

# Indigenous Wellbeing in the Times of COVID-19

INTRODUCTION FROM OUR MATRIARCHS:  
Anishinaabe & Haudenosaunee  
Grandmother Wisdom

WCH CWP  
INDIGENOUS  
HEALTH

# BANAKONDA

## Kennedy Kish (Bell)



### Reflecting on the First Fire Prophecy

“I hold dearly the beautiful Vision that is woven into the framework of our belief in spirit at the Centre of all life. The belief that we are all related, connected in a quest, a desire for wholeness. A wholeness embodied within a way of seeing, relating, knowing and behaving that embodies a vision of wellness and a belief in healing.

The First Fire of the Anishinaabe **Seven Fires Prophecies** tells us about a time when the Anishinaabe people were in great danger. This prophecy told the people to find strength in the teachings and traditions and compelled them to rise and move from the Eastern ocean shores of Turtle Island, and turn inland for safety and security. What a powerful, spirit directed journey our ancestors embarked on!

When I reflect on these prophecies, I am so grateful for the insights and instructions that remain there for us now. There are important teachings for today, for the challenges before us. The remembering of this “call to action” from long ago—asked our ancestors to move away from their homeland and travel great distances into unknown territory.



We are now called to action again, to turn inward to our own personal landscape, our own lodges, our teachings and medicines. It is essential for us to **take up this course of action on behalf of ourselves and all our relations in the Four Directions**. We need to take care of each other by continuing to follow the recommendations; stay home, **practice appropriate physical distancing**, and be vigilant around **disinfecting** and **general hygiene**.

We know our ancestors were thinking of the Seven Generations to come when they made that great challenging journey. We are the generations that they were thinking of, as they persevered, carried their bundles and cared for one another. They lived out their lives with creation, careful to take up their place, taking only what they needed, practicing reciprocity.

We are practicing reciprocity, guided by the beautiful gifts of kind honest sharing and respect when we take up this call to action. These are the values and beliefs in the sacredness of life, inherent in our blood memory. Now, like then, we need to move away from the comfort of the known and familiar.

**Like our Ancestors, we rise to the challenges, striving to protect life for ourselves and for those yet to come, as was done for us.”**

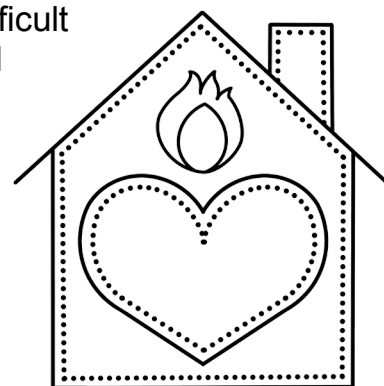
# KAHONTAKWAS

## Diane Longboat



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• **Skennen–Peace**  
• **Kasehstenhsera—Power**  
• **Kanikonhri:yo—Good Mind**  
•

“It is in the most challenging times of life that we find our true values and self-reflect on our true character. We are now witness to the fulfilment of prophecy foretold by ancient ones of our Nations. Change has come to humanity on a global scale. And yet, Turtle Island is the place where peace lives. As Onkwehonwe people, our spiritual leaders teach us that we are spiritually protected in our homelands. We find ourselves living in the times of the fulfillment of our prophecies and we see the evidence daily. As these difficult days pass, we will thrive again. We are fortunate enough to be witness to the changes coming to humanity all over the world.



• While the teachings of our Nations across Turtle Island foretold of this illness, they also gave instructions to strengthen us. The Seers and the gifted ones warned us in 2012 that a great sickness would come that would affect the lungs of the people. Medicines were spoken of to prepare the body and ceremonies offered to ensure that respected the interconnectedness of our spirits to all elements of well-being. We were reminded to take care of our emotional (heart) and mental (mind) well-being. It was prophesied that we would come under great stress during this great sickness.

• The time is now for all Onkwehonwe people across our homelands to share the medicines

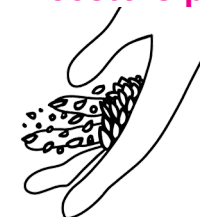
of our Traditional Healers for physical strength, to keep a focused daily spiritual discipline for the well-being of the mind and our emotions, and to maintain faith in the Creator holding infinite power.

Spiritual leaders, Chiefs, Clan Mothers and Faith Keepers are at the forefront at this time to **guide the people** when many are experiencing fear, loss, death and dying, and they help us through the immense change that is causing much global disruption in families and communities.

