

## FOUR DIRECTIONS LEARNING ACTIVITIES

<b>Elder</b>	<b>Lillian Pitawanakwat</b>
<b>Nation</b>	<b>Ojibwe/Potawotami</b>
<b>Lesson Plan Grade Level</b>	<b>Junior (Grades 1-6)</b>
<b>Time Required</b>	<b>3 – 4 hours</b>
<b>Subject Strand Links</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geography</li> <li>• Natural Science</li> <li>• Astronomy</li> </ul>
<b>Traditional Teachings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Medicine Wheel</li> <li>• Tradition</li> <li>• The Four Directions</li> <li>• The Centre of the Wheel</li> </ul>
<b>Teacher Summary</b>	<p><u>The Medicine Wheel</u></p> <p>Medicine Wheels made of stones arranged on the Earth have been found in various places throughout North America, marking places of special significance, such as places of energy, ceremony, meeting, meditation, teaching, and celebration. Some estimate that there were about 20,000 medicine wheels in North America before European contact occurred. Some Medicine Wheels on the prairies have been found to be 5,000 years old or more.</p> <p>The Medicine Wheel is, in essence, a circle divided into four parts, representing the four directions, which relate to and counterbalance one another to form a whole; this symbol is used to represent Aboriginal philosophy on the meaning of life. Medicine Wheels are not necessarily a tradition belonging to all North American Aboriginal peoples; however, many Aboriginal groups have some variation of the Wheel. Nevertheless the traditional knowledge and views of the various first peoples of North America typically share a circular model of thinking.</p> <p>As a whole, the Medicine Wheel represents the relationships between various elements of the world, both seen and unseen, and emphasizes how all parts of the world and all levels of being are interrelated and connected through a life force originating in the creation of the universe. According to the Ojibwe, there are seven teachings within each quadrant of the wheel and each has sub-teachings as well. All parts of the wheel are important, and depend on each other in the cycle of life; what affects one affects all. For this reason, the Medicine Wheel teaches that harmony, balance and respect for all parts are needed to sustain life.</p>

	<p><u>Tradition</u> Tradition is knowledge or ways of doing things that are taught by older people - or Elders - who have worked and studied many years with Elders that came before them to understand the traditions.</p> <p><u>The Four Directions</u> Each quadrant of the Medicine Wheel represents one of four cardinal directions. The Ojibwe believe that the East represents the springtime and the beginning of all life, changing from spirit to human; the journey starts there. The journey continues to the South, the summer stage, to the West, the death stage, and then to the North, the rebirth stage. This cycle continues in a clockwise motion around the Medicine Wheel, following the rising and setting of the sun, with the Four Directions serving as primary directional, or guiding, forces.</p> <p><u>The Centre of the Wheel</u> The centre of the Medicine Wheel symbolizes the self in balance on its life journey, from the perspective of traditional Aboriginal philosophy. The central place of the Medicine Wheel is where one seeks to develop a holistic vision and understanding of creation and connection to all things.</p> <p>The Ojibwe believe that the Centre of the Wheel is represented by a flame and it is our responsibility to nurture this fire by reconciling conflicts with others and making peace within ourselves. Through reflection, meditation, awareness, acceptance and surrender, we are able to live balanced and whole lives.</p>
<p><b>Learner Objectives</b></p>	<p>Knowledge/Understanding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To identify the Ojibwe as an Aboriginal people with traditional teachings</li> <li>• To develop awareness of the natural environment through the identification of the Four Cardinal Directions and the Four Seasons</li> <li>• To identify and perceive the movement of the sun from east to west</li> <li>• Identify the relationship between the Four Directions and the Four Sacred Colours of the Medicine Wheel.</li> <li>• To become familiar with the meanings of the terms “Medicine Wheel”, “sacred”, “traditional”, “direction”, “respect” and “survival”</li> </ul> <p>Inquiry/Values:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To appreciate the unique attributes, or gifts, of each of the four directions</li> <li>• To recognize that the four seasons make a whole which repeats in a cycle year after year</li> <li>• To recognize the Medicine Wheel as an Aboriginal symbol with an ancient history</li> <li>• To appreciate that the four directions are consistent and everlasting and that each individual has a</li> </ul>

