

# PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

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TIPI POLE  
TEACHINGS  
& Building Resiliency



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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A special thank you to our *Filling Our Tipis* partner Friendship Centres for their enthusiasm in delivering the program and passion for working on bettering the lives of Indigenous youth in their communities:

- Sagitawa Friendship Centre (Peace River)
- Miywasin Friendship Centre (Medicine Hat)
- Lloydminster Friendship Centre

Thank you to the Government of Alberta's Early Intervention and Youth Branch of Children's Services for providing funding to support mental wellness and resiliency building to create brighter and mentally well futures for urban Indigenous youth.

## Tansi / Kinanâskomitin Oki / Nitsíniyi'taki:

- To the 21-member Friendship Centres that serve their community's needs with kindness, culture, and dedication every day.

- To urban Indigenous youth who have shared many stories over the years to help guide us to develop programs that support them and their needs.
- To the Elders, mentors, friends, and families who support children and youth in Friendship Centre communities.

To all Indigenous youth who have taken part in the *Filling Our Tipis* program and to our program partner Friendship Centres, we acknowledge you. Day by day, you have inspired us. Your words have been heard and your reflections have informed this publication.



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# The Foundation

The *Filling Our Tipis* program was created with a desire to support urban Indigenous youth to explore cultural connections and build a foundation of resiliency. The program was delivered in three Friendship Centres and while the programming was built on common themes, traditional tipi pole teachings were adapted to meet the needs of youth in each of these communities. Through *Filling Our Tipis* youth were supported to:

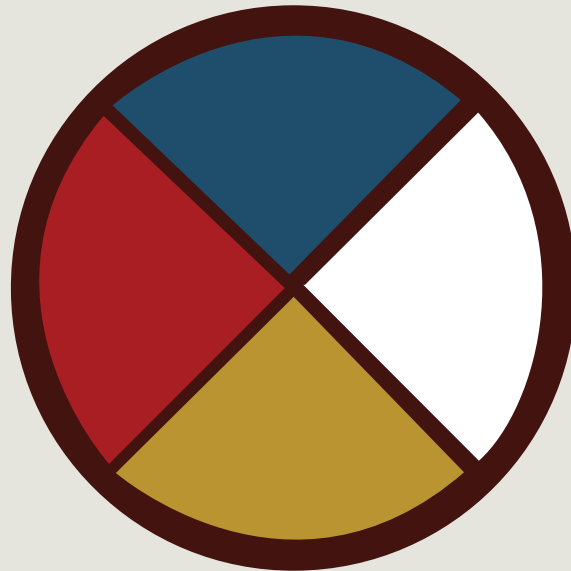
- Create healthy relationships
- Embrace culture and ceremony
- Strengthen resiliency and self-determination
- Decrease bullying and ultimately reduce suicide ideation

# The Tipi

The tipi represents the foundation of self, family, and community. It is through her that we learn values that bring balance to our lives. Each of the tipi poles represents a foundational belief that has been shared for untold generations of teachings. While tipi pole teachings may vary from community to community, the message conveyed through these teachings is familiar from one nation to the next. The *Filling our Tipis* program was created to connect urban Indigenous youth to cultural knowledge carried in the tipi pole teachings.

# THE MEDICINE WHEEL

To further support the holistic approach and interconnection of the tipi teachings, our tipi sits on top of the medicine wheel. The poles rest atop the medicine wheel and connect the teachings in a way that inspires resiliency in our mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.



# FILLING OUR TIPIS

## Pole #1

- **OBEDIENCE**

The Obedience teaching is about learning to accept guidance and wisdom from outside of ourselves.

When we apply this teaching in our lives, it builds our resilience by encouraging us to identify and access a variety of support networks. Through this teaching, we are reminded that when needed, we are stronger when we seek help from others. For example, when we need assistance or support, we can reach out to a trusted Elder for guidance.

*Relationship to Medicine Wheel (Mental)*



# FILLING OUR TIPIS

## Pole #2

- **RESPECT**

The Respect teaching gives honour to our Elders and peers, the community, and to all life. Through this teaching we honour the basic rights of all others.

