

Askaakamigkwewigamig (Ah-skaw-kom-ih-goh-kweh-whi-gah-mig)

Mother Earth Learning Lodge

Restoring Traditions

The presence of *Askaakamigkwewigamig* connects traditional knowledge with the University of Toronto community shared through land-based learning. Raising of the lodge in 2020 was an opportunity to respond to the current pandemic to ensure open air, physically distanced learning on the land and create space for engaging Indigenous knowledge/teachings/ceremony as an essential aspect of continued learning.

The primary Traditional Space Protocol for this Lodge is: **No drugs, No alcohol, No Violence.** Users and guests of the Lodge must also follow all safety protocols for COVID, including social distancing for those in attendance.

The Lodge will be a respected space to connect to the land; with scheduled times (TBD) to access this shared space for facilitated learning as well as traditional practices (supervised sacred fire, ceremonies) for learning.

Booking the lodge on our website: <http://www.newcollege.utoronto.ca/new-resources/room-bookings-and-conference-services-at-new-college/>

Currently, the Lodge is supported by a team of Indigenous faculty and staff represented from various departments within all University of Toronto campuses to advance a student-centred approach to building community from relationship with the land towards a reciprocity of reconciliation that strengthens Indigenous culture and traditions,

Culture enables people to survive in a given natural environment, and those who are born into that culture understand it best. Unfortunately, in most cultures the need for adjustments and adaptations is more subtle and hence more easily hidden from non-members who assume that the knowledge embedded in such cultures is unnecessary to their own survival (Minor, 1994, p. 21-22).

The Lodge is self-governing and requires participants' conduct in and around the Lodge to respond to all protocols for use and reflect the Seven Grandfathers Teachings;



SEVEN GRANDFATHERS TEACHINGS LODGE PRINCIPLES

Each community has adapted the teachings to suit their community values. No matter the different variations, these teachings share the same concepts of living with a moral respect for all of creation.

The seven grandfather teachings are very important to live by. The teachings have been passed down for thousands of years through storytelling, usually elders teaching children.

Teachings may vary nation to nation.

Nbwaakaawin (WISDOM)

Wisdom is to seek and cherish knowledge. To know wisdom is to continuously observe and respect the world around you with clarity and a sound mind.

The beaver represents wisdom because the beaver uses their natural gifts to change his environment and survive in a sustainable way for the earth and family.



The beaver shows us we can use our strength and knowledge to survive with our families without hurting the earth and disrespecting all other creations around us while respecting our own limitations and earth's limitations.

Wisdom means to learn as much as you can and use your knowledge wisely to build peaceful and healthy communities.

Zaagidwin (LOVE)

Love is to respect all and to know peace.

To feel love is to know the Creator and through this care for and help one another.

To know love is to view your inner-self from the perspective of all teachings.



The eagle represents love because they have the strength to carry all the teachings. The eagle can fly high up and is the closest to the creator. The eagle sees much more from that distance higher up.

They gain a perspective of earth that not every part of creation has and this allows them to have a closer relationship with them self and with the creator. Love means to understand all things are equal to yourself.

Aakdehewin (BRAVERY)

Bravery is to be ready to face life with courage and strength when things are hard to do.

To know bravery is to face the difficulties of life, have the courage to be yourself and to defend what you believe in. To have courage is to face your fears that prevent us from living our true spirit as human beings.

The bear represents bravery because the mother bear always has the bravery to fight to protect her family.

The bear also teaches us how to have a balanced life of rest, survival and play. Bravery means being able to make good decisions and believe you made the right choice.



Debwewin (TRUTH)

Truth is to know all these things and always speak the truth.

To know truth is to show honour and sincerity in everything you say and do.

The turtle represents truth because they live slow and meticulous lives because they understand the importance of the journey and destination.

Truth is to understand your place in life and applying that to how you walk. You must be true to yourself to be able to follow these teachings.