**Ceremonies from across our Nations have been offered throughout March and April 2020. Many will continue to be shared virtually—in ways where safety, physical distancing, self-isolation, or quarantining is required.** This continues to be done to renew medicine societies and to virtually gather whole communities to pray together at specific times. Sacred Fires have been lit throughout our homelands, healing dances and healing songs have been sent with prayers throughout Turtle Island.

The wisdom and the directions from Traditional Healers, Medicine Society Leaders, Knowledge Keepers, Elders and Oral Historians are clear: **return to the land in safe, central-family, physically distant and individual-centered ways, take care of our Elders, youth, children and babies, those at greater risk, gather the medicines, and keep the ceremonies going daily.**

**Believe in the infinite power of the Creator! Be strong and make our Ancestors proud!”**





# ANISHINAABE & HAUDENOSAUNEE

## Grandmother Wisdom

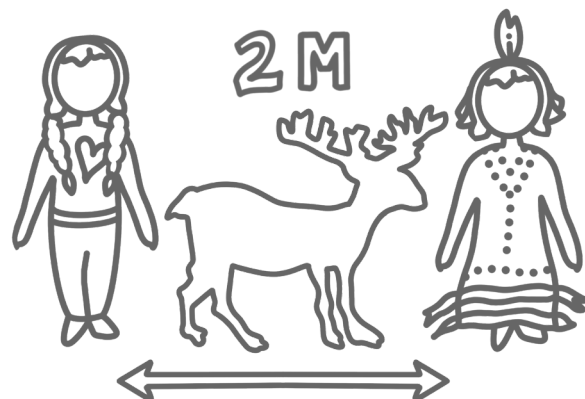
Our cultural values are embedded in our spirits and direct us to help one another, share unconditionally, uplift the hearts of each other and give as needed.

Take time now to reflect:

What do you most cherish?

Where will you draw your strength?

How can we remain connected within our families, and our communities while not being physically together?



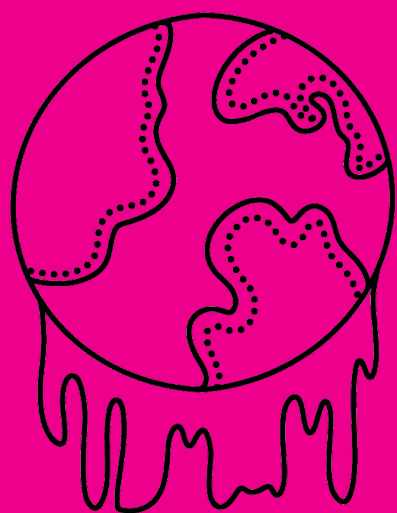
How can we take care of our spiritual well-being, honour our cultural protocols and care for one another?

How can we survive deep economic impact, where all precarious conditions are now heightened?

What is our understanding of the social determinants of health?

How are we acknowledging that healthcare and societal recommendations—and access to culturally safe care—do not all apply for marginalized peoples, whether living in urban or remote settings?

Receive the wisdom of your ancestors and present-day ceremonial leaders. Feel, and experience this encouragement, we are here. Be informed by the guidance and understanding that is there, as it always has been. What are we learning?

