

# National Indigenous Peoples Day

Every day, across Turtle Island, our Ceremonial Elders maintain the Good Mind. Many of our people are like-minded, always aware of the natural life that surrounds us, aware of the life-giving forces that permit our existence on our Sacred Mother Earth.

Our way of life is no different than any other Indigenous People in the world who follow their way of life. We share a commitment to live according to our traditional values, loyal to our original truths, original teachings, and original culture.

These principles are rooted in respect for all natural life and those laws that allow all life on this Mother Earth to be healthy and be one with the Great Web of Life – an ethic repeatedly evoked by Chief Dan George in ceremonies and speeches to his Great Squamish Nation.

Indigenous people must take every opportunity to create positive energy, healing, and unity. When Canada says we will celebrate Indigenous Day on June 21 of every year, using our Good Mind and being the kind-hearted people that we are, we need to take advantage of the ceremony as an avenue to support our children's future.

The COVID-19 pandemic requires that we maintain our way of life of sharing and Thanksgiving by socializing in a way that does not spread the sickness to others in our communities, neighborhoods, and cities too – we must not forget that many of our people are urban Indians. Though some of our people have contracted the virus on Reservation or Traditional Territories, most became infected here in Canada.

National Indigenous Peoples Day could not come at a better time. For hundreds of years, our Spiritual leaders have warned our non-native brothers and sisters what would come if we continued to cut down and destroy all the old-growth forest and plant life in the name of commercial logging.

During the Industrial Revolution, our Elders watched as they took everything from Mother Earth's body, burned it, and put it in the sky. Today, Canada is still one of the world's worst polluters. Her Alberta oil and tar sands pollute the Athabaskan and Mackenzie Rivers. The Indigenous Environmental Network cannot stop this atrocity to Mother Earth's body. Our life species are suffering as much or more than human beings.



Trad circle Sappa Dawn Janet and Don McClouds Yelm Washington photo by Danny Beaton 1993

Our Elders, Chiefs, Clan Mothers, and Medicine People know that our sacred ceremonies, prayers, songs, and thinking can be very powerful, bringing unity to those of us outside of the circle. We, on the outside of the circle, support those conducting the ceremony from within the inside. Even though we may be in our backyard burning our tobacco, or a sacred fire alone in our backyard or alone in the bush, we are all giving Thanksgiving to Our Sacred Mother Earth.

Even if we are giving Thanksgiving from our living rooms, Mother Earth can hear us. All of creation can hear our prayers and songs. If we all start thanking Brother Sun, Grandmother Moon, the winds of the four directions, the water, Mother Earth, and the life species, everything in our way of life can hear us.

Our Elders teach us that the grandfathers can hear us, and that the stones and everything that is on Mother Earth is alive and is medicine. The wolf is medicine, as is the bear, the eagle, the turtle, and the bumble bee. Everything can hear our voice, sacred thinking, and ceremonies.

Our way of life is one with all life, our ancestors, the spirit world, and four protectors. If we use our thinking with the Solstice Day on Indigenous Peoples Day, we can send a message to Mother Earth that we care for her and love her for all that she gives human beings. The coronavirus cannot stop our sacred thinking at any time. We have a sacred duty from our ancestors to uphold and maintain our way of life, which I believe is our sacred healing.

Because it is such an important day of significance for Indigenous People of Canada, we can send a message to the world that it is a time for healing and sharing, all for our children's future. Our Elders and Spiritual Leaders knew this virus was coming, and many of our people were waiting for this disaster to come to society. We can say we do not want to create negative energy but the world is out of balance, and now we need to nurture positive energy more than ever.

We need good thinkers, we need The Good Mind, we, the Indigenous People, need positive Elders who want unity for all life on our Territories and Homeland. We have the right thinking if you look at what Idle No More did, if you look at the Mohawks of Tyendinaga, and Wetsuweten to stop the pipelines: these are historical times because Indigenous people are saying, 'no more rape!'"

Our Spiritual Elders on Six Nations are saying that we will pay a consequence if we do not defend Mother Earth now, before it is too late. Everything our Elders have said and are saying is real and the truth.

We must focus on the Summer Solstice, we must focus on National Indigenous Peoples Day because it is a chance for Indigenous people to use our thinking and ceremonies to send a message to the world that our Sacred Mother Earth is life.

We want to take the time to thank all the people who stood up for Idle No More, Tyendinaga Mohawks, Wetsuweten, and others who prayed for protection and peace during these struggles.

We want to thank all the caregivers who are taking care of the sick throughout the year and during the Covid-19 epidemic. We want to thank all ceremonial leaders and Clan Mothers, ancestors, and Pipe Carriers for keeping our people strong after all these years of injustice.

