schools, and harmful child welfare policies can still be seen today in the high rates of poverty, addictions, and dysfunction in many Aboriginal families and communities.

Our Elders recognize the sense of loss that exists within our communities, and are now calling upon us to reclaim our traditional parenting ways so that our children, our communities, and our future remain strong and hopeful. In order to brighten the future for our children we need to give them back control over their lives, give them access to their culture, language, teach them traditional knowledge and share with them our spiritual belief systems and practices.

The Wabano Parenting Society, comprised of Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Grandmothers, and community members, wishes to support parents and caregivers in their exploration of the traditional parenting teachings. The Parenting Bundle is the result of the vision and hard work of the Wabano Parenting Society. Based on traditional teachings, the Parenting Bundle is a cultural program designed to reintroduce parents and caregivers to traditional roles and responsibilities of parenting. The Parenting Bundle helps parents and caregivers begin the process of building a bundle of their own, one that carries support and tools that may be used in the parenting journey. The Parenting Bundle introduces seven items to parents and caregivers that are based on the traditional Haudenosaunee bundle. Accompanying each item are activities that can help parents and caregivers explore and understand the traditional teachings and skills. Our Elders strongly believe that our traditional practices give us a way to maintain the balance within ourselves, our families, our communities, and nations. It is time for us, as modern Aboriginal parents and caregivers, to reclaim our traditional parenting bundles so that we may carry out our responsibilities to our children.
What is a Parenting Bundle?
Traditional bundles contain sacred items, both spiritual and physical, that can assist us in our life journeys. Items such as songs, stories, medicines, traditions, and the wisdom of experience are all carried in our bundles. Yet a bundle is not just valuable for what’s inside it. The process of building and keeping a bundle is valuable as well, as it teaches us responsibility.

Likewise, the building and maintaining of a parenting bundle teaches responsibility and prepares us for our sacred roles as parents and caregivers. The Wabano Parenting Bundle introduces seven bundle items based on the traditional items that make up the Haudenosaunee bundle: tobacco, stories, seeds and nourishment, medicines, songs, dances, and deer. Each of the seven bundle items carry a traditional teaching that can support us on our parenting journey.

An Aboriginal Approach
The Parenting Bundle is a holistic and cultural approach to empowering Aboriginal parents and caregivers in their parenting journey. Every Aboriginal nation in Canada has their own specific values, stories, ceremonies, and belief systems. The Wabano Parenting Society recognizes and celebrates the diversity of all Aboriginal people in Canada, and as such, the Parenting Bundle has been created with flexibility, and able to reflect and incorporate the diversity of all our nations.

At the heart of this approach are a number of principles that guide and support us in our quest to raise healthy children, families, and communities. Understanding and respecting differences in learning is an essential element of the Parenting Bundle. It is evident that Aboriginal people have different philosophies about child-rearing and learning compared to western, non-indigenous cultures. This difference is also highlighted in the holistic approach to child-rearing in Aboriginal communities. Each and every member of the community has a role to play in the lives of our children. Revisiting these principles and acknowledging our roles and responsibilities, can help us reclaim our spiritual and cultural beliefs and values, utilize the principles embedded in our traditions and customs, and restore our traditional parenting ways.

LOOK, LISTEN, AND LEARN
“Tell me and I’ll forget. Show me and I may not remember. Involve me and I’ll understand.”
-Native American Proverb

The Parenting Bundle encourages parents and caregivers, facilitators, and program support staff to utilize the traditional Aboriginal learning systems. Central to this is experiential learning. Traditionally, children were involved in everything the family engaged in. This was an effective way of sharing traditional teachings, values, skills, and encouraging observation in children. Importantly, it also allowed children to set their own pace of learning, ensuring that our children are set up for success, not failure. This method of experiential learning is a vital aspect of traditional Aboriginal parenting methods.

The Parenting Bundle works to revitalize our own observational powers, and to encourage it in our children. Our Elders explain that, “Through keen and mindful observation we can learn about the deeper physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental development of our children”. The Parenting Bundle teaches parents how to carefully observe themselves and their children so that they can achieve greater family unity within the home environment. The program encourages the use of traditional storytelling methods and the Aboriginal languages in the instruction of traditional parenting teachings.

“I recall that we were always with the other family members and whatever it was that the older people were doing, we did it too!”
- Elder Elsie Sanderson
**ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

Every person has an important role to play in our communities. Our Elders tell us that within each stage of our life cycle, we have a specific gift, and a specific responsibility to our communities and our nations. Without our participation, our Elders warn, our communities will be imbalanced and incomplete. That is why it is important for all of us to know what our roles are, and to reconnect with our communities and cultures so that we can fulfill our responsibilities.

**THE ROLE OF CHILDREN**

As gifts from the Creator, children, bring love, respect, joy and laughter to our families; they make our families stronger and our communities whole. Our Elders have told us that each child carries a special gift entrusted to them by the Creator. These gifts will be carried by each child, to be used when they grow into the caregivers, leaders, and visionaries of our communities.

Our children are given a special place in the circle at the centre of our communities. They represent our futures, and therefore need the protection of the community. Our Elders tell us that we are all responsible to this inner circle and that the needs of our children must be considered in every decision that is made by the individual, family, and community.

**THE ROLE OF ELDERS**

As our children represent our future, it is our Elders who represent our past. Wisdom, love, and spiritual knowledge are the gifts the Elders bring to our communities. We are told there is a strong bond between our Elders and our children, and this is reflected in the diagram above, where the inner circle of children is always surrounded by the circle of Elders.

**THE ROLE OF WOMEN**

Women occupy the next circle surrounding the Elders. Our Elders teach us that women are responsible for taking care of our Elders and children, making sure
they are healthy and safe. Women in our communities are often the decision makers and the men were the administrators of their council decisions.

“A Nation is not conquered until the hearts of its women are on the ground.”

Cherokee saying…

THE ROLE OF MEN

The outer circle is occupied by men, as they are seen as the protectors of all the community members. Although men are seen as the warriors, our Elders remind us that men have a responsibility to work closely and in co-operation with the women. This balanced approach ensures a healthy, functional community.

By taking back our responsibilities and accountability to the individual, the family and community, as a society and as a nation, we can begin the process of regaining our family systems, and our community and nation through loving, supportive, affirming and culturally sensitive practices, so that future generations live in reconnected circles of care.
Using this manual
Using This Manual

The Wabano Parenting Bundle is based on a foundation of Aboriginal ethics and traditional parenting principles. It applies a holistic approach to learning and recognizes that we have much to learn from the diverse Aboriginal groups living within Canada. A cornerstone of the program are teachings from Elders and important knowledge systems from our many nations such as the Medicine Wheel, Good Mind, Four Directions, and The Sacred Hoop of Life teachings.

The Parenting Bundle suggests activities that are designed around an experiential learning model. These include many hands on art projects, role play scenarios, group work, and team building activities which give the parent participants traditional skills through interactive learning. The program is designed to be fun and give parents and caregivers ideas about how to connect with their children using traditional parenting techniques.

The Participant Intake Process

The traditional parenting program integrates a Parent Participant Intake Questionnaire and intake interview process so the facilitator has a good working knowledge of the participants. This is a critical aspect of the program since the facilitator will have the opportunity to get to personally know the participants, their background information, and personal expectations for their involvement in the program prior to their actual participation in the parenting program classes.

The Wisdom of Elders

A significant component of the program is the presence of Elders and the use of traditional prayer and ceremony in each training session. The Parenting Bundle will provide a spiritual foundation for its participants, who will be able to pass this knowledge onto the families and communities.

Use of Circle Format

Circles symbolize unity, harmony, infinity, eternity, wholeness, and oneness, the different Aboriginal groups general adhere to this teaching about natural law. Unlike the vertical line in Eastern culture that represents hierarchy or the horizontal line in North American culture that encourages people to think in a linear, logical manner, the circle promotes thoughts of oneness and wholeness.

Circles will also be used as ceremony. Opening and closing Circles are an important part of the program. The use of sharing circles in the program gives participants the opportunity to express their thoughts, feelings, and personal expectations on a regular basis.

Daily Reflections for Parents

Structuring time for daily reflection for individual parents is an important component of the Parenting Bundle program. Before each parenting class, participants will fill out a Traditional Parenting Self-Awareness Daily Checklist that will help give participants a routine framework for the development of their self-reflective process.

Journaling

Participants are encouraged to develop a daily parenting journal where they will use guide or prompt questions provided by the facilitator in order to give them an opportunity to privately practice self reflection on the traditional parenting concepts and principles they are learning within the program.

Ongoing Evaluation

Building effective communication is a key principle in the program and allows for continual evaluation. Facilitators will conduct a weekly evaluation process so that the participants will have the opportunity to influence and critique the ongoing design of the Parenting Bundle program. Participants will also be asked to provide a final evaluation of the program to assist in measuring the effectiveness of the program.
The Seven Parenting Bundles
These seven parenting bundles serve as the entire curriculum framework for this Aboriginal parenting program. The seven bundles also relate to the seven stages of life. It is suggested that the Parenting Bundle be offered over a period of nine sessions. The first session is an introductory section in which participants will become introduced to each other, be oriented to the expectations of the facilitator, and be informed about the required commitment for participation in the program. Throughout the next seven weeks the caregivers are given teachings from each of the seven bundle items. The ninth session is designed to be the graduation and celebration portion of the nine week program.
The Seven Parenting Bundles

First Bundle Offering
Tobacco

To approach an Elder the tobacco offering always comes first. You can feel the heartbeat of that tobacco become active once it has been prayed upon. An Elder acts as a vessel or instrument with that tobacco. Tobacco has the power to help your words flow and it helps open your heart centre.

