

The Medicine Wheel at the First Nations University of Canada is the Four Directions Medicine Wheel envisioned for us by a female Elder from the Anishnabe Nation. This is but one Medicine Wheel, and since there are many Medicine Wheels, some people may see the wheel differently. For example, there are age Medicine Wheels, tribal Medicine Wheels, wheels for the four sacred plants (cedar, sage, tobacco and sweetgrass), the four seasons, the four aspects of the self (physical, mental, emotional and spiritual), and personal Medicine Wheels. These wheels each have different colours, placements and meanings.

**The Four Directions Medicine Wheel
as shared by a female Elder from the Anishnabe Nation**

“The Medicine Wheel was placed on Turtle Island by people thousands of years ago. For this Medicine Wheel, I want to honour one of the oldest things we have, which is our four directions. We seek knowledge from those four directions. We get power from those four directions. They pull stuff into our lives. When we call out to them in prayer, they will bring things to us. The four directions came with creation. We didn’t. We were the last thing created. And this is a garden, it’s coming from mother earth, so that’s where the four directions are coming from.

When I look at a Four Directions Medicine Wheel, I see yellow in the east, blue in the south, red in the west, white in the north. The sun rises yellow in the east. It’s always going to rise in the east, and it’s always going to set in the west. And we always get those red sunsets. So we have yellow in the east and red in the west.

And the blue is because we have spring. And spring brings a lighter blue sky, and that blue sky is reflected in the water. Instead of being that darker, cold-looking water, we get those warm-looking waters, that warmer blue. And that is why we have blue in the south – it indicates the summer sky and the summer waters. The north is white because of the icebergs and snow.

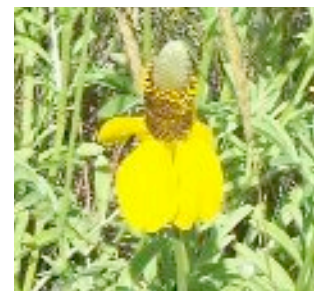
The paths are another Medicine Wheel that represent all the nations of the world. And my thought is that all peoples of the world could attend First Nations University and know about these plants, so I’m putting the path of all the Nations of the world leading into there. These are the white man, the yellow man, the red man and the black man. They can converge in there and learn about our plants and our sacred spaces.”



Common Name: Blanket flower
Latin Name: *Gaillardia aristata*

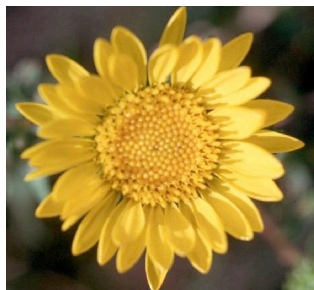


Common Name: Stiff goldenrod
Latin Name: *Solidago rigida*



Common Name: Prairie coneflower
Latin Name: *Ratibida columnifera*

East
yellow



Common Name: Gumweed
Latin Name: *Grindelia squarrosa*



Common Name: Hairy golden aster
Latin Name: *Chrysopsis villosa*



Common Name: Sneezeweed
Latin Name: *Helenium montanum* or
Helenium autumnale

The Medicine Wheel as shared by a male Elder from the Pasqua First Nation

“I hadn’t heard of the Medicine

Wheel until recently; we called it the Sacred

Circle. You see the Sacred Circle in so many things, like the rocks of the tipi and the talking circle. The circle also represents the time from infants to old people. When old people start acting like kids again, they have completed the cycle. For me, the Medicine Wheel

has four quadrants: white faces North, yellow faces East, red faces South, and blue-green faces West. I think of the X of the quadrants as a light that shines from the

centre. The beam spreads as it moves out and covers everything in that direction.”

Each person must find their own Medicine Wheel. What colours do you see in each of the directions? What animals do you associate with each direction? What your Medicine Wheel is comes from your own personal experience of it.

“The Medicine Wheel is a tool. Every morning I start out in the east and move through the directions. I physically move as I go through the directions.”
-student at the First Nations University of Canada

We also get energy from nature, because all things that are alive, including rocks, have energy to depart.”
energy focuses itself to the middle. You see, we all have a spirit, an energy that is transferable.

of the circle. All of the people sitting around the circle are an equal distance from the person in the middle and the person in the middle. Sometimes we put a sick person in the middle around a circle forever. Energy can continue to flow keeps flowing and building momentum. Energy can continue to flow and the sky. The circle is important in that it develops an energy that

medicine wheel is the circle; we call it a hoop. You can see it in the trunk of the tree, the nest, the world,

“The most important part of the

The Medicine Wheel as shared by a male Elder from the Standing Buffalo First Nation

The Medicine Wheel as shared by a female Elder from the Standing Buffalo First Nation

“For the Dakota-Sioux, the

Medicine Wheel is referred to as the Sacred Hoop.

