



“We are all in a journey of learning. No one is ever too young or too old to learn something new. Despite what we may believe, we are all learning new things each and every day.”

- Andrew Wong

LESSONS FROM THE ELDERS: MENTAL HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTALISM IN DAY-TO-DAY LIFE BY ANDREW WONG

- 🌱 Andrew started his career in **environmentalism** in Grade 10 when he joined **BGYN**.
- 🌱 He then went on to attend the [Students on Ice Arctic expedition](#), an organization that **brings high school and university aged youth to the Arctic** for expeditions, allowing them to gain a better understanding of

life in the far North and the **current issues** that are taking place there. As a part of this program, Andrew spent several weeks on a **boat** with many other youth that travelled through **Southern Nunavut**.

- 🌲 Andrew's expedition with Students on Ice **sparked his interest in the Arctic**, encouraging him to write his **university thesis** on the **transfer of knowledge by Inuit Elders to Youth**. As a part of his thesis, Andrew spent time in Igloolik, Nunavut, learning the ways of life there by the region's residents.
- 🌲 Andrew spent over 30 days in a tent in **sub-zero temperatures, hunting, fishing, as well as interacting and learning the ways of the Inuit peoples**. Andrew's time in Nunavut allowed him to gain a thorough understanding as to how Inuit peoples pass down **knowledge and stories from generation to generation**.
- 🌲 Andrew specifically spent time learning from **Inuit elders** in the community in which he was staying. An **Elder** is a person that is willing to help and **share their knowledge with younger generations**.
- 🌲 Later on in 2012, Andrew **delegated with a group of youth in Rio de Janeiro** and learnt about how youth can develop **delegation skills** and **improve environmentalism**.

Some of the Major Principles Andrew Learnt from the Inuit:

1. **Learn by observation first, and then by doing:** an old Inuit principle that applies to learning many new skills. With the guidance of elders, you can practice your skills and develop new skills and traits.
2. **Use only what you need:** most stores these days are solely focused on making a profit. This has an environmental cost. This principle states that you should find **durable products** so that you can use them for a longer period of time and to **not purchase in excess**.
3. **Go by what you know:** Use the skills that you **already know** and do not just guess. Use your prior knowledge. Stick to what you know, what you've experienced **rather than guessing**. Do not make assumptions.
4. **Work hard and never give up:** If you put effort into something, you will achieve your goals. If we try our best every day, we will overcome our goals. If you work towards something and never give up, you will have the resources needed to achieve your goals.
5. **Stay humble:** Celebrate your successes, but **do not be too boastful** as to avoid envy from others and to ensure you have confidence, but do not feel above others.
6. **Wake up early:** You will have more time to do things, easier, less burn out. You will set your body more aligned with the natural rhythms of the Earth.

- 🏔️ During the **1800s and 1900s** many colonial peoples came to Nunavut and **nearly eliminated the Bowhead Whale population**. However, lately, the whale population has been doing better and is now open again for hunting during specific seasons.
- 🏔️ **Bowhead whale hunting is a large effort:** it usually takes **30-40 people** and **10 boats** to find a whale. First they must find the whale, then track the whale, manage to “hunt” it, then haul the *gigantic* animal back to shore.
- 🏔️ You then need to be able to butcher the animal & divide the meat amongst the community. An incredible example of “Work hard and never give up” . The conditions must be just right, **before the whale is captured**.