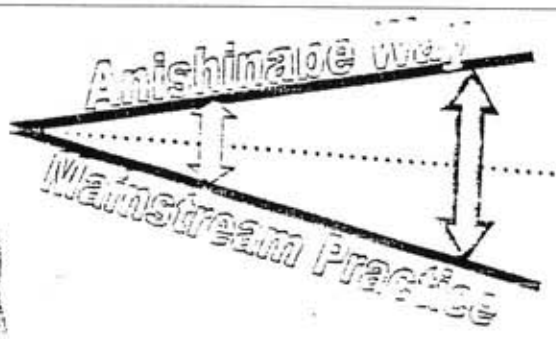
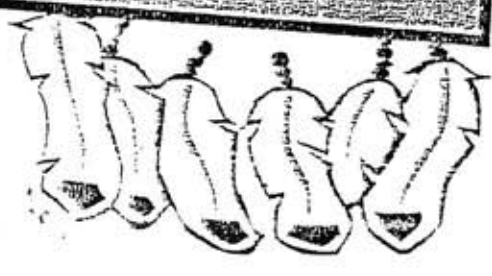
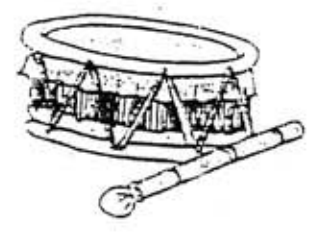


Elders Gathering of Men  
"Customary Care Workshop"  
Weechi-it-te-win Family Services  
Nanicost Gym  
May 11-12, 2000

Summary Report





Elders Gathering of Men: "Customary Care Workshop"  
Nanibooz Gym  
May 11-12, 2000

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## Executive Summary

### Customary Care Workshop Organization

Weechi-to-be-win Family Services convened an important gathering of the male Elders of the ten member First Nations of Weechi-to-be-win Family Services on May 11-12, 1999. The gathering took place at the Maricopa Gym on Couchiching First Nation. Mr. George Potash, Weechi-to-be-win Family Services Cultural Coordinator was responsible for being the part together. This particular gathering follows the "Gathering of Women Elders", which was held at Kay-man-chi-wah-nung Historical Centre (Manitou Mountain) on April 6-7, 2000. At that meeting, there was discussion on the nature of Ojibway family life focusing on the different stages of life of a child from conception to young adulthood. A recommendation issued forth from the grandmothers gathering for Weechi-to-be-win Family Services to sponsor a similar event involving the grandfathers.

The Cultural Coordinator visited each of the communities to offer tobacco and discuss the upcoming workshop a few week prior to the event. Percy Bird assisted him in contacting all the grandfathers and ensuring that information was provided to the grandfathers. They also inquired if the grandfathers had any particular needs that would be of help to them in attending the workshop (eg. Transportation, dietary needs etc.)

### Workshop Themes

The intent of the meeting was to consult with the Elders, specifically the male Elders from the ten member First Nation communities that collectively form Weechi-to-be-win Family Services corporately. The focus of the consultation was to extract from the Elders, information and knowledge from their perspective concerning the nature of customary practices in family life and lifestyles of the Ojibway peoples of the immediate area, both past and present. Weechi-to-be-win Family Services is advancing the cause of aboriginal practice in child welfare under cultural principles and First Nation autonomy. Gatherings of the Elders such as this meeting, which is the subject of this report, are central to planning and setting the direction for this work.

### Principals

The gathering was a team effort that was supported by a number of staff of Weechi-to-be-win Family Services and other helpers who contributed their time and expertise. They are listed as follows:

#### WFS Staff

- George Simard
- George Potash
- Garry Windigo
- Harry Kelly
- Pat Ferrault
- Dave Ervin
- Dylan Simard
- Rick Comeau

#### Others

- Percy Bird
- Doug Sinclair
- Pat Ankeny
- Buddy Louye
- Larry Jourdain

## Consulting Elders

### Community:

- Big Island
- Lac La Proulx
- Niiskousemenecamping
- Seine River
- Big Grassey
- Onigaming
- Stangikoming
- Rainy River
- Couchiching
- Naisatchewenik

### Name:

Myers Handorgan  
Joseph Big George  
John Booney  
Bob Oberball  
Eric [unclear]  
Bill Morrison  
Jack Johnson  
Jim Bushkaygin  
Hugh Morrison  
Robert Archie  
Billy Blackwell  
[unclear]  
Fred Major  
Billy Wayash  
Harold McGinnis  
Willie Wilton  
Bill Yanxa  
Eimer Mainvill  
Steve Johnson  
Gilbert Smith  
Joseph Big George [unclear]

### Host Drum:

## Historic Developments

In 1962, the Rainy Lake Tribal Chiefs nurtured a vision, which found expression in a resolution on March 15, 1962 where they called for the beginning of "a process to create Indian Child Care Alternatives". This resolution initiated a process to attain the goal, which involved the creation of the Native Child Welfare Planning Committee. The committee was composed of the First Nation representatives and a provincial administrator whose primary task was to begin to define what that "alternative" might look like.

In 1966, the report "A Model of Indian Community Care for children and their Families". The Rainy Lake Tribal Chiefs subsequently accepted the report. The report laid out an alternative model of child welfare services for the ten First Nation communities of the Rainy Lake Tribal Region, as it was known at the time. The model was based on local Anishinabe customs and values of the communities represented. With the support of the Chiefs, the model has evolved into the Neeshi-to-te-win Family Services model, as we know it today.

Weechi-it-te-win Family Services has been able to make the mechanisms available under the provisions of the Child and Family Services Act (1984 (C.F.S.A.)) as an interim measure leading to the ultimate control of Indian family and child care at the Band level as a result of direct negotiations with the federal government... (Resolution of the Rainy Lake Tribal Chiefs - March 1992). This resolution eventually led to Weechi-it-te-win Family Services receiving designation as a Children's Aid Society on September 2, 1987. The society designation was just another step in the "interim measure" that the Chiefs set out in their ultimate goal of attaining federal recognition to exercise our inherent right to look after our own children and families under our own laws in Treaty # 3. As a society, WFS carries a dual mandate and is accountable to the Chiefs and to the Ministry of Community and Social Services. The dual mandate entrusts Weechi-it-te-win Family Services with the responsibility to develop services that reflect the cultural needs and aspirations of the communities. In carrying forward that directive, the Elders have a unique, integral role and relationship that is fundamental to Weechi-it-te-win in designing and developing the specifics of the Indian Alternative inherent in its mandate.

## Context for Elders' Consultation

### WFS Practice and the Anishinabe Way:

The Mandate... Weechi-it-te-win Family Service's efforts to promote and establish cultural competence and cultural congruence, both in service practice, and, in the interpretation of organizational policy in the delivery of child welfare services among the member First Nations of WFS. In moving the organization toward meeting these goals in an ongoing format and format... the Elders continues to be fundamental to Weechi-it-te-win's practice. It is also the primary mechanism to acquire the expertise and cultural knowledge base that can assist the Weechi-it-te-win Board of Directors in setting the direction of the organization.

The practice of consultation with the Elders is not new to Anishinabe country. It does in fact, form the basis of all developments in our services and society. Consultation with Elders in pre-Weechi-it-te-win days was every bit as critical as it is today. Without the wisdom and teachings of the Elders, our services in the tribal area would be very different from what we see today. They would in all probability... the influence of the Elders. Thankfully, we have a strong resource base of Elders who make a very significant... as a people and nation.

For the most part, Elders have been conducting their work and exerting their influence in the background, so to speak. Nonetheless, their influence has been dramatic and powerful. The point being, that the role of the Elders in Weechi-it-te-win's evolution and development has in large measure, been the cornerstone of our achievements. It is what makes us different from other Children's Aid Societies. We are unique because of the Elders' role in our development and as an organization; we do not make light of that fact.



## Recent Developments in Treaty # 3

More recent developments in Treaty # 3 have increased the profile of Weechi-it-be-win Family Services. These developments focus on one accomplishment that Weechi-it-be-win has achieved to date. The Governance Initiative of the Grand Council has a Child Care Table that is working toward the development of a Treaty # 3 Law for traditional family care. This presents both opportunities and challenges for WFB. The development of a Treaty # 3 Law represents the fulfillment of the Chiefs original mandate from their 1997 report. It is a move toward the establishment of our own service structure and policies under self governing principles and authority. While the Treaty # 3 Governance Initiative presents some interesting scenarios and possibilities, it is too early in its development to be a major factor for the purposes of this report. It is however, a significant enough development concerning WFB's mandate that bears acknowledgment.

## Events Preceding the Men's Gathering

Elders have provided assistance throughout the development of Weechi-it-be-win Family Services. It was the desire of the communities that the Elders have a meaningful role in the affairs of Weechi-it-be-win, and they have retained a role throughout our development. There have been various consultations involving the Elders over the preceding years where their direction has been sought.

In May of 1999, Weechi-it-be-win Family Services did convene one of these gatherings of the Elders on Couchiching First Nation. At this gathering, they affirmed their position; that the Anishinabe cultural practices are "core" to the Agency. The spring and fall ceremonies and the Weechi-it-be-win Pow-Wow are an integral part of what defines the agency. Sacred items have been entrusted to Weechi-it-be-win by the Elders to support this position. In the minds of the Elders, the organization is viewed as a person with responsibilities to fulfill on behalf of the communities and people Weechi-it-be-win represents. The concept is not that far removed from the concept of the organization being a "corporate man" in terms of legislation and activity. That is to say, an individual can sue WFB as an organization under the law, in a similar manner that one might take legal action against another individual to resolve a disagreement. In a similar manner, the Elders have requested that WFB take steps to ensure that they have an interest that underscores the day-to-day role of Weechi-it-be-win.

The Elders also asked that Weechi-it-be-win begin to incorporate the concept of the Elders Council as part of the make up of the Agency. A schedule of Elders meeting was discussed along with related cultural activities that they wished to see take place as part of the Weechi-it-be-win practice. At this meeting, the Elders also asked that the Cultural Coordinator position be reinstated as soon as possible. The followup from this meeting included establishing an Interim Elders Council. The Interim Elders Council reported the results of the first Board of Directors annual elections under traditional process.

A "Gathering of Women Elders" was held at the Nyan-nah-wah-mung Historical Centre (Manitou Mountain) on April 6-7, 2000. This meeting was primarily to coordinate cultural information concerning families and family life of the Ojibway people from the women Elders perspective within the area. The information generated is to be assembled into resource materials for use of the Agency and the communities. One of the recommendations from the grandmothers gathering was that, Weechi-to-be-win should convene a follow-up meeting involving the grandfathers for a similar purpose. The recommendation from the grandmothers seeks to provide a 2000 perspective of Ojibwa, family life and values, and to make determinations from the findings of the gatherings to assist Weechi-to-be-win Family Services to advance the cause of aboriginal child welfare.

## Some Limitations in Evaluation of the Discussions

Understanding, perceiving and recording the Elders as they share their knowledge and wisdom in a setting that has traditional and contemporary elements to provide a challenge, each group was given the same tasks and topics to review. The discussion format was left to each group to determine how they wished to proceed. It was apparent that each group took to the task from a slightly different angle and approach. The Cultural Coordinator monitored how the discussions developed and was able to follow how discussion themes emerged. This was helpful to compare and correlate some of the discussion points and flip chart notes that appeared to be unrelated at face value. This was largely due in part to the fact that the groups approached the material in different approaches to discuss the material. Analysis and coordination of the information was time consuming and tedious at the onset. As patterns of discussion were identified, usually by determining who made a particular point and having some understanding of where that individual is coming from, drawing some conclusions based on their comments became somewhat easier to do.

Most of the discussion points that were noted on flip charts have been recorded and attached as part of this report in the Flip Chart Summary. For the sake of clarity, some points were edited slightly to help complete a thought on paper. No changes were intentionally made to misrepresent a point or to suggest further points. A few points were left out of some group notes if the themes were consistent with the other notes. In the event of a conflict, for example, one Elder may be sharing a teaching in one group while, while in another group, another is sharing a life experience that relates to the teaching. If one was clear in its content and captured the point, the other may have been left out. The Flip Chart Summary is intended to highlight points in the discussions rather than to be viewed as a verbatim transcript, which would not be possible given the different format of the groups.

It is also difficult to adequately translate concepts and teachings from a primarily oral tradition to a written document. Many statements were given for reflection and interpretation by the listener. Some liberty was taken in the interpretation and analysis for the sake of the documentation for this report. At times, it feels like to be just a little bit better than a rest

please to announce the results of the study. It is hoped that the report will serve as one of the reference points for the Elders and Weeshi-to-win to further to objectives of culturally sensitive and supportive services for our communities.

Some terms lose much of their essence when English words are applied to convey a concept. For example, the term "legendary" might diminish the depth and nature of a story or lesson if the reader lacks the "Anishinaabe worldview" to more fully appreciate and comprehend the subject matter.



## Analysis of the Role of Elders

... "when things are done right .... as young people, they (the children) are provided with their gifts for life. Parents and everyone around the child are to encourage the young to maintain the positive practices" (of their community). (from the Elder's Gathering, Wa, 1992, 1999)

### Philosophical

A statement in broad terms describing the role of Elders seemed appropriate to provide a context to the nature of the discussions. This section is done to provide the reader with a frame of reference to guide one in reviewing the contents of this report. Elders "see" things from a much broader viewpoint. This is vital to understand. It may be that in seeing a particular statement, one might be tempted to give mental assent to one matter without perceiving a deeper meaning behind a statement. One has a better concept when one speaks the language to one who knows the Elder and how they teach or share their knowledge. The nature of the relationship is a determining factor in how knowledge is transmitted from one individual to another.

Information can readily be captured on paper. Wisdom is transmitted from one human spirit to another. Wisdom is available to all but not everyone receives wisdom when it is presented. It requires a particular "gift" that is spiritual in nature to transmit wisdom constantly. Elders have this capacity when "functioning" as an Elder. We all can benefit from wisdom and pass it on to others to an extent. The "extent" is determined by how much of it you possess. You can only give what you have and this is what the Elders say. The wisdom Elders share promotes relationships and connectedness. What ever they may have, if it is life knowledge to help one to change behaviours, or teachings about medicines to promote a balanced understanding about our relationship to the earth, it is all about relationships. When we think about community healing, resiliency, our communities and/or reconnecting to the traditional way, the Elders have things to share about that as well. That is what this and other similar meeting Weechee-to-wa-wa convenes is about. They do their job to give of themselves and their life experience and teachings. Our job is to learn from the experience and do the work that follows as a result. This is one aspect of reporting and recording an event of this nature that is both challenging and numbing. How to best capture the essence of the discussions, to perceive the message that is being presented is the challenge that is presented.

Drawing on comments in the groups and points captured on the flip charts, the following narrative attempts to provide some reference points concerning the role of Elders to the people and communities, and in our case, to Weechee-to-wa-wa Family Services.

## Roles of Elders

The Elders take an immense responsibility to ensure the transmission of the teachings of our culture and Anishinabe identity for future generations. In providing life span wisdom and knowledge, the Elders can transcend history and the experience of the natural world. This knowledge is designed to sustain and promote Anishinabe life in all areas. As a resource, this knowledge is time tested and has helped the Anishinabe to prevail. Through this, Elders help to sustain community and family structures and the customary value orientations of Anishinabe society. Elders consistently promote these themes, which then, form the basic structure and content of dialogue involving Anishinabe people. As unifiers of family, Elders resisted the onslaught of foreign value systems and looming settler nations that threatened familiar cultural landmarks. Elders' role functions do not decrease with age, but rather, increase which helps families to gain a sense of order, stability and permanence. In transmitting purposeful cultural behaviour that supports the cultural institutions of family, language, land, customary laws and life principles, Elders help to unify Anishinabe society. Through this transmitting of cultural knowledge and behaviours, Elders are key agents in integrating the generations for Anishinabe society. This function as generational windows allows new generations to explore and absorb the Anishinabe life experience for themselves through teachings, stories, ceremony, language and any number of ways that Elders have at their disposal. They bring the experience of the "old ways" to new generations to carry forward the Anishinabe experience into the future.

Elders can provide the spiritual guidance and a vision of a better day. They offer themselves and their life teachings as "life span maps" to bring historical context to today's realities. The spirituality of the Anishinabe life has endured to the present day, and according to the Elders, will sustain us to a new day that they envision is coming. It is the strength of the Anishinabe

Elders continually reinforce this vision through the promotion of *minobimaziziyin*, the "good life" and the teachings of customary law and tradition.

Elders have an enormous responsibility to carry forward the rebuilding and restructuring of cultural institutions, and to revive and strengthen the value systems and structures that contribute to Anishinabe identity and sense of selfhood and nationhood. In this regard, they become instruments to promote and revitalize Anishinabe value systems, structures and knowledge. The advancement of cultural knowledge to affect positive change is a task the Elders role of cultural knowledge. Attempts to control, regulate and outlaw cultural knowledge through legislation, and the destruction of cultural knowledge, as the Elders understand it, is seen a way of life and a determinant of one's role in society; as well as the instrument to adapt to, and live within the environment. Resilient within the knowledge is the capacity to exert and influence positive changes to the life conditions of the Anishinabe people, and to also influence in positive ways, the diverse cultures and people sharing the land base of the Anishinabe.