Mnaadendmowin (RESPECT)

Respect is to honour all creation. To know respect is to be mindful, harmless, waste-less and to live honourably in teachings and in actions. Respect is to take care of all things given on Mother earth.

The buffalo represents respect because the buffalo gives its life and every part of its being for humans, not because they are less valuable, but because they showed the deep respect for balance and needs of others.

Respect means to share and sacrifice for the greater good.



Dbaadendiziwin (Humility)

Humility is to know you are a sacred part of creation, no better and no less.

To know humility is to live selflessly and to carry your pride with your people.

The wolf represents humility because the wolf's life is lived in a pack and it is the biggest shame to be an outcast in the pack.

Humility is to find balance in yourself and all living things.

"The last teaching about the wolf is important for us today"(p.8), as The Mishomis Book (1988) re-tells the story when the Creator sent Ma-en'-gun (the wolf) as "brother" to walk with Original man¹ (Anishinaabe/Wa-na-boo'-zhoo) to name all of Creation. (p.7-8)

What the Grandfather said to them has come true. Both the Indian and the wolf have come to be alike and have experienced the same thing. Both of them mate for life. Both have a Clan system and a tribe. Both have had their land taken from them. Both have been hunted for their wee-nes'-si-see (hair). And both have been pushed very close to destruction....

Will Indian people emerge to lead the way back to natural living and respect for our Earth Mother? (Benton-Benai, 1988, p.8)

Gwekwaadziwin (HONESTY)

Honesty is to go through life with integrity and empathy. To speak right of things - free from fraud or deception.

To know honesty is to recognize and accept who you are, accept and use the gifts you are given, and do not go out of your way to deceive others or yourself.

The sabel or raven represents honesty because they both teach us to be comfortable with ourselves and to not try to be somebody else.

They use the gifts they have been given and do not seek out the speed, beauty, or power of others. Honesty is to be open with others and to fully understand yourself and provide good feelings in your heart.



¹ "After Original man was placed on Earth, he was given instructions by the Creator. He was told to walk this Earth and... name all the Creation. At this time, "Original man had no name of his own yet. Later, people would refer to him as Anishinaabe and, still later, Way-na-boo'- zhoo...(Benotn-Benai, 1988, p.5)

Anishinaabemodaa

From the Seven Generations Education Institute, these Seven Grandfather Teachings were given to Anishinaabeg to live in a good way, to live without conflict or contradiction, and to live in peace with all of our relations.

		Language Understanding	
NIBWAAKAAWIN (Wisdom)	“To Live with Vision”	Waa: Pertaining to Sight. Kaa: An Abundance	Win: Nominalizer. A way it is done.
ZAAGI’IDIWIN (Love)	“Unconditional Love Between One Another”, meaning all of Creation – including humans and non-humans, seen and unseen, of yesterday, today, and tomorrow.	Zaag: To Emerge, to Come Out, to Flow Out. Idi: In a Reciprocal Way	Win: Nominalizer. A way it is done.
ZOONGIDE’EWIN (Bravery or Courage)	“To Live with a Solid, Strong Heart.”	Zoongi: Solid, Strong. De’e: A Form of “heart”.	Win: Nominalizer. A way it is done.
DEBWEWIN (Truth)	“To Speak Only to the Extent We have Lived or Experienced.”	Deb: To a certain extent. We: Sound through speech.	Win: Nominalizer. A way it is done.
MANAAJI’IDIWIN (Respect)	“To Go Easy on One Another”, meaning all of Creation.	Manaaaji: To Go Easy on Someone. Idi: In a Reciprocal Way.	Win: Nominalizer. A way it is done.
DABASENDIZIWIN (Humility)	“To Think Lower of Oneself (in Relation to All That Sustains Us).”	Dabas: Low, Lower. End: Pertaining to thought. Izi: State or Condition	Win: Nominalizer. A way it is done.
GWAYAKWAADIZIWIN (Honesty)	“To Live Correctly and with Virtue.”	Gwayak: Correctly, Straightly, and Rightly. Aadizi: He/She Lives.	Win: Nominalizer. A way it is done.

