

Integrating First Nations and Metis Content and Perspective

Pre-Kindergarten

Sun, Earth, Moon, and Stars

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Rationale:

The sun, earth, moon, and stars are considered to be very spiritual and living things in First Nations culture. They are seen as important things because they are needed to provide life to all living things. (Appendix 4). These elements are all at the center of the medicine wheel, meaning that they are needed in order for everything outside of that to survive. (Appendix 5)

Incorporating Medicine Wheel Philosophy

Spiritual

Students will learn the importance of four elements.

Physical

Students will learn the effects of each element on all living things.

Emotional

Students will learn to appreciate what each element does for all living things.

Mental

Students will learn how to prepare for the different elements.

Engaging Activities

General activities

- Choose natural items from outdoors to create a story bag. Place items in a story bag, and have students pick one item out and tell a story about that item. (Appendix 4)
- Invite a local Elder in to discuss each of the four elements and their importance to our lives.
- You can use the sun to explore your shadows and shadow of other objects.
- General activities – The following are a few ideas and invitations that you may set out for students. With books and pictures to guide them, they will create wonderful things. These thoughts are not meant to be teacher led and could take an unexpected turn at any time!
 - Constellations – boxes, scissors, glow-in-the-dark stars, construction paper, hole punches, light bright
 - Stars - Construction paper, white paint, spray bottle
 - Sun – prisms, natural light, flashlights, paper, markers
 - Moon craters – layer flour, & cocoa powder, drop in balls, bearings
 - Earth, moon, sun – Balls, flashlights

Suggested Resources:

Adams, L. (2009). *Skipping Rocks*. Canada: Eagle Crest books.

Adams, L. (2009). *The Enormous Rock*. Canada: Eagle Crest Books.

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Armstrong, J. C. (1984). *Neeka and Chemai*. Penticton, British Columbia: Theytus Books.

Balantyne, B. (1997). *Wesakejack and the flood*. Bain and Cox.

Baylor, B. (1974). *Everybody Needs A Rock*. New York: Aladdin Paperbacks.

Bear, J. (1979). *The Legend of Big Bear, Little Bear and the Stars*. Saskatoon: Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College.

Bruchac, M. C. (1994). Oot-Kwah-Tah, The Seven Star Dancers. In M. C. Bruchac, *Keepers of the Night* (pp. 63-65). Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers.

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Bruchac, M. J. (1988). How Grandmother Spider Stole the Sun. In M. J. Bruchac, *Keepers or the Earth* (pp. 49-53). Calgary: Fifth House.

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Bruchac, M. J. (1988). The Earth on Turtles Back. In M. J. Bruchac, *Keepers of the Earth* (pp. 25-28). Calgary: Fifth House.

Budd, L. (1971). *Full Moons Indian Legends of the Seasons*. Chicago: Rand McNally & Company.

Caduto, M. J., & Bruchac, J. (1991). *Keepers of the Animals*. Golden, Colo: Fulcrum.

Cameron, A. (1987). *How Raven Freed the Moon*. Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing Co Ltd.

Campbell, M. (1976). *People of the Buffalo*. Vancouver, BC: J.J. Douglas Ltd.

Cleaver, E. (1978). *How Summer Came to Canada*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Elliot, M. (2004). *Empowering the Spirit II*. Owen Sound, ON: Ningwakwe Leaning Press.

Eyvindson, P. (1993). *The Missing Sun*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Pemmican Publications, Inc. .

Eyvindson, P. (1987). *The Wish Wind*. Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications Inc.

Eyvindson, P. (1992). *The Yesterday Stone*. Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications.

Friesen, J. W. (2005). The Day Spider Brought Light. In J. W. Friesen, *Even More Legends of the Elders* (pp. 11-13). Calgary: Detselig.

Friesen, J. W. (2004). Trickster and the Sun. In J. W. Friesen, *Still More Legends of the Elders* (pp. 19-20). Calgary: Detselig Enterprises.

Goble, P. (1983). *Star Boy*. Scarsdale: Bradbury Press.

Hadubiak, M. (2007). *All About the Aboriginal Caretakers of Canada: From A-Z Headstart-Grade 1* . Saskatoon, SK.: Maxine Hadubiak.

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Kalman, B. (2006). *Native North American Wisdom and Gifts*. St Catharines, Ontario: Crabtree Publishing Company.

Krensky, S. (2009). *How Coyote Stole the Summer*. Minneapolis, MN: Milbrook Press.

