

The Reason the O.P.S.E.U. Aboriginal Banner Looks as it Does

The banner is in the shape of a circle, to the Native Community the Circle is very significant. The Circle symbolizes that as the Nation sits in the Circle all within the Circle are of the same height, no one taller, no one shorter in stature. No one sits in front of any other and no one sits behind another. The Circle visually reminds us that all in the community are equal in all contexts, in all forms and shapes..... no one is greater or lesser than any other within the community.

The banner is also split in half by blue on the top and green on the bottom. The Blue is that of the sky and represents the gifts we are gifted with by Our Sky Father (The Creator), the Green is that of the vegetation that makes the colour of Earth Mother's Dress. It reminds us of the fifth and sixth directions the fifth direction is Out not up to Sky Father, The Creator, the maker of all things, the giver of all gifts. The sixth direction is in not down to Earth Mother where all things come and all things will return.

The Circle shape of the banner is split in quarters by the feathers at the top, the bottom, left, and right side of the of the banner. This quartering also appears in the two medicine wheels inside the two silver circles within the banner represented by the colours white, yellow, red and black. These colours represent many things, primarily the four directions, North, East, South, and West. They also are representative of the four elements of life, the four seasons, the four races of man, the four stages of life (the good, the wondering, the responsibility and the wisdom stage of life), and the four quadrants that make us (mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual). The knowing of any one of these representations allows you to find your way, understand what is important, know when to cultivate, plant, nurture, harvest, and rest the soil, to see that we are one of many as opposed to one alone, and what it means to be in balance with yourself and all things.

There are seven different groups of seven different colours of ribbon each colour of ribbon represents one to the seven directions. Yellow represents the East Direction, a new beginning the start of the growing season Spring, Infant and Child stage of life.

Red represents the South Direction, the season of the blazing of colour, the fragrance of blooming, the season summer, a time of explosive growth and the journey of adolescence, the wandering stage of life.

Black represents the West Direction, the season of the harvest, the time of caring for your young one's to pay foreword for the support and caring you received from your care givers, the time of being a parent, a teacher a mentor, the Adult stage of life, a time of responsibility to all the community, the responsibility stage of life.

White represents the North Direction, a time of reflection, of re-discovery and discovery, a time of wisdom and the sharing of that wisdom, a time to point out all that you have experienced, a time to warn anyone and everyone of the pitfalls, cliffs and traps, the holder of this wisdom is not to stop anyone from falling in or over any or all of these obstacles (that's their job), only to point them out. This is a time to gather one's strength in reflection of a life lived, to share the benefits of these gifts with all who are in need of it. This is the season of winter a time of the cold and snow that teach to endure, prepare and reflect on all that has come before. The wisdom stage of life.

The Blue represents the fifth Direction, out not up to Sky Father the Creator, the maker of all things. The understanding is that the Creator is Sacred, therefore all that the Creator creates is Sacred, all the fins, the furs, the feathers, all the four legged, all the two legged, all the many legged, all those that live on the dress of Earth Mother, all those that live in the dress of Earth Mother, all that fly above Her, all that swim in her waters, all the plant people, the bushes, the flowers, the grains, all those we call weeds (for most of those are medicines), all the standing tall one's trees. All those that walk on two legs, four legs, or many legs, or those who's legs are rooted into Earth Mother, all those that creep, crawl, burrow, slither, swim or fly. We reach out to Sky Father to say Gitchi Miigwetch (many thanks) for all the gifts he has gifted us.

The Green represents the Sixth Direction in not down to Earth Mother. We honour our Mother for all things come form the Earth and all things return to the Earth. All our food, all our medicines, all things we need to provide our shelter, all the vistas, majesty, and the awesome beauty that fills us with

wonderment, all the scents like the wind blowing through the pines, the smell after a summer shower, the shimmer of the sun on the waters, the glimmer of the moonlight on freshly fallen snow, the indescribable beauty of the sunset and the incredible subtleness of the sunrise, the sweetness of the straw berries and the blueberries, the boundless limits of the prairies that opens our eyes and hearts to all the possibilities and opportunities, the majesty of the mountains, and the awesome power of the oceans. All of our Earth Mother is beautiful and we say Gitchi Miigwetch for all she provides us.

