



Cultural Standards and Guiding Principles

Our Vision:

It is the goal of FNTI to empower students by offering tools that will enable them to pursue their goals and succeed in the world ahead. As an Indigenous institution serving Indigenous students, FNTI believes that its programs will reach their highest potential and offer more to the students if Indigenous values are applied throughout.

The vision of FNTI is to contribute to the wellbeing and sustainability of all Indigenous communities and nations across Turtle Island by promoting a healthy balance of technical skills and cultural identity in FNTI students, faculty and staff. As Onkwehónwe – Original and Natural Human Beings (Indigenous Peoples), our societal values are found in the teachings that have come to our peoples throughout our existence. It is these teachings that have enabled us to withstand the pressures of time and to continuously know who we are. From these cultural foundations and understandings FNTI draws its Guiding Principles.

As an institution based on the Tyendinaga Kanien'kehà:ka (Bay of Quinte Mohawk) Territory, FNTI's Guiding Principles are ultimately grounded in Rotinonshon:ni (Haudenosaunee – Six Nations Iroquois) systems and values. However, with respect for the diversity of FNTI students, other unique value systems and perspectives are thoroughly integrated and continuously sought after. We believe that complementary relationships of sharing will only expand our hearts and our minds – something we will all benefit from. As Onkwehonwe, it is our understanding that all Indigenous philosophies are necessary and valid. By fostering mutual esteem and cultural knowledge in a safe environment, we strive to further prepare students to interact with the world and move into the future with a Good Mind.

Our Guiding Principles:

“Our culture is a way of thinking, a way of feeling, but also an intuitive way of problem solving and a unique way to express oneself in the world. The Haudenosaunee call all of this ‘Ongwehonweka’ meaning all the things that pertain to the way of life of the Original People. Ongwehonweka includes all of the values, mores, ethics, philosophy and beliefs that we have inherited from our ancestors.” - Grand Council of the Haudenosaunee

The principles of **Skennen**, **Karihwí:iyo** and **Kasahsten:sera** are the foundations and guiding principles of FNTI. As Rotinonshon:ni we have been instructed by the Creator that we should

constantly strive for peace: peace within ourselves, peace amongst each other, and peace as communities and nations.

The principle of **Skennen** – “Peace”, also refers to health, and the calmness of mind and body. Skennen is based in spiritual, social and political concepts and goes beyond the absence of conflict – it is a state of mind. True peace comes from unity among people, the use of reason, spiritual consciousness, gratitude and respect. Skennen also exists as a result of Karihwí:iyo and Kasahsten:sera

The principle of **Karihwí:iyo** – the “Good Message”, is sometimes referred to as “Righteousness”. The meaning of Karihwí:iyo is found in words of unity and respect. Its meaning is more like a wholesome doctrine that is good to be heard because it teaches ethical behaviour and communal values. But it also denotes the idea of justice, of proper behaviour that results in peace. It is putting words into action.

The principle of **Kasahsten:sera** – “Strength” or “Power” refers to the power of the mind to reason, and the power of the inherent “Goodwill” of humans to work towards peace, justice, and unity to prevent the abuse of other humans and of our Mother Earth. It, at times, also refers to the power and role of military unity as a last resort in protecting the peace. But there is also another kind of strength, or power, in the Rotinonshon:ni worldview. Each individual has a base of spiritual power. As one goes through life, experiencing different things, learning more, and comprehending more, they tap into other forms of spiritual power. Through this, their own spirit grows as well. This influences how well an individual develops their sense of self; and how they develop that sense of self in regard to the well-being of others.

These principles, or philosophies, are reinforced within Rotinonshon:ni society through a foundation of interconnected components, or historical events: the Story of Creation; the Four Ceremonies; Kaianeroko:wa – the Great Law of Peace; Kaswéntá – the Two Row Wampum; and Karihwí:iyo – the Good Message of Skaniatari:io. These historical elements are like a basket; they are interwoven throughout Rotinonshon:ni culture in a multitude of ways. Each element contains unique ways of thinking, being, and seeing. All are grounded in the natural world, and they inform Rotinonshon:ni principles on living and fulfilling our responsibilities as members of the Creation – ensuring our continuation into the future, Seven Generations ahead.

Ohónton Karihwaté:kwen Kanonhwaratón:sera – the Thanksgiving Address

From a Rotinonshon:ni perspective, the development of our values ultimately begins with the teachings of Creation. It is through the knowledge of those events that Onkwehónwe learn about our place and our roll in this world. Through the events that occurred during the time of Creation, we begin to understand who we are, where we came from, and why we do what we do today. For Rotinonshon:ni, the feelings of gratitude that come with this knowledge are expressed through the Ohónton Karihwaté:kwen Kanonhwaratón:será – the Thanksgiving Address.

