



Supporting Aboriginal Families with Young Children

Best Start Conference

February 21, 22, 2004

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**A Quote from Black Elk (1863-1950)
-Spiritual Advisor to the Oglala Sioux-**

.....“Have you ever noticed that everything an Indian does is in a circle? That is because the Power of the World always works in circles, and everything tries to be round.....The Sky is round, and I have heard that the world is round like a ball, and so are all the stars. The wind, in its greatest power, whirls. Birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours.....Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing, and always come back again to where they were. The life of a man is a circle from childhood to childhood, and so it is in everything where power moves.





CHILD

Genetics

Prenatal Effects

Birth Events





INFLUENCES ON THE CHILD

Developmental Characteristics

Cultural Teachings

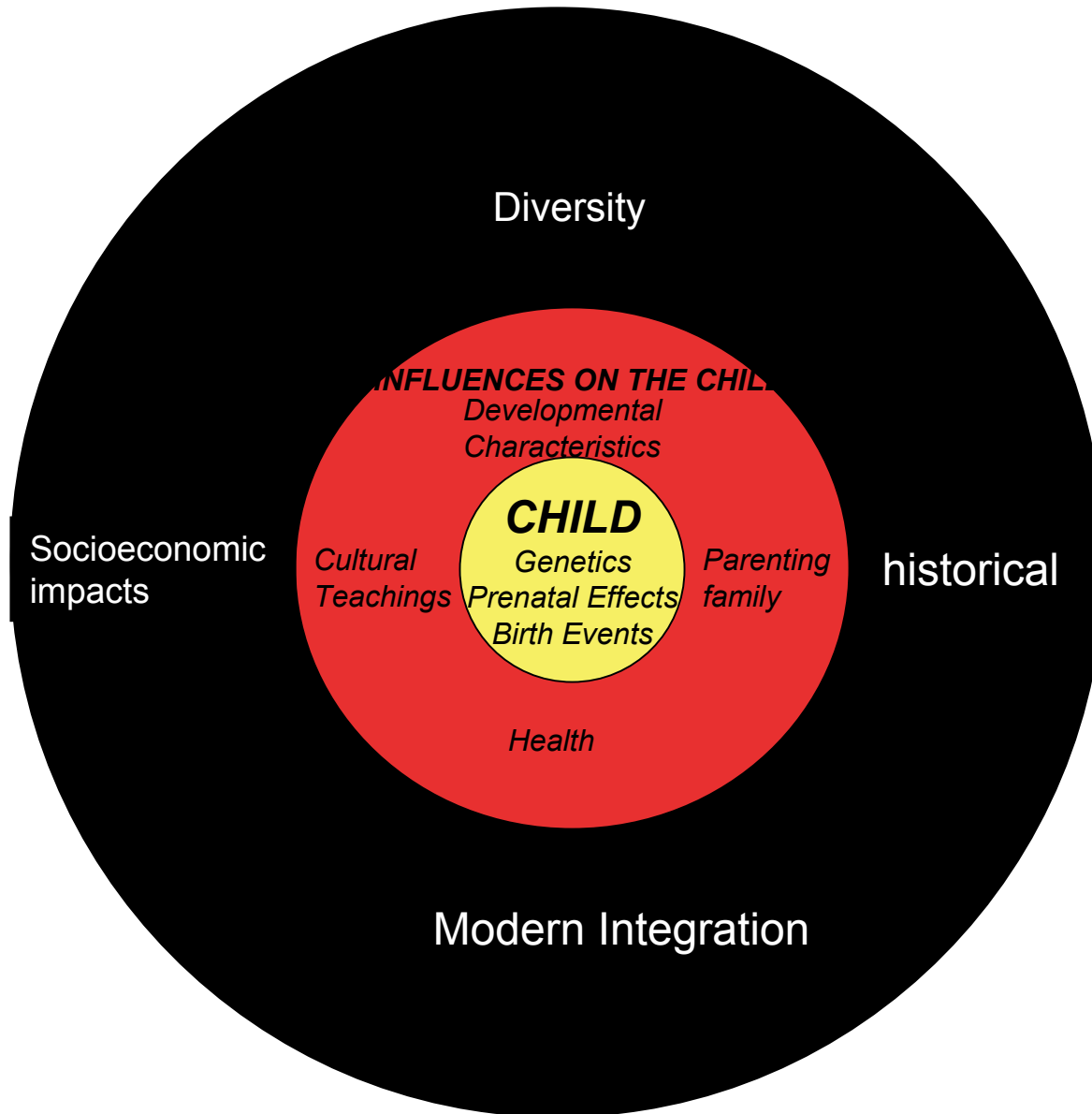
CHILD

*Genetics
Prenatal Effects
Birth Events*

Parenting, Family

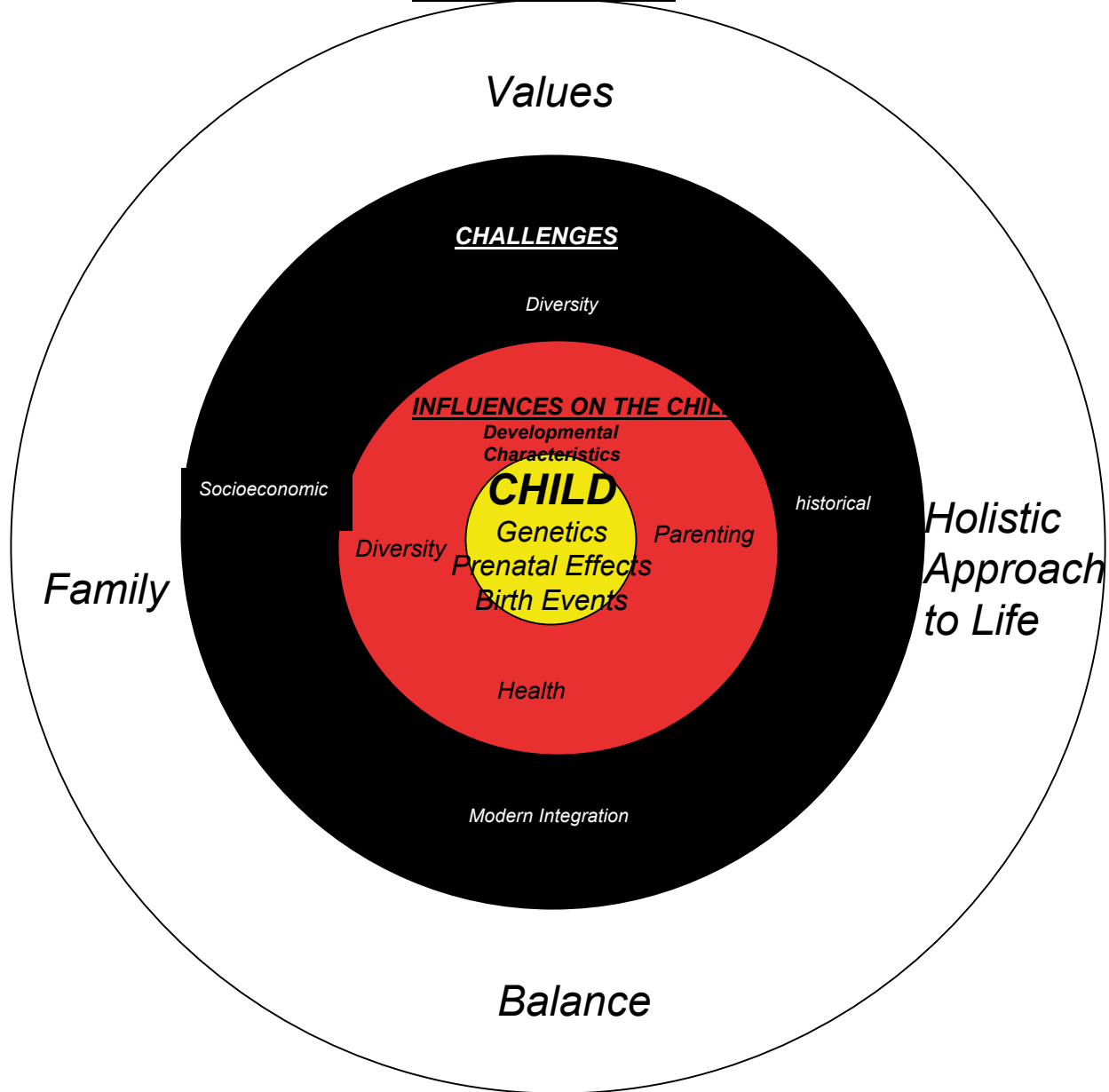
Health

CHALLENGES OF ABORIGINAL FAMILIES





STRENGTHS





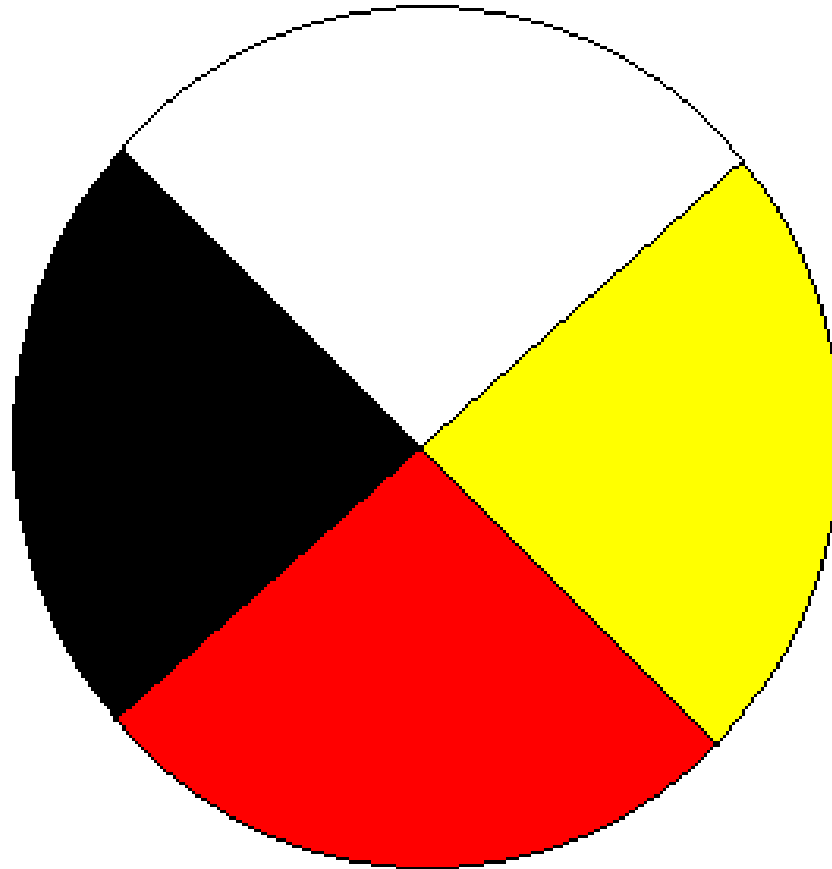
Medicine Wheel

- A teaching tool used historically by Aboriginal people of the Algonquian language group
 - Used to explain many concepts,
for example: Life Stages
Four Directions
Four Races
Health
-

