



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Medicine Circle Teachings

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*Please read this Acknowledgement before the start of this lesson to respect the knowledge that is being shared and the Land of the People where the knowledge originates.:*

We respectfully acknowledge Elder Armand McArthur of Pheasant Rump Nakota Reserve, Saskatchewan for kindly sharing his time, language, and knowledge for this lesson plan.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

*Upon successful completion of this lesson plan, students will be able to:*

1. Apply and adapt selected activity-related skills and strategies through participation in . . . natural (outdoor) 'alternate environment movement' activities in and around own neighbourhood and community. [Physical Education 8.8 (Alternate Environment Activities - Goals: Active Living, Relationships)]
2. Describe the influence of the treaty relationship on Canadian identity by describing the influence of varying views of the land in motivating the treaty relationship. [Social Studies DR8.2 (Dynamic Relationships)]
3. Describe the influence of the treaty relationship on Canadian identity by exploring unfulfilled aspects of Treaty (e.g., education, health care, etc.) in Canada. [Social Studies DR8.2 (Dynamic Relationships)]

### LIST OF ACTIVITIES

1. Accessing Prior Knowledge and Building On It
2. Visiting Archaeological Site / Medicine Circle and or a celestial rock formation

### MATERIALS

- Photo of Medicine Wheel
- Moose Mountain Medicine Circle – Sask History Online
- Wanuskewin Heritage Site
- Medicine Wheel
- St. Victor Petroglyphs



## Social Studies

### Origin

Nakota  
Pheasant Rump Nakota  
Reserve  
Saskatchewan

### Learning Level / Grade

8

Also: 5, 6, 7



420 mins

### Related Subjects

Archaeology, Physical  
Education, Indigenous Ways  
of Knowing & Being

## DESCRIPTION

In this lesson, students will visit a Medicine Circle, make an offering, partake in prayer and feast. This lesson focuses on the following subject areas: science, social studies, Indigenous languages study, and land-based education.

This particular lesson plan is for local Saskatchewan students from surrounding First Nation communities and/or from schools in Regina. Schools that are in other provinces would have to use books and the Saskatchewan Virtual museum as their main source for studying the Medicine Circle. There are sacred sites across Canada, but it would be up to the teacher to find what is local.

## HOLISM AND ALL OUR RELATIONS

*This lesson plan has been developed with an Indigenous lens that is holistic in nature, a way of being and knowing that acknowledges our relationships with 'all our relations', including plants and animals, other human beings, the water, land, wind, sun, moon, stars, and more - everything seen and unseen. With 'all our relations' in mind, this lesson plan has been developed with a focus on:*

- Participatory and experiential learning activities
- Language and Culture
- Intergenerational learning with Elders/Knowledge Holders
- Relationship with family, ancestors
- Different learning styles; attention given to mind, body, and spirit
- Ethics in the classroom: care, truthfulness and trust, respect, integrity
- Relationship with the land
- Personal reflection time (connecting with thoughts and feelings)

## TEACHERS' GUIDE

### Background/Foundational Information

- The knowledge sourced for this lesson comes from Elders or Knowledge Keepers from the Treaty 4 area who will be guiding the experiential learning journey during their visit to a Medicine Circle. In order to teach about the Medicine Circle it is essential that educators reach out to their school's community liaison, cultural coordinator, or Elder for support in this lesson. Find your local Elder or Knowledge Keeper who can speak about Medicine Circles.
- The teacher will need to get consent forms signed in advance of the day-trip. The teacher will need to bring tobacco for an offering. Bagged lunches will need to be brought for the feast.
- This lesson plan involves connecting to the land in a real and ceremonial way. It includes visiting a Medicine Circle on the land. The offering of tobacco, prayer, and commune with the land allows for holism and may spark a closer connection with the land.
- The teacher must build students prior knowledge about a Medicine Circle with an Elder, teacher, or archaeologist prior to visiting the Medicine Circle or dig site.
- Some pre-teaching about the Medicine Circle is required prior to going out on the land.

**Note:** Many Indigenous Peoples have Medicine Circles each holding distinct knowledge that is grounded in the land and natural laws of the People. To learn whether Medicine Circles are part of the knowledge systems of the lands and Peoples where you are, reach out to local communities, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers in your area.

## ACTIVITIES

## 1 - Accessing Prior Knowledge and Building On It

**Purpose**

This activity allows students to learn, on the land, about the history of medicine circles, star mapping, etc. The teacher will provide ways for students to learn about how the treaty relationship has influenced Canadian identity with respect to Medicine Circle teachings. An Elder or Knowledge Keeper can be invited to the class to give an introduction to Medicine Circles. Also, several of the resources in the section 'Where Can I Find Additional Information?' will provide helpful background information.

**Time:** 120 mins

**Activity Instructions**

The teacher will guide students in looking at photos and videos of medicine circles and celestial rock formations and star knowledge in order to build students prior knowledge. This can be done by the teacher in the classroom or on the land with an Elder, Knowledge Keeper, or archaeologist.

