

**Thompson Scholars Learning Community Logo Philosophy**  
**Written by Senior TSLC Member, Amy Markham, Fall 2011**

Live: Tree

The tree is a symbol of antiquity, strength, wisdom, protection, bounty, beauty, and redemption. As a tree matures it develops deep roots. Each day that the Thompson Scholars exist at UNK, they are writing our history and rooting the foundation for the next generation of Thompson Scholars. As they live and co-reside in learning communities, they are planting the seeds that will grow and develop into beautiful things for younger TSLC generations to enjoy. The cycle will then continue as the young Scholars grow and do the same for their predecessors.

When a new tree is born, it branches and sprouts new leaves. When a new Thompson Scholar is “born” at UNK, they also branch out as well. They broaden their horizons and develop into educated, wise adults as they grow, learn, and gain valuable experience through their time as a Thompson Scholar.

A tree is symbolic of the Creator. Its duty is to sustain its creation by nurturing its fruit, providing shelter and protection for its young, and regenerating. Each year a new generation of Thompson Scholars is introduced into TSLC. It is the job of the older Thompson Scholars to take in the new ones and mentor and guide them on their journey through college.

With nurture and care, a tree will live for generations, much like TSLC.

Learn: Acorn

An acorn does not fall far from the tree, the Oak tree that is. The Oak, as well as the acorn, represents power, protection, strength, wisdom, endurance, triumph, dominion, prosperity, sacrifice, success, and stability; all many characteristics that our Thompson Scholars and/or our organization possess. They wouldn't have been accepted as Thompson Scholars if they didn't already possess these traits.

The acorn has been a long time symbol of academics. It has been considered a “cosmic storehouse” of wisdom by ancient people. Wearing oak leaves was a sign of special status (often academia) among the Celts, Greeks, and Romans.

The acorn has traditionally been used to indicate independence of the one who wears it. Thanks to TSLC, our Thompson Scholars will proudly graduate from UNK as independent individuals as they walk the stage wearing their caps and gowns.

The growth and the potential in the tiny acorn serves as a source of inspiration, just as being a Thompson Scholar is inspirational to one's own success. Some of our Thompson Scholars

probably didn't think they could make it through college before they had the support of the TSLC. Now that they do, they can use that as their source of inspiration.

In ancient times, the acorn was used to mark trails to prevent one from becoming lost. The TSLC acts as the acorns to its members, marking the way, through mentoring, advising, and in the learning community, so a Scholar won't get lost.

Fun fact: Oak trees are known to be common targets for lightning strikes. For this reason, the oak was related to deities that had control over thunder, lightning, and storms. In many cultures the oak is sacred, and is often connected to legends of deities who interact with mortals.

#### Connect: Gear

Often gears symbolize a mechanical process and are used as a metaphor for automatic, linear thinking and processes. Rather than looking at gears as representing an automatic, routine, look at them as being pieces of an intricate, shifting process that creates possibilities or outcomes only possible with the participation of each other. Each gear, just as each Scholar, is capable of working together with the others in an integrated, highly functional and effective manner.

The gear is also a symbol of interdependence and cooperation with others for the betterment of mankind. As a learning community, the Thompson Scholars develop interdependent, cooperation, and team building skills as they live, work, play, and learn together.

Lastly, gears are largely symbolic of time. The Thompson Scholars spend a lot of their time working cooperatively together and connecting to make lasting relationships.

#### Succeed: Key

A key can be used to unlock the door and free whoever is inside. However, a key can both unlock and lock things. It can both open and close doors, or opportunities. If you hand over a key then you are granting someone power. Giving them a key to the gates means they can come and go as they wish. Keys can also mean initiation into a new way of life, or a way into some form of success. A family who just bought a house are handed keys to their new home. A man who just won the lottery holds the key to a bright future in the form of the lottery ticket.

The Susan Thompson Buffett Scholarship is need-based. Many of our students wouldn't even have the opportunity to receive a college education if it were not for the scholarship. The Scholarship is *their* key to success, their door to opportunity.