

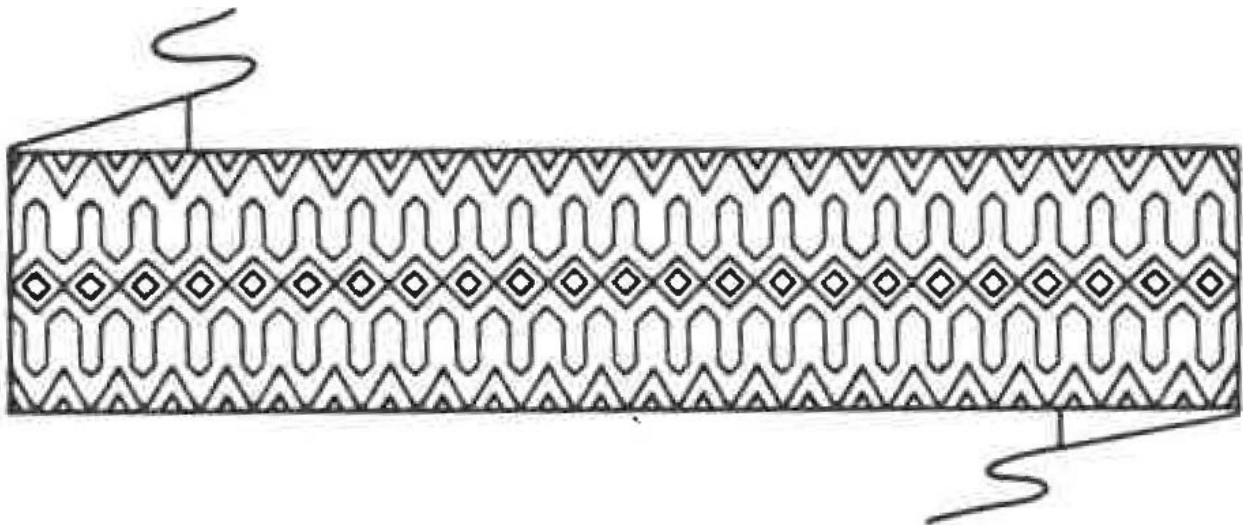
The Medicine Wheel Circle is the Universe. It is change, life, death, birth and learning. This Great Circle is the lodge of our bodies, our minds, and our hearts. It is the cycle of all things that exist. The Circle is our Way of Touching, and of experiencing Harmony with every other thing around us. And for those who seek Understanding, the Circle is their Mirror. This Circle is the Flowering Tree.

When we experience the Flowering Tree, we hear the lightning flash within our darkness. Then we see the thunder within this illumination. The one speaks quietly to us, and the other sings to us of our learning. Together they become one song. This song they sing is the Song of the Coyote, the gently trickster of learning.

As the Coyote sings, his song is echoed by many other Coyotes. These songs, the Teachers tell us, are the songs of the many Reflections that live within all of us.

For example, within every man there is the Reflection of a Woman, and within every woman there is the Reflection of a Man. Within every man and woman there is also the Reflection of an Old Man, an Old Woman, a Little Boy, and a Little Girl.

From my Grandfathers I learned an old Story about the Coyote which speaks to us of these Reflections. I will now tell you this old Story, which is also a new Story.



THE FLOWERING TREE

It seems that at One time the People were Living Scattered Out all Over the World, and Each of them had Heard about a very Powerful Person who Lived in the River. It was Said that this Person could Settle any Problem, no matter what it was.

Because no one really Wanted to Admit to Anyone Else that they Possessed Problems, Everybody had to Sneak Down to the River Alone when they Wished to Hear this Powerful Person Speak. And Everybody did Sneak Down to the River to Hear the Powerful Person, but No One ever Spoke to anyone Else About it.

Then One Day a Little Boy and a Little Girl Returned from the River. The Little Boy and the Little Girl began to Talk to Everyone About their Journey.

"It was a very Strange thing," the Children said.

"What was it that was so very Strange?" the People asked as they Gathered Around the Children, Pretending they did not Know.

"Have you not Seen what is at the River?" the Children asked.

"No," the People All answered. "What was it that you Saw there?"

