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WEBINAR SERIES
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Aboriginal Perspectives on Health and Wellness



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Webinar Training Objectives

- ❑ **Aboriginal Population Profiles and Demographics**
- ❑ **Aboriginal Cultural Wholistic Concepts**
- ❑ **Fundamentals Concepts towards Working with Aboriginal Communities**

Population Profile and Demographics of Aboriginal People





Population Profiles

Before discussing culture and healing and wellness of Aboriginal people in Canada, we must gain a better understanding of their significance by examining the population profile, which demonstrates that the composition of Aboriginal people in Canada is growing and changing.

Population Profiles-Canada



- In 2006, First Nations, Métis and Inuit people of Aboriginal ancestry surpassed the one million mark, reaching 1,172,790.
- In the past decade the Aboriginal population grew by 45%, nearly 6 times faster than the 8% increase of the non-Aboriginal population

Population Profiles- Canada

Aboriginal Identity	2006	% Change from 1996 to 2006
Aboriginal Identity	1,172,790	9%
First Nations	698,025	45%
Métis	389,785	91%
Inuit	50,485	26%
Multiple and other responses (1)	34,500	34%

(1) Includes person who reported more than one Aboriginal identity group, North American Indian, Métis or Inuit) and those who reported being a Registered Indian and or Band member without reporting an Aboriginal identity

(Source: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 1996 and 2006)

Population Profiles-Ontario

- In 2006, the number of people in Ontario who identified themselves as an **Aboriginal person, First Nations, Métis and Inuit** reached **242,495**.
- Of those **Ontarians reporting an Aboriginal identity in the 2006 Census**:

First Nations	158,400	65%
Métis	73,605	30%
Inuit	2,035	1%

(Statistics Canada, 2006)



Population Profiles-Ontario

- **65% of Aboriginal people, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit lived in urban areas (including large cities or census population areas and smaller urban centre's) in 2006, up slightly from 63% in 1996.**
- **18.3% of all Aboriginal people in Ontario lived in non-reserve rural areas**
- **The Aboriginal population in Ontario is much younger than the non-Aboriginal population. The median age of the Aboriginal population in Ontario was 29.7 years in 2006, compared with 38.9 years for non-Aboriginal people in the province.**

(Statistics Canada, 2006)

Population Profiles

Ontario – First Nations

- **Almost one-quarter (23%) of Canada's First Nations population lived in Ontario (158,400) in 2006, representing 1% of the total Ontario population, with a 35% increase since 1996.**
- **In 2006, 15,800 First Nations people spoke Ojibway, 6,840 spoke Oji-Cree, and 4,230 spoke Cree.**

(Statistics Canada, 2006)

Population Profiles

Ontario – Métis



- **Ontario is home to the country's second largest Métis population – 73,605 people accounting for 19% of all Métis in Canada in 2006.**
- **The number of Métis people living in Ontario increased by 242% from 1996 – 2006.**
- **Most of the Métis population (72%) lived in one of the provinces urban centre's in 2006.**

(Statistics Canada, 2006)

Population Profiles

Ontario – Inuit



- **In 2006, there were 2035 Inuit people in Ontario, representing less than 1% of the total Aboriginal identity population of the province**
- **Ottawa-Gatineau has the highest Inuit population outside of Inuit Nunaat with 725 people**

Note: Inuit Nunaat is the Inuktitut expression for Inuit homeland, which is a region stretching from Labrador to the North West Territories

(Statistics Canada, 2006)

Population Profiles

Ontario – Main Cultural Groups

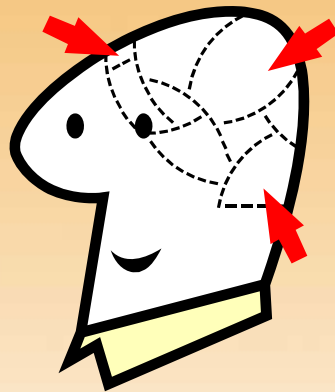


Historically, there are 5 main Aboriginal cultural groups living in Ontario:

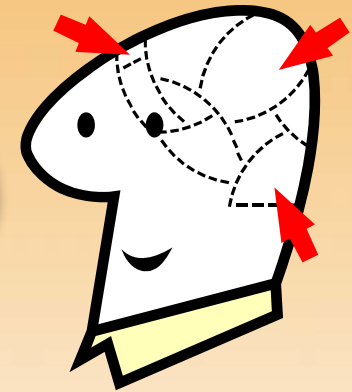
- **Cree**
- **Anishnawbe (Ojibway, Pottawani, Chippewas, Odawa, Algonquin, Mississauga)**
- **Haudensaunee (Iroquois, Mohawk, Onondaga, Oneida, Cayuga, Tuscarora, Seneca)**
- **Métis**
- **Inuit**

