

Aboriginal People of Saskatchewan

INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Social Services, First Nations Child and Family Service Agencies and Métis Nation of Saskatchewan recognize that a First Nations and Métis cultural component for the P.R.I.D.E. (Parent Resources for Information, Development and Education) caregiver training model is integral to providing a comprehensive training package which accurately reflects Saskatchewan's population and unique cultural considerations. For this reason, a committee was established to develop a cultural component with the help of Elders from each Nation in Saskatchewan. This task can be characterized as a true partnership between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people, for the purpose of producing and validating accurate knowledge which reflects the philosophical worldview of all Aboriginal people of Saskatchewan.

Historically, Aboriginal practices, beliefs and values have not been accepted by mainstream society. However, history has also demonstrated that mainstream ideals do not work for Aboriginal people.

The worldview of Aboriginal people of Saskatchewan was disrupted and fragmented by the residential schools. The abuse inflicted upon the children at these institutions has been passed on from generation to generation. To address the residential school legacy and its intergenerational impacts, one must find the way back to traditional teachings as these teachings offer a strong connection to culture and principles. It is essential that we work together within the pedagogy of traditional ways and practices.

We have set precedence in developing this paper for incorporation into the P.R.I.D.E Pre-Service and CORE Module training.

We acknowledge and thank all the Elders who graciously shared their knowledge, wisdom and protocols. Without their expertise this paper and cultural component would not have been possible.

BEST INTEREST OF A CHILD

Aboriginal children are over-represented in the child welfare system. In Saskatchewan, First Nations and Métis children represent 80% of children in care.

The Child and Family Services Act integrates the "family-centred" casework philosophy. The philosophical base of family-centred casework is founded on a principle that the first and greatest investment of time and resources should be made in the care and support of children in **their own family system**. Since time immemorial Aboriginal people practiced this philosophy and family units were intact and strong within the community. All stakeholders, including the Ministry of Social Services, First Nations Child and Family Service Agencies, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC), Métis Nation of Saskatchewan and leadership at all levels, must work together collaboratively as partners to create liberating opportunities to bring about change and a better reality for families, communities and nations.

ABORIGINAL PEOPLE OF SASKATCHEWAN

The *Canadian Constitution Act*, 1982, sections 25 and 35 recognize three separate groups of Aboriginal people, each having unique heritage, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs. They are First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. The term *First Nations* came into use in the 1970s, to replace the term *Indian*, which many found offensive. The term *Eskimo* was more recently replaced by *Inuit*.

In Saskatchewan there are four First Nations groups and Métis Nation people: Cree, Dene, Dakota and Saulteaux, and there are eight linguistic groups within the four First Nations: Woodland Cree, Swampy Cree, Plains Cree, Dene, Dakota, Lakota, Assiniboine (Nakota), and Saulteaux. Each nation and linguistic group is distinct and unique.

The people of the Métis Nation are descendants of Cree, and Ojibwe (Saulteaux) women and French Canadian, Scottish and English settlers. Their history dates back to mid-seventeenth century. These people spoke and still speak a mixed language called Michif. The word Métis comes from the Latin word *miscere*, which means "to mix". Métis nation lifestyles are a combination of both cultures.

There are 75 First Nations in Saskatchewan. These First Nations are affiliated with eight tribal councils, though some First Nations are independent. The federal treaties 2, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 10 cover the province of Saskatchewan (INAC, 2002).

HISTORY

Historically, Aboriginal people lived a simplistic lifestyle filled with rich traditions, values and beliefs guided by the principles of their worldview. Aboriginal people valued holistic wellness, symbolized by the circle of life. They had sophisticated systems in place to govern them in all capacities. Roles and responsibilities were clearly defined and every one had a place and knew what to do.

Most nations were matrilineal but all were respected for their contributions to community life. Communication and consent were central tenets of good government. Leaders were accountable to the people through a transparent, collaborative decision-making process. Consensus was the participatory process in which diversity of ideas and perspectives were taken into consideration (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2005).

Traditionally, children were given the freedom to experience the full realm of childhood. "Everyone who came into contact with the child was a teacher who would describe the world to him until the moment the child was capable of perceiving the world as described" (Asikinack, 1988). Children were "loaned" and considered special gifts of the Creator. It was the responsibility of all members of a community to nurture, protect, teach and guide a child. Children were placed in the centre of the circle. Elders and children shared a special relationship. The concept, "it takes a community to raise a child" was truly practiced.

Young adults performed many tasks preparing them for adulthood. Their passage through life was marked by many ceremonies. Young women entering womanhood were forbidden to play with male cousins. Respect for self and others was highly

valued. Women had an important and central role. They were the nurturers and providers for the community. They hunted small game, picked berries and made clothing for the family.

Men were the hunters and protectors of the community. A man often married a widowed sister-in-law for the purpose of providing for her.

Grandfathers and grandmothers were considered leaders of the family and the community. A council of Elders dealt with anything that required attention by making collaborative decisions.

Aboriginal people placed an emphasis on being collective rather than individualistic and shared everything from food to child rearing. They were present-oriented, cooperative, non-materialistic, and non-aggressive and lived in harmony with everything around them.

They were pragmatic and patient.

Everything had a purpose and many stories were told for a specific purpose to teach a lesson to the listener/learner. Spirituality was the core of all nations. A profound spiritual knowledge and connection strengthened individuals, families and communities.

One way of gaining understanding was through story-telling. Grandfathers and grandmothers say that it is "not merely enough to listen" to the stories which they tell but we must make every attempt to understand the truths which are embodied within these stories (Asikinack, 1988). The following story is an example which illustrates this:

TWO WOLVES

An old grandfather said to his grandson who came to him with anger at a friend who had done him an injustice:

"Let me tell you a story. I, too, at times, have felt a great hate for those that have taken so much, with no sorrow for what they do.

But hate wears you down, and does not hurt your enemy.
It is like taking a poison and wishing your enemy would die.
I have struggled with these feelings many times."

He continued....

"It is as if there are two wolves inside me;
One is good and does no harm. He lives in harmony with all around him and does not take offense when no offense was intended.
He will fight when it is right to do so, and in a right way.
He saves all his energy for the right fight.
But the other wolf, ahhh! He is full of anger. The littlest thing will set him into a fit of temper.
He fights everyone, all the time, for no reason.
He cannot think because his anger and hate are so great.
It is helpless anger, for his anger will change nothing.

"Sometimes it is hard to live with two wolves inside me, for both of them want to dominate my spirit."

The boy looked intently into his Grandfather's eyes and asked.....

"Which one wins, Grandfather?"

The grandfather smiled and quietly said: *"The one I feed."*

As Euro-Canadians began conquering the land, life changed drastically. Treaties were signed which weakened the traditional leadership. Aboriginal people could no longer roam the land and were restricted to reserves. Roles diminished and men were no longer the providers. Churches and industrial schools were established. People were completely controlled by the bureaucracy of Euro-Canadians. They were oppressed and colonized. A new religion spread and ceremonies were prohibited, however spiritual beliefs were still strong and being practiced 'underground'. Children were forcefully removed from their families and communities. The Residential Schools system was to play a large role in the denigration of strong Aboriginal families and communities. Sections 113 to 122 of the *Indian Act* legally removed the rights of Aboriginal parents, giving the government total control over children's lives.

For over a century, under the authority of Indian agents and enforced by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Aboriginal children were taken from their families to be placed in residential schools throughout the country.

IMPACT OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

"When all the buffalo are slaughtered, the wild horses tamed. The secret corners of the forest heavy with the scent of many men and the view of the ripe hills blotted by talking wires. Where is the thicket? Gone. Where is the eagle? Gone."

- Chief Seattle -

The history of the residential schools is long and complex. First and foremost it was a policy of assimilation, a policy designed to move Aboriginal communities from their "savage" state to one of "civilization" (Malloy, 2001).

To comprehend the impact of the residential schools one needs to examine its conception and chronology:

1845: A government report to the legislative assembly of Upper Canada recommends boarding schools be set up to educate Indian children.