**This activity is designed to connect with learners with these learning styles...**

- Intellectual (e.g., Rational, Logical) Learners

**... in the following ways:**

Intellectual – students can analyze the experience and identify where archaeology falls short.

**Materials**

Click the 'Link' to open and view videos.

To open and print files, please go to the 'files' folder accompanying this downloaded lesson plan.

Resource Title	Type
<b>Photo of Medicine Wheel</b>	File (Photo of Medicine Wheel at Pheasant Rump First Nation.pdf) 
Medicine Wheel at Pheasant Rump First Nation. To zoom out and see the whole circle, select 75%. Then click on 'View' and 'Rotate View' and 'Clockwise' to change to landscape view. You can find photos of other Medicine Wheels or Circles on-line. Speak with an Elder or Knowledge Holder from your area to identify other sources for photos.	
<b>Moose Mountain Medicine Circle – Sask History Online</b>	<a href="#">Link</a> 
Photo of Medicine Circle at Moose Mountain.	

## TEACHING NOTES

## 2 - Visiting Archaeological Site / Medicine Circle and or a celestial rock formation

### Purpose

Visiting a Medicine Circle (Sacred Circle) allows students to see firsthand the truth about First Nations people who have inhabited North America for thousands of years. It allows students to engage with the core concept of interconnectivity with the self and the natural world. Students are able to connect to the land in a real and ceremonial way, and they can be given an opportunity to commune with ancestors through prayer. Students will continue to learn about the influence of the treaty relationship on Canadian identity.

**Time:** 240 mins

### Activity Instructions

During this activity students will view an archaeological dig, take a tour at Wanuskewin, or they can locate a local Elder or Knowledge Keeper who can help guide their search of a Medicine Circle to visit.

For students in the region or those making the trek, they may visit the Medicine Circle at Pheasant Rump First Nation with the guidance of local Elders and Knowledge Keepers. If someone would like to do this lesson with students, it is in the teacher's best interests to find a local First Nation who has knowledge of and can teach about a Medicine Circle on the land.

**This activity is designed to connect with learners with these learning styles...**

- Spiritual (e.g., Relational) Learners
- Physical (e.g., Tactile, Experiential, Visual) Learners
- Intellectual (e.g., Rational, Logical) Learners
- Emotional (e.g., Feeling, Intuitive) Learners

**... in the following ways:**

The following activities reflect the four principal learning styles:

1. Spiritual – the tobacco medicine will be used as an offering and this needs to be taught/discussed.
  - The feast (just a bagged lunch) involves the idea that the ancestors were once there hundreds of years ago to construct the medicine wheel. Having a feast, or eating there, honours this understanding. This spiritual component would be done through the guidance of an Elder.
2. Emotional – to be outside for a large part of this lesson lifts the spirit, creating a sense of well-being.
  - Students may come to the realization that their ancestors may have contributed to the making of this particular medicine wheel which can be emotionally significant for Nakota students, in this case.
3. Physical – to leave the classroom and walk out on the land to where this medicine wheel sits is a physical journey. Walking is always beneficial to health and also supports a stronger sense of well-being. The students will visit an actual medicine wheel with an Elder who has this wheel on his property in Pheasant Rump.
4. Intellectual – after visiting the medicine wheel with an Elder, experiencing giving offerings, prayer, and a feast, the students can analyze the experience.

### Materials

*Click the 'Link' to open and view videos.*

*To open and print files, please go to the 'files' folder accompanying this downloaded lesson plan.*

Resource Title	Type
<b>Wanuskewin Heritage Site</b>	<a href="#">Link</a> 
This blog by Dave Yanko gives good insight into the grounds and building at Wanuskewin Heritage Park. You can also visit the website for Wanuskewin at: <a href="https://wanuskewin.com/">https://wanuskewin.com/</a> .	
<b>Medicine Wheel</b>	<a href="#">Link</a> 
This blog entitled 'Endangered Stones' talks about the history and beliefs surrounding Medicine Circles, including information about the Moose Mountain and Bighorn Medicine Circles.	

Resource Title	Type
<b>St. Victor Petroglyphs</b>	<a href="#">Link</a> 
The rock carvings "include representations of animal, bird and human tracks -- foot and hand prints -- as well as several symbols, and a few human and animal figures."	

## TEACHING NOTES

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## ASSESSMENT

*This section contains information for assessing progress in students' learning. While Indigenous approaches to assessment may be highlighted, conventional assessment methods may also be discussed.*

Students reflect on their experience after visiting the medicine circle. Using an *assessment for learning strategy*, it is recommended that instructors make notes of student participation and work completed through Anecdotal Notes.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Click the 'Link' to open and view videos.

To open and print files, please go to the 'files' folder accompanying this downloaded lesson plan.

