



Tipi Teachings

Mihkwap Means Home

Facing East

The direction of tipis are specific for specific reasons. Generally, tipis face east toward the rising sun and facing away from the general direction our weather and winds come from. Facing a tipi in other directions carry special meanings.

Facing South

Facing a tipi south is generally only done for certain ceremonial reasons. During a fasting ceremony, a tipi faces south to welcome good things into the tipi and to keep bad things away. During most pipe ceremonies in a tipi, the tipi is faced south to release all bad energy with the smoke and only welcome good energy and intentions in.

Facing Southeast

Facing a tipi southeast is generally saved for special ceremonies honoring grandmothers, or specifically women. During a rite of passage into womanhood, the young lady reaching womanhood spends four days in the tipi alone for the most part while she transitions into a woman. During this special ceremony the tipi faces southeast to honor and welcome the grandmothers to bring special teachings to the young lady in the tipi.

Sundance

During a Sundance, all tipi doors face the center pole (Okimawahtihk) of the Sundance Lodge.

Rites of Passage

With tipi set up, there is a special rite of passage that young women go through. When they reach their first moon-time they go through the tipi teachings in setting up a tipi facing southeast to honor the grandmothers, or all women. Once set up the young woman will spend four days in the tipi alone. She will spend her entire time there as she is given special teachings throughout the four days.

Stages of Life

Tipi has specific poles with specific meanings that fall under the following four categories or stages of life.

**Each teaching is taught based on the life experience of the one teaching the tipi teachings through relating specific experiences, memories, and/or stories.*



Tipi Teachings

First 3 poles represent childhood – Foundations of Life

Pole 1 – Obedience

Pole 2 – Respect

Pole 3 – Humility

Next 3 poles represent adolescence (teens) – Learning Balance

Pole 4 – Love

Pole 5 – Happiness

Pole 6 – Faith

Next 3 poles represent adulthood – Finding Balance

Pole 7 – Family

Pole 8 – Sharing

Pole 9 – Hope

Next 3 poles represent becoming an elder – Reaching Balance

Pole 10 – Cleanliness

Pole 11 – Kinship

Pole 12 – Thankfulness

Lifting Pole

The lifting pole is lashed to the tipi and lifted last to wrap everything up in perfect balance, which represents everything coming together within us. The 13 poles honor the 13 moons of the traditional “year” cycle, one pole for each lunar cycle.

Two Control Flap Poles

There are two poles that stand separate from the others and these are the control flap poles. These poles attach to the control flaps and are used to control the smoke and heat within the tipi. These poles signify Strength, as once balance is found and the tipi is standing, the control flap poles control the heat or balance inside the tipi. When the heat or strength is high, the flaps are opened, when the heat is low or our strength is low, the control flaps are closed to build strength again.