## Customary Care

The Elders throughout all the discussions referenced customary care. The term was synonymous with the references to the Anishinabe Way or "minobimatiziwini", the good life. They did not make a distinction between customary care and the Anishinabe Way. They see Weechi-it-te-win Family Service as having a responsibility to promote and advance the cause in collaboration with the Elders. The Elders Council was the body that they wish to do this kind of development with.

They appreciated the challenges that child welfare work presents from the multi-generational pain and cycles of learned behaviors that is prevalent in the communities. Some of the Elders have first hand experience with customary care in taking in their own grandchildren into their home. These situations include examples of care with support from Weechi-it-te-win Family Services to those situations where care was extended without Agency involvement. In either situation, there was no value judgment favoring either scenario above the other. They appeared to be acceptable conditions within the meaning of the dialogue concerning customary care.

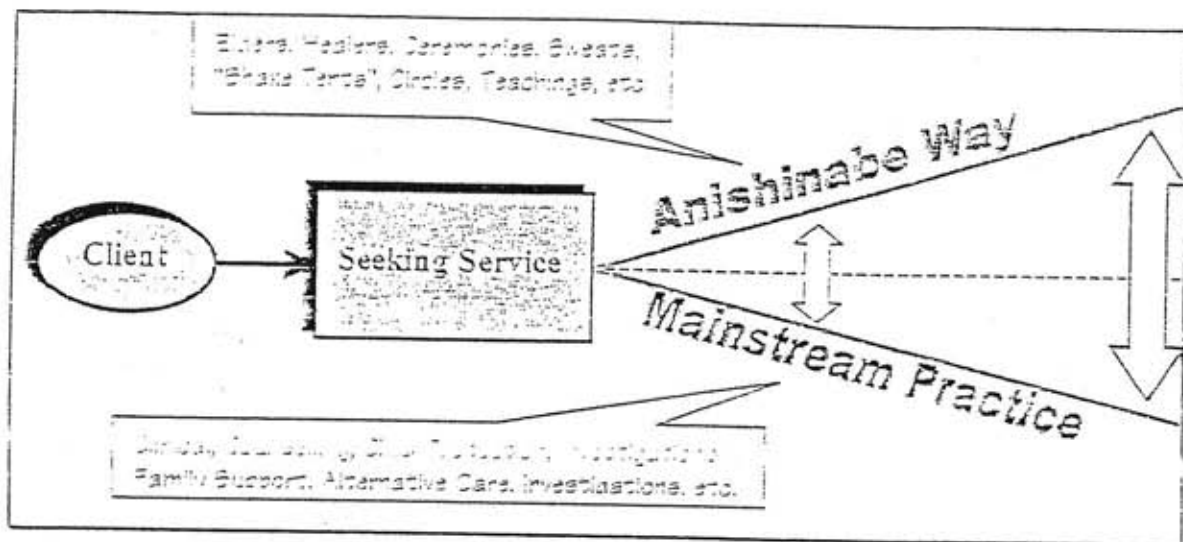
The discussions made it clear that there is still many of the people who do not access all that the Anishinabe Way has to offer, and that many choose not to. Others are satisfied with being "arms length" to the culture while living in the modern world. Others are interested in learning the Anishinabe Way. At whatever stage a person is, their choice should be respected. Those who are sincerely interested in seeking the ways of their culture should be supported by whatever means are available. They see the young people as at a crossroads and beginning to seek the Elders' knowledge. They would like to see more emphasis for this group. They (Elders) know that the services focuses more on those in need of help rather than those who are healthier in their outlook. Ways have to found to access resources for this group. It is the young that need the support in terms of services that will break the cycle of dysfunction and take on the cultural services to make a better life for themselves. It is the young who were taken from their mothers and fathers by the residential schools and later on by the CAS.

There are many ceremonies and teachings, which can be reintroduced that would support and build a healthy identity for the children. These must be researched and planning and more consultation done to find ways how one can be done.

In asking for a definition of customary care from the groups, there was consensus that customary care "is all the things that we have been talking about..." (in these two ways) as one of the participants stated. It includes all the elements of the Anishinabe Way. The definition of "care" for the child was also much broader than the mainstream concept. Child care starts "before birth" as it was also observed by another participant. This may not be a politically correct concept in some mainstream circles, but it is nonetheless, an Anishinabe reality. Customary care is all the things that the people and the people's and maternal. Again, this notion would

and a request for service on the Anishinabe Way, service agreement may converge at any point of a request for service on the Anishinabe Way, service agreement.

### WFS - Bi-Cultural Practice



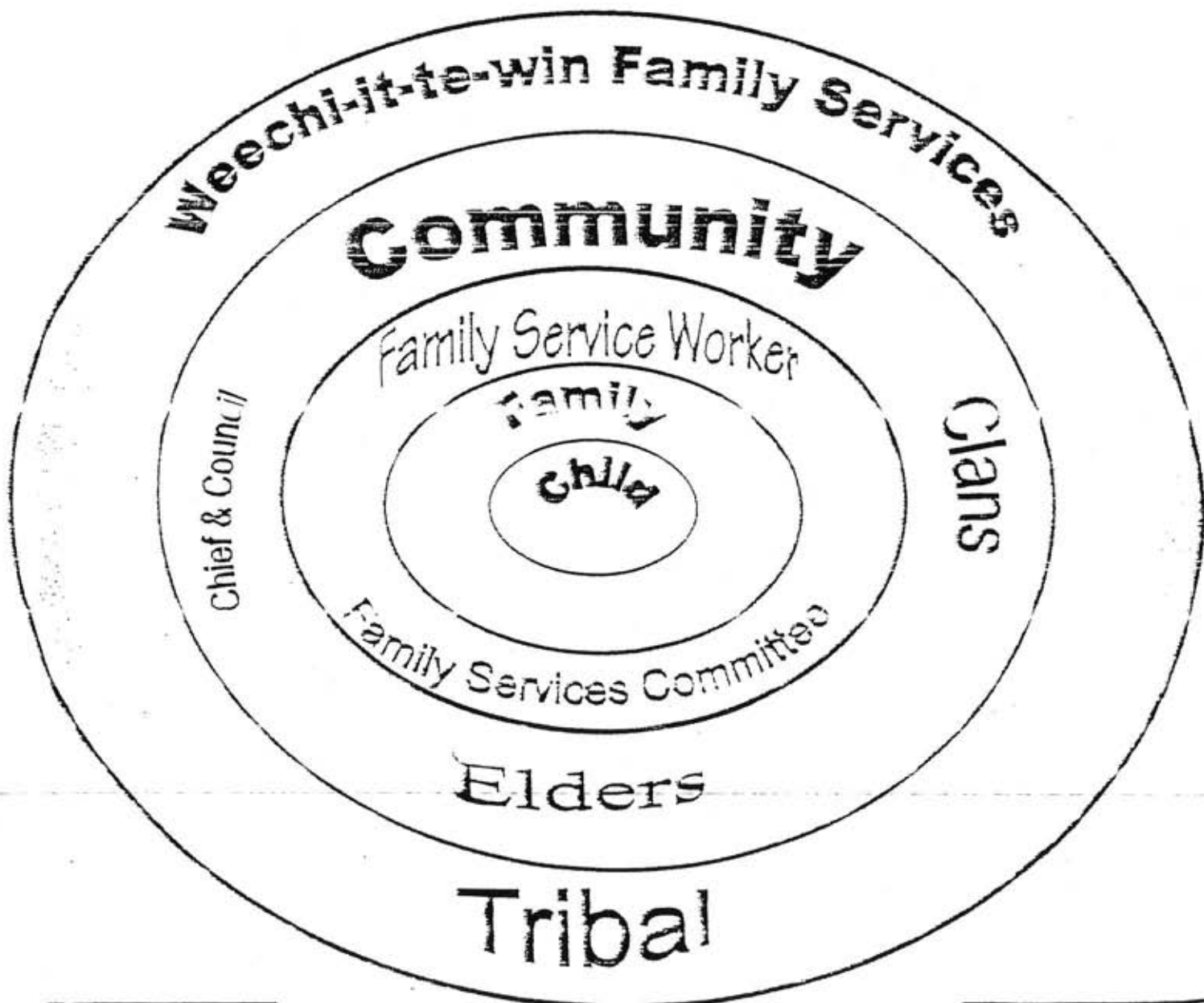
There were many other cultural concepts that entered the discussions in the groups that would challenge the views and beliefs of the larger society. These divergent viewpoints underscore the diametrically opposed worldview between the Anishinabe Way and mainstream society and their practice. In child welfare, these differing viewpoints have collided with devastating consequences to our families at the community level. Foreign social work values have wreaked havoc on our family systems already, reeling from the legacy of the residential school. Communities concerned about the damage from mainstream social work values on our families and communities was the major driving force for change that that caused us to consolidate our focus and resources that eventually formed the *Weechi-to-be-win* approach to social work practice in child welfare.

The efforts of the communities to plan and conceive the model of child care that grew into the Community Care program was a massive undertaking that prevails until the present day. *Weechi-to-be-win* Family Services is the product of a dream for a better way to provide service under a system that recognizes and utilizes the cultural strengths inherent in our communities. All the elements of the Ojibwa nation became involved with the goal of preserving family and traditional values and practices. The boundaries between the political, social, and spiritual have permeable boundaries that interact and intersect at many points in the system. This causes both headaches and also, presents interesting challenges for planners working within the system. Underneath it all is the passion for protecting the most valuable resource of the community and nation-the children.

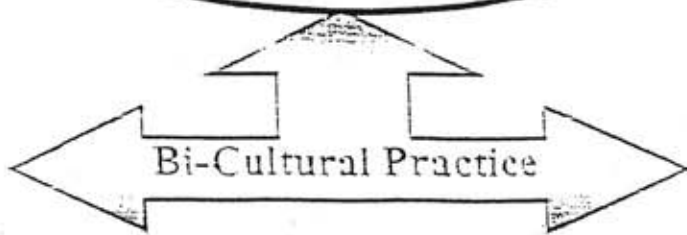
The following chart was developed by the community to illustrate the protection of its people from the groups on the subject of customary care.

Antahinabe Child Welfare System  
 Customary Care Concept

"A child is a gift from the Creator. We as a people, have a duty to help continue the life of that child in our roles as parents, grandparents, and families and collectively as communities. Customary care begins before the child is born."



Modern  
 • Mandated  
 • ---  
 • ---



Traditional  
 • Developmental  
 • ---  
 • ---

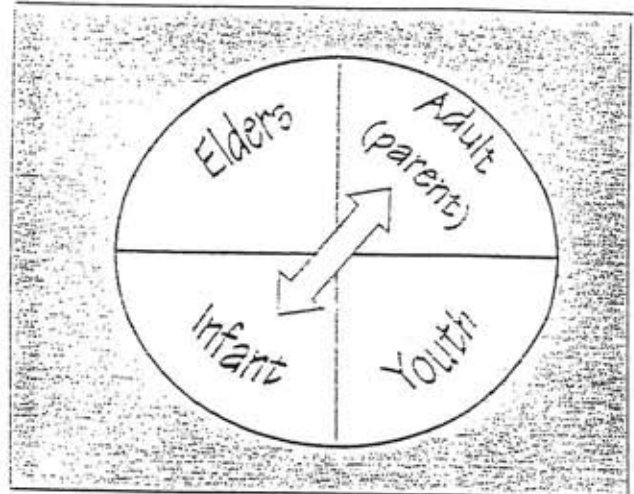
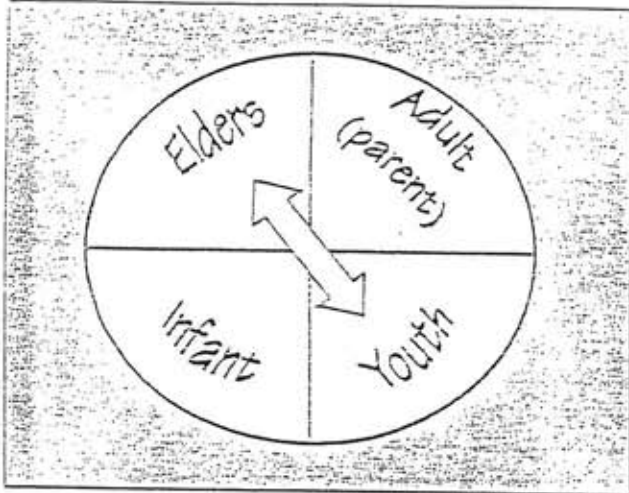
There is a depth of knowledge and information that could not be captured adequately with the written word, but the chart captures the elements of the concept of customary care within the understanding of Weechi-it-te-win's model of child care as noted by the Elders. It was further noted that customary care is much bigger than Part K of the CFSA, but within that narrow context, we have built a child welfare system that is workable and continues to set the standard within Treaty # 3 and beyond. It is the Elders' desire that we continue the good work that is done while exploring new doors of opportunities that will surely open up for those who "catch the vision".

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## Reconnecting the Generations

The importance of connecting the generations once again was another theme that was woven into the discussions. The need for grandparents to interact with the youth was evident in the comments made by the participants. A corresponding need is also needed in the area of parenting skill development to connect parents with children.



This could be facilitated by some of the group work themes that were brought forward in the discussions. The Elders acknowledged that the our people are in varying states of cultural understanding and orientation and therefore; a balanced continuum of services must continue to prevail that is consistent with the model of bi-cultural practice that Weechi-it-be-win Family Services practices. There were suggestions made for a number of community-based groups that target men, women and youth; and others calling for a revitalization of the Ojibway language through language camps and similar projects.

These new programs would support the need of parents to acquire the understanding and skill to connect with their children as well as facilitate an exchange of cultural information from the Elders to help address the anxieties and pressures experienced by our youth.

## Residential School

Healing the legacy of the residential schools upon our people was a predominant theme that reoccurred consistently throughout the discussions over the two days. There were numerous references to the loss of language, culture and identity; as well as many stories and testimonies of the abuse that took place in the schools. While not specifically the focus of this gathering, the residential schools have left an indelible scar upon the consciousness of the Elders and upon our people and communities. It would be impossible to exclude this chapter of the Anishinabe experience on our journey on the Anishinabe Way. There have been too many lives deeply traumatized spanning several generations to not give due acknowledgement.

The Elders have an interest in assisting Weechi-it-be-win Family Services to address the legacy of the residential schools. By transcending the history and experience and bringing forward the time tested and proven tools, resources and methodologies of Anishinabe wisdom, Elders see themselves as key players in addressing generational pain.

There have been demonstrations of the role Elders play in contributing to designing healing support models and circles in our communities. One of the concepts that emerged in the gathering was that of a community justice model that is described in the following section.

---

# Community Healing Process- Alternative Justice Model

## Guiding Principles

1. Exhaust all avenues (resources) available in the community: family, grandparents, Family Service Committee, Chief and Council. This will give chances for families to get their lives straight by healing (offered in the community).
2. Protocols will need to be developed to deal with severe cases
3. Possible banishment from community if all else fails after observing and following all protocols established.

This will require the development of a justice system internal to the community.

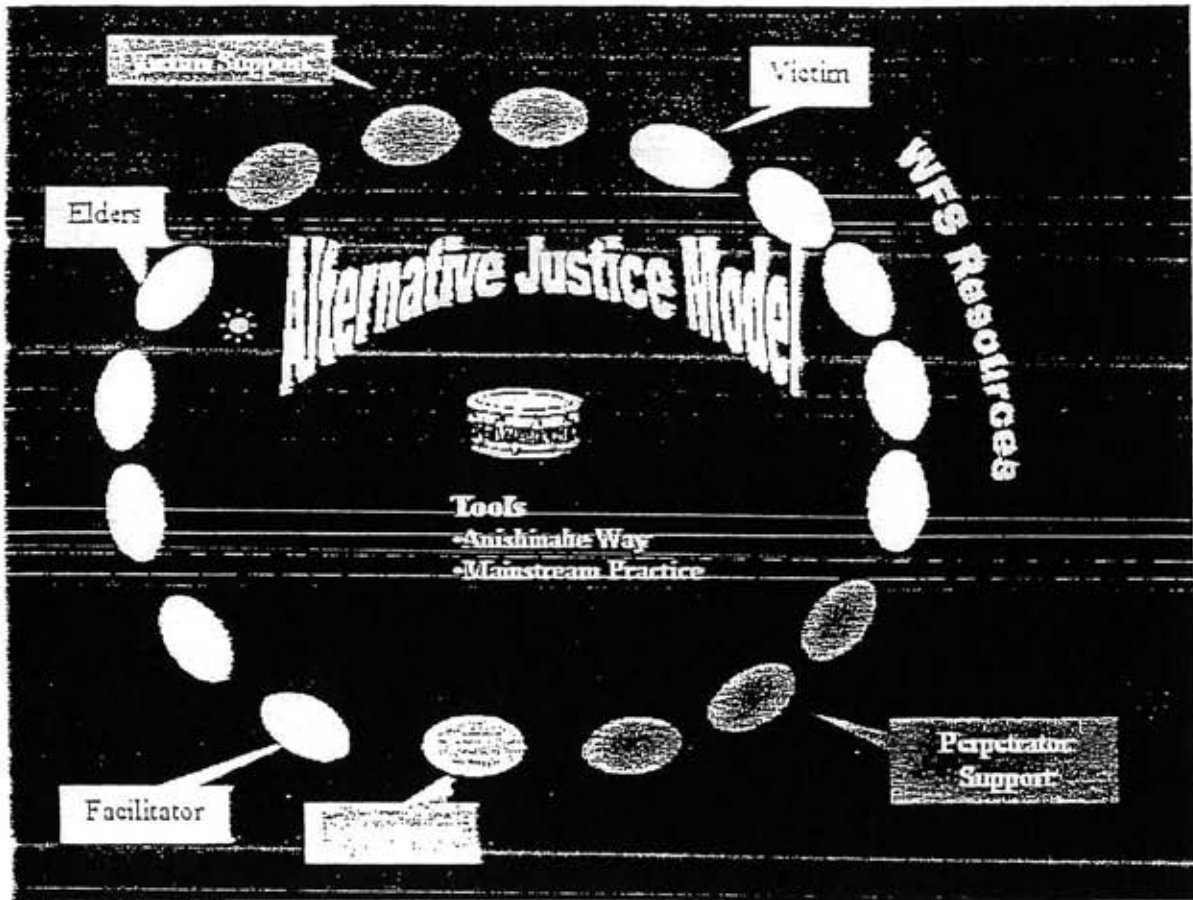
Should include supports for all involved:

- Victim ----- support system
- Perpetrator ----- support system
- Community ----- support system

What is required?

