

Life Cycle Teachings

Every community member, at every age, has a role to play in the community. The four aspects of self: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs of each person is required at every stage of life.

■ Infants

Bring the gift of joy and love to families from the time of conception to the birth. Each family and community member shares in the love and joy and unity of new life and await the new birth. It is believed that infants share the closest union with the Creator, in communication through sounds, laughter, crying and music. Infants are regarded highly by their Elders, family and community. We celebrate the birth of our new community members.

■ Toddlers

Bring love, curiosity and exploration of new surroundings. Parents must take on a special role of teaching and introducing toddlers to their new surroundings. Elders, family and community members participate in the wonder of curiosity of little toddlers who each learned experience is new and learning capacity is great. Toddlers learn by experience and observation. Like the bud of dawn, the toddler awakens to life in curiosity and learning. We want children to learn healthy ways of living and we need to model good behaviour. We teach children to respect the opposite gender. Both toddlers and parents will learn 'safety' at this age.

■ Children

Bring love, respect, caring and sharing to their families and extended families. It is a learning stage and a character building stage where teachers, aunts, uncles should all be around. Children need opportunities to enjoy life with much laughter and also enjoy life. There is need for children to experience people in the most positive way since the experience will continue in these formative years in whatever way they observe and what they are taught. This is also the time for caring, nurturing and molding of the child's formative years. How the seed was planted and nurtured is very important throughout these stages of development.

■ Youth

Bring activity and zest for life in their preparation for the maturing season in their lives built already through teachers, parents and community. They are now regarded and trained to be future leaders and highly respected for their vision and energy. Young boys are recognized for their strength and prepared by their teachers to proceed and realize their potential. Young girls are highly respected for the upcoming role in the creation of life as life givers and are taught by the Elders, parents and community to prepare for their future role in life. Elders also see that youth are vital and thus need the care, nurturing and love to be able to carry out the traditions.

Life Cycle Teachings continued

■ **Young Adult**

Bring caring and respect for life and are responsible for making their own decisions. Their characters are already in place from the proceeding teachers. It is now time for self responsibility, self teaching, for change, and for testing characteristics. They are reminded by the Elders that they too are beginning the harvest of their youth and beginning to form their own character and are ready for parenting roles. This is also a journey of many paths off the main road in search of meaning and understanding.

■ **Parents**

Bring love, hope, caring, sharing and teaching to carry on the traditions picked up on the journey from the Elders. Their roles are emerging as they pick up their parent's role as caregivers in their community and their immediate families. It is now their turn to parent their own young and care for the Elders. They will begin to experience the responsibility to prepare their own children as they were also prepared. They will begin to experience the same aches and sorrows and pleasures in seeing their children as the product of their parenting skills. Their roles are to assist in the meaning and understanding of life and to make clear the vision of life for future generations.

■ **Grandparents**

Bring wisdom, love and greater spiritual understanding. They bring teachings and meaning to the extended families through the practice of example and role modeling. They are aunts and uncles to many children who share in their knowledge and understanding of life and love. They have experienced life in all stages and should be highly respected depending on their journey in life. They are responsible for teaching the younger generation to live together in harmony, peace, cooperation, and caring for each other in the community and all relations.

■ **Elders**

Bring greater, wisdom, love and spiritual meaning and understanding in their roles as healers, counsellors, guides, and keepers of the Aboriginal teachings. The communities and families respect the Elders and value their wisdom and guidance and provide for them as they have provided for their children and grandparents. They are seen as the strength for the positive building in their communities through their teachings. Elders also need help to remain strong. We must keep them free from harm and provide quality care. It is a time to pass their knowledge to the youth since they have been considered to master the meaning of joy and sorrow and many trials and tribulations encountered over the course of their existence.