



## Medicine Wheel Teachings

### Organizational Info:

**Title:** Medicine Wheel Teachings

**Summary:** Learn about the four parts of the medicine wheel, collect items from nature and create a story that connects items.

**Inquiry Question:** Inquiry Question 1: According to local Indigenous groups, what is water, where did it come from, and why is it important?

**Duration:** 1-2 periods

**Learning Environment:** Outdoor

**Season:** Summer, Spring, Fall

**Materials:**

- Green space
- Computer
- Video explaining the meaning behind the medicine wheel: <https://rb.gy/d9vl7>

**Meta Data:**

**Content Type:** Activity, storytelling

**Bundle:** Water

**Theme:** Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Contaminants in the Environment

**Subject Area:** Art, Biology, Environmental Education, Geography, History, Language Arts, Outdoor Education, Science, Social Studies

**Curriculum Focus:** 8

**Curriculum Links:**

Science and Technology: A1.1, A1.4, A1.5, E1.2

**We recommend inviting an Indigenous community member into the learning environment to deliver medicine wheel teachings.**

Anishinaabe community member Nicole Bowron shared with QUILLS that the medicine wheel is a teaching tool used by many Indigenous people. It represents how all things in the natural world come in fours, and how all four things need to be in balance and united. Medicine wheel teachings vary between communities, and the four areas represent many things, for example the four seasons, four directions, four stages of life, four states of being, four sacred medicines, *four natural elements*, and more. Medicine wheel teachings should come from an Indigenous person, however, if you are unable to get a Knowledge Keeper or community member to come into your class, videos (that have been properly vetted) are a great tool. Here is a short video that explains the meaning behind the medicine wheel: <https://rb.gy/d9vl7>

- This activity focuses on the four elements- *water*, air, fire, and earth.



- *Water* is one of the four elements in the Medicine Wheel. It provides life for all living things. It is life-giving and life-sustaining. Water is, therefore, an important part of many ceremonies such as sweat lodges.
- Fire is needed for survival; it is the heart of people. It provides us with life, warmth, & protection. We all have fire within ourselves, within our families, and within our communities. Fire cleanses and renews life.
- Rocks are the wisest of the four elements because of all that they have seen: floods, drought, and fire. They possess a lot of knowledge and that is why they are used in the sweat lodges. Stones that have spirits within them are very heavy and cannot be broken by humans. When the spirit has left, the rock becomes light and easy to break apart.
- Wind is here to protect us. Negatives are blown away. Wind is important to our lives and needs to be recognized as our protector. The wind also helps keep the soil clean by blowing the used topsoil away for new soil to grow.

1. Students go for a nature walk in the nearest forest, park, or schoolyard and collect items that remind them of each element.
2. Students bring collected pieces back to the classroom and create a creative piece that incorporates each item. For instance, students can draw a picture, write a story, poem or song, or any other creative form.
3. Students may present their work if they are comfortable.
4. Last, all items should be returned to the land.

Please note that the learning represented in this activity reflects Big Idea B. in the Indigenous Knowledge Learning Bundle: "Indigenous Knowledge is Place-Based". To help your students learn more about this big idea check out the Learning Activities titled: *Land-Based Meditation*, *Land Acknowledgement Workshop*, *Ceremony Ensures Right Relations with the Land*, *The Clan System*, and *The 13 Moons* found in the Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being with the Natural World Learning Bundle (Grades 7-10).