1847: The assistant superintendent of Indian Affairs writes to Dr. E. Ryerson, Methodist head of Education in Upper Canada for suggestions in how to set up Indian Industrial schools. Ryerson suggests there be partnership between the government and church and that schooling be of a religious nature.

1863: A Roman Catholic residential school is established in St. Mary's Mission in Mission, British Columbia by Oblate Father Florimond.

1867: *The British North America Act* is passed; Indian education becomes a federal responsibility; and Indian day schools are set up.

1879: Nicholas Flood Davin is commissioned by Prime Minister John A. McDonald and sent to the United States to investigate and report on Indian Industrial training schools.

1892: The Government of Canada passes an order-in-council regulating the operation of Indian residential schools. The federal government and churches enter into a formal partnership to run a school system for Indian children.

1892 to 1969: The partnership between the government of Canada and the churches lasted from 1892 until 1969. The Roman Catholic Church, Church of England, United Church and Presbyterian Church ran the schools that operated in all provinces except New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island.

1969 to 1996: Residential schools were closed. When the last school was closed, the government of Canada assumed responsibility for the schools (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2005).

In Saskatchewan, the last federally run school, Gordon Residential School on George Gordon First Nation, near Punnichy, was closed in 1996 (AFN fact sheet).

The residential schools experience is perhaps the most shameful chapter in Canadian history. We cannot and must not minimize or downplay the impacts of the residential schools. Although the residential schools have long since shut their doors, the remnants of all forms of abuse are still being felt today. Due to unresolved trauma, unhealthy coping mechanisms developed and unhealthy behaviors are being passed on. As a result, young people develop similar coping mechanisms and behaviors to those who suffered the original trauma.

The following are key facts related to residential schools in Canada:

- The primary purpose of the residential schools was assimilation. Duncan Campbell Scott, original Indian agent, stated the intent was to “kill the Indian in the child.”
- Children were forcefully removed from their families and communities and were forbidden to speak their language. Siblings were not allowed to have contact. Children were taught their culture was evil and their identity primitive.
- Children were under educated and underfed; they did more physical labor than school work.
- Residential schools were a catastrophe for First Nations communities. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) stated in their final report that even if there was no abuse in the schools, the impact would have been devastating.

WORLDVIEW

*"Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one within it.
Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves.
All things are bound together. All things are connected."
- Chief Seattle -*

Aboriginal people believe they are the children of the Creator placed on Mother Earth to live in harmony with each other, the animals, land, sky, water and other beings. Aboriginal people are interdependent on all life and creation and view their relationship as equal and as a sacred part of Creation.

The Creator created the elements that sustain life for all beings and each element has an essence and nature. The sky carries the wind which brings music and breath of life; the sun carries fire and brings heat; stars carry rock which brings strength and the moon carries water which brings purity and renewal.

Mother Earth provides food, shelter, clothing, medicine and tools for all beings. All plant life: trees, grasses, flowers and vegetables are a source of life. Animals are also a source of life and keepers of land, sky and water. There are four beings of animals: walkers, swimmers, crawlers and winged ones.

The Circle of Life explains life as is (or can be experienced) and reality. The Circle allows us to enter in a direct way into experiencing the area of meaningful reality and to associate our experiences. Unity is the circle as it represents the holistic belief of Aboriginal cultures and it reveals we are a small part of the Creation and within the Creation we discover ourselves. All forms evolve in the great cycle of life: wind, fire, rock and water, seasons, directions, stages of life, races of man and the human elements: physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. All are represented by a circle symbolizing interrelationship and "inseparability."

THE CIRCLE OF LIFE

*"Life, the circle, a measurement with no beginning and no end"
- Phillip Deere -*

The Circle teaches us how the Creator made things and how to live. It teaches us how we should look at Creation. Life travels in a circle. In the East is the baby, to the South is the youth, in the West is the adult and in the North is the Elder. Then we return to the Mother Earth to start the cycle again. We observe what is 'around us' from the centre of the circle. This develops our point of view. We must be careful not to become self-centered (Phillip Deere).

Health from the Aboriginal perspective is perceived as a state of equilibrium or harmony among the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual (Morenci & Kistabish, 2002). Traditional values and beliefs strengthen the human elements through the Elders' teachings to respect all forms of life. Language is important because it is through language that we relate to Mother Earth: storytelling, songs, drumming, and ceremonies.

SACRED CIRCLE – HOLISTIC LIFE

Aboriginal people believe that wholeness includes the health and wellness of our body, mind, heart and spirit. Building on the inner resources speaks to four major powers: to see, feel, think and act. These gifts are all given to us by the Creator. It is our family and culture that teaches us how to use them in ways that contribute to personal development and to our community.

Physical Self – Taking Care of Our Body

- Acceptance
- Aware of parts we negate
- Discipline – exercise
- Awareness of stress on our bodies
- Nutrition (how and what we feed our body)
- Non-nutritious/harmful intake – smoke, alcohol, drugs

Mental Self

- Thinking
 - Problem solving
 - Decision making
 - Exploring our Creativeness
- Art
Cooking
Creative writing
Poems
Singing
Dance
Music

Emotional Self

Awareness of:

- Feelings
- Emotional habits: frustration, jealousy, anger, worry, fear
- Taking care of emotions that can cause unbalance
- Being in charge of **your** choices

Spiritual Self

Our oneness with:

- Mother Earth
- Creator (God, Great Spirit)
- Nature
- Music
- Relationships
- Prayers
- Meditation
- Affirmation

Through nurturing relationships we learn how to maintain balance and harmony in the sacred circle. Culture is the foundation of the circle as it guides us in our personal and social development through the tools of language, social skills, customs, ceremonies, beliefs and values.

To honor the principles of wholeness, connectedness, togetherness and cultural ways of knowing the core institutions such as family, Aboriginal people recognize that wellness is a long journey to achieve balance of body, mind and spirit. It includes self-esteem, personal identity, cultural identity and connectedness in the presence of harmonious physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual wellness. Wellness must be identified in terms of the values of Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal people recognize that well being is not a function simply of the individual but of social structures outside the person that teach practices to maintain, support and restore balance. Key aspects of these structures are family and community, which contain systems responsible for education, recreation and other valued aspects of life.

It is essential that Aboriginal people know their family and community history and explore this history in the context of their worldview. Such knowledge builds understanding, reveals the relationships of the past, present and future and provides tools necessary to engage in the process of making personal and social change.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TIPI

The tipi of the Northern Plains Aboriginal people is much more than a shelter. It embodies many of the values so important to Aboriginal traditions and culture.

The fifteen poles represent values.

- Obedience
We learn obedience by listening to traditional stories, by listening to our parents and caregivers. We learn by their behavior and their reminders, so we know what is right and what is wrong.
- Respect
We must give honor to our Elders and fellow human beings. We must honor other peoples' basic rights.
- Humility
We are not above or below others in the circle of life. We feel humbled when we understand our relationship with creation. We are so small compared to the majestic expanse of creation. "We are just a strand in a web of life," and we respect and value life.
- Happiness
We must show some enthusiasm to encourage others at social functions. Our actions will make our ancestors happy.

- Love
If we are to live in harmony we must love one another as we are and accept others who are not in our circle. Love means to be kind and good to one another.
- Faith
We must learn to believe and trust others, to believe in a power greater than ourselves who we worship and who gives us strength to be a worthy member of the human race.
- Kinship
Our family is important to us. This includes our parents, brothers and sisters who love and give us roots, the roots that tie us to the lifeblood of the earth. It also includes extended family; grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, in-laws and children. They give us a sense of belonging to a community.
- Cleanliness
Clean thoughts come from a clean mind and this comes from spirituality. Good health habits also reflect a clean mind. We must not inflict ills on others.
- Thankfulness
We learn to give thanks for all the kind things others do for us and for the Creator's bounty that we are privileged to share with others in the spirit of love.
- Strength
We must learn to be patient in times of trouble and not to complain but to endure and show our understanding. We must accept difficulties and tragedies so that we may give strength to accept our own difficulties and tragedies.
- Sharing
We learn to be a part of the family by helping in providing food and other basic needs. This is sharing responsibilities in order to enjoy them.
- Good Child Rearing
Children are unique and blessed with the gift of life. We are responsible for their well being, spiritually, emotionally and mentally. They represent the continuity of our circle of life which we perceive to be the Creator's will.
- Hope
We must hope for better things to make life easier for us, our families, and the community, both materially and spiritually.
- Ultimate Protection
The ultimate responsibility to achieve is "health for a balanced caring of the body, mind, emotions and the spirit of the individual, family, community and nation".
- Control Flaps from wind
We are all connected by relations and we depend on each other.