Linear Thinking

To continue to look at something from one point of view



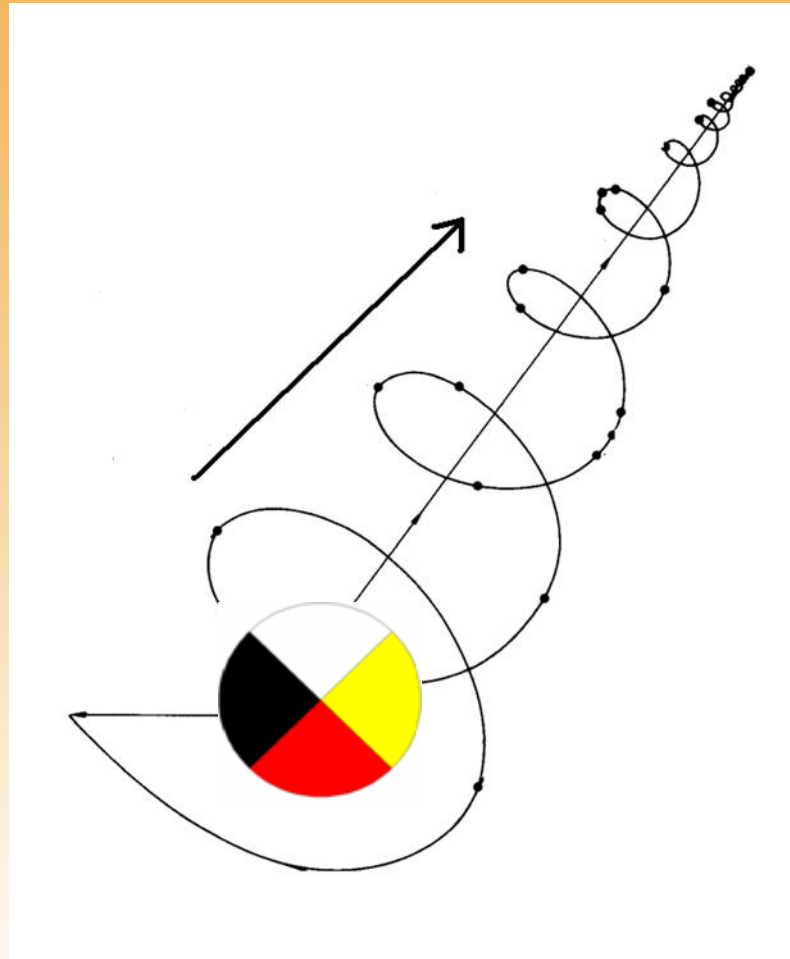
Problem



Solution



Aboriginal Thinking





Aboriginal Well-Being

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) spoke of a circle of well-being in which self-government, economic self-reliance, healing and a partnership of mutual respect are the key building blocks.

***Aboriginal Cultural
Perspectives on Health,
Wellness and Spirituality***



What is Culture ?



To help us understand Aboriginal Culture we need to first define culture itself:

Culture is the sum total of cultural elements that define a specific social group.

Cultural elements are anything that:

- **Affects the behaviour and outlook of a social group**
- **Is shared in common**
- **Is learned and passed on to descendents**



What are Cultural Elements ?

Examples of Cultural Elements are:

- **Language**
- **Belief System**
- **Values**
- **Traditions**
- **Customs**
- **Dress**
- **Identity**
- **Group Perception**

The Medicine Wheel

The MEDICINE WHEEL
Is valued by Aboriginal
peoples as a holistic,
sacred symbol, given by
the Creator, to be used
with great respect
and reverence.

The MEDICINE WHEEL
revolves endlessly in a
clockwise direction.

The Medicine Wheel





The Medicine Wheel

The MEDICINE WHEEL teaches us that we must strive to be in balance, to maintain a healthy mind, body and spirit.