Life Stages



Elders



Maturity

Birth

Youth



Four Directions

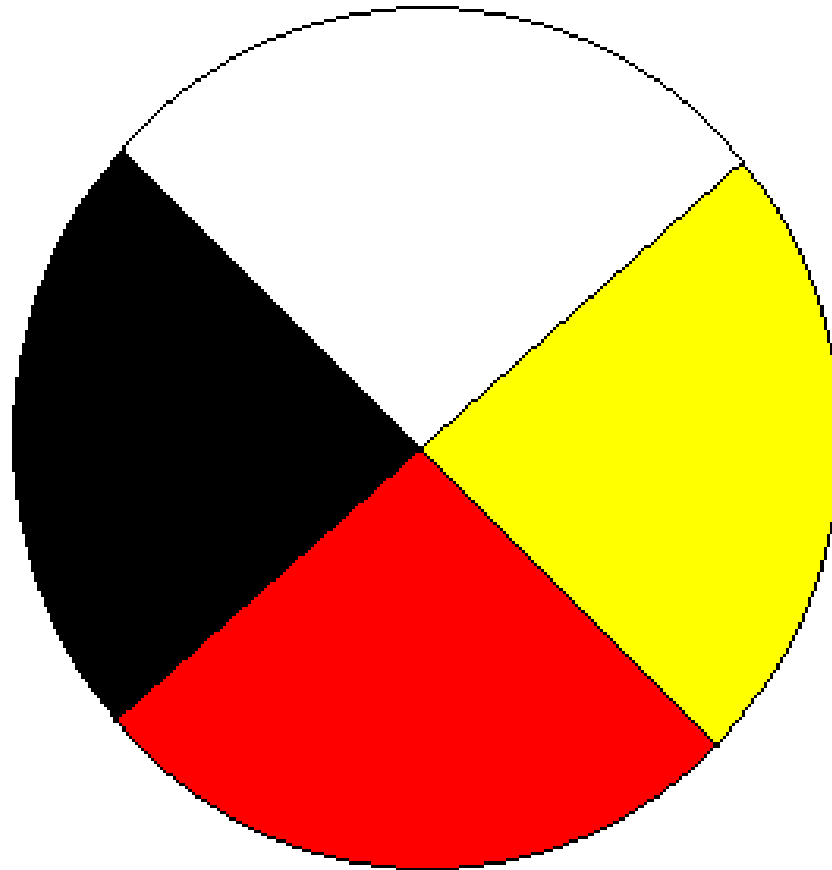


North

West

East

South



Four Races

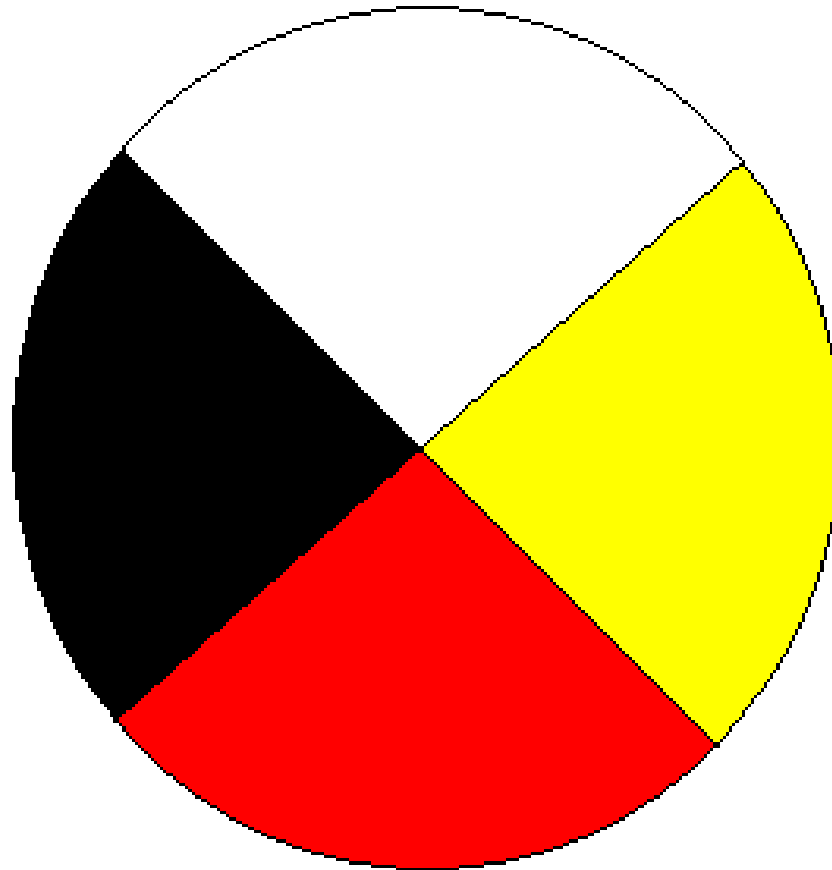


Caucasian

African

Asian

First Nations



Health

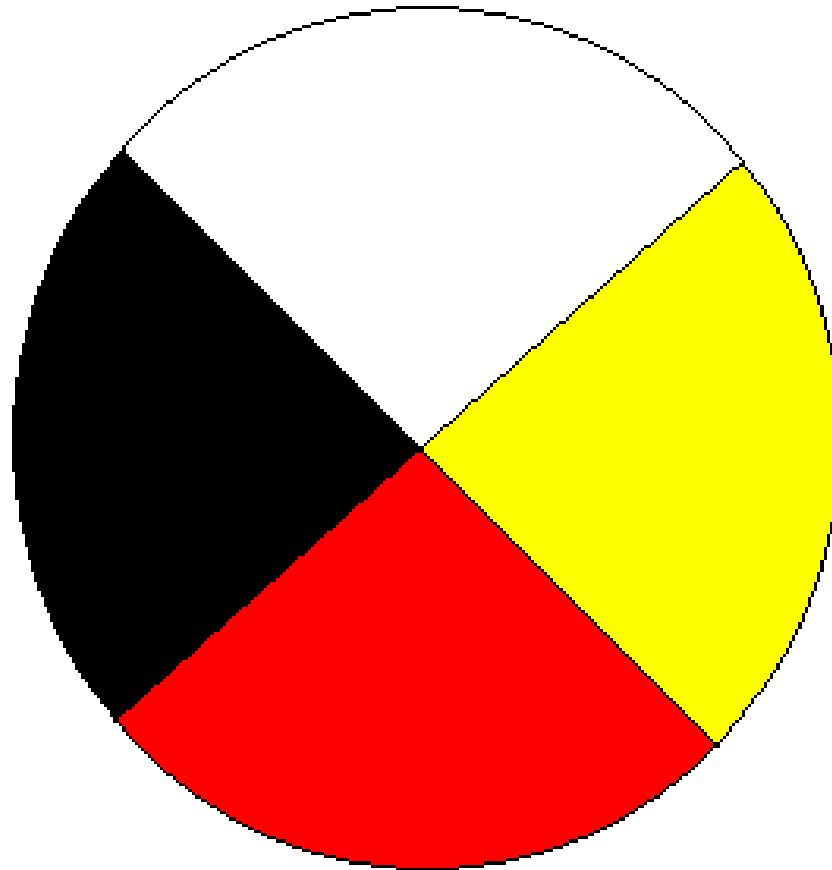


Mental

Physical

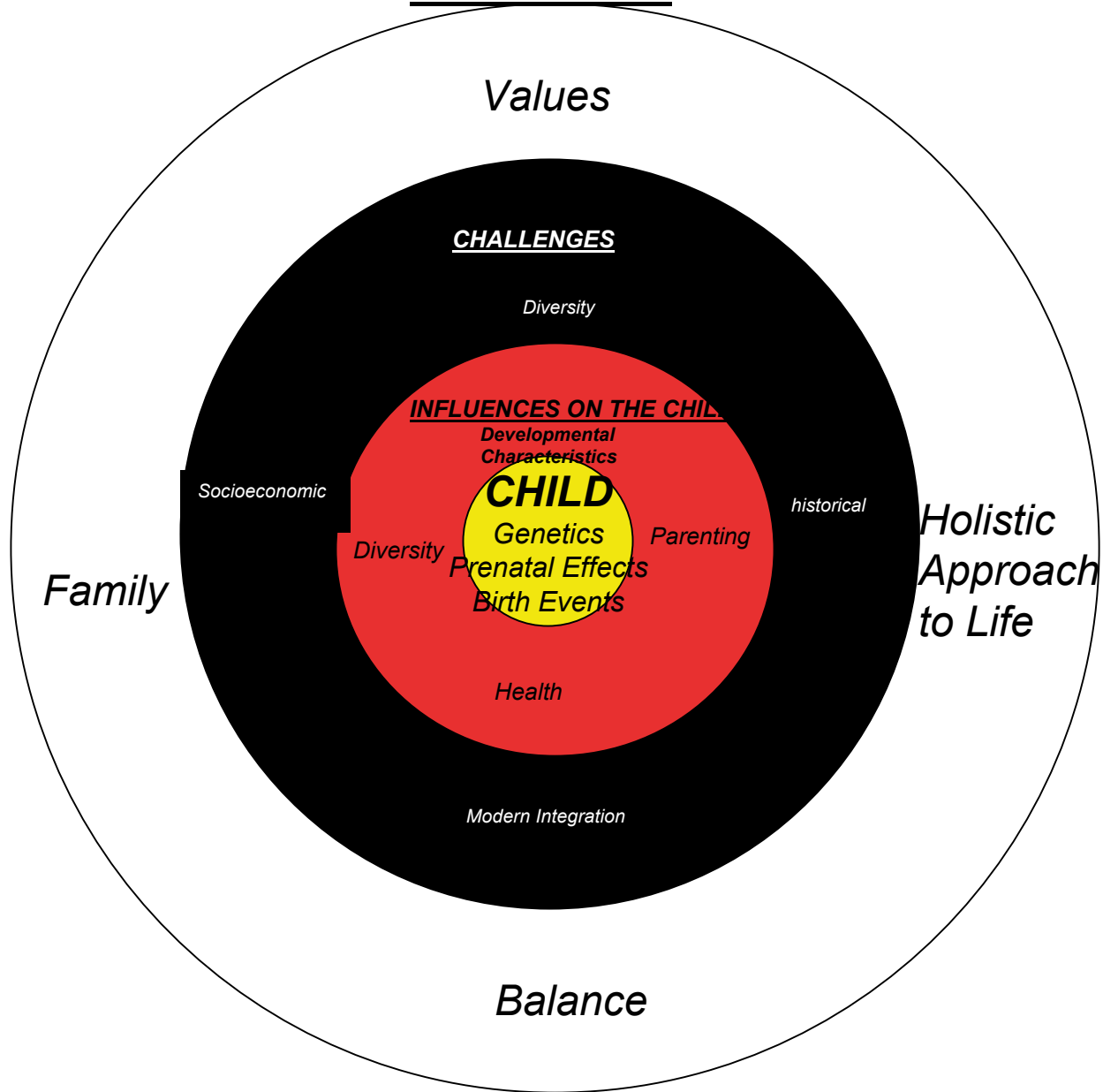
Spiritual

Emotional



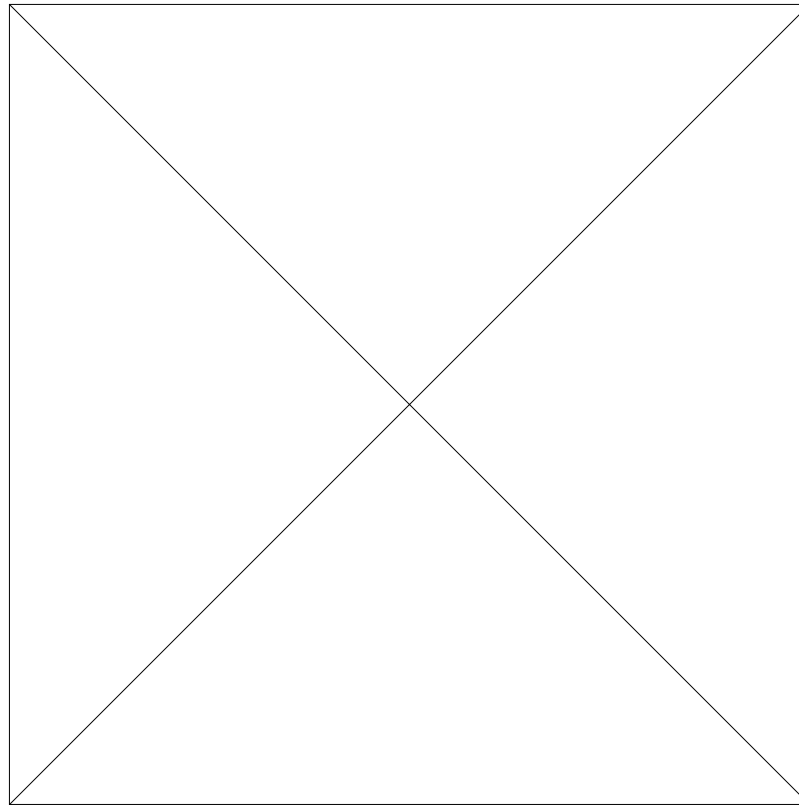


STRENGTHS





Medicine Wheel



Aboriginal Families

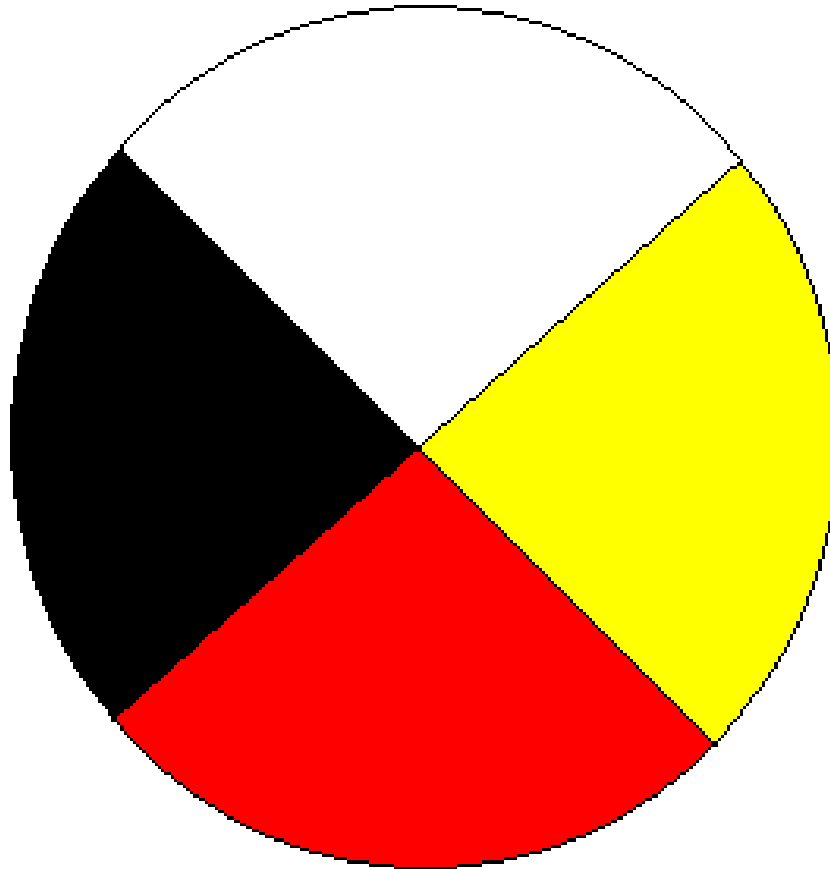


Strengths

Challenges

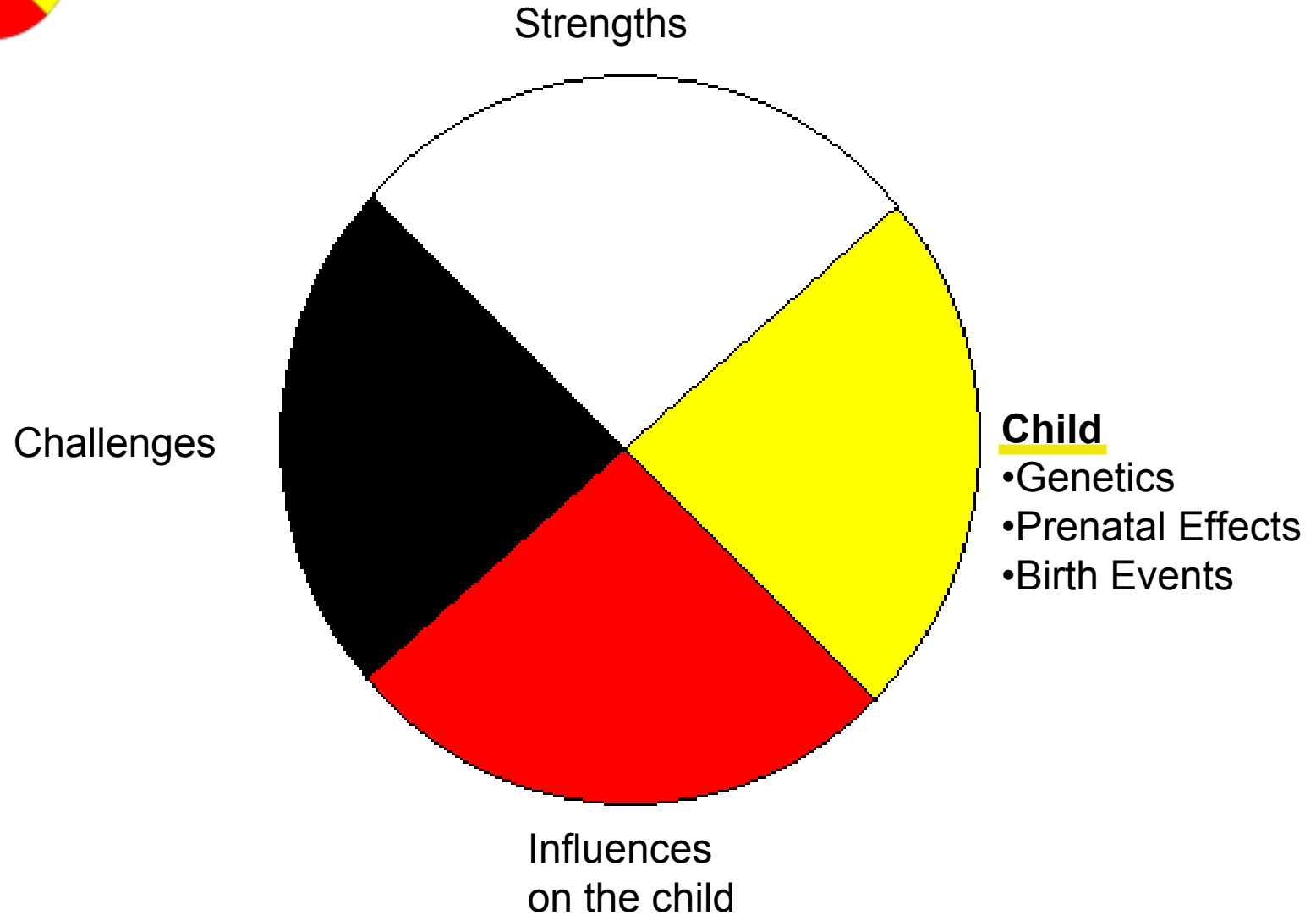
Child

Influences
on the child





Aboriginal Families





Child

- Infants are regarded by their elders, family, and community as gifts from the creator
