**Four Directions Teachings: The Tipi Poles, by Elder Mary Lee**

**OBEDIENCE**

Obedience means accepting guidance and wisdom from outside of ourselves,

using our ears before our mouth. We learn by listening to traditional stories, by

listening to our parents or guardians, our fellow students and our teachers. We

learn by their behaviors and reminders, so that we know what is right and what is

wrong.

**RESPECT**

Respect means giving honor to our Elders and fellow students, to the strangers

that come to visit our community, and to all of life. We must honor the basic

rights of all others.

**HUMILITY**

We are not above or below others in the circle of life. We feel humbled when we

understand our relationship with Creation. We are so small compared to the

majestic expanse of Creation, just a “strand in the web of life.” Understanding

this helps us to respect and value life.

**FAITH**

We must learn to believe and trust others, to believe in a power greater than

ourselves, whom we worship and who gives us strength to be a worthy member

of the human race. To sustain our spirituality, we need to walk it every day. Not

just sometimes, but every day. It’s not just once a week; it’s your life.

**HAPPINESS**

After the tripod is up, the fourth pole completes your doorway. This fourth pole

teaches us happiness. We must show some enthusiasm to encourage others.

Our good actions will make our ancestors happy in the next world. This is how

we share happiness.

**LOVE**

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.

We must learn to believe and trust others, to believe in a power greater than

ourselves, whom we worship and who gives us strength to be a worthy member

of the human race. To sustain our spirituality, we need to walk it every day. Not

just sometimes, but every day. It’s not just once a week; it’s your life.

**KINSHIP**

Our family is important to us. This includes our parents, brothers and sisters,

who love us and give us roots that tie us to the lifeblood of the earth. It also

includes extended family: grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins, and their inlaws

and children. They are also our brothers and sisters and give us a sense of

belonging to a community.

**CLEANLINESS**

Today when we talk about cleanliness, most people think hygiene, and that’s

very important. But years ago, when old people talked about cleanliness, they

meant spiritual cleanliness. When I used to sit with the old Kookums in their tipis,

spiritually, they were so powerfully clean. Clean thoughts come from a clean

mind and this comes from our spirituality. With a clean mind and sense of peace

within we **learn not** to inflict ills on others. Good health habits also reflect a

clean mind.

**THANKFULNESS**

We learn to give thanks: to always be thankful for the Creator’s bounty, which we

are privileged to share with others, and for all the kind things others do for us.

**SHARING**

We learn to be part of a family and community by helping with the provisions of

food and other basic needs. Through the sharing of responsibilities we learn the

value of working together and enjoying the fruits of our labor.

**STRENGTH**

We are not talking about physical strength, but spiritual strength. That was

instilled in us when we were young people through fasting. We must learn to be

patient in times of trouble and not to complain but to endure and show

understanding. We must accept difficulties and tragedies so that we may give

others strength to accept their own difficulties and tragedies.

**GOOD CHILD REARING**

Children are gifts from the Creator. We are responsible for their wellbeing,

spiritually, emotionally, physically, and intellectually, since they are blessed with

the gift of representing the continuing circle of life, which we perceive to be the

Creator’s will.

**HOPE**

We must look forward to moving toward good things. We need to have a sense

that the seeds we are planting will bear fruit for our children, families and

communities.

**ULTIMATE PROTECTION**

This is the ultimate responsibility to achieve the balance and well being of thebody, mind, emotions and spirit for the individual, the family, the community and the nation.

**CONTROL FLAPS**

The control flaps on a tipi teach that we are all connected by relationship and that

we depend on each other. Having respect for and understanding this connection

creates and controls harmony and balance in the circle of life. When we don’t

know how to use the flaps, it gets all smoky inside the tipi, and you can’t see,

which is like life – because if we can’t live in balance, we can’t see clearly where

we’re going.

**CONCLUSION - POLES**

For every time that a pole is added, a rope goes around to bind that pole into

place. You have to be there and see it to appreciate that teaching. That rope is a

sacred bond, binding all the teachings together until they are all connected.

I have shared these teachings with you with the hope that they will help keep the

women strong and will help our communities to nurture healthy, balanced people.

**Challenging Words to Focus on**

expanse tripod inflict nurture hygiene bounty humility instilled majestic tipi doorway inlaws kookums lifeblood wellbeing Teepee

**Tipi Teachings: The Gift of Values Matching Activity**

**Draw a line from the terms on the left to the definitions on the right. The first one is done for you.**

1. **Good Child Rearing**
2. **Cleanliness**
3. **Ultimate Protection**
4. **Respect**
5. **Happiness**
6. **Kinship**
7. **Strength**
8. **Control flaps**
9. **Obedience**
10. **Sharing**
11. **Humility**
12. **Love**
13. **Faith**
14. **Hope**
15. **Thankfulness**

* gratitude for life and for family
* accepting guidance and wisdom from others for self and others
* belief in the spirit world
* sharing knowledge, stories, traditions, for future generations
* showing enthusiasm to encourage others
* balance in life’s journey
* love of self and others not things
* spiritual cleanliness
* that the women who are the life givers and the nurturers will carry on the teachings to bring healthy spirited people into the world
* spiritual strength to do things that are difficult
* guidance and protection of the sacred gift of children
* relationships and bonds with parents, siblings, extended relatives, knowing one’s home community
* spiritual cleanliness
* protection of the minds, spirit, emotions and
* knowing that we are not above or below others in the circle of life showing enthusiasm to love of self and love of others, not things
* sharing knowledge, stories, traditions, for future generations
* protection of the minds, spirit, emotions and health of the youth