Kusugak, M. A. (2001). *hide and Seek*. Friesens: Annick Press.

Kusugak, M. A. (1993). *Northern Lights The Soccer Trails*. Toronto: Annick Press.

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McLellan, J. (1994). *Nanabosho hoe Turtle Got its Shell*. Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications Inc.

McLellan, J. (1990). *Nanabosho Steals Fire*. Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications Inc.

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Office of the Treaty Commissioner. (2008). *Teaching Treaties in the Classroom, A Treaty Resource Guide for Grade 3*. Saskatoon, SK: Office of the Treaty Commissioner.

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Plain, F. (1994). *Grandfather Drum*. Winnipeg, MB: Pemmican Publications.

Porter, R. b. (1979). *First Winter, First Summer*. Toronto: A Westport Group Book.

School, I. (1999). *The Lonely Inuksuk*. Toronto: Schlastic.

Seattle, C. (1991). *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky*. New York: Dial Books.

Swamp, C. j. (1995). *Giving Thanks: A Native American Good Morning Message*. New York: Reading Rainbow Book.

Taylor, C. (1997). *The Messenger of Spring*. Plattsburgh, New York: Tundra Books of Northern New York.

Toye, W. (1979). *The Fire Stealer*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Umpherville, T. (19951). *The Spring Celebration*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Pemmican Publication Inc. .

Waboose, J. B. (2000). *Sky Sisters*. Toronto: Kids Can Press.

Wallace, M. (2009). *I is for Inuksuk*. Toronto: Maple Tree Press.

Wallace, M. (2008). *Inuksuk Journey*. Toronto: Maple Tree Press.

Wallace, M. (2001). *Make Your own Inuksuk*. Hong Kong: Maple Tree Press.

Outcome

Examine how the four elements affect our daily lives, and all living things around us.

Sun

Father sun is here to guide us with his light and watch over us as he travels around the Earth. He is the source of inspiration and energy. He is needed for all living things on Mother Earth.

- In Inuvik there are many days when the sun doesn't shine because of the Earth's tilt. The following legends and stories deal with the disappearance or creation of the sun.
 - The Missing Sun (Eyvindson, The Missing Sun, 1993)
 - The Day Spider Brought Light (Friesen, 2005)
 - How Grandmother Spider Stole the Sun (Bruchac M. J., How Grandmother Spider Stole the Sun, 1988)
- The sun is very powerful and provides us with lots of energy. The following stories deal with the energy of the sun.
 - Still More Legends of the Elders Trickster and the Sun (Friesen J. W., 2004)
 - Star Boy (Goble, 1983)
 - Loo-Wit the Fire Keeper (Bruchac M. J., Loo-Wit The Fire Keeper, 1988)

Stars

Stars ever changing positions have been the basis for many First Nations cultures calendars. They are also believed to be any person that has departed our Earth.

- The following legends are about the creation of stars
 - How the Stars Fell into the Sky (Oughton, 1992)
 - Oot-Kwah-Tah, The Seven Star Dancers p. 63-67 (Bruchac M. C., 1994)
 - The Legend of Big Bear, Little Bear and the Stars (Bear, 1979)
- Constellations are an important part of the sky. The following legends explain how they came to be.
 - How Fisher went to Skyland: The Origin of the Big Dipper (Bruchac M. J., How Fisher Went to the Skyland: The Origin of the Big Dipper, 1988)
 - Oot-Kwah-Tah, The Seven Star Dancers p. 63-67 (Bruchac M. C., 1994)
- Northern Lights are believed to be any person that has passed on dancing in the sky. The following books are about the Northern Lights.
 - Northern Lights the Soccer Trails (Kusugak, Northern Lights The Soccer Trails, 1993)
 - Sky Sisters (Waboose, 2000)
 - Oot-Kwah-Tah, The Seven Star Dancers p. 63-67 (Bruchac M. C., 1994)

Earth

Aboriginal peoples highly respect the earth as being our provider and caregiver, therefore earth is regarded as Mother Earth in many Aboriginal cultures. (Appendix 2) The Earth is our educator, lifeblood, and many gifts have been learned and are used from the earth and its' resources.