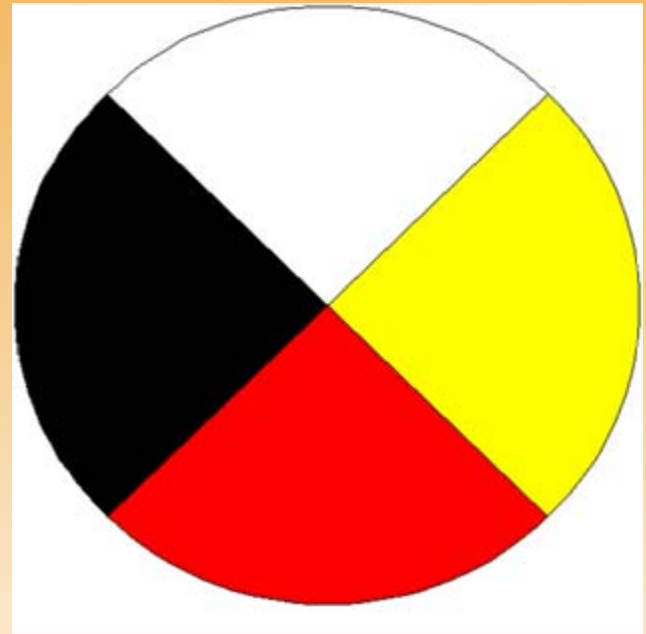
Illness is considered to be the result of “imbalance” in one or more of these areas.

The Medicine Wheel

It represents the universal cycles of life such as;

- **THE STAGES OF LIFE** -birth to death
- **CHANGING OF THE SEASONS** - spring, summer, fall, winter
- **ELEMENTS OF THE EARTH** – water, air, earth, fire
- **HUMAN PERSONALITY** – physical, mental, emotional, spiritual
- **THE RACES OF THE WORLD**- yellow, red, black, white
- **HEALING MEDICINES** – tobacco, cedar, sage and sweetgrass.

