

The Hand Drum: It's Cultural Significance

“Our culture
is our way
of life.”

If you have ever been to a Powwow, you have probably heard the low constant beat of the Grandfather drum—the heartbeat of such gatherings. In addition to this style of drum—which usually sits on the ground and is traditionally surrounded by a group of male drummers—is the smaller hand drum. This is sometimes referred to as the Grandmother drum. The hand drum is more often carried by women who sing either individually or together in a circle. There are various songs that accompany the hand drum including songs dedicated to our sacred teachings (e.g. love, humility, and respect), songs of honour and songs of thanks. The beat of the drum represents the heartbeat of Mother Earth. Our drums and songs help connect us to the Earth's energy and all the life gifts we've received.

At the end of the summer, Dilico's Cultural Committee participated in a drum birthing ceremony for seven Dilico hand drums at the Turtle Lodge on Ojibways of Pic River First Nation. A drum belonging to a small child from this community was also birthed during the ceremony.

During the ceremony, a designated drum keeper (or proxy) was called upon to receive a drum. The drum carriers were also asked to sing songs in the birthing of the new drums. Tobacco was placed on the face of each new drum.

The following chart shows the name, location and song for each Dilico drum:

Seven Grandfathers	Location	Song
Humility (Wolf)	Armstrong District Office	Wolf Song
Respect (Buffalo)	Nipigon District Office	Calling In The Four Grandfathers
Honesty (Sabe)	Longlac District Office	Kitchi Sabe
Love (Eagle)	Assessment and Brief Treatment Residential Services	All My Love
Bravery (Bear)	Heath Park Site	Bear Song
Wisdom (Beaver)	Marathon District Office	Prophecy Song
Truth (Turtle)	Adult Residential Treatment Centre	Turtle Song

The seven drums were made last spring using traditional materials and methods. As part of the Agency's commitment to building its collection of cultural resources available to staff, clients and community members, Dilico produced a DVD of the making of the drums called "Awakening Past Voices".

If your organization would like to receive a copy of this resource, please contact Dilico's Communications Department at the Main Office or email communications@dilico.com. ♦