

Cette présentation a été effectuée le 29 novembre 2023, au cours de la journée « *Une seule santé* » : *aller au-delà des applications traditionnelles* dans le cadre des 26es Journées annuelles de santé publique.

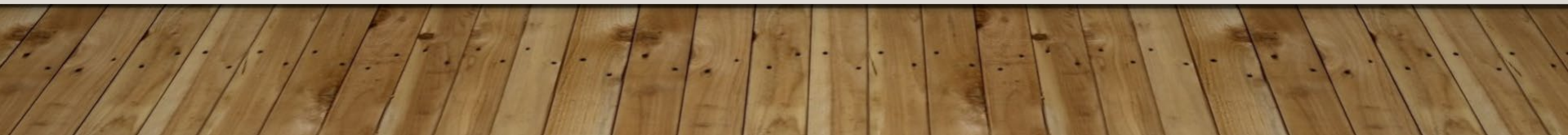
OHÉN:TON KARIHWATÉHKWEN

FIRST NATIONS PERSPECTIVES ON ONE HEALTH

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ONE HEALTH

- One Health concept is the idea that the inter-relationships between humans, animals and our mutual environment is a fundamental component of true holistic health; our mutual health must depend on these relationships.
- I was asked to join your conversation by sharing an Indigenous worldview as it relates to this concept of One Health.
- As you may imagine, the concept of One Health is not new to Indigenous People; in fact, I would suggest that this exact worldview is a central aspect of what it means to be an Indigenous person.

ONE HEALTH

- It is important for us to begin by acknowledging who are the Indigenous people that inhabit the territories we all call home. All the territories of Turtle Island (what people now call North America) had many different Nations residing there. Although there are less of us, we still reside in many parts of these lands.
 - In Canada, Indigenous is a broad term that encompasses First Nations, Inuit and Métis. It is also a term that also includes Māori, Aborigines, and many others that are considered within the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
 - In Canada, the Indian Act did not afford the same rights to Inuit and Metis that they did to First Nations, which is why there is a distinction between our peoples.
- I am a member of the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation (known by others as the Mohawk People) and I am from the community of Kahnawà:ke, just south of Montreal, so the specific perspectives I am speaking about come from that context.

WHAT IS THE OHÉN:TÓN KARIHWATÉHKWEN?

- I think the easiest way to offer an explanation of our world view is to go through the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwén
- Kanien'kehá:ka people, and further anyone within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy (Six Nations), use the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwén in all of our ceremonies, before and after any meeting, and even as a daily, individual way to connect with Creation.
- The real way we describe it is “*The words that come before all other matters/issues*”; so, to put it another way, before we do anything else (any other discussion or business), we must first take the time to acknowledge and honor the natural world that sustains us.
- It is customary to use our language to do these openings because there is power and deeper meaning held in Kanien'kéha words. Our language is also endangered, and we need to work hard to keep it alive.

WHAT IS THE OHÉN:TÓN KARIHWATÉHKWEN?

- The recitation of the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen serves several purposes;
 - It grounds us in the present because whatever was happening in our lives is able to be left outside the room while we concentrate on what is about to be discussed.
 - It allows all of our minds to become as one; we are hearing the same things and therefore thinking the same things.
 - It brings familiarity and ceremony to each gathering of the people; it is one of the most sacred things we have.
 - It is part of our Original Instructions and reminds us of our responsibility and role within Creation; we are not the penultimate aspect of Creation that dominates over everything else, but rather an equal partner in this relationship.
- There is no right way or wrong way to say the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen; it varies depending on the speaker and the issues we are all dealing with.



OPENING WORDS

- Kentióhkwa! Sewatonhonhsí:iost Ken'nikarihwésha ne káti Ohén:ton Kariwatéhkwen enkawennohétston
- Group of people ! Listen well for a short while as we pass the words that come before all other matters.
- Akwé:kon énska entitewahwe'nón:ni ne onkwa'nikòn:ra tánon teiethinonwerá:ton ne...
- Let us all bring our minds together as one and greet/thank....

