



Indigenous Awareness Education a Dene Perspective

**Treaty 11 Liidlii Kue First Nation
Signed: July 13th, 1921**

A watercolor illustration in shades of purple and yellow. In the center, a large yellow dome structure is suspended by ropes from above. Several small, colorful figures are positioned around the top of the dome. Below the dome, a group of people is gathered, some appearing to be in conversation or working together. The overall style is soft and artistic, with visible brushstrokes and a gentle color palette.

***Specific
Cultural Expectations***

- Be familiar with the following Dene spiritual concepts:
 - Medicine power: the strength and the danger.
 - Living forces in the land and water: the strength, the danger, the beauty, the lifegiving.
 - “The One Who Circled the Earth” (Yamoreya, Yamodezhaa, etc.) *Ex-7 DK*
 - Dene Laws recognize and respect the spiritual forces as they exist all around us. They govern the way that Dene are to relate to people and things in the environment:
 - People relationships.
 - Relationships with animals.
 - Hunting rules.
 - The creation story:
 - People depend on the land and its creatures in order to survive.
 - People must therefore maintain an attitude of humility towards all things in nature.
 - All creatures and things have spiritual qualities and characteristics as told in:
 - Legends
 - Water and ice
 - Animals
 - Northern lights
 - Heavenly bodies
 - The drum.

The Spiritual World

Students are expected to:

Recognize powers greater than themselves.

Recognize what is spiritual in the world around them.

Appreciate and respect the spiritual forces.

Recognize and develop their personal spirituality.

2. Be able to show respect to the spiritual world around them using:
 - Prayer
 - Prayer songs sung by elders
 - The drum
 - Appropriate behaviours
3. Understand and participate in spiritual ceremonies:
 - First successful hunt.
 - Birth ceremonies.
 - Weddings.
 - Death ceremonies.
 - Community hunting ceremonies.
4. Recognize and develop their personal spirituality.
 - Use Dene spirituality to help form personal ideas.
 - Practise self-discipline in developing spirituality.

1. Enjoy the Land.
 - Be aware of the sights, sounds, smell and feel of the land.
 - Appreciate the challenge of land experiences.
 - Recall personal land experiences.
 - Enjoy and retell others' stories about the land.
2. Show increased self-confidence on the land as a result of new land skills being learned or mastered.
3. Be healthful.
 - Bodily fitness, strength, endurance, skill.
 - Cleanliness.
 - Healthful diet.
4. Understand the importance of the land for survival.
 - Know how the land has enabled survival, past and present.
 - Be familiar with the concept of aboriginal rights to land and to hunting.
 - Explore ways in which land can be protected and conserved.
 - Practise conservation and land etiquette.
 - Explore ways in which to use the land for economic possibilities without hurting the land.
 - Research with elders as to why land claims are important.
5. Appreciate land-based food and Dene technology.
5. Appreciate land-based art and craft of Dene.
 - Understand design concepts of Dene.
 - Enjoy and create land-based art and craft.

The Land

Students are expected to:

Enjoy the land.

Become capable on the land.

Understand the land.

Appreciate and respect the land.

Be familiar with the Dene history of the land.

7. Know history of the land and be able to identify significant locations and learn Dene names of locations.
8. Demonstrate increasing skills in land survival:
 - Trapping and fishing.
 - Hunting.
 - Familiarity with layout of land.
 - Finding direction.
 - Making camp.
 - Camp etiquette.
 - Bush safety.
 - Navigation routes and water travel.
 - Overland travel in all seasons.
 - Trapping, fishing, hunting trails and areas.
 - Travel greater distances, longer periods.
 - Familiarity with the land in all seasons.
 - Familiarity with all weather conditions.
 - Observing habitats and habits of plants and animals.
 - Familiarity with how Dene use plants and animals.
 - Observing nature and its ways.
 - Working with hides and sewing.
 - Working with food.
 - Using and understanding Dene technology.
9. Be familiar with traditional ways of being on the land.

1. Learn from and respect elders.
 - Listen actively to stories and advice.
 - Go to elders for information and advice.
 - Use advice or knowledge given by elders.
 - Offer assistance to elders.
 - Offer food to elders.
2. Understand the importance of group identity and group cooperation for survival:
 - With others in the extended family, community and tribe and Dene Nation.
 - With others on the land, in the school, and at home.
 - Work within a group with assigned responsibilities:
 - Be aware of the workload generally.
 - Show responsibility for personal tasks.
 - Volunteer to take on more tasks if possible.
 - Help others, guide others or teach others.
 - Take instruction accurately.
 - Anticipate when others need help.
 - Help elders, the needy and the confined.
 - Share, be generous.
 - Acknowledge the strengths and special talents of others and recognize superior ability for sake of the group.
 - Make decisions based on group needs rather than individual needs.
 - Protect one another.
 - Strive to earn leadership roles within a group:
 - Be aware of Dene leaders and heroes.
 - Recognize qualities of leadership.

The People

Students are expected to:

Learn from and respect their elders.

Be generous to others.

Work with others, putting group needs before personal needs.

Accept and enjoy others.

Know the traditional relationships and changes over time.

