

## FOUR DIRECTIONS LEARNING ACTIVITIES

<b>Wheel</b>	Mary Lee
<b>Nation</b>	Cree
<b>Lesson Plan Grade Level</b>	Intermediate (Grades 7-9)
<b>Time Required</b>	3 – 4 hours
<b>Subject Strand Links</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family Studies</li> <li>Social Studies</li> <li>Ecology</li> <li>Biology</li> </ul>
<b>Traditional Teachings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Four Directions</li> <li>Four Aspects of Self</li> <li>The Teepee</li> </ul>
<b>Student Summary</b>	<p><u>Four Directions</u></p> <p>The Four Directions represent the <i>interconnectedness</i> of the <i>universe</i> and all its <i>elements</i>: plants, animals, humans and the environment in which they live. The indigenous perspective views the world as a moving, changing, life force in which birth and death are natural and necessary processes. <i>Balance</i> is maintained through the <i>interdependency</i> of the life forces. The validity of this view rests on the knowledge of the fundamental relationships and patterns at play in the world. To traditional indigenous peoples, the world is sacred.</p> <p>Starting with the spirit that is created at the moment of conception, the nine-month journey towards the birth of a baby marks the beginning of entry into the <i>family</i> unit. The journey continues with each stage of life as infant, child, adolescent, adult, and elder. Development takes place spiritually, mentally, youth to impart knowledge and <i>values</i>. In this way children view those around them as extended</p>

conditions to sustain life. Harmony exists when this spider web of interconnecting threads is respected and understood. Life begins in the spirit and returns to the spirit world following death.

which requires 15 poles - with each pole symbolizing one value:

1. Obedience – accepting guidance and wisdom from others
2. Respect – for self and others
3. Humility – knowing that we are not above or below others in the circle of life
4. Happiness – showing enthusiasm to encourage others

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- To recognize the importance of the role of women in the family unit
  - To gain insight as to the perpetual nature of life and death
  - To identify the Cree as an Aboriginal people with traditional beliefs
  - To recognize change as a natural process

Inquiry/Values:

- To understand that needs, wants, values, and goals are interrelated
- To recognize the impact of values on social behaviour
- To identify the Four Aspects of Self as spiritual, physical, emotional and mental elements of one's being

Skills/Applications:

- To associate decisions with values identification
- To symbolize, describe, and classify family roles and responsibilities
- To navigate the internet with control





6. Our values change somewhat as we grow older and develop new responsibilities. What are responsibilities? What do you have to do to look after a baby? Who looks after the baby? Can a baby feed itself? Why not? Who looks after the home? Who buys groceries? Who cooks the meals? What happens when you become older and start to have trouble walking, or seeing? Who looks after you then? Who is responsible for taking out the garbage?
7. Introduce the life cycle from the beginning of life as a baby to the stages of childhood, adolescence, adulthood and elderhood.
8. Introduce Cree elder Mary Lee to share traditional teachings on the roles and responsibilities that people have as they grow through these stages of life: responsibilities for looking after one's body, one's mind, one's feelings; and one's spirit.
9. Visit [www.fourdirectionteachings.com](http://www.fourdirectionteachings.com) to hear the traditional teachings.
  - a) Go to "Introduction" for a brief introduction to the Four Directions and the Medicine Wheel

	<p>15. Wrap up the lesson with a guided reading of the summary above and select from optional exercises below.</p> <p>Discussion Topics:</p> <p>Explain what Ms. Lee meant when she referred to Obedience, Respect and Humility as a tripod. How do these values relate to the construction of a teepee? What values are foundational in your family?</p> <p>How is the role of women important in the Cree teachings of the teepee? What is the role and responsibility of women in traditional Cree society? How does traditional society's expectations of women compare to those of contemporary society?</p> <p>What is the relevance of offering tobacco in the teepee ceremony in terms of the life cycle?</p> <p>The Four Aspects of Self are gifts as well as responsibilities. Discuss the extent to which the 15 tipi poles represent mental, spiritual, emotional and physical elements in life? How is the teepee a model of holistic living?</p> <p>Optional Exercises:</p> <p>Write a journal entry on the Four Aspects of Self. To what extent do you exercise your mind? Your body? Your spirit? Your emotions? Is there any area that you exercise more than the others? Why? How do you feel when you spend too much time thinking and not enough time playing? What happens when you have feelings locked inside that you can't express? What can you do to balance your Four Aspects?</p> <p>Write an essay on the how the teepee teachings could apply to your life. Explain how you could adopt these values to achieve better balance in life.</p> <p>Conduct a school exchange with a Cree community. See link below for a program that funds exchanges.</p> <p>Invite an Aboriginal Cree elder to help construct a teepee. Identify the values honoured in the construction process. Use the teepee to sit and have a discussion on family values (see link below)</p>
<p><b>Vocabulary</b></p>	<p>Values  Responsibilities  Family  Aspects  Self  Honoured  Interconnectedness</p>



	Universe Elements Interdependency Correlation Balance Elderhood
<b>Materials Required</b>	
<b>Evaluation</b>	1. Self evaluation to assess the personal reflections in the journal. 2. Teacher evaluation on essay

## STUDENT SUMMARY

### Four Directions

The Four Directions represent the *interconnectedness* of the *universe* and all its *elements*: plants, animals, humans and the environment in which they live. The indigenous perspective views the world as a moving, changing, life force in which birth and death are natural and necessary processes. *Balance* is maintained through the *interdependency* of the life forces. The validity of this view rests on the knowledge of the fundamental relationships and patterns at play in the world. To traditional indigenous peoples, the world is sacred.

Starting with the spirit that is created at the moment of conception, the nine-month journey towards the birth of a baby marks the beginning of entry into the *family* unit. The journey continues with each stage of life as infant, child, adolescent, adult, and elder. Development takes place spiritually, mentally, physically and emotionally throughout the life journey however once you are a parent, you are a parent for life.

However just as a baby is completely dependent on adult care for its survival, adults depend on their children for the regeneration, or continuation, of the life chain. Traditionally the *responsibilities* associated with raising a child belonged to a larger circle of all adults in the community. Today Cree grandparents often continue to act as primary caregivers of their grandchildren once they become youth to impart knowledge and *values*. In this way children view those around them as extended family, creating a strong sense of belonging and kinship.

The life chain of plants and animals are similarly connected in the Four Directions and, with the elements, the planets, the seasons, and the four sacred medicines, provide the nourishment and the conditions to sustain life. Harmony exists when this spider web of interconnecting threads is respected and understood. Life begins in the spirit and returns to the spirit world following death.

### Four Aspects of Self





# Diagram for Circulium