- a. An aftercare system in the community.
  - b. A declaration of customary care by the community
  - c. A basic understanding of the root of the problem
  - d. Understanding the impacts of the residential schools on our people and communities
  - e. Understanding the nature of the Indian Act
  - f. Understanding how non-aboriginal systems affect us
  - g. What religious intrusion has done to our way of beliefs, customs and "freedom"
-

# Community Healing Process Conceptual Model



*Recognizing that the Anishinabe Way is a traditional form of justice that acknowledges the community of justice. It is a process that is not adversarial and not adversarial. It is a process that is not adversarial and not adversarial. It is a process that is not adversarial and not adversarial.*

## Objectives of the Model:

- ❖ Allow the perpetrator to come forward and take responsibility for the crime.
- ❖ It has a supportive and healing process.
- ❖ Recognize the role of the community, as well as the individual.
- ❖ By the nature of the process, it encourages effective areas of individual input and output.
- ❖ The process is a healing process.

## Concluding Overview

Recognizing that Weechee-it-te-win Family Services has 16+ years of experience in developing a practice of customary care under Part X of the Child and Family Service Act, one learns to appreciate that the achievements to date are still developmental. Unusual hours of planning, research and plain hard work lies before us to advance the model of customary care in addressing child welfare that has been enshrined in our mandate. Through the Community Care Program of Weechee-it-te-win Family Services, the complement of Elders that have been available, and their contribution to the cause to foster our development has been invaluable. We owe a debt of gratitude to these "gifts" of men and women who comprise the Elders within our communities. But for their contribution, Weechee-it-te-win Family Services would be just a "brown O.A.B." that provided no alternatives to families in need. They (Elders) have really made the difference to what the communities have been able to achieve as Weechee-it-te-win Family Services.

They Elders also feel a sense of "debt" by nature of their role in Anishinabe society. The commitment to promote Anishinabe methodology and tools under the bi-cultural practice as a means to make a difference speaks of their need to fulfill their call to further the goals of "Weechee-it-te-win". This is the dynamic that makes the Weechee-it-te-win mandate unique in child welfare in Ontario, and in Canada for that matter. The dual mandate of the Agency ensures that the practice and developments of Weechee-it-te-win Family Services always remains under the ultimate control of the communities. The Elders contribution to this end is critical and vital to the process. They make the connection to the community "real" by "re"lending the nature of service delivery, and through promoting the "vision" of Weechee-it-te-win.

Elders promote concepts and stimulate thinking that encourages the people to aspire to achieve their potential. The nature of our relationship to an Elder is a determinant to what will be perceived, received and achieved. This principle is consistent from a systems perspective; that is, the relationship of Weechee-it-te-win Family Services, the organization, to the Elders is a determinant to what we will achieve. They provide the foundation and the sense of stability, as well giving substance to the vision of Weechee-it-te-win. Without this, Weechee-it-te-win Family Service would have only the Child and Family Service Act as a foundation for development. Because of the contribution of Elders, the political aspirations of the communities can be more fully realized. The cultural reference points that the Elders have established as guidelines for

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This report "misses" more than it captures when considering the depth and nature of the Elders dialogue. What we hope is captured is enough of the essential elements of the discussions to make a few observations and perhaps some statements about what the Elders are saying to us about customary care. The recommendations that follow reflect some of the directional comments that were noted, as well as some follow up steps that will complement the process that the Elders are saying out for Weechee-it-te-win.



## Recommendations

The following list presents some recommendations that have been drawn from the discussions and notes of the Elders Gathering of Men.

It is recommended that:

1. Weechi-it-t-e-win Family Services continue to lobby for funding to resource the traditional practices, cultural and ceremonial obligations of the Agency's "cultural core"; and that the cultural core of Weechi-it-t-e-win should be entrenched as the policy framework for the services practice and developments for the Agency on all fronts.
2. The Elders Council continue to be supported and nurtured as part of the Weechi-it-t-e-win Family Service structure as originally intended, and that this development should extend to the First Nation communities to form local First Nation Elders Councils to assist the development and direction of Weechi-it-t-e-win Family Services.
3. That Elders Council of Weechi-it-t-e-win Family Services and the local councils developed at the First Nations should be given the mandate to promote the Weechi-it-t-e-win "vision" which is foundational to the Weechi-it-t-e-win Family Services bi-cultural practice service model.
4. That the practice of seeking Elder direction for Weechi-it-t-e-win's future development in program and policy be continued and become increasingly integrated into the Weechi-it-t-e-win maintenance in all areas relevant to the cultural interests of the communities represented by Weechi-it-t-e-win Family Services.
5. That an inventory of the Elders of the area, and those Elders from "outside" the immediate service areas of Weechi-it-t-e-win Family Services but whom are recognized by the Elders of the ten member First Nation as part of the cultural resource pool of Weechi-it-t-e-win, be established. This inventory should include a brief outline detailing their area of expertise and knowledge in relation to the nature of the "services" they can provide to the Agency or clients of Weechi-it-t-e-win Family Services.
6. That a schedule of cultural activities that may include workshops, healing support circles, healing circles, traditional ceremonies, and other cultural activities, and related initiatives consistent with the "cultural core" functions of Weechi-it-t-e-win Family Service be established and made accessible to the Agency, communities and clients of Weechi-it-t-e-win Family Services.
7. That community and cultural-based services referenced in the discussions, and in related gathering such as the "Gathering of Women Elders", such as healing circles, Ojibway language enrichment and immersion programs, cultural retreats and seminars, specialized



groups for men, women and youth and any other such enterprises that is consistent with the cultural core mandate of Weechi-it-be-win Family Services, be inventoried and integrated into the Weechi-it-be-win Service continuum.

8. That the Cultural Coordinator liaise with the organizers of the "Gathering of Women Elders" to plan a follow conference involving both parties to discuss the findings and outcomes of the reports generated by the meetings for the purpose of planning the next steps and set direction for Weechi-it-be-win Family Services cultural core functions.
9. That this planning group are to include the youth as part of the next phases of Elders consultations. This may be included as part of the agenda of the next proposed follow up meeting of the men and women Elders.
10. That the Cultural Coordinator pursue the development of an inventory of cultural resource materials and tools for the purpose of information sharing, teaching, training tools, cultural enrichments and supports utilizing technologies available to Weechi-it-be-win Family Services such as slide, audio and video presentation, music, culture based dancing and singing, utilization of drama and skits for public performance and any other such means to promote the culture and Anishinabe identity of clients and Agency at large.
11. That the Cultural Coordinator undertake with Weechi-it-be-win, a review of the Healing Policy which may necessitate revisions and/or the creation a new section(a) to Weechi-it-be-win's policy manual to capture the essence and intent of these recommendations.

These recommendations are constructed from dialogue and notes from the meeting. Again, every effort was made to ensure that the Elders have not been misrepresented in how the recommendations have been framed.

The term "outside Elders" referenced in Recommendation 5 may appear somewhat misleading in that, Elders may come from other areas but still be within the Ojibway nation from a cultural perspective. The traditional Ojibway territories are much broader than the lines of a map. In any event, the Elders Council as understood within the context of this report would make those decisions for themselves.

It is also understood that there are other sources of funds that can be accessed to fund some of the initiatives reflected in the recommendations and that these sources of funds should be actively pursued to resource these programs and cultural activities. Part of the purpose of "trailing" the rather sizable potential inventory of cultural core services activities under Weechi-it-be-win Family Service is that much of the activities relate to family and family healing. Weechi-it-be-win Family Services has demonstrated their capacity to manage and deliver services and special projects and that the Elders feel that the Agency respects the Elders role and input in this regard.

Elders Gathering of Men "*Customary Care Workshop*"  
Nanicost Gym  
May 11-12, 2000

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# Appendix:

Flip Chart Summary

- Groups 1-4



# Group One

## At Birth or Before

(As Bird) - Adoption - Informal by Grandparents

Teaching/Language  
Sharing of life experience  
Parents/grandparents

(Duties)

Survival teachings  
By example  
Hands on experience

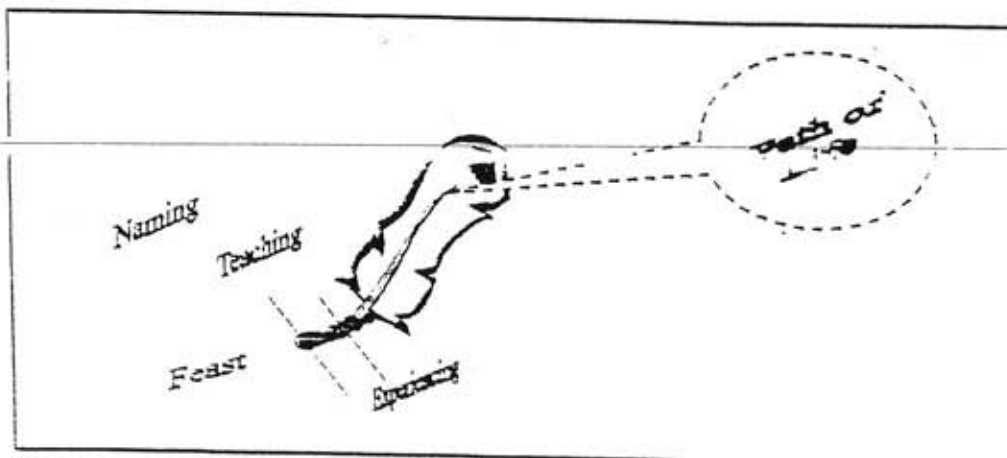
- Immediately after birth-grandparents took care of child
- Language - lose full meaning of teaching if language is lost
- Learned by hands on example; watched parents, trapping, dressing animals
- Book learning does not teach survival skills
- They are learned from parents and Elders by example

(Duties: parents/grandparents)

- Watch children constantly
- Teach informally all the time by showing how to:

Adoption

Feast-Use of Feather



## Four Seasons

Spring - Fasting

Dreams - Teaching of the Future

Summer - Gathering time

Fall - Snow-pure

Winter - Story telling, legends

- > Only certain games can be played
- > Only certain items can be used at different times
- > Shaking tent can be used at any time of the season

Community members have responsibility to teach children by example if someone sees a child who needs to learn something.

### 1 Natural Birch (at home) Naming feast

- > The "cona" was placed in the Tikinagun to protect the child's male or femaleness
- > Before the child is born, the parents will be told in a dream who is to perform the naming ceremony

- ### 2
- > Learn to be independent
  - > Learn to respect life
  - > Learn to use the natural things to survive
  - > Everyone has the duty to teach the young how to hunt and fish and prepare/how to make things for survival
  - > Respect everything/give thanks by offering tobacco

In the culture people do not have a last name (surname). So when a man and woman came together, it was not a marriage ceremony because they did not take each others name. They came together to create new life.

When a child is born, the whole community respects the child's life.

- ### 1
- > child needed to live. Food, clothing or other items the child would need in life.
  - > One's body belongs to the Creator; it is not our own but a place for our spirits to reside. This is why we must respect our own bodies and respect others.
  - > When a child is born the child will be given sacred items by the people who receive instructions in dreams. These items will be used for protection throughout their lives.

Eight levels of life ----- - below  
+ above

- Every season you have a ceremony.
- Learn from watching the animals, how they survive
- Everything is done in the daylight
- Knowledge can be learned from everything. Stones, moss, ... they have gifts to give to help you survive.
- The Elders can teach you these things

#### Before Birth

- 1) 1 - 4 Years old
- 2) 5 - 9 years old

#### General statement

- 2) Five to nine years

- They are to provide teachings
- To learn life in general
- Elders provided stories or legends. From there they learned to respect everything.
- Children are taught to understand how to treat the living things around

#### Some things you weren't allowed to do:

*Taught at this age*

- Were not allowed to go around at night
- (Respect the night) - the danger of the night, use of tobacco-as a means of acknowledging spiritual presence
- Many things are only spoken of in ceremonies or legend telling
- At an early age a child will be taken to a sacred area for one night
- To be an experience
- Any vision or dream must be kept to oneself or they will lose the gift
- Constantly reminded not to reveal these things
- Cedar is used as protection
- Sometimes as bedding
- Visions are secret to one individual's teaching
- Be forgiven
- Prepares to eventually fast to receive gifts of life

#### Ten to Thirteen Years

- Fasting is a time to receive various types of gifts for your life usage
- Sometimes you are given Drums, Songs and/or Items for you only
- You don't talk about these things or you may lose their effectiveness
- Teachings are everywhere: the sky, land, water or living things such as the animals

Fence

Ball

Strap

- > Residential school - don't use your language - use their language and way of life
- > Went home --- free
- > Mother went to residential school—never talked about it—difficult to discuss
- > Stayed home for about 2 years - constant fear

16 years - 6 years

program u\_\_\_\_\_ the student th\_\_\_\_\_ - 12 months in Kenora x's 10 years

itou Day school

- > When in trouble - made you scrub the floor with a toothbrush
- > Food was bad -
- > Saturday - clean up yard, every stick/pebble
- > Farm - planting - end of field 1<sup>st</sup> ---reward-5 cents
- > Laundry
- > Cut wood in winter
- > Dad stopped me
- > "Day schools" - First in 1906

Vent's

Residential school - St. Mary's

- > spoke our language- taught the Nuns and Priest the language
- > in June we went home - till September
- > Coughing children could go home and return in the evening
- > 14 years - worked for all summer

JAS

- > Serial placements
- > Did not know for years where he was
- > He was in Minnesota
- > no wps? Asked to keep him
- > took around mikes in foster care. (Adrian)

- > Friday and Sunday sent to Fort Frances-military training
- > World War 2 closer- \_\_\_\_\_ being sent to war 14 yrs

cadets

300 boys

Customary Care



- Community (family) took care of children.
- Children kept within area (community, family) if children moved around they would experience anger.
- Grand-parents played a big role if family could not keep children.
- If the grand-parents could not do it then it was the brothers or sisters of the parents.
- Family support workers should also focus on keeping children within community.
- S's play a big part in why families adopt.
- children get confused when they move from one foster home to another.
- Community support for the family.
- Keep Anishinabe children within Anishinabe families.
- This would teach tradition and culture to the child.
- Stability for the keeping the child within home rather than moving around.
- In the community, if family having trouble (drugs, alcohol etc.) and support worker moves child to another home, then there must be protection if family threatens and tries to bring child back home.
- Community workers (committees) must be more mindful of what they do. Eg. Child was taken out of home (foster) when foster parent was getting attached to child.

#### Placement Matching

"ishetowat"-the lifestyle, the child, ...parents

- Caregivers – teach "Anishiwke oti gewiwe"
- Don't try to change the child's beliefs.