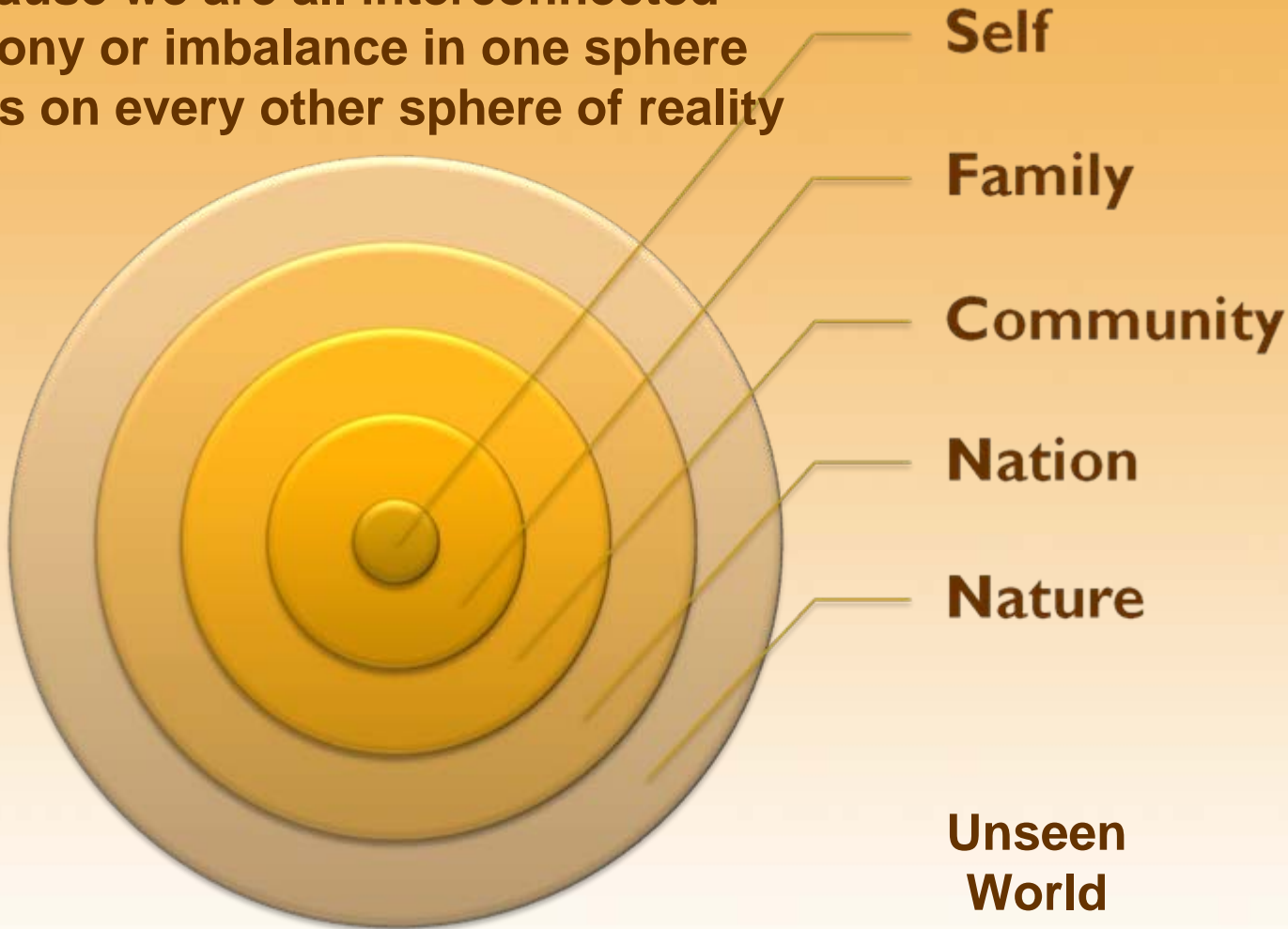
The Medicine Wheel



We are all Connected..... In the Sacred Circle



**Because we are all interconnected
harmony or imbalance in one sphere
impacts on every other sphere of reality**



Seven Sacred Teachings



A fundamental belief underlying most Aboriginal spirituality is that everyone was given gifts from the Creator at birth to use as medicine for the mind, body, heart and spirit. These sacred gifts are:

- ❖ **Wisdom**
- ❖ **Love**
- ❖ **Respect**
- ❖ **Bravery**
- ❖ **Honesty**
- ❖ **Humility**
- ❖ **Truth**

Seven Sacred Gifts



Each gift comes with a teaching that offers direction and guidance in finding balance and purpose in life by:

- **Accepting who we are,**
- **Understanding our responsibilities, and**
- **Doing as we ought to with the best of our abilities.**

(Adapted from 2005, *Reclaiming Connections: Understanding Residential School Trauma Among Aboriginal People, A Resource Manual*, Ottawa, ON, Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 68

Sacred Medicines





Cleansing our Spirit

- **Purification is an ancient Aboriginal tradition. Historically this important act was performed to purify the people and places about to be used for sacred or significant events, such as before meditation, or before starting an important meeting.**
- **The opening of the circle in this manner is a way to seek the protection and guidance of the Ancestors and the Creator and to show respect for all parts of creation and to provide thanks.**

Cleansing our Spirit

- **A shell is chosen because in the purification process four elements are represented: the shell for the water, the match for the fire, the herbs and ashes for the earth, and the smoke for the air.**
- **As the smoke rises in the air so do our prayers rise up to the spiritual world.**
- **The smoke from the sacred medicines will bring our message to the world of the Creator and all the good spirits will be grateful for the offering.**



Sacred Medicines- Tobacco

Tobacco is always first. It is used as an offering for everything and in every ceremony.

Tobacco was given to Aboriginal people so that they may communicate with the spirit world. It opens up the door to allow that communication to take place.

When we make an offering of tobacco, we communicate our thoughts and feelings as we pray for ourselves, our family, our relatives and others.



Sacred Medicines- Sweet grass

Sweetgrass is the sacred hair of Mother earth.

Its sweet aroma reminds people of the gentleness, love and kindness she has for all people.

Like sage and cedar, sweetgrass is used for purification of our thoughts, the environment and to eliminate bad or negative thoughts.



Sacred Medicines- Sage

Sage is used to prepare people for ceremonies and teachings.

Sage is used for releasing what is troubling the mind and for removing negative energy.

It is also used for cleansing homes and sacred items.



Sacred Medicines- Cedar

Cedar is used for purifying the home and protection. It also has many restorative medicinal uses. Cedar baths are healing.

When cedar is put into the fire with tobacco, it crackles, calling the attention of the spirits to the offering that is being made.

Cedar is used in fasting and sweat lodge ceremonies as a form of protection. Cedar branches cover the floor of the sweat lodge and a circle of cedar surrounds the faster's lodge.

Cedar grows during winter months reminding us that the medicines are always available to us. Cedar teaches spiritual strength is grounded in four directions.



