

Intervention 1:

Medicine Wheel

“You have noticed that everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the power of the world always works in circles, and everything tries to be round.

In the old days all our power came to us from the sacred hoop of the nation and so long as the hoop was unbroken the people flourished. The flowering tree was the living center of the hoop, and the circle of the four quarters nourished it. The east gave peace and light, the south gave warmth, the west gave rain and the north with its cold and mighty wind gave strength and endurance. This knowledge came to us from the outer world with our religion.

Everything the power of the world does is done in a circle. The sky is round and I have heard that the Earth is round like a ball and so are all the stars. The wind, in its greatest power, whirls. Birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours. The sun comes forth and goes down again in a circle. The moon does the same and both are round. Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing and always come back again to where they were.

The life of a man is a circle from childhood- to-childhood, and so it is in everything where power moves. Our tipis were round like the nests of birds, and these were always set in a circle, the nation’s hoop, a nest of many nests, where the Great Spirit meant for us to hatch our children.”

—Black Elk, Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux



Objectives

The Medicine Wheel is a symbol of the harmony, balance, and peaceful interaction among all living beings on Earth. Traditionally this is depicted with a circle representing the sacred cycle of life and a color or animal representing the four elements of life (earth, air, water, and fire). The youth will create a Medicine Wheel to:

- assist them in understanding how misusing fire can have financial and emotional consequences that impact their family, their community, and their tribe
- assist them in understanding how they are connected with others in their community/tribe
- assist them in understanding their role in the harmony, balance, and peace between all living things
- educate them about the consequences their decisions have on the other elements of their Medicine Wheel

Materials Needed

- poster board
- crayons, markers, watercolors, or paints & paint brushes
- Questions Worksheet (provided)

Instructions

This project is intended to be provided over 2-4 lessons. The number of lessons should vary based on the youth's age, skill level, and interest. Completing the project over a number of lessons allows the youth greater opportunity to learn from and be guided by you; and more time to be thoughtful in choosing elements to incorporate in his/her Medicine Wheel.

Note: Some tribes may refer to a Medicine Wheel as a Sacred Circle or Sacred Hoop. Use the term that is most frequently used by your tribal community.



Step 1 -

1. Explain the meaning of the Medicine Wheel. If possible, share samples of your tribe's Medicine Wheel and the meanings of the various symbols used by your tribe.
2. Provide the youth with a poster board and art supplies to create their Medicine Wheel.
3. Encourage the youth to choose the elements that are important to them, but also represent the larger community. Elements may include their tribe, their family, their school, their friends, etc. Encourage them to choose an animal spirit and colors that best represent these elements.
4. Allow the youth ample time to complete their Medicine Wheel.

Note: Some youth may need additional assistance based on their age and abilities. A blank circle is provided for those who may need some help getting started. Make yourself available for suggestions or assistance, if needed, while encouraging the youth to complete the project on their own.