ONKWEHSHÒN:'A - THE PEOPLE



We offer our greetings to all the people in this room, as well as thank the Creator for sending all the people who have come into our life; they have come for a reason, a season or a lifetime. We need to remember to be *present* for each of these people who come to us.

IONKHI'NISTÉNHATSÍ IOHONTSÁ:TE - MOTHER EARTH



We offer our greetings to our Mother that we walk on every day; we are conscious of her shape and beauty, her strength and resilience. We need to be more conscious of what we take from her and how we pollute her.

KAHNEKARÓNNION - THE WATERS



We offer our greetings to all the waters that flow across our Mother's back; the small streams, the rivers, the lakes and the oceans. All water is connected, and it reminds us that, like our Mother, we too are comprised of flesh and water.

KENTSON'SHÒN:'A - THE FISH



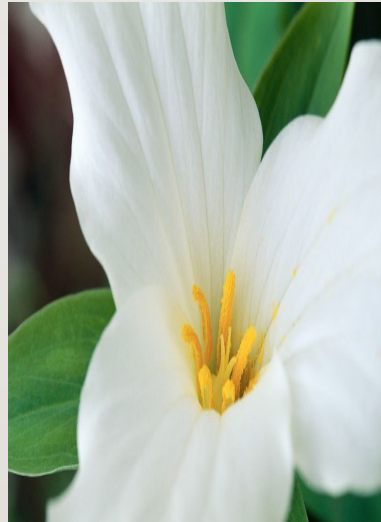
We offer our greetings to all the fish life; from the smallest tadpole and minnow, to the largest whales. Their original instructions were to help clean and purify the waters, and we hope we don't make it too hard for them.

OHONTE'SHÒN:'A TÁNON OHTEHRA'SHÒN:'A - THE GRASSES AND ROOTS



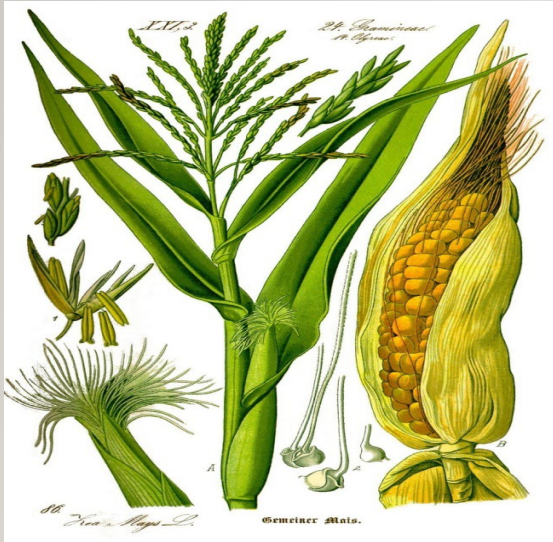
Next, we offer our greetings to the root life; it connects the world above and the world below and reminds us of our own roots. We also offer greetings to the grasses and flowers; our Mother's beautiful dress.

ONONHKWA'SHÒN:'A - THE MEDICINES



Next, we offer our greetings to the medicines; you grow in the fields, the swampy lands, the forests and by the rivers. They heal us and strengthen us. We also acknowledge the 4 sacred medicines; the tobacco, the cedar, the sage, and the sweet grass.

TIONHNHÉHKWEN - SUSTENANCE OF LIFE



Next, we offer our greetings to all the vegetables that we plant and harvest. We think of the work it takes to prepare the ground, sow the seeds, ensure enough water, enough sunlight, to care for them, harvest them until finally we can eat their life-giving energy.

