

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

We all grew up to follow this mantra that we know as The Golden Rule:

It is a unique law of reciprocity centred round the general principle of treating others as one wants to be treated.

According to recent studies, The Golden Rule was mentioned as early as 3,000 BC in ancient Sanskrit, the vedic Indian tradition: "Don't do unto others what you don't want done unto you; wish for others what you wish for yourself."

Among the oldest golden rule quotes is from the Chinese philosopher, Confucius, who lived between the sixth and fifth century BC. "Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you." (Confucius, Analects 15.23 – 5th century BC)

In Buddhism ~ "Whatever is disagreeable to yourself, do not do unto others." (The Buddha, Udana-Varga 5.18 – 6th century BC)

Sikhism: "I am a stranger to no one, and no one is a stranger to me. Indeed, I am a friend to all." (Guru Granth Sahib, religious scripture of Sikhism, p. 1299 – 15th century)

As for Judaism, The Golden Rule is mentioned for the first time in the Book of Tobias, dated 200 BC ~ "Never do to anyone else anything that you would not want someone to do to you." (Tobias 4, 15 – 3rd century BC) ~ but Jesus Christ has turned it into a positive sentence: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." (Matthew 7:12)
(Source of Golden Rules above from "Golden Rule", livingpeaceinternational.org)

But we have not practised the Golden Rule with our Indigenous Peoples. Their history is heartbreaking, the egregious wrongs committed in the name of Colonialism and Christianity, from our systematic oppression of indigenous sovereignty, language, culture, and spirituality to the role of Residential Schools designed to eliminate their unique society, wisdom, and beauty. It has been a tough truth to process for all Canadians.

"None of us today had a part in the harmful policies and practices of the past but we all are 100% responsible for what happens moving forward."

(Deputy Chief of Police Farica Prince, Prince Albert Police Services, November 2021)

In an interview three years ago, former Chief of the Cowassess First Nation in Saskatchewan, Cadmus Delorme, called for a mental "reset" on the path to reconciliation in this country.
(CKOM News Saskatoon, June 25, 2021)

"Part of this 'reset' is, in fact, a reset of what it means to be a Christian. Jesus came proclaiming a message of radical love and acceptance" (The Rev. Victoria Scott, Church of the Ascension, Ottawa, June 25th, 2023), that we should love our neighbour as ourselves. This includes respecting others' cultural identity and beliefs ~ **heart-to-heart** respect.

For thousands of years, The Golden Rule in Native Spirituality has centred around Mother Earth: The late actor, musician, poet and author Chief Dan George's quote, "We are as much alive as we keep the earth alive," is included on the Golden Rule Poster under "Native

Spirituality"

Indigenous Peoples have had a close and abiding love and respect for Mother Earth, beginning with their Creation stories that explain how the world and humankind were made.



Fundamental in their belief system is the idea that nothing is by chance, that the Creator has a purpose for each part of the natural world ~ animals, birds, plants, insects, rocks, trees, rivers, mountains, oceans, and humans. The Creator's touch is everywhere. A message common in many creation stories is that everything and everyone has a gift to give that should be accepted with gratitude and respect. (learnalberta.ca)

The turtle is especially important in its role in creation, giving its shell for the land to grow on until all could inhabit it.

The belief begins with the understanding that the earth was created on top of a great sea. The Creation story varies greatly among the Indigenous peoples and were passed down in oral tradition over hundreds, if not thousands, of years, and there is not one definitive version. Many tell of a great flood ~ a long-ago time when the entire world was covered by water ~ of how Turtle Island ~ North America ~ came to be.

The origin of the name comes from the Algonquian-and-Iroquoian-speaking peoples of the northeast. The stories are about a turtle that carries the world on its back and it is a symbol for life, the earth, and Indigenous identity. (The Canadian Encyclopaedia)

Scholars call the stories of Turtle Island "earth-diver myths" ~ stories that in some way connect the origin of the world to beings ~ often animals ~ that dove into ancient waters to retrieve soil used to create the world as we know it. Such tales also often involve the presence of supernatural beings and a Creator.

In some Ojibwe oral traditions, the story of Turtle Island begins with a flooded Earth.

The Great Spirit, the Giver of Life, Gitche Manitou, created humankind, the Anishinaabe, the First Peoples. When he saw that the people were fighting amongst themselves, he cleansed the world of feuding peoples in order to begin life anew. Some animals survived the flood, such as the loon, the muskrat and the turtle.

