

The Significance of the Tipi

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

The fifteen poles represent the following values:

Obedience.

We learn by listening to traditional stories, by listening to our parents or guardians, our fellow students and our teachers. We learn by their behavior and their reminders, so that we know what is right and what is wrong.

Respect.

We must give honor to our elders and fellow students and the strangers that come to visit our community. We must honor other peoples' basic rights.

Humility.

We are not above or below others in the circle of life. We feel humbled when we understand our relationship with creation. We are so small compared to the majestic expanse of creation. "We are just a strand in a web of life," and we respect and value life.

Kinship.

Our family is important to us. This includes our parents, our brothers and sisters who love us and give us roots, the roots that tie us to the lifeblood of the earth. It also includes extended family: grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, in-laws and children. These are also our brothers and sisters and they give us a sense of belonging to a community.

Cleanliness.

We must learn not to inflict ills on others, for we do it to ourselves. Clean thoughts come from a clean mind and this comes from Indian spirituality. Good health habits also reflect a clean mind.

Thankfulness.

We learn to give thanks for all the kind things others do for us, and for the Creator's bounty that we are privileged to share with others in the spirit of love.

Sharing.

We learn to be part of the family by helping in providing food or other basic needs. This is sharing responsibilities in order to enjoy them.

Control Flaps.

We are all connected by relationships and we depend on each other.

Happiness.

We must show some enthusiasm to encourage others at social functions. Our actions will make our ancestors happy in the next world.

Love.

If we are to live in harmony we must accept one another as we are and accept others who are not in our circle. Love means to be kind and good to one another.

Faith.

We must learn to believe and trust others, to believe in a power greater than ourselves who we worship and who gives us strength to be a worthy member of the human race.

Strength.

We must learn to be patient in times of trouble and not to complain but to endure and show understanding. We must accept difficulties and tragedies so that we may give others strength to accept their own difficulties and tragedies.

Good Child Rearing.

Children are unique and blessed with the gift of life. We are responsible for their well being, spiritually, emotionally and physically, and for their intellectual development. They represent the continuity of our circle of life which we perceive to be the Creator's will.

Hope.

We must hope for better things to make life easier for us, our families and the community, both materially and spiritually.

Ultimate Protection.

The ultimate responsibility to achieve is "health for a balanced caring for the body, mind, emotions and the spirit of the individual, the family, the community and the nation."