

The background features a vertical color gradient from light blue at the top to dark red at the bottom. On the left side, there are several circular and semi-circular graphic elements. A prominent scale-like arc is visible, with numerical markings from 140 to 260 in increments of 10. Other elements include concentric circles, dashed lines, and arrows, some of which are partially cut off by the frame. The overall aesthetic is technical and futuristic.

CEREMONY

WHAT IS A CEREMONY OR RITUAL?

- **Ritual** means "conforming to religious rites," which are the sacred, customary ways of celebrating a religion or culture. Different communities have different **ritual** practices, like meditation in Buddhism, or baptism in Christianity. We also call the **ceremony** itself a **ritual**.
- Ceremony means –(a set of) formal acts, often fixed and traditional, performed on important social or religious occasions:
- Both are practices that :
 - can be conducted by an officiant, priest, Shaman or other religious authority;
 - invoke Deity as an integral part of the practice
 - have a direct relationship with tradition and customs
 - both have a predetermined form (who is included, when and where held), function (a desired or anticipated result), and structure (spoken word, formal dress, and symbolic actions).

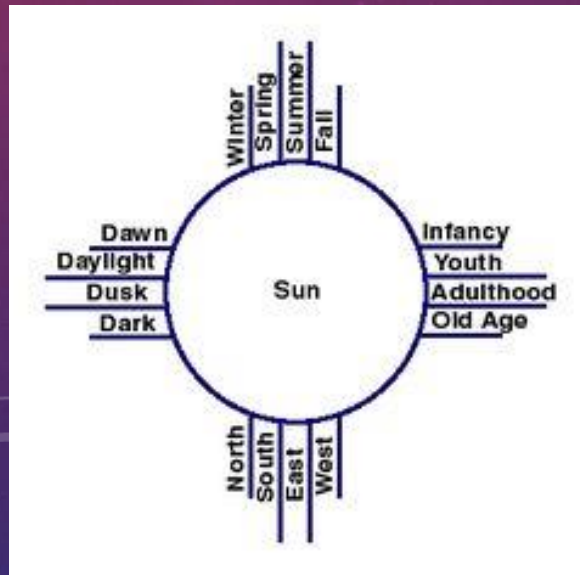
WHY ARE CEREMONIES IMPORTANT?

- Ceremony and rituals have long played a vital and essential role in Indigenous culture.
- Most Indigenous peoples did not consider their spirituality, ceremonies, and rituals as “religion,” in the way that Christians do. Rather, their beliefs and practices form an integral and seamless part of their very being.
- Their beliefs were heavily influenced by their methods of acquiring food, — from hunting to agriculture.
- They also embraced ceremonies and rituals that provided power to conquer the difficulties of life, as well as events and milestones, such as puberty, marriage, and death.
- Over the years, practices and ceremonies changed with the needs of individual tribes.



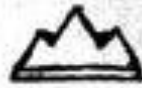
















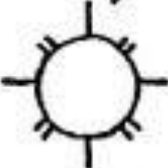
















INSTITUTIONAL AND RITUAL MYTHS

- Institutional myths tell the origins of religious institutions such as:
 - the Sun Dance (Northern Plains, Siksika, Sioux),
 - sacred Medicine Bundles (Siksika, Cree, Ojibwa, Haudenosaunee [Iroquois]),
 - winter ceremonies (Coast Salish, Nuu-chah-nulth, Kwakwaka'wakw)
 - the Green Corn Ceremony (Haudenosaunee)..
- Ritual myths- serve as detailed texts for the performance of institutions, ceremonies and rituals such as:
 - the Sun Dance,
 - Green Corn Ceremony
 - the Ojibwa Midewiwin ritual.
 - Fertility, birth, initiation and death rites.
 - Ceremonies are often preceded by stringent purification rites, such as sweat lodges or baths (common for Salish, Blackfoot and Eastern Woodlands peoples) fasting and sexual abstinence.
 - Feasting is a common feature of such ceremonies.