Overall Benefits

Askaakamigokwewigamig is a strength-based approach to building community by engaging shared learning through practice;

Shared Vision

Strengthens collaboration with Indigenous campus and community participants.
Shifts attitudes and values to sovereignty and autonomy outcomes.
Engagement with self-governing protocols and processes for decision-making.

Relationships/Time

Increases community participation and engagement on-the land experiential learning.
Increases access to traditional knowledge and ceremony to support wellness and well-being.

Way of Knowing - (heart/mind)

Identifies overall strengths that support the Lodge as a site for building community.
Determines cultural contexts to build community and support sustainability of the Lodge and community.
Identifies “other” factors (systemic/structural) that impacts on sustainable outcomes.

Knowledge Mobilization/Evaluation

Co-creates and renegotiates space of power and control.
Demonstrates building community around the Lodge as evolving, on-going and reflective.
Raises level of awareness within the University community and non-university community.
Identifies developing “wise practices”(ways tried and true) to achieve results.
Challenges and reflects on personal assumptions.
Respects Lodge location and asks for clarification.

Shifting the Paradigm

In *Indigenous Healing Exploring Traditional Paths*, (2014) Rupert Ross states that “Aboriginal children need to know about the history of their families, and non-Aboriginal Canadians need to know about the true history of our country. I don’t think Canada understands, and I think we ought to.” (p.xvii). Ross (2014) further explains that in knowing and understanding the “true history” provides an opportunity for “non-Aboriginal Canada” to see the “determination of so many leading Aboriginal people to restore traditional visions to prominence in the modern world” (p. xvii).

In knowing and understanding the “true history” of settler society, Aboriginal people will see their own determination in restoring traditional visions of health and well-being as a priority and perhaps respond to the following “request” of an “Aboriginal Grandmother” speaking at a conference to discuss the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as re-told by Ross (2014),

The first speaker was an Aboriginal Grandmother. She said that she wished the TRC every success in helping to tell the full story of residential schools. Then she surprised me, because she didn’t mention the need to educate non-aboriginal Canadians about the system. Instead, she focused on aboriginal children.

Specifically, she said she felt they needed to understand how their parents and grandparents had been changed by those schools. 'Maybe then,' she said softly, 'they can learn to forgive us for failing them so badly.' (p.xv)

According to Elder, Gertie Beaucage in her "Cultural Competency Training" (February, 2014), the impacts of colonization and cultural genocide were a time of "great confusion." The impacts of land relocation through Treaty agreements, the control by the Indian Agent and governments through The Indian Act (1876, 1951)², enfranchisement, the reserve era (1880-1960), the residential school era (1883-1975), the 1960's scoop of children into adoption and foster homes (1950-1985), The White Paper 1969 and, the Constitutional Act 1982 including Section 35, are all historical government decision-making systems that continues to impact both Settler and Indigenous people within society today.

Research Implications

Askaakamigokwewigamig is a land-based location to experience '*mino bimaadiziwin* (good life) promised through our Anishinaabe creation history (Benton-Benai, 1988) and centres "Anishinaabe Place-Based Research" (McGregor & Plain, 2013) as a "living research" for knowledge and learning is connected to "the Earth and place we come from" and ultimately land as teacher.

Our teachers in the Anishinaabe tradition, include non-human forms such as animals, trees, waters, rocks, etc. They are our relatives and we continue to learn and seek guidance from them as we always have. (Johnson, 1976; Mandamin, 2012 as cited in McGregor & Plain, 2103 pp.111).

Recognizing our relatives as a source of knowledge forms an integral aspect [of] our Anishinaabe theoretical foundation. This means that our knowledge systems are rooted in the Earth and the place we come from: where our ancestors are. There are many stories of Anishinaabeg who seek knowledge or that knowledge is revealed to them by our relatives or the spirit world (p. 111).

The significance of the "living research" inquiry and contribution to advancing traditional knowledge in research is a means to reconcile the unlimited potential for living traditional knowledge as survivance through *mino bimaadiziwin*.

