

Dear WI State MMIW Task Force Members:

I was asked by the task force co-chairs to put something together that describes the Children's Fire. Well, it defies description.

So what I have done in preparation for our June 18 session is to put everything together, including The Question. This gives you the chance to read the material, the rules and laws, the archetype descriptions and the philosophy behind the Children's Fire concept.

I am sure you will be happy to know that for this round, we will do this together so you can have strong examples of each archetype in action. In future uses of the Children's Fire, you would be asked to act from one archetype only and respond **only** from that perspective.

There is not much information on the Children's Fire if you try to "Google" it. What I do know is that it is thousands of years old and was used (and is still used) in pockets of communities that have avoided colonization. Those tribes that have been decimated through disease, colonization, forced removal, boarding schools, urban relocation and child-assimilation, have not been able to keep such processes in place due to the need to survive whatever way possible. The stewards who brought this to our consciousness in modern times are Hopi Nation members. Here is the story:

The whole community sits around a circle called a Medicine Wheel and around that wheel are represented all the different aspects of the community. In the east, there is the trickster. In the west, there's the Earth mother or witch. In the south is the hunter-warrior. The creator is at the northern position. There's also the shaman, politician, etc. all the way around the circle and in the center, there is the Children's Fire. Next to the Children's Fire there sits the grandfather and grandmother.

Say you have the question of whether or not to build a condominium on Spirit Lake. You have to enter the Medicine Wheel in the place of the east, the trickster. The question you asked was, "May I build a condo on Spirit Lake?" Then the trickster takes your question, turns it around, and asks the council around the Medicine Wheel, "What would Spirit Lake say about such a condo?" You have to take the question the trickster gives you all the way around the Medicine Wheel and ask each position. And then the last people you must ask the question are the grandmother and grandfather who guard the Children's Fire. If these two decide that it is not good for the Children's Fire, then the answer is no. They are the only ones in the circle with veto power. The concept of the ultimate question is simple: does it hurt or help the Children's Fire? If it can pass the test of the Children's Fire, then it can be done.

...from the elders of the Hopi Nation

To give more depth on the background regarding the Wheel of Law:

The Wheel of Law is an archetypal symbolic process designed to involve a community of people in addressing the key issues and questions related to the insuring the health and safety of the children—the community's future. The process draws upon the four primary energies of human beings—intellectual, emotional physical and spiritual—and it connects the human element with the natural elements of the earth. The process generates an appreciation for the variety of the perspectives held within a community and reinforces the importance of the whole, the need for balance, and wisdom of the generations in protecting the source of the community's future. As a result, participation in the Wheel of Law process, people experience the value of diversity, see how differences can be linked to arrive at common understanding, and sense the power of a community when all elements are listened to and respected.

Marty Goerke, *Creativity and Problem Solving: How Organizations Can Work Together*

I hope you find the material interesting. I assure you, at the task force meeting it will be more than relevant. Until then, should you have comments, questions, or concerns, feel free to contact me.

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The Rules: What is the Children's Fire?

The Children's Fire is an ancient, yet highly relevant concept of group decision-making, that enabled our ancestors to live in balance and harmony with the natural world – that they realized, they were an integral part. It prioritized the continuation of Life and assisted them in safeguarding what was most dear to them – their children and their future generations, and ultimately...us.

Nature as Teacher. Our ancestors understood that the balance and wisdom observed in nature should be reflected by our systems of governance and institutions of power. The Children's Fire comes from such a system – a system that flourished long ago. Ironically, this system even inspired the original constitution of the US. The people established a deep democratic system of governance known as the Circle of Law and implemented a circular wisdom gathering/decision making structure, known as the Council, to facilitate this.

In the very center of the circle, they placed a small fire which was to remind the eight pairs of representatives (or Chiefs as they were known) that the primary consideration should *always* be the continuation of life when making decisions of *any* kind. *They called this seemingly insignificant fire, The Children's Fire.* The Children's Fire represented two nature-aligned 'laws' that were held sacred by the people.

Law 1: Nothing Shall Harm the Children's Fire. **Law 2:** The Life-giving Power of the Feminine Shall Be Protected.

