

DANCING
with the
WHEEL

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DANCING with the **WHEEL**

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The Medicine Wheel Workbook

Sun Bear, Wabun Wind,
and Crysalis Mulligan

ATRIA PAPERBACK

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To Kyla Anna Eve Wind,
Yarrow Goding, Winona LaDuke Kapesheit,
Waseyabin, Aajuawak, Autumn Garry
—our next generation—and to
all generations to come.

Acknowledgments

The vision of the Medicine Wheel is an unfolding vision. Although it originally came to me, many people have added to it over the years. Wabun, my medicine helper and coauthor, has been instrumental in bringing this vision to the people. She has helped each step of the way, both by writing about my vision and by organizing the original Medicine Wheel Gatherings. Nimimosha and Thunderbird Woman did the art for the original Medicine Wheel circle and *Medicine Wheel Book*, and in that way added their artistic interpretations to the vision. All the people who have helped organize Medicine Wheel Gatherings and all those who have participated in them have also added their essential part to the sacred whole that is the Medicine Wheel. I would like to particularly acknowledge Wabun, Shawnodese, Glenn Schiffman, Donna Singing Pipe Woman, Jaya Bear, Randy North Star Ducharme, Jude Davis, Casey DuPree, Lou and Mary Kay DeSabra, Dawn Songfeather and all the individual Medicine Wheel Gathering organizers for their parts in arranging the first gatherings and in helping them to continue over the years. I also want to thank all the teachers and participants at the gatherings.

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Wabun brings her knowledge of Medicine Wheel consultations, the Earthstones, and the Medicine Wheel Gatherings to this book, and thus makes it a much richer work because it is based on the true life experience of the many people with whom she's worked. Wabun thanks all those who have taken the Medicine Wheel consultation course and thus helped her in defining how the Medicine Wheel affects people in their daily lives.

Crysalis, our coauthor, has danced with the wheel in other ways. Through her love for the mineral and color kingdoms, she has found ways of building wheels that can help people heal on all levels of being. Through her understanding of the sensory and artistic aspect of life, she has devised ceremonies, to help people experience the wheel in a more complete manner, and ceremonial medicine tools, to allow them to bring their understanding into the physical realm. Crysalis brings her expertise in these areas to *Dancing with the Wheel*.

When we let people in the Medicine Wheel network know we were looking for art based on the original vision, we were overwhelmed with the response. Quite a number of people have been inspired to interpret my original vision artistically in all media: oils, acrylics, ink, beadwork, featherwork, wood, clay. Some of these artistic interpretations are found within this book.

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—SUN BEAR
1990

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—CRYSLIS
1990

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Preface: Create the World You Like

The Medicine Wheel dance has had a strong beginning. In the late 1970s, Spirit gave me a powerful vision. In this vision I saw a hilltop bare of trees. A soft breeze was blowing, gently moving the prairie grass. I saw a circle of rocks that came out like the spokes of a wheel. Inside this large circle was another circle of rocks, nearer to the center. As I was looking at this vision I knew this was the Sacred Circle, the hoop of my people. Inside of the Center Circle was the buffalo skull, the skull of the Grandmother. I looked around me and saw coming up through ravines, from the four directions, what at first looked like animals. As they came closer, I saw that they were not animals but people wearing headdresses and costumes to honor the animal kingdom. They moved to the circle, entered it sunwise, and made a complete circle before they settled onto their proper place on the wheel.

First people settled in the place of the North, the place of the winter, the time of rest for ourselves and for the Earth Mother. The North represents the time when we have white hairs of snow upon our heads. This is the time when we prepare to change both worlds and forms. Other people went to the East, the place of awakening, of dawn, and of spring. The East is the place that represents mankind's birth and beginning. Next people settled in the South. The South is the time of summer, of the years of our fruitfulness, and of our most rapid growth. Still others continued until they came to the West. The West

is the time of autumn, the time when we reap our harvest, when we have found the knowledge needed to center ourselves. The West is the home of the West Wind, Father of All the Winds.

The people I saw were singing the songs of their seasons, the songs of their minerals, their plants, their totem animals. Most important, they were singing songs for the healing of the Earth Mother. A leader among them was saying, "Let the Medicine of the sacred circle prevail. Let many people across the land come to this circle and make prayers for the healing of the Earth Mother. Let the circles of the Medicine Wheel come back."

