

# This month's čičyε circle teaching



"I started with Murray and Nancy Mitchell. They were some of the first that I know from Tla'amin to go on Tribal Journeys. Our first journey was in Squamish in 2001 – I did two journeys with them, one with Nanaimo, and several with čičtεm čičyε. I only missed one Tribal Journey in 12 or 14 years, and that was the year I was diagnosed with cancer. But that might have been what helped me with the healing when I went back – being on the water.

The protocol is seen and learned: When we get there, we're on the canoe and our spokesperson would say I'm hungry, I'm tired, can we come ashore? So that's when we get welcomed in to their territory by the host Nation. That's one protocol; there are different ones. And there are a lot of teachings I learned on Tribal Journeys:

Respect for all the different Nations, all their songs. Respect for their community and what they're doing. Listening is another teaching. When we're in the gymnasium or the longhouse, we're taught to be quiet when someone is speaking. You're representing your Nation.

Patience is a great big one. When you're in the water you have to be patient. Sometimes there's rough weather – I've been in currents and humongous waves. You're so tired, and when you come to shore you're hungry, and you're sitting there patiently waiting to be called in. Also communication, teamwork, and rhythm – working together on the canoe teaches that.

Strength. A lot of people aren't in great shape when they start, but then you get out there, you get a feel for it, and get better. Nobody's perfect when they start, but by the time you're done with the journey you'll be so strong: There's no lily-dipping! Your arms and your mind will be so strong.

Culture and identity is a big one learned on these journeys. Coming home from my first journey, I could still hear the drumming and singing in my head. I loved it. There's no TV or internet, just camping, water, paddling, getting to know people. And then there's youth - I'm just astonished at who they are. I see a youth speak in the language, and I'm so proud of them. It's overwhelming. You become proud of who you are.

I find the čičyε Circle makes you stop and think about these things: identity, respect, patience. Because you have to be very patient for a lot of things that are going on within your family. Teach your kids respect. You've got to respect everybody's going through something in their own life."



Tee Kloo'kwen'nas (Big Heart), Evie Tom

čičyε Circle member