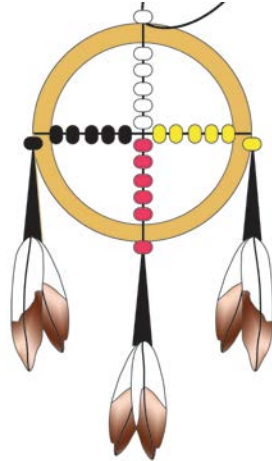


Medicine Wheel



The Anishinabek Medicine Wheel – What Does It Mean?

Medicine Wheels consist of many different aspects which connect humans and all living things to the Earth. All of these things are contained in one small package that exemplifies and reminds us of our earthly ties and responsibilities.

The Medicine Wheel is round to represent the Circle of Life. Human beings like many organisms, enter their existence dependent on others as babies, grow and discover during their youth, experience life and learn while adults, and age and pass on their knowledge as elders (see page 2).

The central cross represents how all things in the natural world come in fours. This includes the four winds, the four seasons, the four directions, the four grandfathers (teachers), and the four stages of life.

The plant and animal symbols are useful to us as medicines and guardians and also act to fulfill our spiritual and personal well-being.

The reason this object is called a “Medicine Wheel” is due to the strong spiritual healing present when all of the representative symbols are in balance and are united.

The Medicine Wheel serves to remind us of our place in this world, how we each have an impact through our actions and how we are connected in many ways to our natural world. Negative impacts would result should we change the balance of things, which eventually will be felt by all. If, however,

Medicine Wheel

humans care for the earth and cherish all within it, we can create a healthy world-wide ecosystem where all can benefit.

Circle of Life – First Peoples Worldview

The Circle of Life is a basic principle of First Peoples worldview. Everything within the circle has a purpose and all things and beings depend on all others for survival. There is a balance in nature that is maintained when this interdependence is recognized and respected. First Peoples elders teach us to take only what is needed. Nothing is wasted. When one part of creation is used up or damaged, then the circle is broken and everything is out of balance. The Anishinabek people (includes the Ojibwa, Potawatami and Odawa) have a philosophy called the Medicine Wheel based on the circle of life and the four directions of the circle. All things in creation are represented as parts of the Medicine Wheel.

The Earth provides everything needed for life: food, air, water, medicines, shelter and clothing. If more is taken from the Earth than can be replenished, we will no longer be able to obtain what is needed for life.

Questions:

Answer the following questions on a lined piece of paper.

1. If you were to make your own Medicine Wheel, what four guardian animals and plants would you use to represent the four parts of your wheel? (You can write the names of your choices on your copy of the Medicine Wheel.)
2. Write a sentence for each of your choices explaining why you chose your plants and animals and why they are important.
3. You need to build a factory to make an important thing called Product X that everyone must have. Write a description of how the Medicine Wheel would help you do this without causing harm to the environment.