

The Story of the Medicine Wheel

Traditional Aboriginal cultures view life as a continuous cycle. Life mirrors the cycling of the seasons, the daily rising of the sun, and the phases of the moon. The Medicine Wheel is a symbol for the circle of life. It is fashioned around nature's cycles to teach how the human species is connected to those of Mother Earth's and shows how all living forms are connected to each other and are sacred. The wheel represents all of creation, all races of people, animals, birds, fish, insects, trees, and stones, the sun, moon and earth are in the cycle of the medicine wheel. Each quadrant tells part of the story. The circle is all of the cycles of nature, day and night, seasons, moons, life cycles, and orbits of the moon and planets. There are many interpretations in the medicine wheel and they are all correct. No one is wrong.

Numbers have always played a significant part in traditional Aboriginal life. Four is one of the most sacred numbers and many aspects are seen in terms of four. The circle is divided into four quadrants. The number four has many significant meanings for Aboriginal people. In the universe there are four directions – east, south, west, and north. There are four winds; four seasons – spring, summer, fall, and winter; four races of people; four types of creatures that breathe – those that fly (birds), those that are four-legged (the buffalo), those that are two-legged (man) and those that crawl (insects). There are four elements on earth – wind, fire, water, and air. The directions used in the wheel are always used in a clockwise direction because that is the way the sun moves, rises, and sets. Traditionally, Healing Circles begin in the east and move clockwise to south, west, and end in the north.

We start in the East direction because that is about

Beginning

Sun rising

Where the new day begins

Yellows of early growth and early sun

Yellow is the path of Life

To begin the walk as a warrior

To shine in all that you do

Spring is the season when

All things begin to grow and awaken

We are born here and

Baby's first stages are here as he learns

About his body

The South direction is about

Relaxing and growing time

It is the summertime

About flowering and knowing what colour we will be,

What shape, what flower – who

It is the time to accept change and

Learn to understand

Our babies have grown to be young teens

It is where the hot sun comes and beats down

Red is the colour of a red hot noon day sun

The West direction is about

Taking all that grew in the summer and harvesting it

It is the autumn

When things die back just a little

The adult years
 The sun is setting in the west
 Where the black clouds come and storms rain down
 Black or blue are the colours of the storms and the night after the sun sets

The North direction is where
 The spirit world resides
 Where trees are bare
 The sun is farthest away
 And all is covered in White
 As we get older our hair turns white
 As we come to our time of winter
 With experience and age
 Elders have great wisdom
 North is purity and wisdom
 A great place of healing
 Having been in action the other seasons,
 We now rest and grow old together
 We are warm in this cold season with
 The wisdom we have been given.

The Medicine Wheel is also about relationships; how to make things work between you and other people. There has to be balance in every person's life. When there is balance, people have harmony. There has to be balance in the four quadrants. Everything in the wheel has a relationship with each other. There is no harmony if all or one of these is not balanced.

It is believed that each of us must stand on every spoke of the great wheel of life many times. Until you have walked in other's moccasins, or stood on their spokes of the wheel, you will never truly know their hearts.

(Information and the wheel taken from: www.ammsa.com/buffalospirit and www.iisd.org/7thgen/healing_circle.htm)