(IPOAA Magazine, reprinted from the Alberta Native News December 2001)

P.R.I.D.E COMPETENCIES

"We did not inherit the land from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children"
- Haida saying -

Animals are symbolic and are used to incorporate the values that reflect those of the Aboriginal people of Saskatchewan. P.R.I.D.E. is based on the following five competencies, and an animal is connected with each competency to symbolize its significance.

1. Protecting and nurturing children – Buffalo

Buffalo protect their weakest and youngest members by placing them in the centre and surrounding them with the strongest buffalo for protection. Foster families need to protect and nurture children in foster care. It is easier to build children than repair adults. The fire inside each child must be rekindled with positive self-esteem, strong cultural identity.

2. Development – Butterfly

The butterfly represents the development from the infant through the stages of life. As Aboriginal people, our cultures marked the transition from one stage of life to another through ceremonies and traditions. Aboriginal people have always recognized the sacredness of each transition and prayed for the person to live a long and good life as they move through the passage. We believe that all children need this, but some of the children in foster care may require special attention and care due to delays that may result from trauma suffered.

3. Family Relationships – Wolf

Wolves live in packs and are very nurturing creatures that value family. This symbol represents the philosophy of supporting the relationships children in foster care have with their birth families.

4. Relationships – Eagle

Eagles mate for life. Their relationships continue over time. This symbol represents the philosophy of supporting the relationships children in foster care have with their foster families.

5. Team Building – Ant

Ants work together to meet the needs of each group, each doing their task for the benefit of the whole. This behavior is necessary for birth families and social services professionals to meet the child's needs.

(Extending Our Families Through Unity. 1999)

HEALING FROM WITHIN

*"May the stars carry your sadness away, May the flowers fill your heart with beauty,
May hope forever wipe away your tears, And above all,
May silence make you strong."
- Chief Dan George -*

DEFINITION OF ELDER

There is no single definition of an Elder. Traditionally Elders are recognized by a community as possessing great wisdom, gentleness, knowledge, humility and expertise. They are called upon as an authority or as an advisor in important family and community matters. Elders are recognized as sources of knowledge and there is no limit to what we can learn from Elders. Their personal experiences, wisdom, the transmission of cultural values and beliefs, language and leadership roles lead to greater cultural awareness on all levels.

Cardinal and Hildebrand (2000) contend that most Elders "point out that repairing the treaty relationship with the Crown brings healing to First Nations and bringing about good relations between and among the people of all treaty nations requires that parties take the steps necessary to eradicate the negative stereotypes and other effects flowing from them. First and foremost is the need to restore First Nations positive sense of *origin and belonging* (p.22)." Elders strongly believe that healing among First Nations cannot occur without positive sense of identity and awareness of the healing gifts given to First Nations by the Creator.

When dealing with Aboriginal people one must have a relevant understanding of all factors involved. One deals with the individual, the family, community and cultural foundation. It is all one.

Most importantly, a helper must understand that they are dealing with descendants who have survived genocidal programs and are still having an ongoing battle for their culture, heritage and basic human rights. Failure to perceive the connections between pre-contact lifestyle (prior to European settlers arriving) and post contact will lead to greater frustration.

Reconnection with culture and community has become a powerful way of restoring wellness and health. Aboriginal people are engaged in a process of recovering cultural traditions, turning to Elders for guidance in searching out enduring knowledge.

Humor and laughter are seen as agents of healing as both offer a different point of view. They stretch thought pattern into a wider dimension of creative awareness. Essentially, Elders believe that humor and laughter are vital to the well being of the individual.

An Elder eloquently reflects on the importance of a strong foundation:

The foundation, you have to know your roots, where you are coming from.....You see a tree that is weak, about to give up. Sometimes you find people like that. Why that tree is just barely making it. Because the roots are not strong. If the roots are solid and

strong, then you see the tree is strong and pretty. It can withstand cold, hot weather and winds. The human has to have those roots; we are growing too. We are put here with them. We are also part of the plant life. We are always growing; we have to have strong roots. (Graveline, 1988).

THE OAK TREE

*A mighty wind blew night and day. It stole the oak tree leaves away.
Then it snapped its boughs and pulled its bark until the oak tree grew tired and stark.
But, still the oak tree held its ground while the other trees fell around.
The weary wind gave up and spoke, "How can you still be standing, Oak?"
The Oak Tree said, "I know that you can break each branch of mine in two,
Carry every leaf away. Shake my limbs and make me sway.
But I have roots stretched in the earth.
Growing stronger since my birth you'll never touch them for you see,
They are the deepest part of me. Until today, I wasn't sure how much I could endure.
But I've found, with thanks to you I'm stronger than I ever knew".*

How do Aboriginal people become whole as individuals, families and nations and move beyond the pain that has kept them hostages for many generations? Ottmann (2002) states that "although the legacy of First Nations has been fraught with injustices, misinterpretations, misunderstandings, pain and suffering since the signing of the treaties and the induction of the *Indian Act*, it is also a legacy of strength, endurance, persistence and hope."

Elders believe it is important to reach into the past for healing to occur. People of all ages need to maintain a sense of belonging, meaning and a purpose in life. Spiritual development and preservation of cultural traditions are crucial aspects of creating meaning and purpose in life. It also provides a sense of identity and connectedness between the past, present and the future.

PLANTS USED FOR CEREMONIES

Tobacco is used in all ceremonies and is a sacred medicine that was not abused.

Sweetgrass is used for smudging in ceremonies for purification and strength.

Sage is considered a women's medicine. It is used in ceremonies, purification and for strength. Women can use sage during their moon time [Moon time is the menstrual cycle].

NATIONS OF SASKATCHEWAN

"We must protect the forest for our children, grandchildren and the children yet to be born. We must protect the forests for those who can't speak for themselves such as the birds, animals, fish and trees".

- Chief Edward Moody -

Danny Musqua, Saulteaux Elder and professor, at First Nations University of Canada has provided his direction, guidance, consultation and expertise in capturing the basic information of the history and protocols of each nation. (The purpose of this cultural component is to provide general information and if there is a quest for more in-depth learning one can seek the information from other sources.)

Elder Danny Musqua states we learn by observation, participation and association. Women were the foundation of every nation and when Aboriginal people were exposed to alcohol in the 1960s; that is when everything started to crumble - they [women] began losing their ability to be mothers; families fell apart.

Long ago every passage was celebrated with a feast and/or ceremony. Teething ceremonies were held to celebrate the first physical experience of pain for the infant. Grandmothers taught young mothers teething medicines.

Ceremonies were two-fold; ceremonial feasts and give-aways were a way of looking after the poor. Value is learned by association. Objective in life – whom you trust – those are going to be teachers and the keepers of the tradition.

Long ago if a child misbehaved the child was ignored and the rejection was painful. Elder Musqua shares a personal experience of when he was ignored by his grandparents when he misbehaved. This form of discipline also teaches how to use praise, for example, when a child does something good, praise him/her.

A child associates with old people because they learn how to love. Grandparents give the affection of love. Young children help the old people to live longer.

CREE NATION

Within Saskatchewan, the Cree people have a large population. Within that population, one will find a great degree of diversity. This includes five different language dialects, as well as differences in customs and traditions from one community to another.

