

At our conference on Saturday, April 13, 2024 we welcomed Michelle and Mary to share their knowledge about the Seven Grandfather Teachings with us.

At this event, instead of doing the land acknowledgement verbally at the beginning of our time together, each table had an invitation to share their reflections with us:

ELQI respectfully acknowledges that we are located on the traditional territory of the Anishnaabe people which is governed by Treaty 20 and the Williams Treaties. As settlers on this land, we invite you to not only reflect on your gratitude and connection to this land, but to also think about how you can incorporate this into the work you do each and every day.

Here are some questions to reflect on:

- How has the land you are on impacted your work? How do you connect to the land?
- What kinds of a world do you want to live in? What are you doing to contribute to this?
- What actions are you taking to acknowledge and respect the land?
- How do you incorporate your connection and gratitude of the land and those who were here before us, to the work you do on a regular basis?

There was a great response of reflections shared from the conference participants that you can read in the rest of this document.

- Springtime offers a chance for new life and rejuvenation. Spring is a time when the land swells with water and life and sighs a big sigh that resets itself. I have been anxiously waiting to start planting in the ground and digging into the land – asking Creator to help nourish and guide my plants this year as I take my first adventure into gardening.
- The land offers something new every single day. I have spent 1 full year with the land in Bethany and it never ceases to amaze me how the land changes season-to-season or how I can think back to the same date last year and the land offered a completely different experience 1 year apart. I am honoured to live and work on land that offers four distinct seasons.
- The land greatly impacts my work. It provides me and the children with a playground. It shares its resources to learn and play. The trees are our risky play structures. The rain provides us puddles to jump in and brings out the worms for us to explore. What kind of world do you want to live in? One where kindness is spread. And everyone can be themselves without fear of judgement. What are you doing to contribute to this? Try! Try to be kind, always. Self reflect when I feel I have passed judgement or been unkind. Always do better than the day before.

Grow, be okay with making changes to better myself.

What actions are you taking to acknowledge and respect the land? Educating myself so I can teach children in their play.

- Taking the time to look at the land, feel it and listen alongside the children while at work. Building connections with the land, learning how to have a relationship with nature. How do you incorporate your connection and gratitude of the land and those who were here before us, to the work you do on a regular basis?
I am learning for myself as this was not something I learned growing up, so I can bring the connection and gratitude forward with me in life and work.
- I try to connect with the land by spending lots of quality family time outside. I want to live in a world that is full of love and peace. I envision a world without hate and it is beautiful. We are all the same. We all bleed red. We are all humans with feelings. Colour doesn't matter. Love and respect does. No more white privilege.
- What kind of world would you want to live in?
A world where everyone is kind to themselves, other people, animals and their environment. Where we respect the ways things were done while also moving forward. What actions are you taking...?
I enjoy spending time in nature with children and alone, thinking about what has happened on this land before we were here.
- I like to connect to the land by being in nature and just sitting quietly, taking in the sights, smells and feelings of wind, sun, rain or anything else happening around me. When I need to recharge, going to sit by the lake and listen to the water or sitting in my yard surrounded by trees will help.
- I connect with the land by walking and acknowledging my gratitude for it daily. Listening to and watching for birds, among other wildlife, as well as paying attention to and noticing the beauty of all life around us. The land impacts my work as we explore it daily, learning with the children as they discover the land along with us. I want to live in a world full of empathy and respect for all. A world where we care for one another deeply, and keep kindness at the root of all we do. I try to contribute to this by leading all I do with kindness and empathy, and modelling this for others around me. Especially the children I work with in program. I try to acknowledge the land and my gratitude for it daily. Learning Indigenous knowledge and teachings is important to me in order to further my education and respect for the land we live and work on.
- The land has impacted me and has taught me a deeper respect and lead the child to respect the land. As well as listen to the stories the children has to share about their knowledge of the land and share with others. I connect to the land by listening, feeling and understanding what they provide me. I like to live in a world where everyone shares their story and are accepted for who they are. Share their story in ways of creativity, what they wear, say, carry themselves, etc.
- The land I'm on has impacted my work by taking walks to nature and water. We connect to the land in weather, rain, sun and snow. The animals we see and hear and touch. I want to live in a world that respects nature. I contribute to this by asking is this the best

choice for nature's future?

I teach children to respect the animals, even the small worm.

I can do more to incorporate my connection and gratitude of the land and those who were here before us. Especially to my regular work.

- I use the land I'm on every day to allow a safe space to play and create with the children I work with. The land impacts how I teach everyday. I have a strong connection to the land itself, from being a child and also going to school and daycare there. I feel at home with the land. I want to live in a world where there is still land with no people – just animals and trees, water – all the natural beauty. I contribute to this by picking up garbage when I can and making time to take a walk out in the woods. I'm taking actions by learning more about my land and be grateful for all that it has taught me growing up. I use a lot of what I know about nature from teachings to incorporate in outside play.
- I am grateful of generosity of elders and teachers in sharing wisdom. I would love to be in a world where people feel connected to the land and nature. I walk in a path of reconciliation, always learning. I strive to be connected to all things in a good way.
- I want to live in a kind world where everyone and everything is connected, supported and celebrated. Living reciprocally to bring joy and love to all.
- The land we are on is foundational to not just my work as an educator, but who I am as a person. Growing up I spent my childhood outside, building connections to the land and I have carried those connections to the children I work with. I saw the same reverence and connections to the land with the "farmland" that the school age children made several years ago. Farmland was a place that mattered to them, that they took care of and became their own special place. When the school cut down the fruit bushes and trees to make a new sledding hill, they were devastated. We honoured the loss and nurtured those fruit bushes that remained nearby.
- How has the land impacted your work?
It impacts everything. Taking care of the land impacts everything. Connecting children with nature is crucial. Outdoor learning is crucial.
What kind of world do you want to live in? What are you doing to contribute to this?
A world where everyone cares about everyone, respect everyone and everything. Everyone is included and feels included; they feel they belong. A happy world! I'm doing my part. I model patience, model respect, I treat others like I want to be treated, I cherish the environment and take care of the environment.
What actions are you taking to acknowledge and respect the land?
Cleaning the garbage left on roadsides, waterways. Recycling all times. Modeling at all times. Living nature in nature when possible, only take what I need.
How do you incorporate...?
Modeling, educating, connecting, acknowledging, respecting, listening, sharing knowledge
- The land is a teacher to my work.
I sit with the land – take rest in the forests.
I want to live in a world that is peaceful.

I take care of the land I live in. I respect it.

I appreciate the gift of the land.

I spend time learning about the Indigenous people before me.

I want to understand my responsibilities and be accountable for my actions towards plant and its inhabitants.

- I absolutely love working outside within nature, seeing the children play with sticks, rocks, getting dirty in puddles, finding shade outside under a tree.

I want to live in a world full of nature. Walking barefoot in the grass. Making sure to recycle and respect the land.

Advocating and trying to protect the land in my community Fenelon Falls.

- The land I am on has impacted my work through it's beauty. I often go on nature walks with children and observe the waterways, the trees and animals with them. I want to live in a world where nature and wildlife are very much a part of it. I contribute to the land by maintaining it where I can: picking up garbage, feeding birds and planting new seeds. I respect the land by taking care of it where I can. I incorporate my connection and gratitude of the land to the way I work by taking part in its beauty by using my senses to listen, to feel and take in the spirit of nature. I use nature to help find calm and to feel grounded. I often look at the stars and reflect on my work and bring back that calm to the children and the people around me that I mentor and support.

Thank you to everyone who shared their reflections with me to be able to share with our community.