Liza Gaasongii-Kwe Mosher,
Wikemikong First Nation
Tobacco opens the first doorway to all our teachings this is why we begin building our own bundle with an initial offering of tobacco. Tobacco is one of the four sacred medicines given to us from the Creator. Tobacco is customarily used to initiate the prayer process.

OVERVIEW
This section shares some important basic traditional teachings that are common to all Aboriginal traditional cultures especially about the sacred use of tobacco in our ceremonies. Elder Basil Johnson tells us that tobacco was among the articles men and women carried in their bundles, and that it was always given to express gratitude. For instance, when a hunter killed an animal, he offered tobacco to the animal’s spirit out of respect and regret, and as an act of thanksgiving to Kitchi-Manitou. Travellers also laid tobacco down when passing through a dangerous place, asking for safe passage. Men and women kept in mind their debt to the earth, the plants, the elements, and the good will of the manitous, and tobacco was used to show their appreciation.

Making a conscious and daily connection with Creator is viewed by the Elders as the most important aspect of living a good and healthy life. This section identifies the various cultural traditions that Aboriginal people have created and sustained for generations to facilitate this personal connection with Creator. Bear Clan Elder Danny Musqua emphasizes that, “Sometimes that lonely or longing feeling that we experience is really a message that we long for the Creator’s presence in our lives.” Furthermore he stresses that, “Many of our youth struggle today because they have lost the tools and traditions to connect with Creator.”

This section of the cultural parenting manual shares many of the basic cultural perspectives about how parents can cultivate a relationship with the Creator and encourage this connection within their children. Elders believe that a significant aspect of traditional cultural parenting is that the parents must have an active relationship with their Creator or Higher Power and role model this connection to their children. Turning one’s children over to the care of the Creator is a difficult act of surrender and letting go. Many Elders stress that parents must learn, “to turn things over to Creator,” or “lift up all challenging issues into the hands of Creator,” during difficult times of parenting.

FOUR FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES
Our Elders have shared four basic principles that complement the Tobacco Bundle and can help participants understand themselves and their culture.

1. The Universe is one circle
2. Life is ever changing
3. We are all interrelated
4. All life has purpose

The first principle is the universe is one circle, moving endlessly and eternally. This section of the curriculum shares the many diverse teachings that our nations hold about natural law and how these laws govern the circle of life especially in relationship to cultural parenting.

The second principle of Aboriginal thought is that everything in life continually changes and moves. This section explains the different teachings that our nations have about living with the natural cycles of life especially in relationship to good child rearing.

A third concept in this section of Aboriginal thought is that everyone and everything are inextricably interrelated. This teaching is often known as the web of life concept. This section looks at how we all have a responsibility to raise our children since we are all deeply connected to each other in the web of life.
A fourth concept in this section shared by all nations is that everything is alive, possessing a physical form and a spiritual vitality, and each creation performs a vital function in the universe. This section encourages parents to consider ways and means to support the development of the spirit of their children through the transmission of traditional cultural knowledge systems.

**TOBACCO BUNDLE THEMES**

“Learning is a continuous process from birth to death.”

- Arthur Solomon, Anishinabe Elder

Traditional Tobacco Teachings:
Why is Tobacco considered Sacred?

Medicine Wheel Teachings:
How did our Ancestors view our world?

Circle of Life Teachings:
How do we understand our connection to all life forms?

Teachings for the Beginning of Life
Twelve Philosophies of Traditional Parenting

**TOBACCO TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

“Each child’s life is sacred, each child has a purpose, each child is a gift from Creator.”

–Traditional Cree Saying

Learning Outcomes:
• The participants will learn information about the basic cultural teachings and philosophical foundations for living a healthy life as a caregiver.

• The participants will understand that each individual has four dimensions for being: the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual and will discover ways to create balance within their own four dimensions of being.

• The participants will be able to comprehend the foundation for traditional parenting customs and practices and discover how these principles are valid today.

• The participants will be able to define ones’ own place within their own family, community, and nation.

• The participants will examine their own roles and functions performed as parents.

• The participants will learn about ways to look after themselves in a traditional manner so they have more energy to share with their family.

Seven Essential Teaching Activities:

• Create a sacred space with the class that is going to be the location of all the sacred objects or items that will be used in the parenting class. Ask the participants to bring one thing for this cultural parenting sacred space.

• Brainstorm on a flip chart with the large group their own understanding of traditional Aboriginal cultural parenting. Discuss what is meant by the term traditional cultural parenting. Discuss how traditional parenting can help children deal with all the changes in life.

• Compare western and Indigenous philosophies of child rearing.

• Have the participants make a medicine wheel poster of their four dimensions of self (mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual self) and have them draw or collage each quadrant with things that they do for themselves in these areas.

• Have the participants develop their own “Twelve philosophies for parenting” and have them share these with the large group.

• Get the participants to make their own bundles to give them strength during the cultural parenting program. Encourage them to bring items from home that are symbolic.

• Discuss the concept of the sacred number four in Aboriginal cultures. Have them make charts about the four seasons, the four moon phases, the four cycles of life.
Other Suggested Teaching and Learning Activities:

People Required Activities:
• Invite a traditional storyteller to speak about the role of prophecy within their nation.
• Invite an Elder to share traditional water teachings and explain the purpose and function of various water ceremonies.
• Bring in an Elder or a knowledge keeper to share teachings about the seven stages of life.
• Invite an Elder in to share the teachings of the four directions.
• Request a pipe carrier to come in and share their teachings about the purpose and functions of pipes and the role of pipe ceremonies in traditional cultures.
• Invite an Elder to teach about smudging and other personal purification ceremonies.
• Invite an Elder in to talk about the teachings of the water drum.
• Invite a Sweat lodge Keeper to speak about the purpose and function of the sweat lodge ceremony.

Art and Creative Activities:
• Have the participants write a short story about their experiences with the element of water. Put these stories into a binder for everyone to read and share.
• Develop a creative visualization or meditation with the theme water. Give the participants a sample water visualization to help them create their own water visualization script.
• Bring in a glass bowl and have everyone pour a small amount of water into the common bowl stress how important it is that we all look after water especially the water that flows through all of us. Drop a small of amount of coloured dye and have the group observe how quickly the colour effects the water. Make comparisons of healthy eating and drug and alcohol abuse on the body.
• Make a collage with beautiful images of water and have the participants make a poem or quote about water beside their collage. Encourage the parents to do this activity with their children.
• Use a large ball of thread and throw it between participants to show the web that we weave together.

Brainstorm Activities:
• Have students say something positive about each other as they throw it around. This activity stresses the concept of we are all related and interconnected.
• Have the participants make a poster representing their understanding of the four directions teachings.
• Have students make a poster with the seven stages of life teachings.
• Ask the participants to write a poem about what a parent is. It can begin with the statement, “I feel a parent is someone who…”
• Have the participants trace each hand and foot and write words about the positive parts of their personality and of themselves: mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Post these positive posters all over the room.
• Make mini-stone medicine wheel formations that are glued to a hard board. Encourage the students to take these home and place is a special location where they need to be reminded of the medicine wheel teachings.
• Have the participants design and create their own personal traditional cultural parenting logo.

Circle Talks:
• Run a circle talk about the responsibilities of parents.
• Run a circle talk about their understanding of the traditional teachings regarding the seven stages of life and human development.
• Run a talking circle about the theme of water and have parents share their memories of their experience about water.
• Discuss with the participants how we as parents can help nurture our children’s connection to the sacred element of water.
• Have a discussion about the concept of parenting the self.

LARGER PROJECTS:
• Make life size moss bags or cradleboards with the group and discuss the teachings or alternatively make doll replicas with the participants.
• Make are large painted mural with the group with their understanding of traditional cultural teachings.
• Make traditional tobacco pouches with the participants and teach them to make traditional tobacco also known as “Kinickinick.”
• Get the participants to make scrap books of their experience in the cultural parenting program.
• Arrange for a Sweatlodge ceremony for the participants.
• Organize a panel of Elders to talk about fasting and its purpose and function.

RESOURCES AND MATERIALS:


SUPPORT MATERIALS AND HANDOUTS:
Comparison of Western and Indigenous Philosophies of Childrearing
Circle of Life Chart
The Individual Medicine Wheel:
The Four Dimensions of Being
Four Stages of Life
Society Medicine Wheel

Four Colours of Humanity
Four Elements of Life
Four Natural Laws
Four Directions
Four Seasons
Eleven Traditional Dene Parenting Teachings
Twelve Philosophies of Traditional Parenting

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:
• What is a parent?
• How do I currently use traditional practices to parent my children?
• What is my understanding about the term “identity”?
• What is meant by the concept of interrelatedness?
• What things in my life bring me mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical health?
• In my traditional culture how did my parents prepare themselves for the birth of their children?
• Why is the number four considered sacred in our cultural teachings?
• What is my interpretation of the meaning of harmony and balance?
• Will I face challenges in trying to apply traditional teachings into my life?
• Why is it important to have a sense of purpose in my life?
In my stories, I try to teach young people respect for everything: other people, trees, water and the spirits. I want them to know that the Creator is in you and me. As long as we can speak our own language, the spirits and the Creator will listen. Ojibway (Chippewa) is the language the Creator gave us, like the deer and the moose gave us moccasins to use. We must stay close to our Indian religion: feasts, naming ceremonies, religious dances. Show an interest by helping the Elders: cut wood, help out in any way. Never put out tobacco without a prayer, as tobacco is our most sacred way of communicating with the spirits. Help old people, and pray for the knowledge and help they give you. If you have a lot of food, share it. What you give you'll receive back.