It does not have the four quadrants as seen in the Medicine Wheels of other Nations but consists of simply the circle, the Sacred Hoop. The sacred hoop holds the belief of equality, that everybody and everything has equal value with nothing and nobody being worth more or less than another. The Sacred Hoop also represents the cycles of life. The seasons move in a circle from spring to summer to fall to winter, and life moves in a circle from infants to youth to adults to old people.”



Common Name: Sweet grass
Latin Name: *Heirochloe odorata*



Common Name: Alumroot
Latin Name: *Heuchera richardsonii*



Common Name: Wild mint
Latin Name: *Mentha arvensis*

South
blue/green



Common Name: Blue beardtongue
Latin Name: *Pentstemon nitidus*



Common Name: Indian breadroot
Latin Name: *Psoralea esculenta*



Common Name: Blue-eyed grass
Latin Name: *Sisyrinchium montanum*

Growth

The Seven Stones
as shared by a female Elder from the Anishnabe First Nation

“Children gain things from knowing their identities from the time they are very young. Our language gives us that identity. Through our language, children gain things called the seven stones. The seven stones are **growth, order, adequacy, love, security, social approval, and self-esteem.**

In our traditions, people give **adequacy** through demonstrating how we live our lives. For example, when my dad hunted, everybody got meat. We didn't keep it at home and hoard it. And when we picked berries, even the people that didn't go picking got some, because there might have been a reason that they could not go. We shared, and knew the Creator would take care of us for another day. Sometimes children that are young take ownership of things. Living adequately says to you that you don't have a need to have ownership of something that can be bought or worn out.

Order

Security

Social
Approval

Self-
Esteem

Adequacy

There are different forms of **love**. In our communities, we have an informal adoption of people. They are not biologically related to me, but they are aunts, uncles, brothers or sisters, because, as two-leggeds, they are all in our family and it doesn't matter if they are non-Aboriginal or not. The thing that is important to us is people. They may only be with us for that five minutes - so enjoy it.

We demonstrate the stones to our children. When they turn 13 and get into that culture within a culture – that seven sacred years, they have all those stones built for them. They know who they are and if you know what stones you are, then you aren't going to grab onto a rock of false belief about yourself. That culture within a culture has been there for thousands of years and will be there if Mother Earth doesn't stand up, shake her skirts, and drop us off within the next few years. That's what the seven stones are for.”