Mary Lee is a Cree Elder from Pelican Lake First Nation. She has worked with youth for many years.

The following are Elder Mary Lee's teachings:

- *"The English language does not appropriately explain the significance of some ceremonies. Many First Nations do not know the protocols.*
- *Women must wear proper attire [skirts and/or dress] when participating in ceremonies or smudging. There is a four day ceremony for girls to signify the special journey to womanhood. Old women and kokums [grandmothers] stayed with girls to honor and celebrate the change.*

- *There is a woman sage which women can use on their moon time. [First Nations refer to the menstrual cycle as moon time.]*
- *There is horse sage for the men.*
- *Children and youth respect kokums – they connect with an older person. We need to protect our children so that they become healthy minded. Children are powerful and spiritual and need nurturing. The moment a child is conceived their spirit begins. We have no ownership of our children. We must not favor one child, for all are special.*
- *Babies that use moss bags learn to observe and become good listeners and develop good posture. They are not hyper; hammocks provide teachings too; babies who lie in cribs miss many things.*
- *Tipi teachings; “I had to learn how to make a tipi”. A tipi is a woman and it was the first lodge given to our people. The tipi teaches women about balance and dignity.*
- *In a Sundance ceremony a buffalo is stuffed with women sage – the buffalo is a woman.*
- *Fasting is not a free gift – our way of life is difficult to follow but it is wonderful.*
- *From the broader perspective, Cree people are implementing new things from other nations. Many are going to the United States to learn about the sweat lodge ceremonies and they are different. We cannot modernize traditional teachings. Ceremonies are given to the holder when he/she is ready; ceremonies are not claimed. Today many young men are learning ceremonies from the prison system.*
- *Long ago women did not cut a young boy’s hair unless it was their child. The boys’ hair and head gear was protected; boys’ caps should not be left on the floor. Girls and women are not to step over the caps.*
- *Foster parents are not the parents and should not give a boy a haircut.*
- *Respecting, recognizing and honoring people for who they are is important. When looking after someone’s children we need to do it from the heart; not for personal gain. Children need to belong; a sense of belonging is important to identity and connection. Every child needs good memories and we need to show by positive example – role modeling.*
- *Storytelling teaches kinship, a way of life and connectedness.*
- *Kokums/Elders need to be healthy. We must honor a child’s spirit because their spirits are angry and do terrible things.*
- *To be an Elder is a very prestigious honor and we must be aware of unhealthy Elders who cause harm. When we abuse and use people we are punished by the Spiritual Law.*
- *When we criticize others we must show them how to do better.*
- *We are fortunate because people living in the prairies are strong culturally and we have sage and sweetgrass growing here [Saskatchewan].*
- *People exchange and share medicines.*
- *Language is integral for traditional teachings and knowledge. It is good to seek knowledge from as many people as possible bearing in mind to be careful about unhealthy Elders.*
- *Children in care are needy and vulnerable and need to be connected with culture through teachings, cultural camps, ceremonies and wilderness. We have a responsibility to introduce all of these to children who are in care [of Social Services or First Nations Child and Family Services Agencies].”*

DENE NATION



The Denesuline (Dene-su-lee-neh) Nation (commonly referred to as “Dene”), occupy the territory in northern Saskatchewan from Lake Athabasca in the west to Wollaston Lake in the east. The Athabasca First Nations Dene live primarily in three communities: Fond du Lac, located on the northeast shore of Lake Athabasca, Black Lake and Wollaston Lake. Several other Dene communities include: Birch Narrows, Buffalo River, Clearwater River, English River and Hatchet Lake.

The Dene of the Athabasca Basin hunt over a vast area, often extending their winter range of hunting camps northward into the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

The Dene language is still very strong. The young and old speak Dene fluently and are very proud people who have maintained their identity by practicing the traditional and cultural ways. They still live off the land and rely on the Caribou all year round. The Caribou is gathered in the winter months; the meat is preserved and used throughout spring, summer, and fall until the next winter. In the past, Dene people hunted and trapped with dog teams, but today ski-dogs are used most often. The Dene still have dog teams, but the dog teams are mainly used for the winter festival dog races, a very popular event during the winter months. In the summer months the Dene people rely mostly on fishing. They live in an area where there are vast fresh water lakes and an abundance of fish.

The Dene people practice their cultural ways by setting up cultural camps where the children and youth are taught how to prepare caribou meat and fish for cooking and storing. The children are also taught how to prepare caribou hides and caribou bones for making tools to prepare hides for tanning, as clothes are made from the hides. Drums are also made out of caribou hide. The Dene hand drum is a prized possession among both the old and the young people.

The Dene people of Saskatchewan continue to live their traditional way of life. Traditional hand games, round dances and feasts are still included in their every day practices and are a part of community social gatherings.

Vitaline Read is a Dene Elder from La Plongh First Nation. She has been an Elder for Valley View School at Beauval, Saskatchewan for five years. Vitaline attended the Beauval Residential School for eight years. Vitaline had an opportunity to further her education however it meant leaving her community for a school in the south and she decided not to leave her home.

Vitaline says she is one of the lucky ones as her residential school experience was positive and she credits another student looking after her. Vitaline says she learned many skills at the school such as cooking, knitting, reading and writing, basic life skills that she uses today.

Vitaline's husband worked for Hudson's Bay Company and his employment took his family to three communities in Manitoba and Stanley Mission.

Vitaline worked at the Beauval Indian Education Centre from 1975 until its closure in 1995. This was a high school and students came from all over the north and some from Alberta. Vitaline recalls students addressing her as "sister" even though the school was no longer run by the church.

The following are Elder Vitaline Read's teachings:

- *"Vitaline believes the curriculum that the school uses to teach Dene is not effective. Students learn to write and read Dene but do not learn to speak it. The way we learned long ago was by speaking Dene. Vitaline gives a personal example: as a young student she had to learn French – she says she simply memorized the words she was taught; she believes youth are memorizing Dene that is taught but it appears they cannot speak it or understand it.*
- *Vitaline speaks Dene fluently but cannot read or write the language. She taught Dene orally to students and they were able to speak it. Vitaline says youth are speaking English because they hear it all the time; when one hears a language that is what one speaks.*
- *Most Dene communities are influenced by the Catholic Church probably from the residential schools; some older people are strong Catholics.*
- *Traditional ceremonies are being introduced and practiced by the Dene. Vitaline believes before the Catholic Church became influential Dene practiced traditional ways.*
- *Vitaline remembers when she was a little girl at Patuanak, an old man became sick and asked her father to build a sweat lodge for him where he could get well. However, her father was unable to fulfill the man's request because he did not know how to build a sweat lodge.*
- *"Dene did not want to get involved in powwow dancing because it was thought to be bad magic but I know it is good. I would like to see more because it is a beautiful culture.*
- *My grandfather was a medicine man – he knew what medicine to pick. I remember during my first pregnancy he made medicine for me.*
- *Attending ceremonies such as powwows and sweat lodges is a way of learning. We have an Elder here [La Plongh] that has a sweat lodge and people are starting to go to ceremonies.*
- *There are nine First Nations in the Meadow Lake Tribal Council; there are two Elders from each community. Through intermarriages traditions are being introduced. A couple from Dillon introduced powwow dancing to their children, there is a drum from Dillon [powwow dancing] and a woman from La Loche had a drum. Culture is slowly being introduced.*
- *Respect and Culture: storytelling by grandparents, before the residential schools was powerful. All extended family were a part of it and it was a happy peaceful feeling.*

