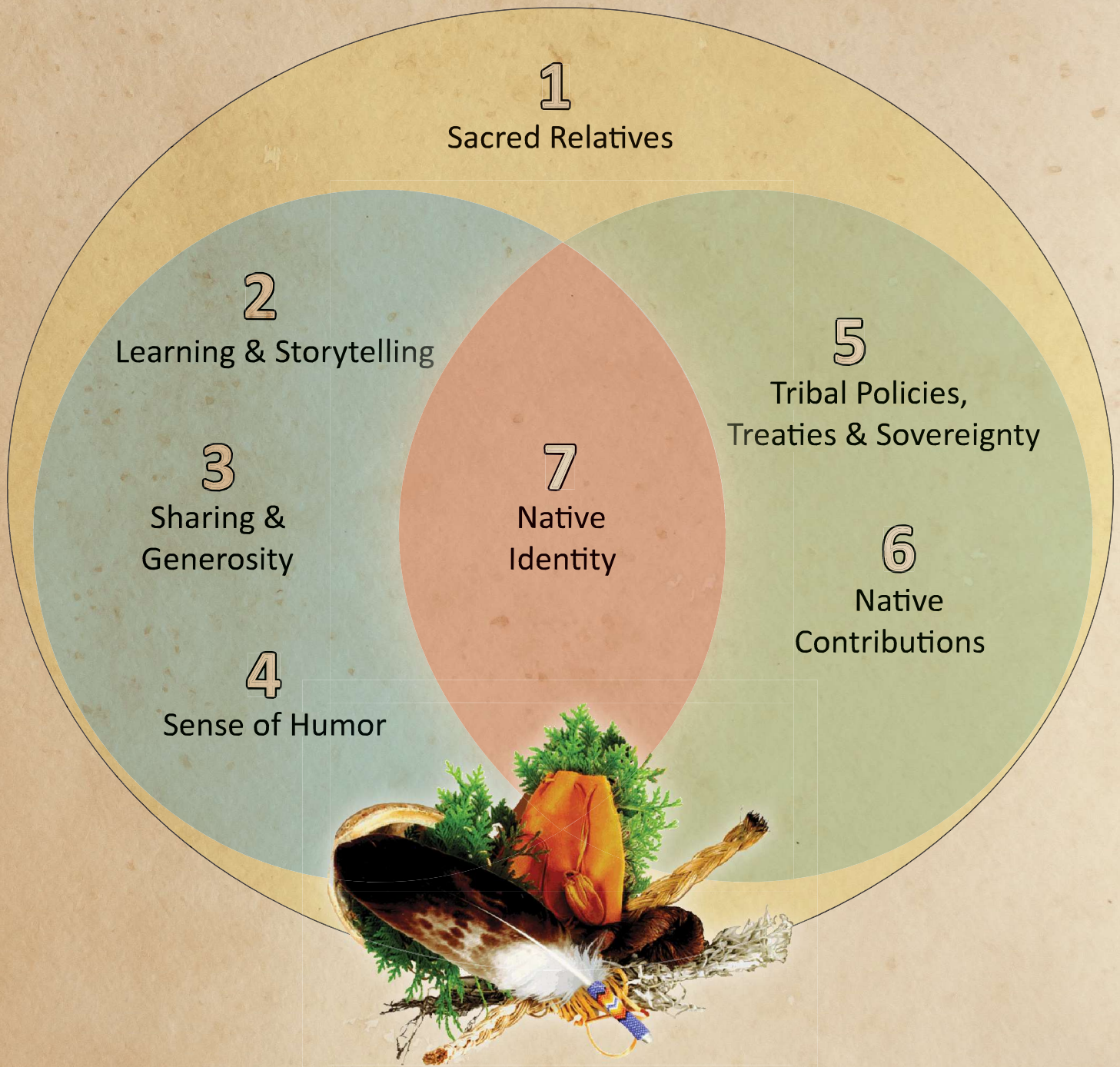


North Dakota Native American Essential Understandings



Four Sacred Medicines

Tobacco Cedar Sage Sweetgrass

NDNAEU 1: Sacred Relatives

How We Relate to Everything

Native people practice a deep interconnectedness with the land, the resources, the water, all living things and all human beings. Land stewardship, respect for all 2 legged, 4 legged, winged, crawlers and swimmers and a strong belief in the sacredness of all human beings are key elements of our spirituality.



