



Emma Meawasige:

As we were growing up, we were brought up always to be together. We were taken together as a family to pick blueberries. The whole family, baby and all. And we would address places where we stopped. Mom and dad always taught us about the environment - the sacredness and the respect that belongs to Mother Earth. That's what we were taught. And as the seasons went by, we were taught about the animals and the birds; they all have their cycles, and to respect their cycles as well as the environment who you are taught to respect. We don't take anything unless you need it, and you only take what you are going to use. That's how we were taught, in the Anishinaabe way. **Take only what you need, and if you do get too much, you share it with others.** We all had to remember that. We were told to not forget that.

Chief Aguonie

And that's part of that creation story that goes back to that first man and that first woman because, at that time, Creator created two people - not just one. **When he created man, he created woman, and he asked those two, "who wants to create for me?" So, that woman said, "yes, I can do that; I can create for you." So, that's how kind a woman is. Women don't have to try. You are born kind because you have that gift, that power to create. And men, our responsibility was to keep that relationship with Creator.** And nowadays, I see when I go to lodges, lots of women there, but not too many men. You know there's a lot of single mothers. The men aren't taking care how they used to. So, we're kind of getting disconnected from that original responsibility.

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So, I think that when we use this land, if we're gonna go have a hunt camp or pick berries, we need to start putting up those teepees, hanging that cloth - you know, asking in the right way. Because you know you can't just talk about one person - you talk about your ancestors since the beginning of time. You know, maybe the government can knock down one person, but they can't knock down all those ancestors since the beginning.

I've also spoken to Chief Bellegarde. I said, "we really need to say something," you know, "I think we have to look past these little, tiny little land claims were putting forward." I said, "I think you need to write a letter to the prime minister and the Queen, tell them where we're claiming it all back."

That goes to the women, too, because the women can make that thunderbird water - they can make that life. Now they have that baby that water flows. As long as the grass grows, that's all our forestry, our hunting, you know, and the water too - that's our fishing, our responsibility, our rights. As long as there's Anishinaabe people - the Creator told us in the beginning - as long as that sun comes up, you are gonna be here.

So, when the government introduced that treaty, it was because we finally decided to sign because we were tired of hiding, we didn't want to fight, and we didn't want to live like that anymore. **It was all about how we're gonna treat each other. So, because every person on earth is Creator's child - meaning were all brothers and sisters.**

Sharon Venne:

I think it's very important that you not be divided up into one person, one expert, whatever - you have to go at it together. **Because it's together that you have that collective knowledge.**

But we are human beings, and when we are sitting together, we have a collective memory which is a really significant component of our knowledge. That's why you know you have a lot of elders together - a lot of older people together who are talking - the information that people they're not even thinking about something, and they just listen to somebody else talking. You think, "oh yes, I remember you know my grandmother and my great-aunt, my kokum, way a long time ago used to talk about this." That's the importance of the collective memory. You don't even know what you know until you're together talking. It's a really important component because when they do these energies regulating meetings or whatever they call themselves, they try to make it as an individual.



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Leona Nahwegahbow:

So, I was the Grand Chief for Robinson Huron at the time, and when you wanted to see the Governor-General, you had to make an appointment several years prior to visiting to make an appointment to talk to her. And she was the Queen's Representative. So, years before we can go and visit her, at the time, it was Paul Williams that was collecting all the information, legal information and also some of the issues that the First Nation people had about the Treaty. So, when we finally got to the Governor-General's Office, the Robinson Huron Chiefs were there. And she had her documents, and she said, "it's so overwhelming how many issues the Robinson Huron Chiefs have." She said, "if this were in any other country, there'd be a lot of civil disobedience." So, when the Chiefs heard this, at the meeting afterwards, although the Governor General said, "I have no impact on the Government's decision in Canada, once this lies in Canada, it'll be up to the goodwill of that Government."

So, on his last public visit, when I was asked to represent the Union of Ontario Indians at the time. This was held at Parliament Hill. They had a big tent set up where all the Premiers were there, and very few Anishinabek were there. And I thought, well, I don't think this will be of any use staying here because there are all the Premiers across Canada that were in attendance. And as I was by the door, I thought I'd slip out and not bother waiting for the big, I guess, conversation with the Prime Minister. Because he was going to each Premier and whoever was there in that big tent. He kept looking towards the doorway as he was walking around, shaking the Premier's hands, and he came straight across to where I was standing. And I thought, how am I going to converse with this Prime Minister? And he was coming closer, and sure enough, he was coming directly towards me, and **he said, "what is your role?" I said, "well, I'm the Chief of my community, and I've been asked to represent the Union of Ontario Indians." And in order to converse with him, I said, "what has made you decide to retire?" And he said, "well," and he sort of scratched his head and said, "well, the time a woman becomes a Chief, is, I better get out of the way."**

Sharon Venne:

Our people used to have a prophecy, and they said that our life would begin to change when grandmother touched mother. I don't know if you have that prophecy amongst your people. But among our people, we had that story, and they said our lives would begin to change when the grandmother touched mother.



They started talking about that prophecy, **the grandmother is the moon, and the mother is earth.** When the grandmother touches the earth, things are going to start changing. And so, you think about it from that time forward of what's been happening to our territory, our lands, our animals, and everything.



Dave Rice:

But that water that everybody carries within themselves, that keeps us alive as a people. Like the Elder said earlier, "we're water before we came here." **Our mothers carried us for nine months, and to this day, I wake up every day, and I give my mother thanks for giving me life today and a purpose to walk here.** To help our people, and to help our young people because that is my journey.