Love



Common Name: Prairie Smoke, Three-flowered avens

Latin Name: *Geum triflorum*



Common Name: Scarlet mallow
Latin Name: *Malvastrum coccineum*



Common Name: Cut-leaved anemone
Latin Name: *Anemone multifida*



Common Name: Purple coneflower
Latin Name: *Echinacea angustifolia*

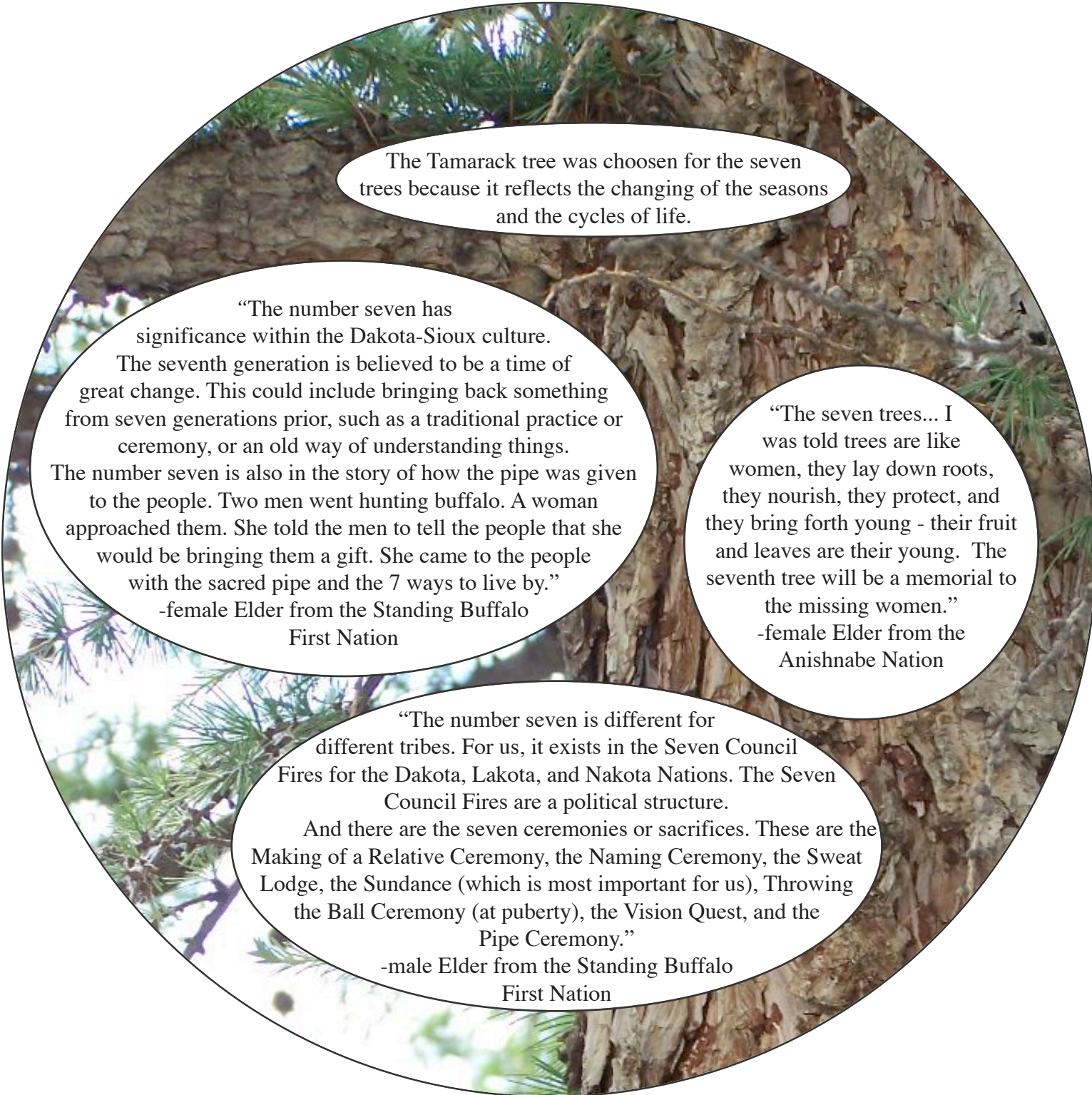


Common Name: Dotted blazingstar
Latin Name: *Liatrus punctata*



Common Name: Wild bergamot, horse mint
Latin Name: *Monarda fistulosa*

West
Red



The Tamarack tree was chosen for the seven trees because it reflects the changing of the seasons and the cycles of life.

“The number seven has significance within the Dakota-Sioux culture. The seventh generation is believed to be a time of great change. This could include bringing back something from seven generations prior, such as a traditional practice or ceremony, or an old way of understanding things. The number seven is also in the story of how the pipe was given to the people. Two men went hunting buffalo. A woman approached them. She told the men to tell the people that she would be bringing them a gift. She came to the people with the sacred pipe and the 7 ways to live by.”

-female Elder from the Standing Buffalo
First Nation

“The seven trees... I was told trees are like women, they lay down roots, they nourish, they protect, and they bring forth young - their fruit and leaves are their young. The seventh tree will be a memorial to the missing women.”

-female Elder from the
Anishnabe Nation

“The number seven is different for different tribes. For us, it exists in the Seven Council Fires for the Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota Nations. The Seven Council Fires are a political structure. And there are the seven ceremonies or sacrifices. These are the Making of a Relative Ceremony, the Naming Ceremony, the Sweat Lodge, the Sundance (which is most important for us), Throwing the Ball Ceremony (at puberty), the Vision Quest, and the Pipe Ceremony.”