I saw in this vision people from all the clans, from all the directions; people representing all the totems. I saw that in their hearts they carried peace.

That is my original vision, a vision that I knew had to be fulfilled.

I shared what I had seen with Wabun and with other members of the Bear Tribe. I knew this was a vision that had to become reality on the physical plane. The world being as it is today, I needed the printed word to bring this vision to the people. First Wabun and I wrote the words for the Medicine Wheel Circle, which contains the essence of my vision. We had it printed and started making it available to people. One of the people with the tribe sent a copy of the Medicine Wheel Circle to Oscar Collier, Wabun's literary agent who was then working as an editor at Prentice Hall. The Medicine Wheel Circle arrived on his birthday. He felt that the information contained in the circle gave him a whole new understanding of life, one that he thought should be shared with other people. He contacted us and asked whether we would be willing to write a book based on my Medicine Wheel vision. We agreed. In 1980, that book was first published.

By the time I write this in 1990, it is probable that close to 1 million people in the world have danced with the Medicine Wheel of my original vision.

The power of the vision I was originally given continues to grow. People are building wheels all over the world. Untold thousands of wheels now exist because of this vision. The *Medicine Wheel Book* is published in English, German, French, Spanish, Dutch, Greek, Hebrew, Danish, Japanese, and Turkish. In Europe, people are dancing around the Medicine Wheels. Isn't it amazing that the vision of one Native American has spread across the Great Water to affect so greatly the descendants of those who once crossed that water to take Turtle Island from its Earthkeepers? Doesn't this in itself teach something about the power of this great wheel?

The Medicine Wheel is a springboard of power that will allow you to link up with all the energies of the universe. It is a place where the great teachers of knowledge will gather to share with each other and the people. The Medicine Wheel is a place where we can speak of medicine to heal our sick, of ways to produce food to feed the hungry, of methods to house the homeless, and of means to teach people to find a balance in their lives and harmony with the earth.

The Medicine Wheel is the sacred hoop of the nations. For the world to come back into real balance the nations must be healed. For this healing to occur there can no longer be war between nations because one nation covets the wealth or territory of another. There can no longer be hate over religion or race.

If we want to have a better world, people must be in balance and harmony. The world is made up of people along with the rest of the creation. It is the people on the earth who are out of balance and who need to right their relationship with the rest of creation. The sacred Medicine Wheel can teach proper balance.

In this book we give you a deeper understanding of how to connect with the powers of creation. The Medicine Wheel has always been an earth teaching. It does not take you out to the stars. Rather it brings you down to earth. In the

Native teachings we acknowledge that all parts of the creation are our relations because we all live on the same Earth Mother and get water, air, food, fuel, and shelter from her. So we are all related.

The native people think of minerals, plants, and animals as all having certain powers. We refer to these other beings as our relations and as our totems. We know each species has a protector spirit. When we need help we pray for that protector spirit to help us. We see the universe as having both a visible and invisible world. The visible world is all we see around us and the invisible world is that of the spirit beings who are placed here to oversee everything on the planet. These spirits work with the Creator and they are available to help humanity.

By doing ceremonies—like those having to do with the Medicine Wheel—you get in touch with these spirits. A ceremony is a way for humans to center their energy and connect with these spirit powers who can help heal both humans and the earth.

Many powerful things have happened to let me know the spirits are reaching out and saying that now is definitively the time to return to the Medicine Wheel. In Europe and England many “mysterious” circles have appeared in the middle of the fields. Now these circles are appearing in the United States. These are spirit circles created by powers beyond our understanding to tell us that now is the time to return to the way of the Medicine Wheel.

So many people have danced with the wheel. For some this has been a brief whirl; for others a dance that has profoundly changed their whole lives. As with all dances, the steps change a little with each dancer. Some people have danced with the wheel so powerfully that their steps have added richness and variety to the original vision. That is all good.

But times are changing. The earth changes are becoming more intense. The earth needs more of her children to take their rightful positions as her keepers. To do this we must have an ever-increasing commitment to the earth and an ever-growing understanding of her needs. As the earth changes, so must we.

The Medicine Wheel is an important tool for these times. By learning about the wheel, we learn about the universe. Through traveling around the wheel, we bring life-giving changes into our own lives and into the world.

Dancing with the Wheel does more than bring you up to date with how my original vision has unfolded. This book gives you important new information that will help you to use the Medicine Wheel as a life tool, whether you are an old hand at earth dancing or someone who is just beginning to hear the earth’s song.