3. Understand ways in which family and tribal camps traditionally worked together:
 - Leadership and elders.
 - Men and women's roles and special skills and abilities.
 - Training of children.
4. Understand traditional relationships between the tribes:
 - Alliances
 - Trade
5. Recognize similarities and differences between the Dene and people of other cultures.
6. Enjoy others:
 - While working and travelling.
 - During group celebrations.
 - During recreation.
 - Using humour.
 - By story telling.
 - By accepting others for what and who they are.
7. Understand changes in traditional culture due to the coming of the whiteman.
 - First and early contact stories.
 - Issues regarding land use.
 - Issues regarding relationships among Dene.

1. Take control of maintaining their own integrity by being responsible and respectful in their relationships with people, the land, and the spiritual world. They will show that they appreciate the need to be responsible by:
 - Self-monitoring or self-evaluating.
 - Setting personal goals and standards.
 - Seeking challenges.
 - Seeking opportunities to learn from respected individuals in the community.
 - Completion of projects or tasks.
2. Know the things that get in the way of maintaining integrity:
 - Bad medicine
 - Money
 - Drugs
 - Alcohol

The Self

Students are expected to:

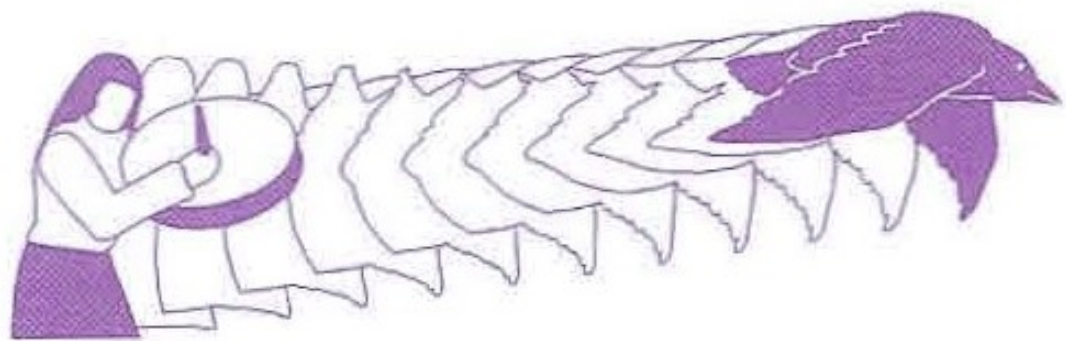
Work to maintain integrity in their relationships.

Know and respect themselves.

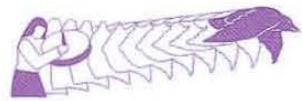
Maintain humility.

Be aware of how their own behaviour affects others.

3. Strive for self-knowledge and self-respect.
 - Enjoy being alone to work or to relax.
 - Seek to discover or develop personal strengths or talents.
 - Explore Dene identity and what it means regarding personal decisions.
 - Find personal satisfaction in having learned new Dene skills or having had new Dene experiences.
4. Maintain sense of humility in all relationships.
 - Pray in recognition of powers greater than you.
 - Resisting aggressive behaviour toward others and things in nature.
5. Become increasingly aware of how others are affected by one's own behaviour.



Spirituality



Spiritual Power

"The drumming and players which my brother gave us are very important. It is the one by which we live. If our children learn to play it would serve them well."

– Terry Simpson "Strong like two people". Nov. 1990



Primary Objective:

Students should understand that although Spiritual Powers were a gift for survival from the Creator, they were given with Rules of Conduct. Students should be aware of the rules of conduct and the implications of adhering or not adhering to those principles.

The Dene youth of today hunger for this kind of information and it is important that they be given the proper information.



Living Force

"It is no good to be scared of the land. We are from the land. We come from it. Why are we scared of ourselves . . . We are the land." – Elizabeth Mackenzie, April 4, 1990



Primary Objective:

The students should experience the Living Force in its concrete and powerful form so that they can come to understand and accept the force. If the students are involved in the rituals which acknowledge the Living Force, they will come to see the land, water and air differently. They will become more connected to the land and have a stronger commitment to it. They will come to respect the land and to protect it from pollution. The experiences for the Living Force unit should be integrated into the activities which take place on the land in other thematic units.



One Who Circled the Earth

Yamozha - Dogrib

Yamodezhaa - South Slavey

Yamoreya - North Slavey

Ebtachohka'e - Gwich'in

Yabatheya - Chipewyan



Primary Objective:

The story of Yamozha ties the Dene to the land and to each other. Dene students will develop a sense of unity through the universal story about "The One Who Circled the Earth". The legend of "The One Who Circled the Earth" is common to all five Dene tribes. Thus, it ties the tribes together into the Dene Nation. "The One Who Circled the Earth" not only ties the Dene Nation together, it ties the Dene Nation to the whole world because this greatest of medicine men circled the planet. Students must begin to recognize that their tribe is a part of something bigger and greater. They must begin to recognize who they are a part of and together with. Students will understand the nature of Dene laws and where they have come from, and as a result come to respect the laws.



Drum

“Just listening to the drums, even from long distances, lifts your spirit and it makes you feel good your whole being listens to the drums.” – Elizabeth Mackenzie, April 4, 1990



Primary Objective:

To give students the sacred gift of the drum which can be used for creating a sense of unity with other Dene, and to help the students in their prayers and meditations as well as for recreational enjoyment.



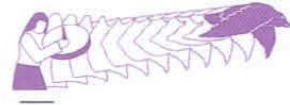
Fire

*"For restoring its life, the first smoke that rises from the fire is the fire's gift to you for good health
– George Kodakin, April 17, 1991*



Primary Objective:

Fire is considered a living force which enables the Dene to survive. The students learn to respect fire for its spiritual meaning as well as for the practical uses and for fire safety.



