

Press Release

Bringing the 7 Sacred Laws to all Manitobans

WINNIPEG, June 3, 2021 - This June, as we recognize National Indigenous History Month, our hearts and minds are heavy with the grief of the 215 children, as well as all survivors of residential schools, their families, and the countless children who never returned home. It is in times like these that we must look to the Elders to share their teachings, and their knowledge, as it is on each of us to ensure these lessons carry into the future, to ensure these tragedies are never forgotten, or repeated.

In partnership with The Turtle Lodge International Centre for Indigenous Education and Wellness in Sagkeeng First Nation and IG Wealth Management, Manitoba 150 is honoured to present a series of short animated films on the Seven Sacred Laws. The vignettes will be released in English, French, and Anishinaabe.

Written by Anishinaabe Elder, Dr. David Courchene, directed and co-written by Indigenous filmmaker, Erica Daniels of Peguis First Nation, and created by Manitoba's Peg City Pictures Inc., the vignettes tell the stories of Indigenous Peoples in their own voices, in a format that is accessible not only for Indigenous people, but for all Manitobans.

"The true identity of the First Peoples is reflected in a foundation of laws and values we know as the Seven Sacred Laws," said Elder Dr. David Courchene. "Turtle Lodge has long wanted to do a project of this magnitude and it is through the support of IG and Manitoba 150 that this was possible."

Known to many as *Nii Gaani Aki Inini* (Leading Earth Man), Dr. Courchene is a respected Elder who has devoted himself to learning the knowledge and traditions of Indigenous people.

The vignettes follow an Indigenous boy on his vision quest, growing, thriving, and gaining wisdom. On his spiritual journey, he meets seven sacred animals who teach him how we as people should live our lives on Mother Earth, including:

- **Grandfather Buffalo**, who brings the law of *Respect*: "respect for all life, the land, our Elders, and people of all colours";
- **Grandfather Eagle**, who carries the law of *Love* - "love for the land, yourself, all life on earth, and the Great Spirit";
- **Grandfather Bear**, who delivers the law of *Courage* - "courage to always do the right thing and to have the strength to resist something you know isn't right";
- **Grandfather Sabé** (a creature similar to Bigfoot), who introduces the teaching of *Honesty* - "to speak the truth, stay true to our values, and speak from the heart";
- **Grandfather Beaver**, who reveals the law of *Wisdom* - "use your gift to build a peaceful world. You will be happiest when you use your gift";
- **Grandfather Wolf**, who conveys the law of *Humility* - "think of others before you think of yourself";
- **Grandmother Turtle**, who brings the law of *Truth* - "to know truth is to live and walk with all seven sacred laws ... then there will be peace".

"We recognize the rich history and the powerful contributions to this land," said Monique LaCoste and Stuart Murray, Co-Chairs of the Manitoba 150 Host Committee. "We are grateful for the opportunity, along with Turtle Lodge International Centre for Indigenous Education and Wellness and IG Wealth

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Management, to document these valuable teachings and allow them to be shared with all people of all cultures.”

“This is a unique opportunity for all Manitobans to learn about these important teachings through the voices of Indigenous peoples,” said Cathy Cox, Manitoba Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage. “The Seven Sacred Laws have understandings we all can benefit from in our daily lives.”

Manitoba 150 is grateful to Elder Courchene and Turtle Lodge for their commitment to fostering education and engagement opportunities around reconciliation. We hope these teachings and their knowledge help us all feel closer to the amazing Indigenous culture in our province, and open our hearts to deeper understanding on the road to reconciliation. To view the Seven Sacred Laws Vignettes, please visit manitoba150.com or turtlelodge.org.

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About the Manitoba 150 Host Committee

The year 2020 marks 150 years since Manitoba became Canada’s fifth province, the only province to enter Confederation under Indigenous leadership. The Manitoba 150 Host Committee Inc. (Manitoba 150) is an independent, not-for-profit organization overseeing commemorative activities in celebration of our province, its beauty, people, culture, and history throughout 2020.

Manitoba 150 supports initiatives and events that cultivate pride in our province, foster a profound connection with our diverse cultures and, above all, unite us in celebration.

Additional information on Manitoba 150 can be found at www.Manitoba150.com.

About Turtle Lodge International Centre for Indigenous Education and Wellness

In 2002, Anishinaabe Elder Dr. David Courchene (*Nii Gaani Aki Inini*) created a sacred lodge of Indigenous knowledge and healing known as the Turtle Lodge International Centre for Indigenous Education and Wellness. It is situated in his home community of Sagkeeng First Nation on the southern tip of Lake Winnipeg.

The Turtle Lodge is internationally recognized as a place for sharing universal and ancient knowledge, reconnecting to earth and nature, and sharing among people of all races. Dave’s vision for the lodge is to honour the traditional knowledge of the First Peoples of these lands and bring healing and peace to the world.

At the foundation of the Turtle Lodge’s teachings are the 7 Sacred Laws, represented by 7 sacred animals. Each of these animals offers a special gift and understanding of how we as people should live our lives on Mother Earth. The 7 sacred animals are the Buffalo (Respect), the Eagle (Love), the Bear (Courage), the Sabé or Bigfoot (Honesty), the Beaver (Wisdom), the Wolf (Humility) and the Turtle (Truth).

More information on the Turtle Lodge can be found at theturtlelodge.org or turtlelodge@mts.net.

For more information (media only), please contact:

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