

SESSION FOUR: STAGES OF LIFE

BEZHIG (Stage one), birth to age seven:

We are spirit from the beginning. A baby, aabinoojii, comes from the creator and is entrusted to its parents for safe keeping. Shortly after birth, aabinoojii will receive a name, the one already given from above. It is a time of innocence, spontaneity, joy, and the capacity to believe in the unseen. This is a time when the child will learn of the warmth of spirit, purity, trust, hope, and the acceptance of others. Love as a child loves; a love that does not question others and does not know itself. Here courage is born and truthfulness begins.

NIIZH (Stage two), age seven to puberty:

As the child grows into the next stage of youth, many lessons will come to prepare him/her for the challenges ahead that everyone must learn about. The child begins to grow and understand responsibility. Here the youth learns the meaning of sacrifice, of sensitivity to others, and feelings of love at a different level – one that expects nothing in return. This is true in all of nature. Puberty happens in this stage. The female, ikwe, will begin her moon time as she steps into her womanhood. The male, inini, will seek his vision.

NISWI (Stage three), teenage years to early twenties:

Early adulthood starts at this stage: Here one begins to learn of one's unique purpose, to learn how to correctly use power, and to learn what the Creator would ask of them as a developing leader. It can also be a time of rebelliousness and testing, as one seeks their own way and learns from their teachers and peers. This stage of youth is very short for both male and female. The family and extended family are needed during this time for support and guidance. A community nourished with love is the best environment for strong growth.

NIIWIN (Stage four), adult to age 45:

In this stage, we will experience hardships, lessons, and build strength for growing into our adult selves. Decisions are needed to choose a good way of life. These decisions take the Anishinabe through the hills and the valleys of life. This is the longest stage of life and much happens that will bring both laughter and tears. The values have been given and the choices we make are ours.

NAANAN (Stage five), midlife years:

In this stage, we begin our midlife years. We begin to serve people at a different level of responsibility and guide them with our growing wisdom. As with all the stages, this is a meaningful time in our lives. Our direct responsibilities to our children lessen and we begin to learn what the Creator would ask of us as leaders in the community.