- The following legends are creation stories about how the earth came to be.
 - The Earth on Turtle's Back (Bruchac M. J., The Earth on Turtles Back, 1988)
 - Of Science and Indian Myths (Bruchac M. J., Of science and Indian Myths, 1988)
 - Four Worlds: The Dine Story of Creation (Bruchac M. J., Four Worlds: The Dine Story of Creation, 1988)
 - Wesakejack and the flood (Balantyne, 1997)
 - Brother Eagle, Sister Sky (Seattle, 1991)
- Iroquois families were Canada's first farmers. (Hadubiak, 2007)
- It is important to give thanks to Mother Earth for all the things that she provides us. When taking things from mother Earth it is important to leave her an offering. (Appendix 3)
 - Giving Thanks (Swamp, 1995)
 - Nanabosho Dances (McLellan J. , Nanabosho Dances, 1991)
- The following website explains symbolism and meaning of Earth.
 - http://www.shannonthunderbird.com/symbols_and_meanings.htm accessed on (04/05/11)

Moon

Grandfather moon watches over us during the nights and is there to regulate everything. Many first Nations people use the moon phases as their calendar.

- These legends are ways of understanding the phases of the moon. Ceremonies and life patterns would take place according to the different moon phases. The moon phases have different meanings of significance. The moon is here to guide us.
 - Full Moons Indian Legends of the Seasons (Budd, 1971)
 - Wisahkecahk Flies To The Moon (Ahenakew, 1999)
- The following legends and stories deal with the creation of moon.
 - How Raven Freed the Moon (Cameron, 1987)
 - Keepers of the Night The Creation of Moon (Bruchac, 1194)
 - How Coyote was the Moon (Bruchac M. J., 1988)

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Appendix 1 Understanding Oral Tradition and Legends

Oral history is a way to store knowledge and pass it along by word of mouth. Legends and stories are part of the oral history of First Nations peoples. These stories have many themes: the creation, trickster and animal stories that teach about the beliefs and values of these cultures. They are entertaining, humorous and easy to understand. They tell about the world of animals, plants, the sky and the universe. Stories differ from nation to nation but have similarities, too. First Nations cultures have their own languages, traditions and customs that are learned through storytelling and ceremonies.

The Elders in First Nation cultures are usually the ones who tell these stories. Elders are very important in First Nation cultures because they are wise and knowledgeable about their traditional teachings and spiritual ceremonies. They taught children how to live in balance and harmony with the environment. The Elders told stories to the children so they could learn the beliefs and values of their cultures. Many First Nations Elders continue to pass on these teachings and ceremonies today.

Retrieved from: http://www.otc.ca/TEACHERS/TTIC_K6_and_TELS/.(accessed 11/04/09)

Within First Nations societies, storytelling is an important developmental and educational tool, and is a central characteristic of their rich oral traditions. Legends, stories and teachings, which remained intact, were passed down from generation to generation over thousands of years. Storytelling was not only used as an important instructive tool, it was also a means of entertainment during the long winter season.

The stories include prayers, songs and dances, which also have a type of story in them. Some stories provide practical instruction on traditional living, such as food preparation, child rearing, friendship, love, hunting routes, bird migrations, family lineage, and prophecies that describe major ecological and spiritual events.

First Nations peoples give great honour to their ancestors because without them, there is no gift of life. One of the most important and common themes is creation stories, which explain how life began on Earth and how each First Nation came to be. Each story is part of a greater whole, providing the particulars on spiritual, emotional, mental and physical teachings – in particular the “natural laws” that remain inherent in traditional teachings and tell how to live in balance with creation.

Teaching Treaties in the Classroom, A Treaty Resource Guide for Grade 1, pg. 31
Office of the Treaty Commissioner (2008)

Among Native North American cultures there were certain stories that were usually told at specific times of the year. Northeastern Indians told stories during the long cold season between the first and last frosts. Although you may not be able to restrict your use of these stories to this period of time, it is good to point out to children the traditional storytelling seasons.

Keepers of the Animals, pg. 10, (Caduto & Bruchac, 1991)

Drums are often used to tell stories, many elders that use a drum with first light some sweetgrass and with the smoke they will smudge the four directions, the drum and himself. Smudging will enable to storyteller to give good, honourable stories. Legends and stories are traditionally told in the cool months as Mother Earth prepares for the long sleep of rest and rejuvenation and as the animals prepare for hibernation and migration.

Grandfather Drum (Plain, 1994)

“Of Science and Indian Myths” from Keepers of the Earth (Bruchac M. J., Keepers of the Earth Native Stories and Environmental Activities For Children, 1988) is a legend that explains the origin of storytelling.