Often as I’ve traveled and taught about the Medicine Wheel, people have asked me for more ways in which to make the wheel part of their daily lives. *Dancing with the Wheel* answers that request.

I hope that through this book you can better understand the Medicine Wheel and the sacred law of relationship. As each of us learns how to live in a sacred manner, how to walk in a way harmonious with all the creation, we put our steps on the path of love and harmony. When enough people on the planet are walking on that path, then we will have a better world.

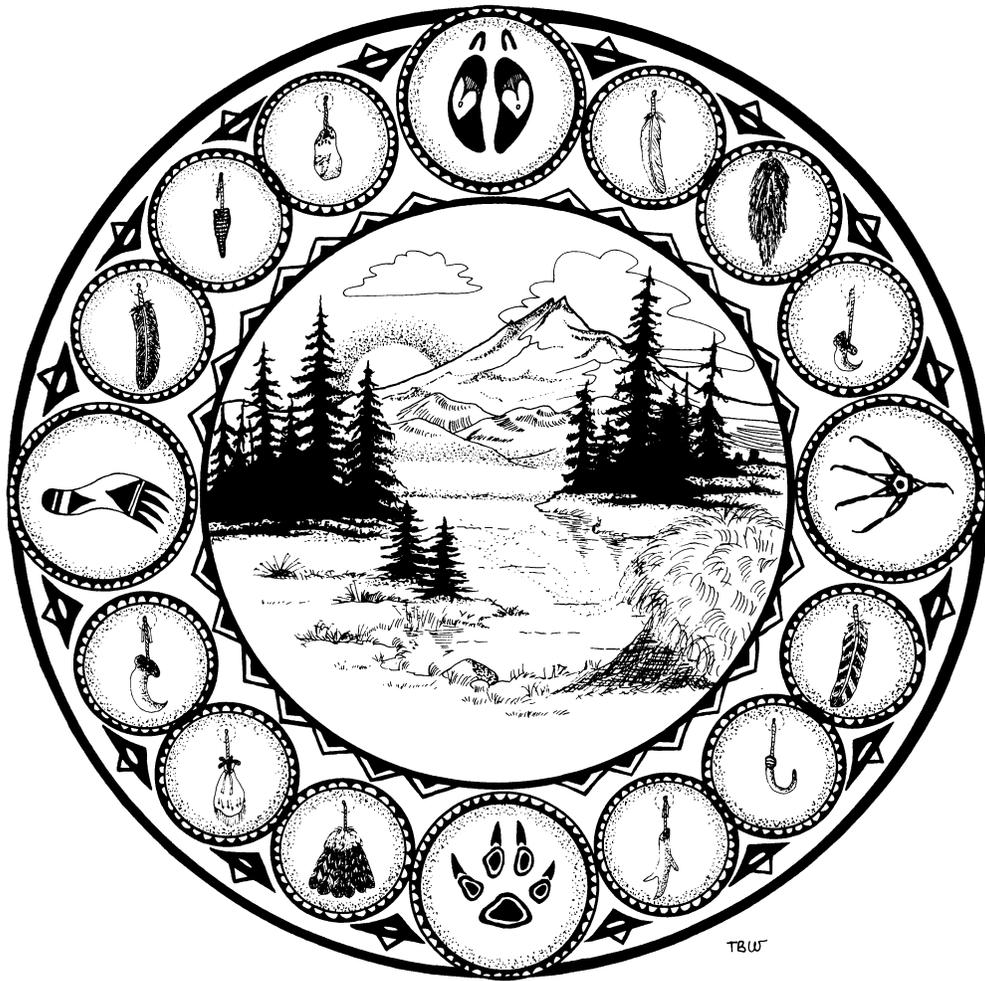
This I have spoken.

