



A Message from Thunderbird Partnership Foundation

April 9, 2020


First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework and COVID-19: A Message of Belonging to support Mental Wellness

The vision for First Nations mental wellness is a balance between Hope, Belonging, Meaning, and Purpose. These four words are applicable to all humanity. This brief focuses on supporting a greater sense of belonging during this pandemic, COVID-19. Key to facilitating a greater sense of belonging are relationships with family, community, land and all of Creation. These relationships support an attitude towards living and we often express this through thinking about all my relations.

Belonging is all about relationships. Now more than ever, we are all exploring ways to maintain relationships and new ways to connect. We have cause for celebration as we witness the creativity among First Nations; online platforms and use of social media are increasingly the mainstays for maintaining relationships. These are good examples of maintaining an attitude towards living!

Yet we know there are still many who do not or cannot leave their homes for a variety of reasons or don't have internet connections. We also have to remember that with spring, many communities are preparing for potential flooding with snow and ice melts, or fires caused by strong winds.

All my relations is an expression that reflects First Nations values of respect and knowing that all beings of Creation are connected and belong within the cycle of life. Whenever we receive something, we are thankful for such as an act of kindness, or a blessing from the spirit, or a gift, by expressing all of my relations. We recognize that as we receive, we want to extend the blessing to others. We never think of just ourselves; we are remembering all to whom we are connected. One way to help each other to develop and maintain a connection to all others is through stories and the teachings our communities hold around our relationship. As we think about all our relations, we need to think about our relationship with snow and water. The snow is a necessary element of Creation and



the freezing ensures that the earth rests and can be renewed. The water is purified with the freezing. Both are necessary for the continuity of life. We don't often talk about these principle teachings when we think about flooding and wind. We can learn the stories that our community had about the land, the animals, fish, and plants used for medicines, as they are an important part of who we are. Our caring for land, snow, wind, and water can be expressed through our giving thanks for their role in our health and our role in their health.

An important way to express respect for all of our relatives in Creation is to remember the offerings our communities traditionally do at springtime, the ways we connected with water, the wind, the spirit of winter and spring.

Be well and nurture your connection to all our relations.

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