"Have All of you not Sneaked Down to the River, just as we Did?" the Children asked in Surprise.

"Who ever Said such a silly thing?" the People asked Angrily.

"We did," the Children answered, Becoming Frightened.

"Never say such an Awful thing again," the People told them Accusingly.

The Children Became even more Frightened. They Perceived that they were Strangers even to their Own Mothers and Fathers.

This Caused All the People to Move Away, Leaving the Little Boy and the Little Girl Alone Upon the Prairie. That Night they were all Alone and Frightened. They Cried, because Everything seemed to be so Terrible.

"Calm yourselves, my Children," a Gentle Voice suddenly said to them The Children Looked to See who had Spoken.

"Who are you?" the Children asked.

It is me, Old Man Coyote," the Voice said. As he Spoke, Old Man Coyote Entered the Children's Lodge and Set Down a Bundle of Firewood Beside them:

"And it is me, Old Woman Coyote," another Voice said to them Softly. She Sat Down and Began to Turn an Arrow Within her Bow to Make them a Fire.

Soon there was a Warm Fire and there was Light Within their Lodge. Sitting Across the Fire from them were an Old Man and an Old Woman.

“Who are you?” the Children asked. They were now Feeling better.

“We are your Grandfather and your Grandmother,” the Old Woman answered, Offering the Children some Buffalo Meat.

“And we are Also the Powerful Person at the River,” the Old Man added, Offering the Children some Sweet Foods.

“But we Saw Only ourselves when we Visited the River,” the Little Boy and the Little Girl said together.

“Yes, that is True,” the Old Woman and the Old Man answered Together.

“I do not Understand this,” the Little Girl said.

“How very Strange,” the Little Boy said.

“The People have All Visited the River as you Did,” the Old Woman began.

“And they All Saw Only themselves, just as you Did.” The Old Man Finished the words.

“How very Strange.” the Little Girl said.

“I do not Understand,” the Little Boy said.

“They too Thought it Strange,” the Old Man answered.

“And they too did not Understand,” the Old Woman answered.

“Were you also their Reflections, as you were ours?” the Little Girl asked Excitedly.

“And they did not Trust their Eyes,” the Little Boy said with Excitement.

“Yes,” the Old Man said, “you are Right. Now you must Find the People and Offer them these Gifts.”

“What are these Gifts?” the Little Girl asked.

“They are these Two Coyote Robes,” the Old Woman answered. “Tell them to Put them On and they will not be Hungry any more.”

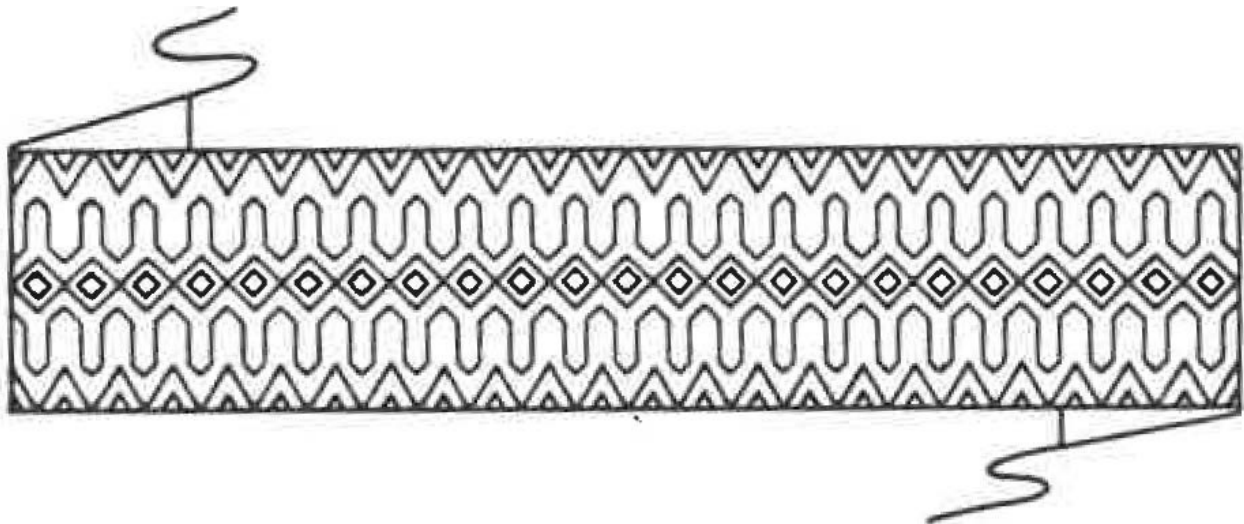
And so the Children Did this. They Found the people the Next Day and Offered them the Two Coyote Robes.

