

# Sacred Images - Physical Fitness and Dance

## Summary

Appreciation of the earth, the water, the plants, and the animals helps us live fuller and more aware lives. It is important to show our gratitude to mother nature and our earth by caring for all living things and realizing that this web of life is like a Great circle with all things equally important; the circle of giving and receiving; the circles of nature that surrounds and supports us, like the earth, sun, moon, seasons, day and night and the cycles that make up living. Realize that appreciating and thanking nature may be a fun and active celebration.

## Time Frame

1 class periods of 45 minutes each

## Group Size

Large Groups

## Life Skills

Communication

## Materials

- *Sacred Images A Vision of Native American Rock Art*
- *Keepers of the Animals*  
"The Rabbit Dance" by Michael J. Caduto and Joseph Bruchac, 1991.  
A simple hand-held drum and striker
- *Seasons of the Circle*  
by Joseph Bruchec
- *Thirteen Moons on Turtle's Back*  
by Joseph Bruchac and Jonathan London  
Circle Dance diagram

## Background for Teachers

Native Americans believe that we can learn many things from watching the behavior of animals. This story "The Rabbit Dance", an Iroquois celebration, is one example of the role animals play as wise teachers. Each time an animal offers its life so that others can survive, the Native Americans give thanks through songs, dances, offerings, and prayer, thus completing the circle of life and death, living in balance with Nature, and giving and receiving. Instruct the students to think of the cycles of the seasons, the movement of the moon, and other cycles or circles on Nature. Then find other circular symbols in the Rock Art photographs and make inferences of their meanings.

## Student Prior Knowledge

Using the Nature Word Bank previously used in the "Web of Life" lesson, brainstorm to create a list of gifts that each of these things in nature give us, such as life, beauty, food, clothing, song, and dance, thus creating a Circle of Life. Discuss the Circles of Life, and look for other circular symbols on the Rock Art panels as well as in nature. Think about what these circular symbols may have meant to their creators.

## Instructional Procedures

### Activity: The Circle Dance

Review the prior lesson on circles.

After discussing circles, instruct the students that they are honoring nature by dancing the Circle Dance.

Students stand in a large circle, linked arm in arm.

Demonstrate a simple toe-heel step, alternating feet while playing a two-part repetitive beat on the drum, one beat soft, the other a little harder.

Tell them "Walking upon Earth is like beating a drum. Let us walk softly upon Mother Earth to show we are respectful of Earth and its ways." Students should not talk during this dance.

Students drop arms, facing clockwise, taking hold of the shoulders of the person in front of them. Students should remember that circles have no end so everyone must remain connected so that the circle remains unbroken.

Join the circle as the leader, having a student hold onto your shoulders. (a) Lead the group once clockwise; (b) Circle then spiraling in; (c) Turn left (counter-clockwise) and spiral out; (d) Unravel the spiral, re-form into a counter clockwise circle and go around for one more turn.

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