

Introduction

My name is Camille Pablo Russell. My Indian name is Shooting in the Air. Born on the Blood Reserve in Southern Alberta, I grew up very close to my grandparents, and learned a lot about my roots and traditions. Over the past 20 years, I have lectured in Europe on Mental Health, Coaching, Traditional Herbs and Leadership Management. I was invited to several Esoteric Conferences. I am working in Calgary, Alberta at the Elbow River Healing Lodge as spiritual counselor and as native coordinator at the local Correctional Institution.

My workshops are based on the principle of “Follow the Buffalo”. To native people the buffalo represents the qualities of perseverance, facing the storms of life and walking into them.

At the age of 19, I started preparing for sun dancing, and my learning continued for eleven years. Then, I was granted to role of leader in the sundance. I continued to learn from the Sundance leaders about the “warrior ways”, as well as the “way of the holy pipe”. These teachings are the foundation for understanding the four parts of a human being and ways of centering.

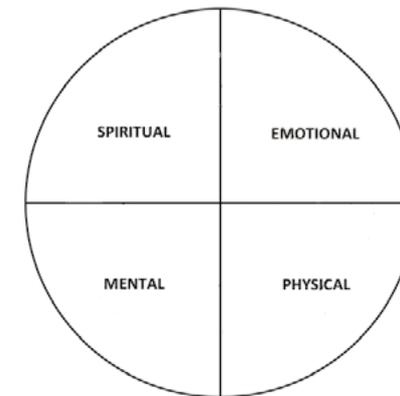
My leader followed our oral tradition in teaching the medicine wheel, but he put this knowledge onto a diagram, to support teaching the principles to modern thinking people.

After learning for 13 years I was granted the right to teach on my own. My workshops are based on this, and other tools, which have helped many people to see things, they have to correct, and take new directions, not only in their lives, but in their work, and to take the steps necessary to improve their quality of life.

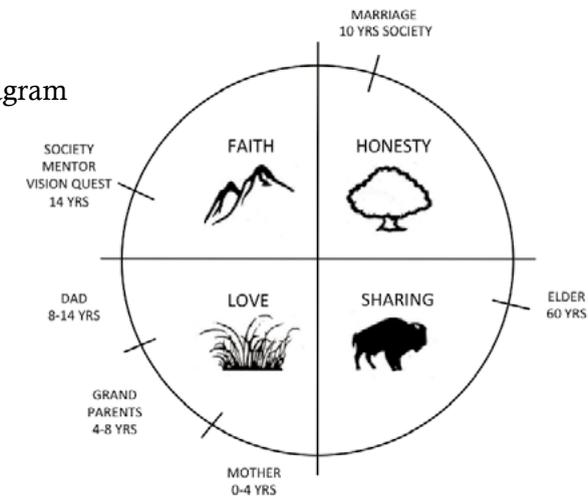
This book is a transcript of the spoken word contents of my lectures and workshops of the “Path of the Buffalo”. As I have already mentioned, I grew up with my grandparents listening to stories and teachings, which were passed on orally by our elders to the next generations. For the Blackfoot Nation, as well as many indigenous people, it was only a puddle jump from the old days of oral tradition to urban life and virtual media. Our native Blackfoot language has rarely been written down or printed in books. My first book is transcribed from my mother tongue captured on a recorder.

The Medicine Wheel

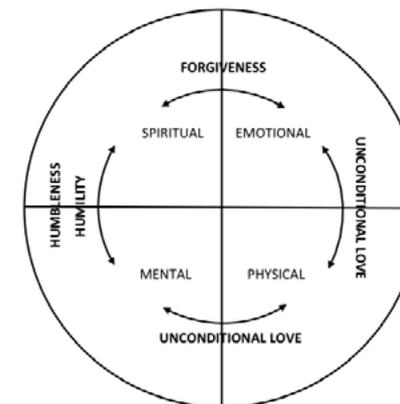
First Diagram



Second Diagram



Third Diagram



The Medicine Wheel

First of all I want to express my views on the medicine wheel. There are a lot of medicine wheels out there. People put labels on their medicine wheels and certify them these, days but, I always wonder who certify these medicine wheels. I guess the only one who could certify the medicine wheel, is the one who came up with the wheel them self.

A medicine wheel in my understanding – from my teacher – is a diagram illustrating or supporting a native philosophy or teaching.

In the past these teachings were not put into a diagram, they were just orally told to an individual from a person, who knew the proper way of living, and what it took to do that. The medicine wheel is a very current thing. Long ago in the past, medicine wheels where not drawn on buffalo robes, and people did not sit in front of this buffalo robe, hanging on a tripod, and the elder had a stick pointing to the drawing of the medicine wheel and then explaining it. In those days the elders talked and the student imagined what he was trying to talk about, and understood in that way.