“What are these for?” the People asked. “There are Thousands upon Thousands of these Coyote Robes to be had,” they laughed. “What we Need to Satisfy our hunger are Buffalo, not these silly Robes.”

“Put them On,” the Two Children Coaxed the People. And as they Coaxed the People to Put On the Coyote Robes, they Spoke to them of their Vision. But this only made the People Laugh even Harder.

Within this Camp there Lived Two Kind People. One was a Man and the Other was a Woman. They were Living Together in the Same Lodge. These Two Kind People Loved the Little Girl and the Little Boy, and Wished to Care for them. They Both Stepped Into the Circle of People and Put their Arms Around the Two Children, Adopting them.

“I will Wear One of the Robes,” the Man said to the Little Girl.



“And I too will Wear One of the Robes,” the Woman said to the Little Boy. The Children Gave their Robes to the Man and the Woman who had Adopted them, and the Man and Woman Put them On.

“There are Buffalo to the North and to the South,” the Man said to the People, because now he could See them.

“And there are Buffalo to the West and to the East,” the Woman said, because now she too could See them.

The People All Became Excited, because Suddenly they too could See the Buffalo. “Let us Hunt them in the North,” some of the People said.

“No,” Others Quickly Shouted. “The Buffalo are much Fatter in the South.”

“No! No!” still Others argued. “They are Bigger in the West.”

“No! No! the Rest of the People said Angrily. “The Best Ones of All are to the East.”

“Please! Please! Do not Fight Among yourselves,” the Man, Woman, Little Boy and Little Girl Pleaded. “You are only Tricking yourselves. Put On the Coyote Robes and you will Understand.”

But the People were very Angry, and they would not Come Together in a Circle to Counsel.

“Kill these Trouble Makers,” the People shouted. And they Rushed in All Together Upon these Four who were Sitting in the Middle of the Camp Circle. But when they Reached the Center of the Camp Circle, they Discovered that the Little Boy and the Little Girl had Become a Flowering Forked Tree. They Quickly Looked for the Man and the Woman who had Adopted the Two Children, but All they Found of them were their Tracks. They were the Tracks of Two Mountain Lions. These Tracks were Leading to the North.

The People were so Angry they Struck at the Flowering Tree.

“Let us Follow the Two Lions and Kill them,” the people then Decided Together. They Followed the Tracks to the North to Find them. They Ran and Ran, until Suddenly the Tracks of the Two Lions Became the Tracks of Four Lions. These Led the People in a Great Circle Back to the Flowering Tree.

The People Sat Down Together Around the Tree because they were so Tired, and they Began to Talk to One Another.

“Why are we Doing this?” Some of them asked the Others.“

“We do not really Wish to Hurt or Kill Anything,” said some Others.