Marella Schofield:

My mom and dad, we worked together. We had a farm. My grandfather had the animals, chickens, gookoosh (Anishinaabemowin for pigs), yes. Pigs. Horses, cows. I had both my grandfather and my great-grandfather. And as we grew up, we grew up as a family because we were doing things together, we worked together, we did planting together, and we picked blueberries together as a family.

You know, all these things that they taught me, for example, my grandmother used to tie these tobaccos up, different tobaccos, like there was the chewing tobacco, the regular tobacco, and there was another kind, because she had three, and she tied the ribbons around them, and she went to the river every spring, and she would put that in the river. And she'd say a prayer. So, every springtime, it was passed on, so when she passed away, someone else took over. My Aunt Julia took over, she would go to the river, and she would take me to the river and explain, "this is what we do, we put it in the river, and we pray." So, all these things we did as I grew up, we did *together*. So, I thank the Creator for not allowing them to drink alcohol because it allowed us to be a family together. We worked together. We did things together. **My mom would stay up when my dad was gone, and she would make blankets and show us how to**

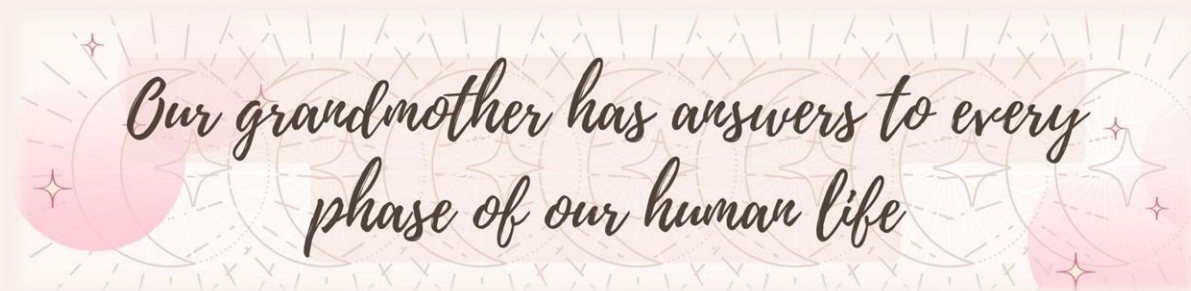
make blankets. It was a family. It was a family get-together with all of us, including my brothers and my young sisters. They are all creative.

Sherry Copenace:

And that one over there [pointing to the slide] is my late mother. Her as well I learned lots from her. **She was from Whitefish Bay, and she taught me about spirituality and about knowing who you are as a woman- and I'm still learning who I am as a woman. And one of that was, even my aunt says that to me, to respect yourself. And you know, as a young girl, I didn't really know what that meant, but I'm still learning that.** So, it was always shared with me about the strength, the brilliance, the kindness of who we are as Anishinaabe. So, that is what I want to share, a little bit about who I am. And everything that I'm sharing with you, once again, I want to say it again - it's not something that I invented. It's been there right from the beginning.

Sherry Copenace:

Our grandmother moon has phases. We all see that when we look out into the sky at that crescent: half, three-quarter, full, then it goes back. They say that for us, our grandmother has answers to every phase of our human life. So that is a law in itself. Why I brought this up is that for us, as Anishinaabe People, originally, it was our grandparents who had the final say in anything that we did. Whether it was in our own little family or in our extended family, it was the grandparents who had the final say. And even to take it a step further, it was our grandmothers who had the final say. I know what it was for me. Like I showed you a picture of my grandmother.



She's the one if there was any decision, anything that we needed to decide as a family, it was her, and everybody respected that. Nobody questioned it. Everybody said "yes," and everybody worked to support what she said. Even for me, I had a disagreement with my father, my late father, and he didn't talk to me for a long time, but my grandmother stepped in, talked to him and mended our relationship in that way. So, she took that role. She did all of those four things that I talked about earlier.

For us, in regard to that Naaknigewin, our people have written that in regard to that law, the grandmothers are going to be the adjudicators of that law. They're going to be the adjudicators of that law. That responsibility is going to be honoured for them to do that with that law, and we're not only saying we're actually going to do it, so that grandmother rule we're lifting that up, and we're also not only doing it, like voicing it, we're actually gonna do it. We're not only gonna say it, we're also gonna do it, and we're going to support those grandmothers to do that work that they need to do.



Angus Toulouse:

This is our obligation to the Creator to make sure that we take care of Mother Earth and that we make sure that it's going to be there for the next seven generations as our ancestors have done for us. So, we need to ensure that our laws are understood, and they take precedence over any of the Canadian environmental assessment processes. But we need to understand it. We need to have each of us not only understand them but believe that we have this tremendous responsibility which is what we're embarking upon today. How we connect all those dots, and really it is, and it is our children that we need to keep in mind and that are going to pick up the work.

Lewis Debassige:

We don't depend on anything. We don't depend on anything; except the way we learn from *shkagmigaang* [earth]. *Shkaamigaang* personified becomes *Shkegmig Kwe* – woman, Mother Earth. And **she's our source, our sustainer, and of course, our ultimate teacher.**

SHE'S OUR **SOURCE**,
OUR **SUSTAINER**,
AND OF COURSE,
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Ken Meawasige:

Minimizing impact and restoring affected properties to improve the community's environmental performance through education, recognition of excellence. **Effective use of natural resources to minimize waste generation through efforts that include recycling innovation, prevention of pollution, commitment, use of innovations and technologies that will help restore the balance of Mother Earth.**

