

COMMISSION DE
DÉVELOPPEMENT DES
RESSOURCES HUMAINES DES
PREMIÈRES NATIONS
DU QUÉBEC



FIRST NATIONS
HUMAN RESOURCES
DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
OF QUEBEC

Participatory Event - First
Nations Community of Practice
in Housing (CoPH)

Montréal, March 27-28, 2017

The practice and potentiality of collaboration between First Nations housing stakeholders.

MATIÈRE
BRUTE



Summary

In 2016, the Community of Practice in Housing (CoPH) was established by a committee of housing managers to promote knowledge and experience sharing for collective capacity building in the First Nations Housing community. During its development, the CoPH carried out exchange activities and became known for promoting collaboration as a tool for action, in addition to launching an online collaborative platform for community housing employees. Recognizing the importance of breaking down the silos between stakeholders from various sectors to effectively address housing challenges, the CoPH invited a wider circle of housing managers and officers, as well as elected officials, directors-general, tribal councils and institutional partners to meet with the intent of increasing collaboration to improve the well-being of the communities. Acceptance of this invitation by more than 50 people from all sectors reflects the need for such meetings. The participative event, which took place on March 27-28, 2017, brought together all these stakeholders representing nearly

all First Nations of Quebec. This meeting allowed for a greater diversity of stakeholders involved in the CoPH and brought the stakeholders/communities/nations closer, reinforced the purpose of a community of practice in housing and consolidated what it has accomplished to date. Like the March 27-28 event, the CoPH displays both the great diversity and common identity of First Nations in the search of sustainable solutions to improve the well-being of their communities. As such, the event generated as much positive energy and connectivity as expectations for the next phase. More than ever, the mission and mandate of the CoPH are getting clearer. Obviously, the greatest value of this project lies in its apolitical culture of sharing, listening, collaboration and respect. Fostering this culture is clearly feeding the potential we all see in this project. The CoPH will have to keep on developing in such a way that preserves this culture, while specifying its tools and project, and clarifying its repercussions.

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Context

The First Nations Community of Practice in Housing was born from a desire to strengthen ties, sharing and collaboration between the stakeholders of the First Nations housing sector in the province of Quebec. Established at the request of the participants present at a participatory event held in Quebec City on February 25, 2016, the CoPH (Community of Practice in Housing) was created through the collaboration of housing officers, partners and collaborators of the housing sector. In addition to establishing the foundations of a community of practice, an online collaborative platform, which includes some 80 members from communities across Quebec, was also launched. During the project's launch year, a number of conversations initiated by the CoPH made it possible to identify the strengths, needs and challenges in order to foster collaboration between the housing stakeholders. One of the challenges was to improve collaboration between the administrative and political levels.

In Montreal, on March 27-28, 2017, the CoPH hosted one-and-a-half-day workshop and discussion on the topic of collaboration in housing. This edition was special in that all housing stakeholders were invited: elected representatives, directors, tribal council members, partners and housing officers.

THE EVENT'S INTENTIONS

The event was created in order to serve the following intentions:

- Obtain a better common understanding of how each contributes to the First Nations housing file;
- Develop a sense of security and confidence in one's work, both within oneself and with others;
- Experience a culture of collaboration;
- Create authentic relationships;
- Have fun

A STRONG RESPONSE

The invitation extended by the CoPH received a strong response from all communities. More than 50 people from various roles and communities were present. This was a first event to bring together such a wide variety of stakeholders and so many different communities.

Through the event, the CoPH pursued its intention to bring the communities closer together and to foster the emergence of a culture of collaboration within the First Nations housing sector.

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Participants





Culture of collaboration within the CoPH

COLLABORATION IS A CULTURE

Since the beginning of the CoPH, it has been understood that collaboration is a culture. The housing challenges include the challenges of collaboration between the actors, it is therefore imperative to develop the ability to work together. This takes more than practice; a culture of interaction is needed. In this sense, the CoPH meetings always take place in a circle, the basic structure of all collaborative meetings, and are structured in such a manner as to encourage maximum sharing between the participants.



WISHES OF THE PARTICIPANTS

In order to better meet the needs of the members of the housing community, the participants were invited to share their wishes as regards the event.