Ron Geyshick, Anishinabe Healer,  
Lac La Croix First Nation
Unwrapping the Storytelling Bundle

“Even hearing a story can be healing, so can telling our story. People need to tell their stories, to be acknowledged, to feel part of a human community.”
-Lewis Mehl-Madrona, Cherokee Healer

OVERVIEW

For many generations the stories, speeches, prayers, and songs of Aboriginal people have depended entirely on oral tradition. Storytelling is a creative and imaginative outlet through which we strive to realize our capacity for wonder, meaning and delight. We tell our stories in order to better understand and learn from our experiences whatever they may be. The possibilities, then, are those of understanding our human experience, of passing on this knowledge, of teaching, and of learning. Aboriginal children form their beliefs, values, and identity from the stories they are told. Our stories are an important element in cultural parenting.

Many traditional Aboriginal people view words as living, breathing, dynamic beings. Living beings create sound vibrations. When people breathe, they exchange spirits, and their breath transforms sounds into words. Aboriginal language speakers rely upon an oral tradition and hence, accord immense importance to the words they speak. To them a mind incapable of speaking is like a bird without wings. The life power of words gives the process of speaking a sacred dimension. Words are holy and are carried by sacred breath. Words have power and must always be spoken with care. As hurtful thoughts and words may have harmful consequences, loving words can heal. Breathing words of truth, communicating in the right relationship with self and everyone and everything, and speaking to manifest wholeness - this is the sacred flow of the oral tradition. Aboriginal people place a premium on words spoken to them, and view listening as a privilege, a responsibility, and a sacred act.

Aboriginal people use stories to teach others about the past. Storytelling passes on the accounts of heroic exploits, tribal history, cultural beliefs and values, societal roles and norms, and humourous human foibles. In this way, storytelling has helped secure the history of our nations and people.

Cree Elder, Jim Ka-Nipitehtew remembers the stories he heard taught about respect for woman, he says, “Never laugh at an old woman, in particular, for old women are held to be dream-guardians and they, of course, make our life as humans go on. If it were not for women, we who are humans would not be alive, is what they used to say.” Many traditional stories demonstrate the consequences of poor behaviour and teach us what is right from wrong.

Storytelling should be considered a valuable learning tool to be used by parents. Aboriginal stories generally encourage listeners to find their own answers to life’s everyday problems. Furthermore, many stories possess no ending, thereby encouraging children to become self-sufficient, to think for themselves. Stories provide insight into the fears, values, and feelings of a people.

The Storytelling bundle provides an overview of teachings for the individual person. It also shares important traditional teachings about the 2nd stage of life of children from ages birth to walking. This section shares activities about Aboriginal women’s and men’s teachings about how to keep in balance mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and physically. Finally, this section also encourages the participants to discover their own stories with themselves and their culture.

STORIES BUNDLE THEMES

“The mother is the first teacher. It is very important how the mother is as she prepares that child for the life path.”
-Liza Gaasongii-Kwe Mosher, Wikemikong First Nation

Cultural Creations Stories:
What are the origin stories held by my own people?
Cultural Identity:
Who am I? What are my family stories?

Traditional Men’s and Women’s Teachings:
What can Elders teach us about the sacred duties and responsibilities of men and women?

Finding Individual in Balance:
Elders teachings about living a healthy and balanced life.

Second Stage of Life Teachings:
What can the Elders teach us about child development from birth to walking age?

TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

“According to Cherokee teachings, there will always be pain in life. If there were no pain, we would never know joy. If everything were perfect, there would be no need to strive for goals.”
- Tsotlagiu RuizRazo, Cherokee Elder

Learning Outcomes:
• The participants will learn how to search out the Creation stories of their nation, their own family and reflect on their own individual life story.
• The participants will learn about the traditional roles and responsibilities of females and males in the family and community, and be introduced to the concept of male and female balance.
• The participants will be introduced to traditional notions of healthy relationships between partners and how to conduct respectful family Talking Circles.
• The participants will learn about the power of traditional naming practices and learn about the ways that different nations transfer cultural and spiritual names to family members.
• The participants will learn how to act as positive cultural role models for their children.

Seven Essential Teachings Activities:
• Conduct a child acknowledgement Circle. Have the parents all sitting in a circle. One at a time bring in each child and have each person say to that child, “I love you and I care for you,” when everyone is finished the child goes around the circle to shake everybody’s hand, and then the next child will enter the circle. Continue this until each child has been acknowledged.
• Have the participants make story sacks with a variety of found items and have the group in a large story circle and each person is given the bag and has to tell an impromptu story.
• Create an anthology of each participant’s life stories or biographies. Have the participants write about the significant experiences in their life.
• Have the participants make a time line of their life with the major defining moments or life transitions that they have experienced. Have each person present their timeline to the group.
• Have participants make a family genealogy chart (tree chart) and have them present them to the group.
• Have the participants write a letter to their mother that is not meant to be sent. At the end of the activity they are given the option to burn the letter in a sacred fire with tobacco and other offerings of their choice.
• Have the participants write a letter to their father that is not meant to be sent. At the end of the activity they are given the option to burn the letter in a sacred fire with tobacco and other offerings of their choice.

SUGGESTED TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES:

People Required Activities:
• Invite a Sundance Keeper to visit the class and explain the purpose and significance of the Sundance Ceremony.
• Invite a female Elder to talk with the women about the purpose and function of full moon ceremonies.
• Invite a male Elder to talk with the men about the purpose and function of traditional warrior societies.
• Invite a guest to teach participants about the purpose of making umbilical cord amulets.
• Invite an Elder to share their traditional Creation story.
• Invite an Aboriginal author or writer to do a reading and writing workshop with the participants.
• Invite an Elder in to speak on Aboriginal teachings about dreaming and dream-time.

ART AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES:
• Have the participants write a short story about their experiences with the element of fire. Put these stories into a binder for everyone to read and share.
• Develop a creative visualization or meditation with the theme fire. Give them a fire visualization to help prepare them for the development of their own script.
• Have the participants make a collage with fire images and have them write a poem or quote on the collage poster.
• Have the participants illustrate and write a children’s book about some aspect of traditional parenting that they have learned in this course.
• Write a poem based on the prompt, “A warrior is someone who is…” Have the participants make a warrior shield with their own power symbols.
• Have the participants make a large circle puzzle with at least eight positive “I” statements on each puzzle about things they can do to look after themselves, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and physically. Have the participants try the positive circle puzzles made by the others.
• Have the participants make a family shield or crest with their family strengths or saying (Motto).
• Get participants to draw a tree, any type. When everyone is finished, have participants hold their drawings up, and point out the number of roots going to mother earth. Discuss with participants how there is much more than what is seen on the surface, reminding them of what our Elders teach us; that is, to look deep to the root of things, and to look at how things are interconnected.
• Have participants write stories of funny things their children did which taught them a lesson about life. Encourage participants to make a small children's book featuring these life lessons.
• Have the participants make a collage of positive Aboriginal male role models in their families, community, and nation. Have the participants present their collage to the group.
• Write a story about your personal experience with traditional Aboriginal cultural parenting teachings.
• Work with the students to perform a drama featuring a traditional story. For instance, it can feature the journey of the trickster or cultural hero such as Nanabush, Goolsap, or Weesakejac.
• Have the participants write a letter to their children which is not meant to be sent. At the end of the activity they are given the option to burn the letter in a sacred fire with tobacco and other offerings of their choice.

CIRCLE TALKS:
• Run a Talking Circle with the theme fire. Ask participants how they have connected with the element of fire. Discuss how they can help teach their children to respect fire.
• Conduct a Circle discussion about the Law of Attraction.
• Run a dream sharing Circle where everyone shares a dream that they have had that has impacted their life. Have each participant draw a scene from their dream.

BRAINSTORM ACTIVITIES:
• Brainstorm the definition of self-esteem. Ask participants to discuss how traditional cultural parenting can help improve their own self-esteem and that of their children.
• Have each participant choose a fascinating person and discuss what they admire about that individual.
LARGER PROJECTS:
• Ask participants to research traditional customs or ceremonies that were practiced by their culture from birth to childhood.
• Arrange for a field trip for the women to attend a full moon ceremony.
• Host a traditional storytelling night where each participant shares a traditional story about their culture.
• Have the group design and paint a large mural representing the Creation stories from the various nations of the participants.
• Create a puppet show based on a Creation story and have participants perform this show for their children.
• Run an Aboriginal children’s literature Circle. Each participant is required to choose an Aboriginal specific children’s book, review it, and present their reviews to the Circle.