Aboriginal Traditional Healing and Culture





Traditional Aboriginal Healing

- **Traditional Indigenous approaches to healing are based in a world-view that seeks to take into account in an integrated manner the mental, emotional, spiritual, physical and ecological dimensions of health and well-being.**
- **Central importance is placed upon the concept of maintaining healthful balance, within the individual and between the individual, society and the natural world.**
- **Imbalance and breakdown arises with the breaching of sacred laws and the inter-connectedness of life, resulting in discomfort and disease**

Adapted from *Traditional Medicine for Canada's First Peoples*, 2007

Traditional Healers, Elders or Medicine People



- **Elders and Traditional Persons who are willing to share their knowledge and wisdoms through teachings and “natural counseling” are assisted through prayers and meditation, consultation with peers and traditional teachers, traditional healers or medicine people.**
- **Elders are respected for their wisdom in the traditional culture and teachings of the Creator, and as a well respected role model and guide for their communities.**

Adapted from Reclaiming Connections: Understanding the Residential School Trauma Among Aboriginal People, Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2005; 705

Traditional Aboriginal Medicine

- **Governed by Law of Creation; everything we need comes from the earth - our food, medicine, water, education, spirituality & laws**
- **Medicine people are accountable to the Creator, to the people & to the elders of their community**
- **Medicine is not for profit, but a gift to be shared**
- **The land & the people support the medicine person & their practice**
- **Encourages self-sufficiency, self-care, responsibility & self-governance by the people**



Canadian Women Studies adapted from Indian Medicine, Indian Health, 1982 Lesley Malloch

Sweat Lodge



- **The sweat lodge ceremony forms the ceremonial life of many Aboriginal people**
- **Even within one territory, there may be many differences in the way the ceremony is conducted**

The Sacred Drum



- **The drum represents the universal heartbeat of Mother Earth - the universal mother to us all.**
- **The first sound that was heard in the world was her heartbeat.**
- **The first sound a baby hears in the womb is the heartbeat of the Mother.**
- **The heartbeat is manifested through playing a special rhythm on the drum.**
- **This rhythm facilitates healing and realignment of the four realms of human existence (Mental, Spiritual, Emotional, Physical) because the Creator revolves around the rhythm.**
- **The drum when combined with the voice, creates a hum that rests between the voice and the drum and is thought to be the spirits of the Ancestors.**

Moontime



- **Very often amongst the Aboriginal people you will hear of a time called " the moon time". The name is understood to be symbolic of the Grandmother moon that travels the sky at night. The moon is honoured by the women in different ways and as she becomes full once a month so do women.**
- **This is a time when the blood flows from a woman and she is considered to be at her greatest strength. It is a time for women to stay quiet, to think, and to meditate about who they are as women.**

Pow Wow Ceremony



- **The Pow-Wow can be referred to as the learning of all nations. Certain things have been allowed to surface in the hopes of better relations to all human, spiritual and animal kind.**
- **Today there are two different Pow-Wows that Natives participate in. The first is called a Competition Pow-Wow. This involves competing with other dancers in your category and age. Drum groups also compete against other drum groups. The winning dancer is named a Champion Dancer and the winning drum group is named Championship Drum.**

**A Conceptual Approach
towards Addressing Health
and Wellness with
Aboriginal Communities**



Key Concepts



- **Aboriginal health is wholistic and includes the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and cultural aspects of life.**
- **Through this understanding of self, a vision of wellness which balances body, mind and spirit is promoted throughout the healing continuum.**
- **This wholistic approach, through all the developmental stages of life, will guide health programs and services.**

Key Concepts



- **Aboriginal beliefs, values, customs, languages and traditions must be respected in the design, development and delivery of health promotion, prevention and treatment programs and services for Aboriginal**
- **Health care policies, programs and services for Aboriginal people must be planned, designed and developed by Aboriginal people and be available in locations identified by Aboriginal communities**

Key Concepts



- **Recognition of Aboriginal concepts of healing modalities and inclusion of Aboriginal healers, medicine people, midwives and community counselors and health care workers in collaborative efforts towards healing and wellness, health empowerment and prevention and promotion strategies.**

**How can the Community
Assist in Addressing Health
and Wellness with
Aboriginal Communities?**





How can the Community Address Aboriginal Health and Wellness?

- **Establish AWARENESS of Aboriginal people and their culture and establish why and how to successfully make a connection with them**



How can the Community Address Aboriginal Health and Wellness?

- **Develop RELATIONSHIPS with those affected by health and social inequities and health disparities and those who can support them in culturally appropriate and safe way**



How can the Community Address Aboriginal Health and Wellness?

