First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model

Living DRAFT
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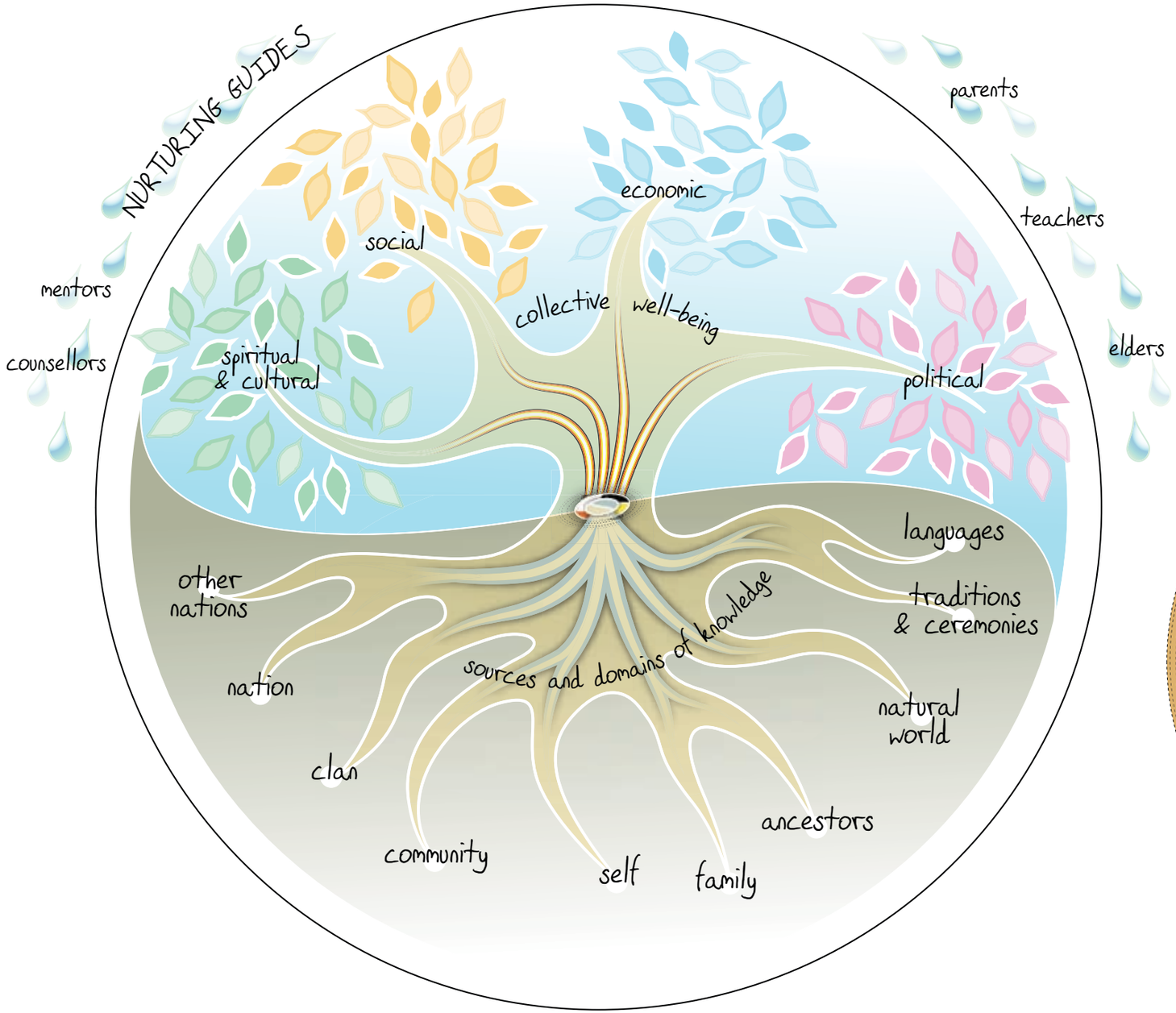