-male Elder from the Standing Buffalo
First Nation



Common Name: Prairie sage
Latin Name: *Artemisia ludoviciana*



Common Name: Ground plum
Latin Name: *Astragalus crassicaarpus*



Common Name: Common yarrow
Latin Name: *Achillea millefolium*

North
White

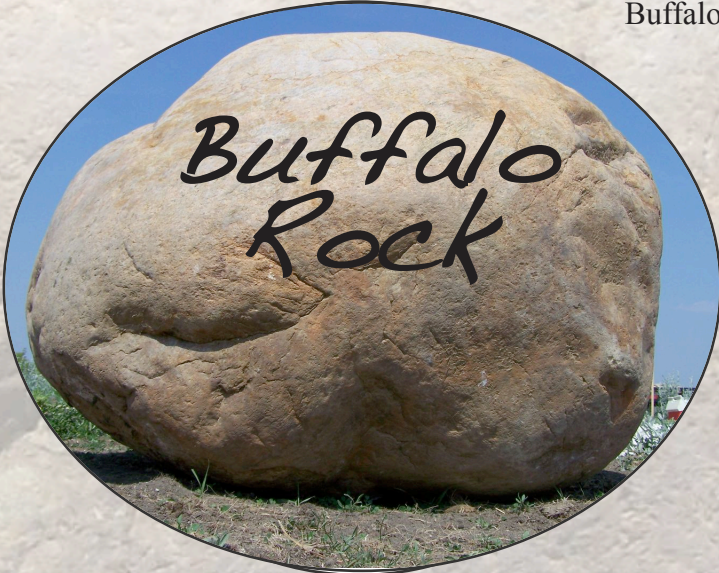


Common Name: Pussy toes
Latin Name: *Antennaria aprica*



Common Name: Pasture sage
Latin Name: *Artemisisa frigida*

“It is our belief that the buffalo ran west, and the mountains opened up, and they have taken refuge there until we start bringing back our natural plants. When the plants come back, the buffalo will return.”



“We call the stones our grandfathers. They were here when the earth was young. They have so much knowledge and memory. We see the stones as having spirit and being alive.”

“On the prairie, the buffalo was the thing that all people lived off of. They needed nothing else but the buffalo. They used every part of the buffalo. Today our buffalo has been transformed into education for our people. When you get your education, no one can take it away from you. With your education, you can provide yourself with all the things the buffalo would have given us – food, clothing. Instead of chasing the buffalo, our young people better be chasing education. - female Elder from the Anishnabe Nation

“The Buffalo Rock is shiny. It’s where the buffalo would lean up and rub themselves. People often pray and make offerings like tobacco on large rocks. Large rocks serve as a reminder that we do bigger things than we can handle. They are humbling. The Buffalo Rock is important because it was favoured by the buffalo. The Dakota are Buffalo people, so the buffalo are very important to us. When we brought back the buffalo to Standing Buffalo, people were crying to see them. A wholistic sense of wellness was returned.” -male Elder from Standing Buffalo First Nation



Common Name: Canada anemone
Latin Name: *Anemone canadensis*

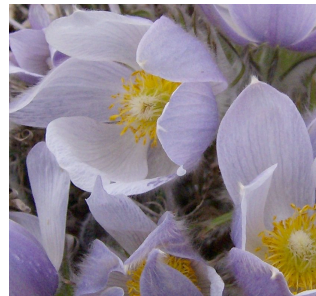


Common Name: Long-fruited anemone
Latin Name: *Anemone cylindrica*



Common Name: Wild licorice
Latin Name: *Glycyrrhiza lepidota*


North
White
con't



Common Name: Prairie crocus
Latin Name: *Anemone patens*



Common Name: Northern bedstraw
Latin Name: *Galium boreale*




“Some elders are comfortable with sharing plant knowledge and uses and some are not. The uses for some plants are given to us to use through visions and dreams. Each person may be given different plants and they may be used in different ways and for different purposes. We cannot say what a plant is used for in general because each plant will do different things depending on the person who uses them. And we cannot say what we use the plants for because it is sacred knowledge. If we do so, we will lose their gifts. Then, when we go to use them to help people, they will no longer work. There is a difference between wild and planted plants. The plants and medicines that grow in the wild are stronger and more powerful medicines, while those that are planted do not hold that same strength. The same goes for natural versus worked land. Once a land has been turned and worked by man, the plants that grow within it will not be as powerful as those that grow in untouched land. It is important when planting or picking any plant that we treat it with respect.”

- female Elder from the Standing Buffalo First Nation

“The old people were very powerful. They had dreams about plants – what to use them for, how to prepare them, and which plants to mix them with. They didn’t just go out into the world and experiment – they received instructions through their dreams.”