	<p>central perspective to these directions</p> <p>Skills/Applications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To physically identify the Four Cardinal Directions</li> <li>• To physically demonstrate the movement of the sun</li> <li>• To navigate the internet with some measure of control</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategy</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Take students to a place in an open area outside the school (yard or field). Ask if they know which direction they live in. Have them point in that direction. Ask them to look at the sun. Which way does the sun rise in the morning? Explain that this is the East. Where is it in the evening? Explain this is the West. Ask who knows what the other directions are called – point them out. Explain South and North. Where are we standing? Each of us is at the centre of these directions at all times.</li> <li>2. Explain that Aboriginal people have <i>traditional</i> teachings to share, given to them thousands of years ago and passed down through the generations. Aboriginal elders teach that the four <i>directions</i> are very special and very important, not just to them, but to everyone - because all of us share these same four directions no matter where we are: at home, at school, indoors or outdoors. The four directions never change. Aboriginal traditions see the four directions as <i>sacred</i>, because each direction gives us special gifts. So they teach that we must always <i>respect</i> the four directions and the gifts they bring. What is respect?</li> <li>3. Have the class face East together. What comes from the East that we need? What is the gift of the East? Explain that this is the direction where the sun comes up every day. Why is the sun important to us? The sun's light gives us warmth and makes our plants and foods grow; we need the sun for our physical <i>survival</i>. What is survival? What colour is the sun? Yellow: a colour that the Ojibwe people use to represent the East. Now turn together to the south, in the direction that the sun moves. Explain that this is the direction the sun passes each and every day, year after year. The sun gets hotter in the south, which is represented among the Ojibwe by the colour red. Now turn to face West together. Explain that this is where the sun goes down and night comes, represented among the Ojibwe by the colour black. Now turn to face North together. Explain that this is where a new day gets ready to be born. North is represented among the Ojibwe by the colour white. Explain that Ojibwe elders teach that these directions and colours are <i>sacred</i>, and are remembered in their prayers.</li> <li>4. Face East again, and the cycle is complete. Did we change our position? No, we stayed in the centre, because we are always in the centre. Even if we move left or right, we are always in the middle of the four directions. So this is important to remember according to traditional teachings because it reminds us that we are connected to the four directions. We cannot escape them. They are part of us and we are part of them. Return to class.</li> <li>5. Show a picture of a <i>Medicine Wheel</i> to the class to generate discussion (see links below). Who</li> </ol>

knows what this is? What is this called? Where does it come from? Show a modern representation of a Medicine Wheel. What do the colours represent? Why is it called a Medicine Wheel? What is *medicine*? We use medicine to heal us; it is good for us; it keeps us strong and healthy. This looks like a *wheel* because it is round and each part is the same size. The Ojibwe and other Aboriginal peoples have used the Medicine Wheel as a symbol for generations, to remember and respect the Four Directions and the good things that the sun and the seasons bring us every day. Explain a little bit more about Medicine Wheels from the Teacher Summary above.

6. Now ask students to identify the Four Directions in the classroom. Put up a yellow sheet on the eastern wall. Put up a red sign in the south; a black sign in the west; and a white sign in the north. Explain these are colours used by the Ojibwe. Other Aboriginal groups use different colours.
7. Explain that Ms. Lillian Pitawanakwat is an Ojibwe elder and has traditional teachings to share with the students about the Medicine Wheel. The Medicine Wheel has been a symbol for generations to remember and respect the Four Directions and the good things that the sun and the seasons bring us every day.
8. Visit [www.fourdirectionteachings.com](http://www.fourdirectionteachings.com) together as a class to read the Elder biography.
9. Individually or in pairs, have students listen to the elder's teaching on the East.
10. On paper, have students draw a large circle. Draw four quadrants. Colour the first quadrant on the right in yellow. Label it "East." Ask, "What else does the elder say the East represents? Spring, when new life begins and flowers begin to grow." Label the yellow quadrant in the drawing "spring."
11. Individually or in pairs have students listen to the elder's teaching on the South. Colour the second (bottom) quadrant in red. Label it "South". Which season does south represent? Summer, when flowers have grown and are in full bloom. Label the quadrant "summer."
12. Individually or in pairs have students listen to the elder's teaching on the West. Colour the third quadrant on the left in black. Label it "West." Which season does west represent? Fall, when flowers die. Label the quadrant "fall."
13. Individually or in pairs have students listen to the elder's teaching on the North. Colour the last (upper) quadrant in white. Label it "North". Which season does north represent? Winter, when plants rest and the ground is covered in snow. Label the north quadrant "winter."
14. Individually or in pairs have students listen to the elder's teaching on the Centre of the Wheel. What does the Centre of the Wheel represent?
15. Wrap up the lesson with a guided reading of the summary above and select from optional exercises below.