Through Ohónton Karihwaté:kwen Kanonhwaratón:será all of Creation is acknowledged. It is an expression of our gratitude and respect for all life and our wishes for the continued wellbeing of all things: the grasses, trees, fish, animals, birds, etc., as well as for those yet unborn – the “Coming Faces”.

It is intended that the recitation of Ohónton Karihwaté:kwen Kanonhwaratón:sera brings the people to ‘One Mind’ in an effort to contribute to maintaining the balance of the Creation and to help guide our actions in this world.

Our Goals: Seven Essential Qualities

Through these guiding principles, the goal of FNTI is to instill the seven following qualities in ourselves, our institution, the students, and finally, within our communities.

The story relating to the birth of the Peacemaker and the subsequent establishment of the Great Law of Peace explains the essential role of the Chief and the responsibilities assigned to this position. However, it may also be understood from related stories, such as the Creation Story, that a Chief is a man who must also possess certain personal qualities and characteristics. For insight into the kind of qualities and characteristics needed, students of Haudenosaunee politics are urged to consider and to reflect on the following quote: “In their position, they will receive much abuse and the thickness of their skin must be seven spans” (Traditional Teachings: North American Indian Travelling College. 1984, p.30)

In order to provide students, faculty and staff with clarity and stability, FNTI relies on the following seven essential qualities:

Essential Qualities and Characteristics of Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Longhouse) Chiefs and Their Position

1. **Ohtennita:onsra** – “Compassion” as a quality that makes it possible for a person to understand and to accept another person because he/she is able to perceive or sense the “wholeness” of a person
2. **Kanoronkwa:sra** – “Love” that is felt when a person is connected to all aspects of life; on all levels of the mind, body, heart, and spirit
3. **Kanikonri:io** – a “Good Mind” that is able not only to discern between the negative/positive, but also to understand the responsibility that is associated with this ability. Discernment is often exercised within the cultural context and understanding of “who we are” as a people

4. **Kasahsten:sera** – “Strength” that is found within the personal integrity and dignity of a person because he/she embodies and so, is able to reflect the principles, values, and beliefs of the people by his/her behaviour. One who walks his/her talk
5. **Awenho:ten** – the ability to use “Kind, Caring Words that Support and Nurture” people and provides them with the time to self-reflect and with the energy to self-evaluate by helping the people to remember “who they are”
6. **Kahretsyar:ron** – the ability to use “Words of Encouragement” that incorporates common sense in acknowledging people and in building relationships
7. **Senitweho:ten** - “Spirituality” as the foundational essence or “fire” that is directly connected to the Creator and that is used to activate and to direct the qualities necessary for this way of being

Through a reliance on these principles and standards for every aspect of our institutional values and educational methodologies, it is hoped that students will be empowered to continue following their path into the future with the information and skills that they need. We believe that by relying on Indigenous philosophies and knowledges, partnered with the technical skills offered in our programs, students’ self-confidence and sense of self-worth will be expanded and entrenched deep within them.

It is Rotinonshon:ni teaching that before making any final decisions or instituting any policies, we should reflect on them and what impacts they may have on the next Seven Generations. FNTI will continuously refer to these culturally-based Guiding Principles as our compass in evaluating our performance as an institution.

Along this path, we aim to assist students in developing a proper contextualized knowledge that will enable them to further contribute to the survival of our communities and world views. We believe that by promoting in students the further development of their individual cultural knowledge, critical thinking skills, positive attitude, and self-confidence, they will be better prepared to “govern themselves”.

FNTI maintains the vision that a resolute sense of empowerment and peace will blossom in every student through their understanding of where they come from, who they are, and where they are going. We are told that it is our responsibility to fulfill our relationships and with these Principles and Values as our guides, along with our trust in the students own experiences and knowledges, we look forward to those moments when we will all play our part in making a better world for the Coming Faces.

Sources used:

Akwesasne Notes (2005). Basic Call to Consciousness

General, Norma (2006, February 28)

Hill, Susan Marie (2005). The Clay We Are Made Of: An Examination of Haudenosaunee Land Tenure on the Grand River Territory. Ph.D. Dissertation. Peterborough, ON: Trent University Native Studies PH.D. Program, (2006, June)

ICHA Team (2006, June 8). *Meeting Notes: With regard to creation of FNTI/Haudenosaunee Cultural Standards*

Mohawk, John (2005). Iroquois Creation Story: John Arthur Gibson and J.N.B. Hewitt's "Myth of the Earth Grasper". Buffalo, NY: Mohawk Publications

Thomas, Jake (1993, February 6). Thanksgiving Address: Ohónton Karihwaté:kwen Kanonhwaratón:sera. Wilsonville, ON: Sandpiper Press.

The Haudenosaunee Home Page – <http://sixnations.buffnet.net/>

The Mohawk Nation Council & The Great Law of Peace – <http://hometown.aol.com/miketben2/miktben7.htm>

FNTI Cultural Standards/Guiding Principles by:

Rick Hill Sr., July 2006