

ᑕᑦᑲᑦ ᑲᑦᑲᑦ nehiyaw pimatisiwin

“People came from across the ocean and they thought that we did not know anything (...). (If we) could write down the stories, teachings, and principles, it would be good to give them out (to them).”

Elder Adelaide McDonald, April 24, 2018 ¹

ᑕᑦᑲᑦ ᑲᑦᑲᑦ *nehiyaw pimatisiwin* encompasses the principles and related laws connected to the Cree way of life. Many Elders and knowledge keepers interpret ᑕᑦᑲᑦ ᑲᑦᑲᑦ *nehiyaw pimatisiwin* as being connected to a traditional way of life, and they identify their relationship to the land as being central to their identity. While hunting, trapping, fishing and gathering medicinal and other plants are regularly practiced in accordance with this principle, members of the Aseniwuche Winewak Nation have adapted ᑕᑦᑲᑦ ᑲᑦᑲᑦ *nehiyaw pimatisiwin* to new ways of making a living and many are active participants in the wage economy.²

Many interviewees considered that the regular practice and preservation of the Cree language is crucial to maintaining ᑕᑦᑲᑦ ᑲᑦᑲᑦ *nehiyaw pimatisiwin*. Speaking the Nation’s Cree dialect is perceived as an important factor in the Nation’s collective identity as it allows for the meaningful expression of the Aseniwuche Winewak’s unique perspectives.³

Some interviewees highlight the spiritual dimension as a core element of ᑕᑦᑲᑦ ᑲᑦᑲᑦ *nehiyaw pimatisiwin*. In keeping with historical practices, spirituality is enacted by connecting to the land and by holding traditional ceremonies.⁴ These practices may be experienced as maintaining relationships in families, in community, with external guests, with nonhuman beings, as well as with land and territory (Jobin, 2014). Spirituality may also be practiced in accordance with congruent aspects of the Roman Catholic religion, such as one Elder emphasizing a belief in the power of individual healing and forgiveness necessary to sustain

a healthy community.⁵

Responsibilities and obligations related to ᑎᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦ ᑲᑲᑲᑲᑲᑲ *nehiyaw pimatisiwin* may be identified through specific roles assigned to each family member. Well-defined roles ensure that related obligations are accomplished in “the right way” and in a respectful manner.⁶ All emphasize the core responsibility of passing on the Nation’s knowledge to the next generations within their family and within their community. The transmission of the Cree language is considered a critical responsibility, which may include advocacy to ensure that the local school curriculum reflects the needs of the Nation’s children.⁷ Given the far-reaching implications of passing on the Nation’s knowledge to future generations, one Elder stressed the critical importance for the Aseniwuche Winewak Nation to work together as a community to successfully meet the Nation’s obligations toward these generations.⁸

Endnotes

1 From interview with Elder Adelaide McDonald, April 24, 2018.

2 From interview with Elder Russell Wanyandie, April 25, 2018.

3 From interviews with Elder Mary Delorme, August 24, 2018; Elder Jane McDonald, July 11, 2018; Tom McDonald, July 23, 2018; Elder Philomene Moberly, April 26, 2018; Elder Russell Wanyandie & Carol Wanyandie, April 25, 2018.

4 From interviews with Tom McDonald, July 23, 2018; Carol Wanyandie & Elder Mabel Wanyandie, April 24, 2018.

5 From interview with Elder Mabel Wanyandie, April 24, 2018.

6 From interviews with Elder Mary Delorme, August 24, 2018; Elder Adelaide McDonald, April 24, 2018 and Elder Jane McDonald, July 11, 2018.

7 From interviews with Elder Adelaide McDonald & Carol Wanyandie, April 24, 2018; Tom McDonald, Elder Russell Wanyandie, April 25, 2018 and Elder Philomene Moberly, April 26, 2018.

8 From interview with Elder Jane McDonald, July 11, 2018

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**ASENIWUCHE
WINEWAK NATION**