- *Father Louie Moraud was a nice man and he made a positive impact because he did everything with us. Although some would say he was strict but he lived like the rest of us: cutting his firewood; he built the church; people helped him. He built a good relationship with all the communities he worked with.*
- *I was at a ceremony at Waterhen and I saw the children lying on the ground listening to the beat of the drum. The beat of the drum is so calming, represents the heartbeat. It was so peaceful.*
- *The sweat lodge is beautiful too. It was the best confession I ever made. It is a place of humor, rejuvenation; there is no rigidity.*
- *Elders need to go back to the language, reconnect with the language they spoke and the young must learn the language as so much becomes lost when translated. Different communities had tragic happenings – suicides – and we {Elders} can't talk to them because they cannot speak or understand Dene.*
- *Many of the older people have not changed with the times. We all need to change with the times. As an Elder I needed to change with the students – to try and stay with them. I listen to them, I talk to them and I learn from them. For example, when I see young people as a couple I tell them that parenthood is a huge responsibility, a lifetime commitment; they need to be there for the rest of the little person's life, not just the fun part.*
- *Many Elders today are not saying much because I remember my grandparents talking to us through storytelling. I lived through "it takes a community to raise a child" and today it is gone.*
- *As an Elder you have to learn respect – you may not like what you see but you have to go through change and yet still maintaining the values, as a healthy person and being a good role model. It is important to recognize you have to heal before you can reach out to help another. One needs wholeness in mind, body and spirit. Many youth avoid spirituality which ultimately creates an imbalance. We are all responsible to put ourselves as one."*

DAKOTA NATION

The Dakota, Lakota and Nakota people all speak the same language but the dialects are different. The language is of utmost importance especially when it comes to teaching the young people the traditional ways of life. The following interviews will relate the importance and sacredness of children in learning the Dakota, Lakota and Nakota traditional ways of life.

Vicki Wilson is originally from White Bear First Nation and is of Cree/Dakota heritage and was raised by her grandparents. Vicki has worked for many organizations at local and national levels and has worked hard to make changes with policies that affect First Nations and improve the quality of life for all Aboriginal people. It has been a slow process. Vicki is a teacher and currently works for First Nations University of Canada, Prince Albert Campus; she is an Elder.

Vicki is a third generation survivor of the residential school system and was thoroughly indoctrinated. Vicki states residential schools did not provide choices or career opportunities. Children were severely punished if caught speaking their language and siblings were not allowed to have contact with each other.

These are Elder Vicki Wilson's teachings:

- *"Assiniboine (Nakota) was a minority and were separated by the church. We were not supposed to tell who we were because we ran from the United States. My grandmother was from the USA.*
- *Over time many changes have taken place and the community has lost the way of life. Long ago there was community spirit where everybody helped one other; we've lost the community spirit.*
- *Residential schools impacted Assiniboine (Nakota) nation and our people did not want to speak their language. Some people spoke Assiniboine (Nakota) while under the influence. My father only spoke Assiniboine when intoxicated.*
- *Many changes occurred in the 1950s and 1960s, some good, such as social programs were introduced, men were allowed to vote and to enter establishments serving alcohol. Men were no longer allowed to hunt and they became mean and angry because their roles and responsibilities were taken away. My dad became an angry man because he could not hunt anymore – many injustices happened to us. In the 1970s and onward I became involved with organizations at local and national levels to help implement change. I became an activist through my involvement with Native Women's Association and I met many women from across Canada whom I learned so much from, particularly about ceremonies.*
- *Women were a part of the ceremonies; a grandmother was asked to be a part of the sweat lodge ceremony. All ceremonies belonged to women; women always wore skirts or dresses especially when attending/participating in a ceremony."*

Ceremonies

- *"Many ceremonies were outlawed.*
- *The Full Moon Ceremony is honoring grandmother moon and us [women] and fire. Fire is a sacred element; Cree translation of fire is "to a woman's heart". It is good to have youth attend and bring hand drums.*
- *Vicki is a holder of the Full Moon Ceremony and has the ceremony monthly depending on the weather. Vicki goes out of Prince Albert to conduct the ceremony and uses an outside fire. Some have the ceremony indoors. All women ceremonies require a male fire keeper to maintain balance and to drum the hand drum.*
- *Strawberry ceremony is held in the spring to honor the first fruit and the season. The strawberry represents a woman's heart. An eagle bone whistle is used in this ceremony when asking the grandmothers [spirits] to come and pray. An outside fire is kept going and a male is the fire keeper and has a drum. There is a pipe ceremony and a male fills the pipe and sings. Blueberries are offered to the Bear Spirit. The eagle bone whistle is blown four times to the grandmothers to be with us and four times again to indicate the ceremony is over.*
- *Water ceremony honors the element of water; we are born in a sac of water. Tobacco tie offerings are used to honor the water. Offerings are put in the water; giving thanks to the Creator for giving us a chance.*
- *Naming ceremonies and coming of age ceremonies were conducted by a male Elder. Long ago children were involved in everything; grandmothers and aunties were in charge of the children. I was never yelled at by my grandmother or aunties, but my parents yelled at me. Today children are yelled at.*

- Women were given many teachings: how to look after a home, to cook for a feast, to dress appropriately at all times. Protocols during moon time were strictly followed; women on their moon time could not touch food or cook for a feast.
- Women who were pipe carriers earned this prestige through fasting. My grandmother and mother were pipe carriers, women smoked their pipes together, had tea and prayed; this was the only time my mother smoked.
- Umbilical Cord: The significance of burying the “belly button” of the young is important; it keeps them from roaming. A pledge must be made and the belly button is kept in a pouch. Male cords are usually buried in a field so that a boy learns to respect the land and to be a farmer.
- People adopt each other in the traditional way; my daughter adopted a sister. Grandmothers are invited to adoption ceremonies.
- Tipi Teachings: Every part of the teepee represents a teaching of how to be a good parent. The flaps of the teepee represent women.
- Roles have changed drastically over the years; women are now becoming providers for their families. Women are seeking higher education; many of the students at First Nations University of Canada are women and in single parent households.
- In single parenting homes it can be challenging to teach boys to respect themselves and others. Children become what they are taught.
- Women do not sleep with their partners/husbands during their moon time. Moon time is a woman’s way of cleansing and a time for self reflection. Residential schools did not prepare girls for womanhood and young girls did not understand their bodies. Long ago young girls were prepared for the changes and were instructed not to run during their moon time and not to play with male cousins. Girls are developing physically at a much younger age today.
- Men and boys clothing were washed separately from the women and girls clothing.
- Sexual abuse and incest are coming out and being talked about. Phil Fontaine, Chief of Assembly of First Nations was the first to break the silence by talking about his abuse in the residential school. Many boys were abused in the schools and they became abusers.
- Two-Spirited: “Long ago two-spirited people were considered gifted people and had a role in the community. Two-Spirited people did not initiate relationships with either genders and kept to themselves.”
- Kinship: It is important to tell the youth who they are related to; otherwise close relatives may intermarry if they are not aware they are related. People who are related that marry often have children that are deformed in some way.
- Death ceremony is a celebration and everyone pays respect to the deceased. Wakes are held and may last from one night to four nights, depending on the nation. A feast will be held after the burial and there may be a giveaway of the deceased’s possessions during the feast. Many are going back to the traditional funerals using horse drawn wagons.
- There are talking circles and healing ceremonies – depending what they [people] want, sometimes a prayer. Circles can be very intense; participants must feel safe if they are going to share. A talking stick, eagle feather or rock is used to teach the virtue of patience, [listening] and honoring the Creator for the gift of today.

- *Training is needed today on how to deal with the abuses. We recognize that you [institution] don't change anything by putting "brown faces" (tokenism) unless you change the policy. Many ceremonies are learned through participation and seeking information through proper protocol of tobacco offering. Teachings all go back to respect.*
- *You have to "walk the talk" – because people watch you. We have to live that part; we need to know what we are doing.*
- *The system does not use First Nations curriculum and many Non-First Nations do not know who we are. We must teach non First Nation providers our history and culture. During my involvement with organizations, local and national, we tried to implement traditional curriculum as part of learning – we were losing because the educators were using book learning. This process is long overdue. It is important for youth to know their history – why they are the way they are."*

Vincent Ryder is a Dakota Elder from Carry the Kettle First Nation. Vincent works with Qu'Appelle Child and Family Services as an Elder. Vincent knows many Elders from Treaty 4 area and holds pipe and seasonal ceremonies for them. Vincent helps people, especially children. Vincent recognizes people need help because many of them have problems with drugs and alcohol and family break ups.

