



THE HONORABLE HARVEST

While there are no written instructions for the Honorable Harvest, the principles and guidelines of this cultural practice have been shared through **stories**. Robin Wall Kimmerer, a botanist and member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, shares her knowledge of the Honorable Harvest in her 2013 book, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, as well as through many forums and webinars. Use this sheet to learn from Kimmerer and think about how these teachings apply to your own life.

Scan the QR code to watch a segment of Robin Wall Kimmerer's 2014 speech at the forum on Ethics and Nature. In this video, Dr. Kimmerer shares her knowledge of the Honorable Harvest and the sustainable practices that can be learned from traditional Indigenous ecological knowledge. When watching this video, take some time to think about the questions below.



https://youtu.be/ZDAPis_GA_s

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How can I bring the principles of the Honorable Harvest into my daily life?
- What does "giving back in return to the Earth" mean?
- What are some ways that I can give back to the Earth?
- What gifts do I give to the Earth? What are the responsibilities associated with these gifts?
- What do you know about the importance of oral history and storytelling in Haudenosaunee culture? Why do you think that the instructions to the Honorable Harvest are not written down?



"We need the Honorable Harvest today. But like the leeks and the marten, it is an endangered species that arose in another landscape, another time, from a legacy of traditional knowledge. That ethic of reciprocity was cleared away along with the forests, the beauty of justice traded away for more stuff" (Kimmerer, 2013)



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The Honorable Harvest offers guidelines to create a **reciprocal**, sharing, relationship between humans and other living beings. The guidelines of this practice are rooted in the traditional Haudenosaunee perspective of the **Seventh Generation Principle**, which considers the long-term environmental effects of actions taken in the present. Today, it is critical that we learn from this ecological practice and consider its principles in order to honour the land and implement more sustainable practices.

SEVENTH GENERATION PRINCIPLE

"Decisions are made considering the wisdom of the ancestors of seven generations ago. Each of us is a seventh generation"

(Caduto & Bruchac)



"It's our job to see that the people coming ahead, the generations still unborn, have a world no worse than ours- and hopefully better"

Chief Oren Lyons,
Onondaga

This way of thinking reminds us that all actions have repercussions, either good or bad. With this, the Haudenosaunee, and many other Indigenous nations, place a great importance on being mindful of the effects that current actions will have on the next seven generations.

GUIDELINES AND PRACTICES

Note: An Indigenous community member should be present to help students harvest according to the tenants of the Honourable Harvest.

- Plants are living beings and are recognized as non-human persons.
- Plants have their own intentions, make their own contributions to the world, and have their own rights to life.
 - It is important to recognize the **personhood** of plant species.
 - We must remember that we are taking the lives of living beings.
- "The Honorable Harvest asks us to give back, in **reciprocity**, for what we have been given" (Kimmerer, 2013).
 - Humans are consumers, but also **givers**.
 - The Honorable Harvest "starts by asking ourselves, "what will I give in return for the gifts of the earth?" (Kimmerer, 2016).
- Introduce yourself to the plant and share with them your intentions.
- Ask for **permission** before picking a plant and listen to the answer.
- Never take the first plant that you see- look for others to make sure that you are not taking the last one.
- **Take only what you need** and leave some for others.
- **Share** what you have taken.
- **Give thanks** for what has been given to you.



ASKING PERMISSION

Before picking a plant, the Honorable Harvest tells us that it is important to introduce yourself to the plant, inform the plant of your intentions, and then ask the plant for permission.

"Asking permission shows respect for the personhood of the plant, but it is also an assessment of the well-being of the population"

(Kimmerer, 2013)

- What does it mean to assess the well-being of a plant population?
- Why do you think it is important to assess this before picking a plant?



"IF YOU ASK PERMISSION, YOU HAVE TO LISTEN TO THE ANSWER"

Kimmerer (2013) shares a few ways in which you can listen to the plants and hear their answers.

- Look to see if the plants are healthy.
- Make sure that the plants have enough to be able to share with you.
 - If there is not enough, you must not take any.
- Understand growth cycles so that you know when the plants are ready to be harvested (i.e. knowing when berries are ripe).