

# THE TRIBAL LAWS OF EASTERN ALGONQUIN

## - The Children of the Light

An excerpt from "Nipissing from Brule to Booth", author Muray Leatherdale 1975.

*The following tribal laws which were supposedly those incorporated by the Eastern Algonkian Nation were probably known by the Nipissings who were a part of this large nation. The origin of these laws, or their actual use, is unknown. To what extent the Nipissings adhered to them is also unknown. At any rate I am introducing them here for the reader's interest.*

1. Condemn not a man by the hue of his flesh, the lilt of his voice or the curvature of his face, for it is within him and unseen that which can love you.
2. Look into the eyes of your child once a moon and see there for you the miracle of the Great Spirit.
3. He who knows not the love of a small child cannot know the love of the Great Spirit.
4. When you think you are a great chief and above your tribesmen go into the forest, stand before a mighty pine, then tell that pine how great a man you really are.
5. If you find fear in your heart go into the mountains, stand high on the peak, watch the storm come from the horizon, see the lightning and hear the thunder and know that all this power is small in comparison to the power of the Great Spirit with which he has to protect you.
6. When you become a wolf in the lodge of your loved ones go into the forest, find the tranquillity, there rest a while, then come home again, a man.
7. Beware of the man that smiles too soon, for does not the wolf smile just before he bites?
8. Father in your youth have time for your son and in your age your son shall have time for you.
9. In the profusion of the forest examine the small weed and note there the work of the Great Spirit.

# THE TRIBAL LAWS OF EASTERN ALGONQUIN

## - The Children of the Light

10. Sing loud in the forest and be not ashamed of your voice for the Great Spirit loves the song of the Raven, and did he not give him his?
11. Hurt not any child for they are the possessions of the Great Spirit and remain so until maturity.
12. Honour your father and your child shall honour you.
13. Make sure others are not hungry when you have sufficient for loneliness will drive you mad.
14. Remember, hate destroys the hater and the hated watches him die.
15. Mend the tribe you have defeated in war and they shall no longer be your enemies.
16. If a stranger enters your lodge, feed first his dog and by this he will know you are of a kind heart.
17. Gratitude comes from the heart and the heart cannot speak.
18. Knock not upon the lodge of another for you may frighten the children.
19. Make sure the smell of your people is a good smell to your nostrils.
20. When you take of the trees of the forest thank the Great Spirit, for they were made by him and given to you as to your need.
21. The Shaman Chief shall kill no game, for his duty is to preserve all life of the tribe and pertaining to the tribe.
22. If the Dog Soldier be commanded by the chief to take the life of another, the chief is responsible and may only do so in the defence of the tribe or the chieftainship.
23. When you walk on the land of a strange tribe, remove your moccasins in honour of this tribe for their land is their great love and the possession of their God.
24. If you wish to feel the hand of the Great Spirit stand naked in the sun.
25. Clothe yourself for warmth and not for shame.

# THE TRIBAL LAWS OF EASTERN ALGONQUIN

## - The Children of the Light

26. Love is man's greatest possession for even the beasts of the forest will return it when loaned.
27. Despise not the infirmity of your brother's mind or body or any condition of life for they may become in time your own lot.
28. When sickness or infirmity or the reverse of fortune affects us, the sincerity of friendship is found.
29. The path to the Great Spirit is as wide to the tribesman as it is to the chiefs.
30. To discover truth the mind must be sedate, seek council at the council rock.
31. In all your reason employ your mind in the search of truth.
32. The true worship of the Great Spirit is an important and reverent necessity to success.
33. Know that to be a leader and a chief you must be the servant of the least of your people.
34. Know that the Great Spirit is the light beyond the sun, who created the sun, water and earth, then with these things he created a man.
35. The eldest of the lodge is chief of the lodge and though he becomes feeble, you in time will be also.
36. If your father's bones lie in the land, you are of the land for his spirit lie with the spirits of this land.
37. It shall be the father who councils in truth with his son in matters of the flesh and mothers with their daughters. Sons belong to fathers for they were once sons, and daughters to mothers, for they were once daughters. The son raised by a mother will never become a warrior, and a daughter raised by a father shall have difficulty in the search for gentleness.
38. If your village stinks, sickness will visit your people.
39. Make no dung or water within four lengths of a man, to a river, lake or brook.

