

The Spirit of the Wolf Mask

*“In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations.”-
Iroquois philosophy*



The Spirit of the Wolf Mask design is based on a wood block print designed and created by Joseph E. Senungetuk, an Iñupiaq artist from Wales, Alaska. Traditionally, the wolf mask was an Iñupiaq ceremonial dance mask. Ceremonial dance masks were specifically created for a dance, and each ceremonial mask artist had their own individual philosophy about the mask(s) they created. Contemporary Iñupiaq artists continue this ancestral artistic skill by reproducing ceremonial masks. While the “ceremonial” aspect of the process is largely changing, the essence lives on through Elders and the resurgence through younger generations.

The Alaska Indigenous Research Program aims to bring together individuals from all walks of life and different ways of knowing and understanding the world. We all have Original instructions or teachings, ceremonies, practices and ancestral knowledge that have sustained us over generations. We chose the Spirit of the Wolf Mask to symbolize the goal of the Alaska Indigenous Research Program because it represents cultural continuity and the link between past, present and future generations. The Seven Feathers in the Wolf Mask represent many different meanings: the seven generations before and after us; the Seven Grandfather Teachings of truth, humility, respect, love, honesty, courage and wisdom; and the Seven Sacred Fires prophecy which marks important times in Our History of All Our Relations. These teachings serve as foundational principles of how to live a Good Life and how to build upon Indigenous Research Paradigms with sense of self, purpose and place at the center (the heart).

Indigenous writer Richard Wagamese captured the essence of All My Relations when he stated:

“I’ve been considering the phrase ‘all my relations’ for some time now. It’s hugely important. It’s our saving grace in the end. It points to the truth that we are related, we are all connected, we all belong to each other. The most important word is all. Not just those who look like me, sing like me, dance like me, speak like me, pray like me or behave like me. ALL my relations. It means every person just as it means every blade of grass, rock, mineral and creature. We live because everything else does. If we were to collectively choose to live that teaching the energy of that change of consciousness would heal all of us — and heal the planet. We do it one person, one heart at a time... we are connected, we are the answer.”

The Spirit of the Wolf calls us to retrace the steps of our Elders and Ancestors who have been sleeping for a long time. We must rekindle old flames and light the Sacred Fire again – a fire that is inside each of us. All people of Mother Earth are in the time of the Seventh Fire; a transition period to the Eighth and final fire that marks a time when we return to our old lifeways and reclaim the knowledge of our Ancestors.