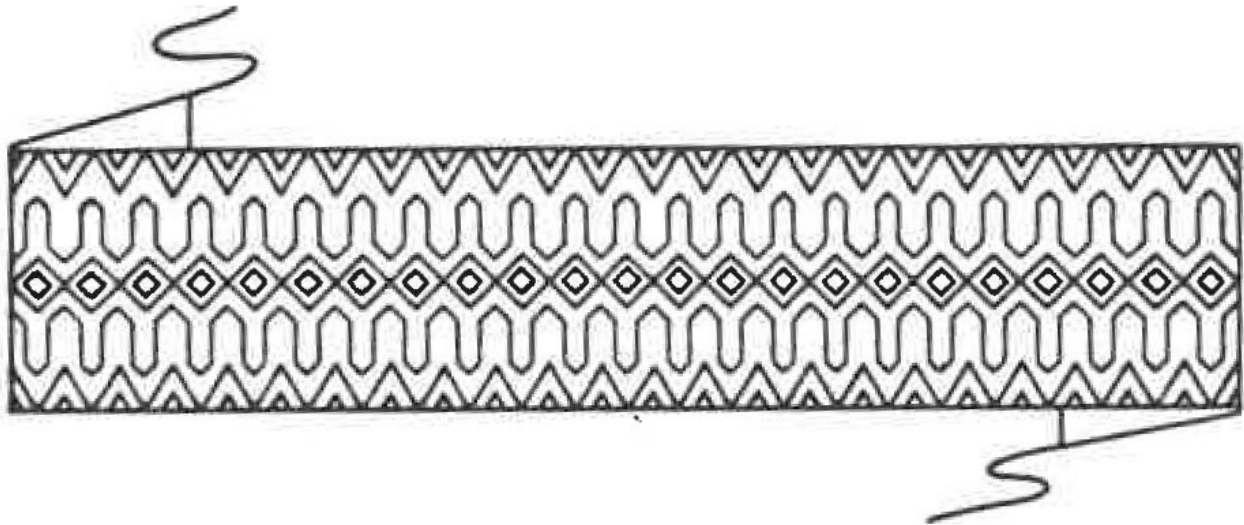
“Then why were you Running?” asked Still Others.

“We were Only Following you,” those Spoken To said in Amazement. And they All Began to Laugh.

Then the People All Heard Singing, and thy Looked Up. There, Sitting in the North, they Saw a White Coyote and he was Singing. They Also looked to the South, and Sitting there was a Green Coyote. She too was Singing. Then the Looked to the West, and Sitting there was a Black Coyote and she was Singing.

The People Sat there Quietly All Together and Learned these Four Beautiful Songs. They were the Songs of Four Lions. Then the People Looked All Around and Saw that

Each of them was Wearing a Coyote Robe. They put their Arms Around Each Other and Began to Dance Toward the Flowering Tree Together in a Great Circle. The People were Happy.



This Story we have just heard has now become a portion of our awareness, or understanding.

Stories are like paths, or Ways. Whenever we hear a Story, it is as if we were physically walking down a particular path that it has created for us. Everything we perceive upon this path or around it becomes part of our experience, both individually and collectively.

This particular story has within it many Mirrors which Reflect certain realities that exist in all of us. Each one of these little Mirrors, when we look into it as a whole thing, or Wheel, can be a Teacher for us. So that you may understand this more fully, let us now experience the Story once more in a new way. Let us open our eyes wide as we walk down its path a second time, so that we may look into some of its Mirrors and see the many images that are Reflected there for us.

This is a Story that has been told to us about the Trickster of Learning. It seems there are times in each of our lives when we are not in balance with our brothers and sisters. We are unable to communicate with ourselves or with the world we live in. And yet each one of us knows of the powerful person who lives within us, and who can settle any problem, no matter what it is. This powerful person is our spirit. But we never really want to admit to anyone, or even, to ourselves, that we actually have a problem. So every one of us sneaks down many times to the river inside ourselves. This river is the

spirit of the power of the universe. But when we go there to hear the powerful person, we usually are afraid to speak about it.

That is, until one day the little boy and the little girl begin to make themselves known in our minds.

“It is a very strange thing,” these children say inside our own hearts and minds.

“What is it that is so very strange?” we ask, not wanting to admit to anyone else, or even to the two children inside ourselves, that we know what they are talking about.

But of course the children within us speak again, asking us, “Have you never seen what is at the river?”

And we reply, “No.”

And even though we know, we ask, “What was it that you saw?”

We do this because we do not want anyone else to know that we have often sneaked down to the river, like the children.

Of course these children within us are surprised, and they ask us again, “Have all of you not sneaked down to the river, just as we did?”

“Who ever said such a silly thing?” we answer ourselves angrily.

“Ourselves,” the children say inside us. They are now becoming frightened.

“Never say such an awful thing again,” we say to ourselves accusingly.