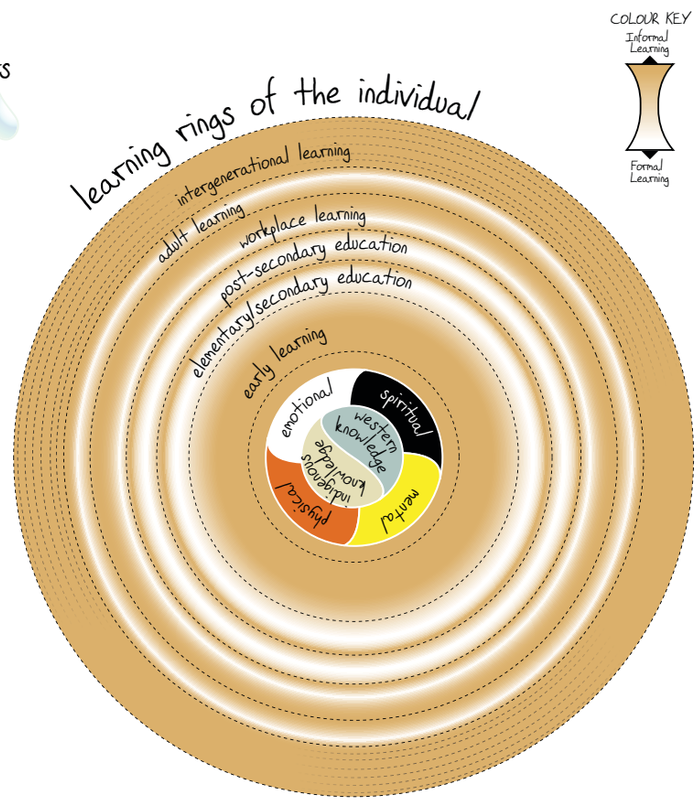

About the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model

The *First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model* represents the link between First Nations lifelong learning and community well-being, and can be used as a framework for measuring success in lifelong learning.

For First Nations people, the purpose of learning is to honour and protect the earth and ensure the longterm sustainability of life. To illustrate the organic and self regenerative nature of First Nations learning, the Holistic Lifelong Learning Model uses a stylistic graphic of a living tree. The tree depicts the cycles of learning for an individual and identifies the influences that affect individual learning and collective well-being.

The *First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model* is a result of ongoing discussions among First Nations learning professionals, community practitioners, researchers and analysts. For a complete list of individuals and organizations that have contributed to the development of this learning model, visit www.ccl-cca.ca.

Describing the Model

The First Nations learner dwells in a world of continual re-formation, where interactive cycles, rather than disconnected events, occur. In this world, nothing is simply a cause or an effect, but the expression of the interconnectedness of life. These relationships are circular, rather than linear, holistic, and cumulative rather than compartmentalized. The mode of learning for First Nations people reflects and honours this understanding.

Lifelong learning for First Nations peoples is grounded in experiences that embrace both indigenous and Western knowledge traditions, as depicted in the tree's root system, "Sources and Domains of Knowledge". Just as the tree draws nourishment through its roots, the First Nations person learns from and through the natural world, language, traditions and ceremonies, and the world of people (self, family, ancestors, clan, community, nation and other nations). Any uneven root growth can de-stabilize the learning system. The root system also depicts the intertwining presence of indigenous and Western knowledge, which forms the tree trunk's core, where learning develops.

A cross-sectional view of the trunk reveals the "Learning Rings of the Individual". At the ring's core are the four dimensions of personal development—spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental—through which learning is experienced holistically. The tree's rings portray how learning is a lifelong process that begins at birth and progresses through childhood, youth and adulthood.

Learning opportunities are available in all stages of First Nations life. They can occur in both informal and formal settings such as in the home, on the land, or in the school. The stages of learning begin with the early childhood phase and progress through elementary, secondary and post-secondary education, to adult skills training and employment. Intergenerational knowledge is transmitted to the individual from the sources within the roots.

The First Nations learner experiences the various relationships within indigenous and Western knowledge traditions through their emotional, mental, spiritual and physical dimensions. The tree's extended branches, which represent the individual's harmony and well-being, depict the development of these experiences. The individual's well-being supports the cultural, social, political and economic "Collective Well-Being", represented by the four clusters of leaves.

Just as leaves provide nourishment to the roots and support the tree's foundation, the community's collective well-being rejuvenates the individual's learning cycle. Learning guides—mentors, counsellors, parents, teachers, and Elders—provide additional support and opportunities for individuals to learn throughout their lifespan.