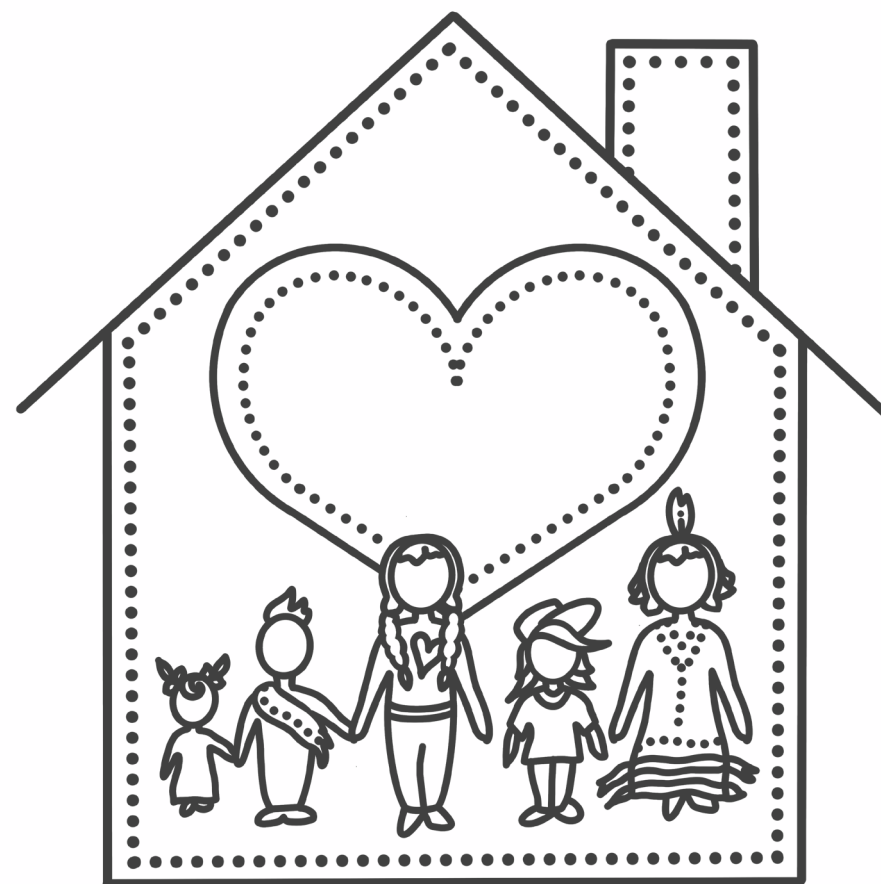


That our Ancestors foretold of these times when our ways of defiling our First Mother would come back to challenge humanity and that she would rebalance herself.

That we have the Spirit of our Ancestors standing behind us, we have each other, and we have this great responsibility right now before us, which is to care for our children and our children's children.

That following ethical spiritual law is demanded of all global citizens: as [First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples and communities](#) who already live in precarious conditions, we [MUST](#) be cared for in accordance with our own governance systems.

That great patience, [creativity, collaboration, innovation](#) and kind honesty are to be upheld as skills/characteristics to value as we move through the changes of isolation and [follow the guidance of our doctors](#).



That this is a time to slow down: Nation-to-Nation,  
and without borders.

Family ❖❖❖ Community ❖❖❖ Heart ❖❖❖ Centered

That while a virus does not discriminate on social status,  
wealth, geography, race or faith, Indigenous communities (urban  
or remote) are at a higher risk so we must help one another in  
safe ways. One model does not suit all.

That despite the overwhelming socio-economic and healthcare  
disparities our communities face, we are fortunate enough to  
bear witness to the changes in the minds of the people.  
That old systems will meet new systems based on spiritual  
law and the natural laws of Mother Earth will guide the future  
for humanity.

May our actions  
mirror our understanding  
and respect for humanity.



That the diversity in our ancestral teachings will be harnessed by  
our Spiritual Leaders as they show us the way forward. **Our diversity is  
sophisticated and sacred**, this is no time for division or competition.

That we can do this together, in prayer, in ceremony and in social  
connections by phone, email, video conferencing apps, and all other  
virtual/digital means we have available to us, **as we respond to the call to  
safety to the life of ourselves and each other.**

# EBOOK RESOURCES

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- ▶ *7 Fires Prophecy*, Chi Manidoo
- ▶ *COVID-19 Fact Sheet for Indigenous Communities*, Morning Star Lodge
- ▶ Siksika Health Services Message
- ▶ *Guide to Physical Distancing*, Morning Star Lodge
- ▶ *Clean And Disinfect Surfaces*, Kativik
- ▶ *Hand Washing Instructional Video*, Morning Star Lodge
- ▶ *COVID-19 Information Centre*, Six Nations of the Grand River
- ▶ *#ItsNotAboutYou: First Nations coming together for their elders amid COVID-19 pandemic*, CBC Indigenous
- ▶ *Traditional Indigenous Kinship Practices at Home: Being Child-Centered During the Pandemic*, Indigenous Motherhood
- ▶ *Protecting Babies and Infants During the Pandemic*, First Nations Health Authority
- ▶ *We Need Data to Protect Those Most Vulnerable to the Coronavirus*, The Star
- ▶ *DECOLONIZING COMMUNITY CARE IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19*, NDN Collective
- ▶ *Traditional Healing*, Anishnawbe Health Toronto
- ▶ *Protecting Our Home Fires*, Morning Star Lodge
- ▶ *Financial Resources*, Robson
- ▶ *Webinar on COVID-19 and Indigenous Communities*, Indigenous Climate Action Network
- ▶ *Indigenous COVID-19 Information and Resources Guide*, The Indigenous Education Network & the OISE Library, University of Toronto
- ▶ *COVID-19 Resources for Indigenous Peoples*, Indigenous Climate Action
- ▶ *Mental Wellness Continuum Model*, The Thunderbird Partnership
- ▶ *A COVID-19 Fireside Chat with Indigenous Health Professionals*, Idle No More
- ▶ *Why You Should Ignore All That Coronavirus-Inspired Productivity Pressure*, The Chronicle of Higher Education
- ▶ *Canada Is Ignoring the Gendered Impacts of COVID-19 on Indigenous Women*, Canadian Dimension
- ▶ *COVID-19 And Inuit Nunangat: Research, Responsibility & Infrastructure Inequality*, The Yellowhead Institute
- ▶ *Sharing Practices: Indigenous Communities Respond to COVID-19*
- ▶ *Highlights from A COVID-19 Fireside Chat with Indigenous Health Professionals*, The Yellowhead Institute