Optional Exercises:

- Find Manitoulin Island, Ms. Pitawanakwat's community, on a map of Ontario. Who knows where Manitoulin Island is? Who has visited there?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify additional symbols of the seasons to add to the drawings.</li> <li>• Research the vocabulary words in a dictionary and study the meanings.</li> <li>• Find creative ways to craft Medicine Wheels using hoops, coloured cloth, leather, paints, yarn, etc.</li> <li>• Invite an Ojibwe Aboriginal elder to the class to discuss the Medicine Wheel from his/her perspective – see Teacher Resource Kit for information on protocol.</li> <li>• Take the class to visit a planetarium to demonstrate how Earth’s orbit around the sun relates to the seasons, and how the circular motion, like the Medicine Wheel, is evident in many ways, such as the shapes of the Earth and Sun, and the orbits of the Earth and moon.</li> <li>• Visit related websites that explain the solar system and the changing of the seasons from a scientific perspective (see links below).</li> </ul>
<b>Vocabulary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional</li> <li>• Sacred</li> <li>• Direction</li> <li>• Survival</li> <li>• Respect</li> <li>• Medicine Wheel</li> </ul>
<b>Materials Required</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 large coloured sheets of paper for the walls (yellow, red, black, white)</li> <li>• Markers, crayons or paint, and paper for four-coloured Medicine Wheel drawing</li> <li>• Other arts and crafts materials, if available, for more elaborate Medicine Wheel models (hoops, coloured cloth, paint, yarn, leather, etc.)</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teacher observation of students’ ability to grasp concepts of directions and relationships to seasons and colours</li> <li>2. Worksheets for the identification of colours and directions</li> <li>3. Tests for correct spelling of vocabulary terms</li> <li>4. Participation in discussions and demonstrated understanding of key concepts</li> </ol>

<b>Elder</b>	<b>Lillian Pitawanakwat</b>
<b>Nation</b>	<b>Ojibwe/Potawatami</b>
<b>Lesson Plan Grade Level</b>	<b>Intermediate (Grades 7-9)</b>
<b>Time Required</b>	<b>3 – 4 hours</b>
<b>Subject Strand Links</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geography</li> <li>• Natural Science</li> <li>• Botany</li> <li>• Astronomy</li> <li>• Art</li> </ul>
<b>Traditional Teachings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Medicine Wheel</li> <li>• Tradition</li> <li>• The Four Directions</li> <li>• The Centre of the Wheel</li> <li>• The Four Sacred Medicines</li> <li>• The Seven Stages of Life</li> </ul>
<b>Student Summary</b>	<p><u>The Medicine Wheel</u>  Medicine Wheels made of stones arranged on the Earth have been found in various places throughout North America, marking places of special significance, such as places of energy, ceremony, meeting, meditation, teaching, and celebration. Some estimate that there were about 20,000 medicine wheels in North America before European contact occurred. Some Medicine Wheels on the prairies have been found to be 5,000 years old or more.</p> <p>The Medicine Wheel is, in essence, a circle divided into four parts, representing the four directions, which relate to and counterbalance one another to form a whole; this symbol is used to represent Aboriginal philosophy on the meaning of life. Medicine Wheels are not necessarily a tradition belonging to all North American Aboriginal peoples; however, many Aboriginal groups have some variation of the Wheel. Nevertheless the traditional knowledge and views of the various first peoples of North America typically share a circular model of thinking.</p> <p>As a whole, the Medicine Wheel represents the relationships between various elements of the world, both seen and unseen, and emphasizes how all parts of the world and all levels of being are interrelated and connected through a life force originating in the creation of the universe. According to the Ojibwe, there are seven teachings within each quadrant of the wheel and each has sub-teachings as well. All parts of the wheel are important, and depend on each other in the cycle of life; what affects one affects all. For this reason, the Medicine Wheel teaches that harmony, balance and</p>

respect for all parts are needed to sustain life.

#### Tradition

Tradition is knowledge or ways of doing things that are taught by older people - or Elders - who have worked and studied many years with Elders that came before them to understand the traditions.

#### The Four Directions

Each quadrant of the Medicine Wheel represents one of four cardinal directions. The Ojibwe believe that the East represents the springtime and the beginning of all life, changing from spirit to human; the journey starts there. The journey continues to the South, the summer stage, to the West, the death stage, and then to the North, the rebirth stage. This cycle continues in a clockwise motion around the Medicine Wheel, following the rising and setting of the sun, with the Four Directions serving as primary directional, or guiding, forces.

#### The Centre of the Wheel

The centre of the Medicine Wheel symbolizes the self in balance on its life journey, from the perspective of traditional Aboriginal philosophy. The central place of the Medicine Wheel is where one seeks to develop a holistic vision and understanding of creation and connection to all things.