Resource Title	Type
<b>Office of the Treaty Commissioner</b>	<a href="#">Link</a> 
The Office of the Treaty Commissioner has resources for groups or individuals in school or in workplaces who want to be educated.	
<b>Inspiring Success: First Nation's and Métis, Pre K – 12 Education Policy Framework</b>	<a href="#">Link</a> 
Scroll down and click on the document from the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education: <i>Inspiring Success: First Nation's and Métis, Pre K – 12 Education Policy Framework</i> , which is being followed in this lesson plan. It contains guidelines and protocols for Indigenous content, as well as the content itself (also available in French).	
<b>Atchakosuk: Ininewuk Stories of the Stars by Wilfred Buck</b>	<a href="#">Link</a> 
<p>"All cultures on Mother Earth have their own understandings of the stars. No matter where one was located on Earth, all one has to do was look up into an evening sky and a myriad of stories can be revealed. As human beings made sense of their world and established a sense of belonging, stories were told and connections between people and the environment were established" (First Nations Perspectives 2, 1 (2009): 71-83).</p> <p>Wilfred Buck is from the Opaskwayak Cree Nation of Northern Manitoba and is currently working for the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre as a Science Specialist. He has a Bachelors and Post Baccalaureate degree from the University of Manitoba and has 15 years experience as an educator.</p>	
<b>Wilfred Buck - Indigenous Science</b>	<a href="#">Link</a> 
<b>The Story of the Northern Lights</b>	<a href="#">Link</a> 
<b>Walking Together – First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Perspectives in Curriculum</b>	<a href="#">Link</a> 
<p>On this page about 'well-being,' read the first three documents, which are only 2-3 pages long: 1) The Sacred Circle; 2) All My Relations; and 3) Cycles of Life. There is good information about Medicine Circles in each of these.</p> <p>"About five thousand years ago, while pyramids were being built in Egypt and Stonehenge was under construction in England, the people of the North American Plains were also laying stones..." (quote from 'Cycle of Life', page 2).</p>	
<b>Full Circle: First Nations, Métis and Inuit Ways of Knowing</b>	<a href="#">Link</a> 
The 'Introduction' in this curriculum document provides helpful background information for this lesson plan. The document as a whole provides curricular materials that focus on First Nations, Métis and Inuit people, history and culture. While developed for use by teachers of Native Studies and Native Languages, this resource is also intended for use by teachers of history, civics, social sciences, careers, English and science.	

## HOLISM AND ALL OUR RELATIONS

*This lesson plan has been developed with an Indigenous lens that is holistic in nature, a way of being and knowing that acknowledges our relationships with 'all our relations', including plants and animals, other human beings, the water, land,*

*wind, sun, moon, stars, and more - everything seen and unseen. With 'all our relations' in mind, this lesson plan has been developed with a focus on:*

<b>Relationship with the land</b>
<p>It is believed that the medicine circles were related to star mapping.          This lesson plan includes visiting a medicine circle on the land. The offering of tobacco, prayer, and commune with the land allows for a holism and may spark a closer connection with the land.          This lesson plan allows students to reflect on relationships with the land and family. It allows for family to grow in deeper understanding in this relationship, as well as, with Creation and the great mystery.</p>
<b>Participatory and experiential learning activities</b>
<b>Language and Culture</b>
<p>A few words can be introduced in the Nakota language which is the language of the territory and Pheasant Rump Nakota Reserve.          Opportunities have been provided for oral, written and visual communication through prior knowledge-building and in the visit to the medicine circle.</p>
<b>Relationship with family, ancestors</b>
<p>Students will have an opportunity to bring home their questions about what family members know about medicine circles. This action will create space for intergenerational learning.</p>
<b>Intergenerational learning with Elders/Knowledge Holders</b>
<p>Were Elders or Knowledge Holders involved in the development of this Lesson Plan? Yes          Can Elders or Knowledge Holders be invited to help teach part of this lesson plan? Yes</p>
<b>Intergenerational learning with Elders/Knowledge Holders</b>
<b>Ethics in the classroom: care, truthfulness and trust, respect, integrity</b>
<p>Besides the prior review of what a medicine circle is or looks like, the students will be reminded to respect the Elder when he speaks, to be quiet in their heart when he speaks the prayer, and to be respectful of the land and not leave any garbage.          The students will learn to trust in the experience and understand that this is an opportunity to connect with the land, to become in touch with the truth of their understanding, to learn about the great mystery, and to become aware of this delicate connection that involves all future generations.</p>
<b>Different learning styles; attention given to mind, body, and spirit</b>
<b>Personal reflection time (connecting with thoughts and feelings)</b>
<p>Students will take notes of their learning and observances. Students will inquire at home with parents and grandparents about their understanding of medicine circles and any relationship there might be.</p>

## OTHER DETAILS

**Stream:** Academic

## RELATED LESSON PLANS

- [Le ciel nocturne comme enseignement](#)
- [Lessons from the Night Sky](#)

## CONTRIBUTORS

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role/Job Title</b>	<b>Place</b>
Anna-Leah King	Curriculum Developer	University of Regina
Armand MacArthur	Elder	Pheasant Rump First Nation
Steffany Salloum	Research Assistant, NCCIE	First Nations University of Canada
Dustin Brass	Regional Lead, NCCIE	First Nations University of Canada

## QUESTIONS/MORE DETAILS

For Questions contact: [Bettina Schneider \(bschneider@fnuniv.ca\)](mailto:bschneider@fnuniv.ca) for more information.