

Acknowledgements

When Muskoday First Nation Community School opened, our principal, Sharon Laflamme, guided us towards teaching in the area of character education by introducing to us the book *Building Moral Intelligence : The Seven Essential Virtues that Teach Kids To Do The Right Thing* by Michelle Borba.

Through the reading of this work we reacquainted ourselves with the idea that teaching character education and developing moral intelligence serves several purposes. It helps improve social skills, develops strong internal control, builds thinking skills for making positive choices to solve problems and ultimately builds skills to live a positive life-style.

At the same time our staff was trained by the very capable Patti Sebestyen in the use of Perceptual Control Theory (PCT) developed by Dr. William Glasser. Perceptual Control Theory suggests that in order for a person to be healthy and happy they must balance four basic needs. Those needs are Personal Power, Fun, Love, and Freedom. You will note that throughout this document we have made many references to the PCT Theory.

We were also fortunate to have Vince Hill, Master Facilitator with The Virtues Project International present to our staff and Student Leadership Council (SLC) the Virtues Project. From Vince, we learned about a different approach to carrying out a program that teaches virtues. He spoke to us about intentionally building trust and relationships and having a common language.

Another person who brought us a presentation in the area of peace education was Jeanette Eddolls. In partnership with the Prince Albert Cooperative Health Centre and the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division., Jeanette compiled the HOPE curriculum which is an acronym for Honoring Ourselves and People Everywhere. The HOPE curriculum is available through the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division.

All of the training we received and information obtained from the written materials was consistent with our vision for the delivery of a character education program at Muskoday First Nation School, however, we wanted a framework that was culturally relevant to our students. It was then that our Special Education and Behaviors teacher, Myrna Turner remembered the Tipi Teachings that her father Joe Turner used to teach in Prince Albert Schools while he was Resident Elder for the Prince Albert Grand Council.

The Tipi Teachings that Mr. Turner referred to in his work were developed for The Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College (SICC) in the early 1980s by a group of Elders.

They were Smith Atimoyoo, Indian Languages Department , Angus Esperence, Program Director, Jean Marie Felix, Resident Elder, Lizette Ahenakew, Resident Elder, James Kanipitetew, Head Elder and Joe Turner, Field Worker.

Before Myrna's father died, he had given each of his children a copy of the Tipi Teachings that he and the team of Elders had worked to develop. Myrna stored her copy away as a precious gift

not realizing at that time how she would use it. During our character education discussions she brought it out and showed it to Sharon Laflamme, our Principal and they decided to use it as the basis for our character education program.

Over a period of four years Myrna and Brad Parent, a fellow teacher at Muskoday School, have been developing and redeveloping the Tipi Teachings. The original document prepared by the Elders consisted of four pages which defined the virtue assigned to each pole. Myrna and Brad have added meat to these bones by creating questions about these values. Questions that cause students to think, evaluate, reflect upon and practice each virtue.

The Tipi Teaching model supports MFNCS efforts in addressing bullying and deterring violence within our school community. It is a way to teach our students how to develop successful friendships and establish life-long relationships. Through the teachings the students are taught to care for and respect each other. It is a strategy for our whole school to develop moral reasoning, etiquette, self-control and empathy.

Throughout our work we have taken the liberty of referring to the teachings of Elder Mary Lee. Mary is a Plains Cree speaker from Chitek Lake, Saskatchewan. She has worked with the youth of Joe Duquette High School in Saskatoon for twenty-six years and now serves their students and staff as Cultural Advisor and Elder.

At Muskoday First Nation Community School, we have taken the Tipi Teachings in the spirit of the Elders who created this model and use it on a daily basis in order to help establish and maintain a successful character education program which is culturally relevant and meaningful to our students.