The Ojibwe believe that the Centre of the Wheel is represented by a flame and it is our responsibility to nurture this fire by reconciling conflicts with others and making peace within ourselves. Through reflection, meditation, awareness, acceptance and surrender, we are able to live balanced and whole lives.

#### The Four Sacred Medicines

To give thanks each day to those things that are needed to sustain life, traditional Ojibwe people take a small handful of tobacco and place it in a clean place on the earth or on the shore of a lake. In this way, the Ojibwe thank nature, Creation, for giving the breath of life. Tobacco is represented by the East on the Medicine Wheel.

Cedar is used as a traditional medicine often prepared as a tea to cleanse the body and mind and spirit of things not needed on life's journey. Cedar is represented by the South on the Medicine Wheel.

Sage is represented by the West on the Medicine Wheel and is used for cleansing as well, burnt to use the smoke as a wash over the body.

	<p>Sweet grass is represented by the North on the Medicine Wheel and is used to invite positive energy.</p> <p><u>The Seven Stages of Life</u>  Approximately every seven years of life are considered to relate to a stage in life’s journey, beginning with the Good Life. At this stage the child is attended to by loving family members who provide unconditional support. The Fast Life is when the child is being prepared for their four-day vision quest, or fast, at the time of puberty. The Wandering Life is where the youth develops, questions, and continues to grow. The Truth Stage is when the youth has matured and is able to speak with knowledge of self. The Planning Stage requires the adult to work with this knowledge to lead his/her life. The Doing Stage is when one puts all his/her life knowledge into practice. In the Elder Stage one is expected to share knowledge through the teaching of younger generations.</p>
<p><b>Learner Objectives</b></p>	<p>Knowledge/Understanding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To identify the Ojibwe as an Aboriginal people with traditional beliefs</li> <li>• To develop awareness of the natural environment through the identification of the Four Cardinal Directions and the Four Seasons</li> <li>• To recognize the cyclical nature of the four seasons in relation to the earth’s orbit</li> <li>• To identify the Four Sacred Medicines of the Medicine Wheel</li> <li>• To relate the Four Sacred Colours of the Medicine Wheel to the Four Cardinal Directions</li> <li>• To describe the meaning behind the Seven Stages of Life</li> <li>• To become familiar with the meanings of the terms “Medicine Wheel”, “sacred”, “traditional”, and “interconnected”</li> </ul> <p>Inquiry/Values:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To appreciate the unique attributes, or gifts, of each of the four directions</li> <li>• To recognize that the four seasons make a whole which repeats in a cycle year after year</li> <li>• To recognize the Medicine Wheel as an Aboriginal symbol with an ancient history</li> <li>• To appreciate that the four directions are consistent and everlasting and that each individual has a central perspective to these directions</li> <li>• To relate the concept of spiritual connection as it applies to the teachings and sub-teachings of the Medicine Wheel</li> </ul> <p>Skills/Applications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To physically identify the Four Cardinal Directions</li> <li>• To physically demonstrate the movement of the sun</li> <li>• To navigate the internet with some measure of control</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategy</b></p>	<p>1. Post a very large sheet labeled “Spring” on the eastern wall of the classroom. Post a sheet</p>



labeled “Summer” on the southern wall of the classroom, a sheet for “Fall” on the western wall of the classroom, and one for “Winter” on the northern wall of the classroom. As the students arrive for class, ask them to move to the side of the room representing the season that is their favourite. Generate a discussion based on which season is most popular among the class. Why is this your favourite season? What do you like to do at that time? What do you not like about the other seasons? Why?