SACREDNESS OF SYMBOLS



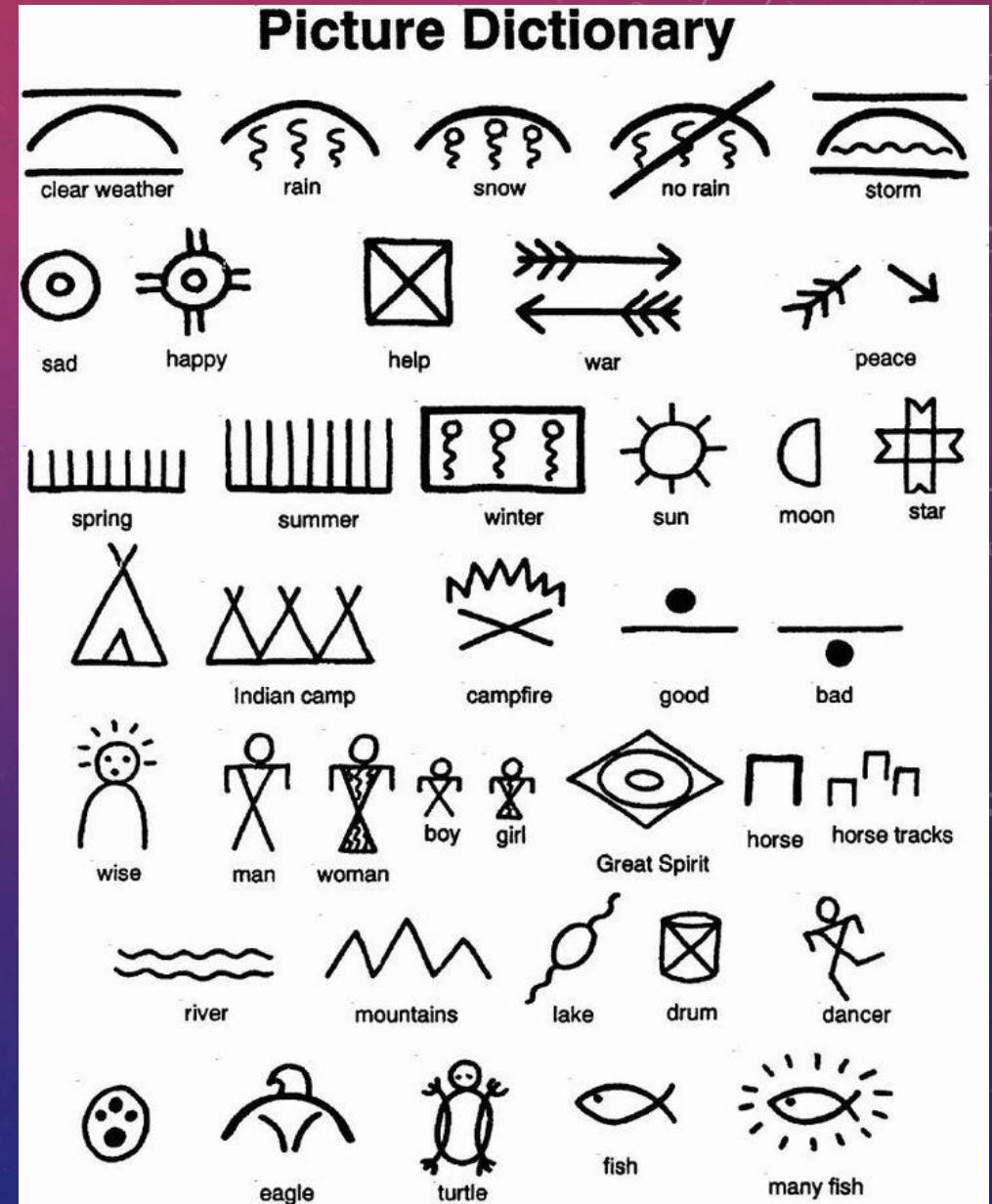
SYMBOLS OF THE INDIAN NATION

	MAN life		HORSE journey		BIG MOUNTAIN great abundance		THUNDERBIRD unlimited happiness
	CROSSED ARROWS friendship		ARROW protection		LIGHTNING swiftness		BROKEN ARROW peace
	WATER HOUSE		HEADRESS ceremonial		KOKOPELLI flute player		CHILD fathers pride
	TEEPEE temporary house		HOGAN longtime home		RAIN plentiful crop		EAGLE FEATHER chief
	CACTUS sign of desert		PATH crossed		GECKO sign of desert		SUN happiness
	RAIN CLOUDS good prospect		THUNDERBIRDTRACK bright prospect		DEERTRACK game plentiful		SEASONS winter summer spring fall
	DAYS-NIGHTS time		PEACE PIPE ceremonial sacred		WATER RUNNING constant life		MOUNTAIN RANGE destination
	SUN RAYS constant		BIRD free of worry		BEAR strength		ARROW alertness
	SNAKE defiance		BEAR PAW good omen		OAK TWIG summon the holy		EAGLE freedom

- In Plains tribes, the Thunderbird is sometimes known as *Wakinyan*, from the Dakota word *kinyan* meaning "winged." Others suggest the word links the Thunderbird to *wakan*, or sacred power. In many stories, the Thunderbird is thought of as a great Eagle, who produces thunder from the beating of his wings and flashes lightning from his eyes. (Descriptions are vague because it is thought Thunderbird is always surrounded by thick, rolling clouds which prevent him from being seen.) Further, there were a variety of beliefs about Thunderbird, which suggest a somewhat complicated picture. Usually, his role is to challenge some other great power and protect the Indians - such as White Owl Woman, the bringer of winter storms; the malevolent Unktehi, or water oxen who plague mankind; the horned serpents; Wochowsen, the enemy bird; or Waziya, the killing North Wind. But in some other legends (not so much in the Plains), Thunderbird is himself malevolent, carrying off people (or reindeer or whales) to their doom, or slaying people who seek to cross his sacred mountain. (Erdoes and Ortiz 1984)

