



## PAINTING MY WONDERINGS – Medicine Wheel, Thoughts

Students create a mixed media artwork using watercolour paints, watercolour pencils, crayons, and fine black markers as they reflect on the mental, thinking aspect of the Medicine Wheel and the life experiences that inspire learning, questioning, and wondering.

Required Time

120 Minutes

Grade Level

Grade 3 to Grade 8

Subject

Language Arts  
Science  
Visual Arts  
First Nations, Metis, Inuit

Vocabulary

balance  
contrast  
cool colours  
emphasis  
form  
shape  
texture  
variety  
warm colours

Materials

Crayola Marker & Watercolour Paper - 22.9 cm x 30.5 cm (9" x 12")

Crayola Paintbrushes - 5 Count

Crayola Watercolour Pencils - 12 Count

Crayola Construction Paper Crayons - 16 Count

Crayola Fine Line Markers - 12 Count

Water Containers

Paper Towels

Shop Crayola  
Products

# Steps

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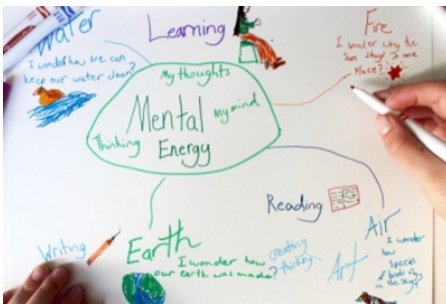
## Step One

1. Begin with a circle and divide it into 4 equal sections.
2. Label each of the quadrants:
  - in the east is **spiritual** energy (our spirit);
  - in the south is **emotional** energy (our hearts, our feelings);
  - in the west is **physical** energy (our bodies, our actions);
  - in the north is **mental** energy (our thoughts, our thinking).
3. *Focus on the mental aspect of human beings.*
4. Reflect on how you learn.
  - *Close your eyes and focus on the different learning experiences in your life.*
  - *What images come to your mind?*
  - *What questions do you wonder about?*
5. Write words and draw images about your mind, your thinking, in the northern quadrant of the medicine wheel.
6. Include life experiences that help you learn and inspire your curiosity.



## Step Two

1. Brainstorm words and images connected to the mental aspect of your life.
2. Use a variety of shapes to express the thinking area of your life.
3. Reflect on how you learn, and the questions you wonder about.
  - *What life experiences have inspired your learning and wondering?*
4. Reflect on each of the 4 elements (fire, air, earth, and water).
5. Discuss what each element represents.
6. Brainstorm questions, wonderings about each of the elements.
7. Draw an image to represent each question, each wondering.



## Step Three

1. Use watercolour paints to paint a background for your artwork.
2. Begin by dividing the watercolour paper into **4 sections**.
3. Choose colours to represent each of the 4 elements.
4. Cover your blank paper with water, then begin to add colours to each section, for examples, Fire – yellow, orange, red, Air – purple, blue, Earth – brown, green, yellow, Water – blue, green.
5. Add salt to an area to change the way the colours bleed together.
6. Make sure you use a lot of water with your artwork.



## Step Four

1. Use **watercolour pencils** to draw an image to represent each of the 4 questions, wonderings you had when reflecting on the 4 elements.
2. Create your drawings using a variety of colours that contrast against the background painting.
3. Make sure the 4 images are balanced on the whole paper.





### Step Five

1. Use a paintbrush to paint clear water into each image you drew.



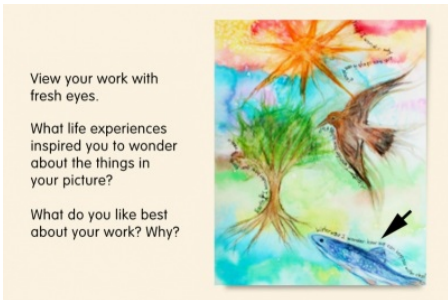
### Step Six

1. Use crayons to clarify your images.
2. Add form to your shapes and emphasize different areas of each image.



### Step Seven

1. Use a fine black marker to identify each element (earth, fire, air, water).
2. Write a question, a wondering you are curious about for each of the elements.



### Step Eight

1. Make sure you have written your wonderings in a way that connects each of the four sections in your artwork.
2. Create balance with both your images and words.
3. View your work with fresh eyes.
  - *What life experiences inspired you to wonder about the things in your picture?*
  - *What worked well in your artwork?*
  - *What do you see that makes you say that?*
  - *What would you change or do differently next time?*

