

## 2020 Indigenous Day of Prayer: The Seven Grandfather Teachings

Sunday, June 21, 2020

### Reflection ~ Deb Anderson Pratt

Imagine living in harmony with Mother Earth, the animals around and with each other, before strangers came to your lands. We had a belief system that helped us to live a good life. ... Some of the teachings we lived by were the Grandfather Teachings, which consist of Love, Respect, Courage, Honesty, Wisdom, Humility, and Truth, teachings you also find in the Bible. ...

**Love:** To know love is to know the Creator, therefore it's expected one's first love is for that of the Creator or Great Spirit. Creator is the parent of all children. The love given to the Great Spirit is expressed through self-love; if you can't love yourself how can you love anyone else? The Great Spirit chose the eagle to represent love because the eagle soars the highest of all creatures in bringing pure vision to the seeker. Although love is the supplier of the greatest and most powerful medicine, it can also be the most elusive of the teachings as it depends on a world that acknowledges the importance of spirituality.

Colossians 3:14 states:

*And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*  
(NIV)

**Respect** is the condition of being honoured. Respect is represented by the buffalo. Through giving its life and sharing every part of its being the buffalo showed the deepest respect it had for people. No animal was more important to the existence of our people. Its gifts provided shelter, clothing, and utensils for our daily life. Our people believed we were the true caretakers of the herds and developed a sustainable relationship with the buffalo that resulted in a relationship of true respect. I remember all the teachings my great-grandmother gave us in regards to respect; a few of them were:

- Respect our Elders by listening to what they said and do what they told us to do. In teaching my own children, I taught them to do only what felt right and respectful. I did this to teach them to protect themselves from sexual abuse.
- Give your seat up to Elders. It is considered very disrespectful to see a young person seated and an Elder standing.
- Respect your siblings, especially your brothers. Do not step over your brother. It was taboo to step over the men in the family because a girl/woman may be close to or on her time of month; it was believed that women are very powerful when they are on their time and could cripple a man if they stepped over them.

1 Peter 5:5 teaches:

*Likewise, you who are younger be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” (ESV)*

**Courage** is the ability to face danger, fear, or change with confidence and bravery. The bear teaches us courage with many lessons in the way it lives. Courage is the most important teaching the bear offers. The true definition of courage is a mother bear’s ferociousness when it comes to her cubs being approached, very much like a human mother when she comes to her child. This same ferociousness is needed to have the moral and mental strength to overcome fears that prevent us from living our true spirit as human beings. Living in the heart and spirit is difficult. The bear’s example shows us how to face any danger to achieve courage in our lives.

2 Timothy 1:7 speaks of the spirit:

*God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. (ESV)*

**Honesty** is speaking and acting truthfully, thereby remaining morally upright. The Sabe (Sasquatch) represents honesty. Long ago, there was a giant called Kitchi-Sabe. It walked among the people to remind them to be honest to the law of the Creator and with each other. The highest honour bestowed on a person was the saying, “There walks an honest man, he can be trusted.” Keeping the promises one made to the Creator or to others and self was to be truly honest. The Elders said live true to your spirit, never try to be someone else.

Ephesians 4:25 says what our ancestors passed down long before Christianity came to our people:

*Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. (NIV)*

**Wisdom** is the ability to make decisions based on personal knowledge and experience. The beaver teaches us wisdom. Community is entirely dependent on the gifts given to each member by the Creator. The beaver’s example of using its sharp teeth for cutting down trees and branches to build its dams and lodges expresses this teaching. If the beaver didn’t use its teeth in this way, the teeth would continue to grow until they became useless, ultimately making it impossible for the beaver to sustain itself. The same can be said for human beings. One’s spirit will grow weak if it is not fulfilling its use. When used properly, one’s gifts contribute to the development of a peaceful and healthy being and community.

James 3:13 says:

*Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. (NIV)*

The beaver is wise and understanding in knowing he has to use his teeth for them to be productive.

**Humility** is recognizing and acknowledging that Creator is a higher power than people. This is truly humbling. True humility is being humble and not arrogant. To capture true humility one

must express deference or submission to the Creator, through the acceptance that all human beings are equal. The expression of this humility is manifested through the consideration of others before oneself. The wolf teaches us humility; it bows his head in the presence of others in deference, and once it has hunted the wolf will not take any of the food until it can be shared with the pack. The wolf's lack of arrogance and its respect for its community is a hard lesson, but in our people's way. The wolf's actions bring to mind Chief Marie-Anne Day Walker-Pelletier, who has been Chief of Okanese First Nation since 1981. Whenever there was a community meal taking place she always waited till the last to eat to ensure all the people were fed first.

Proverbs 18:12 says:

*Before a downfall the heart is haughty, but humility comes before honor. (NIV)*

I believe the wolf and Chief Marie-Anne Day Walker-Pelletier are true examples of humility and honour.

**Truth** is to know and understand all of the original laws given by the Creator and to remain faithful to them. The turtle teaches us about truth. It is said that in the beginning when the Creator made humanity and gave them the Sacred Laws, the Grandmother Turtle was present to ensure that the laws would never be forgotten.

On the back of a turtle are the 13 moons, each representing the truth of one cycle of the earth around the sun. The 28 markings on the turtle's back represent the cycle of the moon of a woman's body. The shell of the turtle represents the body's real events as created by a higher power, and serves as a reminder of the Creator's will and teachings.

1 John 5:20 teaches:

*We know also the Son of God has come and given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true by being in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. (NIV)*