 - Children bring love, respect, caring and sharing to their families...youth bring activity and zest for life.
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Genetics

No identified increased risks to
Aboriginal Children



Prenatal Effects

- Inuit neonatal deaths due to birth defects 7/1000 (1.6/1000 in general population) 1990-94
 - Gestational Diabetes (8.4 to 12.8% prevalence)
 - Neural tube defects
 - Smoking (2x rate in general population)
 - Drug and Alcohol Addictions
 - Environmental exposures (mercury, PCB)
 - Socio-economic factors (e.g. diet, stressors)
 - Accessing prenatal care
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Birth Effects

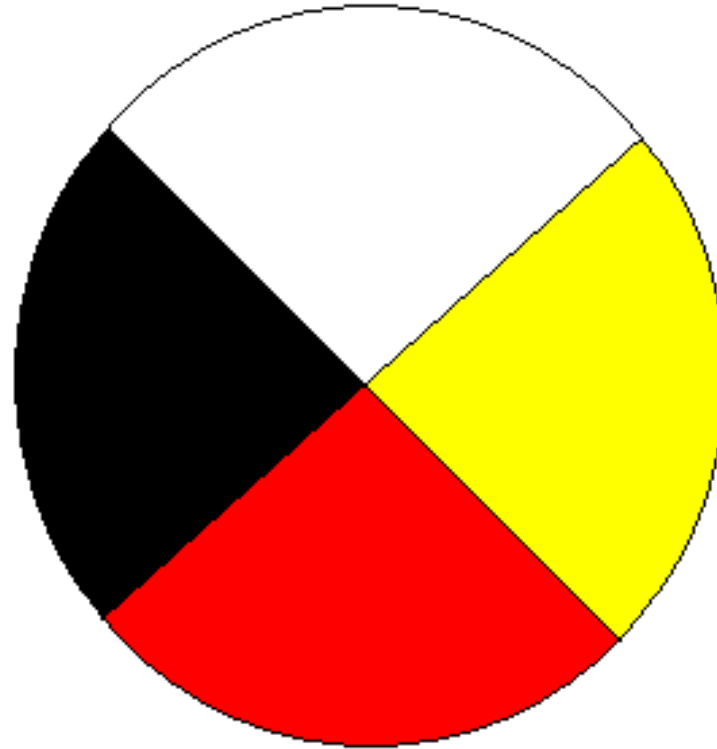
- Infant mortality 12 per 1000 live births 1994 in 'Registered Indians' (compared to 6.0 per 1000 in general population)
 - Inuit infant mortality 17 per 1,000 1994-96
 - Higher number of high birthweight babies (more than 4.0 kg)
 - Access to obstetrical care (geographic, cultural)
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Aboriginal Families

Strengths

Challenges



Child

Influences on the child

- Developmental characteristics
 - Parenting, family
 - Health
 - Cultural Teachings
-



Developmental Characteristics

- Speech and Language
 - Socialization
 - Socio-economic factors
(FASD, Attachment disorders,
ADHD, Behaviour problems etc.)
 - Screening strategies (Nipissing
etc.)
-



