

TIPI TEACHINGS – POLE TEACHINGS

- **Pole 1 - OBEDIENCE**

First to your parents and then to your Elders. Obedience means accepting guidance and wisdom from outside of ourselves, using our ears before our mouth. We learn by listening to traditional stories, by listening to our parents or guardians, our fellow students and our teachers. We learn by their behaviors and reminders, so that we know what is right and what is wrong.

- **Pole 2 - RESPECT**

Respect means honoring our Elders and fellow students, to the strangers that come to visit our community, and to all of life. We must honor the basic rights of all living beings.

- **Pole 3 - 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 mountains, rivers, oceans, animals and all of Creation. We are just a “strand in the web of life”. Understanding this helps us to respect and value life.

- **Pole 4 - HAPPINESS**

After the tripod is up, the fourth pole completes your doorway. This fourth pole teaches us happiness. We must show some enthusiasm to encourage others. Our good actions will make our ancestors happy in the next world. This is how we share happiness.

- **Pole 5 - LOVE**

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

- **Pole 6 - FAITH**

We must learn to believe and trust others, to believe in a power greater than ourselves; a power that gives us the strength needed to be worthy members of the human race. To sustain our spirituality, we need to walk it every day. Not just sometimes, but every day of your life.

- **Pole 7 - KINSHIP**

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

- **Pole 8 - CLEANLINESS**

Today when we talk about cleanliness, most people think hygiene, and that's very important too, but years ago when old people talked about cleanliness, they meant spiritual cleanliness. Years ago, when we used to sit with the Elders in their tipis, you could just feel their spiritually, they were so powerful and spiritually clean. Clean thoughts come from a clean mind and this comes from our spirituality. With a clean mind and sense of peace within we learn not to think or act badly toward others.

- **Pole 9 - THANKFULNESS**

We learn to give thanks and to always be thankful for everything Creator and mother Earth provide for us, which we are privileged to share with others, and to be thankful for all the kind things others share with us.

- **Pole 10 - SHARING**

We learn to be part of a family and community by helping with the provisions of food and other basic needs. Through the sharing of responsibilities we learn the value of working together and enjoying the fruits of our labor.

- **Pole 11 - STRENGTH**

We are not talking about physical strength, but spiritual strength. That was instilled in us when we were young people through fasting. 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 get through their own difficulties and tragedies.

- **Pole 12 - GOOD CHILD REARING**

Children are gifts from the Creator. We are responsible for their wellbeing, spiritually, emotionally, physically, and mentally. They are blessed with the gift to continue the circle of life and so they are sacred and must be treated in a kind, gentle and loving way.

- **Pole 13 - HOPE**

We must look forward to moving toward good things. We need to have a sense that the seeds we are planting will bear fruit for our children, families and communities.

- **Pole 14 - ULTIMATE RESPONSIBILITY**

Each person's ultimate responsibility is to achieve the balance and well-being of the body, mind, emotions and spirit for the individual, the family, the community and the nation.

- **Poles 15 & 16 - SMOKE FLAPS**

The smoke flaps on a tipi teach that we are all related or connected and that we depend on each other. Having respect for and understanding this connection creates harmony and balance in the circle of life. When we don't know how to use the flaps, it gets all smoky inside the tipi, and you can't see, which is like life – because if we can't live in balance, we can't see clearly where we're going.