- male Elder from the Pasqua First Nation

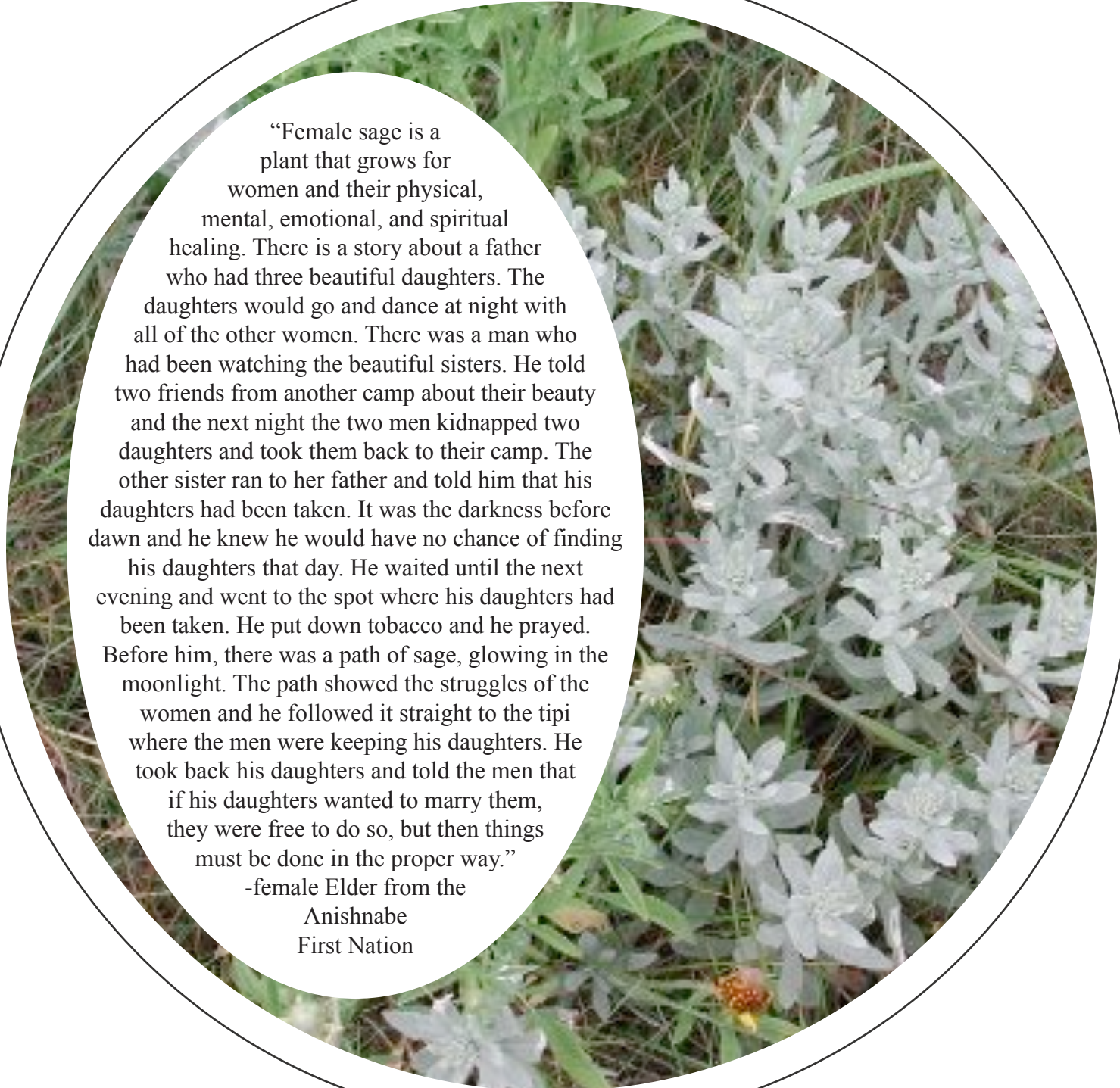


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Photographs: Fidji Gendron, Michelle Biden and Saskatchewan Conservation Data Centre

The Medicine Wheel Garden was created in the Summer of 2008.



“Female sage is a plant that grows for women and their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual healing. There is a story about a father who had three beautiful daughters. The daughters would go and dance at night with all of the other women. There was a man who had been watching the beautiful sisters. He told two friends from another camp about their beauty and the next night the two men kidnapped two daughters and took them back to their camp. The other sister ran to her father and told him that his daughters had been taken. It was the darkness before dawn and he knew he would have no chance of finding his daughters that day. He waited until the next evening and went to the spot where his daughters had been taken. He put down tobacco and he prayed. Before him, there was a path of sage, glowing in the moonlight. The path showed the struggles of the women and he followed it straight to the tipi where the men were keeping his daughters. He took back his daughters and told the men that if his daughters wanted to marry them, they were free to do so, but then things must be done in the proper way.”

-female Elder from the
Anishnabe
First Nation

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