Parenting, and Family

- Extended family is very close (blends with the nuclear family)
 - The community may raise the child (group responsibility)
 - Family and community success may be valued before individual success
 - Experiential learning (may be interpreted as a lack of parenting, or lack of discipline)
 - Story telling, oral traditions
-



Physical Health

A Higher Incidence in Aboriginal Children aged 0-5

- Asthma
 - Bronchitis
 - SIDS
 - FASD
 - Congenital Dislocation of the hip
 - Dental caries
 - Otitis media
 - Accidental Injury
-





Cultural Teachings

- Holistic world
 - Interdependence of all
 - Equality, Sharing, Respect for all
 - Non interference
 - Acceptance of the creator's plan
 - Balance
 - Traditional Medicine
 - Diversity
-



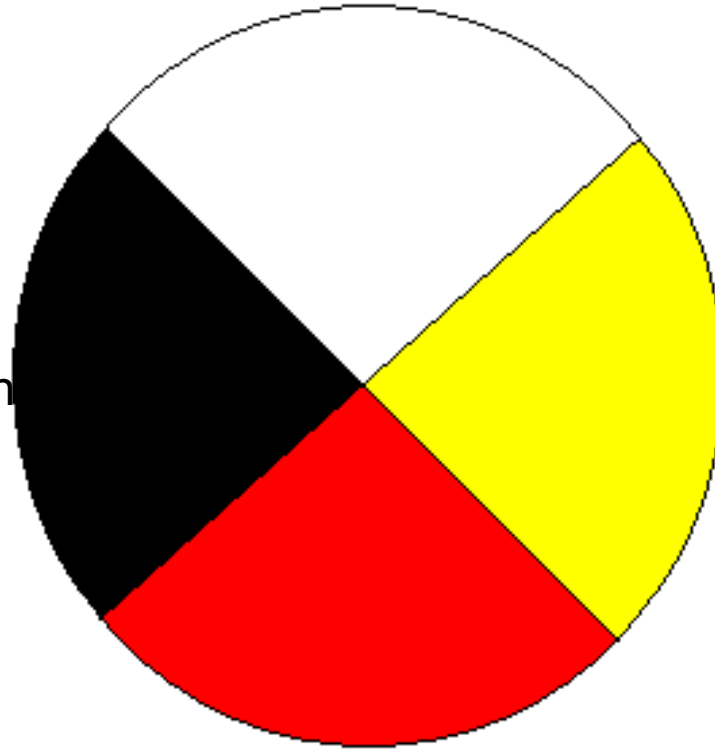
Values

- Wisdom
 - Love
 - Respect
 - Integrity
 - Honesty
 - Humility
 - Truth
- 
- 
-



Aboriginal Families

Strengths



Child

Influences on the child

Challenges

- Historical
- Modern integration
- Socio-economic
- Diversity





Historical

- Lifestyle changes with colonization
 - Residential Schooling
 - Degradation of cultural practices
 - Modern Integration
-



Colonization

- Domination by other races and societies
 - New illnesses
 - Theft of homeland
 - Suppression of Language, Ceremonies, Culture, Spiritual lifestyle
 - Residential Schools
 - Destruction of Native Family Systems
 - Slavery by Churches and Society
 - Denial of Native Historical Importance
 - Multigenerational Trauma
 - Racism, ignorance, oppression, fear
-



Residential Schooling

- Up to 5 generations of children removed from their homes, families, cultures
 - Cultural practices forbidden, offenders severely punished
 - Disease, hunger, harsh discipline
 - Abuse: physical, sexual, emotional
 - Quote from Dr. Cornelia Wieman
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Dr. Cornelia Wieman:

“in addition to the damage caused to the individual survivors who endured emotional, physical and sexual abuse, we must consider the long term, cumulative intergenerational effects on First Nations Communities...including dislocation from one’s community, loss of pride and self-respect, loss of identity, language, spirituality, culture, and ability to parent. The roots of this damage and these losses are reflected in the abysmal statistics which reflect levels of family violence, suicide, alcohol and other abuse in Aboriginal communities today”



Residential Schools, a Historical Perspective

- 1600-1700 churches began informal schooling
 - Royal Proclamation of 1763: British government would ensure protection of Aboriginal people and their lands
 - Late 1800's Treaties: rights in return for land. Government policy was to assimilate FN people as quickly as possible
 - 1867 Confederation: Sir John A MacDonaldd decreed that Aboriginal children will come under colonial control
 - 1879 Davin Report: augment day schools into boarding and industrial schools, church state partnership
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Residential Schools Historical Perspective cont'd

- 1900 - 1 in 6 children attending
 - 1931 - 80 schools
 - 1940's- 50% of First Nations students attending
 - 1951 Indian Act- Indians on Reserve shall attend school
 - 1950's anecdotal- when “the change started: massive addiction, poverty, child death, social chaos”
 - 1960's -development of First Nations Institutions (Assembly of First Nations, National Indian Brotherhood)
 - 1980's -3% of FN children attending residential schools
 - **1989 the last residential school closed**
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Socio-economic impacts

- Poverty
 - Living Conditions
 - Addictions
 - Mental health problems
 - Abuse cycles
 - Parenting Practices
 - Lack of Education
 - Racism
-



Modern Integration

- Assimilation
 - Blending
 - Traditional peoples
 - Cultural Rebirth

 - Many Aboriginal people are still finding their way
-



Cultural Resurgence

- 1990 to the present: resurgence of Aboriginal cultural practices
 - Increased cultural pride and acceptance
 - More Aboriginal organizations develop to help the people
 - More Aboriginal people pursue post secondary education
 -the healing continues.....
-



Diversity

- First Nations
 - Metis
 - Inuit
 - On reserve
 - Off reserve
 - 'Blending'
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Diversity

- Traditional and non traditional families
 - Urban families, rural, remote
 - Spectrum of resources
 - Spectrum of Cultural beliefs
 - Strength of survivors
 - Wounded survivors
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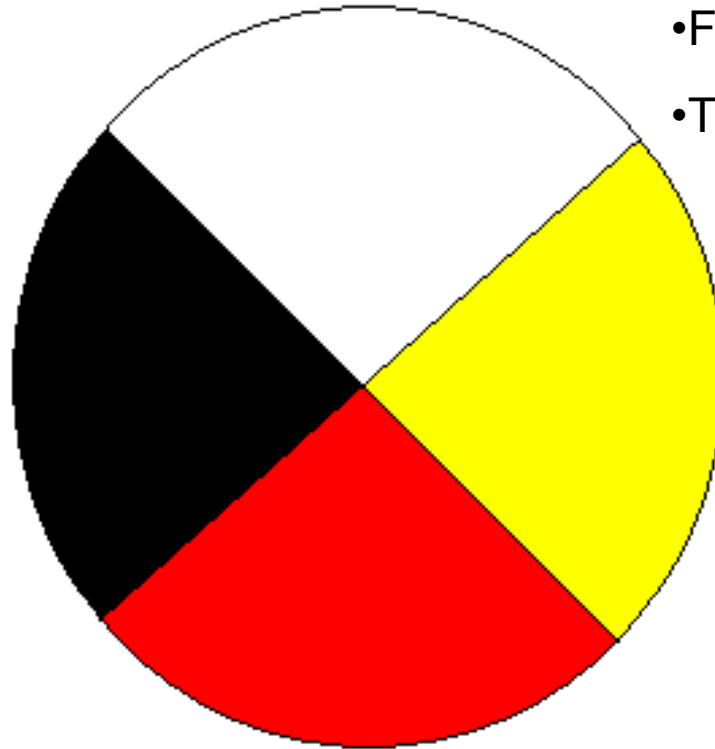