“We practice our ceremonies, medicines and plants to keep us whole and connected to the Great Mystery of Life.”

Elder JT Shining Oneside, Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa

View all NDNAEU Elder interviews at www.teachingsofourelders.org

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“We learned how to make *wasna*—cherries and dried meat—we’d help our grandmother... we wanted to play, but we had to learn these things, so I’m glad they taught us all these things—they should go on!”

Elder Angeline Fourth Iron Road, Standing Rock Dakota

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NDNAEU 2: Learning & Storytelling

How We Promote & Sustain Our Cultures, Languages & Traditions

Traditional teaching and the passing on of knowledge and wisdom was done through storytelling, song, ceremony and daily way of life, often incorporating specific gender and age specific responsibilities. These continue to be some of the best modes for learning for both Native and non-Native learners.



“Patience... learn patience and respect and just listen. You don’t say, ‘Oh I’ve heard that before!’ You just listen. That’s how they’d teach us...they’d tell you these stories over and over so you won’t forget.”

Elder Oliver Gourd, Spirit Lake Dakota

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“Teaching children to be able to sing a song, or looking at the flag song...our kids are... Arikara/Lakota, Arikara/Chippewa, Hidatsa/Arikara, some are mixed or half and half of a different culture... and having that understanding of who they are... to connect it back...that is the most (important thing).”

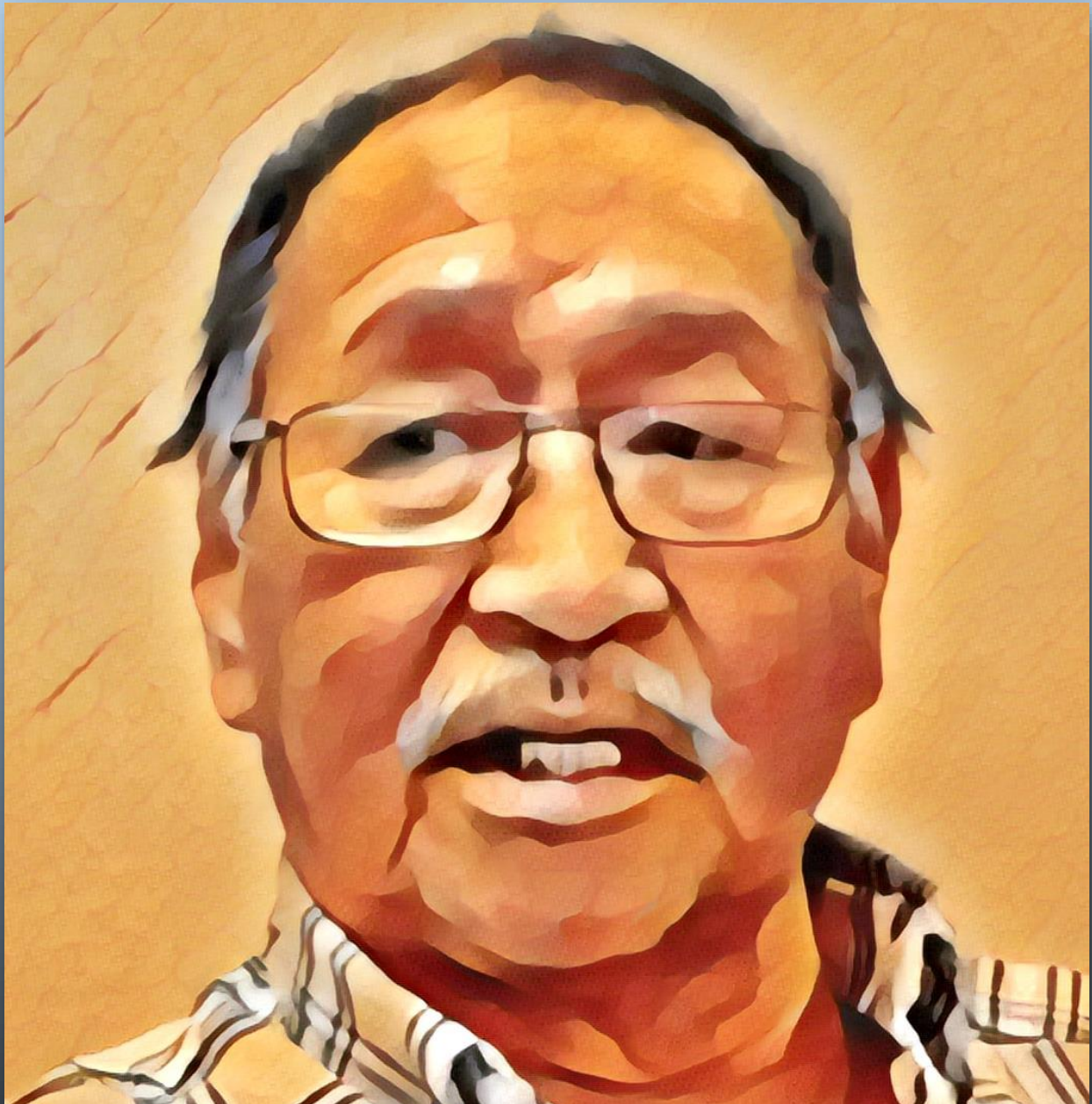
Dr. Wayne Fox, Mandan, Hidatsa & Arikara

