

## ADDITIONAL NOTES ON WOODLAND ART SYMBOLS.

12/17/14 b barry

Most of the representations you see today in what is called Woodland Art (aka *medicine paintings*) generally, are from midewiwin birchbark scrolls. Midewiwin being a medicine society of the Ojibwe that is still around and meet well below the radar and from the eyes of government in response to historical suppression of Native American beliefs. In short, this is a pictographic language of the Mide, and a powerful language of symbols and such that make note of the truths given by the Great Mystery to the Anishinaabe (go Ojibwe!!).

It was the painter Norval Morriseau who most will recognize as the first to use these symbols in paintings, which was not without controversy. Exploration of the interrelationship between traditional legends and such is a gift shared by Anishinaabe with the world - exploring the balance between humans, animals and all. Yet, there is as always a scent of appropriation of a world view that was at one time the victim of attempts to kill Midewiwin beliefs. So this is spiritual and symbolic expression.

While there ought be no limits on how art is expressed, traditionally most of 'Woodland Art' presents in a two dimensional mostly frontal in perspective, or profile. The colours are usually a palette of bright 'pure' colour, with heavy black lines amongst figurative images. It is a minimalist form that can be very powerful if done well.

Example: *the divided circles are oftimes bordered in various colours representing various entities, perhaps yellow or red for the fun, or dark ochre for water spirits and such.*

Like all art, it is made up of reactions to what is going on in the world and the vision of the artist.

On the next page are some small drawings and notes about the symbols in this art form.

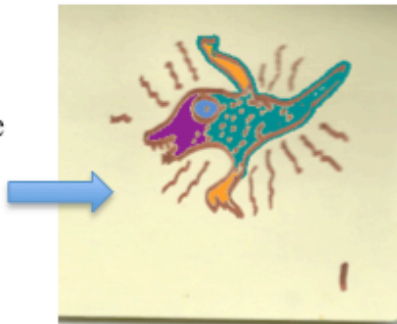
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## Bruce's Comments re Woodland Art Symbols.

[Dec/17/14]

These thumb drawings will hopefully assist and illustrate the symbols noted.

**Radiating lines:** this symbolize 'power' and are with both humans and animals – as we are all part of the face of G\_d. They are both receiving power and giving power.



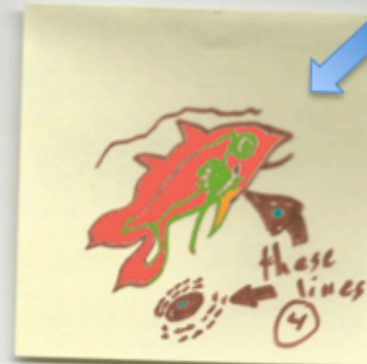
**Connecting lines:** Key to Ojibwe worldview is that we are all 'connected' – and more importantly we are all 'interdependent' and when not in balance in our relationships with animals and nature things don't go well.



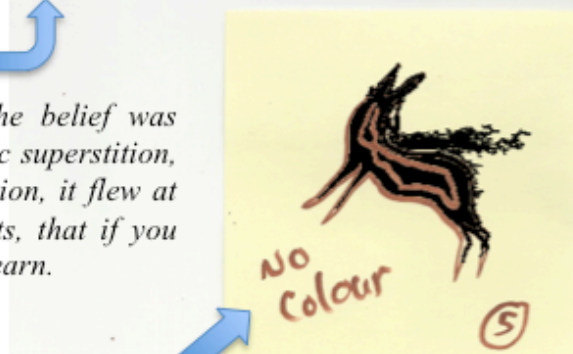
**Prophecy:** lines with wiggly lines coming off of it shows us direct connection with other beings and the Great Mystery and communicating with them. For example, the salamander, beetles and such, go into the mud, into the underworld and are told things that we then are told by them.



**Special Power or gift of:** From the shaking tent world (long and very complex area of belief). When you see it around an organ, heart, brain, eyes – this tells us of special power and activity, of a gift being given to that being.



*As a side note, until the belief was colonized by Euro-centric superstition, the owl was about intuition, it flew at night and learned secrets, that if you were worthy, you could learn.*



**Inner life – monochromic beings:** The inner life of a being – human or animal, is depicted - in the modern context – by use of a monochromic palette. These are usually seen in grey scale or rarely an other colour.