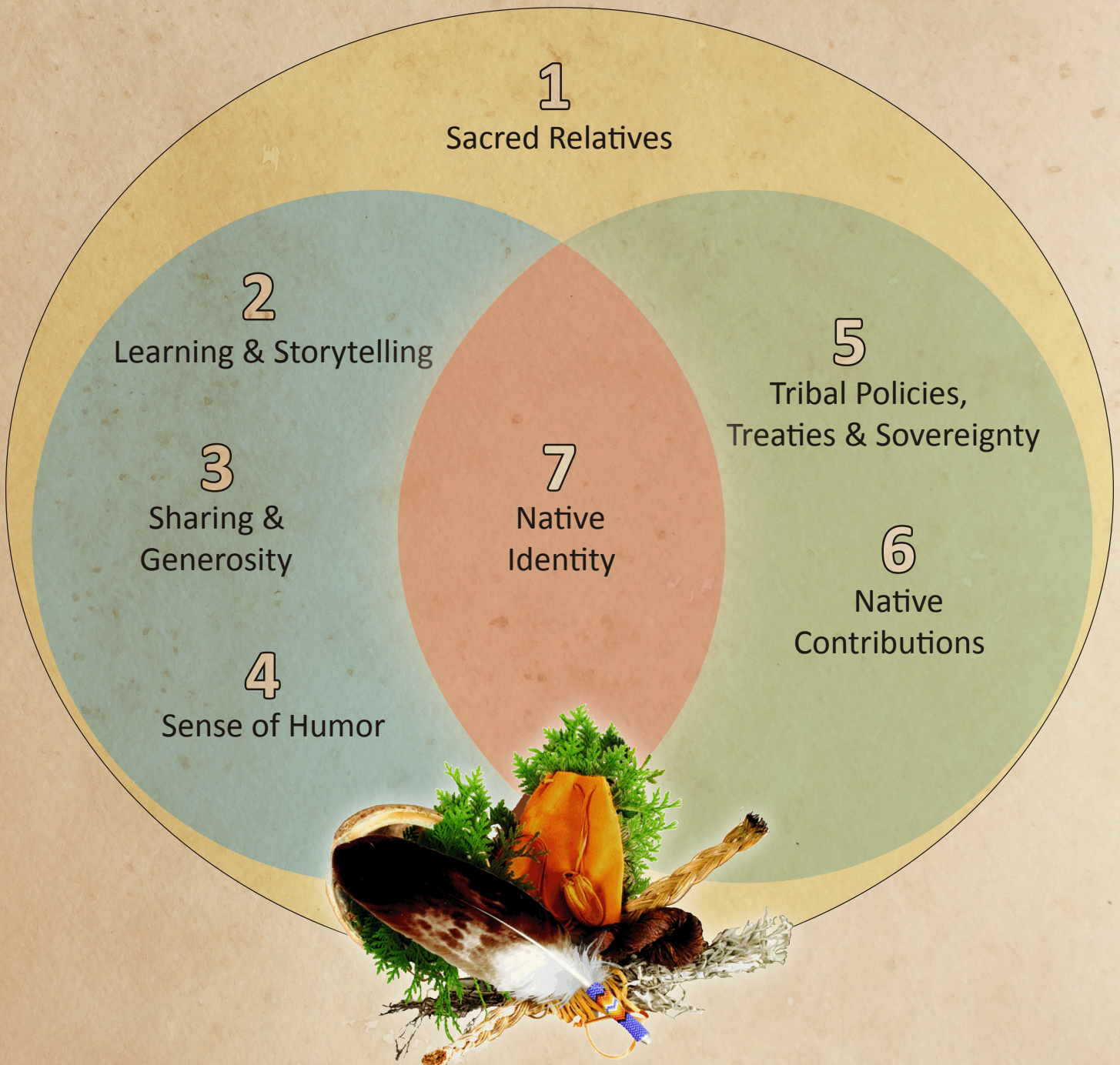


North Dakota Native American Essential Understandings



Four Sacred Medicines

Tobacco Cedar Sage Sweetgrass

Introduction to the North Dakota Native American Essential Understandings (NDNAEU)

In the spring of 2015, the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction brought together tribal Elders from across North Dakota to share stories, memories, songs and wisdom in order to develop the North Dakota Native American Essential Understandings to guide the learning of both Native and non-Native students across the state. Similar Essential Understandings have been developed and are being used in several other states already, and more are making plans to begin a similar process. Many tribal Elders have had input into these understandings, and it is hoped that the NDNAEU themselves will open up many more additional opportunities for tribal Elders and Educational Leaders to impact ND classroom practice with important tribal stories, songs and cultural perspectives.

The learning benefits to ND students who have a tribal or native heritage are clear. According to research around Culture Based Education (CBE), "...in culture-rich environments, teachers push beyond conventional best practice to achieve greater relevance, relationships, and rigor using culturally responsive, relevant approaches. Teachers can and must make learning culturally meaningful to their students and families by honoring culture and place in teaching and learning with respect to the heritage language, family and community involvement, instructional content and context, and authentic assessment" (Kana'iaupuni and Ledward, 2013).

The benefits to ALL students who learn in educational environments that are culturally responsive and value multiple cultural perspectives are clear. The following is a summary of outcomes connected with multi-cultural education compiled in ASCD Express, Vol. 6, No. 15., 2011 (<http://www.ascd.org/ascd-express/vol6/615-koppelman.aspx>).