Characteristics of Oral Tradition

Taken from Treaty Essential Learnings, We Are All Treaty People (Office of the Treaty Commissioner, 2008)

Oral tradition transmits the First Nations’ worldviews, including the values, beliefs and the “essence” of the nations.

Oral tradition requires the ability to listen and understand.

Oral traditions are repetitious so teachings can be understood and will not be lost.

Oral traditions encompass values, customs, beliefs, traditions, songs, ceremonies, history and information about events.

Oral traditions are still practised today by Elders who pass on important wisdom and knowledge that are invaluable to the culture, language and spirituality of their people.

Elders acknowledge the source of oral history.

Oral traditions were shared only if they imparted accurate information.

Oral traditions follow strict laws of respect.

Treaty Essential Learnings, We Are All Treaty People (Office of the Treaty Commissioner, 2008)

Appendix 2 First Nations and the Land

First Nations peoples have a deep connection with all life forms on Mother Earth provided to them by the Creator. They believe(d) the Creator gave them “natural laws” that ensured they would live in balance and harmony with all of creation. First nations peoples had deep respect for the land, the plants and animals, for these entities provided everything they needed to live. These nations gave thanks every day for all of creation through spiritual ceremonies in the form of prayers. Feasts, pipe ceremonies, lodges, songs and dances.

Teaching Treaties in the Classroom, A Treaty Resource Guide for Grade 1, pg. 14
Office of the Treaty Commissioner (2008)

The First Nations were well adapted to the natural environment: they were knowledgeable about the geography of the land; they were experts at hunting, trapping and gathering food; they knew how to survive the harsh winters; they had a special relationship with the land and they respected all living things. As natural conservationists, they used only what was necessary for survival and did not abuse the land, nature or the environment.

First Nations peoples used plants, animals and other resources carefully so that their children and grandchildren would be able to use them as well. They cared for these resources as a way of respecting the land which they believed the Creator gave them; therefore, they treated the resources and took what it had to offer as gifts. First Nations peoples realized their relationship to the land gave them the big responsibility of caring for the natural resources.

Teaching Treaties in the Classroom, A Treaty Resource Guide for Grade 3, pg. 27
Office of the Treaty Commissioner (2008)

First Nations peoples are spiritual in nature. The Creator provided many spiritual ceremonies to First Nations peoples so they would be able to show their appreciation and spiritual connection to him. These ceremonies are carried out in recognition of certain life achievements and events which have special significance. Ceremonies are a means of showing respect and gratitude to the Creator, to others and to the natural world.

Teaching Treaties in the Classroom, A Treaty Resource Guide for Grade 2, pg. 26
Office of the Treaty Commissioner (2008)

First Nations peoples only use what was needed from the land. In recognition of thanks an offering would be made back to Earth. Offerings are made during hunting and gathering of different plants and foods. Most commonly used as an offering was tobacco. As plants and animals were taken from the Earth tobacco was offered with a prayer of thanks in which it is believed that the offering and prayer would please the Earth and the resources and allow for replenishing to take place.

Appendix 3 Offerings

Traditional tobacco has been used by many Aboriginal people in ceremonies, rituals and prayer for thousands of years. Using tobacco in non-traditional ways like smoking cigarettes or chewing tobacco or snuff is abuse of its traditional purpose.

"Traditional tobacco is our SACRED connection to our Creator."

- **Pauline Shirt**
Elder, Cree Nation

For more information about **Traditional Tobacco Use** follow the link below:

<http://www.tobaccowise.com/cms/One.aspx?portalId=44644&pageId=46570>

"tobaccowise" accessed on 01/13/10

Traditional Tobacco Use

Tobacco is often smoked in a sacred pipe during certain ceremonies. Tobacco acts as a communication link between the people and the Creator. Thus when tobacco is smoked from a pipe or burned as an offering, all thoughts, feelings, and prayers are carried in the tobacco smoke directly to the Creator.

Tobacco is not always burned. It is also used as a means of giving thanks. Before and after killing an animal such as a deer, a hunter will often say a prayer while holding the tobacco in his left hand (the one closest to his heart) to give thanks to the Creator and to the animal for giving up its life so that the hunter can feed his family. First Nations people will also place tobacco on the ground and say a prayer as an offering when picking medicines to give thanks to Mother Earth.

Peterborough County-City Health Unit.