—SUN BEAR
1990

Part I



**THE STEPS
TO THE
DANCE**



TBW

The Medicine Wheel—by Thunderbird Woman



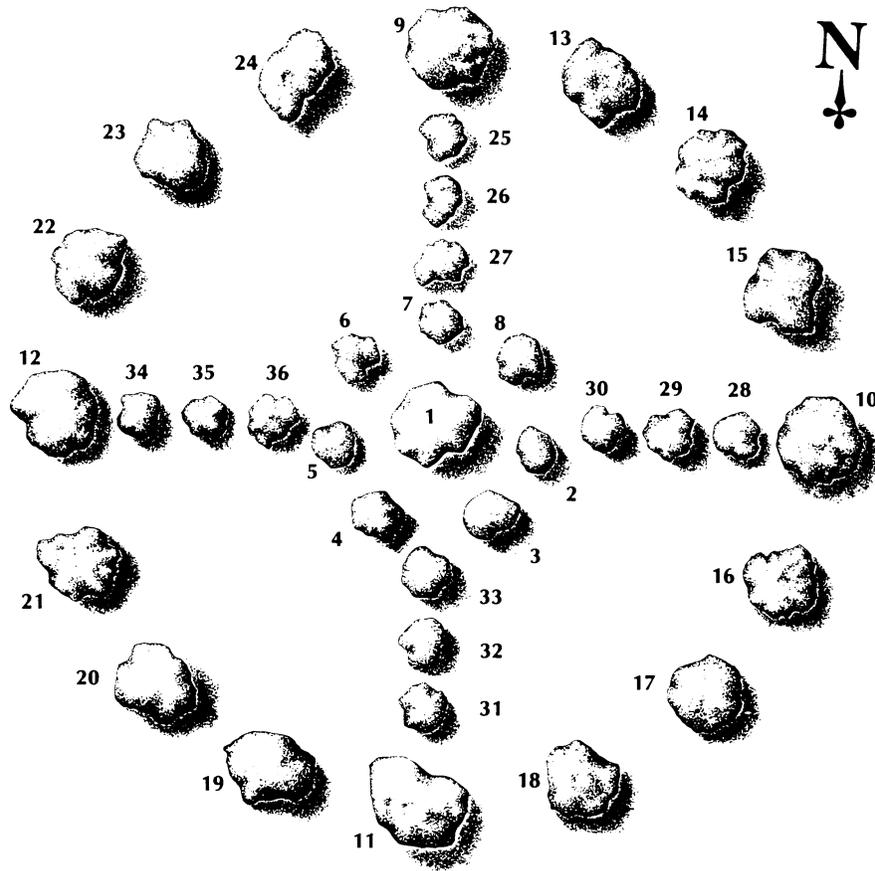
The Dance Begins

To enjoy dancing with the wheel you must first learn the steps to the dance. Like most earth-based ceremonies and tools, the Medicine Wheel appears to be simple. After all, it is merely a structure of thirty-six stones. Yet there are untold levels of meaning to this simple circle and the lines within the circle. *Dancing with the Wheel* is a step-by-step guide to these levels.

To understand the Medicine Wheel dance you must first know that the Medicine Wheel of this vision is similar to the 20,000 Medicine Wheels that existed on this continent before the European people immigrated here. These Medicine Wheels served many purposes for the Native people of the Americas. They were the ceremonial centers of culture, astronomical laboratories, and places people would come to mark the times and changes in their own lives as well as the life of the earth. They were places to pray, meditate, contemplate, strengthen your connection with nature, and come to a higher degree of understanding of yourself and your relationship with all the creation. Medicine Wheels were usually placed on areas where the energy of the earth could be strongly felt, and their use in ceremony made this energy get even stronger. Consequently, Medicine Wheel areas became what people now call vortexes: places of intense earth energy and healing. The new areas where Medicine Wheels have been built are serving the same function.

The Medicine Wheel

1. Creator
2. Earth Mother
3. Father Sun
4. Grandmother Moon
5. Turtle
6. Frog
7. Thunderbird
8. Butterfly
9. Waboose
10. Wabun
11. Shawnode
12. Mudjekeewis
13. Snow Goose
14. Otter
15. Cougar
16. Red Hawk
17. Beaver
18. Deer
19. Flicker
20. Sturgeon
21. Brown Bear
22. Raven
23. Snake
24. Elk
25. Cleansing
26. Renewal
27. Purity
28. Clarity
29. Wisdom
30. Illumination
31. Growth
32. Trust
33. Love
34. Experience
35. Introspection
36. Strength



A Complete Medicine Wheel

Forms of the Medicine Wheel exist all around the globe from the great stone circles of Europe to the mandalas of India. All of these are reminders of our past when the world was guided by the law of right relationship, and humans respected themselves and all their relations—mineral, plant, animal, spirit—on the Earth Mother. Learning about the Medicine Wheel can help you remember your connection with all these aspects of the universe. Each stone in the Medicine Wheel is a tool to help you understand your ties with the ancient past that molds both personal and planetary present and future. Each position in the Medicine Wheel will directly affect you at some point in your life.