# Prepare

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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 Anishinaabe Framework for Indigenous Education, by: Nicole Bell, 2014**Medicine Wheel**
  - Anishinaabemdaa: Medicine Wheel, by: Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, 2014**Anishinaabemowin**
  - Teachings of the Medicine Wheel is a curriculum unit developed by the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition. On the Main Resources page, you can download a student and teacher manual.**Teachings**
2. If available read *The Sacred Tree*, by Phil Lane, Jr. et. al., 1989.
3. Read about the Cree artist, **Jane Ash Poitras**.
  - *She has created many mixed media artworks.*
  - *Jane Ash Poitras' artworks tell stories, they help the viewer understand the history of this land we call Canada.*
  - *Her artworks teach, and inspire us to think, question, wonder.*
4. View the video **Jane Ash Poitras Conversation**.
  - *Jane Ash Poitras discusses four major paintings purchased by the ROM.*
  - *Images from the ROM exhibition are shown, followed by images and paintings from the Kinsman Robinson Galleries, 2015 exhibition, Jane Ash Poitras: New Paintings.*
5. Download images from the Internet, or find images in art catalogues such as: *Who discovered the Americas: Recent Work By Jane Ash Poitras*, Thunder Bay Art Gallery, 1992. The following artworks are examples of mixed media artworks that tell a story through layers, the canvas is divided into sections (each giving a different voice to the story, the history): *Living in the Storm Too Long*, 1992; *2 C Mother = E*, 1993; *Transparent Parents Singing Hearts*, 1998.
6. Download images from the Internet, or find images in books or magazines of the 4 elements: Fire (sun), Earth (animals, plants, land), Water (oceans, lakes, fish), and Air (birds, clouds).  
**Fire**  
**Sun**  
**Earth**  
**Black Bear**  
**Trees**  
**Heron**  
**Trout**  
**Clouds**

# Introduction

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1. Introduce the students to the Cree artist, Jane Ash Poitras.
2. Share Jane Ash Poitras' paintings: *Living in the Storm Too Long*, 1992; *2 C Mother = E*, 1993. Discuss the different sections of each painting, and the meaning communicated by the words, colours, and images. Ask questions,
  - *What do you wonder when you view each painting?*
  - *Whose story is being told?*
3. Review the different teachings represented by the medicine wheel. Introduce the students to the 4 different aspects (physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional) that are part of each person, and represented by the medicine wheel.
4. Reflect on each area (physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional) inviting students to share their personal understanding and meaning of each human aspect. The medicine wheel is a symbol teaching us to keep each area healthy and balanced.
5. Focus on the mental (thinking) aspect. Ask students to reflect on how they learn.
  - *What life experiences inspire you to wonder?*
6. Discuss the 4 elements (earth, water, fire, air) represented by the medicine wheel.
  - *What images come to your mind when you close your eyes and think about each element, picturing it in your mind's eye?*

# Activities

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## The Challenge

1. Communicate your personal understanding of the mental (thinking) aspect represented by the medicine wheel.
2. Create a background using watercolour paints. Make 4 different, but integrated sections.
3. Draw and paint images in each of the 4 sections that communicate your questions, wonderings, about the 4 elements (fire, air, earth, water) represented by the medicine wheel.
4. Balance the images in your artwork, contrasting them with the background.
5. Integrate and balance 4 written questions, wonderings, (one for each element) with the images and background of your artwork.

## The Process

1. After reflecting on the 4 aspects of human beings (physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental) 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 quadrants. In the east is spiritual energy (our spirit); in the south is emotional energy (our hearts, our feelings); in the west is physical energy (our bodies, our actions); and in the north is mental energy (our thoughts, our thinking).
3. Read the preview of, *The Sacred Tree*, Bopp, Bopp, Brown & Lane Jr., 1995.
4. Explain to students that First Nations communities are diverse and may have different teachings connected to each direction.
5. Ask students to begin in the northern quadrant of the medicine wheel with the mental (thinking) aspect of human beings. Ask them to draw images and include words that express how they learn, what they wonder, question, and what life experiences inspire them to learn.
6. Guide students through the steps outlined in this lesson plan.
7. Observe students as they work.
8. Provide individual assistance and encouragement.

## Sharing

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1. Once all the artworks are complete ask students to bring their mixed media artworks into a large circle.
2. Invite each student to share one of their wonderings, questions connected to an element (earth, water, fire, air).
3. Ask students to share a life experience that inspired them to learn.
4. During the circle discussion include references to colour (warm and cool), and the meaning connected to the colours.
5. Ask students to share how they have created balance and used contrast in their artworks.

## Assessment

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1. Observe students as they work - thoughtful focus, discriminating, seeking more information, elaborating, experimenting.
2. Observe students as they discuss their artworks - speaks with a clear voice, looks at audience while speaking, points to areas on the picture, provides accurate information, answers questions from the audience effectively.
3. Observe students as they listen - looks at presenter, asks effective questions, supports ideas with evidence found in the artwork.
4. Use a checklist to track progress. (Downloads - Wonderings\_tracking.pdf)
5. 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?*
  - *What life experiences inspired you to wonder about the things in your artwork?*
  - *Explain how you prefer to learn.*