RESOURCES AND MATERIALS:


SUPPORT MATERIALS AND HANDOUTS:
Mothering, Fathering, or Parenting Activity
Teachings of the Thirteen Moons
Four Moon Cycles Medicine Wheel
The Concept of Male and Female Balance

Parenting Reflection Inventory
Tree of Life Poster Activity
Tree Teachings Symbolism
Teachings of the Tikenagun
Father Teachings Wheel

Mother Teachings Wheel
Seven Philosophies for Man: The Native Perspective
The Effect of the Individual Out of Balance Chart
The Effect of the Individual In of Balance Chart
Medicine Shield Activity
Life Cycle Teachings

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:
• What does the term maturity mean to me?
• What does the term self-responsibility mean to me?
• What does my history reveal about me being responsible and/or irresponsible?
• While growing up, what did I learn about being responsible?
• What am I teaching others, especially my children, about being responsible?
• How do I determine what are my responsibilities or obligations, and what is not?
• In what ways am I responsible for my family?
• How am I responsible for my own happiness?
• In what ways am I accountable for my actions?
• How am I involved in my children’s schooling?
• How do I conduct myself at my job?
• Who or what am I responsible for today?
• How have I acted responsibly today? How have I assumed someone else’s responsibilities today?
• By answering these questions on the subject of responsibilities, what have I learned about myself?

“Each of us carries a fire within. Whether it’s through the knowledge we have, or through our experiences and associations, we are responsible for maintaining that fire.”
- Powawatomi Elder Lillian Pitawanakwat
Plants and trees are marvelous creations. Neither animals nor humans can live without them. How else can they be regarded but in terms of wonder? Year after year they yield more than enough to feed every living, moving being: fruit, vegetables, nuts, drink of every different kind, apples, pears, peaches, cherries, bilberries, grapes, walnuts, hazelnuts, acorns, maple sap, Labrador tea, cedar tonic, potatoes, corn, wild rice. It is remarkable that a tiny seed or nut should anchor itself in a tiny crevice in a rock, sink its roots and thrust itself as a tree 80 to 120 feet into the air, and live up to 300 to 500 years. A tree may bend and creak and even lose a few limbs under gales and twisters, crack and snap in subzero weather, and splinter under a thunderbolt, but it will not loosen its grip upon its bed. When a tree dies it becomes part of the earth and adds to the mass of the earth. The Anishinaubæk were well aware of their debt to plants and trees.

_Basil Johnston, Traditional Storyteller_  
_Cape Croker First Nation_
Unwrapping the Seeds & Nourishment Bundle

“The Earth is said to be a woman. In this way it is understood that woman preceded man of the Earth. She is called Mother Earth because from her come all living things. Water is her life blood. It flows through her, nourishes her, and purifies her. When she was young, the Earth was filled with beauty. The Creator sent his singers in the form of birds to the Earth to carry the seeds of life to all of the Four Directions. In this way life was spread across the Earth. On the Earth the Creator placed the swimming creatures of the water. He gave life to all the plant and insect world. He placed the crawling things and the four leggeds on the land. All of these parts of life lived in harmony with each other. Gitchie Manitou then took four parts of Mother Earth and blew into them using a Sacred Shell. From the union of the four Sacred Elements and his breath, man was created.”

- Anishinabe Elder, Edward Benton-Banai

OVERVIEW
People from every nation have inherited many ceremonies and teachings about our sacred relationship to food. Elder Jan Longboat explains that, “We believe the foods we eat provide us with more than just nourishment, they affect us mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.” The Elders have much knowledge to share with our present generation about how to practice ethically sustainable harvesting and procurement of food. Aboriginal cultures all have specific protocols, expectations and traditional teachings about how to feed and nourish your family.

This section explores Aboriginal teachings about traditional ceremonies and feasts. It also looks closely at the home environment that is created by the family unit and explores what fosters healthy and balanced families. Seneca Elder, Twyla Nitsch says that, “The most important message is to build a home for protection, which will have a fire for warmth, a bed for comfort, and parents for the children. Thereafter, from this Longhouse each addition is an extension of the original home.”

This section also includes ways for parents to encourage their children connect with nature and mother earth. Many Elders stress the importance of learning from the land, and from the plants and animals that live on it. Every life form is a teacher and by watching animals care for their young we can learn many life lessons and teachings about parenting.

SEEDS AND NOURISHMENT BUNDLE THEMES
From a young age, children are taught that when they think of something, they need to also feel it. And when they feel something, they also need to think about it.”

- Rita Pitka Blumenstein, Yupik Elder

Giving Thanks:
The Importance of Sharing Food with Others

Family Relationships in the Home:
Maintaining Balance Within the Family

The Traditional Clan System:
Developing a Sense of Belonging

Nurturing and Bonding:
Using Traditional Activities to Promote Family Unity

Third Stage of Life Teachings:
What do the Elders teach us about our development from the age of walking to seven years of age?

TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

In Cherokee culture we have the custom of having children set a place for Mother Earth at the family table. This reminds them of her role in their lives. Children raised with these traditions continue to honour Mother Earth as adults and pass the teachings on to the next generation.

- Tsolgiu RuizRazo, Cherokee Elder

Learning Outcomes:
• The participants will learn about the health benefit of traditional foods and examine ways to modify
and incorporate these traditional foods into their children's diets.

- The participants will identify the strengths and supports available within their own families and to incorporate some of the uses and purposes of traditional family systems into their own family situations.
- The participants will learn about the traditional kinship system and the purpose of the clan system and how families contribute to self-identity.
- The participants will be given the opportunity to reflect on the positive aspects of their current family situation and will learn how to recognize their own parenting strengths.

**Seven Essential Teaching Activities:**
- Brainstorm with the participants about the purposes and function of family.
- Create family flowers poster. Have participants make a flower for each family member. The center of the flower lists the name of the family member and the gifts that they bring to the family on the petals. Have each person present their family flowers to the larger group.
- As a group develop the traits of a healthy family. Use circle/pie charts on a flip or blackboard to list positive characteristics. Also, have the group develop the traits of an unhealthy family for comparison.
- Discuss ways that the participants can reduce GAS (Guilt, Anger, & Shame) and FARTS (Fear, Acting, Reacting, Traps, and Secrets) in order to create and maintain a healthy family.
- Have participants make a scroll with the title, “Personal Rights of Our Family.” Begin this activity with the prompt, “Each member of our family has the right to…”. It is suggested to place this Personal Rights of our Family statement on birch bark scrolls or make them into wall hangings.
- Have the participants learn to cook recipes using the three sisters (beans, corn, and squash). Everyone can learn to cook a dish and then take part in sharing the food. Encourage the children to taste all the recipes.
- Develop a healthy lifestyle action plan with the participants.

**Suggested Teaching and Learning Activities:**
**Guest People Required Activities:**
- Invite a guest to teach participants how to make willow baskets and/or birch bark baskets.
- Invite an Elder to discuss child development from walking age to 7 years old.
- Invite an Elder to talk about traditional foods for example the Corn Teachings.
- Invite an Elder to talk about the traditional kinships and clan systems; for instance, the Cree Kinship System, or the Mohawk or Ojibway Clan Systems.

**Art and Creative Activities:**
- Have participants write a short story about their experiences with the element of earth. Put these stories into a binder for everyone to read and share.
- Develop a creative visualization or meditation with an Earth theme.
- Plant some seeds in a small pot.
- Have participants make a large circle puzzle with at least eight positive “I” statements. On each puzzle piece, have participants list things they can do to create family togetherness and bonding. Have participants try the positive circle puzzles made by the others.
- Make a family mobile with the different roles of each family member listed on the mobile.
- Have the participants monitor their food behaviours for 7 days. Encourage them to observe the eating behaviours of others around them such as a small child, grandparent, or friend. Hold a debriefing circle to discuss what they learned about their eating habits, customs, and traditions.
• Share with the participants recipes with maple and birch syrup and discuss the traditional process for harvesting these medicines.

• Have the participants write the names of their child(ren) and list positive qualities about them that match the first letter in their name for example, **Louis** [L-Loving O-Organized U-Understanding I-Intelligent S-Sincere].

• Explain the tepee teachings and then have the participants make mini-replicas of the plains tepee.

• Make a family mobile with cardboard stars from a wire coat hanger and decorate the star of each family member.

• Have the participants experience a visualization with the theme Earth. Encourage the participants to write a visualization script with their own images of the healing power of the Earth.

• Make a collage with the theme earth and have the participants place a poem or quote about the earth on the collage/poster.

**Circle Talks:**

• Run a talking circle about theme Earth and how participants connect with this sacred element of life.

**Brainstorm Activities:**

• Have participants talk about the different roles they play in their families.

• Brainstorm with participants about the current state of their family to see where they are at and how they can make improvements for the well-being of his/her family.

• Discuss some of the ceremonies that children participated in at their seventh birth day.

• Have the participants discuss the unhealthy roles of family members in a dysfunctional family such as the family hero, rebel, lost child, and family pet. Have them make masks with the different characters.

• Have the group compare the extended family and nuclear family systems.

• Brainstorm the strengths of the traditional extended family.

**Larger Projects:**

• Have group members create a recipe book with traditional foods, accompanied by the traditional teachings.

• Host a wild rice family night. In the kitchen have participants make recipes with wild rice and bring in the children to be the taste testers.

• Have a potato night where everyone celebrates Indigenous foods such as the potato. Share food value information with the group about the potato. Bring in a variety of potato dishes and recipes to share with everyone. Do a creative writing activity where they are to taste test the potatoes dishes and write creatively about their observations and experiences.

• Go to a sugar camp and have the families learn to tap the maple and birch trees.

• Create a traditional community garden with the families and have them grow the Three Sisters (Corn, Beans, and Squash) along with other traditional food crops.