Aboriginal Families

Strengths

- Values
- Holistic approach to life
- Balance
- Family
- Traditional Medicine

Challenges



Child

Influences on the child



Values

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Balance

- Physical
 - Mental
 - Spiritual
 - Social
-
- A holistic approach to life, and health
-



Family

- Family is the primary society unit
 - Extended family very important traditionally
 - Roles and values of each age group
 - The circle of parenting skills was disrupted by residential schools, it is gradually healing
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Traditional Medicine

- Spiritual Healing ceremonies
 - Some examples:
 - » Smudging
 - » Sweat Lodges
 - » Ceremonies
- Herbal Medicines
- Teachings of Elders



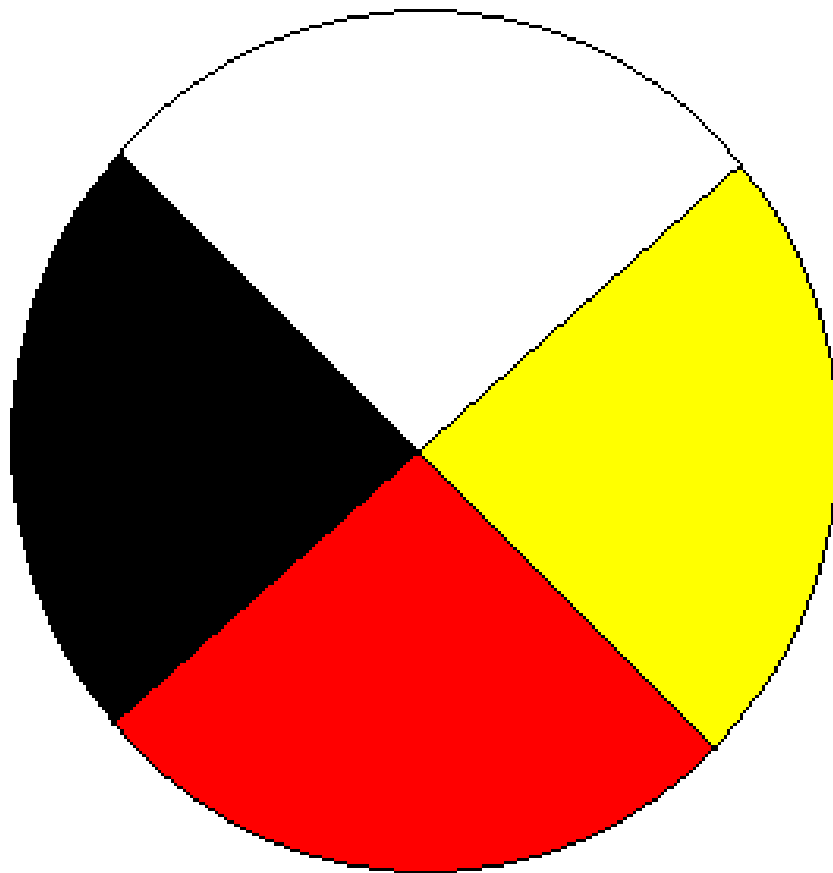
Summary

Strengths

Challenges

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Case # 1: Raven

- 2 month girl, for routine WBC at Family doctor's office
 - Normal pregnancy, delivery, breastfed, sleeps 6 hours at night
 - 2 parent on reserve First Nation family, Raven is their first child
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Case #1 Raven (cont'd)