Vincent was raised by his grandparents at Standing Buffalo. Vincent's mother died in childbirth when he was two years old. Vincent attended the residential school at Lebret. Vincent says he spoke Dakota before going to the residential school and he lost his language because students were forbidden to speak their language at the residential school. During the summer Vincent went home to his grandparents who spoke both Dakota and English; his grandmother attended the residential school and spoke good English. When Vincent left school his grandfather passed away; when his grandmother passed away too he did not have anyone to speak Dakota with. Vincent was in school from 1937 to 1947 and worked on farms after he left school.

These are Elder Vincent Ryder's teachings:

- *Vincent has had sufficient losses – language, family members: in 1984 his grandmother died; a daughter in 1983, he also lost a half sister and half brother; he hit a low point in his life and was drinking excessively. Vincent has two sons.*
- *In the summer of 1985, Vincent became sick with cancer and ulcers; doctors were unable to do anything for him; he informed his sons. Both of Vincent's sons participated in sundances at Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota.*
- *They knew a medicine man at Pine Ridge and called him and told him of my situation with cancer and that the doctors were unable to do anything for me. I was taken to Pine Ridge and the medicine man doctored me in the sweat lodge. Medicine man told me what to do; cloth and tobacco were offered. I stayed there for two days after the ceremony, one year later, the medicine man called my son and told him that I was to make a commitment. I had to sundance four years once every summer, sundance is four days, no water no food. I had to do what I was told – after the fourth year the medicine man called to go to Pine Ridge for a ceremony. I was accepted and was given a pipe. I was also told that the people where I am from [Saskatchewan] need someone to do ceremonies for them – to help the people. Since then I have been helping people but it is getting harder because I'm getting old. I don't refuse anyone.*

- *"I help out at feasts when I am asked by a family when they hold feasts for a family member that has passed on. I am given tobacco to pray.*
- *A story of how First Nations got their pipes: Long ago White Buffalo Calf Woman came to the people and stayed with them for four to seven days. She told them some day strangers would come and fill the land and you [First Nations] will suffer. You will survive with the pipe and ceremonies. Sweat lodge, sun dance, pipe ceremonies and purify yourself before you do anything. She took the women out and showed what plants to use for medicinal use. The original pipe is very old, about 1400 BC and it is with this pipe people are surviving. White Buffalo Calf Woman said she would be back after Seven Generations. We have lost the old ways; we live in a world that is very high tech. When I was young the old ways were very strong.*
- *Before the White man came land was pure; today everything is polluted.*
- *The original pipe is kept at Cheyenne River Reservation, South Dakota.*
- *June 20, 1996 a unity ride from Prince Albert, SK to Devils' Tower, Wyoming was very significant because a ceremony was held to take to the original pipe. Elders from many nations participated/were represented at the ceremony. During the ceremony Elders sat in the centre. Orvol Looking Horse brought out the sacred pipe. Looking Horse said the original pipe is too brittle, it's old, four Elders handled the pipe and young boys were asked to help. The feeling in that ceremony was beautiful and sacred. There were Elders that blessed pipes for whoever wanted to have their pipe blessed and there was a long line up of people waiting to get their pipes blessed. This was one of the greatest experiences I've ever had.*
- *Dakota, Lakota and Nakota speak the same linguistic language but different dialects.*
- *Seven Councils/Seven Fireplaces resembles as six nations. Many years ago people were one and separation occurred and that is how Dakota, Lakota and Nakota came about. Lakota are descendents of Chief Sitting Bull. Nakota came from Montana and Dakota came from Minnesota. Nakota was once a big nation; the government sent out surveyors as far west as the Rocky Mountains, as far east as the Great Lakes, north to the tree line and south to Missouri. This area is rich land; that is why the government wanted it. Natives [First Nations] were given blankets infested with small pox.*
- *Stone circles are found today; a stone circle within a tipi; families were wiped out with small pox. The flaps of tipis were closed when families died in their tipi and were left inside; the tipi stones were put around the tipi.*
- *Roles of adults/parents: women made the tipi, clothing and prepared daily food. Men hunted while the grandmothers looked after the young girls and taught them how to make clothing. Grandfathers hunted, snared and trapped animals. All roles were clear.*
- *Before horses were introduced to First Nations people they used dogs to transport their packs. Having horses made traveling easier."*

The following are Elder Vincent Ryder's teachings about the Lakota – Sitting Bull Clan:

- *We had a camp - at the head of the circle was the Lakota, at the end of the circle was the Nakota (Assiniboine); they were very well organized.*
- *They played lacrosse using sticks with hide on them. Horse racing was a big event. They had relay racing.*

- *Nakota/Assiniboiné came from the east to the rocky mountains; they had over thirty different clans. They gathered in the summer at Cypress Hills; one gathering would have 5000 camps [tipis] and would stay together for two to three weeks holding ceremonies. There was a lot of game for hunting in the area; when camp finished each clan went back to their respective home area.*
- *Canoe Paddlers – Assiniboiné from the east came down the river.*
- *“Ho-haze” were a clan mostly of young people - they were like the police because they had the best horses and they were good fighters. They were allies of the Cree and did not get along with the Blackfoot nation.*
- *Assiniboiné traded with the fur traders.*
- *Ancestors believed in the Creator; they offered food to the ones gone before them. We still offer food to the ones gone before - feeding the spirit. When a relative dies they keep the spirit for one year; they [family] cut a lock of his/her hair and the hair of a close family member. I kept mine for one year and offered food to him for one year.*
- *When we die our spirit stays here [earth] that is why they [spirits] are offered food; offering of tobacco is good too. I remember my grandmother putting food into the fire as an offering to the spirits. After one year the spirit goes to the spirit world – the other side. There is a ceremony for that – a feast.*
- *Pipe is life: the pipe never gets buried when the pipe carrier passes on.*
- *How can Elders play a bigger role with foster families?*
 - *Through ceremonies*
 - *Praying for the children*
 - *Children are sacred; the Dakota translation for children means, “the sacred ones.”*
 - *I have seen many children taken away; they cry; it breaks my heart when I get home; I fill my pipe for them [children] to find a good home.*
 - *Creator has put the children on this earth to grow up, our way; the cycle of a child is sacred: new born, childhood, adulthood cycle, the old age cycle. Number 4 is sacred in our way: life has 4 cycles, 4 directions to grandfathers we pray to, 4 different cycles in the moon, and 4 seasons. We do a pipe ceremony every seasonal change.*
 - *We explain to the young people about the significance of each ceremony. We also explain that a pipe is life and never gets buried. We know with the pipe our people will pull through.*
 - *Women bring life. We all have a role in ensuring the children are loved, nurtured, guided and taught their language – children are very important.”*

Lorraine Yuzicapi is a Dakota Elder from the Standing Buffalo First Nation. Lorraine worked forty years in the health field.

The Sioux tribe has three main dialects: Lakota, Dakota and Nakota (Assiniboiné/Stony) and they originated from the United States, Sitting Bull's people. Dakota people do not have treaty rights. They have dual citizenship to Canada and the United States.

