

Elaine tells us about the dogs and the natural laws for humans.

In the beginning of time, we were given our first instructions as humans. We were shown the natural laws of how we were to be with other beings: the four leggeds, the swimmers, the wingeds, the crawlers, the children, the Elders, our family and our friends. Each spring, the Creator showed us how to live in a good way with others.

Spring is the time when the trees start talking and giving life. The Sugar Maple tree teaches us how to be good with others. We get water from the sugar maple tree in the spring. It is called maple syrup. It reminds the people: don't forget our natural life with our relations. It reminds us about the good life and our place with animals. We are to be sweet with all of our relations, including dogs.

The natural laws teach us that dogs have always been wanted by us. They have never forgotten their place and their instructions in the natural laws. They have stayed sweet with us. They have stayed loyal to us. Dogs are our gifts and some people have forgotten this. They have become hard with dogs, not sweet. They make fun of dogs, or bully dogs. Because the humans have forgotten the sweetness of life and the sweetness of our original relations with dogs, they can be hurtful to dogs and so dogs will be unsafe with us.

When dogs are puppies they come into the world with sacredness. The natural law of feeling is already there inside each puppy. They know about the sweetness of life. We, as people, need to also remember the sweetness of life and treat all of our relations in a good way. If we remember the maple trees and what they teach us each spring, we will live in a good way with dogs again.

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Elaine Kicknosway
Elder, Swampy Cree

This story was told to Captain George Leonard by an Elder.

“Why Dogs Are Now Our Friends and Family”

Creator looked down on us and he saw that man was having trouble to live well, so he gathered spirits of the moose, the deer, the elk and the caribou. He told them to become man’s food supply, his tools, his clothing, his transportation and his shelters. He told them to give man their help. So they went and helped the humans.

He then called on the wolf. He said to him: “Now, you wolf will be my special one. You are going to be the one who speaks with man for me. You will keep the humans safe. You will watch out for the humans. You will be their helper.”

The wolf said: “No! I don’t want anything to do with man! He is selfish and wants a lot.” The Creator listened to wolf and then he made the dog. He gave the dog to man to be his helper, to keep him safe and to watch out for the humans. Man started to work with the dog and he planted food and took care of the farm animals. Dog kept watch for rodents and robbers and kept the farm animals safe. The dog got his daily meals, got to stay warm indoors, was loved and well treated by the humans.

As wolf looked on, he saw that dog was living well and he wanted to have that too. He went to the Creator and he said: “Creator, I had time to think and I would now like to be your special one for the man. I’d like to watch out for him, be at his side and talk to him for you. I will keep him safe. Will you let me do this special job?”

Creator said: “Māhingan, it is now too late! I have given that job to the dog. I asked you to be my special one, but you did not want to be with the humans. So I made another spirit for him, the dog. Because of that, you will now howl at the moon at night while you think about the lost chance you had to be with the man. You will wander about in packs but you will not be with the people.”

That is how the dog became our friend and family; he was given to us by the Creator.

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Captain George Leonard
Anishinaabeg, Manitoba

Captain George Leonard tells you how to approach a dog you don't know.

Don't interact with a dog you don't know, and if you are going to interact with a dog, make sure you get the OK and directions from the dog's owner. If he is not your dog, don't pat him. The dog may be ill, tired, or too excited to be approached by someone the dog does not know.

I have seen a kid get in the face of a dog and get bit. Sometimes children stick their hands on top of the dog's head and that can be taken as a threat by a dog. If the dog has been harmed or hit before, they become hand shy. They can be afraid of all people, and they will bite the child.

To greet a dog you do not know, stand straight and ignore the dog. Don't go to the dog—let him come to you. Then, hold out a fist, and then open your hand and let the dog smell your hand.

Kids need to stop rushing at a dog. When a dog is unstable or sick, he may react in a negative way towards the kid. It is better to let the dog come to you and then slowly address that dog. If you are scared, the dog can sense that, so be brave and don't show your fear. Some dogs are unfriendly because they have not been shown enough love or a person has harmed them. These dogs may react with aggression towards a child. The child could get hurt.