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NDNAEU 3: Sharing & Generosity

How We Promote & Sustain Our Cultures, Languages & Traditions

Native people have rich traditions of sharing and generosity which include gifting, shared meals, Pow Wow gatherings, shared living spaces and care for relatives, including the environment, natural resources and waters.



“The way my name was explained... ‘You’re going to be a helper of people’ and I’m just now trying to do that.”

Elder Eugene Hale, Spirit Lake Dakota

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“There was a lesson from my grandma... she said, ‘In the future when you grow up... if you see an orphan child someplace, you go up to him... take his hand and say, *come to my house.*’”

Elder Demus McDonald, Spirit Lake Dakota

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NDNAEU 4: Sense of Humor

How We Promote & Sustain Our Cultures, Languages & Traditions

Native people have a rich history of shared sense of humor that includes teaching stories involving Iktomi, Maymaygwisi and Nanabozhoo. These stories and this unique sense of humor continue to support our resiliency and cohesiveness.



“Sense of humor is really important because I think it’s helped tribal people overcome lots of obstacles—to be able to laugh at things that were so disheartening.”

Elder Kathryn Froelich, Sahnish, Arikara & Black Feet

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“We share when we get together... happy occasions. We remember these things as kids, and we’re adults now... I wish we could go back to those days.”

Elder Mary Gachupin, Hidatsa

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“In Hidatsa it’s humorous... but it loses something in English.”

Elder Martha Bird Bear, Hidatsa

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NDNAEU 5: Tribal Policies, Treaties & Sovereignty

How We Respond to & Contribute to All of Society from Local to Global

Native people practice self-determination, developing tribal policies and practicing political activism. Despite a history of US policies and Treaties that have often been detrimental, Native people are members of sovereign nations that predate the US government.



“There were a lot of lives lost for those treaties... a lot of land given up for those treaties... a way of life given up for those treaties... I believe the US government should still abide by those treaties because of the fact that our people have lost so much.”

Elder Debbe Poitra, Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa

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“We’ve got to go on to the universities. Before they become our leaders, they should study the treaties, the land, everything.”

Elder Mary Bateman, Arikara

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NDNAEU 6: Native Contributions

How We Respond to & Contribute to All of Society from Local to Global

Native people continue to contribute to all levels of society from local to global in diverse fields including medicine, science, government, education, economics, art, music, and many more.



“We knew science before science came... we dried our own corn... we dried deer meat... Now days you go inside the store and they have the little dried meet... we did that a long time ago!”

Elder Catherine Howard, Spirit Lake Dakota

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NDNAEU 7: Native Identity

Who We Are

Individual and communal identity is defined and supported by shared Native languages, kinship systems, Tiospaye, Clan structures, traditional teachings, values, sacred laws and ceremonies. A continuum of tribal identity, unique to each individual, ranges from assimilated to traditional lifestyle. There is no “generic American Indian”.



“I’ve got a little granddaughter now I’m trying to teach (Lakota), she’s six or seven... she really catches on!”

Elder Joe White Mountain, Standing Rock Lakota

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“There is no ‘wrong way’ to pray.”

Elder Carol Davis, Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa

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