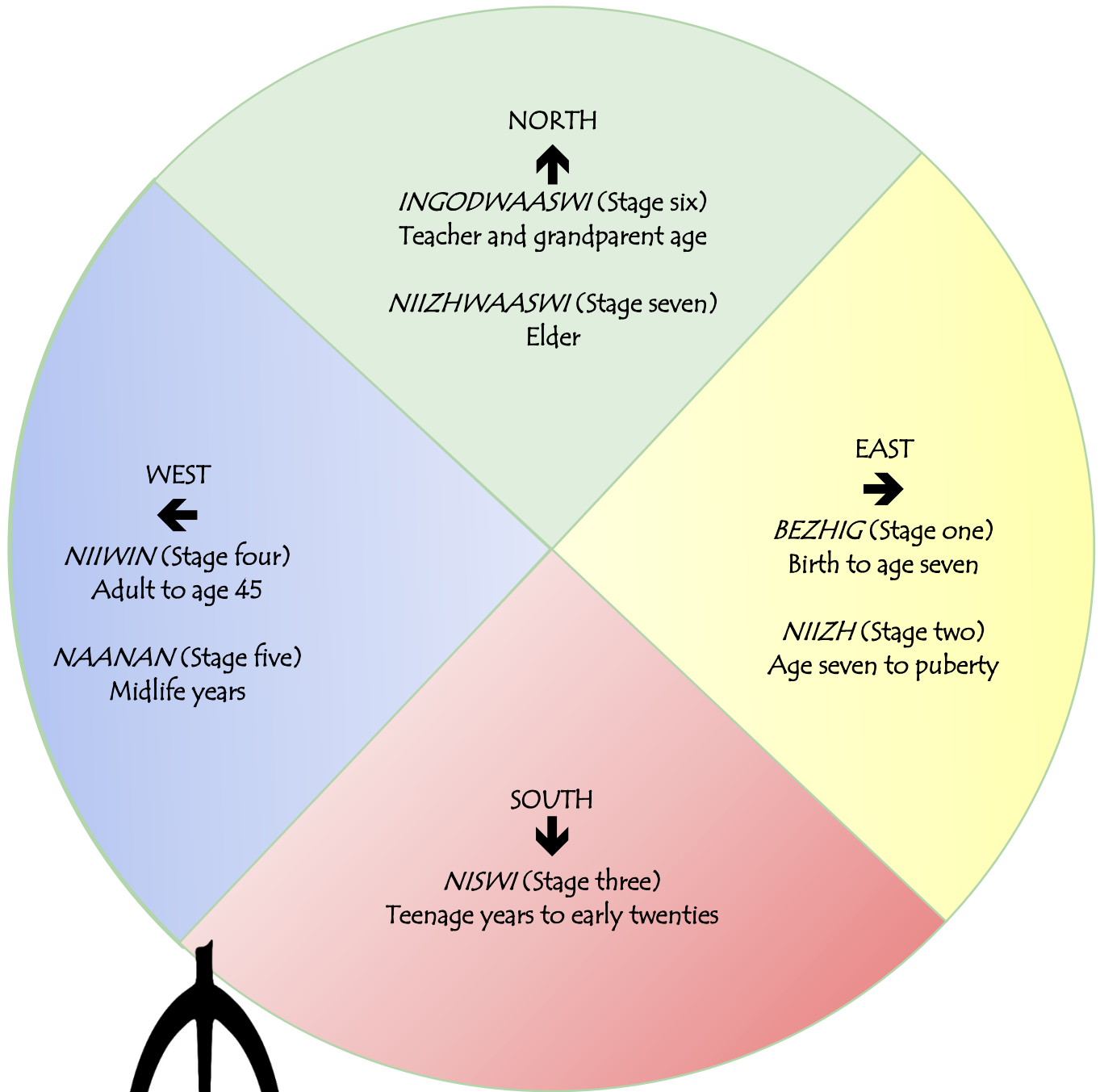
INGODWAASWI (Stage six), teacher and grandparent age:

At this stage we now move into the grandparent age. We become known as a giver and a teacher and people begin to seek us out for advice and guidance. We have been tested and won the gift of perseverance. We have learned the capacity to stick to a challenge, even though it is very hard and even painful, so we can pass this gift on.

NIIZHWAASWI (Stage seven), Elder:

The last years of your life are rich in memories and new lessons are more easily accepted. The Elder years are respected by the community and understanding has come full circle. We are now approaching completion and fulfillment. Here the traveler learns the lessons of all things that end. We have learned the capacity to finish what we have started and the tremendous importance of this to our well-being. Life is like a stem of an eagle feather. The road was broader at its beginning and as traveling continues, gradually the life-stem narrows until it disappears through the top of the eagle feather back to its Creator. The circle of life is completed.

SESSION FOUR: STAGES OF LIFE



My direction is: _____ . I fit into stage _____ .

The good things in my life include _____ and _____ .

My favorite things are _____ .

I am looking forward to _____ .

SESSION FOUR: A GOOD WAY OF LIFE

How do you define "MINOBIMAADIZIWIN" or "a Good Way of Life?"

Check off the things that you've done or things that you like to do on the lists:

STAGE #1: Birth to Age Seven

- Receiving an Ojibwe name
- Rolling over for the first time
- Saying my first words
- Learning to feed myself
- Crawling for the first time
- Sitting up by myself
- Learning to ride a bike
- Singing songs
- Learning to do something new
- Being with my family
- Daydreaming
- Learning to swim
- Learning to read
- Looking for eagle feathers
- Looking at the stars or moon
- Going to a fast food restaurant
- Collecting leaves or flowers
- Drawing or painting
- Playing catch
- Going to pow-wows
- Singing to myself
- Making decorations or ornaments
- Going to the zoo, park, or carnival
- Listening to the radio