- How to have effective policies without interference from elected officials?
- Spirit of collaboration;
- Relations with elected officials;
- Not feel alone;
- Gain a better understanding in order to provide better support;
- Challenges of being a housing officer;
- Improve our work;
- A better understanding of how I can effectively help the community in relation to housing issues;
- Leave with effective work tools.

These wishes represent an opportunity to know the needs of the stakeholders, and also the value of the community of practice project, as this one aims the creation of a network of support, listening and mutual assistance.



Culture of collaboration within the CoPH

COMMON INTENTIONS

Any collaboration begins with the pursuit of a common intention. Though the CoPH had already carried out an intention-setting exercise in 2016, the presence of new actors from the political and administrative sectors required revisiting the question. This exercise allowed obtaining a better understanding of each other's intentions.

- Dissemination of best practices;
- Private Access Program;
- Work on the problem of rent collection;
- Community credibility;
- Work on the problem of interference;
- Policies cannot be changed each time. Adaptation period for elected officials;
- Work on the creation of housing-related training for the politicians;
- Distinctions between youth and elders;
- Teamwork between communities - elected officials, managers, directors;
- RL-31 Slip;
- Increase support for the construction of new houses;
- Exodus of young people due to lack of space - Return to the community in 15 years (what would be the solutions?);
- Baby boomers - traditional housing vs new generation (subdivision);
- Work towards adopting common visions, difficult but necessary (present ideas to the Council).





Culture of collaboration within the CoPH

HOW TO BETTER COMMUNICATE:

Communication is essential to cultivate authentic, respectful and productive relationships. Through exercises and conversations, the participants were invited to identify what they believe to be the best practices to improve communication.

- Acceptance;
- Sharing;
- Listen-be heard;
- Inform;
- Believe in people who have experience;
- Understand;
- Respond;
- Mutual respect;
- Openness;
- Encourage;
- Responsible for what must be carried out;
- Self-change;
- Be ready to change oneself!
- Quality of the interaction;
- Dare!





Culture of collaboration within the CoPH

ETHICS

In the same way as communication, ethics are at the core of positive human relationships. The importance of following ethical rules having been identified during previous discussions, the CoPH presented to the participants its vision of principles that could guide the relationships between community stakeholders. While the preparation of a typical code of ethics was explored by the CoPH's creation committee, the use of Aboriginal traditional principles was identified as more comprehensive and better adapted to the culture fostered by the community of practice. The application of these principles will doubtlessly have to be clarified during the course of its implementation.

Although these principles were not discussed during the participatory event, the Seven Grand Father Teachings serve as a code of ethics within the use of the CoPH. The list of teachings is found in the appendix.

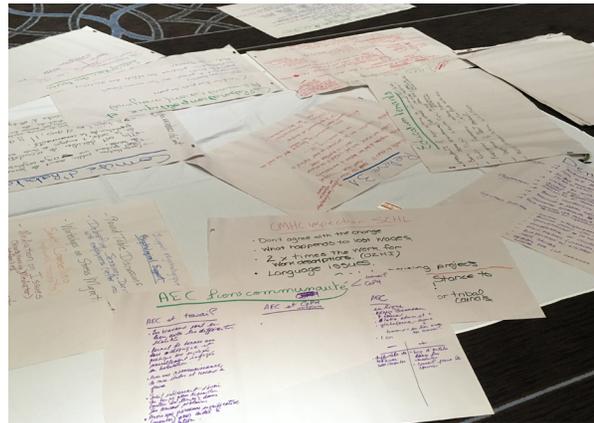


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Open Space

OPEN SPACE

The *Open Space* is a method used when one wishes to build on the group's power in order to meet its present challenges, particularly when it consists of a heterogenous group with divergent interests and skills. This methodology allows highlighting the contribution and innovative genius of each person when the evolving context requires important changes, when we have to reorganize our activities, when there is a crisis to be resolved, when we want to break the silos within an organization, or when our community needs to develop solutions for the future.



Gathered around a central issue, the group is informed of all the existing parameters (constraints, resources, etc.). Space is then open to all those who wish to propose a workshop topic. During the *Open Space*, individuals are free to choose the workshop in which they wish to most participate, thus bringing a sustained enthusiasm to the conversations in which they are taking part. This method allows for engagement and commitment around an issue within a very short period of time.