Mike Mitchell, Mohawk Former Grand Chief Speaks Out

My name is Kanentakero. I am the former Grand Chief of the Akwesasne. I've served my community for over 30 years. The reason I was asked to come and speak is my long history in politics. I'm also a faith-keeper in the Mohawk Nation Longhouse. Protector of our ceremonies, songs, and spiritual life. So when you balance your culture and your language and your spiritual ways, it's very important not to be just a politician but a human being.

I want to share a message about the Tyendinaga community. I want it noted that Tyendinaga is the Mohawk name of Joseph Brant. The British asked Joseph Brant to ask the Haudenosaunee if they could be allies in constructing a new country called Canada. I put emphasis on "allies" because they had to face confrontations with the French and Americans. As it stands today, we are still allies with Canada.

Tyendinaga is the birthplace of a peacemaker. One that brought us the Great Law of Peace. A very spiritual man, Tyendinaga was born at a time when there was great violence and turmoil



Chief Oren Lyons, Danny, Alicja Rozanska, John Mohawk, Rigel Rozanska Photo by Brian Danniels 1995

amongst the 5 Nations: Mohawk, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, and Seneca. He approached each Nation and convinced them to do away with warfare.

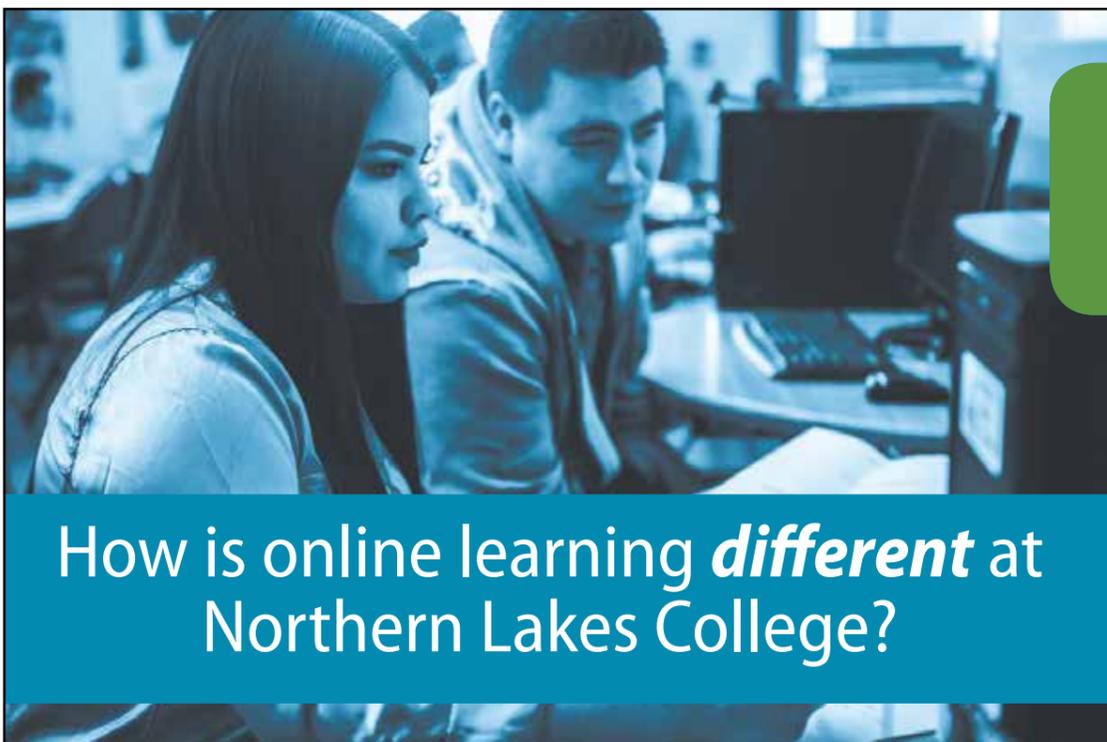
This is significant because of where he was born. He went across Lake Ontario to Haudenosaunee country and he was able to stop the warfare and the killing, and turn it into a great union by providing them with a constitution based on peace.

This is the time for us to remember what his message of peace was about. It's always easy to go the other route. Peaceful or not, it's our choice. We are at the crossroads. We must invoke the message of the peacemaker if we are going to

have lasting peace, security, and wellness in our communities.

And that goes both ways. Canadians at large are just beginning to learn something I'm well aware of: that there's a lot of hatred in this country, and it's directed at First Nations. We've got a lot of work to do. We can react, or we can sit down and consult with one another based on the message of peace left by the Peacemaker.

Story and Photos by Danny Beaton Turtle Clan Mohawk | [www.dannybeaton.ca](http://www.dannybeaton.ca) | In Memory of Alicja Rozanska



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