

Pamphlet # 4

First Nations: Circles, Eagles and Wheels

The Circle of Life

Black Elk: "You have noticed that everything an Indian does is in a circle and that is because the Power of the World always works in circles and everything tries to be round. In the old days, when we were a strong and happy people, all our power came to us from the sacred hoop of the nation and so long as the hoop was unbroken, the people flourished.

The flowering tree was the living centre of the hoop and the circle of the four quarters nourished it. The East gave peace and light, the South gave warmth, the West gave rain and the North, with its cold and mighty wind gave strength and endurance. This knowledge came to us from the outer world with our religion. Everything the Power of the World does is done in a circle. The sky is round and I have heard the earth is round like a ball and so are the stars. The Wind, in its greatest power whirls. Birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours. The Sun comes forth and goes down again in a circle. The Moon does the same and both are round. Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing and always come back again to where they were. The life of man is a circle from childhood to childhood and so it is in everything where power moves. Our teepees were round like the nests of birds and these were always set in a circle, the nation's hoop, a nest of many nests where the Great Spirit meant for us to hatch our children." (*Black Elk, Spiritual Advisor to the Ogallala Sioux in 1930 in Black Elk Speaks*, pp. 198-200.)

The Eagle Feather

Ken Saunders: "The eagle is a symbol of truth, power and freedom as it roams the sky. Its wings represent the balance needed between male and female, each one dependant upon the strengths and abilities of the other.

The eagle was given the honor of carrying the prayers of (wo)man between the world of earth and the world of spirit where our Creator and the grandfathers and grandmothers reside.

When one holds the eagle feather, one must speak the truth in as positive a way as one can, for the ear of our Creator is that much closer to the feather of the eagle.

We honor the feather of the eagle with great care, showing it respect and honesty and truth at all times.

To be given an eagle feather is the highest honor that can be awarded within Aboriginal culture." (*Ken Saunders, Aboriginal Elders Teachings - Virtual Circle's Aboriginal Community.*)

The Medicine Wheel

"Numbers have always played a significant part in traditional Aboriginal life. Four is one of the most sacred numbers used in Aboriginal culture. Many aspects are seen in terms of four. The Sacred Mystery, the source of all creation, reveals itself as the Powers of the Four Directions and these four powers provide the organizing principle for everything that exists in the world: the Seasons, the Races, the Elements of the Universe, the Stages of Life, the Emotions and Aspects of Human Behavior.

The Medicine Wheel, which is symbolized by a cross within a circle, is a ceremonial tool and the basis for all teaching wheels. The Power of the Four Directions is implied whenever a wheel

or circle is drawn. Since traditional Native American cultures view life as a continuous cycle, life mirrors the cycling of the seasons, the daily rising of the sun, and the phases of the moon. They also hold the view that all things are interrelated. The Medicine Wheel incorporates the Powers of the Four Directions and the interrelatedness of all things."

www.indianheadfirstnations.com/wheel.htm

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