<http://pcchu.peterborough.on.ca/TUP/TUP-traditional.html> "traditional tobacco use"
accessed on 01/13/10

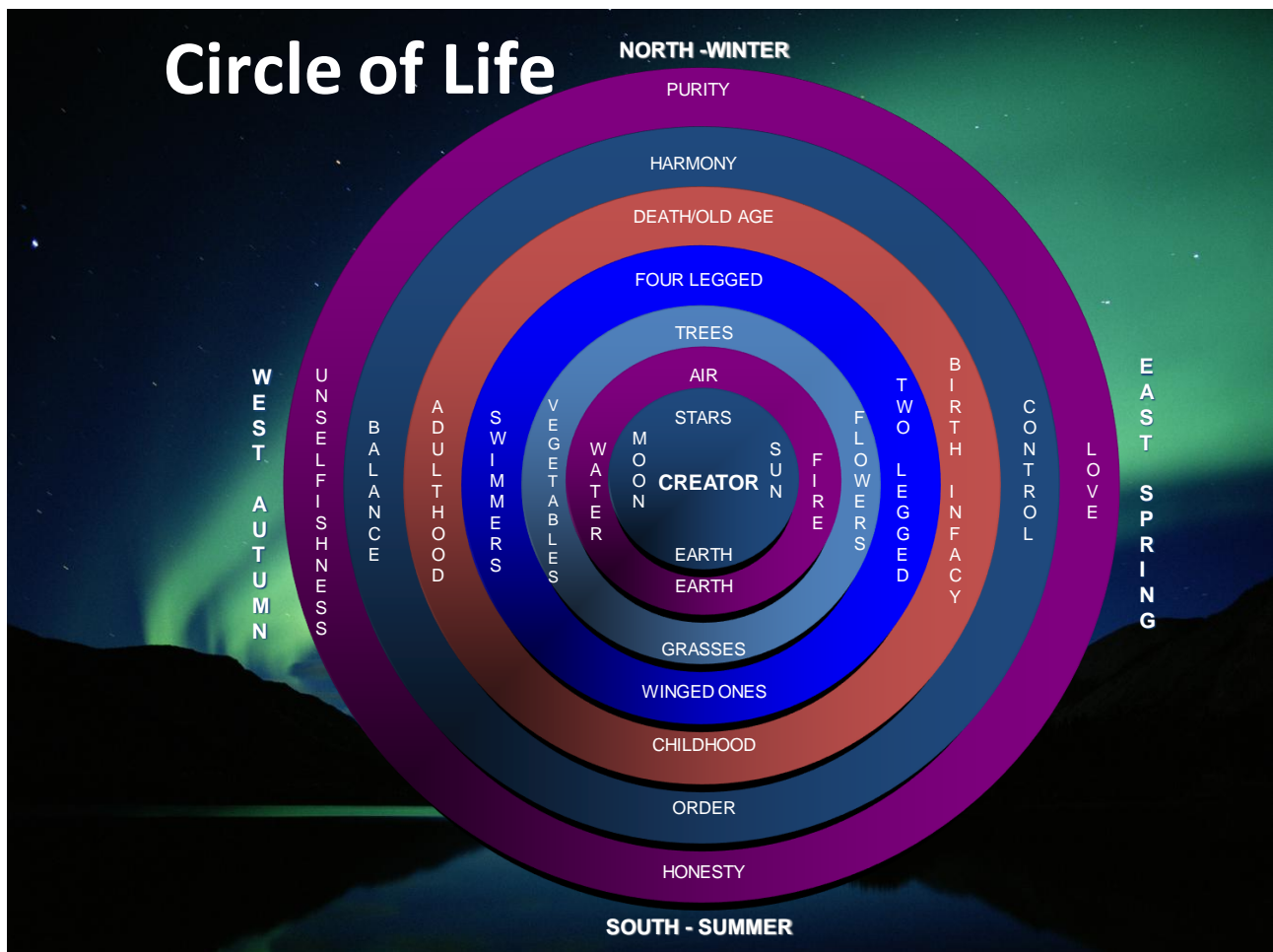
See People of the Buffalo by Maria Campbell last paragraph of pg. 14 (Campbell, 1976)

Appendix 4 Sun, Earth, Stars, Moon as living things.

First Nations peoples shared a common belief that humans were one entity of the world and the most dependent of all entities. Humans were not superior to the rivers, forests, animals and plants. First Nations peoples believed that the Creator gave them everything they needed to survive and live full and productive lives. They took only what they needed for their survival and did not interfere with the natural environments. The First Nations knew that they had to adapt to the land rather than altering or transforming the land to suit their needs. The First Nations developed the knowledge, skills and tools that assisted them to live in balance and harmony with nature.