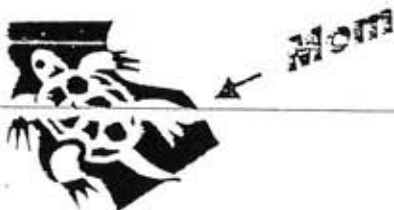
Emotionally protected ---- tobacco

Kanienkehaka – Mohawk

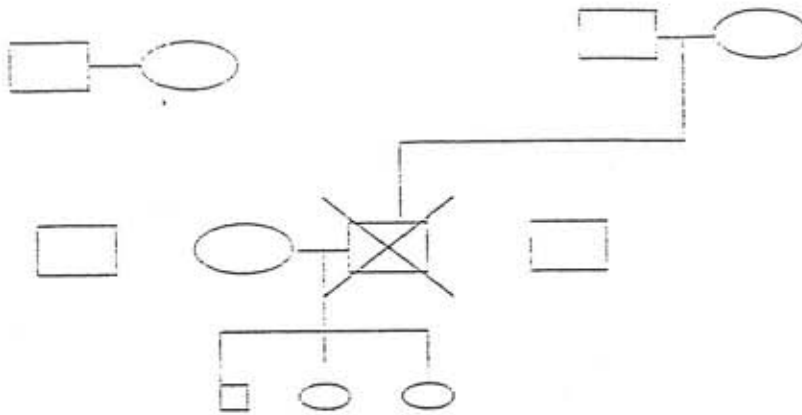
Onkwehonwe – Indian

Ojibway

"Snabontawan"



"Role Brothers and Sisters



Ojibway Teachings 
 / Go back-look  
 — Misplaced

- Sent to residential school
- Taught European culture/religion
- Today's parents - do not know how to parent
- Dysfunctional families - delinquent children/
- Sniff-drugs-alcohol, create dysfunctional lifestyle
- \$'s cost of going back - will adapt - renewed Ojibway parenting skills
- sickness/improper eating habits/what we eat
- teaching ourselves of what to eat.
- Exercise giving balanced lifestyles.
- Making traditional lifestyles part of contemporary lifestyles (eg. dance trips)
- \$'s vs. culture (Anishinabe) - how much (\$'s) does a person really need. (eg. gambling...spending it at all the wrong places)
- parents need to learn their values along with the youth

## Group Two

a. provision of tobacco for everything  
that he does ie. canoe, boat in water

### A. Age 0 - 4 years old

- Don't remember much
- Talk to him in Anishinabe language
- Teachings begin - around age 4
- Respect animals/play
  - Don't make animals suffer
  - respect even the insects
  - same effects "onjiwewin"

learned at 4 yrs,  
by parents and  
was bought him up

- 4-8
  - residential school
  - taken over by somebody else
  - people that ran the school
- respect people - travel - show you things along the way
- everything starts at home-language ie English children speak English

### Teaching:

- sacred areas
- tobacco
- never point at island or anything that is sacred
- make people laugh
- more relaxed
- Anishinabe name
- Ceremony before entering Pow-Wow
- First kill - "aeiginak"
- grandfather does ceremony "sagiquechimacchige"

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### 6 years old

- Clans - through your fathers side of family
- Respect - many do not know, they were not told
- Ojibway - members "family"
- Ojibway territory - cannot marry the same clan



- ❖ Process – ask the Elders present if this was their experience?
- Clan identification – ask your extended family
- Residential school – beaten for speaking our language
- This was where the “nieh” was lost
- Have to learn to “let go” (the effects/bad experience, heal ourselves)

### 0-4 years, Roles and Relationships

#### a. Grandparents – teachings

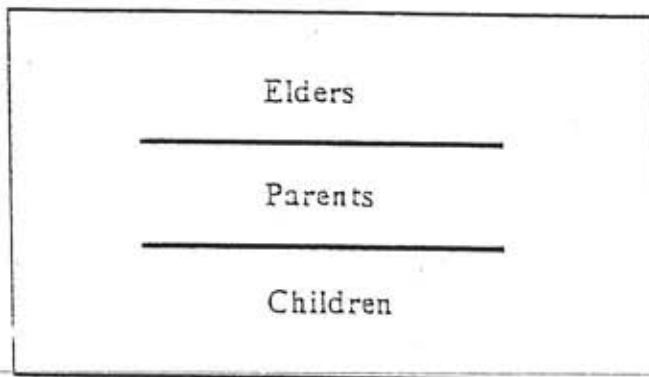
- Talk about natural foods-picking berries
- Feast
- Gifts – tobacco
- Grandparents, brothers, sisters & extended family kept kids in the community-other extended? Family
- Foster homes

#### b. Parents

- Ceremonies – knowledge
- Roles \_\_\_\_\_ changes
- Never spank the children

#### c. Daa

- Provide everything to the family



### Eight to Thirteen Years

- Fasting began (usually 4 days) no water, no food ✖
- No shelter was used
- At the fast is where they got visions, dreams knowledge
- There is an island on Rainy Lake which was used for fasting.

- > The more you suffered during the fast and after, then you were looked upon with care (love) by the Creator.
- > Long ago, they used to have only young people (youth) fast.
- > Sundances are part of Sioux culture (not Ojibway)

### Skill Development

Learn:

- > survival skills
- > social skills
- > living skills

Taught:

- > warn about traditional family relationships
- > specific relational family positions

Ojibway Family System

### Customary Relationships

Parents Responsibility

- ❖ Fred Major - Harold McGinnie

Further follow up



Traditional Family Relationships



Everybody

Knew

the culture

- > F2 & wo - teaching the language
- > Boy during puberty - used sticks to hold penis for urinating
- > Life change process - becoming a man

### Aftermath

- > Forgetting about the importance and significance of tobacco - the first offering for any cultural activity.
- > Ojibway teachings don't use this word - putting them aside - it is not "loss" to learn other societal ways

St. Marguerite's

- Always give thanks for your "learnings"
- At this age you are preparing for manhood
- Your voice changes
- Taught to respect women
- Prepare you to be responsible
- The sun takes of the man, the moon takes of the woman
- Fasting dependant upon the length of time the person could endure (suffer)
- The longer one could stand, the more gifted he was
- At this age they are still pure and able to learn
- Grand-parents are responsible to teach the fasting and its purpose
- They are taught to hunt and prepare but first have a ceremony
- Their first kill is important and how they treat it
- They must feast everything they do; celebrate
- They share their kill with the Elders. They eat last
- Everything has a teaching
- There is a reason for everything that happens. We must observe to understand
- Understand your responsibilities

#### Thirteen Year and On

- Patience is self-discipline
- Meditation is a tool to understand life
- Be observant of everything
- Natural smudging is purification
- Hunting and fishing promotes patience

#### Day 2

- Residential school
- Foreign language
- Do not know how to parent (dysfunctional families)
- Drugs, sniffing, alcohol
- Addictive behaviours

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#### Unwritten Customs

When an incident of child neglect happened, it was known without question who was responsible. Punishment was not the answer. A healing process was put into place.



## Group Three

### Birth to 3-4 years old

- An Elder did a naming ceremony for the child.
- At this time, a feather is given to the child and the mother is the "keeper" of the feather for the baby.
- This feather is hung at the head of where the baby sleeps.
- An offering of food, blankets, and tobacco is made on behalf of the baby.
- There are different ceremonies for the male child and female child.
- These practices were common before the whiteman came to this area. For example, there were no stores in the area until the first one in 1932.
- Teaching of love, respect and getting along with others starts very early.
- Grandparents have important nurturing role. (spending time with kids)
- The grandparents would do story telling and teach and sing songs to the children.
- The role of the father also included some story telling and sharing and singing songs.
- The teaching of the Anishinabe language is a lifelong experience - it never stops but continues throughout one's life.
- Atkinagun teaching-very fundamental teaching to our people.
- Moss was used to lay baby in. Birch bark was placed underneath. This was like a jumper and was the same for the male and female child.
- Teachings about respecting the night time begins at this age - and continues through life.
- Taught to not pursue relationships with some from your own clan. They are your brother and sister.
- The larger community helped to look after the children. All parents watched out for the children. (the community raises the children)
- "OGIN-A-WIN" - refers to a set of teachings with many applications about one's life and how behaviours can affect one's self and family- even future generations. The teachings start when an infant begins to speak and continues throughout one's lifetime.

### Age 4 - 5 years old

- Teachings related to respect of the water, ceremonies and other aspects of Ojibway life begin to be shared at this age.
- Children were not to be in the Roundhouse until the child had some basic understanding of the teachings and how they are to relate to them. For example, they had to show respect through good behaviour around the cultural practices, sitting still etc.
- They are taught to have respect for all living things and whatever comes from the earth. They begin to be shown that they are to take only enough for what is needed.
- Consequences for behaviours are taught, sometime through sayings. Eg. don't whistle at night.

- Willow stick teaching-very rarely used but it was there. One had to go and find the stick and in searching, the child would be thinking of the behaviour and the consequences. Because there were so very many methods, examples from life, and a system teaching in place to raise children, this practice was very rare.
- Teachings about the use of tobacco begin at this young stage of life.
- The father taught "games" that related to the child's environment and life.
- Young males began to make tools to play with that would help him to learn valuable skills necessary for life. Eg, everyone had a slingshot, bow and arrows and/or fishing spears. Older brothers, uncles, father or grandfather all helped the young boy to make these things and to use them. They also took the opportunity to begin the teachings related to respect for animals that they would hunt for and sharing of what they got etc. while doing these things.
- Young girls were not to touch these things. They were for the boys and there were teachings and stories to support this. Eg. they would have a flat chest if they touched these things. All part of learning their proper roles in society.
- At this age, they were taught to get up early and do something outside (so the Creator will see busy). This taught them not to be lazy and to not waste the day.
- They were expected to start helping with the chores at home such as hauling water.
- They learned how to make a fire and all the teachings needed to have respect for fire.
- They learned more and more about respecting the world and the way of life through doing things with the teachings.
- They learned not to laugh at people with disabilities. They were reminded that one day they would have children and they would want them to be healthy in every way.
- The young boys were taught about hunting and respect with support from various ceremony and ritual.
- Values of helping out any way that they could were taught.
- In days past, fasting and the teachings were started. Eg, at age 4, the first fast of 4 days would take place on an island by themselves. They would be watched over by the Elder or medicine person during this time so they were kept safe. There were situations where a fast may last up to eight days, but this was not the usual practice.
- Today fasting is generally not started until they get much older.
- The boys were told to play with just with other boys from age 4 - 17 years of age.
- The dances began to be taught to young boys at this age.
- The individual does not decide how long a fast will be/ the spirits will direct him when the fast begins through a vision.
- "Moccasin games" begin in this stage of life.
- At five years old, children would offer tobacco to a "legend teller" and they would sit and listen. This took place only in the winter.
- "Legends" says that if this took place in the summer, it meant that a frog sucked on him.

boys fire  
girls  
water



## Age 9 – 13 years

- A ceremony was done once you killed your first elk or deer. There had to be an offering ceremony and a feast as part of the teaching.
- Not only was there ceremony, but they also had to skin the animal, learn to cut the meat up, what to do with the inside parts (hanging them up) and not to waste any part of the animal. Everything had to be used and everything had a use.
- They were also expected to share the meat with everyone.
- The community gets together to participate in the ceremony of the first kill.
- They were taught to help out the Elders and anyone else that had need.
- "Listening" becomes more important in relation to Elders teaching and learning ceremonies. This continues throughout life.
- Teaching of the Drum begins.

## Age 13 – 18 years

- In days past, sexual relations did not happen during this age.
- The young men were taught to have respect for women and sex relations were to be for later age (eg. after 18 years). Not like today!
- The father told the boys about sex and the mother explained to the girls about sex.
- They were also taught to respect themselves and their body.
- The boys were told not to go near or play with any girl on her "moon" time.
- The teachings of the Anishinabe have been slowly lost about 30 – 35 year ago. Since then, we have been slowly getting back our teachings.
- The young man's voice becomes deeper, genital hair, facial hair signals the one is getting physically capable to make a baby (new life).
- Teachings about family life, clan system, Anishinabe ways, rights of passage etc. all have a part to play during each stage of physical maturity and development.
- Teachings given and reinforced that the child is not a possession, but is a gift and is sacred in nature. The individual receiving these teachings (and they all get them) becomes responsible to look after their own children with all this background and expectations when they choose a life-partner.
- Hair was grown into braids and represented one's life, thoughts, and strengths.
- Some would have sacred items at this stage and would feast these items and the spring and fall ceremonies.
- The expectation was that an "arranged marriage" would take place at this stage (about 17-18 years old).
- The arranged marriage is part of the child's upbringing and life teachings.
- Physical discipline was not a part of the teaching about family life. A child was not to be hit or harmed.
- A young man was expected to "know something" – how to live, look after himself and also know how to look after a woman and children. He was expected to be able to provide with skills such as being able to hunt, fish, and trap for his family. All of this ability and knowledge had to be in his life before he could go and find a mate. He also was expected

to know his traditional background – the ceremonies and teachings of the Anishinabe way and his own role in that life.

- A young woman had similar expectations upon her from the women's cultural teachings and background.

## Loss of Culture and Effects

- Residential school introduced foreign methods of discipline, which were harmful to children and the community.
- The manner of discipline enforced by the residential schools produced a culture shock on the young children which carries on to today's generation. (Residual impact, secondary effects).
- Five hundred years of bad haircuts!
- The Anishinabe language was cut off from the young.
- There was an absence of love and nurturing from familiar sources of family ties, which were replaced by an institution.
- There were no familiar reference points to build character and learn cultural values for the children while in the schools.
- The parenting role was removed from the home and community. We are only beginning to understand the full meaning and effect now.
- Whole generations of children were removed from the community at once. They are the centre of our way of life.
- Over several generations, this produces learned behaviours and cycles of hopelessness.
- Disconnection from the teaching system of the family and community. This was devastation on all parts of our society and nation.
- The role of the government of Canada in making policies to condone this (all the above) cannot be ignored for what it is. They should be made accountable.
- "Tikinagan" teaching – represents the whole way of life. The loss of availability of this fundamental teaching is seen by how things are today.
- Forced allegiance to the church which ran the schools was harmful.
- The children were introduced to strange religious rituals that had no meaning or value to them. Eg. baptism, confession, mass etc.
- After the residential school experience, there was a loss of respect for life, a loss of understanding of the relationship of the people to the land, and a growing disconnection to the whole way of life of the Anishinabe (its values, teachings etc.).
- Today, parents and children both are learning, relearning about the Anishinabe Way (and ~~about how to live together~~) and talking anana to heal themselves together.
- There has been a loss of "spirit" among the nation. Along with this, the people have "broken spirits" that need to be healed. All these affect how we see the world around us and how we live out our lives.
- There is the loss of our identity as Anishinabe. Eg. "we have Christian names"
- How could priests and nuns that practice a celibate lifestyle teach healthy sexuality. This caused distorted ideas about relationships and human behaviours that affected our boys and girls who attended the schools.

- Sexual abuse is one of the outcomes of the residential school experience among our people and communities. Affect both males and females.
- Homosexual behaviours among males (and females) also comes from the residential school experience.
- These behaviours become generational with in our own as a result (learned behaviours).
- Residential school had staff called "keepers" or "dorm keepers" who helped supervise the kids. Some of them (keepers) became part of the problem as abusers with both the young boys and girls at the schools.
- As a result of the schools, the ability to learn parenting skills was lost. The unity of the family was damaged and caused many to turn to alcohol and drugs and other compulsive behaviours as a coping method or a way. The behaviours then became "learned behaviours" for the next generation.

What is needed (approaches) for parents and grandparents to heal and restore our families and ourselves? (what can be done to support WFS to accomplish this?)

- We need to establish more youth supports in the community such as healing circles and recreational programs.
- Parenting supports.
- Men's groups
- Women's groups
- Grandparent circles – where the participants all bring their bundles to share with each other.
- Learn to recognize the role of the medicines and the medicine persons in all these activities and in the community life.
- Run language camps and other structured and non-structured programs to support language development in the community.
- Basic Anishinabe teachings should be made available. Eg. what a bundle is and how does one acquire them. (Ojibway 101)
- Make instruction available as to how to get or earn traditional "items" as part of one's life and lifestyle.
- We have to be concerned about the "recording" of these kinds of gatherings. How is the information to be used? Can it be used wrongly and how? ... Work against us? We have to keep this in mind.
- We have to protect this knowledge and keep the information in our full control. (intellectual property)
- Weechi-it-te-win Family Services is responsible to guard and protect this information because it represents our (the Elders) life.
- The information is to used to develop the direction we (WFS) are to take to design systems and supports for our children and our healing of individuals, family, community and nation.
- There should be a follow up meeting with the women to bring developments into balance.

- A meeting for the youth should also take place to bring them into the process.

## Customary Care

- Where children could not be with parents, grandparents assumed responsibility for them. The child was not taken away from the family home.
- Children were kept together in family home and were not separated from each other.
- Older siblings assumed some of the caregiving role and functions.
- Extended family and the clan system had the responsibility to share in caregiving.
- When a child must be taken from the family for a time, the child must be kept within the community – preferably within the biological family's extended family and clan system of the community.
- Children in Children's Aid Societies from other areas should be returned to the community of origin.
- Leadership (Chiefs) should have a more defined role to play in bringing forward these issues to resolution. (political advocacy)
- The child has a right to his/her culture, identity and all that the community would normally provide.
- Customary care is all that has been discussed on the charts in these last two days. Not just CFSA responsibility through WFS – it is a lifestyle.
- Placements should be in alcohol and drug free homes.
- And the homes should be traditional in their outlook and practice.



## Group Four

Categories: Young Boy - Born ----- 3 to 4 years, 5 - 6 Years, 9 - 13 years, 14 - 18 years

Hughie Morrison ---- Big Grassy member - born Oct 7, 1927

Age 3-4

- > Born in Lake of the Woods
- > Lived out in the lakes
- > Trapping, fishing & hunting was the way of life
- > Lived in Big Island First Nation up till about 3 or 4 years old
- > Raised by great grandfather - Metis status

Age 5-6

- > Moved to Morson where the members attended school
- > Started school at age 7 years old
- > Lost my father at age of 2 years old
- > There were a lot of hard times

Age 9-13 years

- > Continued to live in the community of Morson and attended school

Age 14-18 years

- > Went to school until the age of 16
- > Started to work and which then lead to leaving school to continue to earn money
- > Took upgrading later on to get the education he missed

Bill Wayash ----- Stanjikoming First Nation - born 1943

- > Mother breast fed
- > Remember being told that he was raised in a Tikinagun

---

Age 3-4

- > Food at home was wild meats like deer, rabbits, duck, fish and many others
- > Remember parents doing a lot of trapping during the winter

Age 5-6

- > Started to help parents around the age of 5 years old
- > At age of 12 years- parents separated
- > Attended school for one year at the residential school
- > Left the residential school due to the hard discipline

#### Age 14-18

- Started living on my own along with my brother
- Began working steady ever since
- Remained single until age 25 years old

As a family man, I try to raise my own family with the teachings that I learned as I was growing up.