• Teach participants to make dry meat or pemmican.
• Take families out rabbit snaring and teach them how to skin the animal and prepare the meat for stew.
• Take families on a fishing trip where they can learn how to scale, prepare and cook the fish over an open fire.
• Host a theme night around fish. Have participants share their knowledge and recipes for cooking fish.
• Teach participants to cook recipes from traditional game such as caribou, moose, deer, and elk. Everyone can learn to cook a dish and then take part in a sharing of the food. Encourage participants children to do the taste testing.
• Host a traditional feast and give away.

Resources and Materials:

Support Materials and Handouts:
Four Parenting Styles
Haudenosaunee Clan System
The Ojibway Traditional Clan System
The Cherokee Clan System
Characteristics of Healthy Family Systems
The Impacts of Colonization of the Indigenous Family Structure and Function
Characteristics of Unhealthy Family Systems
Healing the Aboriginal Family System—GAS Workout
The Effects of the Family in Balance
The Effects of the Family out of Balance

Journal Questions:
• What is meant by the term family of origin versus family of choice?
• What is my history of trusting myself?
• In what ways am I trustworthy both to myself and to others?
• In what ways have I been untrustworthy in some of my activities?
• How do I determine if someone is trustworthy?
• How do I determine if someone has lost my trust?
• What behaviours do I have that inspire trust?
• What behaviours do I have that inhibit trust?
• What important things do I trust to my Creator?
• What is guilt? Where do I currently experience guilt in my life in relationship to parenting?
• What is anger? Where do I currently experience anger in my life in relationship to parenting?
• What is shame? Where do I currently experience shame in my life in relationship to parenting?
• What is the role of men, women & grandparents in my family structure and function?
• What healthy family traditions do we have that give my child cultural validation?
• How is my traditional family life and contemporary family life different?
• What are some stereotypes about Aboriginal parents and parenting?
• How do I usually react when I feel frightened?
• By answering these questions on the subject of trust, what have I learned about myself?
Always talk to the plants as you harvest and prepare them as this respectful conversation with each plant opens the spiritual doorway between yourself and the plant. As such the healing energy released in each plant will be more infused with good medicine.

Jan Kahehti:io Longboat,
Grand River Mohawk Nation
“The Creator is the centre of everything. We give thanks for everything we do, for everything we are given, and for life. Always acknowledge the Creator and Mother Earth at all times. Remember to respect, love, be humble, share, and care for one another and the medicines.”
- Midewin Elder Liza Mosher

OVERVIEW
The belief that, “All Life is Sacred,” permeates the value and belief system within every Aboriginal nations worldview. The Elders teach that everything in Creation holds a medicine. Dene Elder George Blondin calls this force, “Medicine Power.” For generations Aboriginal people used medicines to heal, cure, and prevent sickness. There were many gifted medicine people and many Aboriginal cultures had large organized societies, such as the Midewin, or other groups that were entrusted with the protection and dissemination of this sacred knowledge.

Traditional Elders believe in a kind and loving Creator who placed on the earth everything that is needed to live a healthy and balanced life. As such, the Elders believe there is a great ability and willingness of nature to help humanity. Many creation stories acknowledge that humanity is the most weakest being within this creation, and we need the help of all “Our Relations”. Basil Johnston says that, “So much did the maple tree mean to the Anishinaubaek that they called it “ininautik,” the man tree. No other tree yields as much sap or as sweet a drink as does the maple. Come mid-March, give or take a few days either way, the Maple trees can no longer take in another drop of water or hold back what they’ve taken in during the past year. They must shed and change their life fluid as women change their blood once a month.” Within nature Aboriginal people saw a reflection of themselves and understood many natural laws for interacting with nature. As a result there are many protocols and teachings about how to harvest, collect, and process traditional medicines.

The notion that everything in nature has a spirit is a key concept within Aboriginal cultures. Métis Elder, George McDermott explains that, “When you pick medicine, you must pick it clean. Talk to it, my little brother. You do not step all over the medicines. You do not disrespect any plants whether they are big or small because a small plant can be just as powerful as a large plant. That plant’s life is a whole new world to people not familiar. It is a different life altogether, it is a different world view. There is nothing to be afraid of in the bush.”

The Elders teach that the act of living life constitutes the longest ceremony that you will every participate in. Good medicine can be had when you do everything with a kind heart and a gratitude for the Creator’s gifts.

This section looks at the teachings about how to use plant medicines, how to create a healthy and balanced home environment and the important ceremonies that our people had for entering puberty. Brooke Medicine-Eagle says that, “At the time of birth, there is a tremendous opening of the wings of spirit. Then those wings of spirit tuck themselves back in and are not seen again so clearly until around the age of five. Spiritual elders watch the children closely, and observe them at this next opening of their spiritual intent. Those small wings flutter and open, flap and stretch in a brief display, and are then quiet again. In the stages of spiritual development, another opening of wings of spirit comes at puberty”. This section discusses the important ceremonies and cultural rituals that were practiced to help bring young people into woman and manhood. Additionally, the role of the community in the creation of healthy individuals and families will be discussed, as well as developing the minds of our children.

MEDICINES BUNDLE THEMES
“You do not disrespect any plants whether they are big or small because a small plant can be just as powerful as a large plant.”
- George McDermott, Métis Elder

The Four Sacred Medicines: Sweet Grass, Cedar, Sage, and Tobacco.

Using Traditional Medicines: What do the Elders teach us about using, preparing, and sharing traditional medicines?
Maintaining My Sacred Space: 
The Home Atmosphere and Environment

Embracing Manhood and Womanhood: 
What do the Elders teach us about caring for youth during puberty and adolescence?

Living a Balanced Community Life: 
Elders teachings about living a balanced community life.

TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Children are respected as spiritual beings, and they are looked up to, because they have knowledge their parents, who live largely in the physical world do not.  
- Leanne Simpson

Learning Outcomes:
• The participants will learn about the value of structure and consistency in daily life as one means of achieving balance and harmony within the family.
• The participants will learn how to create security among each family member and learn how to communicate expectations to children and youth.
• The participants will learn that everyone has a role to play to keep the family and community functioning properly and how eagle feathers and other sacred objects are earned.
• The participant will learn skills and techniques to help their children develop curiosity, critical thinking, and inquiry skills.
• The participants will learn teachings about the four sacred medicines; sweetgrass, cedar, sage, and tobacco and other sacred medicines.

Seven Essential Teaching Activities:
• Make a story map of the geographic places that the participants have experienced. Have the participants present to the group their story map and explain what lands have influenced their life.
• Have participants make a KWL chart of a traditional medicine and then have them conduct research and generate questions for further research and inquiry.
• Have participants make a visual poster of their routine for the week. Make sure they list what transitions and duties that each family member has each day of the week. This poster can be placed on the fridge.
• Bring in an Aboriginal midwife to talk about her life and what she has learned through the process of helping bring new life into this world.
• Have the participants pick a medicinal plant and do research on it and make a bulletin board of traditional plants.
• Teach participants about healthy, rigid, and weak boundaries.
• Have participants create a circle of influence poster.

SUGGESTED TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES:

People Required Activities:
• Invite a guest and an Elder to talk about their personal experiences about attending and participating in puberty ceremonies.
• Invite an Elder to give the teachings about the traditional use of Cedar, Sweet Grass, Tobacco, and Sage.
• Bring in an Elder to talk about growing and caring for tobacco seeds for ceremonial use.
• Invite a traditional herbalist to lead a field trip to the land to share teachings about the different plants and their purpose in the local region.
• Invite a traditional healer to speak to the group about their healing art form and teachings.
• Invite an Elder to talk about how sacred objects and medicines are earned, such as eagle feathers.

Art and Creative Activities:
• Have the participants write a short story about their experiences with the element of air. Put these stories into a binder for everyone to read and share.
• Make a collage on the theme of air and have participants place a quote or poem on their collage or poster.
• Develop a creative visualization or meditation with the theme air. Lead a sample air visualization to help prepare them for making their own script.
• Have the participants write a short story about their community.
• Bring hoola hoops to class and have the class visualize the sacred space around them. Ask them to go into the hoop of another and ask them how that feels.

• Have the participants make a large circle puzzle with at least eight positive “I” statements on each puzzle about things they can do to connect with their community and nation. Have the participants swap and do each others’ positive circle puzzles.

• Make the participants do everything backwards for a while and then discuss how it made them feel to do things differently out of routine?

**Circle Talks:**
• Run a Talking Circle about the theme of air, and how they are connected to this sacred element of life.

• Discuss how to develop all six senses of our children

• Discuss family rituals and routine.

**Brainstorm Activities:**
• Brainstorm with the participants about supports that are available to them within the community.

• Discuss the notion of sacred space in the home. Brainstorm how participants can create sacred space in their home environment.

**Larger Projects:**
• Teach participants the process of tanning a hide.

• Host a comedy night with the participants. Invite a comedian to do a special feature that night and talk about the power of laughter in life.

**Resources and Materials:**


**Support Materials and Handouts:**
- The Community in Balance
- The Community out of Balance
- Circles of Influence Activity
- Four Aspects of a Ritual
- Development of Ritual with Children
- Respect for Sacred Space: Understanding Family Boundaries
- Lack of Personal Boundaries Wheel
- Tips for Setting Boundaries
- Four Sacred Medicines
- KWL Chart-Tobacco
- KWL Chart-Cedar
- KWL Chart-Sage
- KWL Chart-Sweetgrass

**Journal Questions:**
• What is meant by the term boundaries?

• What are some boundaries I have set recently?

• How did I feel before and after I set that boundary?

• Was I called on to enforce it?