STAGE #2: Age Seven to Puberty

- Dancing at pow-wows
- Feeling good about myself
- Doing a good job completing chores
- Being a good student
- Making my family proud
- Being outdoors
- Preparing for tests at school
- Playing sports
- Reading books
- Going out for pizza
- Playing on the computer
- Saying prayers
- Fishing or spearing
- Solving problems and puzzles
- Writing stories
- Visiting with Elders
- Skipping rocks
- Listening to Elders share about old times
- Doing science projects or experiments
- Playing videogames
- Doing crafts
- Visiting with friends
- Hunting

STAGE #3: Teenage Years to Early Twenties

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Playing a musical instrument | <input type="checkbox"/> Talking on the phone | <input type="checkbox"/> Rock climbing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Combing or fixing my hair | <input type="checkbox"/> Completing a difficult task | <input type="checkbox"/> Learning to sing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Working on my pow-wow outfit | <input type="checkbox"/> Going to the movies | <input type="checkbox"/> Camping or hiking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Running, jogging, or walking | <input type="checkbox"/> Going to the mall | <input type="checkbox"/> Joining the military |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Doing my makeup | <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoying school activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Meeting new people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trying on and wearing new clothes | <input type="checkbox"/> Being a good athlete | <input type="checkbox"/> Writing in a diary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rearranging or redecorating my room | <input type="checkbox"/> Playing new sports | <input type="checkbox"/> Making career plans |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Learning to make fry bread | <input type="checkbox"/> Learning to drum | <input type="checkbox"/> Watching TV |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having an honest conversation | <input type="checkbox"/> Graduating from school | <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoying social media |

Looking forward to your teens and beyond, what are YOU most excited about?

SESSION FOUR: MY LIFE HISTORY TIMELINE

Use the space provided below to draw your life timeline. Start with your birth and ending with your age now. Fill in the blanks or draw some of the good things in life that you have experienced along the way.

Your age now: _____

The illustration features a winding path that starts at the bottom left and ends at the top right. The path is drawn with two lines: a brown line on the left and a grey line on the right. Along the path, there are several nature-themed illustrations: a green deciduous tree, a green coniferous tree, a white rabbit, a brown deer, a green coniferous tree, a green turtle, and a grey rock. There are also several horizontal black lines placed at various points along the path, intended for writing or drawing. At the bottom left, the text "Your birthday" is followed by a horizontal line. At the top right, the text "Your age now:" is followed by a horizontal line.

Your birthday

SESSION FOUR TAKE HOME ACTIVITY

Four Sacred Plants

Read about the Four Sacred Plants and discuss when you would like to use the smudge kits.

Tobacco or Asemaa represents the Eastern Direction and the mind. The Anishinabe use a form of tobacco known as kinikinik, or a red willow mix. There are four traditional Tobacco uses.

Prayer: When we put sacred tobacco into our Sacred Pipes, we do not inhale the smoke. When the smoke rises, it is taking our prayers with it up to the Creator and all of our relatives who have gone on before us. When we finish with prayers, we sprinkle a small amount of tobacco on the drum. This is a way of giving back to and thanking the Creator. Tobacco can be used on a daily basis as each new day is greeted with prayers of thankfulness. Many Elders say that you are to hold it in your left hand as this is the hand closer to your heart.

Offerings: Some Elders burn tobacco before storms. It is used to pray that powerful storms won't hurt our families. To pray with tobacco in your Native language is very powerful. When tobacco is used as an offering, it is set on the ground in a nice, clean place. It means we come humbly to our creator. We proclaim our innocence. When you want to speak to the creator, we are told to make an offering of the tobacco plant. An Elder will take tobacco ties and offer them to the fire or offer it back to Mother Earth on behalf of the Sacred Circle. When taking something from the Earth, they always explain to the spirit of the plant why it is being done and offer some tobacco in return for the generosity and help of the plant which shared itself so freely.