2. Each group can work as a team to decorate the sign that is on their wall, drawing symbols to identify what the group likes best about the season they chose. Then have them add the months of the year for their seasons respectively.
3. Explain that Aboriginal people have *traditional* teachings to share, given to them thousands of years ago and passed down through the generations. Aboriginal people have always had a close, *spiritual*, relationship to nature, having depended on it for survival. It was (and in some places is still) important to know the seasons to know when to hunt, to trap, to grow plants, to make shelters, etc. Different times of the year pose different challenges. Aboriginal people have very highly developed knowledge about the forces of nature and how we are all connected through nature. Aboriginal elders teach that the four seasons are very special and very important and not just to them but to everyone because all of us share these same four seasons (at least in Canada). The seasons do not change. So traditional Aboriginal people believe that the four seasons are *sacred*, or blessed, because each season has a spirit and gives us special gifts. The seasons are *interconnected*. They believe that we must always respect the four seasons. What are the gifts of the seasons? What are the challenges of the seasons?
4. Explain that in addition to the seasons, the Ojibwe people have traditional teachings about the sacredness of the four directions, as they recognize the value of the sun for physical survival. Why? What are the gifts of the sun? To keep warm, to have light, to grow food. So the Ojibwe respect the sun which rises each day - in which direction? It travels across the sky in which direction? It sets in which direction? And the cycle repeats the next day. And the next day. And the next day after that. So the Four Directions are considered to be forces that provide guidance. The directions are interconnected. Where does the sun rise? Everybody point in that direction. Ask the spring group to add “East” to their poster. Now ask which direction does the sun travel? Everybody point in that direction. Ask the summer group to add “South” to their poster. Now ask which direction does the sun set each night? Everybody point in that direction. As the fall group to add “West” to their poster. Finally ask which direction does the sun return to start the cycle again? Everybody point north. Ask the winter group to add “North” to their poster. Four directions makes the sun’s cycle complete, balanced.

5. Face East again, as the cycle is complete. Did we change our position? No, we stayed in the centre, because we are always in the centre. Even if we move left or right, we are always in the middle of the four directions. So this is important to remember according to traditional teachings because it reminds us that we are spiritually connected to the four directions. We cannot escape them. They are part of us and we are part of them. That means everything around us is connected to us, and we are connected to everything around us and to each other. Post the four signs where they were before and have the students tour the room like in an art gallery to look at the other posters up close.
6. Returning to the original seasons groups, explain that Ms. Lillian Pitawanakwat is an Ojibwe elder who has traditional teachings to share with the class about the four directions and the four seasons. She wants to teach the *Medicine Wheel* to the class from the internet. What is medicine? We use medicine to heal us; it is good for us; it keeps us strong and healthy. This looks like a wheel because it is round and each part is the same size. Aboriginal people originally placed rocks in a formation on the ground to mark places of special spiritual significance and to use for prayer. The Medicine Wheel has been a symbol for generations to remember and respect the Four Directions and the good things that the sun and the seasons bring us every day. The Medicine Wheel represents all that is interconnected.
7. Read the summary above.
8. Visit [www.fourdirectionteachings.com](http://www.fourdirectionteachings.com) together as a class to read the elder's biography. Who can pronounce the elder's name? Ms. Pitawanakwat comes from Manitoulin Island in Ontario. Does anyone know where that is? Has anyone ever been there?
9. Individually or in pairs have students listen to the elder's teachings, "The East – Waubunong," "The South – Zhawanong," "The West – Epingishmook," "The North – Kiiwedionong," and "The Centre of the Wheel."
10. Discuss the teachings and the colour associations with each direction. Colour the posters appropriately: East (Yellow); South (Red); West (Black); and North (White). Why might these colours be used to represent these directions?
11. Now have the students move to the side of the room representing their favourite colour. The elder had another teaching to share about the Medicine Wheel. There are four plants that Aboriginal people consider sacred, spiritual, and they burn them in ceremonies following ancient practices. Start with the Yellow group. What did she say about their sacred plant? Add "Tobacco" to the yellow poster. Continue to the Red group. Add "Cedar" to the red poster. Continue to the Black group. Add "Sage" to the black poster. Continue to the White group. Add "Sweet grass" to the white poster. Why are these plants considered to be medicinal?
12. Visit [www.fourdirectionteachings.com](http://www.fourdirectionteachings.com) together as a class to hear the elder's teachings on the

seven stages of life. Discuss the names of the stages and how they relate to the time periods in question.

13. Wrap up lesson with a selection of discussion topics and optional exercises below.

Discussion Topics:

- Paying respects to the Four Directions is done through a gift of tobacco, in the traditional Aboriginal custom. Why do traditional Ojibwe people consider this to be an act of humility? Why do they consider tobacco to be a medicine? How does this compare to modern society's view of tobacco?
- Aboriginal people have traditionally recognized humanity's dependency on nature but modern society has a different view of the importance of the natural elements. What happens when we lose respect for nature? What are the effects of polluting our water systems and the air we breathe? What happens when people work together all around the world to preserve nature?
- Ms. Pitawanakwat refers to the Seven Stages of Life that are found on the Medicine Wheel. When the Ojibwe say that each of us was gifted with seven stages of life, what does that mean? Is this ancient theory meant to be taken literally? How do these stages relate to the Medicine Wheel as a *continuum*?