KAHIHSHÒN:'A - THE FRUITS



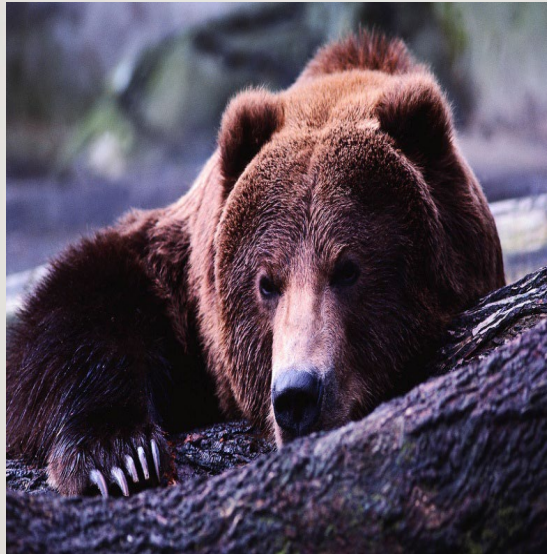
Next, we offer our greetings to all the fruit life that grows on Mother Earth. The strawberry who is the leader of the fruit as they are first to ripen in the planting season. We thank them for offering us their strength.

OKWIRE'SHÒN:'A - THE TREES



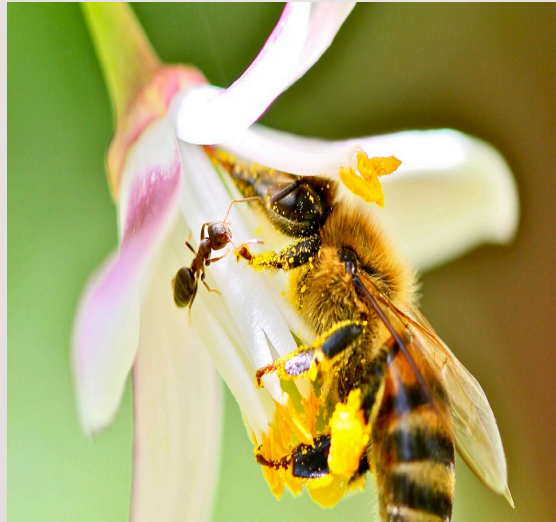
Next, we offer our greetings to all the trees. They have the original instructions to work with the winds to clean and purify the air we breathe. They teach us how to work with others. They provide shelter to so many creatures.

KONTÍRIO - THE ANIMALS



Next, we offer our greetings to all the animals that share our mother with us. They teach us so many lessons about family, about survival, about preparation. They give up their lives for our food, for our clothing and we must remember to only take what we need.

OTSI'NONWA'SHÒN:'A - THE INSECTS



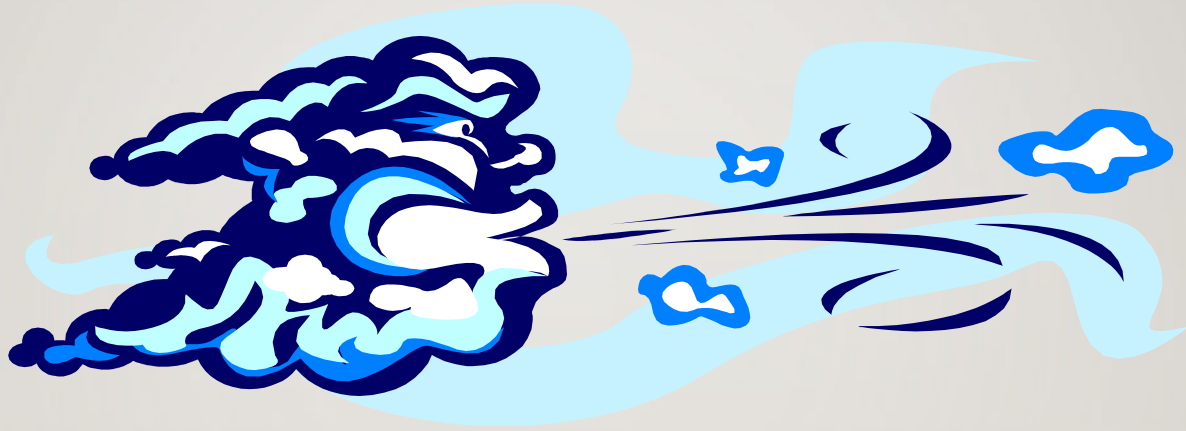
Next, we offer our greetings to all the insect life. They are the building blocks of all other life. They are constantly taking care of our Mother; they work with the earth itself, the plants, the other insects, and help breakdown nutrients in animals who died.