Prayer

*"If you don't know who the Creator is, just go outside."
— Joe Boucher, in Fort Franklin, Jan. 1991*



Primary Objective:

The Dene have always prayed to the Creator to show respect and to give thanks for all life around them. They prayed before the coming of Non-Dene and their prayers were important to them. The prayers given by the missionaries and churches were a different language but they serve a similar purpose. It is important for children to realize that prayers come in many forms, but all should be respected for they all are attempting to speak to the Creator.



The Land and the Sky



Geography and Land Use

*"Please open my tent flap so I can see my land once more before I die."
(from a story told by George Blondin: Délı̄ne, Jan. 1991)*



Primary Objective:

The Dene elders have said that the land, Mother Earth, is life itself. If life is to continue, the land must be cared for. Students will understand the importance and meaning of their relationship to the land. The land has meant life and death to the people.

The story of Dene people is told in the names given to places on the land including historically used places, and in the stories which come from there. Students will know that there are places identified in legends that have a 'living force', places that are sacred. The elders see that the children must become keepers of the land. Children must be given love of the land. From love will come respect, care, a sense of responsibility, a pride of tribe and homeland, and identification with the ideals connected to it.



Water and Rivers

*"The waterfall began to speak to her . . . why are you afraid of me?
We are here for you to hear our song. It is music to people's ears so you shouldn't be afraid."
– Elizabeth Mackenzie, April 4, 1990*



Primary Objective:

Since time immemorial, the Dene have had a very deep respect for water and rivers as a living force and spirit. Lack of respect has meant death for individuals and the threat of death for many more because of actions and attitudes which pollute or harm our access to water. If the students can learn how important water is for life then perhaps not only will the life of an individual be saved, but that of all mankind. In the North, knowing the habits of water and rivers has been a matter of survival. Navigational skills will give students a greater sense of security on the land which in turn will make them feel more at one with the land and its water.



Trees

*"It is believed that the trees are very happy when it is windy. The movement of the tree, caused by the wind, enables the sap to run through the tree and rejuvenate it, therefore bringing it much joy
Wind has its purpose." – Francis Tatti, April 1991*



Primary Objective:

To enable students to use and protect trees. Trees have been important to the survival of the Dene as well as of many animals upon which the Dene rely for food and for a livelihood.

Also, trees are a vital part of what the Dene consider their home. It is hoped that if the students are given familiarity with trees and working with wood, they will see the need to conserve and protect the trees.



Earth Medicine

"Earth Medicine came as a contribution from the Aboriginal Peoples."

– George Blondin, April 18, 1993



Primary Objective:

Earth medicine is a gift from the Creator which has enabled the Dene to survive. The students learn to respect the gift for its spiritual meaning as well as for its practical uses. Students also learn to respect the elders as those who carry this knowledge from the past.



Sun

"April is the month of the geese. This is the nearest moon to Easter, or the day the sun dances."

— John Tetso, Trapping is My Life, 1970



Primary Objective:

Knowledge of the spiritual nature of the sun and the gifts it gives to people will give students a greater appreciation of it. Learning the survival skills which use the sun will help them when on the land.



Moon and Stars

*Do not cry for me mother. Long after you are gone and till the end of time, people will gaze at me.
(The Boy in the Moon's parting words to his mother.) – Francis Tatti, April, 1991*



Primary Objective:

The moon and stars were traditionally used as clocks, compasses and calendars. It is still an important skill to be able to use the moon and the stars for direction and time while travelling.

It could mean survival for the student. But also, the student should know how the Dene traditionally found their way and told the time, and take pride in that knowledge.



Northern Lights

"It was one of those clear, cold nights, and the aurora borealis put on a magnificent display of white, roving fingers across the night sky as we lay in our beddings."

– John Tetso, Trapping is My Life, 1970



Primary Objective:

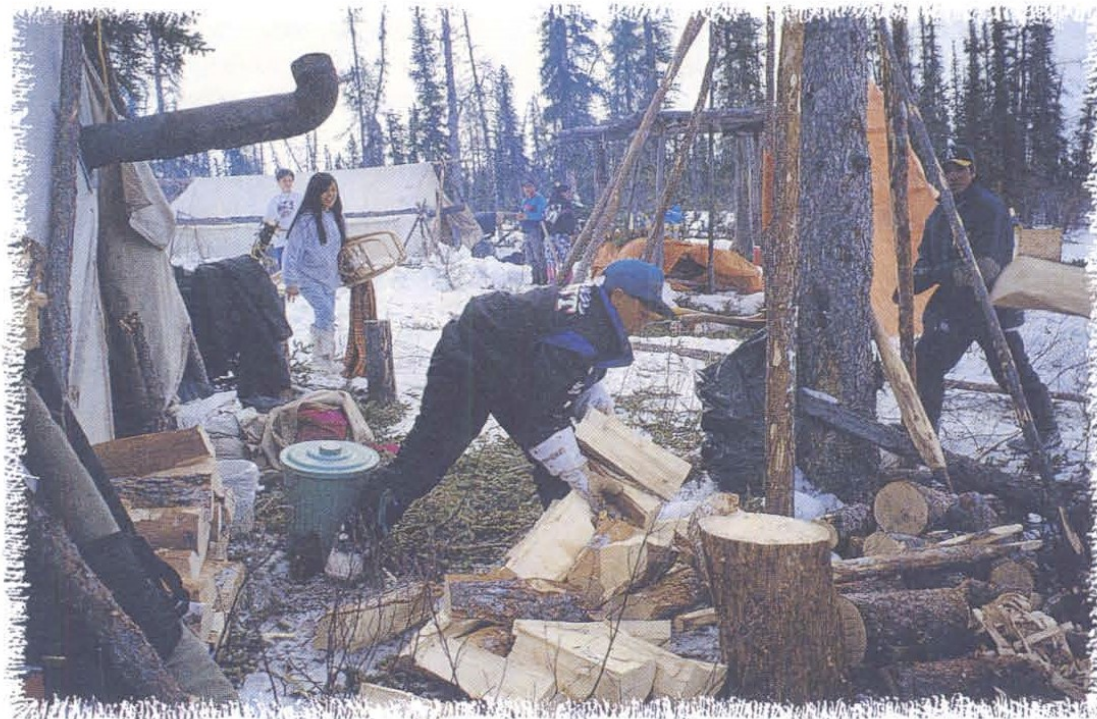
The Northern Lights have been an important source of light for travelling and hunting in the darkness. Also the dancing Northern Lights create a mood of happiness for the Dene. The students will come to appreciate the way that the Dene perceive the Northern Lights.



