Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one’s actions

This principle highlights the understanding that people must take responsibility for their actions, and that every action has a consequence (both intended and unintended). It is understood that actions may have consequences for the individual as well as for others. Given the awareness that we are all related, it is important to think about how one’s actions may affect others (such as family, community, and/or the land), instead of focusing on compliance behaviours. This principle also highlights the need for authentic learning situations, and the need for learner autonomy, as recognizing the consequences of one’s own actions can only genuinely occur when the learner has made autonomous choices.

Relation to Other Education Theory

Chickering and Gamson (1987) point out that an effective learning environment respects and supports diverse talents and learning styles; the way in which one person learns may not be effective for another. Providing learners with autonomy over their learning not only motivates them but also provides them with avenues to pursue knowledge in the form that best suits them. This leads to greater knowledge acquisition, motivation and most importantly, supports and fosters a learner’s talents and strengths, which can also be used to support learning in other areas of need for the learner.

Implications for the Classroom and School Include:

- Providing learners with appropriate levels of autonomy and choice in their learning. This might include some choice in what they learn, in how they learn, and in how they represent what they have learned. How this looks will depend on the age and skill sets of the learner.
- Helping learners become aware of the natural consequences (to themselves and others) of their actions. This might include letting learners make mistakes and then helping them to learn from those mistakes (as long as those mistakes do not cause harm to themselves or others).
- Focussing on reflective and critical thinking to help learners understand the natural consequences of their actions (as opposed to punitive consequences).
- Nurturing the development of empathy and understanding of the interconnected of all being and the land. This helps learners extend their thinking of consequences beyond themselves.