(Office of Treaty Commissioner, 2008)

The following circle of life model indicates the entities in which we are most dependent on. The entities within the circle are important for our survival as well as to live a balanced life. If one thing in the circle is not nurtured then we become unbalance.



by Lamarr Oksasikewiyin. "Traditional First Nations Spirituality lamarr". Accessed on accessed on 03/04/11. Retrieved from:

[http://naicam.nesd.ca/~currcorner/files//u6/TradFNSpirit\(2\).ppt](http://naicam.nesd.ca/~currcorner/files//u6/TradFNSpirit(2).ppt)

Appendix 5 The Medicine Wheel

The First Nations peoples' common worldviews are formulated by interrelated components such as spirituality, values, knowledge, culture, oral traditions, language, technology, and the natural world. These influential components comprise social, economic, and belief systems.

Treaty Essential Learnings We Are All Treaty People

Office of the Treaty Commissioner (2008)

Information below is quoted from:

Empowering the Spirit II, pg. 3, (Elliot, 2004) and Empowering the Learner 2, pg.5, (Hawker, 2005)

Purpose:

The four directions of the medicine wheel are gifts given by the Creator. It represents change, equality, unity and interconnectedness with all creation. The medicine wheel is a circle of hope and of healing. It contains many stories and many teachings. We will never see in our lifetime all the wisdom that comes from these doorways. Every entity is considered a life form as it is essential for survival and balance. Every life form has a spirit, from the tiniest insect to the largest rock. The medicine wheel helps people balance and heal themselves and use it to provide a sense of direction and guidance to their lives. It helps people achieve a greater understanding of themselves in relation to all of creation.

Shape:

The spiral within the wheel represents change and moving toward another level of growth and development. The life force of all existence moves in a clockwise circular manner, representing wholeness and continuity. All of life forms within the circle will go through these cycles. The wheel is an important tool because of its constant movement. When the earth completes a full cycle of the four seasons, we also mature and grow as we complete a full circle. The circle is a sacred symbol used by most aboriginal people. There is no beginning and no end. When sitting in a circle all are equal; no one is greater than anyone else. We can see all who is in the circle and know what strengths the circle holds.

The circle shape also keeps us in mind of the many circles found within Creation. It remind us of the sun and the moon. Not only is their shape a circle, but so also is their journey. The natural cycles of life move in a circle. Think of the four seasons.

Examples of Gifts from Creator within the Quadrants

- Four Direction east, south, west, north
- Four seasons spring, summer, fall, winter
- Four original races Caucasian, First Nations, African, Asian
- Four principles of life love, honesty, unselfishness, purity
- Four stages of life child, adolescent, adult, elder
- Four parts of self physical, mental, emotional, spiritual
- Four medicines sage, tobacco, sweetgrass, cedar

- Four types of animals winged ones, two legged, four legged, flyers, swimmers
- Four elements sun, water, air, earth

Empowering the Spirit II, pg. 3, (Elliot, 2004) and Empowering the Learner 2, pg.5, (Hawker, 2005)

Understanding the 4 Parts of Self - Making personal connections within your medicine wheel?

Physical: What are you putting in your body that makes it weak?

Mental: What is causing stress in your life?

Emotional: Share a story that relates to your feelings.

Spiritual: When was the last time you participated in a ceremony?

Empowering the Spirit II, pg. 3, (Elliot, 2004) and Empowering the Learner 2, pg.5, (Hawker, 2005)

For other traditional teachings go to:

www.fourdirectionsteachings.com (accessed 19/04/08)

Teaching Treaties in the Classroom, A Resource Guide for Grade 1, pgs. 26-27, (Office of the Treaty Commissioner, 2008)

Treaty Essential Learnings We Are All Treaty People, Treaty Essential Learning #4, pgs. 26-46, (Office of the Treaty Commissioner, 2008)

Native beliefs stress that it is important to maintain a balance among all things in nature. The people believe that plants, animals, and minerals have spirits that must be respected. If people take too much from nature, they upset the balance of nature and disrespect the spirits. Once the balance is disrupted, people may experience sickness, hunger, or other types of suffering.

To maintain the balance, people must treat one another, plants, animals, and the land with respect. Native people show respect by offering thanks for the gifts that they receive from nature. People show thanks with prayers, songs, dances, and offerings.

Native North American Wisdom and Gifts (Kalman, 2006)