At the Center of the Wheel

Children's Fire:

- * Symbolizes all of future's potential and promise
- * The Children's Fire is in the Wheel and in each of us

Grandparents:

- * Represent the wisdom of the past
- * They sit without judgment
- * They bring and hold the memory of the past
- * They are the testimony of our capacity to survive



The Question

- * The question within us might be heard in various degrees, from a small nudging to a great blast.
- * The Question has an energy of its own. You will know what needs to be asked.
- * If you already know the answer and only need it affirmed, do not ask this question.
- * Is the question one that lends itself to be answered through different lens of perceptions, through the different positions of the wheel?
- * Are you clear and respectful about your intention with the Question and the Wheel?
- * Are you willing to listen and to act in response to the Wheel's answers?

We start our journey around the Children's Fire in the East, where the sun rises. This is the position of the Trickster. He gets the question first. The question chosen by the Task Force Co-chairs is, "How do we go about preventing indigenous people from being murdered and going missing?"

GRANDPARENTS:

HICOKA
Grandfather

KUNIKA
Grandmother

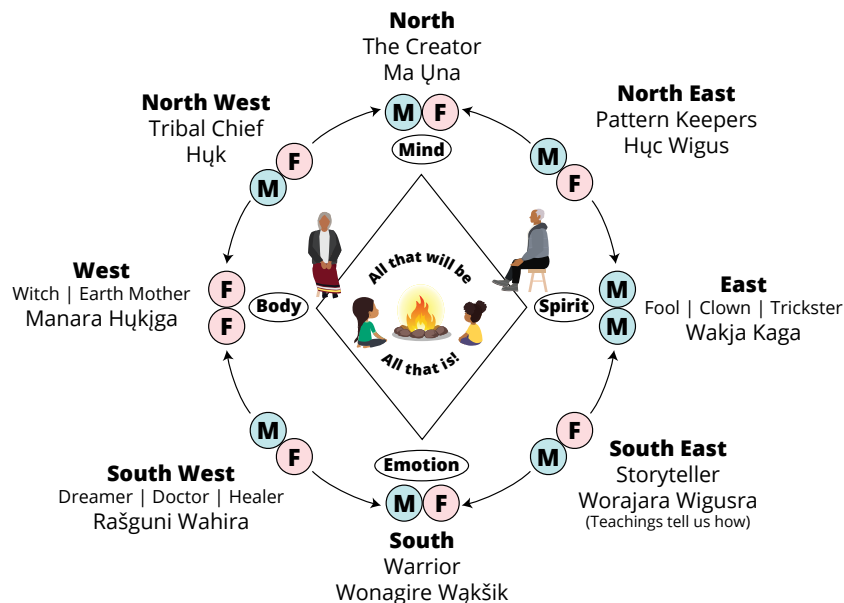
Represent the wisdom of the past

They sit without judgment

They bring and hold the memory of the past

They are the testimony of our capacity to survive

For Children's Fire, they make the final decision based on the archetypes and their representations.



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The HIR Wellness Institute Presents Teaching of the Medicine Wheel: The Children's Fire

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Facilitator(s): Barb Blackdeer-Mackenzie & HIR Wellness team

Place: Wisconsin State MMIW Task Force

Date: June 18, 2021

The Laws:

- Nothing Shall Harm the Children's Fire
- The Life-Giving Power of the Feminine Shall be protected

The Question:

How do we go about preventing indigenous people from being murdered and going missing?



FOOL | CLOWN | TRICKSTER

WAKJA KAGA

The Fool throws us upside down and takes us to another, perhaps deeper, level. Because of the ability to turn reality over, the Fool turns the question upside down and inside out.

The Fool's gift is to recognize the real question regardless of how uncomfortable it makes anyone

What we believe is disrupted. When things are topsy-turvy we can take a new look.

Recognizes that 99% of the time people ask the wrong question.

The place of Fool is in the East

Focuses on making others think, especially about enlightenment, cosmos, eternal time

The guardian of the spiritual life

Masculine – primary teacher

The role of the Fool is to know the deeper question.

The East is not a place of the mind. This is a place of the spirit.

As you play the role of the Fool, try to imagine being roaring drunk.

Fools don't give reasons. Fools just "do it."

The Fool is playful and creative.

The Fool is not hostile, angry, protesting, or judgmental.

The Fool is inept, bungling, bumbling.



PATTERN KEEPER

HUC WIGUS

It is the responsibility of the Pattern Keeper to be certain that the Wheel is in proper form before the Wheel begins. Are people evenly spaced from one another? Are all the positions represented and in place when the Wheel begins?