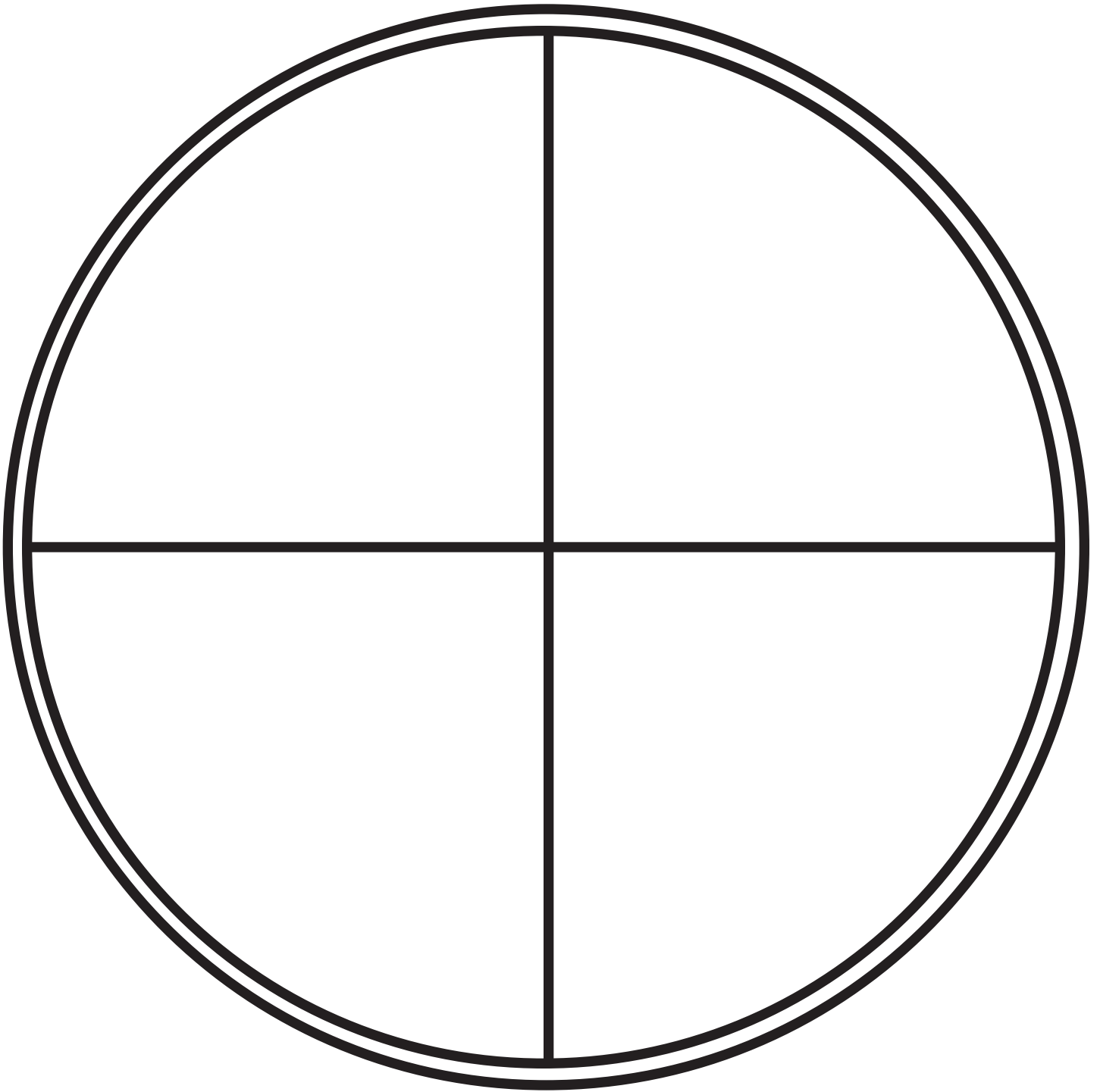
Step 2 -

1. Provide the Question Worksheet (provided) to the youth. The worksheet can be completed together or as a homework assignment.
2. Have the youth create a symbol that represents the fire they started and have them attach this to their Medicine Wheel.
3. Using the answers from the Question Worksheet, discuss how their fire symbol impacted the various elements of their Sacred Hoop.

Step 3 -

1. Invite a small group of supportive adults (tribal council, elders, parents, representative from the fire department) to a meeting and have the youth present their Sacred Hoop to the group.
2. Initially, the youth should present their Medicine Wheel without the fire. They should explain:
 - ☼ the elements they chose and why they chose the specific animals/colors to represent them
 - ☼ how the elements are connected to one another
 - ☼ how he/she is connected to each element
3. After presenting their Medicine Wheel, the youth attaches their fire symbol and presents to the group the story of their fire and how it has impacted each element of their Medicine Wheel and how it has impacted the relationship he/she has with each of the elements.

My Medicine Wheel

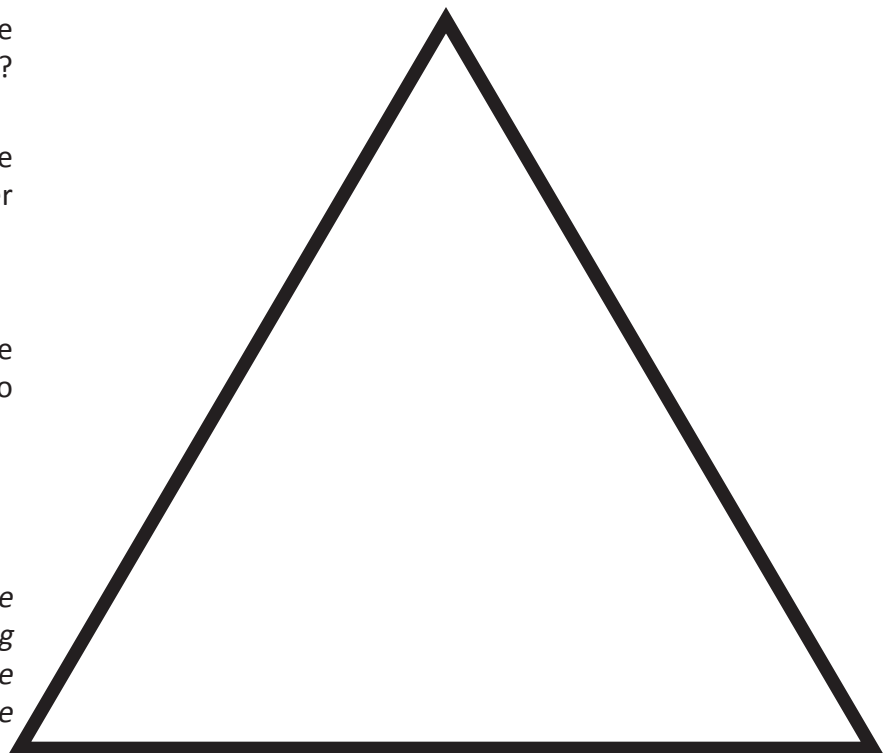


Question Worksheet

Instructions: Answer the following questions about your fire. Use additional sheets of paper if necessary.

1. What happened?
2. Who responded?
3. Was anyone hurt?
4. What damage did it cause?
5. Were any natural resources destroyed?
6. If yes, how much income was lost for the tribe?
7. How could this fire affect our community?
8. How could this fire affect the Elders? the young children?
9. How could this fire affect our natural resources?
10. How could this fire affect our animals?
11. How did your decision to set the fire affect the elements in your Sacred Hoop?
12. How did your decision to set the fire affect your relationship with other elements in your Medicine Wheel?
13. When faced with tough decisions in the future, what will you do differently to make the right choice?

Use the triangle to draw picture of the fire you set or to draw an image representing fire. When completed, cut out the triangle and glue or tape them to your Medicine Wheel.



My Medicine Wheel