

## Circle of life

We experience life and life cycles from the moment we are born: of day and night, from top to bottom, and back up again, from in and out, life is circular. The seasons, the cycle of death and life, the moon, the stars, the planets, the pebbles that enter the lakes and create circles within circles, even the seven directions, show us that life is circular. We live on circles, we live beneath circles, for both Mother Earth and Grandmother Moon, who give us substance and watch over us, are also circles. The Great Circle is the Parental Guardian of all circles.

The Sacred Hoop encompasses the cycles of all things, and joins them together so that all energy is in balance. The Sacred Hoop represents the journey we all take now. It symbolizes our connection to the invisible, as well as the visible.

To return to health, to return to life, you must return to the circle. The Sacred Hoop is the Great Circle, the web of life. It circles the Source of all and it is alive with universal vibrations. We follow its direction, we take our path, the path to becoming. The Sacred Hoop represents the eternal configuration of the Creator. It contains a constant and consistent re-creation of itself.

We are all related, because we truly believe and live this, it reveals our connection to all of life. Now is the time to see the separation of all life. In the circle of life, all things come together, connected then separate again, only to repeat this cycle over and over.

A circle is complete and never ending, yet for us to be healthy travelers of this journey on the circle of life, separating ourselves is necessary. We do not separate from the Sacred Hoop. We separate only from temporary situations, from circumstances. When death comes full circle, we separate from our body, to live again. We separate from pain to fill up with joy, like a bear who separates from the fur that is not needed in Spring. See the separation we must

mother Moon's full face looked down.  
The Medicine Man reached into his pouch and pulled out kinnikinick, sweet grass, and cedar. Pinched between his fingers, he held it high for Grandmother Moon to see. With words of Miigwetch, he let the medicine softly fall over the hot fire, and its essence joined the invisible with tiny sparkling lights that danced with their twirls of silent paint.

Above the soft black headdresses of the men and women sitting around the fire, the sweet scent of smoke circled, blending the invisible with the visible. The connection to the Spirit World was made and the meeting could continue. "Boo-zhoo" was heard from the voices circling the fire as the invisible Spirits that had been invited to this important meeting now sat next to their brothers and sisters of the visible world.

The sound of every heart was important. The chief would not speak until all were heard. The Elders would speak first.

"It is time to leave," the first one said. "The buffalo have not traveled this way for many moons and the berries have dropped to Earth Mother. We must leave to find food."

"I disagree," spoke another. "There are plenty of fish in the river and we have stored the grains to fill our stomachs. We are settled here. And Grandfather Sun still warms the ground. Feel it. It is warm."

All listened intently. No one spoke until it was time. All emptied their own thoughts, as they filled

Our life experiences demand constant interaction. The process of living is a dynamic dance of yield and accept, which follows the ever-constant Sacred Hoop. We accept our breath, as we yield to its departure.

The Sacred Hoop silently speaks of ongoing life struggles. It speaks of agonies and fears, of pain we must empty. The Sacred Hoop is about coming to center and knowing Self, letting its blanket of comfort surround you. When you discovered the power of AH-da-Ning (the home within our heart), you understand AH-da-Ning. You are allowed to be you. To be. To coexist in peace with all members of the Web of Life.

Inside your home within your heart, you are open, honest, clear, direct, and calm. These are the gifts of AH-da-Ning. This the state of being in AH-da-Ning. This is who you really are. The Sacred Hoop asks you to share these treasures with the world outside that home within your heart. Share these gifts with those you meet on your journey, on the outside Hoop of Life.

Like the Council, listen with open ears.  
Follow your path, with honesty.  
Fill your bucket with clear waters.  
Speak with a direct tongue.  
Move with calm clouds.

This is the way of the Sacred Hoop. Practice these things as you travel on your journey to Self.

Remember the feeling of opening yourself to the experience of AH-da-Ning. The comfort and the filling. Like soaking in Grandfather's sunlight, it is the beginning to greater understanding. On your journey in this life, on the Sacred Hoop, work to become truly open. Allow others to see inside of you, just as you allow your Self to see out. Lower your defenses, trust your response to the Now.

The words although borrowed only have thunder in them if there is a passion in the Spirit, a reality in Self and in the pronouncement of them. These words have been inspired by the teachings of an Ojibway healer and teacher, named Blackwolf Jones. I have been honoured to hear these words, and further honored to use them in my life. I honour Blackwolf by acknowledging him for his impact on my life by these teachings.

WUT-TUN-NEE (Tim Brown),  
Chair of the O.P.S.E.U. Aboriginal Circle.

Convention 2003.