

Statement of Traditional Dene Values and Principles

From the foregoing description of the traditional Dene way of life, It Is possible to identify and summarize particular values and principles which served as a foundation for the totality of the Dene way.

Principles

One

This land was created by “the one who provides for all”, and we came from this land. We recognize our equality with this land and all living creatures

Two

We recognize and respect the natural laws which regulate the cycle of seasons, the rhythms of the earth, the ways of the animals.

Three

No one individual has the right to own the land. As the ones who came from this land, we have a collective right to use the land and its resources to ensure our survival as a people. We also have a collective responsibility to protect the land and resources for our children and grandchildren.

Four

We take only what we need from the land. We honour and give thanks to the spirit of the land and that which we take from the land. We do not waste anything that we have taken from the land, but share it with all who are in need

Five

The survival of the whole group (family, community), is more important than the accumulation of individual wealth or status.

Six

Individual rights and freedoms are respected and encouraged within the larger, more important context of the collective identity and collective responsibility for the survival and well being of the entire group

Seven

The laws of the Dene, which have been passed down to us by our elders, teach us how to respect the land, ourselves, and each other. They teach us how to live in balance and good health, and how to protect ourselves and our children. We must continue to live by these laws and pass them on to our children.

Eight

We respect and care for each other. In particular, we honour and provide for our elders, who cared for us and passed on the gifts of generations past. We also honour and provide for our children who will pass on the ways of the Dene to generations yet to come.

Nine

We come from male and female, and we respect and honour the contribution which both men and women make in working together for the survival of the people.

Ten

We respect and honour our leaders and medicine men and women who share their special skills, experience, wisdom, and powers for the benefit of their people. We don't expect them to work for us or serve us, but we look to them for guidance and instruction to help us govern ourselves in a good way.

Eleven

Everyone has the right to be heard and to take part in the decision-making process on discussion of matters which will affect us.

Twelve

We respect the right of Dene, in family groups, in communities, or in regions, to make decisions, without interference from outside, with respect to matters which affect them alone in their territory.

Clearly, the values and principles summarized above have a certain universal human quality. Many of them have been reflected in the cultures of other peoples throughout the world, at different times in history. For the traditional Dene, however, these values and principles were as fundamental as life itself. They not only gave expression to the purpose and fulfillment of human life, they also served the very practical function of ensuring the survival of the people.

Values

Sharing:

The Dene shared in the use of the land and the resources of the land, in particular food. The work of maintaining the camp was shared, as was the responsibility for caring for children, and protecting the safety and health of the family.

Respect:

One showed respect for oneself and for others, for leaders and elders and those with special skills, and for the land and all living things.

Caring:

Caring was shown for all members of the extended family. The widows, orphans, and elders, unable to provide for themselves, were cared for by their community. Concern was shown for the safety and protection of oneself and others in the home.

Equality:

Equality among all people, and the equality of humans and all other living creatures, were recognized.

Self-respect and Pride:

Everyone, as equals, had reason to respect themselves and take pride in doing well whatever it was their particular responsibility to do. There was pride in being self-reliant, in being someone who could contribute something to the family and community.