And, as you remember from the story, this makes the little girl and the little boy inside us very afraid. But it also teaches us something. It teaches us that we cannot trust ourselves, because the mother and father that are within us are not able to communicate with the little boy and the little girl that are also within us. They are strangers to each other.

And so we move away, putting those things out of our mind. We leave the little boy and the little girl within us there alone upon the prairie, which symbolizes everyday life.

Within our time of night, which here symbolizes introspection, fear, and blindness, we know the children within us are crying, and that they are alone and frightened. During one of these nights, while we are feeling lonely and afraid and wondering why everything seems so terrible, we hear a voice speaking inside us.

The voice tells us to calm ourselves. We hear the voice say to the children inside us, “Calm yourselves, my children.” And we, like the children, look to see who it is that has spoken.

“Who are you?” we hear the children ask.

“It is me, Old Man Coyote,” we hear a softer voice answer the children.

“And it is me, Old Woman Coyote,” we hear a softer voice inside us say.

Then we feel her turn an arrow in us, a teaching arrow within the bow that is our tension, to make the fire.

Soon inside us there is a bright fire. This fire represents the living spirit, either of a person or a whole people. It is warm within us, and this fire illuminates the darkness that is in the lodges of our minds. Sitting with our illumination, this warm and living spirit of the people, are the old an and the old woman. And these ancient ways speak to us, offering some food of the spirit to the two children inside us.

“Every man and every woman is the Sun Dance Lodge and the Living circle of the Flowering Tree. We, the grandparents, Dance around you. There are six of us grandfathers. We are the Power of the North, the Growing of the South, the Changing of the West, the Rebirth of the East, the Law of the Universe and its Mirror, the Law of the Earth. And there also are six of us grandmothers. We are the Marriages of these Teaching Ways. We twelve Dance together in One lodge. We are also the powerful person at the river inside you.”

Then we hear the children say, “But we saw only ourselves when we visited the river which flows inside us.”

“That is true,” the old Marriage of Teaching and the old Teacher of Marriage answered together.

“I do not understand this,” the little boy says inside us.

“How very strange,” the little girl says inside us.

And we hear the old woman and the old man say, “All of the people come to the river, and they too perceive only themselves, as you do.”

“How very strange,” we hear the little boy say.

“I do not understand” we hear the little girl say.

“They too perceive only themselves, and they too think it strange,” we hear the old an within us answer.

“Are you then the reflection of what they are?” we hear the little girl ask excitedly.

“And they do not believe in themselves,” we hear the little boy say inside us.

“You must find the People and offer them these Gifts of Understanding that you now see inside yourself,” we hear the old man say.

“But what are these Gifts?” we hear the little girl say.

“They are the Understandings which you now perceive inside yourself, and which you must *Give-Away* to the People so that they may also perceive. Then they will no longer be starving for these Ways of Learning.” the old Woman said.

Within their new Illumination, the children find the People and offer them these Coyote Robes of Understanding.

“What are these things for?” the people ask. “There are thousands upon thousands of these Trickster Coyotes. Their robes are everywhere, and they are much too flimsy to wear. Just hearing the howling of all those tricksters is enough,” and they laugh.

The two children coax the people to put the robes on, telling them of their beautiful Vision, but the People laugh even harder. But within the camp of people there is a man and a woman who were living together in one body. These two people love the little boy and the little girl that are inside them, and wish to care for them. They show all the people around them that they care for the two children within them. The woman asks the little boy for his robe, and the man within that woman then asks the little girl for her robe. The children inside this Medicine Woman give the man and woman their robes to put on.

“These are our Gifts in Wisdom, and in Trust and Innocence.” the man says to the People because now he can perceive them.

“And they are also our Gifts within Introspection and Illumination,” the woman says, because now she has Given Birth to them and can perceive them.

The People become excited by this Illumination.

“Let us hunt these Gifts of Wisdom,” some of the People say.

“No,” others quickly shout. “These Gifts of Trust and Innocence are more healing.”

“No! No!” still others of the People argue.

“There are bigger Gifts of Introspection to the West.”

“No! No!” the rest of the People reply angrily. “The best Gifts of all are to be found to the East, within Illumination.”