On the Banner the Seventh Direction is represented by Orange. This colour is a personal colour, your colour, for the Seventh direction is you. As you look inward to find who you are, what you believe in, what you will tolerate, what you won't tolerate, who you are in the dark when others as well as your Self cannot see your image and the projections you put on, you are measured by what you do, how you act, not only by what you say. You are unique, but you are similar, you are strong and but you will be weak, you are young, but you will be old, you are right, but you will be wrong, you are bright, but you will be dumb, you are complex, but you will be simple, you are well, but you will be ill, you are a participant, but you will be a spectator. The way you manage, or find your way through both sides of these things on your journey through life, this is how you will measure your Self. When you discover your Self your colour will reveal itself.

The middle of the Banner has a pair of crossed pipes. The Pipe is used for many ceremonial uses, for prayer singularly or in unity with your community. A personal pipe, your pipe is used whenever you are hurt, insulted or disrespected you are taught to take your pipe down, load your pipe with tobacco and with each pinch of tobacco you are to honour one of the seven directions and continue to add a pinch of tobacco until each direction has been honoured. Then a cap of sage is placed on top of the tobacco, this process will take about 12 to 15 minutes, all the time you are loading the pipe you are thinking about the problem presented. Then you will smoke the pipe, you do not take the smoke from your pipe into your body only your mouth, because that point in your mouth is between the head and the heart and thoughts from both mingle with the smoke while in your mouth. The smoke is released from your mouth and those thoughts become visible and that is important because many things make a lot of sense until you actually hear or see them. This process is

continued until all the tobacco is consumed by the fire in the bowl, this takes about 15 minutes depending your thoughts, all this time you are thinking about the problem. As the pipe is now smoked the ashes must be removed from the bowl and returned to the Earth again honouring each of the Seven Directions, then the pipe must be returned to it's place of honour and again this takes about 15 minutes, all the time thinking about the problem. You have taken time about 45 minutes to understand the problem presented, you have allowed yourself time to have the emotions calm, the flare of anger to ease, and the sting of pain to dissipate. You now will most likely respond to the problem rather than reacting to it.

Around the Circle are four words RESPECT, HONOUR, DIGNITY and PRIDE. To the Aboriginal Community these words are known as NAMAJI , this is the highest principle of Native Americans. Have respect for yourself, and extend it to all around you. "Never let anyone's opinion of you ever become your reality!" Conduct yourself with honour and demand honour in all those around you. "Never make a promise you don't intend to keep, and never betray the ground beneath your feet!" It living with dignity you must endeavor to do your best that you are capable of at that time, you must remember that you are not perfect, time, situation and circumstance have impacts upon us and we must come to know this. Allow yourself to know your limitations, your strengths and weaknesses and always make sure you allow for the same in others. "Respect All, Fear None!" Pride is personal and shines from within. To live with Pride is to be comfortable with most of what you do, if you are not, maybe you should be doing something else. Pride is not boastful, loud or vain. "When you have something to say, say it softly, ask the listener to turn his ear toward you, if the ear turns the heart opens!"

At the bottom of Banner is a map of Ontario and it is marked out in the seven regions O.P.S.E.U. members provides services for the people of Ontario. In the story of the banner listed above the Seven Directions were explained and the importance of each of these were outlined; let each and every member of O.P.S.E.U. look at this banner and take a piece of the teachings outlined and apply it in making us to be seen in the dark for who we are by what we do, what we believe in, what we will tolerate, and what we will not tolerate. FORWARD TOGETHER. Seven Regions, Seven Directions, coincidence? I think not, in the

Native Community there are no coincidences, all things happen for a reason!

At the top of the Banner is a stylized Thunderbird, looking over a woman and a man, this woman and man represent all those women and men of O.P.S.E.U. that provide services to Ontario. Providing a service to your community is a great honour in the Aboriginal Community. It is our responsibility and our obligation. It is our Honour.

*In Peace, To All Our Relations.
Your Aboriginal Circle.*