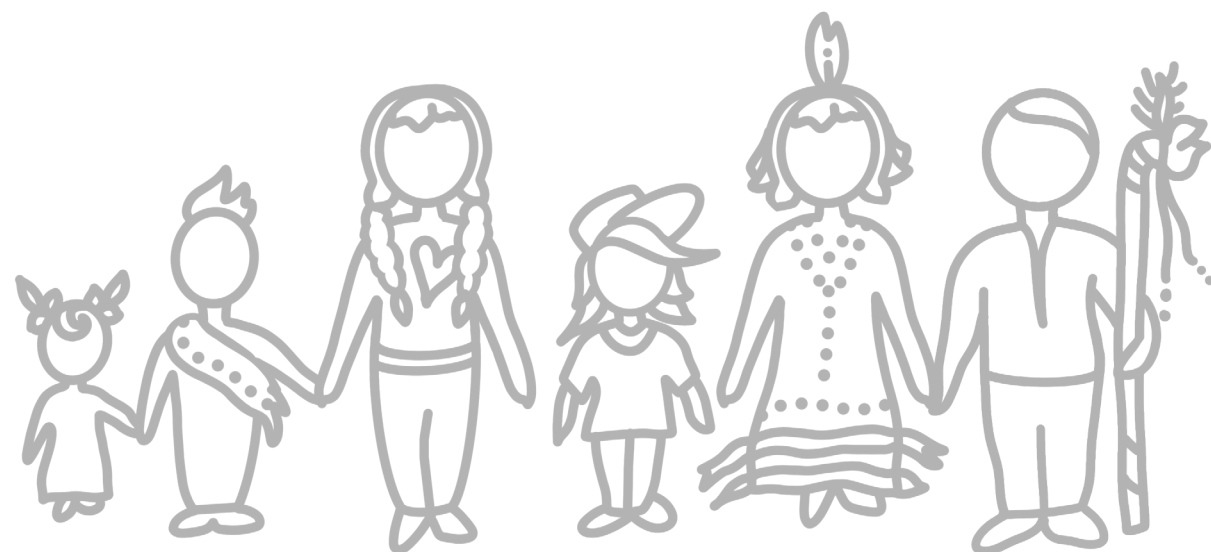
*\*The resources are listed in-order of the appearance in the EBook.*

# COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

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- ▶ Seventh Generation Midwives & Baby Bundle Project  
Call Auntie: Indigenous COVID-19 Pathways Hotline  
7 DAYS A WEEK 4-9 PM: 437-703-8703 (GTA Only)
- ▶ Aboriginal Crisis Intervention Line:  
416-531-0330
- ▶ Anishnawbe Health Mental Health Crisis Line:  
416-891-8606
- ▶ First Nations, Inuit and Métis Hope For Wellness:  
1-855-242-3310  
Online Chat: <https://www.hopeforwellness.ca/>  
*\*Available in Cree, Ojibway and Inuktitut ᐃᓄᐃᓴᓴᓴ*
- ▶ Harm Reduction (GTA)  
647-825-GEAR  
email: [outreach@pqwchc.ca](mailto:outreach@pqwchc.ca)
- ▶ Indigenous EI & CERB Assistance Line (Service Canada):  
1-877-631-2657
- ▶ Kids Help Phone: Supporting First Nations, Inuit and Métis  
1-800-668-6868
- ▶ Métis Nation of Ontario COVID-19 Support Programs:  
1-800-263-4889
- ▶ Talk 4 Healing (Indigenous Women):  
1-855-554-4325

- ▶ COVID-19: Community Guide on Accessing Additional Supports
- ▶ COVID-19 Indigenous Facebook Group
- ▶ COVID-19: National Association of Friendship Centres Resource List
- ▶ First Nations Health Authority COVID-19 Public Health Messages
- ▶ First Nations, Inuit and Métis Virtual Programming
- ▶ Two-Spirit People Responding to COVID-19
- ▶ Well Living House Urban Indigenous COVID-19 Fact Sheets
- ▶ Women's College Hospital Self Assessment Tool





# Presented by The Centre For Wise Practices in Indigenous Health, Women's College Hospital

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