

Supporting Inclusive Learning Environments:

7 Grandfather Teachings *Niizhwaaswi Gmishoomsinaan Kinoomaagewinan*

According to the *Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework 2007*, “All students in Ontario will have knowledge and appreciation of contemporary and traditional First Nation, Métis, and Inuit traditions, cultures, and perspectives.” Currently, there are embedded opportunities within the curriculum expectations to assist students in acquiring this knowledge and appreciation. In addition, when developing a positive learning environment and creating norms, teachers may wish to use the Seven Grandfather Teachings.

Seven Grandfather Teachings

The Seven Grandfather Teachings, are also known as the Seven Sacred Teachings. The lessons of life the Teachings hold are shared among many First Nations peoples of Turtle Island.

Through the oral histories of the Anishnaabae people it is acknowledged that the *First Elder* received the gifts of the Seven Grandfather Teachings when he was a little boy. He was given the great responsibility to share these teachings with his people.

The Seven Grandfather Teachings are honoured by using these gifts to take care of Mother Earth and the community of life.

The teachings speak of traditional values that give the Anishnaabae people direction, balance and order.

The seven teachings are:

- wisdom
- love
- respect
- bravery
- honesty
- humility and
- truth

The Teachings, like life itself, are interconnected. They are not to be considered in isolation.

Why should we consider using the Seven Grandfather Teachings as norms for the classroom?

The teachings provides students with the opportunity to learn and deepen their understanding of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) peoples.

They also provide a framework for students to understand the roles and responsibilities of all participants in

“We had ...our own teachings, our own education system – teaching children that way of life was taught [by] the grandparents and extended families; they were taught how to view and respect the land and everything in Creation. Through that, the young people were [educated about] what were the Creator’s laws, what were these natural laws. What were these First Nations’ laws. And talk revolved around a way of life, based on their values. For example: ... to share, to care, to be respectful of people, how to help oneself. How to help others. How to work together”
– Peter Waskahat, Cree Elder, Frog Lake First Nation in Cardinal and Hildebrandt 2000, pp. 15–16

the classroom and community.

The teachings themselves are life lessons and therefore may be interpreted differently within the learning environment.

Classroom Norms

Wisdom - Nbwaakaawin

When we share our ideas and stories with each other, we build a common understanding and collective wisdom.

Love - Zaagidowin

By accepting that everyone sees things differently, we maintain safety and harmony for one another.

Respect - Mnaadendimoowin

We respect the contributions of each participant by being effective and attentive listeners.

Bravery- Aakide’ewin

We must courageously share our thoughts, ask tough questions, and admit that we are all lifelong learners.

Honesty- Gwekwaadiziwin

We will seek permission and honour the contribution of one another.

Humility- Dbadendiziwin

We will understand that everyone is at a different place on the learning wheel.

Truth- Debwewin

We must speak from our own experiences and ,at the same time, acknowledge our limitations and biases.