

SEVEN SACRED TEACHINGS

The traditional concepts of respect and sharing that form the foundation of the Native American way of life are built around the seven natural laws, or sacred teachings. Each teaching honors one of the basic virtues intrinsic to a full and healthy life. Each law is embodied by an animal to underscore the point that all actions and decisions made by man are manifest on a physical plain. The animal world taught man how to live close to the earth; the connection that has been established between the animal world and that of man has instilled a respect for all life in those who follow the traditional way.

The Eagle teaches us **LOVE**.

Love must be unconditional.

To feel true love is to know the Creator. Therefore, it is expected that one's first love is to be the Great Spirit. He is considered the father of all children, and the giver of human life. Love given to the Great Spirit is expressed through love of oneself, and it is understood that if one cannot love oneself, it is impossible to love anyone else.

The Eagle was chosen by the Great Spirit to represent this law, as the Eagle can reach the highest out of all the creatures in bringing pure vision to the seeker. Although the supplier of the greatest and most powerful medicine, love can also be the most elusive of the teachings, as it depends upon a world that acknowledges the importance of spirituality.

The Buffalo teaches us **RESPECT**.

Respect is the condition of being honored.

The Buffalo, through giving its life and sharing every part of its being, showed the deep respect it had for the people. No animal was more important to the existence of Indigenous families than this animal, and its gift provided shelter, clothing and utensils for daily living. Native people believed themselves to be true caretakers of the great herds, and developed a sustainable relationship with the Buffalo resulting in a relationship that was a true expression of respect.

The Bear teaches us **COURAGE**.

Courage is the ability to face danger, fear, or changes with confidence and bravery.

The Bear provides many lessons in the way it lives, but courage is the most important teaching it offers. Though gentle by nature, the ferociousness of a mother Bear when one of her cubs is approached is the true definition of courage. To have the mental and moral strength to overcome fears that prevent us from living our true spirit as human beings is a great challenge that must be met with the same vigour and intensity as a mother Bear protecting her cub. Living of the heart and living of the spirit is difficult, but the Bear's example shows us how to face any danger to achieve these goals.



The Sabe teaches us **HONESTY.**

Honesty is speaking and acting truthfully, and thereby remained morally upright.

Long ago, there was a giant called Kitch-Sabe. Kitch-Sabe walked among the people to remind them to be honest to the laws of the creator and honest to each other. The highest honor that could be bestowed upon an individual was the saying "There walks an honest man. He can be trusted." To be truly honest was to keep the promises one made to the Creator, to others and to oneself. The Elders would say, "Never try to be someone else; live true to your spirit, be honest to yourself and accept who you are the way the Creator made you."

The Beaver teaches us **WISDOM.**

Wisdom is the ability to make decisions based on personal knowledge and experience.

The building of a community is entirely dependent on gifts given to each member by the creator and how these gifts are used. The Beaver's example of using his sharp teeth for cutting trees and branches to build his dams and lodges expresses this teaching. If he did not use his teeth, the teeth would continue to grow until they became useless, ultimately making it impossible for him to sustain himself. The same can be said for human beings. One's spirit will grow weak if it is not fulfilling its use. When used properly however, these gifts contribute to the development of a peaceful and healthy community.

The Wolf teaches us **HUMILITY.**

Humility is being humble and not arrogant

Recognizing and acknowledging that there is a higher power than man and it is known as the Creator is to be deemed truly humble. To express deference or submission to the Creator through the acceptance that all beings are equal is to capture the spirit of humility. The expression of this humility is manifested through the consideration of others before ourselves. In this way, the Wolf became the teacher of this lesson. He bows his head in the presence of others out of deference, and once hunted, will not take of the food until it can be shared with the pack. His lack of arrogance and respect for his community is a hard lesson, but integral in the Aboriginal way.

The Turtle teaches us **TRUTH.**

Truth is to know and understand all the seven teachings have given to us by the Creator and to remain faithful to them.

To know truth is to know and understand all of the original laws as given by the Creator- and to remain faithful to them. It is said that in the beginning, when the Creator made man and gave him the seven sacred laws, the Grandmother Turtle was present to ensure that the laws would never be lost or forgotten. On the back of a Turtle are the 13 moon, each representing the truth of one cycle of the Earth's rotations around the sun. The 28 markings on her back represent the cycle of the moon and of a woman's body. The shell of the Turtle represents the body real events as created by the Higher Power, and serves as a reminder of the Creator's will and teachings.

SOURCE: Descriptions obtained from http://www.thesharingcircle.com/sacred_teachings.html



tribal community
PREVENTION

IDEAS:

Help students create a picture dictionary and use symbols to write a paragraph about the decision to stay alcohol and drug-free OR send the note to a classmate telling something you admire about them.



Create your own Pictograph Positive Prints (How to: <http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/trans-p/kids/make/design1.html>) Reinforce the traditional concepts by helping students make natural brushes using leaves and paint using berries, stones, clay, and other materials found outside in a natural environment. If you don't have access, you can always use crayons, watercolors, or tempera paints.

- Students put “positive prints” on a large sheet of paper to declare your classroom “Positively Drug-Free”!
- Each student creates their own drug-free sign
- Students make a handprint and write their reason for staying healthy and drug-free on it
- Make peer “Helping Hands” ...students outline their hand and write on it how they would help a friend or family in need or stay healthy and safe or stay true to self. Students can exchange helping hands or give it to a friend and make a pact to protect one another.



Have students research and find a famous quote from a Native American legend that represents each of the Seven Teachings and present it to the class OR have students get a quote from an Elder.

Students write a story or poem about what each of the Seven Teachings mean to them!

From foods and medicines to model of government and “the zero” in math, have students research and discover the many contributions Native Americans have made to other cultures. (Click here for some examples: <http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3748131>).

Have students create a ceremony or way to acknowledge one another when they are “caught” displaying one of the Seven Teachings. Tell other adults to acknowledge students displaying positive behavior.