Optional Exercises:

- Draw a Medicine Wheel which captures all of the teachings above in brief. Start with a circle, then the four quadrants. Relate in writing the relationships between the rings of the Medicine Wheel.
- Choose the part of the Medicine Wheel most interesting (e.g. the four seasons, the four directions, the four colours, or the four sacred medicines) and, in a journal, summarize the teaching. What was surprising about this information? Was it confusing?
- Bring in potted plants of cedar, tobacco (or a package of pipe tobacco), sage, and sweet grass (or a sweet grass braid) to view in class or visit a garden centre together. Examine the differences between the plants in size, shape, colour, feel and smell. Grow these plants in class or plant outside in a special garden marked "Four Sacred Medicines."
- Research the vocabulary words in a dictionary and study the meanings.
- Create medicine wheel models using leather, paints, yarn, etc.
- Invite an Aboriginal elder to the class to discuss the Medicine Wheel from his/her perspective – see Teacher Resource Kit for information on protocol.
- Listen to Vivaldi's concerto "Four Seasons". Ask students to describe the differences in the sounds in each season in a poem. Type the poems and create a class book, "The Four

	<p>Seasons". Make a copy for each student.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take a walk in a conservation area, park, wetland, etc. Collect samples of earth and water to do an in-class study of microscopic life forms.</li> <li>• Do an internet search of literary/poetic quotes pertaining to the elements. Print them out with the poets' names and post them on the respective walls of the classroom with art design illustrating the respective elements.</li> <li>• Execute a different seasonal exercise each month highlighting natural materials such as food products in season or leaves (see links below).</li> <li>• Visit related websites that explain the solar system and the changing of the seasons from a scientific perspective (see links below).</li> </ul>
<b>Vocabulary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medicine Wheel</li> <li>• Sacred</li> <li>• Traditional</li> <li>• Spiritual</li> <li>• Interconnected</li> <li>• Continuum</li> </ul>
<b>Materials Required</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very large sheets of paper, tape, markers or crayons.</li> <li>• Other arts and crafts materials.</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Self evaluation of participation by students. Did I share ideas with my groups? Did I listen to others? Did I make the effort to understand the elder? Did I give others a chance to speak? Did I complete the reading?</li> <li>2. Teacher evaluation of poems. Did the student identify four related Medicine Wheel elements? Did the poem capture the essence of the teaching? Was the spelling correct?</li> <li>3. Parent evaluation of journal writing. Did the parent understand the teaching based on the student's summary? Was the summary clear? Which part did the parent find interesting?</li> </ol>

<b>Elder Nation</b>	<b>Lillian Pitawanakwat</b>
<b>Lesson Plan Grade Level</b>	<b>Ojibwe/Potawotami</b>
<b>Time Required</b>	<b>Senior (Grades 10-12)</b>
<b>Subject Strand Links</b>	<b>3 – 4 hours</b>
<b>Key Concepts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language Arts</li> <li>• Religious Studies</li> <li>• The Medicine Wheel</li> <li>• Tradition</li> <li>• The Four Directions</li> <li>• The Centre of the Wheel</li> <li>• The Four Sacred Medicines</li> <li>• Death and Remembrance</li> <li>• The Strawberry Teaching</li> </ul>
<b>Summary</b>	<p><u>The Medicine Wheel</u></p> <p>Medicine Wheels made of stones arranged on the Earth have been found in various places throughout North America, marking places of special significance, such as places of energy, ceremony, meeting, meditation, teaching, and celebration. Some estimate that there were about 20,000 medicine wheels in North America before European contact occurred. Some Medicine Wheels on the prairies have been found to be 5,000 years old or more.</p> <p>The Medicine Wheel is, in essence, a circle divided into four parts, representing the four directions, which relate to and counterbalance one another to form a whole; this symbol is used to represent Aboriginal philosophy on the meaning of life. Medicine Wheels are not necessarily a tradition belonging to all North American Aboriginal peoples; however, many Aboriginal groups have some variation of the Wheel. Nevertheless the traditional knowledge and views of the various first peoples of North America typically share a circular model of thinking.</p> <p>As a whole, the Medicine Wheel represents the relationships between various elements of the world, both seen and unseen, and emphasizes how all parts of the world and all levels of being are interrelated and connected through a life force originating in the creation of the universe. According to the Ojibwe, there are seven teachings within each quadrant of the wheel and each has sub-teachings as well. All parts of the wheel are important, and depend on each other in the cycle of life; what affects one affects all. For this reason, the Medicine Wheel teaches that harmony, balance and respect for all parts are needed to sustain life.</p>

### Tradition

Tradition is knowledge or ways of doing things that are taught by older people - or Elders - who have worked and studied many years with Elders that came before them to understand the traditions.

