

# MEDICINE WHEEL / FOUR DIRECTIONS TEACHINGS



## APPENDIX G MEDICINE WHEEL / FOUR DIRECTIONS TEACHINGS

The medicine wheel, or four directions teachings, are used by many (but not all) First Nations communities to teach about many aspects of life.

An excellent resource on such traditions is “Four Directions Teachings” ([www.fourdirectionsteachings.com](http://www.fourdirectionsteachings.com)). This site provides oral teachings and teacher resources for Cree, Ojibwe, and Mohawk learning activities. You can also ask local Elders and cultural teachers about teachings appropriate for your community or region.

In essence, the four directions teachings demonstrate the importance of the circle in our life. The circle has four quadrants, with each one being represented by a colour and various elements of life (stages of life, seasons, animals, etc.)

There are different interpretations of the elements of the medicine wheel but the following images illustrate two of the most common in Ontario. The first of the two is the Anishnabeg Medicine Wheel and the second is a version of the Cree Medicine Wheel.<sup>1,2</sup>

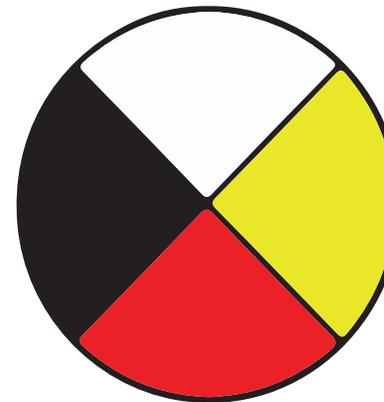
### Anishnabeg Medicine Wheel

#### Keewatinong - Spirit Keeper of the North

Colour: White  
Direction: North  
Time of Day: Night  
Season: Winter  
Stage of Life: Elder  
Animal: Deer  
Plant: Medicine: Sweet Grass  
Place: Mind

#### Sha'ngabi'hanong - Spirit Keeper of the West

Colour: Black  
Direction: West  
Time of Day: Evening  
Season: Autumn  
Stage of Life: Adult  
Animal: Bear  
Plant Medicine: Cedar  
Place: Physical



#### Wabanong - Spirit Keeper of the East

Colour: Yellow  
Direction: East  
Time of Day: Morning  
Season: Spring  
Stage of Life: Baby  
Animal: Eagle  
Plant Medicine: Tobacco  
Place: Spirit

#### Shawnanong- Spirit Keeper of the South

Colour: Red  
Direction: South  
Time of Day: Afternoon  
Season: Summer  
Stage of Life: Youth  
Animal: Coyote  
Plant: Medicine: Sage  
Place: Emotion

1 Philip, J. "Anishinaabe Medicine Wheel." *The Silent Canoe*. [www.thesilentcanoe.com/anishinaabe-medicine-wheel.html](http://www.thesilentcanoe.com/anishinaabe-medicine-wheel.html)

2 Laframboise, Sandra, and Karen Sherbina. "The Medicine Wheel." *Dancing to Eagle Spirit Society*. [www.dancingtoeaglespiritsociety.org/medwheel.php](http://www.dancingtoeaglespiritsociety.org/medwheel.php)



### Cree Medicine Wheel

Winter Season Eldership.  
Place of achievement,  
reflection, deep connec-  
tion to spirituality and  
understanding of life

Direction of the  
North colour is white  
for the White Nation.  
Spirit animal put there  
by my teaching is the White  
Calf. Buffalo Woman brought to  
Native people the sacred Pipe  
and a way of prayers. Therefore  
we say it is the place of knowledge and  
wisdom. The place of freedom and  
selfishness. The place of personal  
power. The place of Eldership. We also  
place the element of Fire in that  
direction.

Direction of the  
East colour is yellow  
for the Yellow Nation.  
Spirit Animal put there by  
my teaching is the Eagle. The Sun  
rises in that direction. It is a new  
day. The beginning of new things. The  
Eagle brings focus and flies high in the  
sky. So we say we are walking close to  
Creator when we are honored with an  
Eagle Feather as it brings words to him.  
The Eagle gives us the ability to stay  
focused on our tasks at hand. We also  
place the element of Air in that direction.

Spring Season time of  
planting, birth and first  
or second chance. Con-  
nection to the physical is  
in this place.

Fall Season time of  
harvesting, adulthood  
and deeper emotional  
understanding.

Direction of the West colour is  
black for the Black Nation. Spirit  
animal placed there by my teachings is  
the brown medicine bear. We say it is  
the place of deep introspection and  
reflection. The sun sets in that  
direction. We ask for ability to  
go deep within to do the healing  
necessary. We place the  
element of Water in  
that direction.

Direction of the South colour is  
red for the Red Nation. The animal  
placed there by my teachings is  
that of the jumping mouse.  
The mouse multiplies and  
works hard. Therefore the  
lessons of family, hard  
work, integrity, honesty  
and truth. We also  
place the element  
of Earth in that  
direction.

Summer Season time of  
growth, adolescence,  
juvenile/development of  
mental capacities.