Today it is a modern time and a lot of people do not live for the moment. A lot of memories are put into reading and writing and this is what the mind frame has become for everyone also for aboriginal people. So to explain a native teaching or philosophy or way of being people started making diagrams. And of course as native people we think in a circle, so naturally our drawing is going to be a circle and then within this circle is an explanation, a teaching. So the name for this teaching became a ‘medicine wheel’.

There are many different types of medicine wheels, because there are many different kinds of teachings, and different tribes explaining the teachings in different ways, with different animals etc. Some medicine wheels will have colors and directions. Some will have animals and plants and will explain a teaching.

Today we don't think the way we used to think. There is a lot of things there are lacking from our ability to understand the old way of teaching. The sense of dreams and following your dreams has been restricted due to norms and stopping of natural growth, and all these restrictions that people

put on children today. They don't allow them to believe and connect naturally anymore. They put a set of norms and expectations on a child at a very early age, which stops their imagination skills, and then they start to compete with the rest of society, and they are taught this at a very young age.

So when they are old enough to think for them selves, it is hard for them to imagine and understand fully what the elders are trying to teach them. So to help the new generation understand those old teaching, we have to adapt the teaching skills to this new generation. So we draw circles, and we put this diagram on the wall, with the circle divided in to four sections.

Some wheels have colors in them, seasons, animals and directions. And it is just to explain what the teacher is trying to teach them. So there is not one true medicine wheel, there is not one way a medicine wheels should be. There are many different kinds of medicine wheels out there, trying to explain a philosophy or a way of life, that belonged to the people of North America.

So there is not one true medicine wheel. There are many different teachings and many different types of wheels. They come from native teachings from our elders, and the medicine wheel that I am talking about here, was taught to me from my teacher. He taught me and gave me the rights to use it to help people.

I had to live by and learn and to change my ways, in order for me to be able to share the wheel with other people.

So this medicine wheel that I am talking about, is the explanation of my teacher. And this is the one that he taught me and that I had to live by and learn by and to change my ways by, in order for me to be able to share it with other people.

It took 13 years of sitting beside him being his apprentice, serving him tea, watching him doing this wheel diagram for audiences over and over again. And just when I thought I knew the wheel, something else popped up that I didn't understand or see or realize or discover, and it continued and continued. Along the way I applied some of those teachings to my personal life and grew and learned and healed from it – not saying that I am perfect – but it did help me change my view on life. Helped me open

up my heart, helped me discover who I am as a human being on this earth, and also as a son to my people.

One day my leader said: Okay now you get up to the board and you talk about the medicine wheel. And of course I was shocked because the anticipation of teaching the wheel had long gone from my ego, because all I did was sit and observe him for 13 years, so I never thought that I would teach it. And then finally he said: “okay you teach it!” So I got up and explained the wheel to the best of my ability at that time.

He critiqued me and said that I did a good job. And after when we were alone I questioned him and asked him why he asked me to do the wheel – now – 13 years later. And he laughed and he said: “It is very simple, son. You had to fix your wheel first before you can teach it.”

That left a very significant realization inside of me. That you first have to heal and understand what you are teaching and go through it yourself before you can turn around and try to teach or share it with others.

So you get this saying that the best teachers are people who are going through it themselves. So you have a lot of problems with psychiatrists, doctors, nurses, priests etc. The people in the helping field always seem to have problems of their own. And you realize that they did not deal with their problems on a personal level.

Heal yourself before helping others

And what I find today in a lot of cases in the world is that people study to be of service to people, but they themselves have not healed the things they preach. In some cases the people who are in the helping field have personal problems themselves. You see this in professions like nursing, teaching, psychiatry or social work. Some of those will have problems of their own. And you realize that in many cases they did not deal with their problems on a personal level.

And to compensate for that, they get an education and they try to help people with the same problems, which creates what some people call a shadow or the dark side of themselves.

Probably these people are not aware of this mechanism when they go through it, but perhaps they become aware of it later on in life.

They do not have the elders, and the mentors that talked with them about these things and teach them about behaviors of people. When I was growing up, I was given examples of different lifestyles, and why that was that way or why that person was like that. They would give you an understanding if you follow this road this could happen, and if you go that way that could happen. So you are not aware, because there is no one around teaching you behaviors of people, or even telling you about your behavior.

If an elder in our culture sees somebody becoming a professional caregiver without dealing with his or her own problems first, then the elder would tell you that you should fix yourself first, before you consider helping people. That is the traditional way. So the person knows it in advance and starts working on her- or himself before she / he becomes a professional caregiver. This is what the elders would teach. This is the problem with society today, that there are no elders to talk to, or no connections to the elders in the society. So these insights are not being shared or taught so that people become aware of it.

This is where this diagram comes from, and the teachings, which is a Blackfoot concept of life. But it applies to any lifestyle of any tribe or any nationality, because it is about the human being. So anybody could relate to this wheel and use it and it, has been used for thousands of years. The wheel is still valid today, and people still need the wheel to fix their life, because we do not have the traditional lifestyle, we used to have.