Camping

"The native people look at the land as their view of living, surviving."

– Rosa Mantla, April 4, 1990



Primary Objective:

To enable students to become skillful on and respectful of the land. The student should learn the basic camping skills as a matter of survival in case he or she is ever lost or left alone in the bush. Camping skills are basic to becoming a good hunter or trapper and will enable students to become independent and self-sufficient. Students with camping skills earn respect from their peers and adults. The camp environment is a good one for learning traditional Dene knowledge and skills, and for learning why things are done as they are. Finally, the cultural attitudes that are developed with the camping skills will enable students to live in both worlds.



Plants

"Replace the plant with a gift for its use." – William Sewi, April 18, 1993



Primary Objective:

The Dene rely heavily upon the use of plants in their daily lives. The Dene had many uses for plants in the past, both domestic and medicinal. Plants were also appreciated for their beauty in summer, indicating new life and plentiful food. The students will recognize the different kinds of plants in their area and know what their uses are.



Animals



Bear

"If you are going to hunt for the bear and work with it, you must not talk about it before you do, because it was given its own entity by the Creator and can hear you."

– George Kodakin, April 16, 1991



Primary Objective:

The bear is considered the most respected animal of the animal world. The students will learn to respect the bear as the leader amongst leaders and as having great powers in the human world. It is important to have a good relationship with the animals but especially with the bear.



Beaver

"It is the Beaver who taught the Dene how to store and ration food."

– George Blondin, April 17, 1991



Primary Objective:

The beaver is valued by the Dene because it has the gift of intelligence. It is the boss of intelligence. The beaver's existence on this land is very important to the shaping of Dene history.



Birds

*"It is said that a Beaver den is very well guarded by the Bird family."
– George Blondin, April 17, 1991*



Primary Objective:

The students will begin to notice and appreciate the many birds found in the North and their value to the Dene both past and present. The students will also become familiar with bird legends which will give students a deeper understanding of the value of birds to the Dene.



Caribou

"The boy had asked his caribou friends to come and get him. He was too strongly attached to them to stay human, and had decided to become a caribou."

– George Blondin, When the World Was New, 1990



Primary Objective:

To give students skills for physical survival, to give students understanding and appreciation of the caribou as a spiritual entity, to give students an appreciation of Dene hunting technology in the past, to give students ideas for possible uses of caribou for economic development. By giving students a respect for the caribou, the caribou will continue to provide for the Dene.

Disrespect will mean their extinction.



Dog

*"We will be a people's dog. Our existence is going to depend on these people called the Dene,"
declared the Dog People. – Francis Tatti, The Sabtuotine Long Ago, 1991*