Keeper of the pattern and protector of these Wheel Laws: Nothing Shall Harm the Children's Fire and Nothing Shall Harm the Life-Giving Power of the Feminine.

Weaver of the worlds; Bringer into form; Teacher and guide, leading us to meaning.

It is the job of the Pattern Keeper to determine if the Wheel was done properly and if a satisfactory answer was given to the question. The Pattern Keeper may insist that the Wheel be done again.

Thinks about practice and repetition to ensure pattern sticks.

Careful to make things uniform, clearly communicating "how to" and "what for"

This is the last position on the Wheel to respond to the question, and as such, the Pattern Keeper identifies the pattern that may be emerging from the Wheel. Recognizes the patterns from what the majority is saying in response to the question.

This position shows us where we can go based on where we have been. It allows what needs to happen to shape us. Prediction of where we go will be based on pattern established by the group.





THE CREATOR MA ҮNA

Home of the creator. Acts as a connector to Logic

Common professions are artists; writers.

Operates from a place of total clarity, able to conceptualize

Thinks from places of the mind. Focuses on “never done before” and “in a new way”

Knows that mind is superior to matter.

Creates Names and Words for new concepts and ideas

Time dimension: the Future

When you can create, you make things happen

From conception to manifestation

Nature’s wind give breath to the word - - reality is created

Visionary of possibility, of inspiration

The one who carries the vision into being



TRADITION | STORY TELLER WORAJARA WIGUSRA

(teachings tell us how)

We cherish this place. “In our grandparents’ time.”

This is the place of the storyteller where oral traditions are kept alive. The stories are indeed alive and not stagnated.

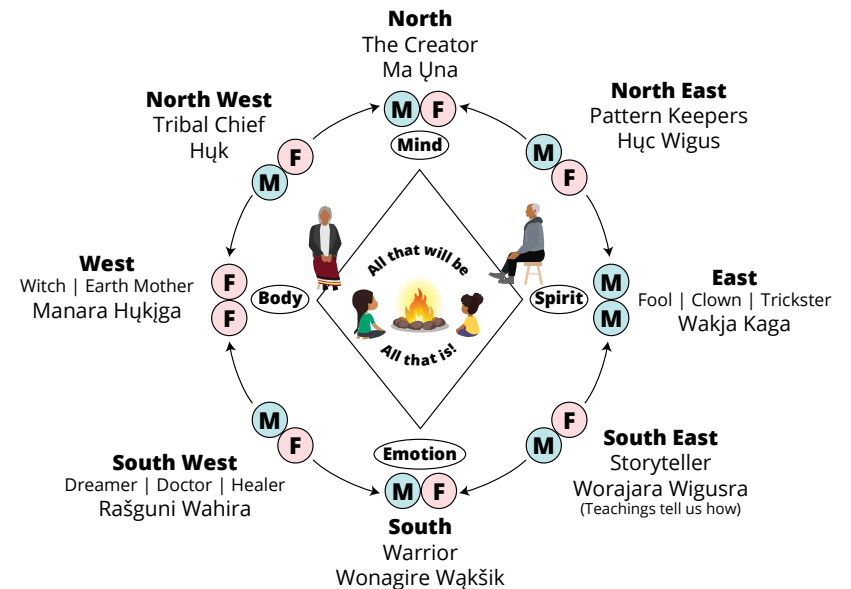
This position wants respect and honor, not obedience.

We remember here how things were done in the past and how problems were solved (or not solved) based on characters actions.

It is the stories that weave the cultures together.

Time frame: The stories incorporate the past and include the new elements of the current problems.

Tradition’s position on the Wheel is between the Fool and the Warrior: The Fool lives in no time. The Warrior in time. Tradition is somewhere in between.





WARRIOR WONAĞIRE WAŦŠIK

Defender, protector of the Children’s Fire, takes action but not aggressively

Home of pure emotion, trust, and innocence. An aspect of the warrior is gentleness.

This is a place of the caring heart, passion, rage – the places of caring.

Keeper of the heart and justice. May work outside the existing systems.

Carry the sword and shield, symbolic of discernment.

Enormous capacity to defend: willing to enter into conflict to protect, willing to die for cause

The Warrior feels impaled. Adrenaline flows throughout. Chemical abuse is the shadow of the warrior

On the archetypal level: It is an honor to have a worthy adversary

Fights to protect without fear or concern for winning or losing

This is not the place where the bully knocks down the weak: Rather, this where we say, “Damn it! We have to do something.”

