

# Camping Toolkit

From First Nation Teachings



## Acknowledgement

Thunderbird Partnership Foundation extends sincere appreciation to Elder Gene Cada and Elder Gloria McGregor Oshkabewisens who generously shared valuable cultural teachings for this toolkit.

*This toolkit was developed from First Nations teachings and could be adapted to Inuit and Métis camping experiences.*



[thunderbirdpf.org](http://thunderbirdpf.org)

1-866-763-4714

[info@thunderbirdpf.org](mailto:info@thunderbirdpf.org)

Thunderbird Partnership Foundation is a leading culturally centred voice across Canada on First Nations mental wellness, substance use and addictions. The organization supports an integrated and wholistic approach to healing and wellness serving First Nations and various levels of government, through research, training and education, policy and partnerships, and communications. Thunderbird strives to support culture-based outcomes of Hope, Belonging, Meaning and Purpose for First Nations individuals, families and communities. Thunderbird's mandate is to implement the *Honouring Our Strengths: A Renewed Framework to Address Substance Use Issues Among First Nations People in Canada (HOS)* and the *First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum (FNMWC)* framework.

The Thunderbird Partnership Foundation is a division of the National Native Addictions Partnership Foundation Inc.

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## Description of Toolkit

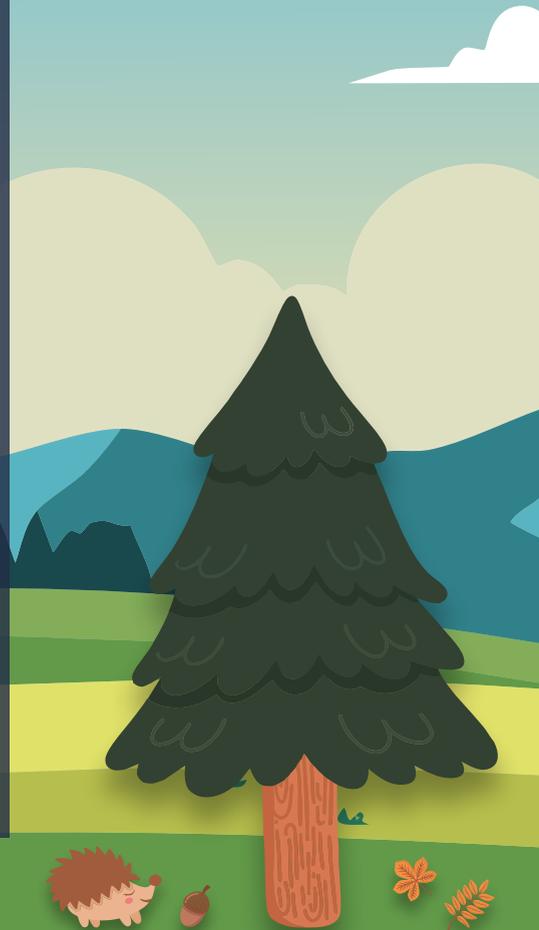
The purpose of this Indigenous Camping Toolkit is to help guide any worker, organization, or group who may be in a role to support the learning and growth of Indigenous youth. The toolkit encourages people in this role to take Indigenous youth out on the land for a camping trip to have the chance to connect with Creation. This toolkit can also be used beyond groups to help guide an individual's connection to all of Creation.

### **There are four main parts to this toolkit:**

1. Fire Teachings
2. Water Teachings
3. Elder and Youth Interaction
4. Medicine Teachings

### **The Facilitator Guide content includes the following:**

- Safety and Logistics Checklist
- Recommended Equipment Checklist
- Tips to Lead Culturally Respectful Camps
- Icebreaker Activities





## Fire Teachings

### These fire teachings were shared by Elder Gene Cada:

1. When you light a fire or are asked to light a fire, it is important to make sure your mind and heart are connected and in a healthy place. Your energy transfers to the fire.
2. Hosting a fire on a camping trip creates a safe space for everyone to share what is on their mind with the group.
3. It is important to keep the fire lit within you as you go through life.
4. Creating a feast bowl to give thanks and feed our ancestors in the fire is a way to honour them. Using what is around you, such as creating a feast bowl with birch bark, would be a great activity with the youth on the land.