These are Elder Yuzicapi's teachings:

- *"[Long ago] there were no orphans – if a child lost both parents, maternal grandparents took in the children. Children were loved and not treated as slaves.*
- *Kinship was integral in relationships.*
- *In our belief children were sacred beings – from the day of conception. Grandmothers were instrumental in teaching pregnant women the protocols of [prenatal care] childbirth, how to dress infants. Mothers talked to their unborn babies.*
- *Babies were delivered by a midwife; once a baby is born the midwife would dress the baby in bright clothes. All babies were breast-fed; mother's diet was healthy. Mothers helped each other in looking after the infants.*
- *Children need to be included and present in a circle.*
- *Moss bags and bundles are like being in the womb – they [babies] need to develop their minds by using it first. Babies are content in the womb – mothers need to bond with their babies. Don't hold babies too much – there's a reason for a moss bag and a cradle board.*
- *Children were taught to respect and love self. Today children have lost respect and many end up at Dojack Centre [youth custody facility]. Children need to hear that they are loved and should hear that regularly.*
- *Many children look for love in relationships and become teen parents. They need to be shown healthy touches such as through hugs. Self esteem is affected when children don't know healthy touches and/or acceptance.*
- *We have to work with the children no matter how challenging it becomes.*
- *Respect for one another was honored long ago. Brothers could not change [diapers] or bath their sisters."*

Language

- *"When a child attended residential school, parents [father] would remind the child language is [kept] in the heart and that it cannot be completely lost.*
- *There are two ways of speaking Dakota – the man way and woman way."*

Ceremonies

- *"Children were involved in sweat lodge ceremonies.*
- *Men and women do no sweat together. Everyone is equal and children are given a choice of whether to [participate] in a sweat.*
- *Two virgin girls carry the pipe at a sun dance. They do a reenactment of how the first pipe came about.*
- *Children learn to fast and they are the strongest ones. Ceremonies are the places to introduce children to culture.*
- *Grandmothers wear skirts when cooking or teaching.*
- *[Men] and boys take off their caps during teachings and [ceremonies]."*

Elder Yuzicapi has been involved with powwows since 1953.

Death and Spirit World

- *"The deceased is dressed in a ribbon shirt, moccasins, a blanket and a food bag. The spirit of the deceased is fed one year after [death] at which time a memorial is held for the deceased with an honor song and a picture of [deceased] is displayed and passed around.*
- *The spirit is fed four times [four years in total].*
- *Settings of the cloth, food and towels – special place at the table.*
- *Corn soups are basic traditional foods.*
- *Wiping of the tears ceremony helps people move on."*

Moon Time

- *"During their moon time [menstrual cycle] women were not allowed to cook or touch food. A woman lived alone during her moon time as she could weaken her husband."*

Seven Rites

- *"Rites of Passage for [becoming] a man or woman were celebrated through a sweatlodge or sundance ceremony.*
- *There were also adoption ceremonies."*

Marriages

- *"Pipes were used in traditional wedding ceremonies. Great respect is given to the pipe during the ceremony as two people are being connected. The couple are dressed in traditional attire for the ceremony – buckskin dress with beads for the woman; ribbon shirt for the man and both wear moccasins.*
- *Traditional food is offered in cloth bags – pemmican [crushed dried meat], berries and mint tea.*
- *Children sat quietly and paid attention [respect] during the ceremony.*
- *Young [married] couples prepare their life journey together with moccasins and a travel bag."*

Foods

- *"Long ago Mother Earth was like a giant supermarket and everyone respected her. You only took what you needed."*

SAULTEAUX NATION

The Saulteaux people believe that language is the most important aspect to their culture, especially for the young people. The Saulteaux people have a great respect for their culture and traditions. These traditions are passed on to the younger people by oral teachings and learning interactions with Saulteaux Elders.

Luke Nanaquetung is a Saulteaux Elder and a Senator for the Federation of Saskatchewan Nations. Luke is a member of the Fishing Lake First Nation; he is 72 years of age. Luke was employed by his band for many years and served on the band council for years.

These are Elder Luke Nanaquetung's teachings:

- *"Luke acknowledges the changes over the years, citing "a very big difference from long ago and today. Today the young generation has many more challenges and negative influences than my generation. Youth today don't use respect. Television influences negative behavior for youth; there is no structure as many youth are watching television all night and not attending school."*
- *Luke states there were no modern amenities such as television or electricity in his youth. Youth were respectful to everyone and followed rules set by the parents and the Elders. Youth followed a routine such as going to bed early.*
- *People were respectful to each other; parents taught and encouraged their children to be respectful through modeling. Children were especially encouraged to be respectful when the family had company.*
- *There were tough times but everyone worked together. There was clarity of roles and responsibilities of each family member. Laundry was done by hand; water had to be collected and heated. Luke says he heated the water when his mother did the wash. He remembers his mother washing the boys' clothes separately from the girls. Luke says the reason for washing clothes separately is the purity of men and women. If a woman stepped over any piece of boys/men clothing, an Elder was brought in to smudge the items; everything was pure. Elders and grandparents were advisors, teachers, disciplinarians and nurturers.*
- *A child was trained early to be positive; everyone talked to a child; always being gentle, loving and caring."*

Ceremonies

- *Luke states he has been asked to participate in a rain dance ceremony, however he will not go that far. He participates in pipe ceremonies. Luke recognizes and acknowledges that the ceremonial protocols for each nation are different but emphasizes they all pray to the same Creator.*
- *Luke says when Fishing Lake was still under Touchwood Tribal Council he noticed it "was a little different – no First Nation has the same way – everything is different, but they [other first nations] call it the same."*

Discipline

- *"It is difficult to discipline a child in a way parents of long ago disciplined their children. Long ago spanking was one way of disciplining a child whereas today if you touch a child – it is a big difference. It appears the kids are more boss to us. We know spanking is not acceptable today."*

Naming Ceremonies

- *"Everyone has their name – a baptismal name. I remember my infant sister crying all the time, sometimes all night. My grandfather told my parents she was crying because she wanted an Indian name. My father asked an Elder to give her a name and he did; we had a small ceremony honoring the name the Elder bestowed on my sister."*
- *"It is great to have an Indian name as it links the individual to cultural identity and belonging."*

Elders

- *"As you grow older you become wiser and you take the role of an Elder and become a teacher. My grandparents taught me that grandparents have a significant role with youth."*

Residential School

- *"I attended a residential school and became lost and mixed up during that period. I only saw my parents twice a year during Christmas and summer holidays. I learned more about religion than education. My parents traveled approximately eighty miles by a horse team to visit us for three or four days during Christmas."*
- *"My parents always encouraged us [siblings] to listen to the nuns because they were our caregivers and supervisors. Each time my parents left, the nuns would take us into a room demanding [interrogate] to know what we told our parents about them and the school. I would tell the nuns what my parents said but they still beat me up."*
- *"My parents said they could not defend us. I try to practice that with my grandchildren. You cannot defend a child if she/he is being disrespectful to others. If a child is defended each time she/he gets into trouble they become spoiled and also do not develop problem solving skills."*

Hunting

- *"Long ago we hunted for all of our food. We would travel sometimes two days to hunt moose or elk. It was hard work in the winter time because the sleigh would fill up with snow. We ate healthy and diabetes was unheard of. Wild meat did not have any chemicals or ingredients like the meat we buy from the store."*
- *"Today we have access to all modern amenities – we press a button, turn a knob and all the food is bought from a grocery store and it is all processed."*

Relations/Kinship

- *“Youth call each other down – there is a loss of kinship as youth are not told who their relatives are. Kinship is becoming lost and as a result people are hurting each other. People continue to hurt each other because their parents do not tell the youth – youth need to know who they are related to.*
- *Elders say we have to share, be honest and love one another. Parents need to be involved with their children; youth are getting into deep trouble – getting worse. Youth find it very hard to apologize for their mistakes partly because they see many negative things and normalize these influences and/or adapt to a harsher environment. It becomes harder to raise children in a hardened environment.”*

Wakes

- *“Long ago children were not allowed to be present during a wake. That is not happening today; small children run around and make a lot noise during a wake.*

Infants

- *“Long ago the umbilical cord was put in a medicine bag as a lifetime collection. Safekeeping of the umbilical cord keeps a child from wandering and looking for it.*
- *Baby bonnets were important; my grandfather kept my bonnet and my sister’s; both were destroyed in a house fire.*
- *Moss bags were important. A moss bag is made of fabric and decorated with other materials such as beading and lace. An infant that is wrapped in a moss bag is more content and sleeps better. It is believed the infant will not be bow-legged when he/she begins walking.”*

MÉTIS NATION

The Métis family is the foundation of the Métis Nation.