#### About Residential School:

- At the time of being put in the "school", the law was used against parent/mother. Once being in residential school, Anishinabe language was not allowed to be used in school.
- If you were caught using the language, we were punished.
- A lot of abuse took place while being in school, such as physical.
- People weren't allowed to go home during holiday time. The only time we were allowed to go home was in the summertime.

#### About Parenting:

- As a parent, he sometimes struck his kids in a physical manner. He feels this stems from his experience of being in the residential school.
- In his growing up years, he remembers being taught about parenting skills from his mother.
- He was also taught about the clan system and was told not to go with a female who was from the same clan as him.
- He was also told to be careful in choosing a partner for lifetime. As a result, he has been married for 32 years.
- When he started to raise his own family, he always remembered about the teachings that he learned in the past. He started to use these teachings for his own kids and family.
- One of the teachings he passes on to his boys is about remembering to make an offering when hunting an animal or for what is being caught.
- Today, he is having problems with the grandchildren. They do not listen, they are too busy watching television.
- Back in his younger days, and his wife's), they did not face the drug problems that they now have in the community.
- Both grandparents were gone before his time and he remembers one grandmother on his mother's side.

---

#### Bob Uttersan ----- Lac La Proux First Nation - 1961-1981

- He remembers difficult times
- Lived on traditional foods - fish in the summer as well as deer and other natural foods
- Came from a large family of seven
- Spent a lot of time with his father who taught him the traditional life and living skills such as survival skills
- He was given teaching on how to raise his own family properly
- As a parent, he passed that teaching to his own children
- The children began to listen and learned as he had when he was young

- All his children learned to speak the Anishinabe language
- can speak the language to this day (they are now all adults)
- Bob feels he did a good job raising his children and they are all living on their own.
- Bob spent a lot of time with his grandfather who shared many teachings about the Anishinabe way of life such as the ceremonies and visions.

#### Parenting:

- Received teachings from his father about parenting
- Teaches his family how to hunt
- Remembers being told not ever to spank his kids and not to ever treat them with physical force.
- He feels his kids learned and listened well.
- He also taught his kids the importance of work and how to make a living. They do that today and are doing well for themselves.
- He continues to pass on messages to his family; reflecting on the difficult times that he came across in his younger days (and the experience and lessons learned).
- He worked as a guide for 23 years and now his sons do the same kind of work today.
- He was able to spend time with his grandfather; who shared many teachings with him.
- And he remembers both his grandmothers.

#### Elmer Mainville Sr. - Couchiching First Nation member-born in Ft. Alexander Manitoba in 1930

- As a young boy, Elmer remembers his dad being away a lot to work.
- His mother took the role as father in his absence
- His mother taught him how to make rabbits, berry picking and taught him about the different traditional medicines.
- Elmer remembers watching his grandfather fix canoes, fish nets, making shingles and other wood work items.
- Elmer played a lot until he came to the residential school, which was around 1936. He went as far as Grade seven. at the school
- After his school residential experience Elmer found work at a sawmill.
- In 1948, Elmer went to work at the mill in International Falls, Mn.
- He also did some trapping as he was growing up.
- Elmer joined the army and served from 1953 - 1956.
- During these years he also worked for the railroad (CNR).
- Elmer had been involved with the Catholic church in Couchiching and was an altar boy and a Deacon in 1991. He still serves in this capacity today and is currently helping his people in that field.
- Elmer was also a firefighter with the Ministry of Natural Resources and continued that until 1994.
- He remembers the Anishinabe language from his early years, which his grandmother spoke to him with.

Everett Ottertall --- Lac La Croix First Nation member-born in LLC in 1942

- Everett lived with his Uncle and mother (they had married) and he lived with them until they passed away.
- Everett remembers his Uncle being a medicine man.
- They raised him well he was taught to have respect for all people which he lives by today.
- Everett moved to Thunder Bay, Ontario in 1980 and believes that he will continue to reside there as his home now. He does not think he will move from there.
- He visits in Dryden, Ontario where he has two sons living there.
- He taught his kids to respect people as he had been raised.
- "I went to Fort Frances residential school one year until they opened their own school in 1950. Then I went to school there. I completed Grade eight.
- I was in school off and on because my parents would take me trapping in the fall and spring every year. This would be October to December in the fall and February to April in the spring and then came back to Lac La Croix for school.
- So I didn't go to school much in one school months but I did learn a little bit of English and some writing.
- I have two daughters in Grade eleven and a son in Grade 3. They are doing well in school.
- My kids have a life with good parents which is good.
- My ex-wife and I were foster parents for a couple of years. We took some training for that. We had trouble with one boy and had a hard time with him because he was getting bad.

Gilbert Smith ----- Naicatchewenin First Nation member - born 1947

- As a young boy around 3 years old, I remember spending a lot of time with my two grandmothers.
- Being around them, I heard them talk about many things such as making a fire to keep warm and how to cook from a fire. (things about the Anishinabe life)
- I remember getting sick at around age 3 and being taken to a medicine man.
- At age seven, I started school on the reserve.
- My father worked as a guide on the summer time, in winter he worked as a pulp wood cutter.
- During my early years, I remember my father showed me how to work. This is what I can recall about being raised.
- I was about 15 years old and my father became ill and he needed help. At that time I decided to quit school and go to work to help out.
- While I was growing up, I always heard about our Anishinabe way of life being talked about.
- I heard about ceremonies, pow-wows, naming ceremonies and many others.
- I heard about people teaching about respect and passing the teachings to our people.

### Earling Trudeau --- Sudbury Ontario - born 1934

- The furthest back I can remember was when I was 5 years old. My biological father was always drinking. He came home one night and I guess he forgot his key so he started knocking. My mom would not let him in because he was drunk so he went to the trunk of the car and got an axe. He went to the back door and tried to break down the door.
- My next memory would be at the age of seven when my mom kicked my dad out. She came home from work and my dad was passed out in the middle of the floor. He was supposed to be taking care of me. I remember sitting in the kitchen crying because I was all by myself and I was scared.
- At the age of eleven years old, I got arrested at "Canada's Wonderland" for smoking drugs. I was charged with possession of narcotics and that where things got started for me.
- I recently got out of custody. I did eleven months for 4 break and enter charges, 5 probation breaches, escaping police custody, theft under \$5000.00 and a failure to appear (in court) charge.
- Right now I am living in Lac La Croix to try and change my life and stay out of trouble. I have managed to stay clean for the past seven months while in Lac La Croix.

### Steve Johnson --- Naicatchewenin First Nation - born in Emo, Ontario, 1950

- As a young boy I heard a lot about the Anishinabe life.
- Went to pow-wows and ceremonies in the community
- Attended school in Emo, Ontario and lived with my grandparents 1955.
- I remember that we had a hard life Re: survival.
- I lost my dad in 1962 and my mother 1960.
- Lots of teaching from my parents - how to raise my own children.
- Now it is different to live in the society
- I have become involved in traditional culture since about 1985, these are the things I do today now. (traditional)
- I was in the Indian school only for 3 months in late 1960.
- I was told to go home to my community due to my running away every weekend.
- I always got the strap every Monday.
- No talking the native language allowed. That was my reason to run away all the time.

# What is Customary Care?

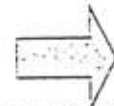
Discussion about the various orders under the Child and Family Services Act:

1. Customary Care

2. Temporary Care Agreement (TCA) ..... 1 or 2 year max

3. Society Ward ..... 1 or 2 years

4. Crown Ward ..... after 1 or 2 years - permanent



Voluntary



Crown Ward

Cumulative: (due to the Child Welfare Reform Initiative)

- 1 or 2 year max. before permanent order imposed

Customary Care under Part X of the CFSA not regulated at this time - no time restrictions!

## Discussion Highlights concerning Customary Care

### Hughie Morrison

- > Member of Big Grassy FN. and a Caregiver for WFS
- > Raised two nephews in his care till they were five years old
- > There was no agreement or documents to sign and no subsidy paid
- > When the boys started school a subsidy was paid

### Bill Wayash

- > Stanjikoming member
- > Started looking after grandchildren
- > First one under his care was one year old
- > Three others - currently one grandson in care with him
- > Bill has been a caregiver for Weechee-it-to-win Family Services for fifteen years
- > Children that are taken into care should be placed within their home community and off the reserve.
- > They should also stay together (siblings) and not to be separated.

### Bob Ottertail

- > Bob raised grandchild from a young age.
- > He did this for fifteen years
- > There was no subsidy or order involved



Elmer Mainville

- Took on caregiving role for three grandchildren who came into care with WFS

## Community Healing Process-Guiding Principles

1. Exhaust all avenues (resources) available in the community: family, grandparents, Family Service Committee, Chief and Council. This will give chances for families to get their lives straight by healing (offered in the community).
2. Protocols will need to be developed to deal with severe cases
3. Possible banishment from community if all else fails after observing and following all protocols established.

This will require the development of a justice system based in the community.

Should include supports for all involved:

- Victim ----- support system
- Perpetrator ----- support system
- Community ----- support system

- ❖ With this approach, the whole community begins to understand the whole issue.
- ❖ With the understanding comes the realization that they must take responsibility for the issue.

What is required?

- a. An aftercare system in the community.
- b. A declaration of customary care by the community
- c. A basic understanding of the roots of the problem
- d. Understanding the impacts of the residential schools on our people and communities
- e. Understanding the nature of the Indian Act
- f. Understanding how non-aboriginal systems affect us
- g. What religious intrusion has done to our way of beliefs, outlook and lifestyle

## Wrap up Comments:

- This gathering should continue.
- The next one should include some young people to participate and to listen.
- It is important to convey how the traditional practices have been practiced to staff, community and everyone involved (in this work).
- Practice the teachings
- Be holistic
- Documentation of our discussions for reference in future sessions.
- ... when things are done right .... as young people, they (the children) are provided with their gifts for life. Parents and everyone around the child are to encourage the young to maintain the positive practices (of their community).
- Barriers – eg, Boarding school
- Lack of acceptance in this non-Indian population.
- Made to feel we are different.
- Tendency to lose the Native ways because of loss of language, beliefs and social belonging resulting in drinking, and other social problems.
- We need to be visible in our Native ways and be proactive.
- We need to constantly remind ourselves to understand and be proactive about our culture.
- Be proud!
- Understand the individual communities (and their individuality).
- Off reserve people need to be included.

# *Traditional Childcare Practices*

## *Raising our children the Anishinaabe Way.*



*Respect is the key word in the relationship between Anishinaabe children and their parents or caregivers.*

*It lies at the center of a person's relationship to nature and to the Creator, respect for the Elders, respect for the child, respect for all living creatures. The management and growth of a child comes not from fear of his/her parent, but out of respect for adults and tribal teachings.*

*It is the community's shared responsibility in raising the children.*

**Prepared by: Weechi it te win Family Services  
and The Fort Frances Governance Team**

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*Traditional Child Care Practices - Raising our Children the Anishinaabe Way*

This gathering would not have been possible without the assistance of the Weechi it te win Staff member's who gave of their time to facilitate the group discussions. Chi-meegwich to Cathy Jack and Joanne Bruyere for co-chairing this gathering. As well as Gina Keast and Darlene Curci for organizing the gathering, and to all the facilitators. They are as follows:

Theresa Stevens  
Kathy Keshiequeb  
Phyllis Pierson  
Lauris Werenko  
Valerie Siwak  
Betsy Guenette

Sandra Stevens  
Lana Mainville  
Brenda Wickstrom  
Wilma Yerxa - Bird  
Brenda Whitehead

A chi meegwich to Roseanna Councillor for her assistance with facilitating.

And the young ladies of the TLC - who assisted the elder's for the two days.

To the staff of Manitou Mounds - for keeping the fire going.

It is through working together that we will guarantee a future for the children of today. They are gift's from the Creator and we must take care of them, love them and treasure them.

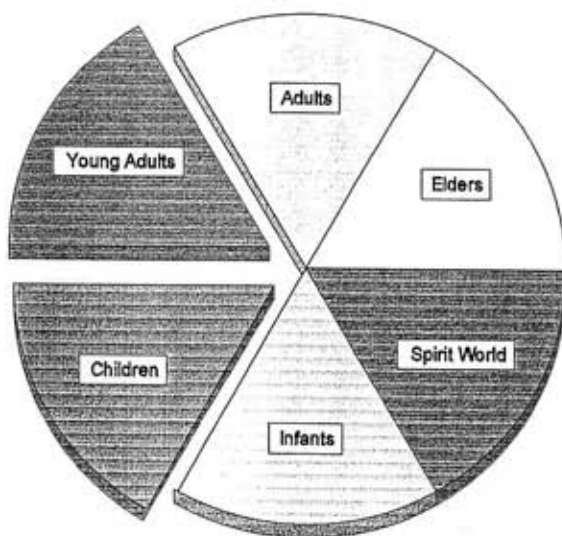
## *Traditional Child Care Practices - Raising our Children the Anishinaabe Way*

### **Introduction:**

When our people were a strong nation, we raised our children the way the Creator intended them to be raised. They were taught to live a good life and to respect every thing on Mother Earth. We had our own way of educating our children with the tools they needed to live a good life. It was a community responsibility to raise the children and teach them.

With the changes that have occurred over time, it is now critical that we start to record some of these teachings to ensure a future for our children. We have watched our children being taken away from us for the past 60 years. That is a life time. First it was the residential schools, then it was the Children's Aid Societies of the 60's that took a lot of our children. After so many years we have a nation of people that need to relearn the way of life they were intended to live. We need to prove to the Government that currently controls our people, that we can take control and that we have been given a way to properly raise our children. We have to guarantee a future for our children.

### **Family Circle.**



**When you remove parts of this circle, it is no longer complete. We need to put our circle back together.**

The funding source that is currently used to maintain the services that Weechi it te win Family Services offers to our communities is controlled by the provincial government. They are forced to follow

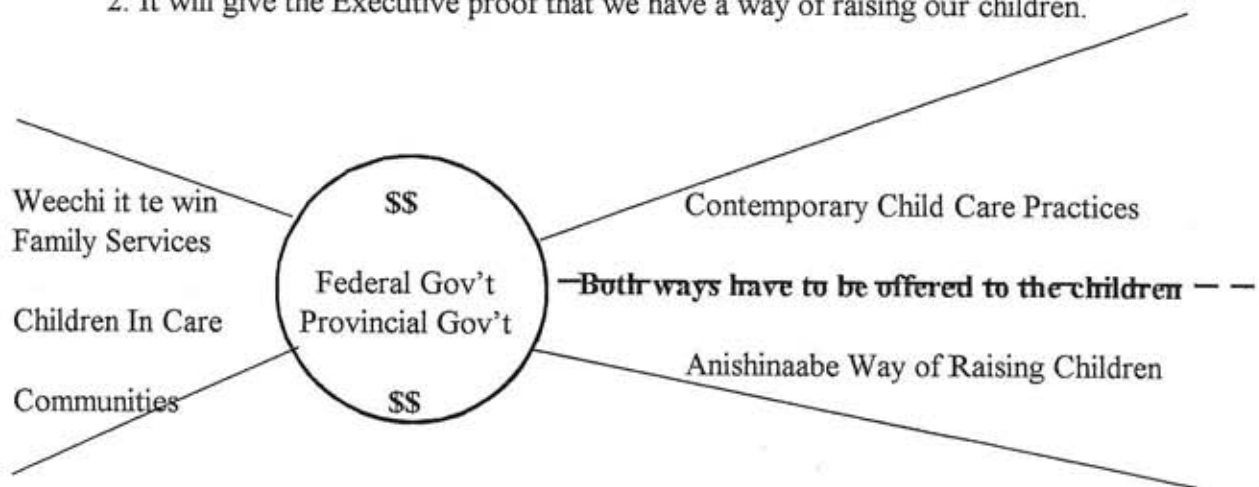


## *Traditional Child Care Practices - Raising our Children the Anishinaabe Way*

provincial guidelines in caring for the children that are in care. The lack of understanding that exists with the provincial officials that are the driving force to their guidelines makes it difficult for the Executive of Weechi it te win to convince the province that we have a way of raising our children that is more appropriate for them. Our people that have either been educated in or a victim of the European Social Work Practices know that their models do not adequately server the needs of the Anishinaabe people. We hope that through gathering our Elder's and recording their teachings, we can prove that the Anishinaabe have a way of life that is good for our people.

The purpose of this gathering is to develop a manual that will do two things;

1. To provide guidelines to Customary Care Practices that will be used by the care givers of our children. This includes parent's , grandparents, extended family and community.
2. It will give the Executive proof that we have a way of raising our children.



As a child grows, they develop a belief system in a higher power of some kind. They should not be forced to follow either the Anishinaabe way or a religious way of life. They should be free to choose which path in life they are going to follow. They should be aware of both ways of life and know that both ways are available to them.

Weechi it te win recognizes that there are some people that have lost the understanding of the culture and the language which is so important to our way of life. They also realize the importance of regaining the understanding of the culture and teachings in the healing process of our people. In order for our families to heal properly, Weechi it te win has to be able to provide both the contemporary social work practices and the traditional practices.

The Grandmother's were gathered and asked how we can provide proof to the government

### *Traditional Child Care Practices - Raising our Children the Anishinaabe Way*

that we do have our own way of raising our children that is much different from the social work practices that are presently being taught and used by our social workers. They were all offered tobacco by the staff to attend this gathering. It was with the understanding that some kind of manual would be developed from this workshop. Gina Keast and Darlene Curci worked on putting this gathering together and did a lot to prepare for it. Cathy Jack and Joanne Bruyere were asked to work together as chair person's for this gathering. Elder Joe Big George was asked to be there to assist with the drum. Elder Ann Wilson was asked to assist with the opening ceremonies for the gathering.