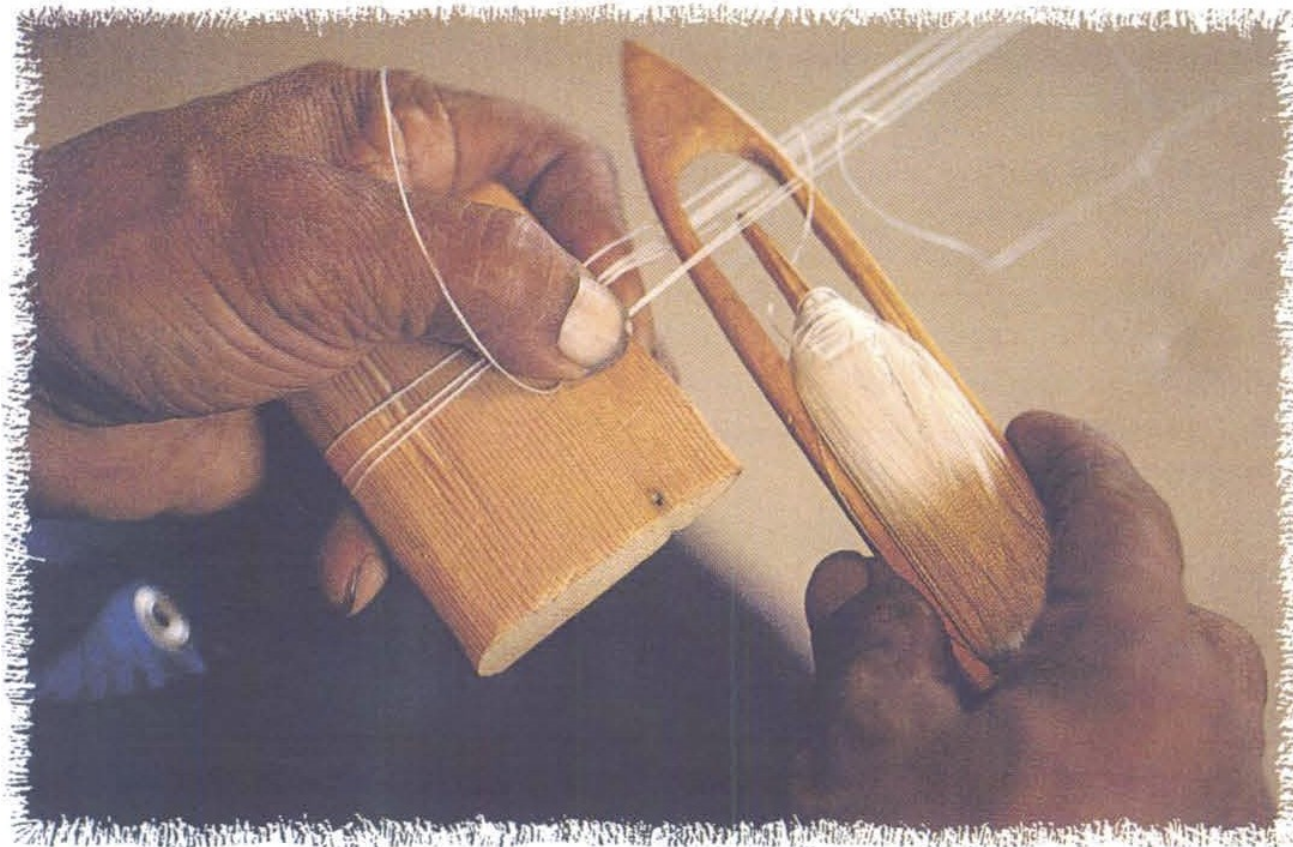
Primary Objective:

The dog has played an important role in the survival of the Dene on the land. The students should be made aware of the positive value of dogs on the land.



Fish

"I tried to go to the Heart of the Water but the passage was guarded by giant fish, said Daghuzbea of his stay with the fish people." – William Sewi, April 16, 1991



Primary Objective:

The students must appreciate that fish have been one of the main sources of food for the Dene and will continue to be. Fish have therefore played a large role in the lives of the people.



FOX

"Raven, instead of placing Fox's arm on properly, threw it unceremoniously through the air and as a result it landed crookedly. Now the fox's arm is crooked."

- Louie Taniton, Tatso Nogere Gone Naarichu, 1983



Primary Objective:

The fox contributes significantly to the Dene. The fox is trapped, but it gives itself willingly to ensure that life is sustained. The fox therefore must be sincerely respected at all times.



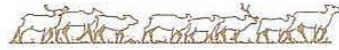
Moose

"On and on we called each other, I and the bull moose." – John Tetso, Trapping is My Life, 1970



Primary Objective:

Moose meat and moose hides are prized by the Dene. Students will assist in hunting and skinning a moose. In learning these skills, students are also carrying on the knowledge and wisdom of a particular teacher, and taking part in an important Dene tradition. Students must also become familiar with the spiritual relationship of the Dene to the moose, and learn how to respect the moose. Respect means preservation of the moose; lack of respect means its extinction.



Muskox

"He stood outside for a day and a half and people tried to talk to him but his medicine turned him to a muskox and he returned to the muskox." – Suziekwi



Primary Objective:

The Dene have depended on the muskox for food and clothing for thousands of years.

Careful study by the students will encourage ways to preserve the traditional use of the muskox. The muskox is respected as having the special power of being able to understand Dene. People can talk to them.



Rabbit

"Rabbit is a gift from the Creator and comes to us pure, therefore it must never suffer at the hands of man when it offers itself." – George Kodakin, April 16, 1991



Primary Objective:

The student will respect the rabbit as being a gift from the Creator. It was the rabbit that gave the gift of dance to the Dene. The student will appreciate the rabbit for being an important source of food when large game could not be found. The student will obtain the skills required to snare and prepare rabbit for its many uses. People who go on the land bring fixings for rabbit snaring as a matter of course (like bringing matches). This is survival that children can learn at a very early age because of the safeness of the equipment.



Raven

"Artistically they outdid themselves painting the Raven but still he was not pleased."

– Francis Tatti, April 16, 1991



Primary Objective:

Raven stories can help students understand themselves and their behaviour better. Raven stories are also a good example of how things are perceived quite differently by the Dene and other cultures. Children are exposed to a lot of raven stories.



Shrews and Mice

"The shrew, although disguised in the form of an insignificant being, is believed to be so powerful that it straddles the entire earth." – Lucy Tatti, April, 1991



Primary Objective:

Students should understand that all living things, no matter what the size, have a purpose and special qualities. Individual worth, inner strength and determination do not depend on size and outward appearance. Always maintain respect for others regardless of how they look and are perceived.



