

FOUR DIRECTIONS LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Elder	Lillian Pitawanakwat
Nation	Ojibwe/Potawotami
Lesson Plan Grade Level	Intermediate (Grades 7-9)
Time Required	3 – 4 hours
Subject Strand Links	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geography • Natural Science • Botany • Astronomy • Art
Traditional Teachings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Medicine Wheel • Tradition • The Four Directions • The Centre of the Wheel • The Four Sacred Medicines • The Seven Stages of Life

what affects one affects all. For this reason, the Medicine Wheel teaches that harmony, balance and respect for all parts are needed to sustain life.

Tradition

Tradition is knowledge or ways of doing things that are taught by older people - or Elders - who have worked and studied many years with Elders that came before them to understand the traditions.

The Four Directions

use the smoke as a wash over the body.

Sweet grass is represented by the North on the Medicine Wheel and is used to invite positive energy.

The Seven Stages of Life

Approximately every seven years of life are considered to relate to a stage in life's journey, beginning with the Good Life. At this stage the child is attended to by loving family members who provide unconditional support. The Fast Life is when the child is being prepared for their four-day vision

Strategy

1. Post a very large sheet labeled “Spring” on the eastern wall of the classroom. Post a sheet labeled “Summer” on the southern wall of the classroom, a sheet for “Fall” on the western wall of the classroom, and one for “Winter” on the northern wall of the classroom. As the students arrive for class, ask them to move to the side of the room representing the season that is their favourite. Generate a discussion based on which season is most popular among the class. Why is this your favourite season? What do you like to do at that time? What do you not like about the other seasons? Why?
2. Each group can work as a team to decorate the sign that is on their wall, drawing symbols to identify what the group likes best about the season they chose. Then have them add the months of the year for their seasons respectively.
3. Explain that Aboriginal people have *traditional* teachings to share, given to them thousands of years ago and passed down through the generations. Aboriginal people have always had a close, *spiritual*, relationship to nature, having depended on it for survival. It was (and in some places is still) important to know the seasons to know when to hunt, to trap, to grow plants, to make shelters, etc. Different times of the year pose different challenges. Aboriginal people have very highly developed knowledge about the forces of nature and how we are all connected through nature. Aboriginal Elders teach that the four seasons are very special and very important and not just to them but to everyone because all of us share these same four seasons (at least in Canada). The seasons do not change. So traditional Aboriginal people believe that the four seasons are *sacred*, or blessed, because each season has a spirit and gives us special gifts. The seasons are

12. Visit www.fourdirectionteachings.com together as a class to hear the Elder's teachings on the seven stages of life. Discuss the names of the stages and how they relate to the time periods in question.

13. Wrap up lesson with a selection of discussion topics and optional exercises below.

Discussion Topics:

- Paying respect to the Four Directions is done through a gift of tobacco, in the traditional Aboriginal custom. Why do traditional Ojibwe people consider this to be an act of humility? Why do they consider tobacco to be a medicine? How does this compare to modern society's view of tobacco?
- Aboriginal people have traditionally recognized humanity's dependency on nature but modern society has a different view of the importance of the natural elements. What happens when we lose respect for nature? What are the effects of polluting our water systems and the air we breathe? What happens when people work together all around the world to preserve nature?
- Ms. Pitawanakwat refers to the Seven Stages of Life that are found on the Medicine Wheel. When the Ojibwe say that each of us was gifted with seven stages of life, what does that mean? Is this ancient theory meant to be taken literally? How do these stages relate to the Medicine Wheel as a *continuum*?

Optional Exercises:

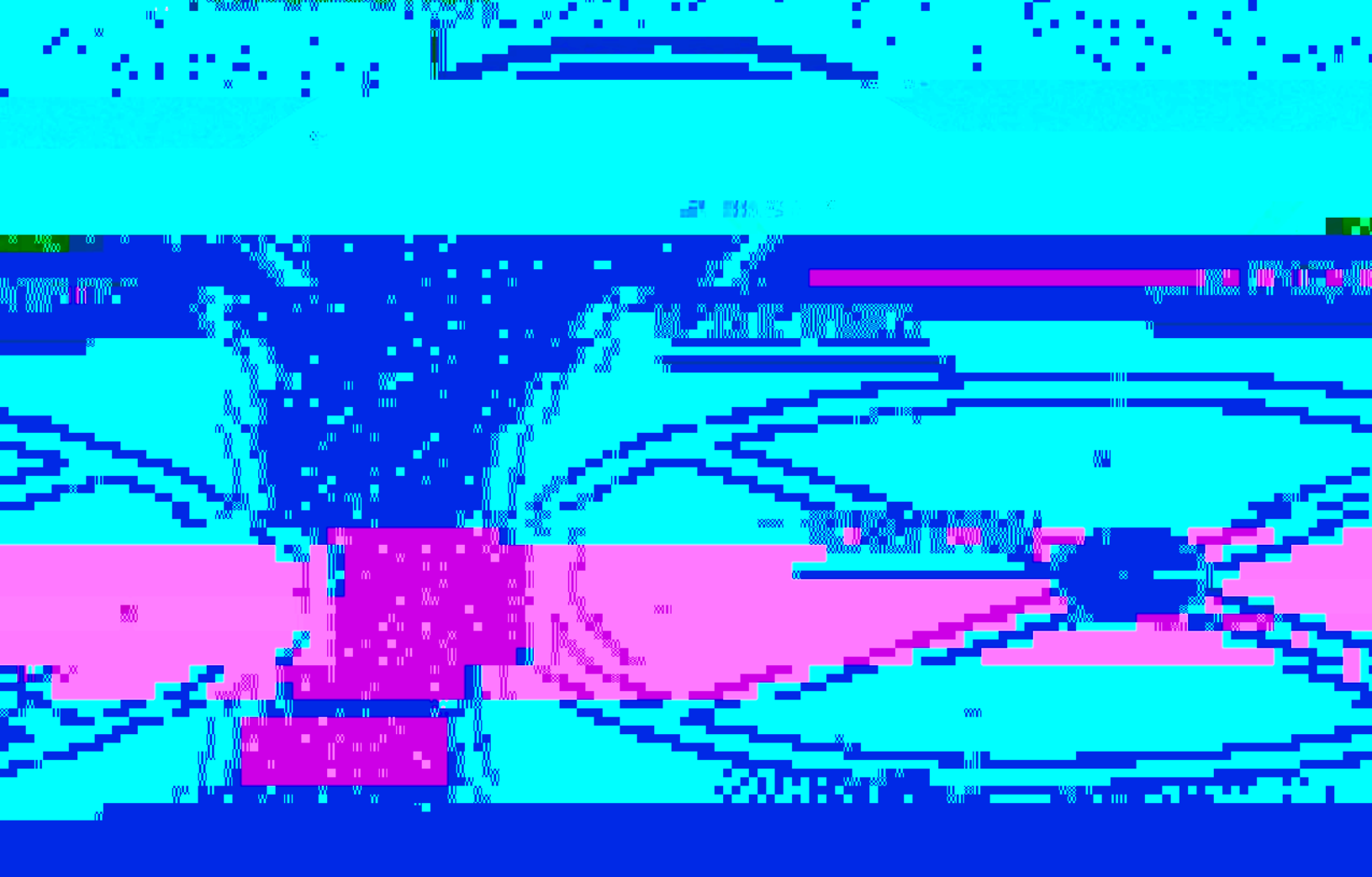
- Draw a Medicine Wheel which captures all of the teachings above in brief. Start with a circle, then the four quadrants. Relate in writing the relationships between the rings of the Medicine Wheel.
- Choose the part of the Medicine Wheel most interesting (e.g. the four seasons, the four directions, the four colours, or the four sacred medicines) and, in a journal, summarize the teaching. What was surprising about this information? Was it confusing?
- Bring in potted plants of cedar, tobacco (or a package of pipe tobacco), sage, and sweet grass (or a sweet grass braid) to view in class or visit a garden centre together. Examine the differences between the plants in size, shape, colour, feel and smell. Grow these plants in class or plant outside in a special garden marked "Four Sacred Medicines."
- Research the vocabulary words in a dictionary and study the meanings.
- Create Medicine Wheel models using leather, paints, yarn, etc.
- Invite an Aboriginal Elder to the class to discuss the Medicine Wheel from his/her perspective – see Teacher Resource Kit for information on protocol.
- Listen to Vivaldi's concerto "Four Seasons". Ask students to describe the differences in the

sounds in each season in a poem. Type the poems and create a class book, "The Four Seasons". Make a copy for each student.

- Take a walk in a conservation area, park, wetland, etc. Collect samples of earth and water to do an in-class study of microscopic life forms.
- Do an internet search of literary/poetic quotes pertaining to the elements. Print them out with the poets' names and post them on the respective walls of the classroom with art design illustrating the respective elements.
- Execute a different seasonal exercise each month highlighting natural materials such as food products in season or leaves (see links below).
- Visit related websites that explain the solar system and the changing of the seasons from a

Diagram for CURVE CURRICULUM

1. INTRODUCTION



2. THE SOUTH