# Water Teachings

## Elder Gloria McGregor Oshkabewisens provided these water teachings:

1. Our ancestors spoke to the sky world and the Creator in Anishinaabemowin to specifically ask for rain in times of need during a dry summer season. The sky world is all connected, first the thunder rumbles across the land to break up the ground in preparation for the water to flow through the cracks. Secondly, a lightning bolt will strike an area in need of water and in need to remove sickness (e.g., to create a wildfire to begin another growth of nature). Lastly, the rain falls to help nature grow!
2. Anishinabek have a special connection to the land, and the Creator has given our people this important role to take care of the land. Our ancestors communicated with the trees to help point them in the direction where water veins would be found underneath the ground.





## *Elder and Youth Interaction*

### **These teachings are shared by Elder Gene Cada:**

1. Incorporating everyone in the circle is the best way to interact with one another, not just Elder and youth.
2. Adapting to different ages and genders is important to identify the needs and what youth should be learning at that time in their life.
3. The youth need mentorship from the adults. They have the most daily interaction with the youth.
4. To heal and teach our youth, it needs to start with our medicines and language. Practicing it daily, even if it is as simple as speaking in the language to one person each day, is progress.





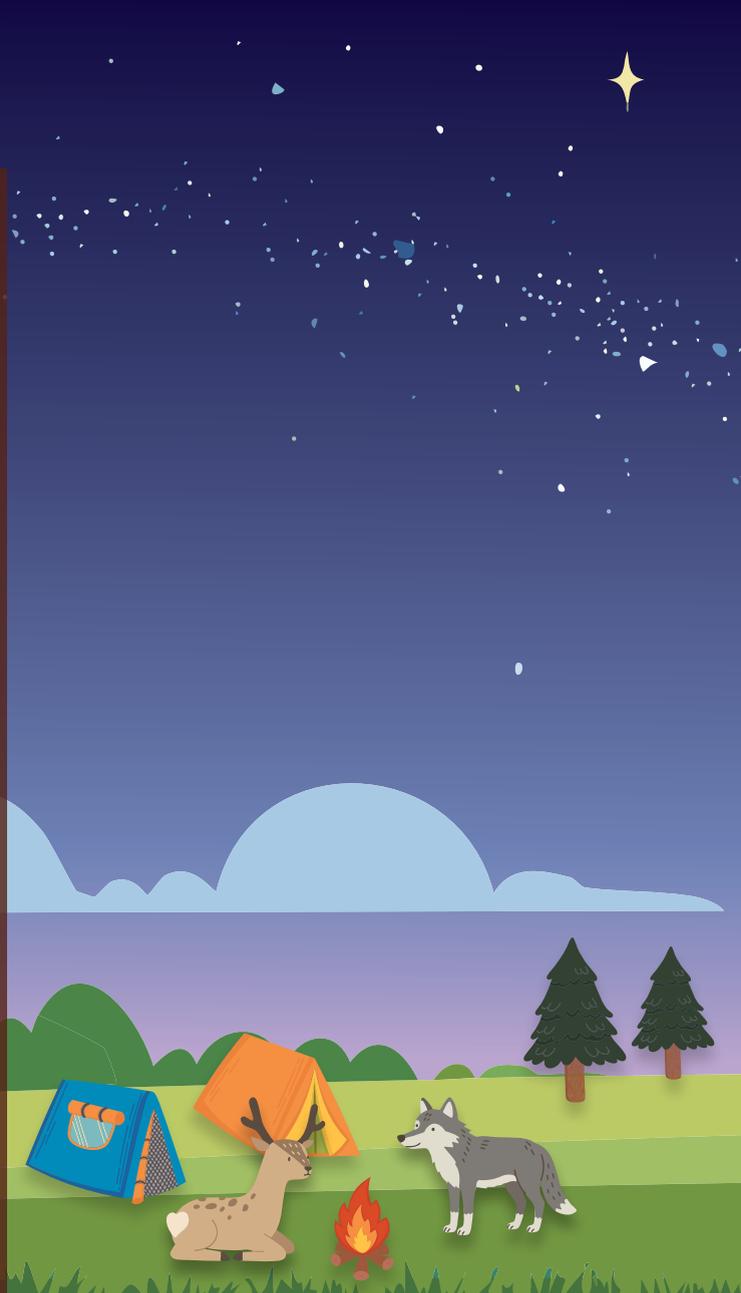
## Medicine Teachings

### The following medicine teachings are provided by Elder Gene Cada:

1. Ask the Creator what you are looking for and the medicine you are seeking will find you. After you find the medicine, give thanks to the Creator. It is important to wake up and talk with the Creator first thing in the morning every day.
2. Sweetgrass gathering is typically from mid-June to mid-July in Northern Ontario.

### Elder Gloria McGregor Oshkabewisens shared these medicine teachings:

3. Tobacco is in the yellow (East) quadrant of the Medicine Wheel, which is where infants are introduced to the physical world. Tobacco gives thanks to new beginnings.
4. Cedar is in the red (South) quadrant of the Medicine Wheel because it recognizes the *fast life* of a teenager and young adult. When cedar burns for a smudge, it crackles loud and gives off a lot of energy. People who are in this quadrant need to learn their own energy that they give off and be aware of the energy that they may take in from other people.
5. Sage is in the black (West) quadrant of the Medicine Wheel because during potential dark times, uncertainty, and challenges of adulthood, the bright colours of sage can be that shining light to help us.
