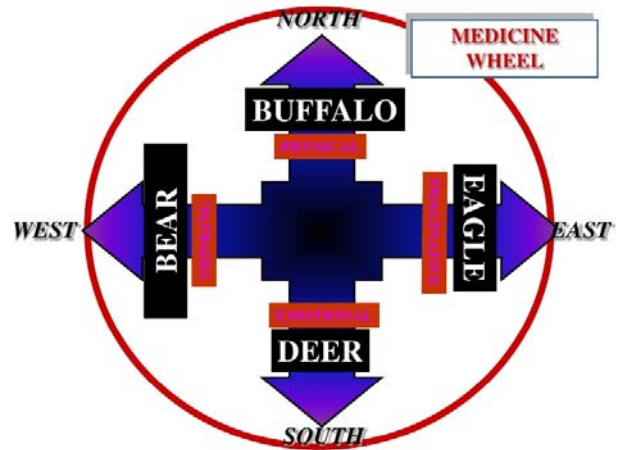


The Medicine Wheel

A design for understanding individual differences, and group strengths: The Medicine Wheel. Taken from ancient Native American lore, it is a valuable tool to use every day. Here is a short overview of the concept to think about.



Mother Earth is a circle. The sun and moon are circles and the path that they take each day is also a circle. The seasons are also a circle. Life is a circle with us being born, become an adult, then elders and then death with its transformation. The Medicine Wheel is a symbol to help understand how things happen in our lives and to understand ourselves better.

So, if you are going to be a part of a project, you want to know what your resources are, correct? Where you are starting from, where you are going, what your goal is? And who can help you along the way.

What about the people who will be part of this project? What does each of them bring to the table?

Before any meeting, before any project, before the first planning session, get the lay of the land. Use The Medicine Wheel to find out about the strengths and talents of all of the participants in the projects.

It's simple – ask people to read about the four quadrants of the wheel, and identify which quadrant they feel fits them the best. Then when it comes to task time, people will feel comfortable with their role in the project. Listen to these descriptions, and think about what quadrant of the circle YOU feel most comfortable in:

The NORTH, which is represented by The Buffalo, the Winter, the color white. The Buffalo likes to take control of a task and quickly work towards a goal.

Buffaloes bring together all of the circle members to achieve the dream. How do we dance together, how do we celebrate, how do we keep each other joyfully motivated, how do we keep focused on success?

The blender. Puller together of the plan. The Buffalo!

Lessons and gifts: Intellectual wisdom, ability to complete tasks that began as a vision; ability to see the past, present and future as interrelated

Barriers: Autocratic, not able to be aware of feelings. **Warrior.**

THE SOUTH, is represented by the Deer, the summer, the color green Deer are people known to be collaborative and supportive. They are trusting and careful of others' feelings.

They have technology skills, Know-how, emotional resources, motivation and energy.

Their Lessons and gifts: Generosity, loyalty, capacity to express feelings

Barriers: Has trouble saying NO; Easily taken advantage of. **Nurturer.**

THE EAST, is represented by The Eagle, the spring, the color yellow Eagles are people of creativity and innovation, they are visionaries.

Characteristics: Reading books, talking to others and asking for advice, attending workshops, brainstorming, traveling to new places.

Lessons and gifts: Warmth of the spirit, purity trust and hope; courage, truthfulness, guidance and leadership, remaining in the present moment

Barrier: Head in the clouds, overwhelmed, not detailed oriented.

Visionary.

THE WEST, is represented by The Bear, the autumn, the color brown A bear is analytic, methodical, and introspective.

Can translate information into a form that others can understand and recognize; diagrams, outlines, dance, a story.....masters of the spreadsheet!

Lessons and gifts: Dreams, prayers, meditation; perseverance, self-knowledge, vision. **Thinker.**

Barrier: Stubborn. Resists change.

Perhaps someone who identifies as a BEAR would be the perfect treasurer to keep careful track of the budget. Perhaps the EAGLE is the one who has the creative big picture idea that will inspire everyone with its grandeur. Perhaps the BUFFALO is the one that will make sure that all the equipment is on site and in running order. And you might need lots of DEERS working as a team on the day of the event itself.

Which one are you? And do your talents match the part of the task puzzle you are asked to solve?

So as a Resident Leader, we have to remember not to try to fit a round peg in a square hole. Use as many tools as you can to get people to work together as a team: if all you have is a hammer, everything is going to look like a nail.

So when we try to persuade city leaders to focus on a project, or when we try to persuade children to go to bed on time, or when we try to persuade others to join in a just cause, we have to know first if they are a round peg, or a square hole. We have to know if they are good with a hammer, or maybe better with a keyboard. We might need an Eagle for Inspiration, but we need the Deer to keep the project moving forward, and the Bear to balance the budget.

Using The Medicine Wheel gives people involved in a project a safe way to share what they are comfortable doing, or volunteering for. You might here “Hey, I’m a bear, that’s not for me.....or hey, I’m a Buffalo, that task is right up my alley.

Diversity is a strength, not an impediment.