Once the opening was complete, Cathy welcomed the Grandmother's to the gathering. She explained the purpose of this gathering using the Ojibway language. Joanne welcomed and expressed what was hoped to be achieved from this gathering. She explained that everyone would be broken up into groups and asked to discuss each stage of a child's life. There were four groups that were formed. The first group talked on the time of conception to 4 years of age, the second group worked on the 5 to 8 years of age, the third group worked on the 9 to 12 years of age and the last group worked on the 13 to 18 years of age. In order to make sure not all the women from one community would end up in one group, they were numbered off from one to four and given an area to work in. The group discussions took place most of the first day. At the end of the day, the grandmother's were asked to think of two things over night. They were asked how we can get more native homes open to children needing a place to live and how we can develop this information into a workable manual.

Before the grandmother's were let go for the day, there was a healing song that had to be done. One of the grandmother's spoke of trouble she still faces in her life today and had to ask for healing. The healing song was done to correct this. The first day ended.

The morning of the second day was a very good learning experience for those of us that are working with the grass roots people. We are young and still learning and have a long way to go. We realized that we may have made some mistakes and hoped that we would be corrected on them and shown the proper way of doing things.

Once the opening was completed, some of the grandmother's spoke to the large group. There was a blessing of the water that was done by one of the grandmother's. One of the Grandmother's was celebrating her birthday and that was acknowledged. There were also some of the grandmother's that got up and expressed their support for this type of gathering and suggested we hold them on a regular basis.

Cathy Jack addressed the Grandmother's and told them of the importance for us to learn these teachings the Grandmother's were talking about. We do not know all these teachings and need to be taught them. Even though we are getting older age wise, most of us are still in our childhood culture wise. We still have a lot of leaning to do. One of the elder's took offence to this and there had to be a

### *Traditional Child Care Practices - Raising our Children the Anishinaabe Way*

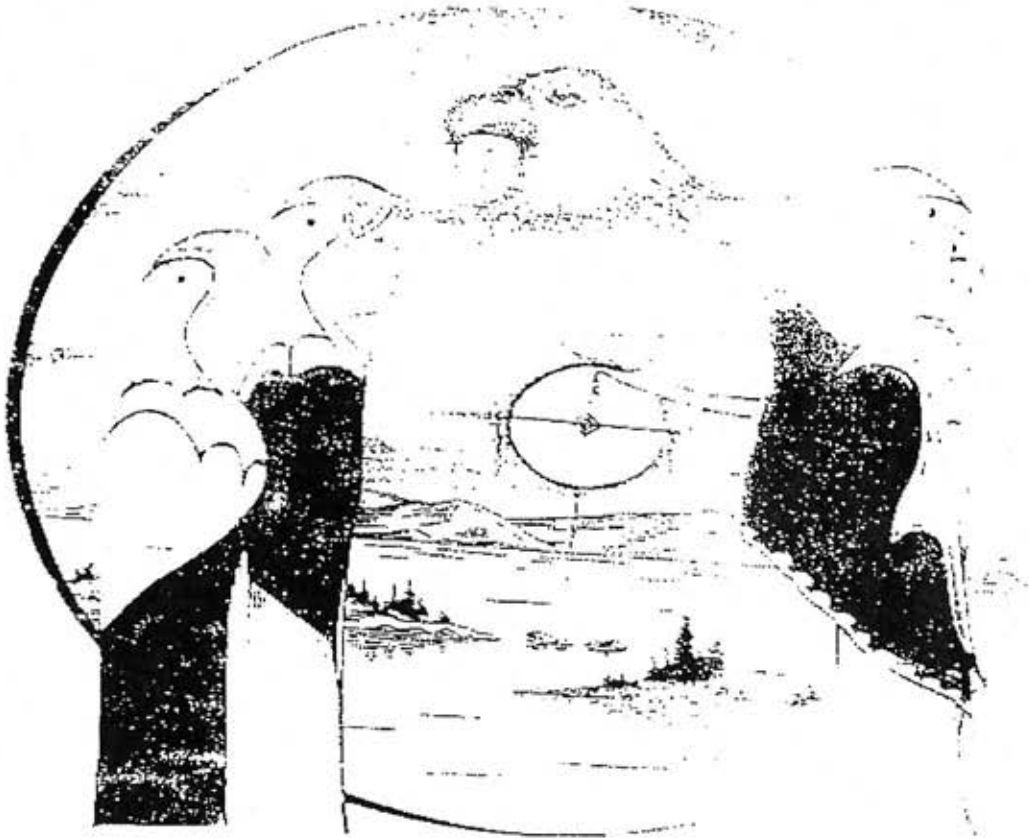
special song sung for those of us that do not have the cultural knowledge that our Grandmother's have. Once all of this was completed, we continued on with the general discussions for the rest of the morning. All the grandmother's were pleased with the way the gathering was going and the information that was being shared.

The group broke for lunch. After lunch was finished, the Grandmother's were split up into their groups again and the discussions continued. They were asked to continue on with the group discussions that they started the first day. Some of the groups had talked about all they could for the age range they were given. They were asked to go on to discuss the role of the parents, foster parents, grandparents, extended family, and the community in raising our children.

Upon completion of the two day gathering, it was suggested that once the information has been collaborated into some kind of a report format, that the Grandmother's be brought back together for one day to review and make any necessary changes to the parenting manual. It was also suggested that this same type of gathering be held for the men. There are teaching for the young boys that only the men can talk about. The other suggestions that came out was to utilize the pow wow trail to advertise the need for our community members to open their homes to our children. The gathering ended with a gift being given to all the participants and the closing ceremony being done.

*Traditional Child Care Practices - Raising our Children the Anishinaabe Way*

# WISDOM



NIBWAAKAAWIN - GIKENDAASOWIN

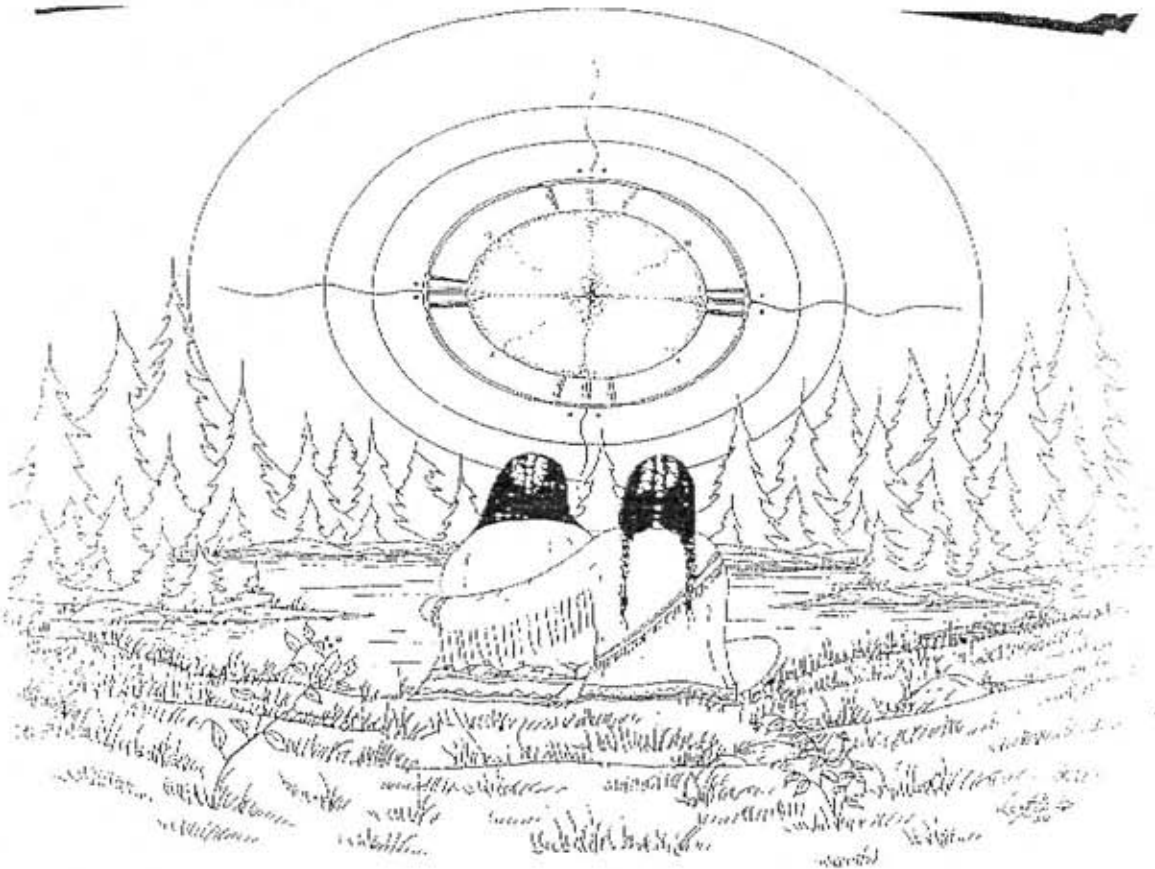
To cherish knowledge is to know Wisdom.

- to earn wisdom by taking time to reflect in everything we experience;
- to acknowledge the opportunity of every lesson learned;
- to learn a high degree of knowledge - the cumulative culture of the human race;
- to know and practice the values and ethics of my chosen occupation;
- to communicate understanding;
- to seek guidance from our Elder's;
- to consistently seek to extend knowledge and improve skills;
- to promote excellence in educational development.



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# LOVE



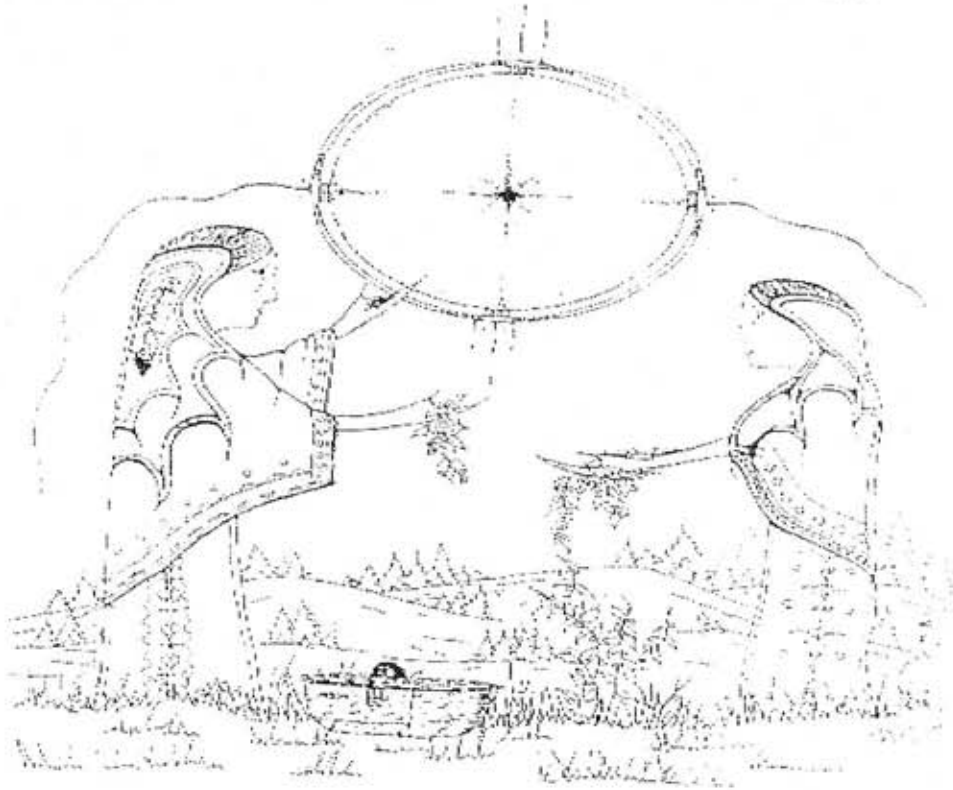
## ZAAGI'IDIWIN - ZHAAWENIDIWIN

To know LOVE is to know peace.

- to know how to get along with others and work with people.
- to have the capacity for caring.
- to recognize the value of sharing.
- to have things in a state of order and harmony.
- to show kindness and cooperation.
- to know and understand your program's mandate, goals, and objectives.
- to apply and practice values of acceptance and empowerment.
- to demonstrate the capacity to offer hope and effective support.
- to work towards harmony and well-being in interpersonal relations.

*Traditional Child Care Practices - Raising our Children the Anishinaabe Way*

# RESPECT



## MANAANZOODIWIN - OZHIBWAADENIDIWIN

To honour all of the Creation is to have RESPECT.

- to encourage respect for the diversity of cultures which constitute society.
- to accept cross-cultural differences.
- to have a strong sense of what is right.
- to maintain high standards of conduct.
- to safeguard people's dignity, individuality and rights.
- to respect the integrity of oneself and others.
- to form a meaningful relationship with the community.
- to act to effect social change for the overall benefit of the community.



# BRAVERY

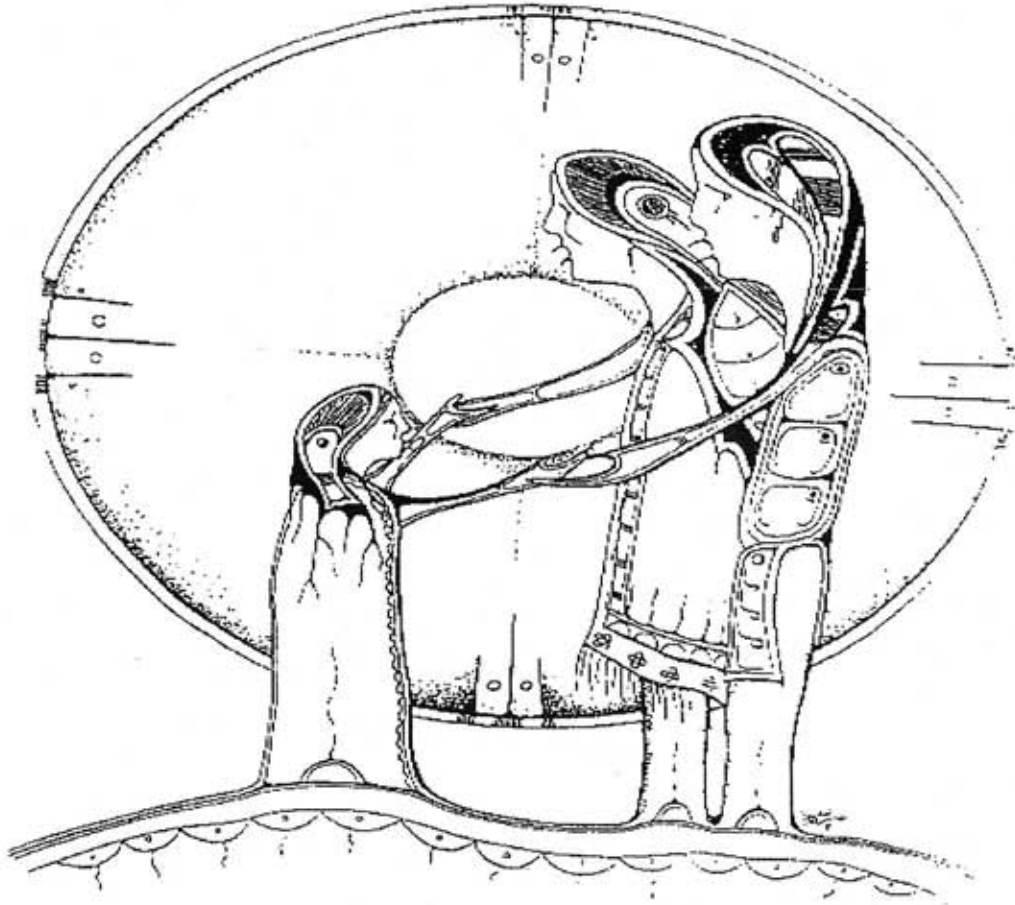


## ZOONGIDE'EWIN

BRAVERY is to face the foe with integrity.

- to have courage and face difficult situations.
- to acknowledge the ability to go deeper into self-awareness.
- to be strong and achieve completeness in our personal development.
- to maintain strength of character.
- to have self-assurance.
- to identify personal and professional development needs and undertake to meet them.
- to demonstrate awareness and understanding of own attitudes and values in the helping process.
- to fulfill obligations and responsibilities with integrity.

