



## THE 7 GRANDFATHER TEACHINGS/SACRED PLANTS/MEDICINE WHEEL

--Al MacLeod September 2022

### **SEPTEMBER 30 IS NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH & RECONCILIATION**

Proceeding through Autumn, the focus will be on Anishinaabe/Ojibwe teachings on various approaches and principles used to conduct themselves in 'the good way of life'. With this introduction and as we study them in more detail, consider how some of their attributes align with Catholic and Christian beliefs.

#### **The 7 Grandfather Teachings:**

[HTTPS://WWW.COLLINGWOOD.CA](https://www.collingwood.ca)

Of all the North American Indigenous teachings, the 7 Grandfather Teachings are the most commonly shared from coast to coast. Many Aboriginal communities have adopted & adapted the 7 guiding principles in one form or another, as a moral stepping stone and cultural foundation. Despite where the teachings may have originated, they share the same concepts of abiding by a moral respect for all living things. The teachings represent the traditional concepts of respect and sharing that form the foundation of the Aboriginal way of life. Each teaching honors one of the basic virtues and is embodied by a sacred animal to underscore how mankind's decisions manifest on the physical plain.

- To cherish knowledge is to know **WISDOM**;
- To know **LOVE** is to know peace;
- To honor all of the Creation is to have **RESPECT**;
- **BRAVERY** is to face the foe with integrity;
- **HONESTY** also means "righteousness", be honest first with yourself – in word and action;
- **TRUTH** is to know all of these things.
- **HUMILITY** is to know yourself as a sacred part of the Creation

#### **THE 4 SACRED PLANTS**

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/indigistudies/chapter/four-direction-teachings/>

There are four plant medicines that are common to most First Nations on Turtle Island: **TOBACCO, SWEETGRASS, SAGE & CEDAR**. These are used in smudging, for gifts, and in other ceremonies. In Nations that use the medicine wheel as a teaching tool, each medicine has a place on the wheel. Traditional teachers and knowledge keepers from different Indigenous Nations have specific and nuanced teachings that go with each medicine. The burning of the four sacred medicines is often referred to as smudging. Sage, sweetgrass and cedar are often burned to purify one's self, one's space and one's spiritual or healing tools. The burning of herbs during healing work and prayer help connect intentions and prayers to the Ancestors and Creator. Tobacco is the first of the sacred plants and is held in the highest regard.

#### **THE MEDICINE WHEEL**

<https://www.nlm.nih.gov/nativevoices/exhibition/healing-ways/medicine-ways/medicine-wheel.html>

The Medicine Wheel has been used by generations for health and healing. It embodies and symbolizes the dimensions of physical & emotional health, the elements and all cycles of life. Movement in the Medicine Wheel is circular, clockwise (sun-wise) to align it with the forces of Nature, such as rising and setting of the Sun. Each of the Four Directions (East, South, West and North) is represented by a colour: yellow, red, black and white. The Directions can also represent:

- Stages of life: birth, youth, adult (or elder), death
- Seasons of the year: spring, summer, winter, fall
- Aspects of life: spiritual, emotional, intellectual, physical
- Elements of nature: fire (or sun), air, water, and earth
- Animals: Eagle, Bear, Wolf, Buffalo and many others
- Ceremonial plants: tobacco, sweet grass, sage, cedar