As Elder Jim Dumont (2006) reminds us,

Our present day thinking is inclusive of the legacy of our ancestors and of what our ancestors are waiting for us to do. Our thoughts also include the future generations, recognizing that they are already looking back towards us with the awareness that our decisions and our actions are impacting them. It is a living past, a living future, and we are the living connection in between.

² Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Chapter 9, "The Indian Act", Volume 1. 1996

Centering Indigenous Worldviews

Askaakamigokwewigamig centres Indigenous worldviews as the strength for community to understanding all of mother earth as the foundation for sovereignty and movement towards health, healing and well-being.

Dumont (1999) explains this connection to the land; its' responsibilities and primary relationships to creation itself, and teachings including,

- Kindness – the grass, vegetation, medicines and plant life
- Honesty – the tree life or “standing ones”
- Sharing – the animal life (four leggeds, flyers, swimmers, crawlers)
- Strength – the mineral life or “rock life” (above and below the ground)

These rights and responsibilities have not and cannot ever be abandoned or surrendered without disowning our very identity and originality as Anishinaabe people...(p.25).

Sacred/Ceremonial Fires

No Fires will be permitted without the proper authorization and approval!

All unauthorized fires that result in arrival by the Toronto Fire Department will be required to pay the \$1500 fine.

The Role of the Fire Keeper(s)

For Authorized Fires Only

The Fire Keeper(s) is responsible for the sacred fire space, medicines, tools associated with the fire, offerings, safety and other elements of ceremony.

The Fire Keeper(s) must remain with the fire at all times. If at any point a Fire Keeper must leave the fire area, s/he must make arrangements with another trained Fire Keeper to watch and care for the fire in their absence.

Communication with helpers, elders, ceremonial conductors, staff volunteers and guests by the Fire Keeper(s) at all times is essential to this role to ensure the safety of the fire, the protection of the University of Toronto and natural space, and the health and well-being of all U of T community members.

Time and Commitment

The duration of a ceremony includes the preparation of all materials used for the fire, ensuring the presence of fire making and fire extinguishing equipment, the presence and preparation of associated medicines, the creation and maintenance of the fire, the management of ceremonial activities involving the fire, the extinguishment of the fire, clean up, and preparation of materials for the next fire.

Gender and Keeping Care of the Fire

Those who accept fire keeping responsibilities are requested to review the protocols and be prepared in a good way/good mind to conduct fire keeping roles.

If you are unavailable or unable to maintain (in a good way/good mind) the fire responsibilities please volunteer to step back.

Please have a back up available for the day of the fire, to ensure continuity in fire responsibilities if you are unable to attend for any reason.

Protocols and Safety Measures

The Fire Keeper will ensure respect for all Community Fires and Ceremonial Fires by keeping it clean

i.e. no cigarette butts in the sacred fire.

Alcohol and Drug Use Thinking and Safety

Acknowledgement that people who are on mind-changers might not be thinking clearly so the Fire keeper has that responsibility to keep the fire, and people safe. And also the right to ask the person to leave (that might even be calling Campus Security).

ie. Being mindful of people falling into the fire, maybe they have to sit a bit farther away?

Allowable Burn Items

Due to health and safety concerns, please adhere to only allowing to burn to following items

- Loose organic offerings (medicines):
- Must be smaller than one closed handful
- Must be places into the fire one at a time
- Must be completely burned before next offering
- Smudge ashes
- Tobacco ties/offerings - To be burned one at a time - Must be cotton wrapped/non-synthetic
- Spirit plate food - No meat on the bone - Only burn the plate if it is paper - No plastic

Non-Allowable Burn Items

- Items larger than one closed handful
- Any ceremonial or painted items
- Any synthetic items
- Books/magazines/clothing
- Clippings/stems from medicines

Starting/Maintaining Fires

Preparation

- Move resources to location of fire (between 1- 2 hours ahead)
- Smudge
- Lay tobacco down in fireplace at the centre
- Acknowledge the Creator, Mother Earth, and Four directions

Fire Wood Placement

- Lay down three (small) base logs, side by side (north to south)
- These logs represent our past, present, and future
- Lay down three more (small) logs (on east to west)
- These logs represent our Elders, Grandmothers, Grandfathers, and our Transitional teachers; those that came before us.
- Fill with Birch bark tinder
- This tinder represents the people.