• What is the most difficult kind of boundary I have set for myself and enforce?

• How do I feel when I’m around people with rigid boundaries and too many rules and regulations?

• How do I feel when I’m around people with few or no boundaries?

• What is community? What parts of the community do I belong to?

• What kinds of rules and structure do I have in my home?

• What is my role and function as a parent in maintaining structure and routine in the family?

• What is meant by the term structure and how does it relate to traditional cultural parenting techniques?

• How can I set up healthy structures in my family?
“Your voice is one of your medicines. As Haudenousaunee women we are taught to always use our voice and speak out. Our voice is a form of power and it has the ability to transform ourselves and those listening to us. We are taught by the Elders to always be mindful and respectful of how we use this powerful gift that we have been given.”

Jan Kahehtı:io Longboat,
Grand River Mohawk Nation
Unwrapping the Songs Bundle

SONGS BUNDLE OVERVIEW

When I am upset, I go out and chant prayers to Our Father that he might help me, that he should give me something good to think about; this is what I do; I also keep these cloth offerings, and as soon as I arise, I go out without delay; I go and sing and give thanks to Our Father so that I might guide my children through a beautiful day.

—Jim Ka-Nipitehtew, Cree Elder

Every Aboriginal nation held songs for their people. There were songs for births, marriages, puberty, hunting, planting, and for every aspect of life. There were ceremonial songs and songs about love and courting of many types. For Aboriginal people singing children lullabies and other songs was important for the healthy development of their mind, body, emotions, and spirit. The human voice is considered a sacred gift. Teaching children the songs of their people gives them the opportunity to develop a healthy sense of belonging to their family, community, and nation. Self expression through songs and voice is known to be a very healing act.

Respect the privacy and personal space of others. Mohawk Elder, Tom Porter says that, “The father and mother according to the teachings, should never argue in front of their children. If there is a disagreement, you should do that when your children aren’t around. Never argue in front of your children because it will lead to problems later on, behavior problems, and problems with discipline.” Good relations and mutual respect are emphasized. Every attempt is utilized to make decisions by consensus rather than majority vote. Our Elders say that respect means to feel or show honour or esteem for someone or something; to consider the well-being of, or to treat someone or something with deference or courtesy. It is a traditional custom that one treats every person, from the tiniest of children to the oldest elder with respect. It is also a traditional belief that everyone respects the privacy of every person and never walk between people that are conversing or interrupt them.

This section of the manual discusses the power of music in the life of Aboriginal families. Family communication, the ways Aboriginal people learn, and traditional teachings about using discipline will be examined. The traditional arts have been and continue to be a source of pride and cultural expression. This section of the manual shares teachings about how to bring our symbolic and expressive arts into the lives of our children.

SONGS BUNDLE THEMES

“Never judge others until you have walked a mile in their moccasins”

—Traditional Saying

The Medicine of Voice:
Why is voice consider sacred?

Cultivating a Sense of Mastery in Children:
Teaching and Sharing Traditional Arts and Crafts

Traditional Forms of Discipline:
What do the Elders teach us about discipline of self and of children?

Creating a Sense of Purpose in the Family:
Creation of a Family Vision

Emotional Care of Children and Families

Fifth Stage of Life Teachings:
What do the Elders teach us about caring for children between the ages of 14-20?

TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

“Listen or thy tongue will keep thee deaf.”

—American Indian Proverb

Learning Outcomes:
• The participants will understand the necessity of expressing emotions and practicing healthy emotional skills for balanced interpersonal relationships.
The participants will learn to become good at identifying their feelings and will increase their emotional vocabulary.

The participants will learn about the traditional experiential and artistic learning styles used in their families, communities, and nation.

The participants will explore their own understanding of discipline and compare their beliefs systems to those practiced within their traditional culture.

**Seven Essential Activities:**

- Have participants make masks and learn about the power of mask making in traditional cultures.
- The six senses are gifts that children need to be taught about by traditional parents. The six senses include: sight, sound, smell, taste, touch and intuition. Brainstorm with parents ways they can encourage their children to use all their senses in their learning.
- Conduct a doll making session with the parents and talk about the importance of children making and creating their own toys.
- For a full day, listen to our language and to the language of the people around you. How often do you use and hear reactive phrases such as “If only,” “I can’t”, or “I have to”?
- Have participants research traditional forms of discipline in their culture. Develop re-enactment skits with the participants that model these traditional forms of discipline.
- Have participants individually write down their family rules. Break participants up into small groups and have them share their family rules and regulations. Discuss how they are similar and different?

**SUGGESTED TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES:**

**People Required Activities:**

- Have participants make rattles and learn a traditional rattle song from a local Elder.
- Invite a guest to teach the participants to make corn husk mats.
- Invite an Elder to talk about traditional methods for the discipline of children.
- Invite an Elder to talk about traditional grieving processes and ceremonies for grieving.

**Art and Creative Activities:**

- Have participants compose their own lullaby song and encourage them to perform it to the group, and teach it to their children.
- Break participants up into groups and have them write praise statements for each other, really targeting the behaviour in great detail. Share these statements with the larger group.
- Have participants research songs of their nation.
- Have participants make traditional clothing such as moccasins, mittens, and ribbon shirts.
- Have parents make talking sticks to take home to their family.
- Have participants make traditional drums. Invite an Elder to share teachings about the drum.
- Invite an Elder to come and teach the women how to make traditional shawls and share the teachings of the shawl.
- Teach participants traditional lullabies and invite them to share any traditional songs they remember.
- Have participants make body diagram posters of their body showing where they express different emotions such as joy, fear, stress, anger, etc.

**Circle Talks:**

- Have a Circle talk about expressing emotions. What purpose do emotions serve? What happens when you do not express emotions in a healthy manner?

**Brainstorm Activities:**

- Have participants identify an experience they might encounter in the near future where, based on past experience, they would probably behave reactively. Discuss with participants how they could respond proactively. Tell participants to take several moments and create the experience vividly in their minds, picturing themselves responding in a proactive manner.
- Brainstorm with the participants a definition, term or explanation of the concept of structure? Discuss the purpose of structure and why structure is important in traditional cultural parenting.
• Have participants develop their family goals. Brainstorm the importance of having a sense of purpose in life. Use the following questions to debrief the family goals. What do you really want/desire for this family? (List) Which of these goals are realistic? Are they achievable? Have we come close to achieving some of these goals in the past?

• Ask participants to list the reasons why you want these goals. (Use I statements) When are we going to take steps to implement these goals? What are all the obstacles towards achieving these goals?

• Who can help us achieve these goals? Which goals are the most important priorities right now? What is everyone’s role in achieving these goals? What do you expect as an outcome from these goals?

• Have participants develop a Family Mission Statement. Give the following prompt to help initiate the process. “Our family believes in…..”, “We value………”

• Have participants list their family routines and family rituals. Have them make a timeline of a regular day.

• Brainstorm with participants what they consider to be obedience and orderly conduct. Ask them to formulate their own definition of discipline. Discipline is often referred to as, “A system of rules used to maintain control over people and training to be self-controlled and skilful.”

LARGER PROJECTS:
• Make braided or rag hooked rugs with the participants.

• Have a speakers night where each participant works on a speech about parenting issues and presents it to the group. Make a binder with all the speeches.

• Host a family talent night where everyone can showcase their vocal and musical talents.

• As a group make a large star quilt blanket and do a traditional give away of this item to a person or group of their choice.

RESOURCES AND MATERIALS:

SUPPORT MATERIALS AND HANDOUTS:
Twelve Philosophies for the Discipline of Children
The Feeling Wheel
Pro-Active Parenting Wheel
Parenting Communication Skills: Door Closers Reflection Activity
Effective Communications Rating Scale
The Four Behaviour Types Wheel
Proactive Parenting Wheel
Are you a Pro-Active or Re-Active Parent?
Letting Go of Anger in Healthy Ways
Letting Go of Anger Wheel
The Four Sacred Aspects of Traditional Aboriginal Parenting
The Effects of Breaking the Traditional Childrearing System
The Four Basic Psychological Needs
Family Circle Book Activity

Journal Questions:
- Why is it difficult for me to talk to some people and not others?
- What are some of the non-verbal ways that I communicate?
- Sometimes my tone of voice interferes with clear communication. What are some examples?
- How do I communicate my needs to various people in my life?
- What are some of the subjects I am afraid of or that I feel uncomfortable discussing? Why?
- What are some examples of both truthful and untruthful statements I have made to others?
- How do I communicate with people I do not like?
- When was the last time I was in a situation where another person believed that I want entirely wrong? What happened?
- How do I know when someone understands what I have said?
- How do I react when someone misunderstands me?
- How do I know when I understand what someone says to me?
- How do I present myself when I feel strongly about something?
- After listening completely to all that was said, what questions do I ask to aid my total understanding?
- How does my attitude toward others affect my communication with them?
- What provokes my fears?
- Where do I turn when I feel afraid, and does that relieve my fear?
- How do I interact with authority figures?
- If my worst fears came true, how would they impact me?
- What happened the last time I was truly afraid and how did I respond?
- How do my fears affect the way I make decisions?
- What am I afraid of today?
- How do my fears affect my relationships?
The Seven Parenting Bundles
Sixth Bundle Offering
Dances

Traditional dancing is a way to express the self and get reconnected with your emotions. There are many types of songs and different dances in our nations and they all have the power to heal, the mind, body, emotions, and the spirit. Skilled or not, I believe there is a need or urge to express oneself through dance.