### The Four Directions

Each quadrant of the Medicine Wheel represents one of four cardinal directions. The Ojibwe believe that the East represents the springtime and the beginning of all life, changing from spirit to human; the journey starts there. The journey continues to the South, the summer stage, to the West, the death stage, and then to the North, the rebirth stage. This cycle continues in a clockwise motion around the Medicine Wheel, following the rising and setting of the sun, with the Four Directions serving as primary directional, or guiding, forces.

### The Centre of the Wheel

The centre of the Medicine Wheel symbolizes the self in balance on its life journey, from the perspective of traditional Aboriginal philosophy. The central place of the Medicine Wheel is where one seeks to develop a holistic vision and understanding of creation and connection to all things.

The Ojibwe believe that the Centre of the Wheel is represented by a flame and it is our responsibility to nurture this fire by reconciling conflicts with others and making peace within ourselves. Through reflection, meditation, awareness, acceptance and *surrender*, we are able to live balanced and whole lives.

### The Four Sacred Medicines

To give thanks each day to those things that are needed to sustain life, traditional Ojibwe people take a small handful of tobacco and place it in a clean place on the earth or on the shore of a lake. In this way, the Ojibwe thank nature, Creation, for giving the breath of life. Tobacco is represented by the East on the Medicine Wheel.

Cedar is used as a traditional medicine often prepared as a tea to cleanse the body and mind and spirit of things not needed on life's journey. Cedar is represented by the South on the Medicine Wheel.

Sage is represented by the West on the Medicine Wheel and is used for cleansing as well, burnt to use the smoke as a wash over the body.

	<p>Sweet grass is represented by the North on the Medicine Wheel and is used to invite positive energy.</p> <p><u>Death and Remembrance</u>  Among other things, the north direction of the Medicine Wheel is representative of the winter season, the elder stage of life, and the colour white. Just as plants transform themselves through the changing of the seasons to end life in winter, the stages of life proceed from infancy through to adulthood and death. Traditional Ojibwe people believe, however, that death is but one stage of the cycle of life, as it is not the end; there is no end. The life force is continuous beyond the moment to death through <i>transformation</i> into spirit. The white of the snow is kin to the white of the death spirit and the death of the physical body is kin to the birth of the spirit. Veneration of the spirits is important to maintain awareness of one's place in the cycle of life and to experience the fullness of self; this is done through various ceremonial practices.</p> <p><u>The Strawberry Teaching</u>  In the Strawberry Teaching two brothers mischievously play at wrestling, against their parents' wishes. Following the accidental death of one of the boys, the survivor is overcome with grief and ashamed to admit his role in his brother's death. After years of grief and anger, the surviving brother is surprised to discover a strawberry plant growing on his brother's grave. As the fruit matures it transforms from a tiny white bud to a beautiful red, luscious fruit, shaped like a heart. Eating this fruit restored his joy in life again and allowed him to release his guilt and shame. Change and healing took place not from the head, but from the heart following <i>acceptance</i> of his brother's death.</p>
<p><b>Learner Objectives</b></p>	<p>Knowledge/Understanding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To identify the Ojibwe as an Aboriginal people with traditional beliefs</li> <li>• To develop awareness of the natural environment through the identification of the Four Cardinal Directions</li> <li>• To identify the Centre of the Medicine Wheel as symbolic of balance and harmony</li> <li>• To relate the continuum of life, growth, death and rebirth to the Medicine Wheel</li> <li>• To relate the practice of remembrance of the dead as significant to honoring all the stages of life along with their gifts and teachings</li> <li>• To become familiar with the meanings of the terms "Medicine Wheel", "sacred", "traditional", "direction", and "veneration."</li> </ul> <p>Inquiry/Values:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To recognize the Medicine Wheel as an Aboriginal symbol with an ancient history</li> <li>• To appreciate that the four directions are consistent and everlasting and that each individual has a central perspective to these directions</li> <li>• To relate the concept of spiritual connection as it applies to the Medicine Wheel</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To relate the associations between the final stage of life (and death), mindfulness and remembrance with the North direction of the Medicine Wheel</li> </ul> <p>Skills/Applications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To verbally communicate the symbolism behind the Medicine Wheel and each of four directions</li> <li>• To navigate the internet with control</li> <li>• To produce a Medicine Wheel graphically or physically</li> </ul>
<b>Strategy</b>	<p>Bring in a plate of strawberries for the class to enjoy. Generate a discussion on the fruit and where it comes from, where it grows, its season, and its byproducts. What does the strawberry symbolize in cultural folklore? How has this fruit figured in literature?</p> <p>Introduce Ms. Lillian Pitawanakwat as an Ojibwe elder from Manitoulin Island, Ontario, who will share traditional teachings on the strawberry and what it represents to the Ojibwe. Visit <a href="http://www.fourdirectionteachings.com">www.fourdirectionteachings.com</a> to hear the Strawberry Teaching as told by the elder.</p> <p>Discuss the teaching. How does the process of grieving for the lost brother change following the introduction of the strawberry? What responsibility does the surviving brother have to himself in his healing? What role does self-<i>forgiveness</i> play in healing? How would this story help one through the grieving process? What happens when one focuses on <i>grief</i> and nothing else?</p> <p>Introduce the concept of the <i>Medicine Wheel</i>. What is medicine? We use medicine to heal us; it is good for us; it keeps us strong and healthy. The Medicine Wheel has been a symbol for generations to remember and respect the Four Directions and the good things that the sun and the seasons bring us every day. It looks like a wheel because it is round and each part is the same size. Aboriginal people originally placed rocks in a formation on the ground to mark places of special spiritual significance and to use for prayer. The Medicine Wheel represents all that is interconnected.</p> <p>Read the summary above.</p> <p>Explain that Aboriginal people have <i>traditional</i> teachings that have been passed down from generation to generation and those that follow these teachings share a close, spiritual, relationship with nature, having depended on it for physical survival. It was (and in some places is still) important to know the seasons to know when to hunt, to trap, to grow plants, to make shelters, etc. Different times of the year pose different challenges. Traditional Aboriginal people have very highly developed knowledge about the forces of nature and how we are all connected through nature. Aboriginal elders teach that the four seasons are very special and very important and not just to them but to everyone because all of us share these same four seasons - at least in Canada. The seasons do not change. So traditional Aboriginal people believe the four seasons are <i>sacred</i>, or blessed, because each season has a spirit and gives us special gifts. The seasons are <i>interconnected</i>. So they believe that we must always <i>respect</i> the four</p>