Nanabush, a supernatural being who had the power to create life in others, was also present. Nanabush asked the animals to swim deep beneath the water and collect soil that would be



used to recreate the world.

One by one the animals tried, but one by one they failed.

The last animal that tried, the muskrat, was underwater for a long time, and when it resurfaced, the little animal had wet soil in its paws.

The journey took the muskrat's life, but the creature did not die in vain. Nanabush, with the help of the Creator, Gitche Manitou, took the soil and placed it on a willing turtle's back.

Suddenly, the wind blew from each of the four directions. The tiny piece of Earth began to grow until it formed a minisi, an island in the water, and the Turtle bore the weight of the Earth on his back. After a while, the four winds ceased to blow and the waters became still. A huge island sat in the middle of the water.

This became known as Turtle Island, the centre of creation. (from The Canadian Encyclopaedia)

There is so much we can learn from our First Nations peoples. Explore their culture, art, spirituality, and history. With greater empathy and appreciation on our part, let us apply the Golden Rule to them ~ respectful reciprocity.

In our First Nations Gospel passage from John, we heard "Creator's life shined out from the Word, giving light to all human beings...the light the darkness cannot overcome, cannot put out."

How fitting that June 21st is National Indigenous Peoples Day, celebrated on the summer solstice, the longest day of the year, ~ June's full strawberry moon, Ode'imini Giizis, which holds a special significance for Indigenous Peoples as they welcome the arrival of warm weather with ceremonies, and traditional practices.

When we lean into Indigenous Peoples' spirituality acknowledging that light, "we are kindling it so that it shines brighter in the world." (Sermon: National Indigenous Day of Prayer, Sunday, June 25th, 2023, Church of the Ascension, Ottawa, Reverend Victoria Scott)

We are living The Golden Rule. We are letting our own light shine as we look for the light in others. Another way of saying this is: "Everyone is you, living a different life. Treat them as such." (Rev. Victoria Scott)

Everyone is you, living a different life. Treat them as such.

Indigenous spirituality has much to offer us. Rooted in creation, it makes connections everywhere. It is steeped in empathy ~ **heart-to-heart** ~ resonating with the Seven Sacred Teachings, the Seven Grandfather Teachings I shared last year: Love, Respect, Truth, Courage, Honesty, Humility, and Wisdom.

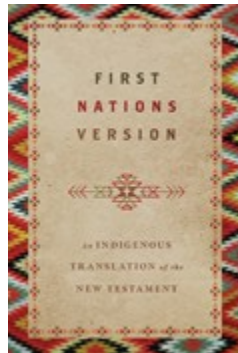
"The translation of John's gospel this morning is powerful and vividly written. We meet Jesus - Creator's Word - in verse 14: Creator's Word who became a flesh-and-blood human being, who pitched his sacred tent in first century Palestine and began a radical ministry, living as one of us.

We heard this morning:

"We looked upon his great beauty and saw how honourable he was, the kind of honour held only by this one Son who fully represents his Father - full of his great kindness and truth," and "No one has ever seen the Great Spirit, but the one Son, who is himself the Great Spirit and closest to the Father's heart, has shown us what he is like."



2024 National Indigenous History Month: an eagle represents First Nations, a narwhal represents Inuit, and a violin represents Métis. These illustrations are placed around the sun and surrounded by multicoloured smoke that represents Indigenous traditions, spirituality, inclusion and diversity. (canada.ca)



GLOSSARY (from First Nations New Testament)

Good Road (Kingdom of God)
Great Spirit/Creator (God)
Creator Sets Free (Jesus)

Small Man to the Sacred Family in Village of Horses (Paul's Letter to the Philippians)

~ Small Man (Paul)
~ Village of Horses (Philippi)

He Shows Goodwill Tells the Good Story (The Gospel of John)

~ Land of Promise (Judea)
~ Gift of Goodwill (John)
~ Drawn from the Water (Moses)

NAMES

Turtle Island (North America)

Gitche Manitou (pronounced Gih-chee-man-ee-doo) Great Spirit, Creator of all things,
Giver of Life

Ode'imini Giizis (pronounced O-day-ih-min-nih-Gee-zis) Strawberry Moon ~ June's full moon
Aho! (Amen)