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On Campus Seminars:

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Aug 1-25 2007	Mathematics
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For the complete list of all GWC on campus Seminars [click here](#).

For a Face to Face with Greatness seminar in your area, [click here](#).

For a Statesmanship Seminar in your area, [click here](#).

We Now Hunt for Knowledge

By Gaylene Hatch, Adjunct Faculty

Gaylene is currently working on her Jefferson Degree at GWC. As a part of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, she has been trying to understand the educational, political and cultural traditions of her people. To further this mission, she is inviting Native American statesmen to share their knowledge with the college community. This article is the beginning of this project.

He is seated cross-legged upon a buffalo robe, the aroma of burning sweetgrass filling the room. Behind him is a backdrop of the night sky filled with stars. . . . "We once hunted for buffalo, we now hunt for knowledge. Come into my classroom," he invites us. "Leave your square buildings, and come walk to the sacred mountain. Come sit with me within the Tee-chee-ka, where we touch the ground and look out to the stars. Come learn through the Circle of Light Where the Four Winds Meet"

Joseph Chasing Horse, a member of the Lakota Nations, has spent his life in a quest to restore and revive the broken and nearly lost Lakota traditions. He speaks often of this new hunt that the People are involved in, the hunt for knowledge. He is not alone. Members from nearly all Native Nations are starting to search for the knowledge necessary to bring their people out of poverty and ignorance. The key to this

hunt seems to be in remembering the wisdom of our ancestors.

Native Americans have been misunderstood throughout history. Most textbooks refer to these nations as being “backwards, primitive and savage.” White society has not felt it could learn anything from the Native Nations except in reference to plants and animals. Some of the Native people have also bought into this attitude and continue to feel they are inferior and incapable of competing with Whites. How amazing it has been for me, as I have learned about my Native ancestry, to discover that the Native Nations actually had complex traditions in fields such as Education, Mathematics, Science and Government.

Education is a special love of mine, as I have run a private school and am currently homeschooling my children. As I read the stories of various Native people, I discovered that my ancestors used educational principles that were different from those commonly accepted today. I compiled a list of 12 principles that were part of this Native model of education. Below is a description of 4 of these principles. They represent what I believe to be the answer to the hunt for educational knowledge, not just for Native Americans, but for all people.

1. Learn from the inside out – In Western society, most education takes place from the outside in, as a teacher shares ideas and explains to the student how to think about these ideas. That goes against Native wisdom. When learning comes from the outside, there is something standing between the student and his learning. The best education – in fact the only education – is self-education. It is what takes place on the inside where no one else can see.

When Paula Underwood, an Oneida woman, was a young girl, she found her father sitting in their learning area, a spot of beaten earth on the far side of their garage. He had just finished drawing a circle in the dirt. Paula wanted to know what he was drawing, but instead of telling her, her father asked what Paula thought it might be. And so her

journey to understand the Medicine Wheel began. The answers, the definitions, the essence and the wisdom of each step around the Wheel had to come from within her. Her father would ask questions to prompt more thoughts and help move Paula along, but he would never have given her the answers. If she truly wanted to learn the Wheel, she had to name it. The knowledge had to be hers.

Another aspect of learning from the inside out is that you learn about yourself. You are responsible to understand who you are, how you learn, what your weaknesses are that might require some outside help, and what you will give back to the world. You should not wait for someone else to give you these answers. They won't. This is no one's responsibility but your own. Native youth were sent on vision quests before they were considered adults in the tribe. Only after they had found out for themselves the gifts that Creator had given to them could they tell the Elders how they would contribute to the tribe and begin on the path to life fulfillment.

2. Follow the Rule of 6 – For everything that can be perceived, create at least 6 plausible explanations. There could be more explanations, but in the act of creating 6, you move away from rigidity of thought. This helps you find patterns and subtleties that may be overlooked by others who see only one possible explanation.

For example, one day your child sits down to read a book and something inside you says there is a problem. You realize that he can't seem to get comfortable, his brow is wrinkled and every so often he lets out a long, drawn out sigh. It would be unwise to simply assume that he hates reading. That could be true, but he could also be tired, hungry, or have a headache. Maybe he's frustrated with a character in the story, maybe the light is too bright, or perhaps he really wants you to notice and come spend some time with him. You just came up with 6 explanations and you still might not have found the right

one. In fact, it might be a combination of all 6. The point is you must allow yourself to perceive many options and keep yourself open to the countless others that are possible.

3. Say everything 3 ways – When you explain something, say it 3 times in 3 different ways. Say it once for the left ear, once for the right ear and once for the heart. The first explanation is intellectual. It appeals to the logical, linear part of us, which is symbolized by our left side. The second explanation should engender images. This appeals to the visual, creative side of us, which is symbolized by the right side. The third explanation should be a mix of both. This is the explanation which bridges the two and allows both sides to work together.

To spend your life only in the left side or only in the right hampers your abilities. It is like trying to hop on only one foot to your destination. You might eventually get there, but it will be more tiring and not as fast or graceful as using both feet together. Just as using both feet allows you to walk or run to where you need to go, developing both the right and left sides allows you to reach your full potential. Say things to your children and/or students in all 3 ways. One explanation will appeal to those who are primarily strong in their logical thinking skills. The next explanation will appeal to those with strengths in creative thinking. The third will teach both types to recognize the alternate way of looking at the same situation, and exemplify how to use their whole selves in their learning.

4. Choose the most difficult route to learning – This sounds like the antithesis of inspiring learning, but it makes sense when you realize that difficult routes are often simple to find, but not always simple to master. If you can overcome a difficult situation, you will be able to excel when facing less difficult problems.

Olympic athletes understand this principle.

They train in the mountains where the air is thin and breathing is harder. That way, when the circumstances are more ideal, they find it easier to perform.

Stalking Wolf, an Apache elder, used this principle when training Tom Brown, Jr. He trained Tom to be a world-renown tracker by starting him with ants. First, Tom would herd ants onto a sheet of dark paper covered with chalk dust so that he could see what ant tracks look like. Then, after Tom knew what he was looking for, he started studying the ants and their habits in order to determine where the ants might be going or where they might have come from. After he understood ant habits, he was then able to find the telltale signs of ant tracks. Eventually Tom became quite good at finding an ant's trail. After tracking ants, finding skunk, squirrel or even robin tracks seemed quite simple. Tom was later able to use his skills to find lost children and return escaped criminals to prison. Through struggle and difficulty, it is possible for anyone to achieve excellence.

These 4 principles are only a small part of the First Nations' model of education. There is so much more that these nations have to offer, ranging from family and community forms to quantum physics and astronomy. This knowledge is available for anyone who is willing to “walk to the sacred mountain, . . . touch the ground and look out to the stars.”

My good friend, Leonard Little Finger has offered to share with the George Wythe community some of what the Lakota Nation has to offer. As an Elder of the tribe, Leonard understands much of the traditions and wisdom that have been almost forgotten. Leonard is a statesman among the Lakota and has dedicated his remaining years to preserving the Lakota language and restoring the ancient knowledge to all who are willing to hear. I invite everyone to join us on the evening of March 3 for this special event. Come be a part of our hunt for knowledge.