**`Honorable Harvest**

“Our Elders remind us that we are related to everything around us: the earth, the plants and the animals. We came last. Our existence is dependent on our relatives and we must always remember to give respectful thanks when we harvest. Prior to going out to harvest, we must first have the knowledge of how to harvest without harming. We need to consult with community to make sure we are stewards of the land, and not destroying a sensitive area or denuding a community harvesting location.”

” (excerpt from SD #83 Aboriginal Education, Aboriginal Protocol for Respectful Harvesting)

**Guiding Principles to Restoring Our Relationship to the Natural World**

**Robin Wall Kimmerer, Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants**  
Author, Environmental Educator, & Plant Ecologist

**The honourable harvest is a set of guidelines which we can use to improve our relationship with the land by viewing it as kin, rather than just a resource.**This mentality is an aspect of the [‘7 Generations’](https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/seventh-generation-principle#:~:text=The%20Seventh%20Generation%20Principle%20is,seven%20generations%20into%20the%20future.) way of thinking, which emphasizes the need to think about how the actions of today will affect future generations to come. The honourable harvest can also play a role in helping us change our mindset about things like waste, energy consumption, and means of transportation.

* **Know the ways of the ones who take care of you, so that you may take care of them.**Plants can be seen as food and medicine, from that perspective, they are the ones who take care of us. Through thoughtful observation and interaction, we can learn how they function, how they can be used, and how to ensure it remains ecologically stable.
* **Introduce yourself. Ask permission before taking. Abide by the answer.**Be courteous, and respect plants and the environment as you would your own friend. Imagine walking into your friends house and eating all the food in their fridge without asking permission. It’s just rude!
* **Never take the first. Never take the last. Take only what you need.**Sometimes the first one you see might be the only one in the area. If you take the last one you see, maybe you just cleared out an entire area of a particular species. Overharvesting is a major problem for all kinds of plants and fungi (especially in heavily populated areas), if you take something, make sure it’s only what you need and can actually use.
* **Take only that which is given.**  
  Sometimes it can be a little difficult to know when something is being given. But as we start to recognize growth cycles and patterns, then it becomes more clear when a plant is ripe for the taking. This is more clear when thinking of berries, but with other harvestables such as roots, maybe the best time to harvest is in the spring or fall, when all of the nutrients have retreated underground for the winter.
* **Never take more than half. Leave some for others.  
  Harvest in a way that minimizes harm.**
* **Use it respectfully. Never waste what you have taken. Share.**

We always ensure there are plenty left behind so that the birds get their fair share. One of the best parts of harvesting from the wild is sharing with friends and family!

* **Give thanks for what you have been given.**  
  **Give a gift, in reciprocity for what you have taken.**It is suggested that we leave a strand of hair behind for every plant that we harvest from the wild. Offerings of tobacco and water are also common practice in many first nations communities.