Paul Skanks, Tiao Re Hen Sere
Mohawk Traditional Teacher
“When you dance, the trees hear it, and they get stronger, and they get bigger. When you dance, your gardens will hear it and they feel great and they are thankful ‘cause you are dancing for them. And they grow.”

- Mohawk Elder Tom Porter.

OVERVIEW
Dancing is a way to connect with the natural rhythms of life. It is believed by the Elders that we all have an innate desire and ability to dance. Life is often compared to a dance and the Elders believe that Creation responds to our dances. Aboriginal people have many forms of dance ranging from the ceremonial to the social. Dances such as powwows, round dances, and square dances are social dances that bring the family and community together in a joyous celebratory act. Children who are to join in cultural dance activities have a better sense of self and develop a feeling of belonging.

Dancing bring us into the present moment and gives us relief from the day to day routine of life. Cultural dances tell the story of metaphors for good living. Aboriginal dance has been used for many generations as a form of storytelling and used as a teaching device for children. It is said by Elders that we dance, “To pray, to heal, to give, and to share”. Elders strongly emphasize that dance has the ability to bring an individual into balance mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Many traditional Elders teach young people that when we dance our “Ancestors dance with us.” Cree Elder John Cuthand says that, “the Creator and spirits love it when we dance.” Many cultural traditional teachers say that, “When you dance you dance for someone else who can’t dance.” This teaching reminds young people to feel gratitude and respect for the ability to be physically able to participate in dance. As a result, young people are taught to dance for the spirit and good health of others in their families and communities.

The Elders have many teachings about how to care for the physical body in a traditional manner. This section looks at traditional games and dances and how they contributed to the collective health of the people. Learning teachings about sexuality and the body are an important aspect of parenting. This section looks at intimacy and partnership and the role that parents play in teaching children about these basic human needs. Aboriginal concepts of marriage and teachings about adulthood and the roles and responsibilities of adults will be shared.

DANCES BUNDLE THEMES
“The teachings of the moss bag and cradleboard were childrearing devices which provided the infant with a warm secure and portable resting place. The restrictive function that it served was believed to develop a disciplined and secure character, by looking and listening. Lovingly wrapped and bound First Nation and Metis children were initiated into the cultural life of their families and communities.”

- Gabriel Dumont Institute

Traditional Dances and Healing Dances: What are the dances of my people?

Traditional Teachings about the Care of the Physical Body: Through Movement and Games

Traditional Concepts of Marriage: What do the Elders teach us about traditional marriage practices?

The Need of Connection: Traditional Teachings about Courting, Sexuality, and Intimacy.

The Sixth Stage of Life Teachings- What do the Elders teach about healthy adult development?

TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

“No one can hurt you without your consent. They cannot take away our self-respect if we do not give it to them.”

- Traditional Saying
Learning Outcomes:
- The participants will practice using their critical thinking skills and problem solving skills.
- The participants will learn about traditional games that can be used to enhance their family bonds.
- The participants will learn traditional teachings about sexuality, marriage, and intimacy.

Seven Essential Activities:
- Teach participants several traditional cultural social dances such as the round dance.
- Have participants make a poster about how their family stays healthy and active. Ask everyone to share their poster with the group.
- Have the participants interview each other about their own unique cultural traditions.
- Set up a consensus decision-making circle so the participants can learn about this traditional form of conflict resolution.
- Involve participants in writing up two small skits demonstrating both respectful and non-respectful communication in the family system. Have the entire group discuss the teachings that were raised by each skit.
- Teach some traditional hand games to participants and have them play them with their families and then debrief the experience at the next gathering.
- Have participants discuss healthy ways to solve parenting problems and challenges.

Invite a First Nation, Inuit, or Métis dance group to do workshops with the participants.
- Invite an Elder to talk about traditional conflict resolution.

Art and Creative Activities:
- Create two jars. The first is for pro-active behaviour and the other for reactive behaviour. Give participants slips of paper and have them watch each of their family members for one week. At the end of each day give a reward for the most pro-active family member and a consequence for the one who is the most reactive. The group will decide the consequences for the reactive person. It is usually something simple like empty the garbage or make coffee tomorrow.
- Make a collage to represent healthy marriages and relationship.

Circle Talks:
- Have a Talking Circle about the concept of “consequences.”
- Have a Talking Circle about influences on decision making.
- Have a Talking Circle about maturity and what it means.

Brainstorm Activities:
- Have participants define their understanding of intimacy in relationships. Encourage each person to make a collage reflecting their understanding of the concept of intimacy.
- Give examples of assertiveness techniques and have participants make up scripts of the dialogue and perform them for the large group.

Larger Projects:
- Form a traditional dance group and make your own regalia.
- Conduct a field trip to an Aboriginal traditional gathering or event such as a Pow-Wow.
- Have a night focused on traditional winter games such as snow shoe racing, nail pounding and whatever the group can research about their nation.

Suggested Teaching and Learning Activities:
People Required Activities:
- Invite a traditional dancer to speak about their regalia.
- Invite a Lacrosse player and an Elder to talk about the game of lacrosse.
- Invite an Elder to talk about traditional marriage ceremonies and the expectations of adult relationships.
- Invite a hoop dancer to speak about the dance and teach participants some of the skills for hoop dancing. Have the participants make a set of hoops for the program.

Art and Creative Activities:
- Invite a First Nation, Inuit, or Métis dance group to do workshops with the participants.
- Invite an Elder to talk about traditional conflict resolution.

Circle Talks:
- Have a Talking Circle about the concept of “consequences.”
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Brainstorm Activities:
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Larger Projects:
- Form a traditional dance group and make your own regalia.
- Conduct a field trip to an Aboriginal traditional gathering or event such as a Pow-Wow.
- Have a night focused on traditional winter games such as snow shoe racing, nail pounding and whatever the group can research about their nation.
• Make traditional snow snakes with the participants.
• Host a family dance night where each participant and their family gets an opportunity to perform the dances of their nation or dance expressions that they have improvised.
• Have a traditional games night where each parent researches traditional games in their culture and then have them teach this traditional game to the group.

RESOURCES AND MATERIALS:

SUPPORT MATERIALS AND HANDOUTS:
Parenting Beliefs Inventory
Influences on Decision Making
Story About the Healing Power of Dances

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:
• How do I usually react to conflict? Do I usually give in? Do others usually give in to me?
• Do I avoid conflict by denial or ending relationships?
• What do I think about who I am based on my interactions with others, which are reflected back to me? How does this concept relate to parenting?
• How often do I compare myself to others?
• Do I value my skills, abilities, talents, appearance and those of my children?
• How do I feel about myself and my ability to grow and change?
• How does my schedule include quiet time, time for meetings, family, and other things I like to do? How do I determine what I can fit into my schedule?
• How is my attendance at work or school?
• What portion of my time am I devoting to working on myself?
• What are the specific commitments I have in my life today?
• How do I follow through on commitments I make? How reliable and prompt am I?
• If I have to break a commitment, how do I do it?
• What is my commitment to attending cultural parenting classes? When the time comes, what will most likely be my reasons for being or not being available to complete this course?
• What are some examples of how I keep or don’t keep my word?
• In what ways does my family count on me to follow through with what I say I will do?
• What circumstances and or persons did I consider in the most recent important decisions in my life?
The Seven Parenting Bundles
Seventh Bundle Offering
Deer

In our traditional teachings the deer is a symbol of gentleness. She is a very kind, loving, and patient mother and we have so much to learn from all our relations about how to raise our own children.

Liza Gaasongii-Kwe Mosher,
Wikemikong First Nation
Unwrapping the Deer Bundle

Native people were given their language, intelligence and ability from Creator.
- James Carpenter, Mushkegowuk Cree

OVERVIEW
This section of the manual features the importance of listening to the Elders. Our Elders hold the key in passing on of cultural parenting teachings to the next generation. This part of the manual encourages us to think about the place of Elders in our family, community, and nation. The Elders stress that gentleness is connected to silence. Unlike many Euro-Americans who fear silence, Aboriginal people talk about silence and gentleness as necessary to secure oneness with themselves and with nature and with each other. Aboriginal People frequently talk about the significance of silence, claiming that the person who values silence may often be the best speaker and that in the battle of words, silence is often the best weapon.

Aboriginal People say silence means stilling the mind, finding solitude in the midst of busy lives, becoming attuned to inner rhythms of the body and of the Earth, and lifting themselves to new levels of awareness. They say through silence we listen; silence is a precondition for awareness and alertness. Remembering, returning, retrieving, recovering, and reawakening require this soothing and serene silence.

Part of the power of speaking involves the art of listening. By listening Aboriginal People do not mean hearing in a passive placid way, but rather, participating with body, mind, and soul in the communicative act. Listening involves hearing the words spoken and the silences between the words, the sounds of drums and the pauses between the beats. The Oral tradition, then, refers not only to talking but also to listening. Active listening gives messages more power. Participating in the communicative act takes listeners to different places and new levels of awareness.

There is an old saying, “we are born with two ears and one mouth because we should listen at least twice as much as we speak.” In all Indigenous cultures, silence is a token or respect, self-control, patience, and humility. The gift of speaking is connected to the gift of hearing. It is important to speak from our listening, to speak with a quiet, humble, and open mind, whether we are communicating with people or nature. A basic rule of traditional Indian oratory is never to try to persuade or coerce other people into believing your own truth. Speak with strength and kindness. Mohawk Elder, Tom Porter says that, “When we are mean to each other as people, the first one we hurt is the Creator because he is the one that gave us that life. Every life is hooked to the Creator and to our Mother the Earth. So when we hurt each other and we are mean to each other, we are disobeying our Mother Earth and Our Creator. They are our father and mother.” People should consider the effects of their thoughts, words, and behaviour on the future generations.

