

Video #1 – “Inappropriate versus Appropriate Terminology”:

- Boozhoo Diinaahwehmahgahniitook, Geh Neen Anikay-Keesic Dezhahniikaaz, Maang Dodem.
- My given name is EJ Kwandibens, and I am of the Northern Woodland Anishinawbe descent, I originate from the Waahbiidaahgaah First Nation which translate to Whitesand which is located approximately 21 hours north west from the City of Toronto. I call Toronto today home.
- Today, I want to speak about the usage of certain kinds of words, the inappropriateness of certain words and terminologies used to describe Indigenous Peoples and the power and impact of these words on a People. You see sometimes you know when we have conversations amongst our colleagues, friends and social environments certain types of words and phrases are used to describe certain individuals of a demographic of people and in this case, Indigenous People.
- One of the common terms that are used that we often hear is the, “Bottom of the Totem Pole” term. A group of people that is perceived to be nothing more than bottom feeders. Right? And if we listen truly to that word or that phrase, “Bottom of the Totem Pole” It gives a negative connotation that your lesser than. And how this terminology is used to describe Indigenous People often is used during conversations to make fun of or ridicule or put down Indigenous Peoples. And so, anyone who is using this type of term and there are many other terms used to describe Indigenous Peoples, I only ask that you take a moment to pause and to reflect and to truly understand the power of your words and the impact of your words on other people or an individual.
- Often times we hear words that make reference to:
 - “...oh get over it”
 - “...I’m not apart of the Treaty signings but why do I have to take a portion or any part of responsibility to the Treaty”
 - “...Most Indigenous individuals who are Indigenous are those who are the leeches of society”
OR
 - “...why are my tax dollars going towards free housing that Indigenous People get on First Nation territories?”
- The notion that of Indigenous People especially when it relates to the MMIW movement that if you are a sex trade worker and Indigenous that you are deserving to go die or go missing”. I hear these kinds of comments often times and regardless if you are Indigenous or not, from human to human, when you hear a comment like that, its intended to achieve one goal, which is to attack the individual and its soul. And so, it requires all of us to educate ourselves to understand the history of why Indigenous People are dealing with the issues that they are dealing with. It does not help that we are living in a society that view indigenous Peoples to be lesser than.
- I hear often comments about:

- "...my tax paying dollars are going to pay for the free prescriptions and the quote and quote benefits that individuals who are Indigenous have, that we reap the rewards and the royalties from casinos or the oil fields because the oil fields happen to be on First Nation territory. And a lot of these comments that are being made often come from a place of ignorance. Come from a place of uneducated minds who do not know the history of Indigenous People. And so, if you are one person who is utilizing these terms or share the mindset of any of the comments and others that I have shared, it truly really requires you to just take a step back and reflect and look inward. The notion of having to treat one another with respect as you would want to be treated applies here. You just never know the power of one's words and the impact of one's words are on another person. Most people come from a place of ignorance or misunderstandings or hearsay, it doesn't make it right. It requires all of us in society to learn from one another, to work with one another and to understand one another. Knowing we have this understanding in our Indigenous ways of knowing and being, this term that we refer to as, "...living that good life otherwise known as *Miino Biimahdizewin*". It requires us all to work together. It requires us all to understand one another. To be respectful of one another. It requires us all to show humility, compassion and understanding for one another. We have what is referred to as the Wampum Belt, that speaks to the need for us to walk along side with the settlers, the colonizers to know that we may have differences, to know that we recognize the need to live and walk side by side by one another even though we may agree but to do so respectfully. And so, this video was intended to highlight some of the issues and the words and the phrases that some individuals use in daily practice to describe Indigenous Peoples. It does not make it right. And it definitely does not make it feel right on the receiving end when someone is sharing or using these power words to describe a people. We must be able to reflect, take a moment and be mindful of the choices of words that we use when describing people and, in this case, Indigenous People.
- We are all here in the spiritual form to have a physical experience, we must be able to acknowledge our differences and understand that we don't all have to agree with one another, but it doesn't give us permission either way to be disrespectful to one another. Meegwetch