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Captain George Leonard
Anishinaabeg, Manitoba

Captain George Leonard tells us about a wise service dog named Stinky.

Stinky was one of our first service dogs trained to be a companion for the military soldiers. Her original name was Nikky but she had an unfortunate run-in with two skunks and a pile of manure, so her name was changed to Stinky. It took us a week to get her clean and a month for the stink to go away.

Stinky was in our loaner program. What that means is that when a war veteran was back from the war and having a hard time in life, maybe the soldier would need to have a service dog for up to six months to help him feel better. Perhaps the soldier was home from seeing hard things overseas in the war and we would loan Stinky to the veteran so that he could regain focus and balance in life.

Many veteran soldiers told us stories of how Stinky had helped them out and kept them feeling better. War is hard on soldiers as they may come back sad or angry from what they have seen. They may have been away from their families for a long time. They may not have someone to talk to about what they went through. The loaner dog gives them someone to take care of, to talk to and to be loved by. This is what Stinky was trained to do. She was trained to be there for soldiers who needed to heal from war.

Stinky was there for many soldiers who had seen too much in war. She was a good friend, a good companion, and she even saved some lives in her work. She had a lot of love to give. She was trained to stop actions that could hurt people. She was trained in how to calm people down. She was trained to do certain behaviours until she got someone's full attention. She was honoured by the Purina Hall of Fame in 2011 for saving six lives. She was a dog who had much wisdom. She could sense when someone was sad or when someone was not able to talk to other people. She was wise and knew how to help others.

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Captain George Leonard
Anishinaabeg, Manitoba

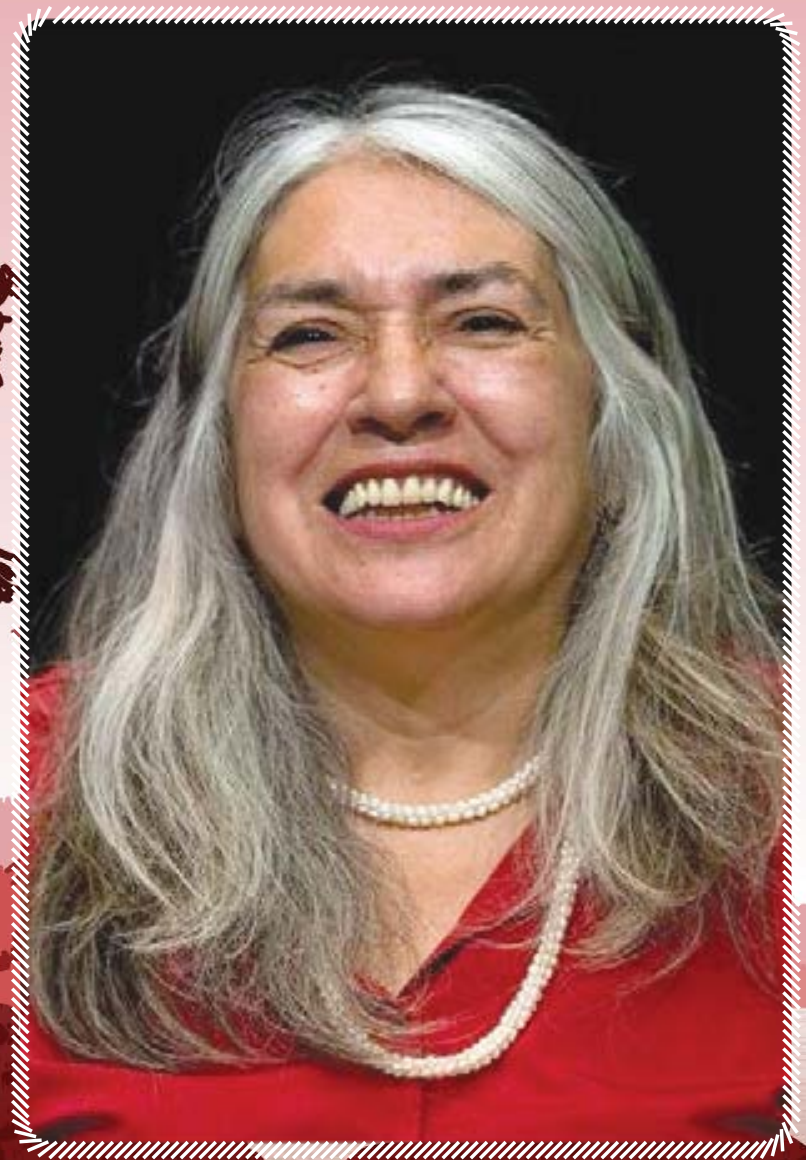
Grandmother Lee Maracle tells us about how our relation with dogs is changing.