When we show respect and use empathy towards others, we also honour ourselves. This teaching helps us create healthy relationships with our family and our friends, and the community in which we live. When we honour this teaching, we show we value our life, and that we respect others and ourselves. We are concerned with the safety of others and we work to decrease bullying and lateral violence. We create resiliency.

*Relationship to Medicine Wheel (Mental)*



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## Pole #3

- **HUMILITY**

The Humility teaching shows us that we are not above or below others in the circle of life, and we should respect and value all life.

Too often we give up in difficult times or activities because we feel we are not doing well enough. Our frustration and anxiety become too much to handle and we feel inadequate. By being taught humility, that no one is perfect and we are all equal, we celebrate our uniqueness and we move past those emotions. By using our own individual creativity, we build our perseverance to stop the negative self-talk and learn to value ourselves, and most importantly, our life.

*Relationship to Medicine Wheel (Mental)*



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## Pole #4

- **HAPPINESS**

The Happiness teaching encourages us to show enthusiasm and to encourage others by overcoming jealousy and envy. Our good actions will make our ancestors happy in the next world.

When we are happy, we are resilient. When we let go of jealousy and instead celebrate and support each other's differences and successes it builds our self-esteem, increases our positive experiences and our own feelings of success. Happiness stimulates a healthy body and mind.

*Relationship to Medicine Wheel (Physical)*

# FILLING OUR TIPIS



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## Pole #5

- **LOVE**

The Love teaching tells us that if we are to live in harmony, we must accept one another as we are, and accept others who are not in our circle. Love means to be good and kind to one another and to ourselves.

Receiving and reciprocating love builds our resilience. Love is having empathy and accepting others as they are. By using kindness in our interactions with others, we create positive relationships with our family and friends which boosts our self-confidence and boosts our inner strength.

*Relationship to Medicine Wheel (Physical)*

# FILLING OUR TIPIS

## Pole #6

- **FAITH**

The Faith teaching shows us to trust others, to know who and how to reach out to those who can help us and believe in a power greater than ourselves – spirituality. This teaching reminds us faith and spirituality must be walked every day to be kept alive.

Faith is important when we are struggling or frustrated with something we are trying to accomplish or overcome. Trying our best and asking for guidance from a power greater than ourselves is one way we allow faith into our lives. Faith promotes independent and higher thinking including seeing connections, visualizing the big picture, and building our problem-solving skills, thus increasing our resilience.

*Relationship to Medicine Wheel (Physical)*



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## Pole #7

- **KINSHIP**

Kinship teaches us that family is important. Through our family, we know our ancestors and place of origin which give us roots that tie us to the lifeblood of the earth. This includes our extended family and our community.

Kinship includes all of our social relationships that form an important part of our lives, from our family and our community. Feeling connection to our ancestors, caregivers and children, and our external supports strengthens our sense of belonging and resiliency.

*Relationship to Medicine Wheel (Emotional)*

# FILLING OUR TIPIS

## Pole #8

- **CLEANLINESS**

Cleanliness teaches us that while good hygiene is important, this teaching focuses on clean or clear thoughts which come from a clean mind based in spirituality. With a clean mind based on spirituality, we have a sense of peace within, we learn not to inflict ills on others or ourselves.

When we practice healthy habits like exercise, good food, and positive thoughts, it is reflected in positive mental wellness. Through clean, positive thoughts we realize effective coping, self-soothing and problem-solving skills while treating others with respect and kindness.

*Relationship to Medicine Wheel (Emotional)*



# FILLING OUR TIPIS



## Pole #9

- **THANKFULNESS**

Thankfulness teaches us to give thanks and recognize the good things in our lives and the kind things others do for us.

Everything – every rock, every blade of grass – has a consciousness. If you take something from the earth, a rock, plant, feather, or receive a gift or teaching from another, you should reciprocate, such as offering tobacco. Being thankful and appreciative for the gifts and teachings from others, for things you have, creates positive feelings about our surroundings and increases our resiliency.