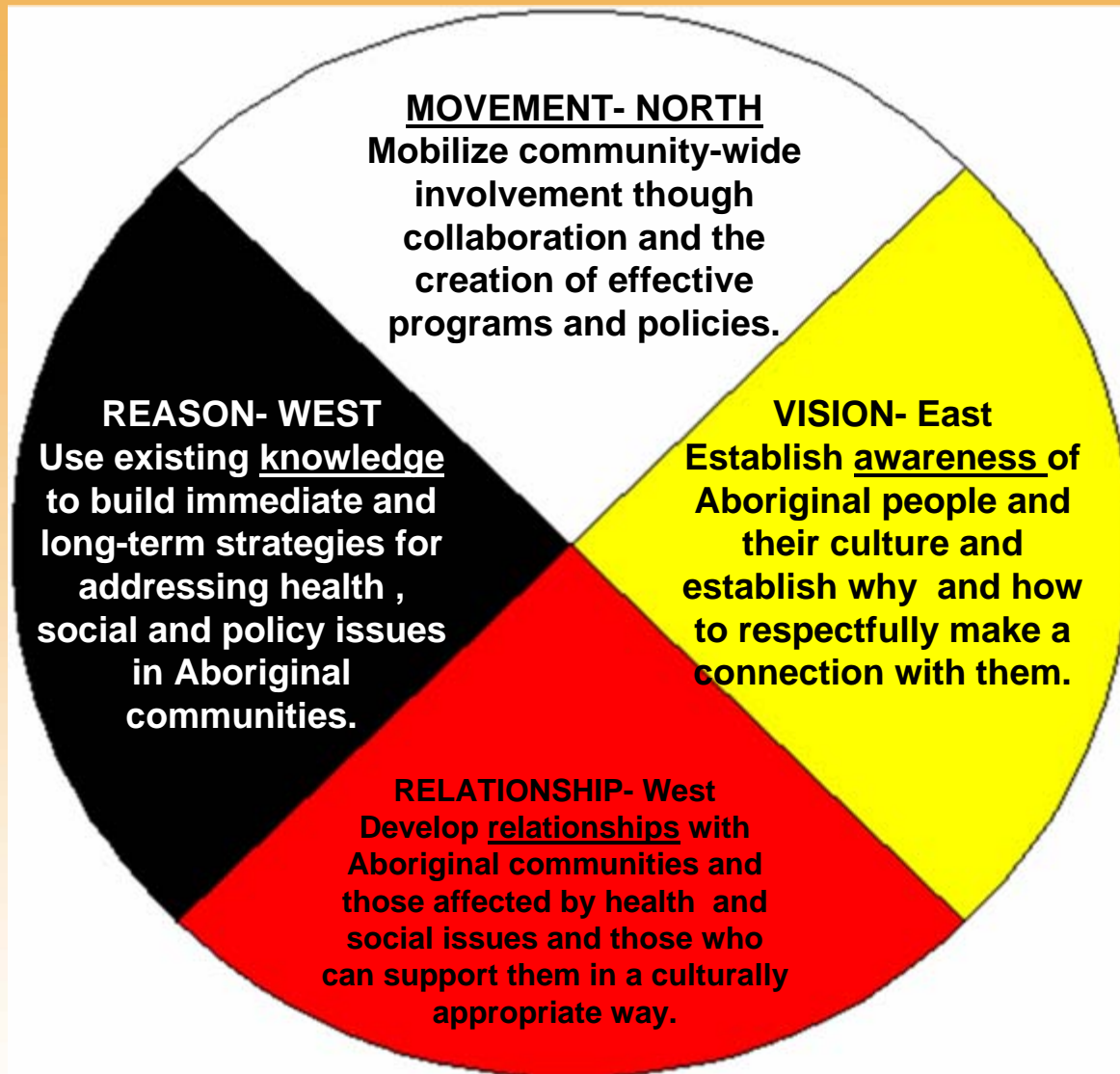
- **Use existing KNOWLEDGE with Aboriginal communities to build immediate and long-term strategies for addressing health, social and policy issues in Aboriginal communities.**



How can the Community Address Aboriginal Health and Wellness?

- **MOBILIZE** community-wide involvement with Aboriginal communities through collaboration and the creation of effective programs and policies respecting the diversity of each community

Establish a Vision for the Prevention of Chronic Disease/Stroke!



How will you play a part in the Future?





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