We used to have dogs when I was a child, but we had a different kind of relation with them than most of our dogs have today. Today a dog is a pet. Many First Nations languages such as Cree and Ojibwe have no word for *pet* and the closest word in their languages is *family member*.

Most First Nations, we did not have pets, so we are still figuring out how to treat a dog who does not work for us and is a pet. Later, I will tell you about the Salish dogs we had when I was a child but now I have a dog who is a pet.

Pets need food, water, supplies like a bed, a leash and a harness and most importantly, some health care. Those are modern things and they are not part of our living vocabulary. We are still living in an oral tradition, so what we know is what is spoken about. Because the word *pet* is not in our languages, we must figure out this new relationship. I am a smart person and quite knowledgeable, but on the issue of pet care, I found that I was completely clueless. I had to go look on the Internet to find what to do with a pet when I got my granddaughter her pet dog. I learned that you have to train them, talk to them, walk them at least twice a day, play with them, keep their nails short, brush their coat, give them baths and so on. I know a lot about dogs now because we've had a pet for eleven years. Our relations with dogs are changing and we need to learn new things in order to live well with them as pets.

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Lee Maracle
Elder, Stó:lō

Grandmother Lee Maracle talks about getting ready to take care of your own dog.

My granddaughter wanted a dog and before I got her the dog, she had to show me that she was ready to take care of her dog. First, she had to do some research about the dog for a whole year. Every Friday, I would ask her questions about that research and if she did not do any of it, I knew that she was not ready for an animal just yet.

She also had to show me she was ready to do the daily work that taking care of a puppy requires. She had to do a regular chore and manage that on her own time without supervision and without fail. It did not matter what the chore was, just that it got done every day. In her case, she chose to sweep the deck and she never forgot to sweep it. She had to show us that she could be responsible enough to take care of a dog by doing that chore each day. If a child can do a daily chore and research about dogs, the child is most likely ready to take care of the dog with a parent's help.

There are things that the kids can do and there are things that they cannot do on their own. An adult will notice when the dog is sick. When we get a pet for the child, we also have a responsibility towards the pet, such as keeping her safe, giving her shelter and food, providing water and health care. We as parents have to look out for the animal. The normal day-to-day stuff can be done by the child, such as giving the dog some food and water, playing with the dog, taking her for a walk, and scooping her poop, but us parents need to help them be good to the puppy.

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Lee Maracle
Elder, Stó:lō

Grandmother Lee Maracle tells us how love and respect are important things for your dog.

You have to develop the feelings about your animal. My dad was always funny; he always taught us to take life on the lighter side of things so that is how I teach my granddaughter. I translate what the dog is saying to her: “*woof-woof*: I want to go with you,” so she thinks I can speak dog.

Now our dogs are not often working dogs like when I was a child. My dad had dogs who helped with hunting. Now our dogs are pets. Pets are like big children; they like to be cuddled and loved. Love your pet and include your pet in your family. Dogs are warm and attentive when they are loved. They become mean if they are not loved, just like kids. The animal wants to be a well-behaved friend to you, so always be kind to your puppy and he will always love you.

Grandmother Lee Maracle tells us about her dad’s dog.

My father trained our dog very well; he was not yelling at the dog ever. He had a soft voice and he had a set of tongue clicks he used to give orders to the dog. The dog would sometimes swim after the ducks my dad hunted. Our dog then, was not a pet; our dog was a hunting dog and we took him out for rabbit and grouse hunting. The dog went and fetched what my dad shot. The dog was a helper to our family. He was a good ratter as well. In those days, we had a rat problem, and the dog caught many rats. The dog was also a good protector, but he was never a pet.