Growth occurs by being torn and mended: The warrior cannot be afraid of being torn.

Belongs to the past



WITCH | EARTH MOTHER MANARA HUŦIGA (Pregnant Female Leader)

On the wheel, this is the place of the setting sun

The place of the physical world and the place of the body

Here are the laws of nature; farmers; connection to the earth; earth cultures; in tune with the cycles of nature. Nature’s laws calling forth birth, death and rebirth or resurrection.

Belongs in the here and now, the present

This place is feminine and home of the Cosmic Bag Lady
This is the place of transformation - - it feels like magic - - it is the coming of life and death. There is the capacity to give birth out of darkness.

Professions: midwives; morticians, orderlies, preparing the body for death; service industries; domestics; childcare workers.

Knows the body inside and out. Others may look down on this archetype.

Here the life process keeps going. Basic things in life. Here we can get dirty, very dirty.

Connector to chaos and transitions from form to form in life and death cycles. Keeper of the dark. Guide to the interior worlds.

Comfortable with sexuality; seduces; uses the body. This is the place of the mystery of the womb; the mystery of darkness where the new can germinate; the mystery of the feminine.

Shadow: teen pregnancy: response to the young Witch/ Earth Mother being put down (timing)



TRIBAL CHIEF HUK

This is the place of caring for the whole tribe, for the community.

This is the place that remembers that the tribe is more important than the chief.

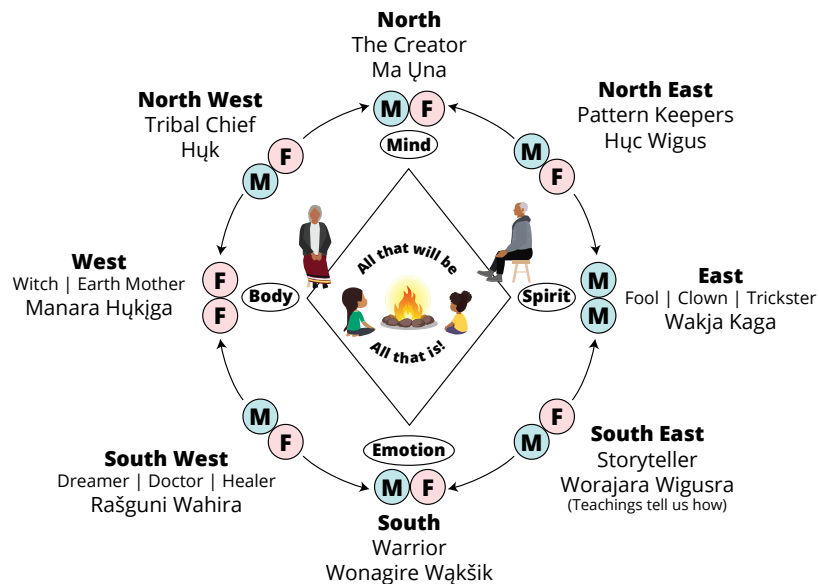
The voice of the Tribal Chief reflects the people's Voices and their Being. (Not the voice of the chief alone.)

The Tribal Chief desires to bring harmony and reflect what everyone says.

The Tribal chief is not necessarily the official, or the elected leader.

Professions: Peacemakers, Mediators; some Politicians; some Administrators.

The Tribal Chief ensures the safety of all.



SHAMAN | HEALER | DREAMER RAŠGUNI WAHIRA (Healer)

This is the place and home of the Healer, Shaman, and Dreamer.

Dreamer thinks about, "If you could do anything in the world, what would you do? What dream you have abandoned?" The dreamer's role is to awaken the dream in other people. Sometimes people who are dying are dying because their dream is dead.

The Shaman/Healer exists only to serve their culture and community.

The Shaman heals the dream by moving between worlds. The Shaman carries the image back and forth between the upper world (known) and underworld (unknown). The Shaman can bridge these two worlds. Trusted by the Spirit world. Acts as a guide to wholeness and acceptance

The Shaman must have been wounded because their wounds open them up to compassion and is willing to let her or his wound stay vulnerably open. Must be chosen by the community in order to be able to heal others, style is specific to community. Characteristics: Has done their work: mentally, emotionally, physically, and/or spiritually. Has a way of sensing the other person's need.

Common professions: social workers, therapists, advisers, consultants, clergy