Lighting the Fire

- Light birch bark tinder with wooden match
- Use either feather, fan, or other object (hat, lid) to drive oxygen towards tinder and ignite kindling
- Do not blow on fire with breath
- Place more kindling and small logs around the fire
- vertical, leaned against main structure //=\
- Space evenly to ensure airflow
- Add logs as needed to maintain for required length of ceremony

Clean Up

1. Wait until fire has extinguished itself - i.e All ash and tinder's have ceased to smoulder
 - **DO NOT use the following to extinguish fire, unless in case of emergency:**
 - Water - Fire extinguisher - Dirt - Sand

2. Place ash/coals into tin bucket (when available)
3. Return Fire Keeping resources (if borrowed)
4. Ensure firewood, kindling and tinder is restocked for next fire.

Fire keepers Equipment Checklist

The following Lodge Bundle materials are to be secured by the Fire Keeper(s) prior to the date of the fire:

Available on Site (Lockable Storage)	Needed to Bring	Optional items
Hatchet/Axe	smudge (mini-cast iron frying pan)	Timber tongs (and/or Lift Hook)
Fire Gloves (Leather/Heat Resistant)	tobacco	(Fire Poker)
Safety glasses/firetec	sage	Portable shovel (for cleaning the firepit)
Matches (weatherproof)	sweetgrass braids	Steel Toed Boots
	cedar	Fire Keeper Shirts (Red with Fire Keeper on the back)
Metal bucket for Ashes	wooden bowls (spirit dish)	Water and Bucket
Firewood/ Split wood	Firewood/Split Wood	
(tinder) birchbark	(tinder) birchbark	
Kindling	Kindling	
First Aid Kit (including extra large bandages)	Fire Pan	
Fire Blanket		
Printed copy of Fire Keeping guidelines		

Emergency call numbers in addition to 911

Campus Police (St. George Campus) 416-978-2222

Fire Prevention Resources

Facilities & Services

<https://www.fs.utoronto.ca/services/fire-prevention/>

Fire Prevention

The University of Toronto Fire Prevention team works closely with Toronto Fire Services to promote and ensure fire safety on campus. Each building on the St. George campus has a designated fire prevention officer. They are your primary contact for fire safety related questions.

The provide the following services:

REGULAR SERVICES

- Complaint inspections
- Developing fire safety guidelines for processes or events
- Fire code compliance use and hazard inspection
- Fire drills and emergency preparedness
- Fire extinguisher safety training
- Fire safety training for labs, residences
- Fire systems inspection and maintenance
- Hot work permits
- Review of proposed renovations

SPECIAL SERVICES

- Fire alarm isolation
- Sprinkler isolation or revision

Participation Evaluation

The following framework questions will inform an ongoing evaluation process as Askaakamigokwewigamig continues to build relationship within the campus and community.

What is really happening?	What results are being achieved?	What is the Value of the results?	How can it be improved?
Who is using the lodge to support their learning, teaching and research practice?	What value,if any, is being realized?	What value can be placed on the results?	Whats helping?
Which people and how are they accessing the lodge and knowledge?	What goals are being met? what goals are not?	Is the Learning Lodge worthwhile?	Whats getting in the way?
What is not working and who is not included?	Is the Lodge building community with intended results?	Is the value of the Learning Lodge worth more than the cost?	What could be done to get more people to use it?
	What are the unintended results?		How can everyone be more included through picking up responsibility?

(A QR code to a Participant survey will also be needed.) This is just a overview of what types of questions we are seeking in our evaluation.