- Many Plains Indians claim there are in fact four colors (varieties) of Thunderbirds (the blue ones are said, strangely, to have no ears or eyes), sometimes associated with the four cardinal directions, but also sometimes only with the west and the western wind. (According to the medicine man Lamé Deer, there were four, one at each compass point, but the western one was the Greatest and most senior.) (Fire and Erdoes 1972) The fact that they are sometimes known as "grandfathers" suggest they are held in considerable reverence and awe. It is supposed to be very dangerous to approach a Thunderbird nest, and many are supposed to have died in the attempt, swept away by ferocious storms. The symbol of Thunderbird is the red zig-zag, lightning-bolt design, which some people mistakenly think represents a stairway. Most tribes feel he and the other Thunder beings were the first to appear in the Creation, and that they have an especially close connection to *wakan tanka*, the Great Mysterious. (Gill and Sullivan 1992)

- The fact that Thunderbird sometimes appears as something that terrorizes and plagues Indians, and sometimes as their protector and liberator (in some myths, he was once an Indian himself) is said to reflect the way thunderstorms and violent weather are seen by Plains people. On the one hand, they bring life-giving rain (Thunderbird is said to be the creator of 'wild rice' and other Plains Indians crops); on the other hand, they bring hail, flood, and lightning and fire. It is not clear where with them worship and awe end, and fear and terror begin. Some Indians claim that there are good and bad Thunderbirds, and that these beings are at war with each other. Others claim that the large predatory birds which are said to kidnap hunters and livestock are not Thunderbirds at all. Largely, I suspect that this dual nature of the Thunderbird ties it to the Trickster figure in Indian belief: like the Trickster, the harm the Thunderbird causes is mostly because it is so large and powerful and primeval.



MINI SEARCH -

- Look up the significance of one of the symbols that we are going to put on the key chains, as well as where it possibly originated from. Write the answer in your reflection journal.
- Also answer the following questions:
- Which symbols did you choose and why?
- Do these symbols have a sacredness to any other cultures?
- What reasons could there be for the similarities?

IMPACT OF EUROPEAN CONTACT AND ABORIGINAL SPIRITUAL TRADITIONS

- Contact between Europeans and Aboriginal peoples had a range of impacts.
- Aboriginal peoples helped early Europeans by teaching them survival skills.
- Many Europeans considered their own ways “civilized” and Aboriginal ways “uncivilized.”
- Aboriginal peoples were expected to give up their ways.
- Reserves were created and land was set aside for specific First Nations peoples to use.
- In 1857, the *Gradual Civilization Act* was passed to assimilate Aboriginal peoples into European culture.
- In 1876, the *Indian Act* allowed the federal government to set up residential schools for Aboriginal children, which were run by Anglican, United, Presbyterian, and Catholic churches.
- In 1885, the potlatch ceremony was banned.
- In 1895, all Aboriginal ceremonies, dances, and festivals were banned.

- Recent History

- Many banned Aboriginal ceremonies continued in private, and the ban was officially lifted in 1951.
- The territory of Nunavut, created in 1999, was the largest land claim settlement in Canada's history.
- Aboriginal spirituality has become recognized as an official religion; the eagle feather can now be used in the provincial justice system instead of a Bible.
- Residential schools were closed after the public became aware of the cultural, physical, and sexual abuse that occurred there:
 - the federal government and the churches involved have apologized to Aboriginal peoples
 - a Truth and Reconciliation Commission is documenting the painful legacy of residential schools

- Aboriginal Peoples in Canada Today

- Many Aboriginal people are trying to address the negative impacts of contact.
- They are reviving Aboriginal spiritual traditions and practices within an increasingly secular society, and integrating Aboriginal spiritual heritage with Christianity.
- Many Aboriginal Canadians who are Christian are struggling with the question of whether they can be true to both religions.

CEREMONIES TO CHOOSE FROM

- Death Ceremony by the Hopi or Cree
- The Ghost Dance
- Vision Quest
- Powwow
- False face Society
- Midewiwin ritual.
- Green Corn Ceremony
- Walking out Ceremony

Sun Dance Ceremony – Very Sacred to be approached with reverence.

The First Kill

Berry Fast and Womanhood

Vision Quest (Coming of age for males)

Marriage

Drum Birthing Ceremony

Fire Keeping and Water Blessing

ASSIGNMENT:

- Look up the ceremony and highlight the sacredness of the plants, objects and symbols that are associated with your Ceremony of choice.
- Make sure you explain what each is used for, and why this plant is associated with this ritual.