Our Elders stress that parents must take the time to practice good communication with their children. The Elders encourage parents to find healthy and gentle ways to solve problems when they arise. The Elder stress that parent must work hard at understanding how everyone feels about the issues. Our Elders believe that discussions with children should be focused on feelings and emotions in order to come up with resolutions in which each person feels valued and like a winner. This warrior solution to problem solving helps children feel respected, listened to, and supported in their discussions with their parents in the traditional parenting model. These discussions result in children feeling better about themselves, growing in self-esteem, and willing to accept personal responsibility for their own lives and actions.

Seneca Elder Twyla Nitsch says that, “The most important tradition is to recognize we all have a value system based upon Love, Truth, and Peace. We also have an awareness that all our gifts are within us and in order to practice these gifts we must learn who we are and how we feel about ourselves. First, we need to recognize the feeling of self-esteem. Self-esteem includes self-respect and self-responsibility. From this source, we can learn the basis of Truth”.
DEER BUNDLE ITEMS

In our language the root word for Elder is kindness. We refer to the Elders as the kind ones.

- Elsie Sanderson, Cree-Metis Elder

Teachings about Gentleness:
The Spiritual Care of Self and Others

The role of Elders and Grandparents in the Traditional Family System

Creating Intergenerational Connections:
Traditional Mentoring

Traditional Values and Belief Systems:
The Seven Grandfather Teachings

The Seventh Stage of Life—Teachings about Eldership

TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

“If a child gets out of hand, he would be sent to the other tent and to see the Elder who he would listen to. The Elder will tell him how to live his life in the future. There were people such as this who counselled the children but there was no judge, only good talk, advice, and the teachings. That’s how the Cree people lived as I grew up.”

- James Carpenter, Muskegowuk Cree

Learning Outcomes:
- The participants will broaden their understanding and knowledge concerning the roles and functions of Elders.
- The participants will learn about the protocol for approaching traditional Elders.
- The participants will examine some steps they can take to identify a support system using their current circle of family and friends.
- The participants will begin to explore their values and beliefs in relationship to parenting practices.

Seven Essential Activities:
- Brainstorm a definition of the concepts of nurturing and bonding and have participants give examples of these behaviours.
- Have the participants develop a concept web of services and support for Aboriginal parents that they can access in their local community. Conduct a field trip to one of these organizations such as an Aboriginal Headstart Program.
- Make puppets of the Seven Grandfathers and perform a puppet show for the children.
- Design and make Seven Grandfather masks and have the group script and perform a dramatic scene. Have participants interview a local Elder in their family or community.
- Encourage students to make a list of moral values that are important to them.
- Set up a mentorship program where more experienced parent mentors can support new or younger parents.
- Make Deer mobiles with participants to show how they can practice gentleness with their children.

SUGGESTED TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES:

People Required Activities:
- Invite an Elder to give a teaching about traditional values and beliefs.
- Invite an Elder to share the Seven Grandfather Teachings.
- Invite a First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Elder to talk about their traditional cultural values and beliefs.

Art and Creative Activities:
- Conduct bonding and building trust blindfold games.
- Bring a traditionally tanned deer hide to class and have participants make a hide painting with their understanding of deer teachings. Make a large willow frame to lace the final hide painting up.
- Make deer claw/hoof rattles with participants. Invite an Elder to share traditional teachings about rattle making.
- Make posters with the Seven Grandfather Teachings.
• Make a puppet show to teach the Seven Grandfather Teachings.
• Write a play or skit about one of the Seven Grandfather Teachings.
• Make a poster of the Native American Code of Ethics.
• Make a poster of the six Indigenous R’s.

**Circle Talks:**
• Have a circle talk about gentleness.
• Have a circle talk about what an Elder is, and how can we connect our children with Elders.
• Have a circle talk about bravery in relationship to parenting.
• Have a circle talk about humility in relationship to parenting.
• Have a circle talk about truth in relationship to parenting.
• Have a circle talk about wisdom in relationship to parenting.
• Have a circle talk about ways to express love as a parent.
• Have a circle talk about respect in relationship to parenting.

**Brainstorm Activities:**
• Brainstorm with participants how they show respect to their children, spouse, parents, and friends.
  Encourage participants to be specific about how they show respect. To get people started, show the following examples: “I show my own parents respect by taking them to doctor’s appointments when they can’t physically drive themselves.” “I show respect to Elders when I bring them a cup of tea at a cultural event.” “I respect my children when I say no to requests that may cause them harm, even if they don’t like it at the time.”
• Discuss the medicine wheel of values, and beliefs and attitude formation.
• Discuss and brainstorm the principles of a traditional parent.

**Larger Projects:**
• Make deer skins pouches with the group.
• Set up an “Adopt a Grandparent” program matching local Elders with the parents so that they can develop a supportive intergenerational relationship.

**Resources and Materials:**


**Support Materials and Handouts:**
Native American Code of Ethics
My Circle of Respect: The Six Indigenous R’s
Medicine Wheel of Values, Beliefs, and Attitude Formation
The Seven Grandfathers
Seven Traditional Teaching
Journal Questions:

- Discuss the Cree saying “Every Child Needs Many Mothers.”
- How can I develop the four aspects of belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence in my children?
- What happens if a child never bonds with another person by the age of 5?
- What is the purpose of nurturing and why is nurturing important in parenting?
- How well do I know myself and my children?
- How good am I at asking for help when I need it and acting on my own when I don’t?
- What is my history regarding admitting when I am wrong and making amends?
- Am I good at accepting love from others even when I am having a tough time loving myself?
- Am I able to recognize that I always have choices and that I have the ability to take responsibility for the ones I make?
- What is my reaction to the Elders teachings that, “life is a blessing.”
- Do I express my opinions without insisting that others share it?
- Am I able to forgive myself and others easily? What personal situation do I need to practice forgiveness?
- Do I regularly take the time to recognize my own personal shortcomings and strengths?
- Do I have the courage to live one day at a time?
- How easily can I acknowledge that, “my needs are my responsibility”
- Can I care for people without having to take care of them?
- Do I believe or accept the statement that, “I’ll never be finished—I’ll always be a work in progress”?
- What are three things I could have been grateful for the last time someone treated me unkindly or unfairly?
- What are the top ten things that I am always grateful for?
- What are five daily things I am grateful for that are different from my top ten?
- What would I list if I were to write the alphabet and think of one thing, beginning with each letter, for which I am grateful?
- What can I be grateful for when people make me angry?
- Besides earning a living, what other reasons do I have for liking my job?
- How do my actions show my gratitude?
- What changes am I grateful for that have come about because of the traditional parenting program?
- By answering these questions on the subject of gratitude, what have I learned about myself?
“It is the mothers, not the warriors, who create a people and guide their destiny.”
Elders Advisory Committee

Jan Kahehti:io Longboat

Jan Kahehti:io, also known by her traditional name as “Beautiful field or garden”, is the mother of three daughters, one son, twelve grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

She is the keeper of Earth Healing Herb Gardens and Retreat Centre at Six Nations of the Grand River. During her life, she has experienced many losses; of historical values, culture, language, traditional healing arts and medicines. For most of her life, Jan has worked in education and the healing arts to bring back what she has previously lost. Jan Kahehti:io presently serves First Nation communities in Indigenous practices of healing, wellbeing and cultural vision.

Liza Gaazongii-kwe Mosher

Liza is a member of the Bear Clan and is originally from Wikemikong on Manitoulin Island. She carries the honour of a practicing 3rd degree Midewiwin woman and holds an Honourary Doctorate of Laws from Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario. Liza is also the founder of Giizhgaandag Gamig (Cedar Healing Lodge), which is located within the territorial grounds of the Bear Island First Nation Anishinaabeg near Temagami, Ontario. Liza has helped many men, women, and children in her Nation through sharing and conducting healing sweatlodges, cedar baths, healing circles, and the grandmother’s pipe ceremony. As well as transmitting these gifts she has served in positions on various boards, committees, Elders advisory councils, and initiated programs within her region and across the country.

Jim Mishike’n Albert

Jim’s spirit name is Mishike’n (Turtle). He is the Bear Clan and Sweat Lodge Keeper.

Jim received his Ph.D. in Social Welfare from Columbia University. He taught for 28 years at University of Toronto and Carleton University. Jim has been developing and implementing Bachelor of Social Work Programs in First Nation’s Communities since 1990. Jim has also been doing consulting work with First Nations Technical Institute since 1998 and is asked to do ceremonies for local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations.
I Remember the Heartbeat
by Albert Dumont ©

I was born loving of humankind
Of bird life, of plant life and of colours

I was born loving of the legged
Of the crawlers, of the swimmers and of the wind

I was born loving of the sun
Of the moon, of the stars and of the rocks

I was born loving of the rivers
Of the streams, of the lakes and of the rain

I was born loving of all goodness
For I remember the heartbeat of my mother

Now, I seek, your knowledge and wisdom
Give me teachings to keep fresh
My memories of the heartbeat
For without the inspiration of the heartbeat
My circle would surely shatter
And I would forevermore, be afraid
References


Notes