



The Medicine Wheel or The Four Directions

By Alice Olsen Williams

February 8, 2011

The block I made speaks to us about the Teachings of Gifts from the Four Directions. The Four Directions are sacred to Indigenous Peoples all over the World, for we are taught that Creation took place in the Four Sacred Directions. Sometimes we call the Circle 'The Medicine Wheel'. That is because we see the teachings of the Circle as Medicines.

Circles from different Nations, or groups of People do not necessarily have the same colours for each of the Four Directions. Even the structure of the Four Directions can be different. For example: the usual way the Circle is presented is to have the circle cut into quarters, with North being at the top axis of the vertical line, and the South being at the bottom; then on the left – right axis, the West is at the left and the East is on the right.

I decided I'd make my Medicine Wheel differently because, in the way I was first taught the Circle, it is the ends of the intersecting lines that indicate the directions. Since the Four Directions carry with them teachings, I was trying to think of a way to help me to remember the messages of each Direction. By giving the traditional Circle an eighth of a turn, each of the Four Directions could be given a quarter of the circle – enough room to write the gifts, the Life-givers, the teachings, the virtues, the “rascals”, the Lands, and other identities within it. Then I have a green circle surrounding the Medicine Wheel, and for me, that represents the Great Mother Earth.

The Medicine Wheel Teachings talk of Caring, Patience, Kindness, and Humbleness, Love, Wisdom, Courage, Honesty and so many other virtues. It teaches us how to live Life in a Good Way; it guides us and shows us how to live a good and balanced Life. Because of that, it gives me Hope. After all the hideous and horrendous and long-lasting fallouts from living Life in the evil residential schools, I can see that there can be Hope to Living Life so that we can be happy, have peace, be content, be strong, and go back to having strong family ties, be one with Spirit and Creation, begin to understand ourselves as Indigenous Peoples, begin to use our Languages, see the world in our world views, be in our Home Lands, and learn our cultural ways and means because of the Sacred Teachings and guidance of the Four Directions.