When my Dad’s dog passed away, it was very emotional, and we had a burial for him because our father felt sorry for us kids because our dog was gone. The feelings I had for our dog were respect and care. These feelings were never playful feelings. You don’t play with a hunting dog or a sled dog. You respect him, and you love him but you don’t play with him; you let him work for your family.

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Lee Maracle
Elder, Stó:lō

“How the Wolf Clan Came to Be”

The original human spirit, Wanabojo who is also called Nanabush, Nenabuyo and Nenabozho was asked to go around the world by the Creator. This human spirit was to travel with Mahingan (the wolf). The wolf and the human spirit were sent on a very long trip so that they could name everything. The Creator knew it was important for some of the spirits that he had created to see and to understand all that he had made in all its richness and purity. He chose the human and the wolf to go on this trip.

The original human and the first wolf were always with each other. They never left each other on that long journey to name everything in the world. When they were finished with their tour of Creation, the Creator instructed them to be separate and to each go on their way alone.

Although they were now apart and not with each other, they had formed so close a bond that what happened to one also happened to the other. This is how the Wolf Clan got created.

When you look at the wolf and the human, we both find a partner for life. We both got pushed off our lands many times. We both had to find new places to live, as our land got crowded. We both faced those hard times, but we both found ways to get better and come back to our former strengths once again.

The Wolf Clan lives like the wolves do; they live in community and in clan groups. Dogs also like to live this way. Dogs like to live in family clans, and when a dog comes to live with us, he gives up so much of his freedom to be our helper. He doesn't ask much in return. He asks to be fed and looked after in a good way. This is how we are connected to wolves and also to dogs.

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Willy Bruce
*Elder, Ojibwe, Mi'gmaq,
Scottish*

Willy Bruce tells us about Dog Soldiers and their powwow regalia.

In the modern world, people are scared of the warriors and think they are protesters. But warriors are truly about the peace. The Ojibwe have the role of protecting the community and those in the community who cannot protect themselves. They will protect those who are too busy (moms) or those who are too weak (elders and sick people). We have to be there whenever the need comes up.

What I learned is that Dog Soldiers came from the Cheyenne nation and started after the first contacts with Europeans in around 1534. They are the first ones to arrive to the action and are the last ones to leave. At first, the intent was to have them train the youth to understand the responsibilities of looking after the community.

Dog Soldiers wear specific regalia when they dance at powwows or attend ceremonies. I wear a Dog Soldier drop on the back of my regalia that is supposed to touch the ground and I carry a stake with me when I dance. In the old days, if a Dog Soldier was told “here is where we need you to be to look after the people,” they would take their stake and attach their drop to the ground, and they would move as far as their drop allowed them to go, and they weren’t allowed to move away unless and until the grandmothers told them “we need you over here now” or “the crisis has passed.”

The Dog Soldier was seen as being the ultimate warrior because the Dog Soldier is as loyal to the community as a dog is to his or her master. We get our teachings from the animal world and even that teaching says if you’re going to look after the people, you don’t ask for much and you give your all and that is what dogs do as well for people. Dogs are loyal and don’t ask for much except to be well treated. Your dog turns back to you always and anything positive you give to the dog is returned tenfold from that dog.

At powwows today, you can still see the regalia of those who follow the Dog Soldier tradition. There are a couple of different traditional Dog Soldier headgears that we still recognize and distinctive paint patterns as well as the drop and the stake. There are a lot of things in our cultures that had to become invisible, because of the laws that banned native ceremonies. Even though those laws are no longer in effect, people say those traditions no longer exist, but the traditions still really do exist and some people still carry the teachings. The clan system is still alive; the warrior society is still alive and strong. These teachings are still out there, and it is a great feeling to know that we have not lost some of the traditions. Dog Warriors dance in the powwow and remind us of how important that dog spirit really is still today.

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Willy Bruce
*Elder, Ojibwe, Mi'gmaq,
Scottish*

Stanford Owl tells us about his job.

