

MUSGAMAKW DZAWADA'ENUXW FIRST NATION
TRADITIONAL LAWS & VALUES

1. Spirituality – That the DFN recognize that there is a 'higher power.'

The Dzewada'enuxw demonstrated this through the following;

- Prayer songs
- Using hemlock / bathing in the river
- Speaking to the four directions (?)
- Praying for all that you received – common practice for example to give thanks for the cedar bark that you took from the tree, or the fish / animals from the land.
- Having cleansing ceremonies/

Values that emerge from this belief are the following;

- Faith- know that Life has purpose – we are created with Love - we are open to miracles. We know without having to see!
- Love – 'our greatest GIFT' – the center of who we are – a Life force that gives us energy and direction.
- Hope – Optimism in the face of adversity! – 'with HOPE, we find the confidence to try and try again.
- Reverence – Life is precious and we live in the presence of our Creator.
- Prayerfulness – 'a relationship with a power greater than ourselves'

2. RESPECT – That the Dzewada'enuxw believes in 'respecting all of creation'.

This is the second LAW, it is a law that recognizes in respecting all of creation, we understand our interdependence of all creation. This was demonstrated by;

- Respect for the animal kingdom,
- Respect for the water kingdom

- Respect for all people (all races, all ages)
- Respect for the land/ all that was on it (plants, medicines)
- Respect for the air / 'the breathe of Life'.
- They consistently demonstrated that respect through the Potlatch system.
- Today that respect doesn't show itself as well eg bears, garbage we allow in our village etc.

Values that emerge from this belief is;

- Caring – for all of creation / for one another / for when an animal gets hurt / 'it takes a community to raise a child'
- Dignity – ' a sense of worthiness and respect' – 'when we value each other, we honor our Creator'
- Moderation – we do things 'in balance, in moderation' – We take only what we need.
- Sharing / Generosity – we help each other, we share what we have – ' a quality of Spirit that calls us to share what we have.'

3. Relationships – The third LAW is to understand the importance of relationships. We must respect creating relationships with all of creation. All of creation can do without MAN, but MAN cannot do without creation. We demonstrate the importance of relationships by;

- A deep commitment to knowing family, extended family.
- A deep commitment to our relationships to other First Nations.
- An incredible understanding and memory of how people are related, even generations gone by.
- Through Potlatch system FN were consistent in demonstrating the importance of human relationships, relationships to the animal & water kingdom, to mother earth, air, fire and all of creation. The dances, songs and ceremonies spoke to that relationship.

Values emerging from this LAW is the following;

- Unity – ‘ brings people together’, experiencing of our connectedness with all people and all of life. It shows ‘strength’ as a people/ brings us together in adversity. Eg Res school if you knew someone – you protected them because they were part of you.
- Cooperation – to work together for the good of All. Together we accomplish greater things.
- Service – “To be of service’ – is one of our greatest values / our Gift. – We don’t wait to be asked – we just do.
- Understanding – we value our ability to ‘understand’ the other person’s point of view – Nunwakola. We are mindful / we are deeply present/ “We don’t have to be right – we just want things to be right”.

The SELF – The 4th Law is the importance of SELF (I AM – Nu-gwa’um). To be whole mentally, physically, spiritually and emotionally. To be able to say Nu qua’um _____, is to be able to say I am a whole human being, a person worthy or recognition, a person worthy of being able “To Give Of Self”. You cannot give what you don’t have. More importantly it was understood that a strong individual will lead to a strong family, a strong community and a strong Nation.

We recognize the importance of SELF by:

- Baby naming ceremony / welcoming a baby to our world
- Coming of Age Ceremonies
- Giving names, songs & dances
- Watching children to look at their strengths / where will they fit in this world?
- Letting children know we care, we will keep them safe, we will make certain that they reach their full potential.
- Teaching daily the laws and values so that they walk a good path

Values emerging from this law

- Self-esteem
- Self-determination (I can do it!)
- Self- help (I can get help / I can be helpful-volunteerism)
- Self-identity (I know who I am, I know where I come from, I know what I stand for).
- Self-worth – I stand for eg. honesty / pride in myself, my family, my people, self-reliance, I am educated in both worlds.

The ‘most awesome destruction known to man’ is what?

When we move towards ‘taking our own life’. The ‘breath of Life is a Gift from our Creator’ and only our Creator can take that breath away! So Suicide is not an option for our people – so we must deal with this issue sooner, rather than later. It must be taught to our children today, this is a priority!