# THE TRIBAL LAWS OF EASTERN ALGONQUIN

## - The Children of the Light

40. If a man be crippled or maimed, it is the will of the Great Spirit. Never condemn the will of the Great Spirit.
41. Feed the stranger who appears at your lodge, for he is also a child of the Great Spirit.
42. Beware of the man who has no love for his dog, particularly if his dog has no love for him.
43. If you see a man unclothed in the sun, know that it is beautiful, for it is the likeness of the Great Spirit.
44. Know that flesh upon flesh is a very small part of love and that it is the completion and not the beginning.
45. Take for yourself one mate and you shall have peace in your lodge.
46. The child of the elk and the deer is owned by neither.
47. The man who touches a deer and lets it live is truly a hunter, but he who kills for the like of killing has a lack of heart and few friends.
48. If you wish to hunt for the sake of killing, hunt a man, he is your equal and can fire back the arrow.
49. Tend the wounds of your brother, for the Great Spirit made both of you in the same manner.
50. If it be necessary to punish a child, do it in such a way as to improve his strength or his mind, but lay not your hand upon him for you may damage the possession of your god, his gift you.
51. Know the success of a man by the weight of his child and the smile upon his child's face.
52. Blame no child how it came to be, for the gift of life is from the Great Spirit.
53. When the nose of your son reaches your first rib, take him into the forest, kill for him a deer; from the fore shoulders to the rear, remove one hand span by two arm lengths of

# THE TRIBAL LAWS OF EASTERN ALGONQUIN

## - The Children of the Light

leather, then from the underside remove a strip the width of your thumb long enough to circle his waist; put the warm hide between his legs and lace it through the belt, front and back. He will then know the reason for killing; Waste not the remainder of the deer.

54. Hold your head high my son for it is your father your honour. If you cannot honour your father, you will never hold your head high.
55. The evil of nudity is generally in the eye of the beholder.
56. Humility is one of the most amiable virtues one can possess.
57. The child who is solemnly fed and never injured in games of hunt, or damaged from childish play, will become like a beast of prey who destroys without pity, for the search for the knowledge of suffering.
58. Flattery made to deceive and betray, should be avoided as a rabid wolf.
59. Unhappiness is brought to those who are deaf to the calls of duty and of honour.
60. If you have only trees to view, you have many possessions.
61. They who have much given to them will have much to answer for.
62. It is not to be expected that those who in early life have been dark and deceitful should afterwards become fair and ingenuous. (sic)
63. They who have laboured to make us wise and good are the persons whom we ought to love and respect and whom we ought to be grateful to.
64. From the character of those whom you associate with, your own will be estimated.
65. It is the Great Spirit who breathes the wind upon the earth with the breath of spring who covers it with splendour and beauty.
66. When the trees get their leaves, the brook again sings after the long winter, and the land becomes green again, it is the time of giving.

# THE TRIBAL LAWS OF EASTERN ALGONQUIN

## - The Children of the Light

67. The truest gift in substance your child can give you is two sticks tied together; It is not the two sticks, it is the tying.
68. To enjoy your own land, look back upon it from another.
69. The ruin of a tribe is generally preceded by a universal degeneracy of manners and contempt toward the Great Spirit.
70. We are frequently benefited by what we have dreaded.
71. It is no great virtue to live lovingly with good-natured and meek persons.
72. It deserves our best skill to inquire into those rules by which we may guide our judgement.
73. If we lie no restraint upon our lust, no control upon our appetites and passions, they will hurry us to guilt and misery.
74. To promote iniquity in others is the same as being the actors of it ourselves.
75. Be not afraid of the wicked, they are under the control of providence.
76. Consciousness of guilt may justly affright us.
77. Convey unto others no intelligence which you would be ashamed to avow.
78. How many disappointments have in their consequences saved a man from ruin and his Chieftainship.
79. A well-poised mind makes a cheerful countenance.
80. Virtue embalms the memory of good.
81. The Shaman may dispense but the Great Spirit alone can bless.
82. Condemn not a man till you have walked a mile in his moccasins.
83. In many pursuits we embark with pleasure and land sorrowfully.
84. Rocks, mountains and caverns are of indispensable use both to the earth and to man.

# THE TRIBAL LAWS OF EASTERN ALGONQUIN

## - The Children of the Light

85. The hive of the village or the lodge is in the best condition when there is the least buzz in it.
86. The roughness found on our entrance into the paths of virtue and learning, grow smoother as we advance into manhood.
87. The harmlessness of many animals and the enjoyment which they have of life, should plead for them against cruel usage.
88. We are often very busy to no useful purpose.
89. Genuine charity how liberal so ever it may be, will never impoverish ourselves.
90. However disagreeable, we must resolutely perform our duty.
91. A bout of sickness is often a kind of chastisement and discipline, to moderate the affection for the things of this life.
92. Health and peace, our most valuable possessions, are obtained at a small price.
93. True happiness is an enemy to pomp and noise.
94. Few depressions are more distressing than those which we make upon ourselves in our own ingratitude.
95. Cultivate your own heart and not that of evil ways.
96. Wars are attended with distasteful and devastating affects; it is confessedly the scourge of our angry passion.
97. The blood of all men when spilled together cannot be defined apart.
98. Encourage no man to do what he believes to be wrong.
99. It shall not be said that we are charitable donors when our deeds proceed with selfish motives.
100. A great joy to a father is the glint of the sweat on the muscles of his son in worthy effort.
101. The gentleness of a daughter's a joy to her mother.