Open Space

Harvesting the conversations

HOUSING DENSIFICATION

What are the advantages and disadvantages of housing densification within the community?
What reasons motivate your community to choose densification?

Participants harvest:

- Why?

- Sustainable development;
- Boundaries of the current reserves (reserve=complicated to expand);
- People would like to leave the reserve but cannot (Indian Act). (loss of rights);
- Control of costs (construction, energy, infrastructure, etc.);
- Wish to be tenants or owners of their housing unit (condo)
- A need for professional resources (health, education);
- Difficult terrain (swamp, rock, etc.).

- Issues

- Noise, vandalism;
- Many young households;
- Different training from one community to the next (not everyone at the same stage);
- To expand a reserve (the only possibility is to build housing).

- Possible solutions

- Intergenerational houses (properly separate the families);
- Garden pavilion (not always the solution depending on the community);
- Home expansion;
- Cooperative or condo;
- Mini-houses (semi-detached) - on one lot (four mini-houses in Kahnawake) Gimme Shelter program;
- Quadruplex or sixplex;
- Interesting resource: Jane Jacobs;
- Separated by common lots, several houses for several families.



Open Space

Harvesting the conversations

EDUCATION FOR TENANTS

What topics would require an education for tenants in the communities? What measures has your community implemented to improve community housing and infrastructure in your community?

Participants harvest:

- Attendant of applications to financial (First Nation marketing)
- Basic home maintenance (CMHC contributes) (one on one, comes twice a year, doors (winter), maintaining humidity)
- Radio shows interventions (mold, vandalism, ventilation system)
- Emergency preparedness - teaching elders, testing smoke detectors
- Importance of rent payment
- Mold prevention workshops

RL-31 SLIP

What measures have you put in place in your community to respond to the new rules for issuing RL-31 slips? What challenges did you encounter? What solutions have you found?

Participants harvest:

- Method for issuing RL-31 slips: Clicséqure (at the Council, not used with personal information), Before-Taxes software;
- Proceed with the signature of a lease with the tenant + without tenants;
- Off-reserve students;
- Without a lease - RL-31 slip on-reserve;
- With a lease - direct owner;
- Possible training for people who issue RL-31 slips for 2017;
- The slip is issued only to the tenant and the tenant himself issues it to the subtenant (certain locations);
- Communication problems with subtenants.



Open Space

Harvesting the conversations

THE AEC IN CONNECTION WITH THE COPH

What do you think of the training? Is it relevant to the development of skills needed to properly perform your work? Do you have questions related to the ACS training and what improvements might be made? What are the specific training needs?

Participants harvest:

- The assignments are related to the various realities;
- Allows providing theoretical and practical facets to newly-hired housing employees;
- Obtain recognition of my studies and assignments to be completed;
- It would be interesting to have time to work on course assignments;
- Have a mentor to help in terms of motivation;
- The modules contain many tools, but it is difficult to find a mentor.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

The work of a housing officer involves numerous challenges at the psychological level because of the difficult situations that must be faced. What would you like to be able to share with other persons who may be experiencing similar situations? What would you like to know about the solutions they found?

Participants harvest:

- Round table discussions
- Debriefing sessions-documented with employees (after incidents)
- Workshops on stress management
- Seek counselling (employees, tenants)
- Mediation on issues (tenants, housing mediators, families)
- Massage therapist



Open Space

Harvesting the conversations

CMHC INSPECTION SCHL

How are the first inspections with OZHI Services going? What would you like to improve? In this regard, what would you like to share with the managers of other communities, tribal council employees, other housing stakeholders?

Participants harvest:

- Don't agree with the change
- What happens to lost wages?
- 2x more work for work descriptions (OZHI)
- Language issues
- Increased cost to housing projects
- Solution:
- To have a firm political stance to stop/or put a stop to it
- Training of our own people or tribal councils

HOUSING COMMITTEE

How do you use your housing committee? Recount how you set up your committee and who is part of it, what are its functions and challenges?

Participants harvest:

- Appointment of committee members by the population?
- Public consultation before closing the committee (this took place during an AGM organized by the Band Council);
- They decided to recruit a health representative, 2 social aid workers, 1 community member;
- Every 4 years, there is an election for the committee;
- Have elders, social service representatives, youth, Council member, but the Council member does not have the right to vote;
- Adopt a code of ethics for the committee.



