

Indigenous Brilliant - Culminating Activity

The Four Rs and My Story

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The eight stones used in this project were collected from the shores of Lake Ontario, a lake that I have lived along my entire life and hold very dear. The largest centre stone is meant to be surrounded by the seven smaller stones.

Respect – Who am I?

-Centre portrait stone: This is a self-portrait. I am wearing the silapâk my aunt had made for me, which is also known as a dickie. This is the traditional outerwear of the Inuit of the northern Labrador coast. I wear it in honour of my father and his heritage, which he has passed on through me. I try to learn more about my culture and to preserve traditional knowledge whenever I have the opportunity. In my hands I hold wheat to honour my mother. She comes from a long line of farmers and grew up on a farm in southern Ontario. My grandparents still live on the land granted to her ancestors as United Empire Loyalists. I love both my parents so much and am very fortunate to have access to this knowledge of my own heritage. It makes up a large part of who I am.

-Kamutik (sled) stone: This is a scene from one of my favourite childhood memories. Every year, my family would travel back to Labrador in the spring to see relatives. The four of us would travel out onto the land and sea ice to visit the old locations where our family traditionally frequented, stopping to have a boil-up or to ice fish. My dad grew up using dog team before snowmobiles were available. Even now, he has an incredible knowledge of the land and how to read it. My dad would drive the snowmobile while my mom would ride behind him. You can see the pointed hood of his silapâk. My sister and I would ride in the kamutik pulled behind. I can remember the northern lights vividly and that they were almost always green, lighting up the night sky. I'm very proud of my culture.

Relevance – Which gifts do I have which I am grateful for?

-Heart stone: This stone represents the love and gratitude that I possess. It can be so full and deep that at times it bubbles up and overflows, shining out and shimmering. At times it can be overwhelming and blinding yet I am grateful for this too. It is better, I think, to be full of love that springs readily than for the feeling to be dry and unreachable. Here the heart is held closely while remaining high, free, and easy to give away. To me, love and gratitude are not shades of aggressive red but instead are a subdued purple. In the teachings of the seven directions, the seventh direction is 'self' and is represented by the colour purple.

-Sunrise stone: I am fortunate that I remain optimistic and hopeful for the future, even in times of uncertainty or when I stumble. The knowledge that things will turn out all right keeps me going. At the end of every bad day is the knowledge that there will soon be a golden morning. The rising sun represents this new potential and opportunity to start again, as well as highlighting new horizons. The sun keeps on rising and the days begin again and again with a stubborn persistence, no matter what the days before them held.

Responsibility – What do I need to learn?

-Earth stone: This stone represents all that I have learned and have yet to learn. The vastness of space and our one little planet set against it is an image that has always fascinated me. All I have ever known and care for is on this one little rock. I am responsible for her. I am apart of her. Seeing the Earth like this acts as a reminder that I must be more present and wider in my perspective. Too often I can narrow my view so greatly that I become blind to the true scope of my problems. I get stuck inside my head. I must work to become more grounded and down-to-Earth. There is still so much that I don't know. There is always room to grow.

-Hands stone: On this stone I have painted my own two hands. In one, I hold a test tube. In the other I hold a pencil and paint brush. These represent my two main passions: science and the visual arts. It is primarily through my hands that I am able to engage in and pursue these passions. The half-heart on either side is to show that I love these two subjects dearly and hold them within my heart. I want to learn how I can best apply my passions to benefit my work, my every day life, and the lives of others. I need to see beyond these two areas as well and embrace new, unfamiliar opportunities. I may find a new passion.

Reciprocity – How can my gifts be used for myself and others?

-Crowd stone: This stone shows a large, unending crowd with a main character in the front. Someone has their hand on the person's shoulder in support. I wanted to show that you see yourself most clearly, and others less clearly. Despite this, others help to define you and support you, even if you may not realize it. Here, the main character in white has no border, and instead it is a combination of the white character and the grey behind them that defines them. There are so many people to which you are connected. When you act positively, those acts can ripple and be felt far beyond what you initially thought. Kindness, love, and gratitude lead to similar feelings and outcomes. Bringing compassion to any task improves my own and others' experiences.

-Bird stone: This stone represents giving and sharing good things. When we are in times of trouble, others help us up and share what they can. A white bird is also a common symbol of peace. Here, it can be seen as passing on feelings of good will. These things do not have to be physical. Even positive feelings and acts of kindness can help people more than you may know. The sharing of experiences can be crucial to continued personal learning as well.