



MEDICINE WHEEL – Directions, Elements, Clay

Students create and paint a clay coil pot. The circular bowl represents ideas connected to the medicine wheel. The students will reflect on relationships between: the 4 cardinal directions, the 4 elements, the 4 seasons, the medicine wheel, and themselves.

Required Time

120 Minutes

Grade Level

Grade 3 to Grade 8

Subject

Language Arts
Science
Visual Arts
First Nations, Metis, Inuit

Vocabulary

Materials

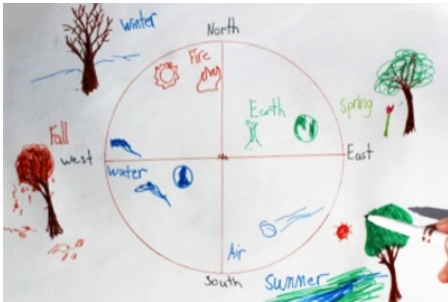
Crayola Air-Dry Clay - White
Crayola Acrylic Paint - 6 Count
Crayola Paint Brushes - 5 Count
Crayola Marker & Watercolour Paper - 22.9 cm x 30.5 cm
Crayola Fine Line Markers - 12 Count
Clay Carving Tools (only if available)
Toothpicks

Shop Crayola
Products

Steps

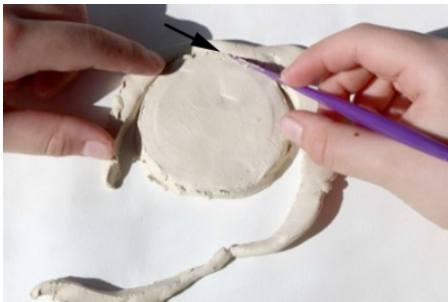
Step One

1. Begin with a circle and divide it into 4 equal parts.
2. Label the 4 cardinal directions.
3. In each section identify one of the 4 elements (earth, air, water, and fire).
4. Brainstorm images connected to each element.
 - Reflect on each of the 4 seasons, thinking about the changes that occur during each season.
5. Brainstorm words and images connected to each season.
 - Spring is in the east, summer is in the south, fall is in the west, and winter is in the north.



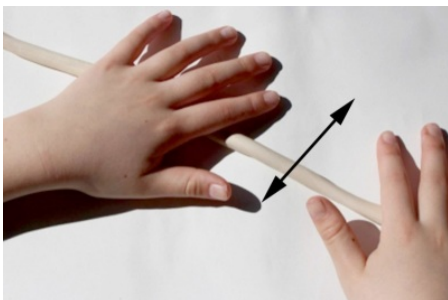
Step Two

1. Make a small slab of clay by flattening some clay in your hands and pressing it onto a flat surface.
2. Press a cup into the clay to get a circle.
3. Then cut away the excess clay with a popsicle stick, plastic knife, or clay cutting tool.
4. This will be the base of your pot.



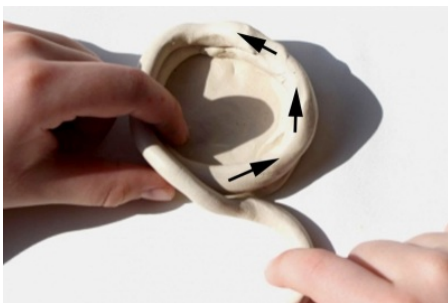
Step Three

1. Create clay coils by rolling clay into long cylinders with your hands.
2. The clay coils will be used to make the walls of your pot.



Step Four

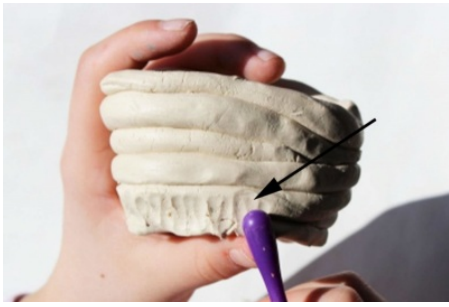
1. Wind the coils around the circular base.
2. Make sure you blend each end of the clay coils into the clay.



Step Five

1. Continue to attach the clay coils together by using your finger to blend the end into the clay.
2. Build the coils up until your pot is high enough (5-10 cm).





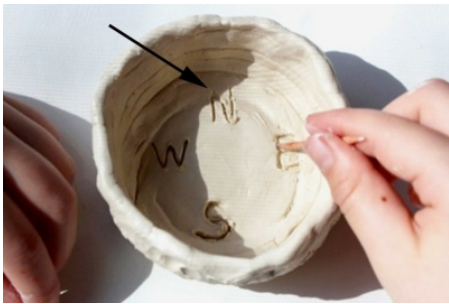
Step Six

1. Choose either the inside or outside of your pot to blend the coils together.
2. Use the end of a paint brush, a popsicle stick, or a clay tool to blend the clay coils.



Step Seven

1. Dip your hands in a little water to keep the clay moist.
2. Smooth the walls and the edges with your fingers.



Step Eight

1. Using a toothpick carve the letters for the 4 cardinal directions into the base of your pot.



Step Nine

1. Carve words and images into your pot that symbolize the 4 elements (earth, air, water, and fire).



Step Ten

1. Reflect on the images you drew for each season.
2. Choose one image to represent each of the 4 seasons.
3. Begin with spring.
 - Flatten a small piece of clay and form a symbol for spring.
 - Attach the clay onto the pot in the east direction.
 - Score the clay and paint it with slip before you attach it.
4. Repeat this process for summer in the south, fall in the west, and winter in the north.
5. When you have finished creating a relief sculpture around your walls allow the pot to dry for several days.