The Creator stone, or symbol, is the center of the Medicine Wheel as the Creator is the center of all life, always creating without beginning or ending, always moving, always continuing. From this center radiates the energy that creates all the rest of the wheel. The seven stones that surround the Creator form the Center Circle of the wheel and represent the foundation of all life. Slightly to the south of East is the stone that represents the Earth Mother, the being who gives us our home and our lives. Continuing in a sunwise (clockwise) direction—as we almost always do in building and using the Medicine Wheel—is the stone honoring Father Sun who warms and quickens life. Next comes the stone for Grandmother Moon who guides our dreams and visions, followed by the Turtle clan stone, representing the element of earth; the Frog clan, representing the element of water; the Thunderbird clan, representing the element of fire; and the Butterfly clan representing the element of air. These seven stones teach about the basic building blocks of all life.

The anchor stones for the outer circle of the Medicine Wheel are the four stones honoring the Spirit Keepers: Waboose in the North; Wabun in the East; Shawnodese in the South; Mudjekeewis in the West. These Spirit Keeper stones divide the circle into the quadrants that set the boundaries for the twelve moon stones in the outer circle. These stones represent the moons that divide the year. From them we learn more about each season; each time of day and time of life; and each mineral, plant, animal, elemental clan, Spirit Keeper, and human associated with that moon.

Completing the Medicine Wheel are four Spirit Paths, each consisting of three stones. These paths go from the Spirit Keeper stones toward the Center Circle. They represent qualities that take us from daily life into the sacred space of the Creator.

That simple physical description of the Medicine Wheel provides you with the first basic steps for dancing with the wheel. But to really understand the wheel, your comprehension must surpass the physical and the intellectual. You can never dance well if you are always thinking about where to place your feet. To dance you need to listen to the music and allow that music to be a part of your body and being. That takes time and practice. When you are ready to begin, use the following simple technique, the first of many that will help you dance with the wheel.

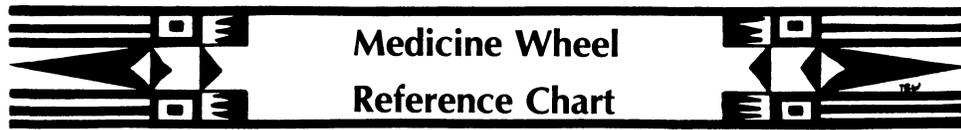
Throughout the book, these techniques are called visualizations or an exercise. These provide ways for you to mentally see, feel, and imagine yourself and your life as something different from what it is now. All visualizations and exercises, if treated with respect, can be done as ceremonies that are ways for you to connect your energy with the energy of the universe and to thank the universe, and all of its parts, for the gift of life.

HEARING THE EARTH'S SONG

What you need. A quiet space and, if desired, notebook and pen or tape recorder.

Estimated time. Ten minutes at first, five when you have done this visualization a few times.

1. Sit comfortably in a chair, or on the floor, or lie down. Take a few really deep breaths, allowing your breath to go through as much of your body as it can.
2. Close your eyes. Relax your jaw and stomach.
3. Be aware that the earth is beneath you even if you are on the fiftieth floor of a skyscraper. Feel your energy connecting with the energy of the earth.
4. When you are relaxed and feel connected, just listen.
5. Do you hear something? Faintly at first then louder you will hear a beat that sounds like a drum.
6. What is it? Listen closer. *Tum, tum, tum, tum.* The drumbeat you hear first is the beat of your own heart. Listen longer.
7. *Tum . . . tum . . . tum . . . tum . . .* goes a slower drumbeat. You feel your heart slow to beat with this new music and you feel yourself deeply relaxed, deeply connected to the source of this music: the Earth Mother.
8. Enjoy the music, enjoy the few moments in sacred space.
9. When you are ready, come back to your normal reality.
10. Take a moment to feel any differences in your body, to sense changes in your perception.
11. If you wish, write down or record your reactions.