“Please! Please! Do not fight among yourselves,” the man, woman, little boy and little girl plead. “These four represent the Circle of the People. “You are only tricking yourselves. Make this Teaching part of yourselves, and you will see that you are all out of Balance.” But the People are very angry, and they will not come together in a Circle to talk with one another.

“Kill the troublemakers,” the People all shout. Then they all rush together. But when they reach the center of their Circle they discover only the Twin Reflections of themselves, the Flowering Forked Tree. The People are so angry with themselves that they strike at this Flowering Tree.

Then they quickly begin to pursue the man and woman who are the symbols of the Teachers among the people. They discover for the first time the spirit and meaning of what these Teachers represent. The Signs of these Teachers are the tracks of the Lion, the symbol of Balance. These signs Teach of the North, the place of Wisdom.

“Let us follow the Signs of these Two Balances and kill them,” the People decide together in their blind anger. Not realizing that they have been Tricked into doing something together as a Whole People, they all run off together in the direction of Wisdom.

They run and run until they perceive the signs of Four Balances, and discover that they have run in a Great Circle and have come back to themselves. Even though the People are angry, they have been Tricked into coming together as a Whole People. And because they are now a Whole People, they are able to discover their Balance within the Ways of the Four Directions.

All the People then sit down around the Flowering Tree because they are so tired, and as soon as they have done this they begin to communicate with each other.

“Why are we doing this?” one asks the other.

“We do not want to hurt or kill anything,” others say.

“Then why were you running?” ask still others.

“We were only following you,” those who now are communicating say in amazement.

All the People begin to laugh.

Then they hear sounds of Harmony, and they look up, wanting to perceive it.

There, sitting within Wisdom, is a Wise Coyote-Teacher. He is singing, and he is in Harmony with the People. Next the People perceive within Trust and Innocence, and sitting there is a Trusting Coyote-Teacher. She too is within Harmony. Then they perceive within Introspection, and sitting there is an Introspective Coyote-Teacher. She too is within Harmony. Then they perceive within Illumination, and there they see an Illuminated Coyote-Teacher sitting within Harmony.

The People all sit there quietly together, and learn these Four Harmonies of Balance. Each of the People can now perceive each other, and they realize that they are all Teachers.

They put their arms around each other and care for each other, and they adopt each other. Then they begin to Dance toward the Flowering Tree together in a Great Circle. Now they are Sun Dancing together for the first time as a Whole People. But still more important, they now are able to Sun Dance with their own selves as well. Each person’s Way of Perceiving has been changed.

As we learn we always change, and so does our perceiving. This changed perception then becomes a new Teacher inside each of us.

Often our first Teacher is our own heart. This Teaching Voice is spoken of by the old Sun Dance Teachers as the Chief. Within the Stories, or Mirrors, this Teacher may be symbolized by the Old Man, the Old Woman, the Little Boy, the Little Girl, the Contrary, the Spirit, or by *Vihio*, the Knowledgeable Fool. These Seven Symbols, or Teaching Arrows, are a tiny portion of the Great Mirror. When you have learned to place these Seven pieces of Mirror together within yourself, you will discover that there are Seven more. Their Reflections will go on and on forever.

Four of these same Seven Arrows are symbolized by the Four Directions. They are the North, South, West and the East. As you remember, these symbolize Wisdom, Trust and Innocence, Introspection and Illumination. These are known as the Four Ways. The Mother Earth is the Fifth Mirror. The Sky, with its Moon, Sun and Stars, is the Sixth Mirror. The Seventh of these Arrows is the Spirit. Among the People, this Spirit is spoken of as the Universal Harmony which holds all things together. All of us, as Perceivers of the Mirrors, are the Eighth Arrow.

Now what we shall do, all of us together, is to Look into another one of these Teaching Mirrors. The Name of this Mirror is the Singing Stone.

The young man you will see in this Mirror is yourself. If you are a woman, then you should change the symbol of the young man to that of a young woman.

“Sand blows endlessly into the rivers, yet they never fill up.” Fire Dog said quietly. The young man who sat across from him watched their tiny fire and moved uncomfortably. “Whirlwinds great and small bring the sand.”

THE FLOWERING TREE
