Anishinabe Teachings about Belief and Values:
Our guide to a healthy and positive Community Life

Our Anishinabe ancestral teachings about the word *belief* have been successfully handed down through the years showing the strength of the word as it has withstood the test of time. For Anishinabe, belief runs deep within us and in many ways are inconsistent with the teachings from the non-Native worldview.

The structure of our communities was guided by the Anishinabe word “*n’debewetawinxwi*” [Canadian Dialect] . . . literally means ‘the truth that is evident in the way of the action’. ¹ For Anishinabe people, the understanding of the word *belief* is ongoing. “Belief is a lifelong commitment to consciously living life in a way that allows the spiritual essence of *everything we know and everything we don’t know* to contribute to our sense of oneness with our universe.”²

Our belief that we are spiritual beings is reflected in the way we strive to live in harmony and balance; we seek kinship with all of Creation. We hold certain values sacred and endeavor to live by these values at all times. Throughout life, by learning and living these values, we gain knowledge of how we and our communities can *walk the good road*. These cultural values have guided individuals, families, communities, and our tribe for hundreds if not thousands of years.

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*Anishinaabe Philosophy and Values*

**Dabasendizowin – Humility**
- to recognize oneself as a sacred and equal part of the Creation
- to be modest in one’s actions
- to demonstrate sensitivity to others
- to be respectful of the thoughts and ideas of others
- to recognize one’s strengths and weaknesses and acknowledge the capacity for self-growth and change
- to develop and practice good listening and observation skills

**Debwewin – Truth**
- to speak the most honestly one can according to his/her perceptions
- to be loyal in all our relationships, avoid hypocrisy

**Zoongide’iwin – Courage**
- to face difficult situations with bravery
- to acknowledge one’s personal weaknesses and develop to strength to combat them
- to demonstrate the ability to take initiative and to speak forthrightly

**Gwayakwaadiziwin – Honesty**
- to maintain truthfulness, sincerity and fairness in all one’s actions
- to possess the ability to manage confidential information
- to communicate with others and transmit information fairly and truthfully

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² Leech Lake Tribal College: http://www.lltc.edu; accessed on June 14, 2012.
Anishinaabe Philosophy and Values

Manaaji’idiwin - Respect
- To accept cultural, religious, and gender differences
- To maintain high standards of conduct at all times
- To safeguard the dignity, individuality and rights of others

Zaagi’idiwin – Love
- To work cooperatively and harmoniously with others
- To show kindness and compassion
- To demonstrate acceptance and the empowerment of others
- To offer hope, encouragement, and inspiration

Nibwaakaawin – Wisdom
- To take time to reflect on all our experiences
- To acknowledge the opportunity to learn from others
- To persist in acquiring knowledge and improving skills
- To strive for the accomplishment of goals and dreams
- To practice ethical behavior at all times
- To seek guidance from Elders and qualified advisors.

What I have learned...

What I have learned by walking a traditional Ojibwe path is the recognition of raising, cultivating, and practicing the sacredness of the human quotient.

The human quotient – the humane in humanity.

The sacredness of the human quotient – the humane in humanity – must be nurtured every day because we are sacred and our life’s purpose is to pass our wisdom on to those who will follow our trail and to those who will listen in deep respect.

We are created differently than the plant and animal nations, the winged ones, and the swimmers in the sea. And yet we are so very much alike. They are our brothers and sisters, our aunties and uncles, our grandmas’ and grandpas’.

But...we are the only beings that can use words to do harm, and to deceive.

Every word we speak can never be taken back. Your life is at the tip of your tongue.*

Take heed: How you walk and what you say, what you feel and how you express it is a true measure of your worth and purpose. It is who we are in the human quotient – the humane in humanity.

Every step we take on Mother Earth is sacred.

Using the Anishinabe Values as a guide to a healthy & positive community life

Listen to your Spirit
Watch, listen, assess, and find the possibilities – this is the Science
Based on what your Spirit, your intelligence, life experience and science tell you, take Action

Remember and live the Anishinaabe Values

*teaching from Richard Cup, Anishinabe from Seine River, Ontario taught to me through my husband Norman Lightfeather (Anishinabe)
Poem by Jo Lightfeather (Anishinabe)
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