seasons. What are the gifts of the seasons? What are the challenges of the seasons? The Centre of the Wheel is where the four directions come together, where the four seasons meet, where the four elements meet, where all of life is in balance and harmony, within each of us. This is where, traditional Ojibwe people believe, one nurtures oneself, feeds one's fire. Visit [www.fourdirectionteachings.com](http://www.fourdirectionteachings.com) again to hear the teachings of the East, the South, the West, and the North.

Discuss the teachings and the practice the elder mentioned of feeding the spirits. What is the premise of this practice? How does feeding the spirits of the dead relate to maintaining our own fires? How does this practice help us to relate to each other and appreciate each other's gifts? Wrap up the lesson with a selection of discussion topics and optional exercises below.

Discussion Topics:

- Discuss how the Four Directions, Four Sacred Medicines, Four Colours, and Four Seasons relate to the Medicine Wheel as a *continuum*.
- "We still go back to our original teachings, because that's where our food for life comes from, to nurture that spirit that is forever searching in life's journey." What does "food for life" refer to in this quote by Ms. Pitawanakwat? What do our spirits seek in life's journey? How does following traditional teachings help in this regard?
- Joy and sadness are ever present in life and death. The elder explains that beauty itself resides within the balance of the whole circle, the whole cycle of life and death and rejuvenation. Discuss how maintenance of the Centre of the Wheel contributes to this beauty.

Optional Exercises:

- Make a journal entry on the power of death to transform one's life.
- Brainstorm thoughts about death and what it means, the impact it has on us, what we learn from it, and why we fear it. Use the ideas that come forth to write a poem from the class. Take everyone's thoughts and work them into one poem on death. Produce for the class.
- Research spiritual practices for *venerating* the dead from various cultures and religions including Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, and Judaism. Include visits to cemeteries, temples, and shrines to meet with religious leaders to learn how these ceremonies are conducted and what they represent.
- Visit a strawberry field for a strawberry picking excursion in June. Collect baskets of strawberries and produce desserts for the class to enjoy: strawberries and cream; strawberry shortcake; strawberry jam; strawberry and apple pie.
- Investigate the spiritual and physical healing power of plants.

**Vocabulary**

- Sacred

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Traditional</li><li>• Surrender</li><li>• Medicine Wheel</li><li>• Transformation</li><li>• Acceptance</li><li>• Respect</li><li>• Veneration</li><li>• Grief</li><li>• Forgiveness</li><li>• Continuum</li></ul>
<b>Materials Required</b>	
<b>Evaluation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Teacher evaluation of student participation</li></ul>