

HONORING OUR ROOTS

Wakanheza (wah-kahn-ee-za) is the Dakota word for child and translates literally to “sacred being.” Gabrielle Strong, a member of the Dakota Nation, offered the word Wakanheza to Ramsey County in 2004. The formal gifting of the word Wakanheza to Ramsey County was to share the world view of children as sacred, to remind us all of the meaning and power of our words, and to both remember and include the indigenous languages of Minnesota in the work that we do. The Wakanheza Principles ask organizations to consider the six principles in their daily interactions with one another, those they serve and the community.



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MORE INFORMATION

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AUTHENTIC CONNECTIONS

A decorative graphic consisting of several overlapping, wavy lines in shades of blue, yellow, and red, flowing from the top right towards the bottom left.

A community-based violence prevention program that utilizes six key principles rooted in improving social connection to support individuals and organizations in reducing, addressing and de-escalating stressful situations in public settings. It is designed for implementation in community, non-profit, public and for-profit organizations. The principles focus on Authentic Connections because research shows that increasing social connection and belonging while reducing social isolation decreases incidents of violence within communities. By using strategies more specific to different situations, environments, and diverse populations, organizations can create welcoming environments, increase social connection, and reduce stressful situations for their employees, those they serve and communities.

THE WAKANHEZA PRINCIPLES



Environment: Environments have significant impacts on behaviors.



Bias: Everyone has implicit bias, which impacts their judgment.



Empathy: All people have the capacity to understand each other's ideas, feelings and experiences.

Culture: Culture includes deeply rooted beliefs and values that shape individual and world views that influence our interactions with others. Opening ourselves to the appreciation of all cultures and the opportunity to acknowledge differences and similarities will allow us to better connect with others.



Power: Power differences exist within systems and are also experienced uniquely by individuals and impact the way that people interact with others and their environment. Acts of violence can arise from feelings of powerlessness.



Connection: In any given moment we have an opportunity to make remarkable and profound connections with others when we are intentional and choose to do so

STRATEGIES TO ACT IN THE MOMENT

- Pause and assess yourself and the environment
- Offer assurance
- Show empathy
- Distract or redirect
- Find something positive
- Offer encouragement
- Be yourself
- Breathe
- Listen
- Give space
- Know your limits and use your resources
- Be aware of bystanders in the environment
- Ask questions
- Show appreciation