- Mom is a professor of Aboriginal Studies at the local university
 - Dad is a lawyer with an Aboriginal organization. He travels often
 - Concerns at this visit:
 - immunizations
 - a blue/purple mark on the child's low back
 - use of their tikinagan
 - traditional medicine esp sweat lodge, herbal teas
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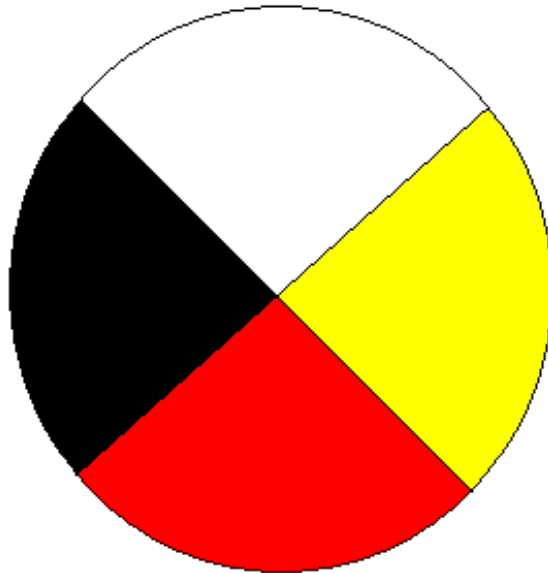
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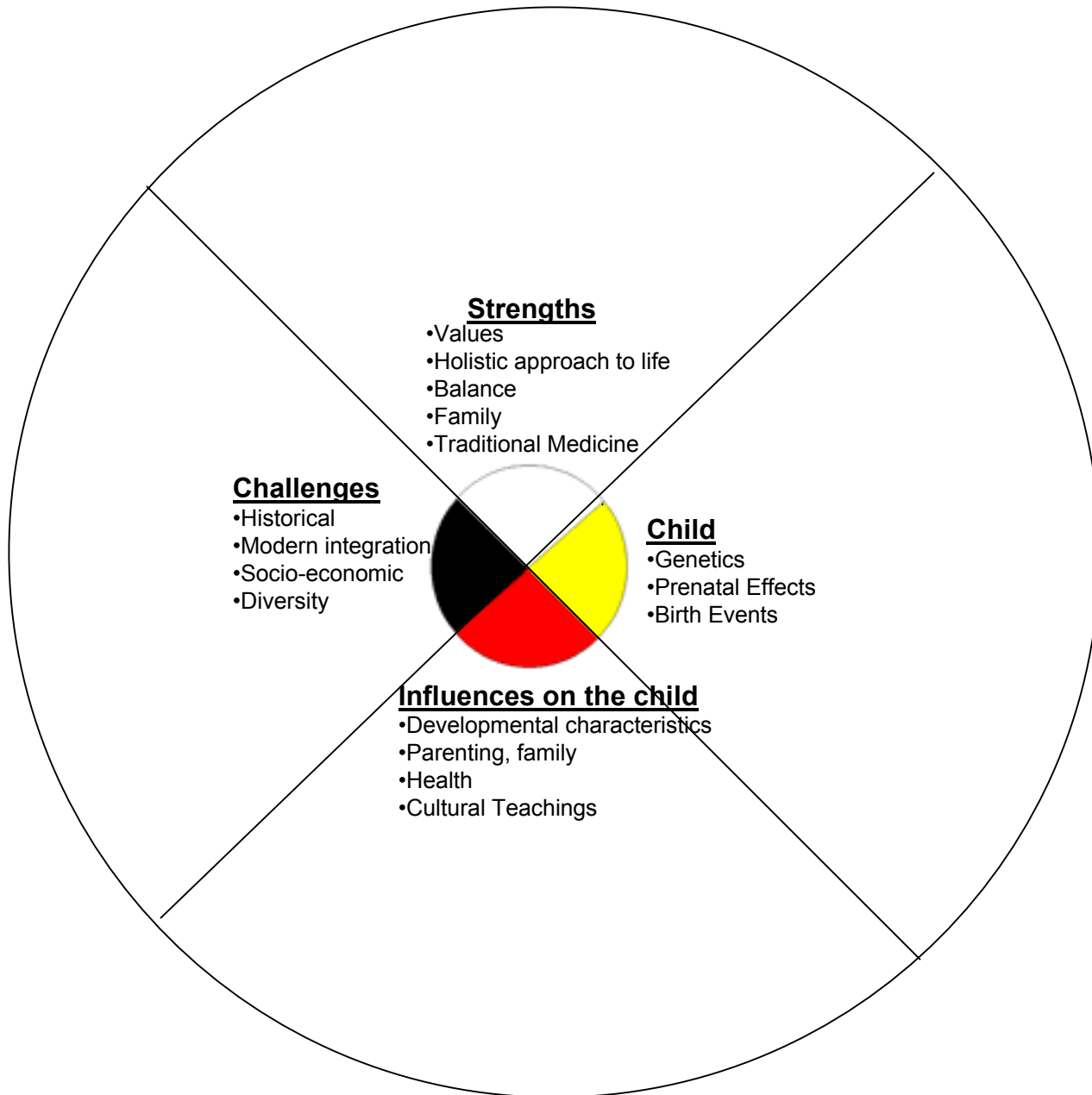
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Case Study: What would be your approach to this Family?





Case # 2 Damian

- 2 1/2 yo boy
 - The day care at your local community college referred him to your agency for assessment of unmanageable behaviour
 - Damian is very active, very affectionate with any adult, does not play well with other children. He needs constant supervision for fear he will injure himself. He speaks rarely, but does seem to understand when spoken to.
 - He has severe temper tantrums when picked up at the daycare at the end of the day.
 - He was in foster care on 2 occasions, at age 6 months, and 16 months of age
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Case #2: Damion (cont'd)

- 30 yo single Mom, returned to college this year for upgrading at the grade 10 level
 - Dad not in the picture
 - Siblings age 5 (twins), 12, and 14
 - Mom was raised on reserve to age 16, was in 7 foster homes age 2 to 16, when she ran away to the city.
 - Mom has recently completed a program at a drug and alcohol treatment facility. She has been drug and alcohol free for 9 months. She drank heavily during her pregnancy with Damion
 - She has few family supports, preferring to avoid her birth family due to conflicts
 - She denies any cultural practices, and seems annoyed by the question of them.
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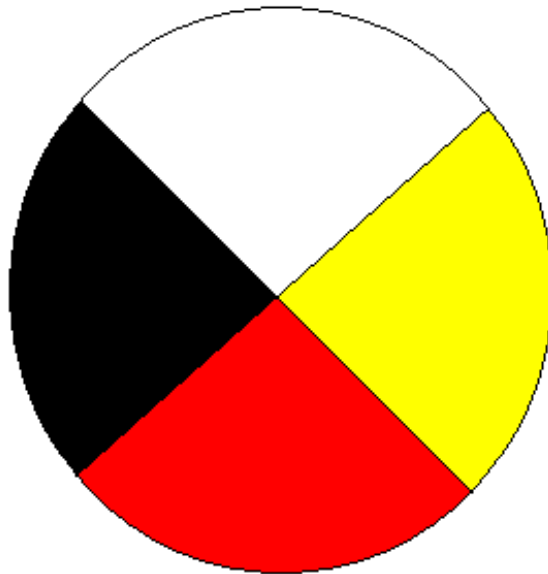
Aboriginal Families

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Case # 3 : Destany

- 4 yo Ojibway girl, who has come for an orientation visit at your daycare.
 - Destany lives in the city with her Dad who is an ambulance attendant, and paternal grandparents
 - Her Mom died when she was 2 years old in a motor vehicle accident
 - She is brought in by her grandmother, who she seems quite attached to, and who would like her to have more social opportunities before she starts school this fall.
-



Case # 3 : Destany (continued)

- Dad was not raised on reserve. He became quite involved with the Cree culture when he met his wife, who was very traditional. She was a jingle dancer, and had won many awards for her dancing. Destany attends a children's dance group
 - Dad is involved in an Aboriginal drum group, and regularly attends traditional ceremonies.
 - Destany's grandparents both attended residential schools, and have no interest in the Aboriginal culture. They would like Destany to blend with the multicultural environment in their city.
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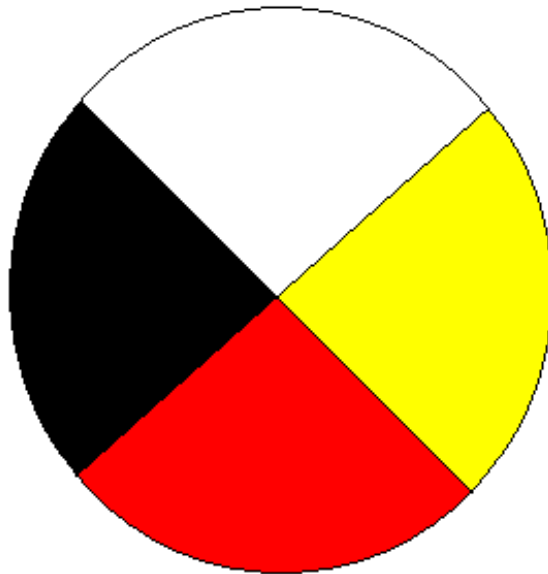
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References

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