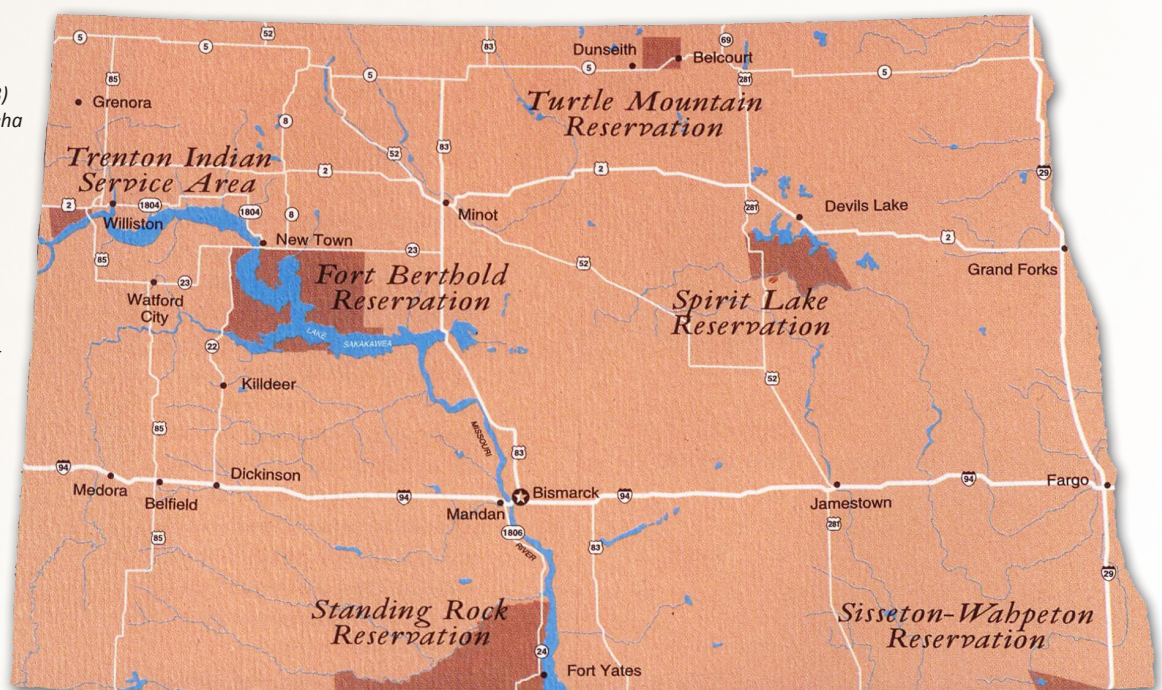
1. All students should be encouraged to affirm themselves as unique individuals and they should accept and respect the differences shaping individual identities of other students.
2. Students should learn about their group from the school curriculum and about the diverse groups in American society to have a basis of appreciation and respect for cultural diversity.
3. Students should engage in intergroup dialogues that promote cross-cultural communication skills and reduce biases and prejudices.
4. Students should learn to be critical thinkers able to analyze historical and contemporary issues in order to make intelligent decisions about problems and conflicts.
5. Students should engage in activities that address social justice issues and be encouraged to develop and implement strategies to respond to such issues in their school and their community.

It is the hope of both the ND Department of Public Instruction and the tribal Elder team of writers that these seven NDNAEU can create a framework for learning that will foster these outcomes. The NDNAEU are merely a starting point for this work. It is our expectation that the next several years will see the active engagement of many more educators, administrators, tribal Elders and communities in developing additional resources, lesson plans, curricula, video interviews and collaborative projects as guided and informed by the NDNAEU. The ultimate goal of this document is to increase learning, understanding and well-being among all North Dakota students, educators and communities.

Sources:

Multidisciplinary Research on Hawaiian Well-Being Vol.9 (2013)
Copyright © 2013 by Kamehameha Schools. Accessed 10/11/2015 at www.ksbe.edu/_assets/spi/hulili/hulili_vol_9/7_2013_Vol9_Kanaiaupuni_Ledward_rev.pdf

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Accessed 10/11/2015 at www.ascd.org/ascd-express/vol6/615-koppelman.aspx



North Dakota Native American Essential Understandings

(short descriptors)

How we relate to everything:

1. **Sacred Relatives:** Native people practice a deep interconnectedness with the land, the resources, the water, all living things and all human beings. Land stewardship, respect for all 2 legged, 4 legged, winged, crawlers and swimmers and a strong belief in the sacredness of all human beings are key elements of our spirituality.

How we promote and sustain our cultures, languages & traditions:

2. **Learning & Storytelling:** Traditional teaching and the passing on of knowledge and wisdom was done through storytelling, song, ceremony and daily way of life, often incorporating specific gender and age specific responsibilities. These continue to be some of the best modes for learning for both Native and non-Native learners.
3. **Sharing & Generosity:** Native people have rich traditions of sharing and generosity which include gifting, shared meals, Pow Wow gatherings, shared living spaces and care for relatives, including the environment, natural resources and waters.
4. **Sense of Humor:** Native people have a rich history of shared sense of humor that includes teaching stories involving Iktomi, Maymaygwisi and Nanabozhoo. These stories and this unique sense of humor continue to support our resiliency and cohesiveness.

How we respond to & contribute to all of society from local to global:

5. **Tribal Policies, Treaties & Sovereignty:** Native people practice self-determination, developing tribal policies and practicing political activism. Despite a history of US policies and Treaties that have often been detrimental, Native people are members of sovereign nations that predate the US government.
6. **Native Contributions:** Native people continue to contribute to all levels of society from local to global in diverse fields including medicine, science, government, education, economics, art, music, and many more.

Who we are:

7. **Native Identity:** Individual and communal identity is defined and supported by shared Native languages, kinship systems, Tiospaye, Clan structures, traditional teachings, values, sacred laws and ceremonies. A continuum of tribal identity, unique to each individual, ranges from assimilated to traditional lifestyle. There is no "generic American Indian".