# THE TRIBAL LAWS OF EASTERN ALGONQUIN

## - The Children of the Light

102. Endeavour to become a great chief and you stand a good chance of becoming a great warrior.
103. Great warriors do not always fight but with wisdom, are peace makers.
104. May a young man put his hand in the hand of an old man and let him live again a day of his youth, and from this learning your youth will become more keenly full.
105. Do one great deed in your life and it will be easier to die.
106. Recompense to no man evil for evil; this will define the leaders of men for the chieftains of the tribe.
107. Meekness controls our angry passions, candor our severe judgements.
108. To be faithful among the faithless argues great grants of principal.
109. Be not fooled but know that wars are regulated robberies.
110. A friend exaggerates a man's virtues, an enemy enflames his crimes.
111. A witty and humorous vein more often produces enemies.
112. Many have been visited with afflictions who have not profited by them.
113. The experience of want enhances the virtue of plenty.
114. The wicked are often ensnared in the trap they lay for others.
115. When retiring at the setting of the day and there is an argument in your lodge, say you are wrong, though you are right and go to bed happy.
116. It is hard to say what diseases are controllable they are all under the controls of the Great Spirit.
117. Fear not the Shaman for he is guided by the Great Spirit, and his cures are the gifts of the Great Spirit's forest.
118. A steady mind may receive council, but there is no hold on a changeable humour.

# THE TRIBAL LAWS OF EASTERN ALGONQUIN

## - The Children of the Light

119. Excessive merriment is the path to grief.
120. To practice virtue is a sure way to love it.
121. One should study to live peaceably with all men.
122. A great warrior has a soul that can secretly defy death and consider it nature's privilege to die.
123. The man who claims no fear is an idiot and a liar.
124. Let not the sternness of virtue affright us; she will soon become amiable.
125. True valour protects the feeble and humbles the oppressor.
126. Hurt no child or elder in war for they are the possessions of the Great Spirit.
127. One should recollect that however favourable we may appear to ourselves, we are vigorously examined-by others.
128. Virtue can render youth as well as old age, honour.
129. Rumor most often tells false tales.
130. Let gossip not break a treaty between friends or tribes; often a jealous tongue will use it to dishonourable advantage.
131. Weak minds are ruffled by trifling things.
132. It is an Honourable chieftain who feeds the hungry, visits the sick and clothes the naked and helpless of children.
133. It is good to be cheerful without levity.
134. The gaiety of youth should be tempered with the respect of age.
135. The most acceptable sacrifice is that of a humble and contrite heart.
136. We are accountable for whatever we patronize in others.

# THE TRIBAL LAWS OF EASTERN ALGONQUIN

## - The Children of the Light

137. It is a mark of a vicious disposition to torture animals, to make them smart and agonize for our devotion.
138. A guilty man cannot avoid many melancholy apprehensions.
139. If we injure other we must expect retaliation.
140. The conscious receiver is as bad as the thief.
141. The Great Spirit is not only the creator but the ruler and preserver of all life.
142. Honest endeavours, if persevered in, will finally be successful.
143. It requires a kind heart as well as a just mind to be a great chief.
144. Inquire into the cause of the crimes of your warriors before you pass judgement on the crime itself.
145. If your warrior steals a loaf of bread, judge him for why. If to feed his children, you are also responsible as Chief that no child should be hungry, but if for self gain only, then he is guilty.
146. When the father of a child be a slave to your tribe, remember that the child is yet the possession of the Great Spirit who at the time of maturity may claim your tribe as his own; this be his right.
147. There be first the child, then the rabbit warrior, then the claim to the tribe at maturity, then the hunter, then the dog soldier (the protector of children and the chieftainship), then a councillor, then an elder.
148. The bloodline chief becomes in line for chieftainship, being the youngest son at the death of the grandfather, therefore the father chief will have time to train him.
149. The child will choose the parents upon the death of his own.
150. Children in their childish battles must be taught to feed the loser for the following day.
151. Learning is losing an argument.