OTSI'TEN'OKÒN:'A - BIRDS



Next, we offer our greetings to all the bird life. They remind us to be free; to fly in the sky and sing our own beautiful songs. They teach us how to take both the big picture and the small, to be able to thrive in both. We use their feathers for our clothes and to keep us warm.

KAIÉ:RI NIKAWERÁ:KE - THE FOUR WINDS



Next, we offer our greetings to four winds. Even if we can't see it, we know the birds travel the winds and we can feel the winds on our face. As we said, the winds work to clear the air, carry the rains, but they also spread the seeds and the pollen.

IONKHIHSOTHÓ:KON RATIWÈ:RAS - THE THUNDERS



Next, we offer our greetings to our Grandfathers, the Thunders. They spread the rains throughout Mother Earth, and they remind us that we are small and weak compared to others; it reminds us to have humility and keeps our ego in check.

SHONKWAHTSÌ:'A TIOHKEHNÉKHA KARÁHKWA - BROTHER SUN



Next, we offer our greetings to our brother the Sun. The sun greets us every morning and almost all peoples have ceremony at dawn because the Creator has given us another day to walk the Earth. All life thrives with the sun.



IONKHIHSÓTHA AHSONTHENHNÉKHA KARÁHKWA - GRANDMOTHER



Next, we offer our greetings to our Grandmother, the Moon. She works with all our cycles, especially our women's cycles. She even works with our Mother's cycles as we observe the changing tides every day. She reminds us that the only constant in life is change.



IOTSISTOHKWARÓNNION - THE STARS



Next, we offer our greetings to all the stars in the sky. They help us know that even when it is darkest in our lives, there can still be light if we look for it. When we think of all the stars and all the worlds, they remind us that we are only a small part of the thing called Creation.

SHONKWAIA'TÍSON - THE CREATOR

- Finally, we offer our greetings to the Creator, however we imagine her, or him or it. The Creator has sent us on the journey, and we never know when they will call us back to the Sky World. In the way, we must appreciate each day the Creator has given us and try to always be present in our lives.
- Thinking of our Creator also reminds us to always have gratitude because when our hearts are full of gratitude, there is little room for anger or sadness.

OPENING

- Ó:nen káti tho niió:re ia'tetewawenniháhrho. Tóka' thé:nen saionkwa'nikónhrhen i:se ki' né: ó:nen sasewakwatakohá:ton. (Now that is how far we have gone with our words. If there is anything I have forgotten you all may now amend it).
- Ó:nen wetewarihwahnhotón:ko nón:wa wenhniserá:te. (The day is now opened).
- Eh káti' niihtónhak ne onkwa'nikòn:ra. Tho niiowèn:nake.Tho. (Let it be that way our minds. Those are all the words.)

WRAP-UP

- Some speakers go into much more detail for each of the elements in Creation, and some add more. The point is to take the time to say it.
- If you say the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen everyday, it will put you in the right mindset of what your responsibilities to Creation are. Imagine if everyone did this daily?
- It is an indisputable fact that humans are no longer in balance with nature; saying this (or even meditating on it!) before starting our day or ending our day and before any important event may get us back to balance some day.
- At its core, the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen teaches us about respect; respect for ourselves, for the land, and for all living creatures.

QUESTIONS?

Niawenhkó:wa!

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