*Relationship to Medicine Wheel (Emotional)*

# FILLING OUR TIPIS



## Pole #10

### • SHARING

Sharing teaches us to be part of a family and community by helping and sharing in the work. Through the sharing of responsibilities, we learn the value of working together and enjoying the rewards of these efforts.

Being part of a community has a positive effect on mental health and emotional well-being. Community involvement such as volunteering or taking part in community and cultural activities provides a sense of belonging and social connection. For many, this sense of connection and sharing of ourselves makes us thrive physically, mentally, and emotionally.

*Relationship to Medicine Wheel (Emotional)*

# FILLING OUR TIPIS

## Pole #11

- **STRENGTH**

Strength teaching is based on spiritual strength, not an ability to be physically strong. We must learn to be patient in times of trouble and not to complain, but endure and show understanding. We must accept difficulties and tragedies so that we may give others strength to accept their own difficulties and tragedies.

Somewhere along the way, we all face a personal tragedy or difficulties. How we react and stop negative thoughts from influencing our emotions and behaviour helps us learn and be there for others. Practicing positive self-talk and creating our own individual strategies to manage stress and negative outside influences makes us resilient.

*Relationship to Medicine Wheel (Spiritual)*



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## Pole #12

- **GOOD CHILD REARING**

Children are gifts from the creator. We are responsible for their well-being, spiritually, emotionally, physically, and intellectually. Children are blessed with the gift representing the continuing circle of life.

Proper guidance helps children grow, develop, and respond to life in a positive way. Children learn by example, so it is important to role model the values you teach children. By being a good role model, helping children gain control of emotions, learn self-discipline, solve problems and gain independence, we create resiliency.

*Relationship to Medicine Wheel (Spiritual)*

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## Pole #13

- **HOPE**

Hope teaches us we must hope for better things to make life easier for us, our families and the community, spiritually, emotionally, mentally and physically. To plant a seed, to tend to it and wait for it to grow, is hope.

Resiliency helps us look forward to the future by creating aspirations and setting goals for ourselves. Hope is having an optimistic outlook of positive outcomes with respect to events and circumstances in one's life or the world at-large.

*Relationship to Medicine Wheel (Spiritual)*

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## Pole #14

### • ULTIMATE PROTECTION

The Ultimate Protection teaching reminds us the ultimate responsibility, to achieve the balance and well-being of the body, mind, emotions, and spirit for the individual, and the family, and the community that comes from within the circle.

Friendship Centres create an atmosphere of Indigenous community that is hard to replicate off-reserve. They are cultural drivers in their communities offering safety, understanding, and support. They provide a space for kinship, strengthen individual indigeneity, and offer a space for cultural and traditional connection.

*Relationship to Medicine Wheel (Spiritual)*

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- **CONTROL FLAPS**

The Control Flaps show that we are all connected by relationships and we depend on each other. Having respect for and understanding this connection creates and controls harmony and balance in the circle of life.

Intergenerational relationships play an integral role in maintaining cultural continuity through the process of storytelling and knowledge transmission. Elders most often have this relationship in the community as they hold roles of knowledge and wisdom keepers.

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- **THE ROPES**

Every time a pole is added, a rope goes around to bind that pole into place. That rope is a sacred bond, binding all the teachings firmly together – keeping them all connected.

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- **THE SACRED HEARTH**

At the centre of the tipi is the sacred hearth, which represents our community. The circle of rocks that contains the fire circle represents the relationship of community working together with ancient knowledge for future generations.

# PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER



## • THE EAGLE'S NEST

The tipi model and tools developed for *Filling Our Tipis* do more than lift youth, they also have the impact of lifting the family and community, which points to the very top part of the tipi, the Eagle's Nest.

This is where all things come together and lift us collectively and as an individual to a vantage point high enough to see a vision of a positive and healthy future. It is there we are connected to the spirit world, our ancestors, and a good life, supported by the warmth, safety, love, sustenance, and embrace of Mother Earth as represented by her lodge, the tipi.

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