

NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION FOR ALL RESOURCES

Partnership of IllumiNative and the National Indian Education Association



ILLUMINATIVE



Grade Level

PK-2

Subject

**Social Studies
Art**

Lesson Title

The Medicine Wheel

Activity Description: In this activity, students will learn about the significance and meaning of the Medicine Wheel to many Native American tribes and cultures. Students will then have the opportunity to make their own medicine wheels, and discover that each piece of the medicine wheel represent something different.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- [Medicine Wheel Teachings and the Four Directions](#) (p. 6)
- Paper Plate
- Red, white, black, and yellow construction paper cut into equal triangles
- Crayons, colored pencils, or markers
- Glue
- Write down these words and cut them into word tiles in the following categories
 - Seasons of the Year: Summer, Spring, Winter, Fall
 - Human Races: Red, Yellow, White, Black
 - Ceremonial Plants: Cedar, Tobacco, Sweet Grass, Sage
 - Cardinal Directions: North, South, East, West
 - Stages of Life: Baby, Adolescence, Adult, Elder
 - Aspects of Life: Mental, Emotional, Physical, Spiritual
 - Elements of Nature: Fire (or sun), Air, Water, Earth
 - Animals: Eagle, Bear, Wolf, Buffalo

STEPS

This activity is for children to do with a person from the family or community.

1. Discuss with your child the [significance of the Medicine Wheel](#), and what the Four Directions mean in Native culture using page 6 of the ["Teachings of the Medicine Wheel"](#).

Creating the Medicine Wheel

1. Cut a large circle in each of the 4 colored pieces of construction paper.
2. Cut that circle into 4 equal pieces (these should look like triangles).
3. Glue one color of each triangle onto a paper plate so that they form the medicine wheel on top of the paper plate.

Matching Activity

1. Ask your child to match each of the word tiles to the correct category.
2. Note: Answer Guide
 - a. **Red:** Spring, Red, Tobacco, East, Baby/Childhood, Spiritual, Earth Eagle,
 - b. **Yellow:** Summer, Yellow, Cedar, South, Adolescence, Emotional, Fire, Wolf
 - c. **Black:** Fall, Black, Sage, West, Adult, Physical, Water, Bear
 - d. **White:** Winter, White, Sweet Grass, North, Elder, Mental, Air, Buffalo

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HELPFUL TIPS

Parents and caregivers: This is an opportunity for your child to understand the concept of the medicine wheel, and its significance to Native culture.

- Share with your child that the Medicine Wheel teachings are among the oldest teachings in Native American culture.
 - There are 4 equal parts that relate to each other, and counterbalance one another, and it is called a wheel because it revolves endlessly. The Medicine Wheel Teachings are based on the 4 directions, north, east, south, and west.
- Emphasize to you child that the colors also represent different aspects of human beings and different stages of life.
 - **East** is the "spiritual" aspect of the human being and represents birth and rebirth, meaning new things to learn and/or new levels of understanding. It is the direction that light comes into the world.
 - **South** represents the "emotional" aspect of a human being and also represents adolescence. This is the direction of the sun at its highest point, and is the place of the heart, where we are sensitive to feelings and emotions.
 - **West** represent the "physical" qualities of a human being, like taking care of our bodies, such as adults do on their own everyday. It emphasizes body awareness, nutrition, and physical activity.
 - **North** represents "wisdom", and the place where we are stimulate and challenged. It represents the time of the Elder.
- Emphasize to your child that these are only a few aspects of the Medicine Wheel Teachings.
- While your child is matching the word tiles to that make up a few components of the Medicine Wheel Teachings, have them explain to you why they are putting those word tiles in those specific parts of the medicine wheel.
 - If it is in the wrong part, explain to your child why another part of the Medicine Wheel makes more sense. Refer to the explanation above for reference.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Families and Educators: This activity may open other talking points around The Medicine Wheel Teachings.

- Use this activity guide to explore more about "[The Seven Lessons of the Medicine Wheel](#)".
- Learn more about the Medicine Wheel from a couple of Native American tribes:
 - [Great Sioux Nation Medicine Wheel Teachings](#)
 - [Cherokee Nation Medicine Wheel Teachings](#)

Activity Resource Links:

- **Adapted from:**
 - *Teachings of the Medicine Wheel:* <https://onlc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Medicine-Wheel-Student-Manual1.pdf>
- *The Seven Lessons of the Medicine Wheel:* <https://saymag.com/the-seven-lessons-of-the-medicine-wheel/>
- *Learning about the Medicine Wheel from a couple of Native American tribes.*
 - *The Great Sioux Nation Medicine Wheel Teachings:* <https://www.stjo.org/native-american-culture/native-american-beliefs/medicine-wheel/>
 - *The Cherokee Nation Medicine Wheel Teachings:* <https://visitchokeenc.com/chokeke-medicine-wheel/>