6. Sweetgrass is in the white (North) quadrant of the Medicine Wheel and has the strongest connection to the Elders. Within every single weave and strand from the braided sweetgrass are stories and teachings from life and Creation that now need to be passed down to the younger generations to carry forward.





# Facilitator Guide

## Safety and Logistics

When camping on the land, ensure that all safety procedures are followed by all staff and campers in case of emergencies. Double check all equipment to avoid problems during the camping trip. This can include creating a checklist to be reviewed by all staff prior to leaving.

### EXAMPLE OF A BASIC EQUIPMENT LIST



Cooking stove



Coolers x 4



Bear spray / wolf spray



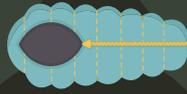
Kitchen tent



Large camping tents (4 person)



Small camping tents (2 person)



Sleeping bags



Cots



Bug spray



First aid kits



Propane tanks x 2



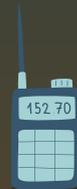
Mosquito coils



Towels



Garbage bags



Radios for all staff



Kitchen accessories (e.g., pots, pans, knives, spatula, oven mitt)



Charging station



Feast plates, bowls, and cutlery (to reduce waste)

## Tips to Lead Culturally Respectful Camps

Understand what treaty territory you are on. This is important as you guide your group on the land.

Try to contact local Indigenous Peoples to gain accurate cultural knowledge about the area. Ask if your group is allowed to camp on the land, and/or invite a local Elder to share teachings with your group.

## Icebreakers

- 1. Introduction game:** An introduction game's goal will be to learn everyone's name, interests and favourite animal. Staff will gather all campers into a circle and an eagle feather will be given to the speaker. The staff member will begin the sharing circle by saying "Everyone can introduce themselves starting with their name and where they are from." The next step is to invite campers to share favourite hobbies. After that perhaps share a favourite animal whose name starts with the first letter of the camper's name. This encourages everyone to think about what they want to share.
- 2. Ball hockey:** To play an old-style game of ball hockey, all campers can go into the forest and collect a stick to use for the game. This helps connect to how Indigenous people prepared and played the game many years ago. A brief ball hockey game will be played following this activity.
- 3. Hiking:** Going for a hike helps youth explore their environment. Set boundaries before the hike but help guide the group to be curious and observe their surroundings. If technology/phones are a distraction, instead of punishing, get the campers to take pictures of what is around them. For example, ask the campers to take three different pictures from three different locations that have personal meaning. Then at the fire later, everyone can share their pictures and speak to the reasons for taking the pictures.





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