Spider

"Grandfather spider's net, Grandfather spider's net." This is what the children chanted as they asked Grandfather Spider to stop the rain and create a rainbow. – A Dene truth



Primary Objective:

To give students the perspective that even though the spider is a very small and seemingly insignificant creature, it has an important and even powerful place in the Dene universe. The spider is so highly honoured by the Dene that it is referred to as “ŋehtsée” (grandfather) even today. A grandfather possesses all the qualities that one should strive to imitate in their own life.



Wolverine

"Wolverine mistakenly threw his pants in the fire and got tricked by his brother in law."

– Neil Colin, May 22, 1991



Primary Objective:

The Dene respect the wolverine as a smart, fierce and strong animal. Students familiar with the wolverine, and with Dene ways of showing respect for it, will help to support its continued existence in the future and, if they wish, will have the opportunity of trapping it. The wolverine's fur was valued by the Dene traditionally for its use as trim and for its trading value.



Wolf

"The wolf is about to take your child, hurry up and light the fire." – George Kodakin, April 16, 1991



Primary Objective:

Though the wolf may appear to tolerate people, it is a powerful animal which can be very dangerous. The Dene must remind themselves that the wolf is not a friend, and maintain distance from it. Nonetheless, the wolf is a creature which must be respected.



Muskrat

Muskrat...aab to be named after an animal is such a great honour". – Elizabeth Mackenzie, 1991



Primary Objective:

From a spiritual perspective, the students will learn to appreciate the value of the muskrat to the Dene as the person who reconstructed land and gave it back to the people. The muskrat is also a behavioural model for the students: he is persistent and determined. Students must understand and appreciate the role and place of the muskrat in the Dene world. Students must be given the knowledge and skills to be able to hunt the muskrat. Trapping muskrat is an important part of being a trapper. Learning to hunt muskrat is important because the meat is an important part of food and excellent in terms of nutritional value. Also, by learning how to work with muskrat hides, the students will have skills that can later be used in craftwork or in the fur business. Learning about the muskrat will also help the students to appreciate the muskrat's role in keeping the rivers and lakes flowing.



Trapping

"It does not take one day or one trip on a trapline to learn everything about it, but the knowledge is accumulated down through the years." – John Tetso, Trapping is My Life, 1970



Primary Objective:

Trapping has always been a way of life for the Dene. Trapping can be a means of earning or supplementing an income in the North. There are Dene who have trapping skills and knowledge which can be passed on to students so that they too can take advantage of this kind of living if they wish to or have to in the future.



People



Family

*"We listened to our parents, our grandparents and to the elders.
We listened to our family, in the old days." – Marie Cadieux, April 16, 1991*



Primary Objective:

Traditionally, the extended family was the basic unit of survival in Dene culture. The extended family is still important to the Dene today. Students will develop a clearer understanding of the role the family plays in shaping the identity of individuals. This will also help them understand their own role as family members. Knowing bloodlines is important because it enables people to avoid marrying close relations.



Grandparents

*There is a saying: "By living with a child your hands will stretch into the future."
For the grandparent it ensures that their knowledge, skills, and values will live on
in new generations. For the youngsters the nurturing and loving relationship will give them
a strong sense of identity and self-worth. – The Elders*



Primary Objective:

Students should know about the traditional role of grandparents in Dene cultures, and how important they are for transmitting the knowledge, skills and attitudes of our ancestors. Our importance comes from the grandparents and because of them our minds become stronger and stronger. Students should learn correct behaviour with grandparents and know the importance of having a good relationship with them.



Parents

"If you don't have respect for your parents you can't have respect for yourself."

– Elizabeth Mackenzie, Deline workshop, January, 1991



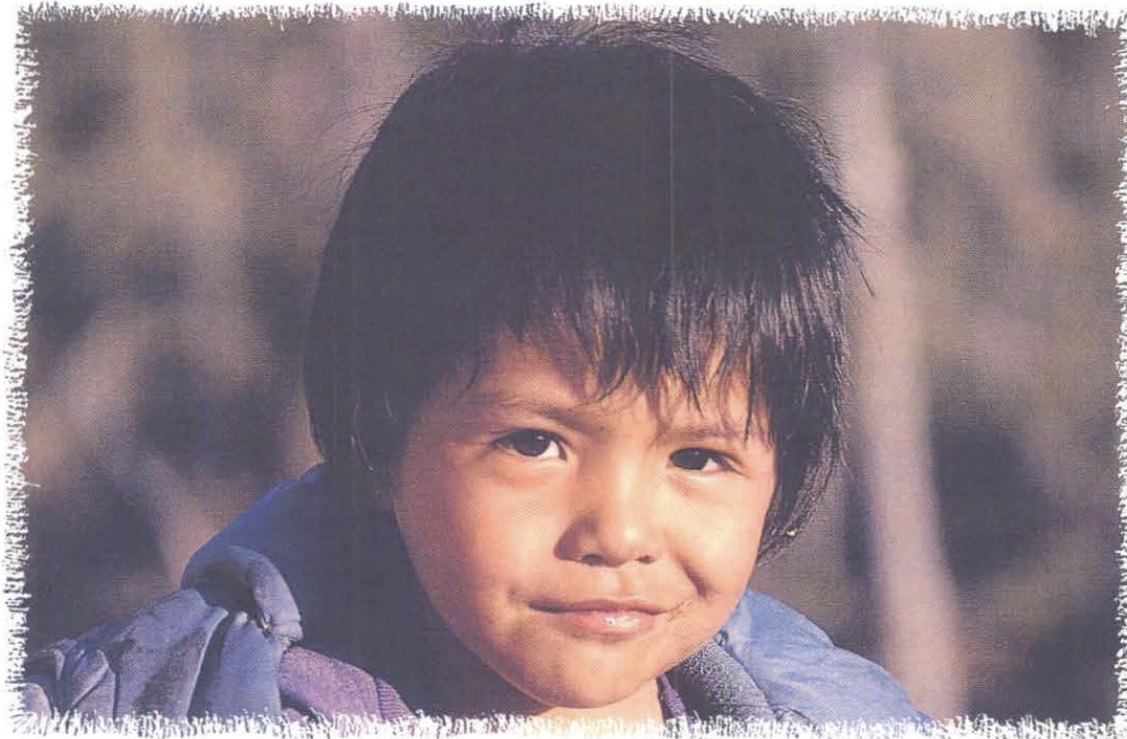
Primary Objective:

Parenting is an important part of a Dene child's development. From the Dene parents come the values, teaching and perspective of a Dene society. Students will learn about the traditional Dene way of parenting, and also begin to explore new ways of parenting based on today's needs. Before students can choose the way they will be parents, they have to know the way it used to be.



The Child

"It was said that one day a Child will be born among the Dene who will change the world. This child will be born with a drum held in his hands. He will help us to regain our strength as a people." – (Izi) Joe Naedzo, The Sahtuotine Long Ago, 1991



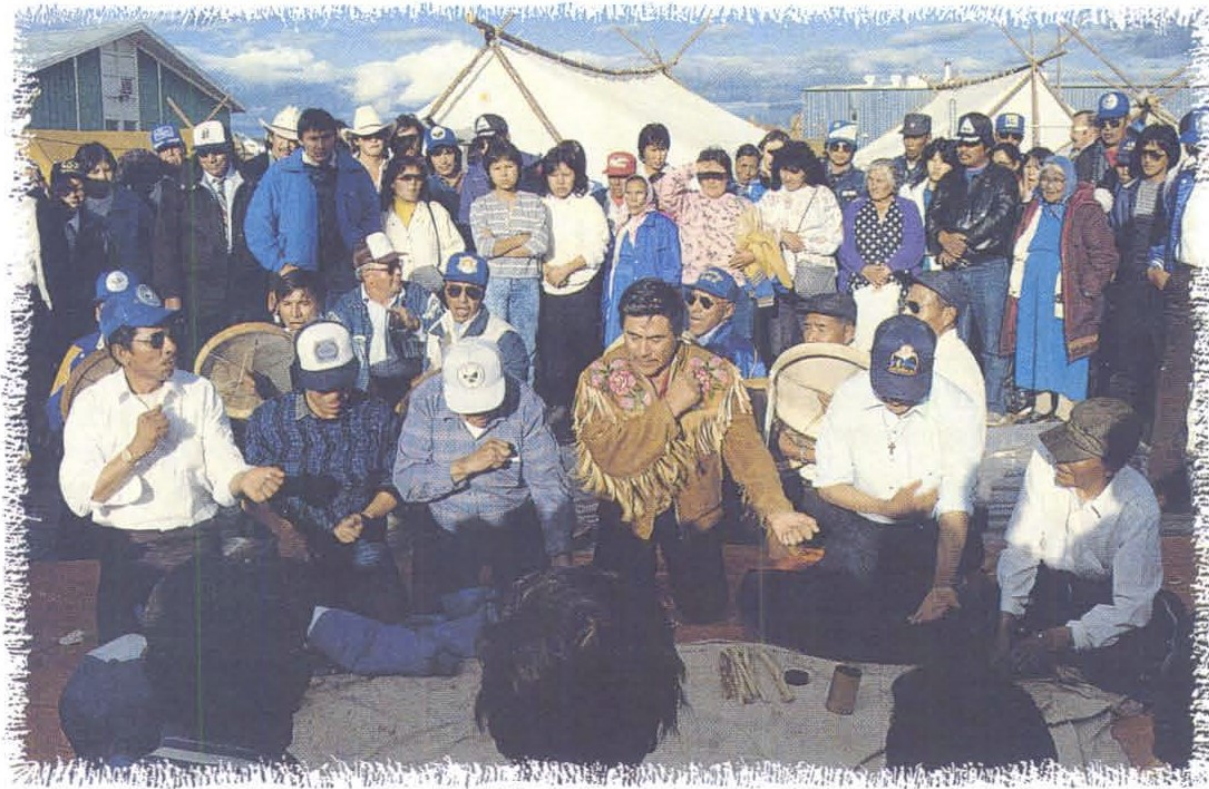
Primary Objective:

It is hoped that through the development of this curriculum the children will realize how valuable they are to the Dene culture, elders and people. Students should learn how children were viewed and brought up traditionally. They should evaluate child-rearing methods in the past, and compare them with present methods. They will understand the importance of sharing, being self-disciplined, and learning from their elders.



Tribes

"A handshake of greetings makes you feel like you've been there before and it invites and welcomes the newcomer to the history and the community." – George Marlowe, April 5, 1990



Primary Objective:

The Dene tribes together have used one land since time immemorial. They and the Inuit are the indigenous peoples of the Northwest Territories. The Dene tribes, though different in many ways, have had very similar lifestyles and all consider themselves a part of the Dene Nation. Students should understand the long history of their people as told by their elders.