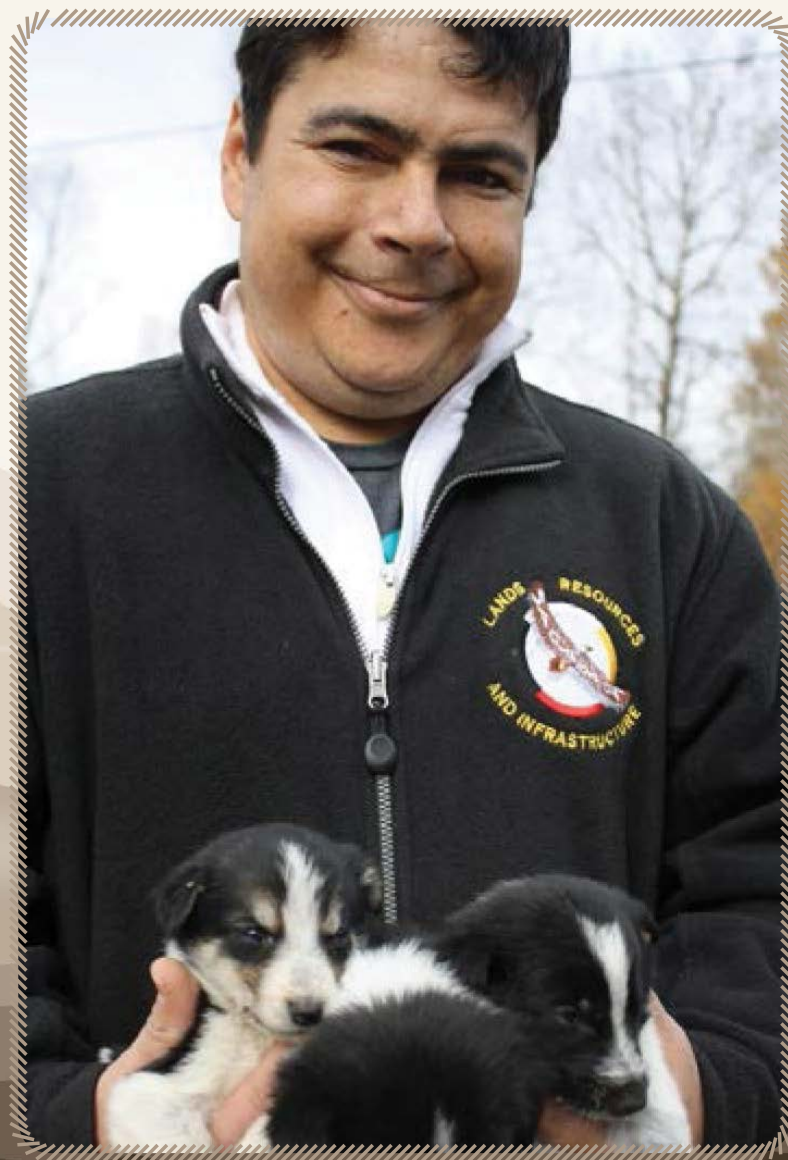
Hi, I am Stanford Owl. I am the Animal Control Officer for Sagamok First Nation. Sometimes I help people with their cats and dogs. During my day on the job, I start by patrolling the community. I drive around the whole reserve in my truck and check to see if everything is OK with the dogs. Sometimes I get called by people to help with their pets. I have space at my house to take care of dogs who are causing problems or those who are no longer wanted by a family. Some kids do come up to me and ask me if I have their dog and they describe the dog. Sometimes it is funny to hear them say: "You know he has these funny ears and his head is tilted this way." Sometimes I know where their dog is, but it is not my job to look for dogs, only to let them know if I happen to see the dog. I tell them this.

I think dogs need to be taken care of. Being on a tie all the time is not good for the animal. It is like being in jail and it is not fair to that dog. Dogs like that will bark a lot, even in the night. If a dog is tied up in your yard, he needs exercise and play so he does not get bored.

My job is not like most jobs. It is 24 hours a day and 7 days a week as I work "on-call," which means people can call me day or night. I will go help out or try to find a way to solve the dog problems.

My job is important for my community.

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Stanford Owl
Ojibwe