Inter-connected relationships to the land, the earth and to one another are the foundation of Métis ways of knowing and understanding the world. This inter-connectedness and interdependence is enduring and has helped in the survival of Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan. In the past, strong Métis societies placed high value on their children, women and families. There was a great respect for the family unit and much was done to maintain it. The roles of mother, father, aunt, uncle and grandparent were clear and everyone had a role in raising children. The care and support of children was a high priority in Métis societies of the past.

Family and the interconnectedness of the relationships within a grouping constitute the foundation of Aboriginal life. It is from family members that Métis people learn about their values, morals, spirituality and life ways. Métis people depend on family not only for the comfort of good relationships but for the caring of the old, the needy and sharing of bounty with family members. The relationships or kinship within the grouping is crucial to survival because it is an inter-dependent partnership, based on values and standards of caring for one’s large extended family. As well, caring for elders is vital to maintaining the connection to family and the kinship of relations.

The strong family institution was present before government imposed colonization onto Aboriginal people. The fragmentation of family systems and supports has taken a toll on the ability of Métis families to cope in today's society. Kinship and extended family networks are still present today, albeit somewhat fragmented. This system is critically needed in order for Métis society to become strong and self-sufficient once again. Assimilation has caused a breakdown in the family unit. This is mostly due to moving away from family groupings and communities and loss of teachings about roles and responsibilities to the clan, family and tribe.

To support and repair existing problems within the family such as absent parents and the abuse and neglect of children, changes must be made to allow for and restore Aboriginal traditions and ways of life.

Métis Identity

There is substantial controversy and disagreement as to who exactly is Métis. Métis are descendents of First Nation women and the fur traders who were French, Scottish and English men. Their history dates back to the seventeenth century. Unlike First Nations people, there is no distinction between status and non-status Métis and the legal definition is not yet fully developed.

S.35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 states:

- 35 (1) the existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal people of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed;
- 35 (2) in this Act, "aboriginal peoples of Canada" includes First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada;
- 35 (2) does not provide a definition of who is Métis;
- The Supreme Court of Canada outlined three broad factors to identify Métis rights-holders:
 - Self-identification
 - Ancestral connection to a historic community
 - Community acceptance.

Métis people were often the middlemen and communicators of the fur trade between First Nations and the Euro-Canadian settlers. They spoke Métis French or Michif, a language combining French and Cree.

Métis are known for fiddle playing and the fiddle is often accompanied by jigging and other dances.

A sash is the most prominent piece of clothing today. A sash is traditionally approximately three meters in length and made by yarn woven together; it is worn around the waist, tied in the middle, with the fringed ends hanging. Vests with characteristic Métis figurative beadwork are also popular.

Mike Maurice is a Métis Elder born and raised in Green Lake Saskatchewan until the age of fifteen. Mike attended a school run by a Roman Catholic priest and nuns. In his youth Mike lived in tents and eventually moved to Saskatoon in 1968. Mike retired from his occupation due to injury after twenty three years of service. Mike worked as a

greeter at Wal-Mart and has been an Elder at the White Buffalo Lodge for approximately seven years. Mike acknowledges similarities with First Nations and Métis protocols.

The following are Elder Mike Maurice's teachings:

- *Mike says building relations based on trust is important particularly with youth. This is guided by the principle to help others through teachings by building on personal strengths which are fundamental in facilitating positive growth.*
- *Mike says he has worked with an Elder and has learned everything he knows from that Elder. Mike says he was asked to be a pipe carrier but he didn't accept it. Ceremonies teach us humility and Mike sees no differences between Métis, First Nations or white [non-first Nation] people – we are all the same.*
- *"The steps of jigging Métis dance and First Nation pow-wow fancy dancing are similar.*
- *Like many First Nations, Métis are losing their language and young people are not speaking Michif.*
- *Sash identifies the Métis; men wear the sash around the waist while the women wear it across the heart.*
- *Métis blend their beliefs from the two cultures.*
- *Oral tradition is powerful and a way of being and creating balance – it brings both cultures together."*

These are some further teachings from Elder Mike Maurice:

Parenting

- *"When you become a parent, you are a parent for life. Trust is important – an experience from being a parent. Being a grandparent is to show kindness – being kind builds trust with the youth. Youth will relate to an Elder." Mike reiterates establishing and maintaining trust among the youth is essential to build a helping relationship. "We are a family at White Buffalo Youth Lodge."*

Kinship

- *Kinship is a valued virtue among the Métis. Mike shares that he lost a brother in the 1940s to tuberculosis. Mike says his brother was taken to Prince Albert and that was the last time he ever saw him.*

Spirituality

- *"Métis Nation is a spiritual mixture as complex as the people who make up the nation. From the beginning Métis people instilled the teachings of both cultures. A child learns to live in both the Aboriginal and non- Aboriginal worlds, encompassing both in their spirituality."*

CONCLUSION

We have attempted to share the history of Aboriginal People of Saskatchewan as best as we could. Aboriginal people recognize culture is fundamental in bringing about positive change and creates opportunities for all nations to learn cultural practices and traditions of the other nations.

The journey of the Aboriginal people of Saskatchewan has been arduous, long and painful. It is also a journey of healing, strength and triumph. Healing is strengthened by going back to traditional ways and roots. Elders of all nations understand.

Elder Walter Lightening (1992) states that "in pursuit of knowledge, of understanding, of education, of learning, perhaps if we open our minds in a non-judgmental way, we may move towards improving our views and perceptions of what the mind is and how thought is processed and more important how anything and everything affects our consciousness as human beings."

***"We Have To Know Where We Have Been
To Know Where We Are Going."***

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Aboriginal Worldview

Creator

Ultimate Entity

Ultimate Power of Life

The Creator made four elements

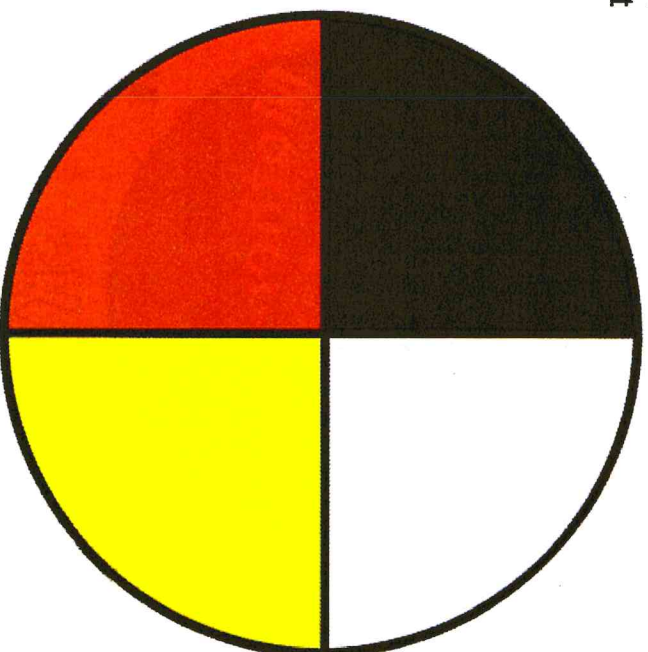
The Creator Bestowed to each a different essence and nature

Each had its own POWER and SOUL-SPIRIT



**All Forms evolve in
FOURS in the great
cycle of life:**

- 4 Seasons
- 4 Directions
- 4 Stages of Man
(Infant, Child, Adult,
Elder)
- 4 Elements (Wind,
Fire, Rock, Water)
- 4 Races of Man
- 4 Human Elements
 - Spiritual
 - Physical
 - Emotional
 - Mental



Earth

**Power of growth and
healing**

Plant life forms: Trees,
Grasses, Flowers,
Vegetables. Plants are a
source of life.

4 Legged

2 Legged (keepers of the
land)

Winged (keepers of the
sky)

Aquatic (keepers of the
water)

HUMANITY:

Dependent on all the above life forms for survival.

Least contributor towards the cycle of continuity.