



Good Words To Live By

Native American Traditional Code of Ethics

Originally published the *Inter-Tribal Times*, October of 1994.

1. Each morning upon rising, and each evening before sleeping, give thanks for the life within you and for all life, for the good things the Creator has given you and for the opportunity to grow a little more each day. Consider your thoughts and actions of the past day and seek for the courage and strength to be a better person. Seek for the things that will benefit others (everyone).

Respect: Respect means ‘To feel or show honour or esteem for someone or something; to consider the well being of, or to treat someone or something with deference or courtesy’. Showing respect is a basic law of life.

- a. Treat every person, the tiniest child to the oldest elder, with respect at all times.

- b. Special respect should be given to Elders, Parents, Teachers, and Community Leaders.
- c. No person should be made to feel 'put down' by you; avoid hurting other hearts, as you would avoid a deadly poison.
- d. Touch nothing that belongs to someone else (especially Sacred Objects) without permission, or an understanding between you.
- e. Respect the privacy of every person; never intrude on a person's quiet moment or personal space.
- f. Never walk between people that are conversing.
- g. Never interrupt people who are conversing.
- h. Speak in a soft voice, especially when you are in the presence of Elders, strangers or others to whom special respect is due.
- i. Do not speak unless invited to do so at gatherings where Elders are present (except to ask what is expected of you, should you be in doubt).
- j. Never speak about others in a negative way, whether they are present or not.
- k. Treat the Earth and all of her aspects as your mother. Show deep respect for the mineral world, the plant world, and the animal world. Do nothing to pollute our Mother, rise up with wisdom to defend her.
- l. Show deep respect for the beliefs and religion of others.
- m. Listen with courtesy to what others say, even if you feel that what they are saying is worthless. Listen with your heart.
- n. Respect the wisdom of the people in council. Once you give an idea to a council meeting it no longer belongs to you. It belongs to the people. Respect demands that you listen intently to the ideas of others in council and that you do not insist that your idea prevail. Indeed you should freely support the ideas of others if they are true and good, even if those ideas are quite different from the ones you have contributed. The clash of ideas brings

forth the Spark of Truth.

2. Once a council has decided something in unity, respect demands that no one speak secretly against what has been decided. If the council has made an error, that error will become apparent to everyone in its own time.
3. Be truthful at all times, and under all conditions.
4. Always treat your guests with honour and consideration. Give of your best food, your best blankets, the best part of your house, and your best service to your guests.
5. The hurt of one is the hurt of all; the honour of one is the honour of all.
6. Receive strangers and outsiders with a loving heart and as members of the human family.
7. All the races and tribes in the world are like the different coloured flowers of one meadow. All are beautiful. As children of the Creator they must all be respected.
8. To serve others, to be of some use to family, community, nation, and the world are one of the main purposes for which human beings have been created. Do not fill yourself with your own affairs and forget your most important tasks. True happiness comes only to those who dedicate their lives to the service of others.
9. Observe moderation and balance in all things.
10. Know those things that lead to your well being, and those things that lead to your destruction.
11. Listen to and follow the guidance given to your heart. Expect guidance to come in many forms; in prayer, in dreams, in times of quiet solitude, and in the words and deeds of wise Elders and friends.