

The Circle – Part 2

The Anishinabek use symbols to explain concrete and abstract ideas found within their cultures and to help members of their societies to understand those ideas. One of the key symbols found in Anishinabek culture is the circle. It is believed that everything in the universe is contained within a circle and everything has its place within that circle. The circle is used to express the holistic nature of Anishinabek culture and the cyclic nature of everything in the Anishinabek world. The circle represents ideas such as the “circle of life,” strength, unity, and balance.

The addition of a line running through the center of a circle is used as a symbol to represent the dual nature of Anishinabek reality, or opposites. It is also used to represent the idea of balance. In the diagram,

each half of the circle represents an opposite such as black and white, and it is believed that each is found in equal proportions, thereby ensuring a proper balance. There are many other opposites, including, for example, the physical and spiritual worlds, earth and sky, movement in clockwise and counter-clockwise directions, things that can move and those that are fixed or stationary, snow and rain, fire and water, water and ice, night and day, summer and winter, male and female, love and hate, hunger and

fullness, good and evil, and animate and inanimate. The Anishinabek believe that these opposites are necessary to provide balance within their universe and that to live a “good life” they must strive for a similar balance in their lives.