# HONESTY

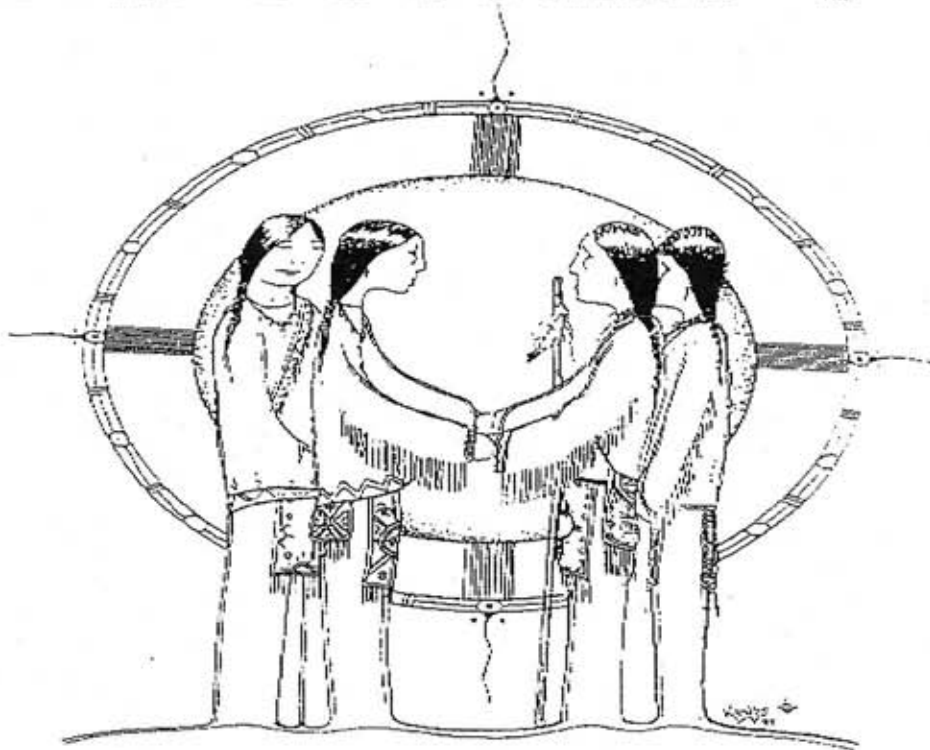


## GWEKWAADIZIWIN

HONESTY in facing a situation os to be brave.

- to have personal qualities in truthfulness, sincerity and fairness.
- to have respect for other's and for one's own personal integrity.
- to know our obligations of maintaining confidentiality.
- to know how to manage confidential information.
- to respect the inner workings and difficulties of a workplace setting.
- to know how to communicate or receive feedback appropriately.

# HUMILITY



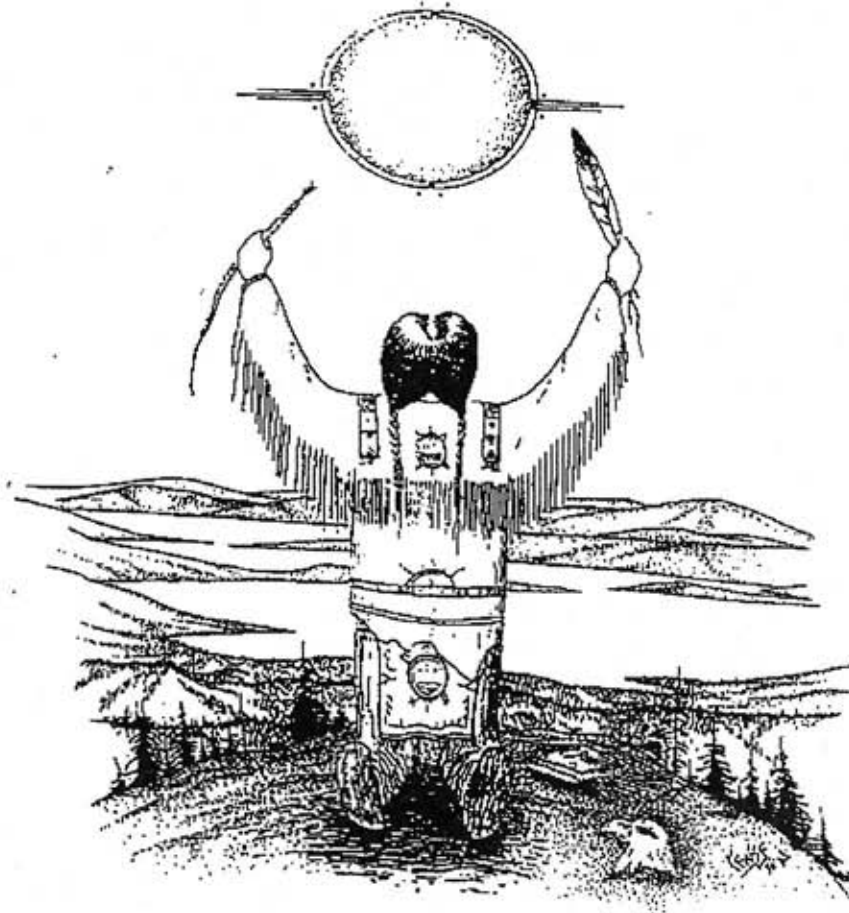
## DIBASENDIZOWIN / NOOKAADIZIWIN

HUMILITY is to know yourself as a sacred part of the Creation.

- to be modest in our actions especially in the context of helping.
- to have sensitivity toward others.
- to be respectful of others' preferred ways of doing things.
- to develop self-awareness on personal strengths and limitations.
- to know that I have the capacity for growth and change.
- to take initiative in self-development and self-evaluation.
- to use self-disclosure appropriately.
- to develop listening and observation skills.
- to allow people self-determination; mutually document needs.

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# TRUTH



## DIBASENDIZOWIN / NOOKAADIZIWIN

TRUTH is to know all of these things.

- the state or character of being true in relation to being, knowledge or speech,
- to be real and natural and have a genuine interest in your work;
- to be loyal in our human relationships;
- to learn and adhere to local community and family protocol;
- to know and understand human growth and development as it pertains to all of the Seven Teachings.

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### **Parenting**

When the Creator placed the Anishinaabe on Mother Earth, the roles and responsibilities of each were clearly defined. The women were given the major responsibility of raising the children. They were made to be the givers of life. The woman has a special connection to the water. When a man and woman decide to conceive a child, they are asking for a special gift from the Creator. Life starts when a child is conceived.

In our culture, when a woman is with child, this is a very sacred and special time for a woman. There is a ceremony that was done by the Grandparents to celebrate the newly expected life that is to come.

There are some requirements a woman must do when the baby is growing inside her. She is required to get lots of exercise because the baby grows on the woman's placenta. She is not to say anything negative about being pregnant as there are consequences. You could end up losing the gift that is developing inside you. The woman is not to brag about the gift growing inside her.

She has to take care of herself and make sure she stay healthy. The woman is encouraged eat well but there are certain things that she needs to avoid during the pregnancy. She is to eat a lot of fish soup to nurture the child while in the womb. She is to refrain from drugs and alcohol during this time. She is told to be very careful not to fall down. She is asked to get up early in the morning and retire early. She is to plan your day with the sun. When the sun comes up, so does she, when the sun goes down, so does she. She is not to fool around or run around. There is traditional medicine for morning sickness if the woman needs it. There was also a form of birth control, but this was not talked about. The elder's were always very secretive about this.

Funerals are not to be attended by women that are pregnant. She is not to view the body of the person that has passed on. If she does, something could happen to the baby (unborn). It could end up being still born or be deformed in appearance, especially around the eyes. The baby could be born cross eyed.

The woman is to teach good morals and values of life. She should listen to the advice the Elder's give to her. They really do know what they are talking about. The women are being prepared all through their life to take on the added responsibility that comes with raising a child.

Long ago, when the child was ready to enter the world, the birth took place where ever the family was. The Grandmother, mother, mother in law or another family member would deliver the baby. Today the birth takes place in the hospitals.



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A woman is not to brag about the size of her breasts. These are considered the sacred mountains and are intended for nurturing and feeding the baby. Breast feeding is the most important component of the bonding process that takes place between the mother and child. Long ago, if a mother was not able to feed her baby, there was always another mother who would have enough milk in her breasts to help out feeding the baby.

In our culture, all children remained with the family. If they were not kept by the biological parents then the extended family took them. There was no such thing as abortions. If a woman has a miscarriage, she is to bring home the fetus and the placenta and ask an elder to conduct the appropriate ceremony for her.

It is the parent's responsibility to make sure the child is taught according to the seasons. There are certain times of the year that things have to be taught, and it is up to the parents to make sure the child receives the teachings. The parent's have to encourage the child to strive for the best. To be as creative as possible. Don't be afraid to show the child love and affection. Teach them to respect every one and everything. Teach them their connection to Mother Earth. Teach them that it is ok to be sad, comfort them, don't be afraid to show them your affection.

Raising a child is a community responsibility as well. The parent's, grandparent's, extended family and community all play a very important role in raising the child. We need to learn to rely on one another again. If the parents need to have someone else care for their child, they should always remain the main part of that child's life. You have nine months to prepare for the arrival of your special gift. Never lose sight of how special giving life to someone is.

Parents today do not know the teachings and are not living up to their responsibilities. Our children are not being cared for. They are not being fed properly. They are left alone to raise themselves. Our mother's today are having their children without being prepared to raise them. We have young mother's that are into drugs and alcohol and prefer to do that over raising their children. We have young mother's that are now trying to raise the children on their own and are getting stressed out over it. We have father's that do not live up to their responsibilities to raising the child. We have too many children that are lost and searching for their identity. It is the parent's responsibility now to help the child find themselves. The parent's that are no longer using alcohol or drugs are still not raising the children properly. They are spending the time they once did in the bars in casino's now. We need to rebuild the family circle.

Parents have to stop being reckless and start caring for their children. Remember they will some day be taking care of you. Do not fight your child's battles. Be careful what you do because it will come back on you 3 X as hard. When the child does wrong, they have to suffer the

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consequences. Watch your children when they play, they will do it when they are older. "Time outs" should be for parents. Time to take a walk in the bush and talk to the trees, animals and mother earth. We are the givers of life, not the takers. Treasure the gift you have been given...a child. If children are taught early, they are never lost traditionally. If you are having problems and are struggling with life, you are just being prepared of something. You will eventually learn and understand what it is you need to know.

The women need to remind the men that they have to teach these things to our children. It is so very important that the young learn the teachings. The men have to get involved in the families. They have their own teachings that the young boys need to learn.

### **Grand Parents Roles**

Every elder woman was a Grandmother to all the children in the community. The Elder's were very much respected and could discipline all the children in the community. The Grandmother's would use every opportunity to teach the children the important teachings of life.

In the olden days, the elder's would go out fasting in order to pass down information or teachings. It was the responsibility of the Grandparents to teach the children. This was done in Anishinaabemowin, because they were taught to be obedient and to respect (manaa ji'di win) all things. They were also taught manaa zon di win - verbal respect.

The children were taught by the Grandmother's how to make bannock, how to do leather work, make clothing, moccasins, gardening, clean ducks, geese, rabbits, how to set nets and snares, make baskets out of birch bark, skinning deer and making the rope for stringing snow shoes. The children were also taught how to tan hides of the deer and moose right from removing the brains for tanning to removing the hair of the animal. They would prepare dried meat, smoke fish and dry corn for winter. There was no wasting of the animals. Every part of the animal was respected and used. The bones were used to make tools such as knives being made from deer bones and sharpened with a rock. Any part of the animal that was not used, would be placed where ever the animal came from. If it was a land animal, the unused remains were put back on the land. If it was a water animal, the unused remains were placed back in the water. During supper, the Grandmother's would teach the children by talking to them about the importance of the items they made.

The parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and extended family were the story tellers and would always take the time before the sun went down to share a story about the animals, importance of the clans, stories of the future, and respect for nature. The stories that were told about the animals always had teachings in them. There were stories of the drums, pow wow, and the importance of teaching in general. Stories can be told any time of the year.



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Legends are different from stories. These can only be told during the winter months. When a legend is being told, sometimes it would take two or three days for it to be completed. The legend teller would decide how much the children were told each night. The children were told not to fall asleep during the legend telling time. This was showing disrespect for the person telling the legend and the teaching you are receiving. Because of the teachings of honesty and respect, what the grandparents say is the truth and should not be questioned.

Grandparents are not living up to their responsibilities today, they are practicing the non native way of living. When the parents of a child are not able to take care of it, the grandparents should take over, however, some of them are too old to be taking care of little ones, but still can play an active role in their upbringing. It is their responsibility to teach the child. The Grandmother's are always willing to take the grandchildren, but they do expect certain things from their children in return. It is hard to tell your grown child they have to sober up and take care of their children. We have to bring back these teachings. Start now it is never too late to learn. The Grandmother is the one that is to make the dancing regalia for the children. She starts them at a young age. She teaches them to dance and sing. Elder's have a natural process of teaching without actually telling you what is happening. **We must emphasize the teachings.**

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### Conception - 4 Years of Age.

The birth of your child has happened and now the life teachings start. It is important that baby feel the mother's nipples soon after birth to start the bonding process. The breast of a woman are considered the sacred mountains. When a child is breast fed, they are immune to sicknesses. This is the cleanest way to feed your baby. It is very important that the child be breast fed. When your baby bits while being breast fed, they are telling the mother that there is something wrong with the child like having a stomach ache. There is a ceremony that is done to welcome the baby into the world, known as the welcoming ceremony. This ceremony should take place 3 or 4 days after the baby arrives, but must happen before the baby is able to walk.

#### **Tikinagan, Moccasin, and Moss Teachings:**

The teachings that were shared are referred to as the **Mother Earth Teachings**. The most important teaching is the tikinagan that the baby is to be kept in. This is where the physical leaning for a child starts. The tikinagan is made of 4 different types of wood, cedar, highland spruce, black ash, and bass wood. There was a lot of consideration given by the parents in preparing the tikanagan for the child. The bead work, and fancy needle work that so beautifully covers the tikanagan is a good example of that. There is a dream catcher that is hung from the protector brace of the tikanagan to catch the dreams of the child.

We all look for love, it starts with the tikinagan. If you don't keep your baby in a tikinagan, they are lost culturally. The tikinagan is the babies home, it is their sacred lodge. This is where dreams come from. The child traveled everywhere with the mother. The child learns from observing and listening to what is going on around him/her.

The cedar that is used represents love. It is used to help exercise the muscles of the baby. When the baby wiggles around inside the tikinagan it learns strength, endurance, and good posture. The decorations that hang on the board of the tikinagan represented what the child will be good at such as becoming good hunters.

The back of the tikinagan displayed the clan that the child belongs to. The child takes on the clan of the father. The baby was kept in what is referred to as a **moss bag**. This is the traditional pamper for babies. The babies never suffered from diaper rash like they do today when they were kept in the moss bags. The mattress that the baby lied on was made of leather, moss and rabbit fur to keep the child warm. The baby is fitted with a pair of **moccasins** to keep the feet warm. There is a hole that is put in the bottom of the moccasin to respect the spirits. Today, you do not see people using tikanagan's, that is where the teachings start in the physical life, namely respect.

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### **The Baby's Soft Spot.**

The size of the soft spot determines the growth pattern of the child. If the spot is large in size the child will be slow in developing. When the soft spot is sunk into the skull, or is pulsing, the child is sick and will develop a fever or has a virus of some sort.

### **The Naval Teaching:**

After the baby is born, the belly button (naval) is to be kept clean. It is important that the parents take special care of this. It is to be kept moist with Vaseline today but years ago they used bear grease. The baby will sometimes carry this for two weeks before it falls off. When it comes off, you as the mother have to take care of it. Sometimes they would be put in the bush. For boys, they were put in a dead tree any kind of a tree. For girls they were put in a dry dead poplar tree. Doing this would ensure the child would become a good hunter if it is a boy or a good wood gatherer if it is a girl. The mother may choose to keep it and pass it on to the child when they are old enough to understand the significance of it. The belly button, if kept was put in a very decorative pouch designed by the mother. This was used to help the child balance when the child begins to walk. If the mother does not take care of the belly button, the child will tend to wander. They will be searching for it. They tend to steal from other people because they are always searching for something.

The toys that the child was given to play with were made of partridge stomach - their food bags would be used to make rattles for the child. For the boys, the mother would use the skull of a duck as the toys to make sure the boy would become a good hunter. For the girls, the partridge belly button on the inside of the gizzard was used. This would ensure the girl would be good at leather work. It would be decorated by the mother. We never had the toys that the children play with today.

### **Naming Ceremony:**

Long time ago, the elder's would go fasting in order for them to pass on information or teachings. The naming ceremony is done by either male or female elder's, but in certain circumstances could be done by the parents of the child. You offer tobacco to an elder four days before the ceremony can take place and ask for a name. The elder will seek a name for you through the contact with the spirit world. During the four days, the food offerings are to be prepared by hand. It is not to be bought from a store. This ceremony was done early in the morning when the sun is rising. Long ago, a name would be provided before the child was even born, but it is never too late to ask for a name.

When a name is given to a child, it represents a bird, animal, plant or any part of the living world. There is a story that is also given by the elder giving the name. It is the vision that the elder has



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to get the name. It is important for the parents to remember the story that goes with the name in order to pass it on to the child when they are old enough to understand. At the time of the naming ceremony, there is also a token or a gift that is handed down to the child. If you don't take care of the gift or token that was given to you, you could get sick. It is important that the child have an Anishinaabe name in order for them to be helped spiritually. It is said the Creator only recognizes you by your Anishinaabe name. It is the parent's or extended families responsibility to make sure the child is given a name. This can happen anytime in life....it is never too late. The gifts that are given to you in this ceremony,(name and feather) should be feasted every year. When you say you are going to ask for a name for your child. You have to carry through with it or the child could get sick. When the child cries, you can hear the child asking for you to follow through with what you said you were going to do for them. If the child continues to be sick after the naming ceremony, the child is still looking for something. You may have to go seek another elder for another name or look for a traditional healing ceremony.