Open Space

Harvesting the conversations

NON-PAYMENT OF RENT AND EVICTION POLICY

Some communities have established an eviction policy for tenants who do not pay their rent. What would you like to learn or share about this subject?

Participants harvest:

- Why:

- 1 year arrears;
- Yes, one has to pay, but eviction creates overcrowding and homelessness;
- Various reasons for non-payment (come and repair my house first)
- Change of mentality - to be achieved (the Council is not responsible for damages caused by the occupants;
- I've been paying for 40 years, it's paid for;
- Young people do not want to pay like their elders (low income). They established an income-detection system;
- Misplaced priorities: pick-up truck, skidoo, boat, trips, etc.).

- Solutions :

- Deadlines (ex.: Pikogan: 15 months, \$125,000 return):
- 10 days: request for a signed agreement
- 20 days: formal notice for a signed payment agreement;
- 30 days: expulsion (Régie du logement... the Council must provide authorization)
- They have a lawyer assigned to the rent payment file;
- Several communities could share the services of one specialist. Expensive at the start (\$25,000 the first, \$5,000 for each afterwards);
- Evicted persons return to the bottom of the list.

- Difficulties :

- The Council may grant a suspended expulsion or a reimbursement request.
- The housing policy must be adapted for eviction;
- Evicting elders (very difficult).



Open Space

Harvesting the conversations

COLLABORATION BETWEEN POLITICS AND ADMINISTRATION

What are the issues and challenges encountered in your community in relation to this subject? The elected officials and directors general may have a different perspective on the housing file than the housing managers. What means have you put in place or do you suggest to put in place to improve collaboration and move this sector forward? Why is collaboration important?

Participants harvest:

- Election for certain positions;
- Records of files;
- Change of administrative staff when there is a new Council;
- The population decides;
- Political awareness of the impacts of the decision;
- Portfolio holder.

ACCESS TO PROPERTY

A number of communities are working to increase the ownership ratio and to implement policies to that end. What are the challenges and successes of your community in this regard? What would you like to share about the subject?

Participants harvest:

According to Manawan: this allowed the new generation and new workers to flourish and to meet their needs; they no longer wish to be tenants. Some already have the down payment and are only waiting for the administration.

- Encourage community members to build their house...how does one do this?
- Housing policy and directional plan;
- Policy accessible on-site + housing committee: elected officials + management. Committee's role: emergencies, problems, work development and advancement;
- Attribution: List at the Council hall;
- Wish to create an attribution committee that would be managed by the administrative sector, observed by the elected officials;
- Key directions for the next 30 years;
- Five-year updates (Kawawachikamach)
- Allows planning all infrastructure, new ways of doing things, demographics.



Check-out

ALLOW A MOMENT FOR THE CLOSING

An authentic meeting has the power to change us. After having genuinely explored the topics that affect us and in which we are invested, it is essential to allow a moment to close. This moment helps us to gauge our state of mind and what we are feeling after the meeting.

More particularly, the check-out invites participants to:

- Open up to reflection following the experience;
- Take stock of where we stand, individually and collectively;
- Express what is present, here and now, after the meeting;
- Engage in action.

The check-out is a special time to explore the collective intelligence as it is a harvest of what is most significant for each of the participants after the meeting. It is a moment where, collectively, everyone can reflect on the progress made during the meeting. The check-out is also an opportunity to voice discomfort or unmet expectations, if necessary. Thus, this harvest is also a way for the process to adapt to the feedback from participants.

The check-out creates fertile ground for the next meeting. It is therefore essential to allot a privileged moment; otherwise all the conversations held during the meeting cannot become truly constructive, a source of learning.

WHAT DID I LEARN?

The purpose of the check-out question is to invite participants to explore how the meeting was able to generate new possibilities. Purposely vague, it also allows each participant to appreciate his learnings in his own manner, to give the desired importance to the aspects he has chosen as significant.