Medicine Wheel Reference Chart

The Center

Stone Number	Name of Stone	Element	Mineral	Plant
1	Creator	All or Any	All or Any	All or Any
2	Earth Mother	Earth	Clay	Corn, Beans, Squash
3	Father Sun	Fire & Air	Geode	Sunflower
4	Grandmother Moon	Water	Moonstone	Mugwort
5	Turtle Clan	Earth	Petrified Wood	Cattails
6	Frog Clan	Water	River Rock	Algae
7	Thunderbird Clan	Fire	Lava Rock	Fireweed
8	Butterfly Clan	Air	Azurite	Butterfly Weed

The Spirit

Stone Number	Name of Stone	Element	Mineral	Plant
9	Waboose (North)	Earth	Alabaster	Sweetgrass
10	Wabun (East)	Air	Pipestone	Tobacco
11	Shawnodese (South)	Water	Serpentine	Sagebrush
12	Mudjekeewis (West)	Fire	Soapstone	Cedar

The Moons

	Stone Number	Dates	Name of Moon	Mineral	Plant
North	13	Dec. 22-Jan.19	Earth Renewal	Quartz	Birch
	14	Jan. 20-Feb. 18	Rest & Cleansing	Silver	Quaking Aspen
	15	Feb.19-March 20	Big Winds	Turquoise	Plantain
East	16	March 21-April 19	Budding Trees	Fire Opal	Dandelion
	17	April 20-May 20	Frogs Return	Chrysocolla	Blue Camas
	18	May 21-June 20	Cornplanting	Moss Agate	Yarrow
South	19	June 21-July 22	Strong Sun	Carnelian Agate	Wild Rose
	20	July 23-Aug. 22	Ripe Berries	Garnet & Iron	Raspberry
	21	Aug. 23-Sept. 22	Harvest	Amethyst	Violet
West	22	Sept. 23-Oct. 23	Ducks Fly	Jasper	Mullein
	23	Oct. 24-Nov. 21	Freeze Up	Copper & Malachite	Thistle
	24	Nov. 22-Dec. 21	Long Snows	Obsidian	Black Spruce

The Spirit

Stone Number	Name of Quality	Position	Mineral	Plant
25	Cleansing	Outer North	Sodalite	Echinacea
26	Renewal	Middle North	Peridote	Red Clover
27	Purity	Inner North	Herkimer Diamond	Trillium
28	Clarity	Outer East	Mica	Rosemary
29	Wisdom	Middle East	Jade	Sage
30	Illumination	Inner East	Calcite	Wild American Ginseng
31	Growth	Outer South	Fluorite	Comfrey
32	Trust	Middle South	Lapidilite	Borage
33	Love	Inner South	Rose Quartz	Hawthorne
34	Experience	Outer West	Hematite	Olive
35	Introspection	Middle West	Lapis Lazuli	Chamomile
36	Strength	Inner West	Amber	Nettle



Medicine Wheel Reference Chart

Circle

Animal	Color
All or Any	All or Any
Tortoise	Forest Green
Lizard	Sky Blue
Loon	Silver/White
Turtle	Green/Brown
Frog	Blue/Green
Thunderbird	Red
Butterfly	Translucent w/Blue

Keepers

Animal	Color	Season	Time of Day	Time of Life
White Buffalo	White	Winter	Midnight	Elder & Newborn
Golden Eagle	Gold & Red	Spring	Dawn	Child
Coyote	Yellow & Green	Summer	Midday	Adolescent & Young Adult
Grizzly Bear	Blue & Black	Autumn	Twilight	Adult

and Totems

Animal	Color	Spirit Keeper	Complement	Elemental Clan
Snow Goose	White	Waboose	Flicker	Turtle
Otter	Silver	Waboose	Sturgeon	Butterfly
Cougar	Turquoise	Waboose	Brown Bear	Frog

Red Hawk	Yellow	Wabun	Raven	Thunderbird
Beaver	Blue	Wabun	Snake	Turtle
Deer	White & Green	Wabun	Elk	Butterfly

Flicker	Pink	Shawnodese	Snow Goose	Frog
Sturgeon	Red	Shawnodese	Otter	Thunderbird
Brown Bear	Purple	Shawnodese	Cougar	Turtle

Raven	Brown	Mudjekeewis	Red Hawk	Butterfly
Snake	Orange	Mudjekeewis	Beaver	Frog
Elk	Black	Mudjekeewis	Deer	Thunderbird

Paths

Animal	Color
Raccoon	Pale Green
Earthworm	Dark Green
Dolphin	Translucent White
Hummingbird	Clear
Owl	Jade Green
Firefly	Fluorescent Blue
Rabbit	Violet
Salmon	Lavender
Wolf	Rose
Whale	Steel Grey
Mouse	Royal Blue
Ant	Golden Yellow