### **Childhood 5 - 8 Years of Age.**

There have always been development stages for children to go through. Some of them overlap each other and will be talked about in more than one age grouping. It is very important to teach the child the values of life. The Seven Teachings become very important to the child. At 5 years of age, the child becomes very curious about things. They need to be taught life skills. They were taught to demonstrate what their skills are.

The children learned to listen to their parents and to the elder's. They were taught not to interrupt the elder's when they were speaking. They were taught to respect themselves and everything around them. They were taught to get up early in the morning and be ready for what ever the day had to offer them. If you don't respect life it was said that the Grandfathers could make you go to sleep for ever. This was a teaching to the children to be grateful for the life they were given

Children at this age should be taught to offer tobacco for everything that is taken from Mother Earth and to seek an elder to tell them legends. Elder's long ago were very blunt and straight forward. They are taught not to fall asleep while the legends are being told, there is a lesson that is being taught during the telling of legends. This is to develop the mind of a child. They were also taught that when older people were talking, not to sit around and listen. That is how a child learns to gossip.

Teaching the child to be safe is very important. There are good spirits and there are bad spirits. The good ones are out in the day. There are bad spirits that come out at night and you could run into something that is bad for you. That is why it is better to sleep at night. You won't get sick if you do this. When you go to bed early and get a good sleep, you will have good spiritual dreams. These



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dreams are giving you direction in life. Dreams are very important. They are when the Creator comes to visit you. That is why it is important to have an Anishinaabe name. This is how the Creator acknowledges you.

Legends were also used to help with discipline. Long ago, the parents never had to yell at the children. If the child was doing something wrong, a legend would be told to the child to help them understand their behavior. If you do something wrong, (major) you were slapped with a willow stick (this taught us never to do it again,) but never on the head, always on the hand or butt.

There was never anything such as free time. The children were given chores to do. This helped them develop physically. The children had to listen all the time because they are always being taught. The children are taught to watch what their parents are doing so they will learn how to do things. If the children were sitting around doing nothing, they were handed a needle and thread for the girls. Children today spend too much time in front of the TV playing video games. When these were introduced to our people, the children started acting differently. They are imitating what they are seeing.

Girls are taught to value the men and the boys and to respect them always. Never to shame them in any way. Now a days, you see girls chasing boys around where as before girls would not do that, they (young girls) would not have relationships with the boys.

Girls should be taught not to step over boy's / men's clothing or belonging and especially their sacred items. Girls were told not to play with sling shots and bow and arrows because these items were only meant for the boys and used for hunting purposes only. Young girls are told not to climb trees or they would start their moon time early. For the girls, they are taught how to keep their house clean, take care of their belongings and to keep themselves clean

Boys were taught to go hunting. When a boy has his first kill of either a fish, or animal, a ceremony has to take place. The boy has to feast the animal or fish and give thanks to that animal or fish. They were taught the responsibility of taking care of their family and future family. They were taught to respect the animals they were hunting. They were taught how to skin, clean and cut up the animal. They learn these things by watching and helping their parents. They were taught how to respect and take care of the women. This is the time that they are taught to skin a beaver until they can do it the right way. This is to test their abilities. This is the time when a child learns to snare rabbits and to set nets in order to survive. They learned to pick berries with the family when it was time. There were no toys for the kids to play with. The only toys they had were the ones that were made. Only when they were ready and learned all that they need to know about woman, could they go out and seek a partner for themselves. It is important to teach the boys to be responsible and accountable to their family before they decide to start having children.

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The children were taught never to make fun of animals or people. They were taught to sit still at pow wow's and not to run around inside the dancing area. Children learn by observing. At this age, it is not recommended that a child attend a funeral. During this time, the family has to put black ash on their foreheads and birch bark was placed in the doorways and windows of the home for 4 days. (from the time of death to the funeral day) A child is not to sleep with the head pointing west (for some areas, this could be south.) Your bed is not suppose to lay the same direction that the dead are buried. The same holds true when you go camping during ricing and berry picking time. You head can not be facing the water.

When a child starts to lose their teeth, the tooth is to be put with a piece of charcoal and thrown to the east. It has to be given back to Mother Earth. Encourage the child to be creative. Allow them time to develop their creativity and encourage them to try anything. Build their self esteem and give them a sense of accomplishment. Allow them to be themselves and make their own mistakes. When a child dances at a pow wow for the first time, there is a ceremony that has to take place for this. In each community, the teachings may vary a bit.

### **Adolescents. Ages 9 - 12 Years Old.**

This is a very important time in a child's life. They are moving from the childhood stage to the adult stage of life. The teachings for both boys and girls are more defined. This is when the children are going through their puberty stage. The girls start their menstrual cycle and the boys voice changes.

For the girls, this is when the Grandmother moon is watching over her. The menstrual cycle is referred to as the ladies moon time. Woman have to be very cautious about what they do during this time. As long as a woman respects herself, she will not be sick. It is important to show respect and honor your self.

 When a young girls has her first moon time, the parents seek an elder to assist the girl with the teachings during this time in her life. She is to be alone for 10 days while this is happening. She is not to be around the male members of her family or any males for that fact. She is not to go swimming during the first summer, can not pick up or carry a baby, can not go berry picking, can not hunt, skin animals, or walk over anything. She can pick her own berries, but first they have to apply cedar ashes on their hands and wear a cedar bonnet. Girls are to use red cedar to help give them energy. Someone else has to prepare the berries for her, then she can eat them. She is to have her own utensils to eat with. She is not to use the same utensils as the male members of her family. The utensils she uses will become the first part of her bundle. She is to live separately from the family. Long ago they would be put in their own teepee/lodge and had to do all their own cooking and cleaning. They



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learned to be thankful for every day and to put tobacco down when taking something from the land and water. Today, they can stay in the house, but must remain in a separate area from the rest of the family.

She is to refrain from attending any social functions and participating in anything. They are to learn the values of being female during this first year. When an animal or bird was killed, because the blood is already becoming medicine on the ground, the girls are not to step over the animal or the blood.

Traditionally, women would use moss and cloth to absorb the flow of their menstrual cycle. It was then buried and given back to mother earth. She was also to wash all her clothing separately after the 10 days because of the medicine that is on them from her body. Remember that you are the life givers of the future and this is a very special gift. Dreams for the girls at this stage are very important spiritually. She should be encouraged to offer tobacco to an elder to have the dreams interpreted for her. Dreams helps you to understand the teachings that are being told to you. The girls were told to listen and watch everything that was going on around them because they are always being taught something. Girls are not fully grown yet at this age.

Boys have to go through their own ceremonies when they go through puberty. Their voice changing is the sign that tells the parents the boy is ready to become a man and must be prepared for it. They were taken out into the woods to a special place for 4 days and 3 nights of fasting and teachings. He is given a sacred teepee/lodge of his own to stay in. He wasn't told why he was being put out in the bush, but through his dreams and visions, later in life he will understand the meaning of this ceremony. This ceremony was usually done by the Grandfather. Now they are taken to an island for this teaching. The boys should use cedar, white cedar to help give them energy.

The boys are taught to respect their bodies. They were told not to touch their private parts during their fast or vision quest. They were taught to respect all things including their bodies.

They are taught to kill animals for survival. They have to be taught how to provide for a family. The boys have to be taught to respect the land and all living things. They would sit in water up to their necks after their first kill. This is to celebrate the feasting of the animal of his first kill. They have to learn how to use different woods to make whistles, drums and learn the songs that goes with the drum. Not everyone is gifted as a whistle carriers or a drum carrier. Only those that are meant to have these items will learn to make them. The songs that go with the drums are handed to you in your dreams. They have to learn how to do bead work on a loom. They have to be taught to respect the woman. Not to abuse them in any way. Teach them to wait until they are ready to support a family before they decide to find a mate.

The seven teachings are very important for the children to learn. They have to learn to be creative at this age not destructive. Male and female make items such as paddles, baskets, canoes, axe handles, this make for good minds. Respect is so important. Both boys and girls have to be taught

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to understand and respect their sexuality and life itself. Teachings on respect for yourself and others sexuality will stop promiscuity. Because our youth are not learning these teachings, they are not learning to respect themselves or the value of life.

### **The Rights of an Adolescents.**

- ☼ you have a right to privacy.
- ☼ you have a right to receive good care.
- ☼ you have a right to healthy meals.
- ☼ you have a right to education that suits your abilities.
- ☼ you have a right to regular medical and dental care.
- ☼ you have a right to age appropriate clothing.
- ☼ you have a right to participate in after school activities such as sports, drama clubs, etc.
- ☼ you have a right to practice your religion and to receive religious instructions.
- ☼ you have a right to participate in activities that are important to your culture or heritage.
- ☼ you have a right to respect for your individuality, including gender identification and sexual orientation.
- ☼ you have a right to participate in planning your care and to be heard when important decisions are made about you.
- ☼ you have a right to see information in your care file.
- ☼ you have a right to be notified of and to attend court hearings that may affect your life.
- ☼ you have a right to request a placement review if you become unhappy where you are living.
- ☼ you have a right to ask for extended care services once you reach 18 years of age.
- ☼ you have a right to be informed of your rights.
- ☼ you have a right to freedom from physical, sexual or verbal abuse.
- ☼ you have a right to appropriate discipline.



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### Teen years 13 - 18 Years of Age.

The puberty teaching are still being taught at this age. Both boys and girls are taught to respect Mother Earth, the water, berries, wild rice, fish the seasons, and everything. They are taught to have everything blessed. Nothing is ever the same after this time in a child's life. If the vision quest has not yet been done for the child, it must be done at this stage. Only the mother, extended family, or the elder could take food that was blessed to the child during this time.

For girls, it is important that they do not step over the roots of the trees as these are medicine. They should be taught to wear cedar in their shoes. They have a lot of power that comes from the moon time cycle. They could do harm to men if they disrespect them in anyway during this time. For boys, it is important that they become good providers and good teachers for the younger ones.

It is so difficult to teach the youth of today because they don't listen. They are not being brought up in the culture anymore and are lost. They don't respect anyone anymore.

The **feather** is where the teachings are. The feather is a path in life for all of us. There is no set time in life to receive a feather. When you are meant to have one, it will come to you. When it does come to you, that is when the teachings of the feather will be given to you. We are born naked and we own nothing except the body that you are born with. Without the teachings, some of us go off the path and get misled to bad places. From the bottom to the top of the feather is 100 years for all of us. Throughout your life, all the things that you have accumulated and think you own are not yours. You own nothing. You leave this world without any of them. The teachings from the feather are so important to each and every person.

Today, our children are being raised in a mixed society. They should be given the right to decide for themselves what spiritual way of life they want to follow. Not all children grow up following the spiritual ways of the Anishinaabe and this should be respected.

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### Education

The schooling in the old days was done by the parents while on the trap lines or where ever the family may have settled. We learn through the years what we are to pass on to our people to help them survive. We have learn by experience. We learn by observing what our parents are doing. This starts right from when a child is small and kept in the tikinagan. Learning is an ongoing process. We are still learning even when we are old.

In order to teach, you have to first get permission from the elders. What you talk about should also include the warning that come with the teachings. You can only speak of the teaching, you do not show how to do them. There was a warning that was shared with us.

On ji ne aa - be careful what you say, it could come back on you 10 fold. It may not happen today or tomorrow or even next week, but someone in your family will be effected and get sick at some point and time.

The government made a big mistake when it changed the child care laws in Canada. Government policies are destroying our children. They took the responsibility of raising children away from the parents. Children are told right from the first day they start attending school that if they are spanked or talked rough to by their parents to tell their teacher and something will be done about it. We are teaching our children to be disrespectful this way.

## *Traditional Child Care Practices - Raising our Children the Anishinaabe Way*

### **Role of Foster Parents**

When a child is taken from their parents and put into care, this is a very traumatic time for the child. The Grandparents should be the first ones to be asked to take the child in. If this is not possible, then the extended family should be asked next. When our children are placed in homes with people they don't know, chances are they will become lost for ever. It is important that the foster parents be strong willed and loving towards the child. The foster parents should be willing to treat the child as they would one of their own. Foster parents should be willing to take the child with them as they would their own children. When a child is placed in a non native home, the home and family should be examined closely. If the non native family does not have a willingness to learn our ways, a child should not be placed there. The foster parents should encourage and support the child by attending pow wow's and ceremonies with the child. Care should be taken when placing a child. Some of the homes are not taking adequate care of the children Even though they are given money for clothing for the children, we still see them inadequately dressed. They need to be given all the support necessary to provide for the child.

When a child is placed in a foster home, the foster parents should be given as much information as possible about the child: the child's Anishinaabe name, who the parents are, the family beliefs and ways of life, and the clan of the child. It is then the foster parents responsibility to make sure the child receives the teaching required in life. When a child is moved to more then one foster home, they become lost. They need stability. The main problem with children today is they don't know who they are, they have lost their culture and their identity.

### **Role of Weechi it te win:**

#### **Don't give up on our parents.**

As a service provider for the best interest of the children, the workers of Weechi it te win should be willing to provide the services to all children not just the ones in care. There needs to be more involvement of the elders at the board level and at the family services level. When a child is taken into care, the grandparents of the child should be given the first opportunity to take the child in. If that is not possible, then the extended family should step in. The extended family is the sister of the mother first then the sister of the father. This may vary in each community. The entire community has a responsibility to the child in care.

The standards that are currently being used or demanded by the province contradicts the Anishinaabe teachings. They are bureaucratic policies that only hurt our people. Our families are led to believe that they are not good enough to be foster parents. Elders could be asked to assist the organization with the healing of our families so that they feel confident enough to open their homes to

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other children. Our people fear the application process because it asks for a police check. We need to help our people believe they are good enough to be foster parents. In the old days, parent's were tricked into signing document that gave the government the right to take their children. They were told the documents were suppose to go to INAC. We can't let that happen again.

When our children are places in white foster homes, they become even more lost. They are taught to believe the ways of the white man and that the ways of the Anishinaabe are bad. It is ok to place them in non native homes, but the foster parents must understand the importance of the culture and ensure that the child is receiving the appropriate teachings. There was a young lady who was tossed around from foster home to foster home until she ended up in a non native foster home. When this girl was older, she was given a jingle dress by someone and she was afraid of it because she was told those ways were bad. She wanted to go as far as burning it. The elder's had to work with her and teach her about the culture so she would understand. The parents should have a say in where their child is being placed. It is important that the biological parents remain a major part of the child's life. The foster parents have to be willing to work with the biological families on this. The grandparents as well should be given access to the child. The hardest part of being a foster parent is the letting go of the child. There should be grief counseling set up for the foster parents once the child is removed from the home. The elders need to hold healing circles with the family, foster family, child and who ever else needs to be involved.

Family members right now feel like they don't have a say in the matters of their children. This has to change. The entire family has to be involved. Long ago, there was no need for children's aid. With the introduction of liquor, you started seeing children's aid workers in the communities. Elder's don't have the opportunity to teach the children the language. The Elders need to be more involved in the case conferences, in the planning of care for a child, and in the planning of the healing practices both for the parents and for the child. It is so very important that the elder's be involved in every area of the service organization possible. The responsibility for raising a child has to be given back to the parents. They have to be taught that it is ok to be strict with their children. They are learning the values of life when you are. Identity is very important to a child in order for him/her to know life.



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### Closing Comments:

Young people have too much free time . Age should not matter when determining when a child is old enough to be on their own and making their own decisions. Many of the grandmother's still tell their adult children what and how to do things in life. Mother's of today are too free to let the children go and have fun. They have to take back control of their children. Young mother's should be made to be responsible for their children they make. They had fun making them, they should have fun taking care of them.

There were a number of recommendations that came from the Grandmother's, they are as follows:

- The men need to get involved in the raising of the children. We have to remind them that they have the responsibility to teach the children as well.
- There should be a gathering held for the Grandfather's to get together and share their teachings as well.
- All the pipe carriers should be brought together and asked to do a ceremony for our children and their future.
- **The Executive of Weechi it te win should lobby the chief's to sign a BCR or something stating Traditional Customary Care is the families responsibility. We know our children best and know what is best for them, we are their family. If the children are raised with the culture and the language, they would not turn to drugs and alcohol and be getting into trouble.**
- The Elder's have to be asked to share their knowledge more. There is so much of it that is lost already. We have to make sure it survives.
- Speak the language to the children, they will eventually learn.
- There should be more gatherings like this though out the year. There should be one held every time the seasons change. We have to get everyone involved. The youth have to start listening. We should be making our own video using the Anishinaabe language.
- When children with emotional, physical, mental and spiritual problems are placed with care giver, doesn't matter if native or not, Elder's should be involved to provide healing.
- The governments have too much control on how Weechi it te win does things, they need to be stopped. They took everything from us, even the children and today they are still involved in

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taking the children. They have more control then before. They think our ways are bad for our children and their ways are superior to ours. They don't want our children to have Anishinaabe names.

- If we don't help our children fill that large void in their lives, we are going to once again lose our children to such things as residential schools. We have to start the teachings and break that cycle.
- Advertise at the pow wow's for families to take in foster children. Have the applications on hand and make them so that they are easy to fill out and not seen as a threat to the potential foster parents.
- There should be more elder involvement at the board level.
- Money should be invested in the communities teaching parenting skills to all the parents.
- Elder's should start providing grief counseling, and hold support groups for the foster parents.
- The Grandmother's would like to be brought back together for one day when all the information has been collaborated to validate the manual. They want this to be as accurate as possible to the teachings they have shared and allowed us to record.

***“Sometimes we have to be told something  
10 times before it actually sinks in.....”***