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Check-out

WHAT THE EVENT WILL HAVE GENERATED ACCORDING TO THE PARTICIPANTS

- Perception choice of brick vs choice of mortar = confidence was created;
- Politics - interference: separate the administrative sector from the political sector, work in cooperation with managers;
- Importance of governance;
- Support provided to managers by elected officials;
- Today, people want an action plan. Not only an alternation of work-unemployment...there is much hope;
- Structure programs so that employees can work with the politicians;
- Autonomy stems from solid structures with trained resources in appropriate places;
- Willingness / hope to work together to improve services;
- There are aspects to be improved in terms of the separation of administration-politics, but work is being done in that regard;
- It would be fun if we could share policies;
- We want to exchange/share;
- We have the same difficulties/problems;
- I would like things to move forward in team meetings, that it continues;

- We will try not to let go of our people. They need us but we also need others;
- Ensure that we can hold discussions (ethics);
- CoPH = wonderful vehicle;
- Political intervention must be well-understood;
- ACS. Short program, support from elected officials/politicians;
- Believe in numerous training projects;
- There is much work to be accomplished together, there is a lot of experience, and beyond training, we can capitalize on the conversations.





A growing community thirsty for action

Analysis

CULTURE

The more the CoPH project advances, the more it becomes clear that the most compelling impact of the project is the new culture of interaction that it generates. Beyond the “importance of collaborating”, the project enabled the creation of genuine human relationships. These relationships often bear fruit beyond the events, and even beyond the Workplace web platform. The desire to collaborate is palpable, as is the will to share and to be heard. One thing is obvious: the communities possess a lot of experience, knowledge, solutions, learnings to share. They also have many challenges, issues, needs, and desire to be heard. For many, the communities can be the best support. The desire to work together is gradually shared, and potentially, the culture through which projects can be carried out.

EXPANSION

The CoPH event helped both to consolidate the development of the community of practice and to ensure its growth. The community of practice is growing in terms of numbers as well as in terms of the diversity of stakeholders and communities represented: it now involves 7 nations and more than 80 persons registered with the Workplace platform.

It is also important to underline that this was the first event to bring together political actors and directors, an experience particularly appreciated by the participants. The choice of inviting other actors who are involved in the advancement of First Nations housing stems from the awareness that better collaboration needs to be developed between the housing managers and the latter. The conversations about political interference in housing demonstrate the need for greater clarity regarding the alignment of these spheres. The conversations generated during the event and beyond will help advance the idea of greater collaboration between stakeholders. The integration of political and administrative actors within the project will have to be the focus of further conversations since the community of practice originally targeted housing managers only. The opportunity to widen collaboration and the need to protect the trusting relationships that have already developed within the community must also be discussed.



A growing community thirsty for action

Analysis

SPECIAL LEARNINGS

- **IN-PERSON MEETINGS**

In driving the cultural change proposed by the CoPH, it appears that in-person meetings are needed to truly develop interpersonal ties, trust and authentic and creative conversations. While these events are very successful in terms of enthusiasm and positive energy, it is not always at these times that the benefits of the CoPH project can be observed. Many of these benefits take the shape of e-mail conversations afterwards, stakeholder meetings, telephone discussions. In addition, as the Workplace platform is still fairly new, many of the discussions will not take place on the platform at this time. As much as the use of the platform is desirable for many reasons, it is as necessary to understand that all the discussions generated, no matter the medium, represent a significant advancement in the project.

- **BILINGUALISM, A FORCE**

Since the beginning of the CoPH project, representation of the communities in their culture and in their language of preference (French or English), when it is not possible in their own language without causing too many constraints, is of

major importance. The holding of bilingual events was prototyped at the outset of the project and the learning from these experiences succeeded in creating bilingual participatory events free from the constraint of simultaneous translation. The participants said they greatly appreciate the dynamic, conversational, engaging character of the events, despite the language differences. A balance seems to exist in the holding of bilingual events, supported by individual responsibility and occasional help from dedicated translators in smaller conversations. While the CoPH initially questioned the use of simultaneous translation, it now seems obvious that the events benefit from being free from the constraint of simultaneous translation when the conditions allow it.

- **SHARING, AND TOOLS TO BE CREATED**

During the events, many conversations mentioned the desire to share resources. It is increasingly clear that a means to share files by internet would be a welcomed addition to the project: a library of files such as policies, plans, technical sheets, accessible through the Workplace platform, would have to be developed.