Birth and Death

"In those days if your parents died, your first child is believed to be your mother or father living again and you love and cherish them all the more." – Julie Lacorne, Nabecho Keh, 1987



Primary Objective:

Understand that the Dene believe that life in its beginning has integrity. Students will understand the Dene way of understanding life, birth and death.



Men and Women

"Each had a role. The men hunting in the lead would place a marker on the path to indicate to the women where the camp should be set up." – George Kodakin, September 9, 1989



Primary Objective:

Students should understand that men and women rely on each other and share work equally. Students will recognize that Dene can still follow traditional ways and that this is essential to survive in today's world. Students should understand and respect the modern and traditional roles of men and women, and realize that they themselves will need these skills in order to teach future generations.



Friends

"Sehlee is my friend, one who is one with me, one who makes me whole."— A Dene truth



Primary Objective:

Students must learn to respect the value of friendship, and the Dene perspective of friendship. Friends can mean many different things: nature is a friend (wood, food, weather, ants, etc.). To succeed in life and to maintain a livelihood, it is important to have friends and to be a friend.



Elders

"The Elders always spoke honestly. My wish was always this, if only I can be like you, live my life as you did in your youth, and to have your wisdom to speak of in my old age."

– Margaret Sabourin Sr., Nahecho Keh, 1987



Primary Objective:

The primary objective is to enable students to appreciate the older members of the community as well as the elders. To become an elder in the Dene community, one must earn the right.

The elders are those who possess Dene knowledge. They are the primary source of all knowledge which has been accumulated by the Dene, generation after generation. Because of their life experience, they have the wisdom to advise new generations as to how to deal with life and its problems. It is hoped that students will become aware of their role or responsibility in ensuring the succession of knowledge and therefore the culture. Whatever is not obtained from our elders is gone forever. This is the only way to ensure that the culture continues to exist and the connection with the past can be maintained.



Leaders

"The leader's job was the survival of the people. By the same principles they have to pass on to the next generation, so that the people never become extinct. You remain a Dene forever."

– John B. Zoe, April 3, 1990



Primary Objective:

Students will learn about traditional leadership and apply it to their own lives in order to prepare them to provide Dene-style leadership in the future. Traditional leadership models were very effective in getting people to work together to survive, and this is required for the future. Also, the students will learn about past and present Dene leaders. This will provide the students with good role models and also give them a new sense of pride in their people and in their history.



Clothing

"Sewing was so valuable a skill, that a young woman's worth as a prospective wife was largely measured by her sewing abilities." – The Sahtuotine Long Ago, 1991



Primary Objective:

Traditionally, Dene clothing was made only of materials from nature. The clothing was designed to enable survival in the most severe winters or the warmest summers. It is important that this knowledge and skill not be lost. People are beginning to discover that the materials and design of traditional clothing are better for colder temperatures than clothing imported from the south. If students can be given this knowledge and the skills to sew the basic items of clothing in the traditional styles with traditional materials, they will come to appreciate the beautiful and creative skills of their culture and their people. In the process of gaining these skills, the students will acquire patience and self-esteem. The skills can be the basis for future economic development projects for communities.



The Arrival of the Non-Dene

*"Long ago before the white people came, our people used to teach each other.
We taught the children by telling them stories and having them watch the adults work."
– John B. Zoe, Strong Like Two People, November, 1990*



Primary Objective:

Before spending time with this theme, the students should know that the Dene were the original occupants of this land, and had learned to live and survive as a people for thousands of years prior to the coming of the Non-Dene. The study of the changes which occurred in the Dene culture as a result of the coming of the Non-Dene will enable students to better understand and control change in the future.



Traditional Games

"The object of the competition was to see who was the fastest. Its real purpose was to identify who was to pursue game." – (Izi) Joe Naedzo, The Sabtuotine Long Ago, 1991



Primary Objective:

It was important traditionally for the Dene to be mentally and physically fit to survive on the land. Traditional games were played to test their physical strength, mental capabilities, and to build character. It is to expose students to the games from the traditional Dene culture, and to have students value the games for what they provided: fun, entertainment, enjoyment and friendship. The competition is with oneself. It is hoped that the games will be revived.



Play Learning Aids

"It is believed that children grow through play so when they are stopped they become sick."

– Lucy Tatti, July 12, 1993



Primary Objective:

Play is a crucial developmental part of the Dene child's development, and is essential to the acquisition of language. Through play, children find friendship, learn leadership skills, and develop mentally, physically, creatively and spiritually. Play is considered an important process for a child in need of healing. Learning how to make traditional toys is one way to learn about the past, and to gain knowledge and skills which can be passed to the next generation. Students will learn that traditional learning aids were often models of the real thing, such as smaller versions of bows and arrows and other tools, and they will need to learn to exercise safe handling of these types of toys.



Eating and Food

"Due to the harshness of the land, no person, tribe or culture could deny others access to food. All accepted and adhered to this 'unstated law'. The worst crime for the Dene was to deny food to others." – (Izi) Joe Naedzo, The Sahtuotine Long Ago, 1991



Primary Objective:

Students will understand that the land has provided the Dene with everything they needed to survive for thousands of years. All kinds of animals, plants and fish were available. The Dene have developed their own system of food gathering, preparation and preservation. Food is a source of wealth for the Dene. It must be shared to be replenished. One must never deny another food.

