Purpose: Students will learn about the Medicine Wheel, a holistic health model used by some Indigenous Peoples. Students will learn about and discuss 'health equity' and 'social determinants of health' and the influence on themselves and Indigenous populations. Students will create a personal Medicine Wheel that breaks down aspects of their life that positively contribute to their mental, physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing.

Estimated time: 50 minutes

Curriculum relations: Determinants of Health, Integration of Mental Health

Activity:
2. After the video, use the following discussion questions to begin a conversation on health and wellness.
   a. What are health inequities? What are health disparities?
   b. What are the three types of social conditions or causes that contribute to health inequities?
   c. How can attending school influence health?
   d. How can a neighbourhood influence health?
   e. What can we do to make a positive difference for everyone’s health?
3. Write the following definitions of ‘social determinants of health’ on the board:
   o The conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the systems put in place to deal with illness. These conditions are shaped by a wider set of forces: economics, social policies, and politics. Source: World Health Organization (WHO)
   If necessary, break down the term further:
   o Social: Your interactions with the environment around you (your friends, family, places and different systems such as gender, race, religious affiliations, etc.)
   o Determinants: Affecters or indicators. A factor that influences something else, for example, the foods you eat and physically activities are factors that affect and determine your health.
   o Health: Your level of physical, emotional, spiritual and mental wellbeing
4. In pairs, have students brainstorm and record as many social determinants of health they that affect someone’s health and wellbeing.
5. Bring the class back together and have students share factors. Create a master list on the board for students to reference. Factors may include ideas related to the following categories:
   o Income
   o Education and literacy
   o Unemployment, job security
   o Employment and working conditions
   o Early childhood development
   o Food insecurity
   o Housing
   o Social exclusion
   o Social support network
   o Personal health practices and coping skills
   o Stress
   o Access to health services
   o Geographic location
   o Gender
   o Race
   o Disability
   o Access to clean water
6. Have a brief discussion on social determinants of health using the following discussion questions:
   a. Which factors do you think affect children the most?
   b. Were any of the examples surprising?
7. Introduce holistic health and the Medicine Wheel.
   a. Holistic health focuses on the four parts of a person's wellbeing: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health.
   b. The Medicine Wheel dates back to stone circles found in North America from the earliest of times and its concept and teachings continue to be relevant today. The circle is a powerful symbol that accounts for and acknowledges every aspect of existence in its four quadrants.
   c. Traditional knowledge teaches that good health requires a balance of all four parts. The symbol of the Medicine Wheel demonstrates this holistic health model, it is circular, each element is equal and interconnected, and cyclical with factors influencing one another.
   d. An imbalance in any area may negatively affect your overall health. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to all kinds of health, not just the physical health of your body.
8. Show students the image of the Medicine Wheel below, source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPVwgnp3dAc

9. Explain the meaning of each section and the importance of the number four. Four is a prominent number in the culture of some Indigenous Peoples:
   a. Four sacred medicines: tobacco, sage, sweet grass, cedar
   b. Four seasons: winter, spring, summer, fall
   c. Four directions: North, West, East, South
   d. Four elements of being a human being: mental, emotional, physical, spiritual
   e. Four stages of life: childhood, youth, adult, elder
   Ensure students understand the representation of the four elements of each human being and the four main factors that influence your holistic health and wellbeing (mental, physical, emotional and spiritual).

10. Distribute the blackline master to each student or have students draw or make their own Medicine Wheel with construction paper and markers. Instruct students to fill in their Medicine Wheel with factors that positively influence their mental, physical, emotional and spiritual (or social) health. For example: Mental: friendship, Physical: playing soccer, Emotional: sketching, Spiritual: reading.

11. If time allows, bring students back together to share their Medicine Wheels with the class and discuss different ways to positively promote each category of holistic health and how to overcome the obstacles too.

Extension: Students may select one or two of the social determinants of health and research more in-depth how they impact Indigenous populations. Newspapers, news magazines, TV news, online news outlets, government sites and organizations offer a wealth of information that addresses Indigenous health and the factors involved in negatively or positively promoting wellbeing.
BLACKINE MASTER 1

MY MEDICINE WHEEL

WHITE = Spiritual Health      YELLOW = Physical Health      RED = Mental Health      BLACK = Emotional Health
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

In addition to the lesson plan, share these resources with your students:

- Holistic Health & Medicine Wheel
  http://www.ddsb.ca/Programs/aboriginal/Resources/LearningWheels/Learning%20Wheels/dds世界经济轮_series_intro_the_the_medicine_wheel.pdf
  http://connectability.ca/2010/11/10/wikwemikong/

- Social Determinants of Health
  http://www.who.int/social_determinants/en/
  http://www.thecanadianfacts.org/
  http://www.med.uottawa.ca/sim/data/Aboriginal_Health_Determinants_e.htm
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXcSJTsrsM

- Alternative Medicine and Therapies
  http://www.alive.com/health/aboriginal-medicine/
  http://www.med.uottawa.ca/sim/data/AlternativeTherapy_e.htm
  http://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/traditional-healing