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A growing community thirsty for action

Analysis

FOLLOW-UP

The CoPH event of March 27th and 28th was a great success based on the progress that it generated, both in terms of the variety of actors, the deepening of the culture of collaboration, the opening of new conversations, the creation of new relationships. Important understandings now appear:

- Importance of generating in-person meetings;
- Potential of expanding collaboration to include other actors involved in housing (political, administrative, etc.);
- The force to preserve the apolitical nature of the project in order to create trust and authenticity;
- Expectations and the desire for action by the CoPH participants;
- A link to be continually strengthened with the Attestation of Collegial Studies in First Nations Housing Management (and the development of other means of adapted training).

Along with these understandings, an awareness exists of the need to continue the project in a sustained manner and to preserve its primary strength: its culture. From its inception, the CoPH was developed in pursuit of its own intention to contribute to an improved quality of life in the communities. While the project continues to grow at an appropriate pace and many expectations are taking shape, it will be necessary to proceed in a concerted, open, transparent and culturally-strong manner in order to stay focused on this intention in an inclusive and anchored way.



Appendix

THE SEVEN GRAND FATHER TEACHINGS

Humility : Humility is represented by the wolf. For the wolf, life is lived for his pack and the ultimate shame is to be outcast.

Humility is to know that you are a sacred part of creation.

Live life selflessly and not selfishly. Respect your place and carry your pride with your people and praise the accomplishments of all. Do not become arrogant and self-important. Find balance in within yourself and all living things.

Honesty : Honesty is represented by either the raven or the sabel. They both understand who they are how to walk in their life. «Sabel reminds us to be ourselves and not someone we are not. An honest person is said to walk tall like Kitchi-Sabel... Like Kitchi-Sabel, Raven accepts himself and knows how to use his gift. He does not seek the power, speed or beauty of others. He uses what he has been given to survive and thrive. So must you.» The Seven Sacred Teachings of White Buffalo Calf Woman, by: David Bouchard & Dr. Joseph Martin.

To walk through life with integrity is to know honesty.

Be honest with yourself. Recognize and accept who you are. Accept and use the gifts you have been given. Do not seek to deceive yourself or others.

Bravery : Bravery is represented by the bear. The mother bear has the courage and strength to face her fears and challenges while protecting her young. The bear also shows us how to live a balanced life with rest, survival and play.

To face life with courage is to know bravery.

Find your inner strength to face the difficulties of life and the courage to be yourself. Defend what you believe in and what is right for your community, family and self. Make positive choices and have conviction in your decisions. Face your fears to allow yourself to live your life.

Wisdom : The beaver represents wisdom because he uses his natural gift wisely for his survival. The beaver also alters his environment in an environmentally friendly and sustainable way for the benefit of his family.

To cherish knowledge is to know wisdom.



Appendix

Use your inherent gifts wisely and live your life by them. Recognize your differences and those of others in a kind and respectful way. Continuously observe the life of all things around you. Listen with clarity and a sound mind. Respect your own limitations and those of all of your surroundings. Allow yourself to learn and live by your wisdom.

Respect : Respect is represented by the buffalo. The buffalo gives every part of his being to sustain the human way living, not because he is of less value, but because he respects the balance and needs of others.

To honour all creation is to have respect.

Live honourably in teachings and in your actions towards all things. Do not waste and be mindful of the balance of all living things. Share and give away what you do not need. Treat others the way you would like to be treated. Do not be hurtful to yourself or others.

Truth: Truth is represented by the turtle as he was here during creation of Earth and carries the teachings of life on his back. The turtle lives life in a slow and meticulous manner, because he understands the importance of both the journey and the destination.

Truth is to know all of these things.

Apply faith and trust in your teachings. Show honour and sincerity in all that you say and do. Understand your place in this life and apply that understanding in the way that you walk. Be true to yourself and all other things.

Love: The eagle that represents love because he has the strength to carry all the teachings. The eagle has the ability to fly highest and closest to the creator and also has the sight to see all the ways of being from great distances. The Eagle's teaching of love can be found in the core of all teachings, therefore an eagle feather is considered the highest honour and a sacred gift.

To know love is to know peace.

View your inner-self from the perspective of all teachings. This is to know love and to love yourself truly. Then you will be at peace with yourself, the balance of life, all things and also with the creator.

Source: ojibweresources.weebly.com



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