Learning Goals

Students will be able to:

- create a coil pot;
- communicate their personal understanding of the 4 seasons using relief sculpture;
- communicate the 4 cardinal directions, and the 4 elements through carving;
- demonstrate an understanding of a few of the teachings of the medicine wheel through words and images, carved and formed on a circular bowl.

Extensions

Have students:

- explore the human impact on the elements (water, air, earth) through inquiry and research;
- share their findings with the class;
- choose one of the seasons to illustrate using watercolour paints;
- write about a personal experience they have had on the land during one of the seasons;
- join a community circle to share what they are thankful for;
 - *begin the circle with a discussion of what a circle represents,*
 - *explain why we sit in a circle.*
 - *make connections to the medicine wheel.*

Prepare

1. Prior to the lesson download background information about the medicine wheel. The following is a list of helpful links for developing a deeper understanding of the teachings represented by the medicine wheel:
 - Ojibwe/Powawatomi (Anishinabe) Teaching, by Elder: Lillian Pitawanakwat, 2006 (All rights reserved 4D Interactive Inc.)
Ojibwe
 - Teaching by the Medicine Wheel: An Anishinabe Framework for Indigenous Education, by: Nicole Bell, 2014
 - Medicine Wheel**
 - Anishninaabemdaa: Medicine Wheel, by: Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, 2014
 - Anishninaabemdaa**
 - Teachings of the Medicine Wheel is a curriculum unit developed by the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition, on the Main Resources you can download a student and teacher manual
 - Teachings**
2. Download images from the Internet, or find images in books or magazines of the 4 seasons:
 - Spring**
 - Spring Geese**
 - Summer**
 - Summer Plants**
 - Fall**
 - Fall Farm**
 - Winter**
 - Winter Field**
3. Download 2 artworks by Richard Kamalatisit from the Internet - **Resting**, and **Owl**
4. Preview the video of images and drawing techniques by Richard **Kamalatisit** available on the Internet.
5. Download images from the Internet, or find images in books or magazines of the 4 elements:
 - Fire**
 - Sun**
 - Earth**
 - Air**
 - Water**
6. Download the **Aboriginal Perspectives: A Guide to the Teacher's Toolkit**, from the Ontario Ministry of Education's website. Read the document for background information about the circle.

Introduction

1. Introduce the students to the concept of the medicine wheel. Begin with a discussion of a circle and what it represents (equality, no beginning, no ending, etc.). Refer to *Aboriginal Perspectives: A Guide to the Teacher's Toolkit* for a deeper understanding of the circle.
2. Discuss how the medicine wheel is an ancient symbol teaching us about life.
3. Introduce students to the different teachings represented by the medicine wheel: the 4 cardinal directions (north, south, east, west), the 4 elements (earth, water, fire, air), the 4 colours symbolic of different groups of people around the world all interconnected within the circle and all part of the human family (yellow, red, black-sometimes blue, white), and the 4 seasons.
4. Introduce the Mushkegowuk Cree artist, Richard Kamalatisit through 2 of his artworks - **Resting**, and **Owl**. Discuss the season each artwork illustrates, describe the images used by the artist to represent the season. Richard Kamalatisit painted many landscapes from the James Bay Lowlands (west coast).
5. View all or part of the *Drawing with Richard Kamalatisit* video.
6. Introduce the challenge.

Activities

The Challenge

1. Create a coil pot with walls that have an even thickness, without cracks.
2. Choose words and images to represent the 4 cardinal directions, and 4 elements. Carve the words and images into the base of your pot.
3. Choose images that represent each season, and sculpt the form of each image onto the outside wall of your pot corresponding with the direction it is connected to.
4. Use acrylic paint to emphasize each image/word and contrast it against the background of your pot.

The Process

1. After reflecting on a few of the teachings represented by the medicine wheel, ask students to use their sketchbooks to draw a circle and divide it into 4 equal sections.
2. Label each of the cardinal directions on the circle. Explain to the students that First Nations communities are diverse and may have different teachings connected to each direction.
3. Reflect on the 4 elements essential to our survival as humans. Ask students to add words and images to each direction of their wheel to represent each element (earth, air, water, fire).
4. View the 2 artworks by Richard Kamalatisit and identify the seasons he has illustrated. Discuss the images he has used in his artworks to represent each season.
5. Ask students to brainstorm images and words for each of the 4 seasons, adding them to their growing wheel. Have students to reflect on their own experiences during the different times of year.
6. Guide students through the steps outlined in this lesson plan.
7. Observe students as they work.
8. Provide individual assistance and encouragement.

Sharing

1. Once all the artworks are complete ask students to bring their artworks into a large circle.
2. Invite each student to share one teaching from the medicine wheel that they have included in their coil pot, and are thankful for.
3. During the circle discussion include references to: emphasis, contrast, texture, form, and shape.
4. Share ideas on why the circle, the 4 elements, and the 4 seasons are important.

Assessment

1. Observe students as they work - exploring, experimenting, adding detail, thoughtful focus.
2. Listen to and observe students as they discuss the artworks - attentive listening, insightful contributions.
3. Use a checklist to track progress (Download - CoilPot_tracking.pdf).
4. Have students reflect on their own artworks in their sketchbooks. Ask students:
 - *What worked well in your artwork? Why?*
 - *What would you change or do differently next time?*
 - *Choose one teaching from the medicine wheel and explain why it is important to you.*