Purification: Purification and working with a clear mind and heart are essential in asking the land to provide for people. This is keeping with the Native belief that if you do things in a good way, good things will follow. If careful attention is not established, the result will not be as good. Sometimes elders place tobacco on the water. This shows our thanks to the Creator, for the lifeblood of our Mother, the earth, that is provided to us. At this time we also acknowledge the moon who, in her 28-day cycle, cleanses the water by filtering it through the sands.

Respect: To offer someone tobacco is to ask that you and the person receiving the tobacco be of one heart, one mind, and one spirit. Tobacco is offered when you ask someone to do a ceremony for you. This signifies that you and the one doing the ceremony are of one heart, one mind, and one spirit; that you have the same purpose. Another way that tobacco is used is to bring people together in unity and to heal rifts between people. If you have a disagreement that causes ill feelings, someone has treated you badly, or if you have treated someone badly, you can bring tobacco and ask to speak to the person. Even a little tobacco can be given if you do not have money for a pouch. It is the sacredness that counts, not the amount. The person can decide to accept your tobacco or not. Some of our Elders still offer tobacco to everyone who visits them. Tobacco is given to elders when one is seeking advice. It is always good to offer tobacco when seeking knowledge or advice from an Elder or when a Pipe is present. It shows gratitude and respect for the Elder whose advice you are seeking. Tobacco is given when you appreciate a teaching from an Elder (or even a younger person) if you value what that person has told you. It is a way of showing respect and gratitude.

Cedar or Keezhik represents the Southern direction and the soul. The leaves are cleaned from the stems and separated into small pieces, which are used in many ways. When burned, Keezhik acts as a purifier, cleansing the area in which it is burned and emitting a pleasant scent. True cedar is burnt while praying to the Great Mystery in meditation and also to bless a house before moving in. Cedar was offered to the fire to smudge the lodge and people. It is also used to ward away sickness. It works both as a purifier and as a way to attract GOOD energy in your direction. Elders say if you put some in your shoes, only goodness will come your way. Many traditional women keep some cedar in their left pocket. When you breathe in the smell of cedar, you decide you're going to have courage and stamina and you're going to survive.

Sage or Sukodawabuk is used in much the same ways as Keezhik (cedar). Sukodawabuk represents the Western direction. Sage is used by the original people to make their prayers and to signal the creator of one's need for help. There are many varieties of Sage and all are effective in smudging. Smudging is a way of using the smoke from burning herbs to cleanse the body, an object, or a given area of negative influences. Many Native Americans used varieties of sage for medicinal purposes as well as religious ceremonies. The burning of Sage in smudging ceremonies is to drive out evil spirits, negative thoughts and feelings, and to keep negative entities away.

Sweet Grass or Weengush is used to cleanse the mind, body, and spirit. It is considered sacred because it is symbolic of purification. It represents the Northern direction and the body. The Elders tell us that the scent of sweet grass is pleasing to the Creator and will incline him to hear the ceremony with favor. The smoke is considered distasteful to all evil beings and thwarts their powers. This plant plays an important part in ceremonies of spiritual significance. When Weengush is used in a ceremony, each person is to fan the sweet grass smoke, first to their heart, second to their mind, third around their body, and lastly, return the smoke to their heart. The prayer said during this process is: "Great Mystery, please cleanse me of my negativity and fill me with the positive energies of love, so that as I am healed, so may I work for the healing of our Earth Mother."

Because it signifies the hair of Nokomis Akiin (Our Grandmother the Earth) it is usually braided. Each of the three sections that go into the braid have a specific meaning: mind, body, and spirit. Because the Anishinabe people live life in a very sacred manner, when taking something from the Earth, like sweet grass, they always explain to the spirit of the plant why it is being done and offer some tobacco in return for the generosity and help of the plant which shared itself so freely.

Adapted from <http://www.oocities.org/redroadcollective/SacredTobacco.html>

When did your family read about the Four Sacred Plants? _____

How did you decide to use the Smudge Kit as a family? _____
