



Supporting Continuous Quality Improvement and Culture

Description:

This tool provides a discussion on Continuous Quality Improvement, the seven sacred teachings, and a matrix to assess your activities.

How it can be used:

At its core, Continuous Quality Improvement is about providing the best care to clients to achieve the healthiest outcome. Similarly, the seven sacred teachings are about being balanced and healthy people. An organization that is based on a foundation that includes both will be respected for not only what they do but also how they do it.

Continuous Quality Improvement represents a coordinated approach to ongoing measurement, analysis and improvement. It is an opportunity to assess, monitor and implement improvements to ensure better organizational performance and healthier outcomes.

There are six client quality dimensions:

- Accessible – providing equitable, timely and appropriate health services;
- Client-centred – actively involving and respecting the needs and preferences of individuals, families and communities;
- Culturally competent – integrating knowledge about individuals, families and communities into health programs and services, standards, policies, practices and attitudes;
- Effective – achieving the best possible health outcomes, supported by current evidence;
- Efficient – making the best use of resources to optimize benefits and demonstrate positive results;
- Safe – minimizing risk and avoiding harm.

The Seven Sacred Teachings form the foundation of many Indigenous communities' way of life. Each teaching honours one of the basic virtues intrinsic to a full and healthy life and is embodied by an animal.

The seven sacred teachings are:

- **Love** – *To receive love and kindness from others, you have to give this to others first.*
To feel true love is to know the Creator. It is understood that if one cannot love oneself, it is impossible to love anyone else. The Eagle was chosen by the Great Spirit to represent this law, as the Eagle can reach the highest out of all the creatures in bringing pure vision to the seeker. Though the purveyor of the greatest and most powerful medicine, love can also be the most elusive of the teachings, as it depends upon a world that acknowledges the importance of spirituality.
- **Respect** – *Show honour and gratitude to all of creation to show and earn respect.*
The Buffalo, through giving its life and sharing every part of its being, showed the deep respect it had for the people. No animal was more important to the existence of Indigenous families than this animal, and its gift provided shelter, clothing and utensils for daily living. Native people believe themselves to be true caretakers of the great herds, and developed a sustainable relationship with the Buffalo resulting in a relationship that is a true expression of respect.



- **Courage** – *Face life and obstacles with a fearless heart; do what is right even if it is difficult.*
 The Bear provides many lessons in the way it lives, but courage is the most important teaching it offers. Though gentle by nature, the ferociousness of a mother Bear when one of her cubs is approached is the true definition of courage. To have the mental and moral strength to overcome fears that prevent us from living our true spirit as human beings is a great challenge that must be met with the same vigour and intensity as a mother Bear protecting her cub. Living of the heart and living of the spirit is difficult, but the Bear's example shows us how to face any danger to achieve these goals.
- **Honesty** – *Face your faults and mistakes with open eyes and learn from them.*
 Long ago, there was a giant called Kitch-Sabe. Kitch-sabe walked among the people to remind them to be honest to the laws of the Creator and honest to each other. The highest honour that could be bestowed upon an individual was the saying "There walks an honest man. He can be trusted." To be truly honest was to keep the promises one made to the Creator, to others and to oneself. The Elders would say, "Never try to be someone else; live true to your spirit, be honest to yourself and accept who you are the way the Creator made you."
- **Wisdom** – *Use the knowledge that you have gained through your life to make good decisions.*
 The building of a community is dependent on the gifts given to each member by the Creator and also how these gifts are used. The Beaver's example of using his sharp teeth for cutting trees and branches to build his dams and lodge expresses this teaching. If he did not use his teeth, the teeth would continue to grow until they became useless, ultimately making it impossible for him to sustain himself. The same can be said for human beings. One's spirit will grow weak if it is not fulfilling its use. When used properly however, these gifts contribute to the development of a peaceful and healthy community.
- **Humility** – *Understand and accept that we are all equal to each other, not better than others.*
 We are each unique within ourselves and from each other. Being truly humble means recognizing and acknowledging that there is a higher power than man, the Creator. The expression of this humility is manifested through considering others before ourselves. In this way, the Wolf became the teacher of this lesson. He bows his head in the presence of others out of deference, and once hunted, will not partake of the food until it can be shared with the pack. His respect for his community is a hard lesson, but integral in the Indigenous way.
- **Truth** – *Know these things, to speak them and to believe in them and in ourselves.*
 To know truth is to know and understand all of the original laws as given by the Creator, and to remain faithful to them. It is said that in the beginning, when the Creator made man and gave him the seven sacred laws, the grandmother Turtle was present to ensure that the laws would never be lost or forgotten. On the back of a Turtle are the 13 moons, each representing the truth of one cycle of the Earth's rotations around the sun. The 28 markings on her back represent the cycle of the moon and of a woman's body. The shell of the Turtle represents the body and serves as a reminder of the Creator's will and teachings.

How does continuous quality improvement support your community culture? When considering accreditation, you may be asked that question.

Use the following matrix as part of an organization-wide or team meeting. As a group, reflect on how your organization demonstrates each of the seven sacred teachings (or insert your own cultural beliefs in that column). Then consider how each of the quality improvement principles is put into practice in a concrete way, and how it demonstrates your sacred teachings. Let the group (as a large group or in smaller groups) fill in these elements as a further reinforcement of the concrete value of quality improvement and how it supports your culture. This can be a powerful exercise, as it provides clear examples of how both concepts can work in harmony for the benefit of your community.



Seven Sacred Teachings (or insert your own sacred teachings) How do we demonstrate these teachings in our organization?	Principles of Continuous Quality Improvement					
	Accessible	Client-Centred	Culturally Competent	Effective	Efficient	Safe
Love						
Respect						
Courage						
Honesty						
Wisdom						
Humility						
Truth						