

## MEDICINE WHEEL

Early cultures throughout the world built rock structures which joined the landscape to the sky, some serving as calendars (Stonehenge in England is an example). Over 100 Medicine Wheels constructed by Native Americans have been found in the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains of the United States and Canada. The complete story of these structures has been lost in the vastness of time. In 1992 at Valley City State University, Professor Joe Stickler and his students began this unique project which soon expanded beyond the

walls of the classroom to involve the community. The Medicine Wheel's large circle measures 213 feet around. The 28 spokes radiating from its center represent the number of days in the lunar cycle. Six spokes extending well beyond the Wheel are aligned to the horizon positions of sunrises and sunsets on the first days of the four seasons. The design of this rock sculpture was inspired by the Big Horn Medicine Wheel in Wyoming and reflects the beauty of the Earth's journey around the Sun and the grand cycle of the seasons.

## NATIVE AMERICAN MOUNDS

This Medicine Wheel is a multicultural symbol celebrating the calendar discovery process by our intelligent human ancestors around the globe and honoring the presence of the Native American burial mounds immediately to the east. This particular burial mound complex, built 500–2000 years ago, was originally comprised of

15 circular mounds and 5 linear mounds, 12 of which remain within the boundary of the Park. The area was first surveyed in 1883 by T.H. Lewis, who was part of the Northwest Archeological Survey, which mapped features such as burial mounds, rock alignments, and pictographs in eleven states and Manitoba, Canada.



Saturn with rings on the Solar System walk



Medicine Wheel Park on the VCSU campus

## MORE INFORMATION

Medicine Wheel Park is less than a mile from Interstate 94 Exit 292 in Valley City. After exiting the Interstate and driving north 1,000 feet, turn right (east) onto Winter Show Road. Within a half-mile turn left (north) at the sign, "Medicine Wheel Park."

Valley City State University invites individuals and groups, particularly school groups, to visit Medicine Wheel Park for enriching cultural and educational experiences.

[medicinewheel.vcsu.edu](http://medicinewheel.vcsu.edu)

### Friends of the Medicine Wheel VCSU Foundation

Contributions for the continued development and maintenance of this unique park are greatly appreciated.

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Information about other area attractions and visitor amenities is available at the Rosebud Visitor Center in historic downtown Valley City.

Rosebud Visitor Center  
250 West Main Street  
Valley City, ND 58072  
(701) 845-1891  
[www.hellovalley.com](http://www.hellovalley.com)

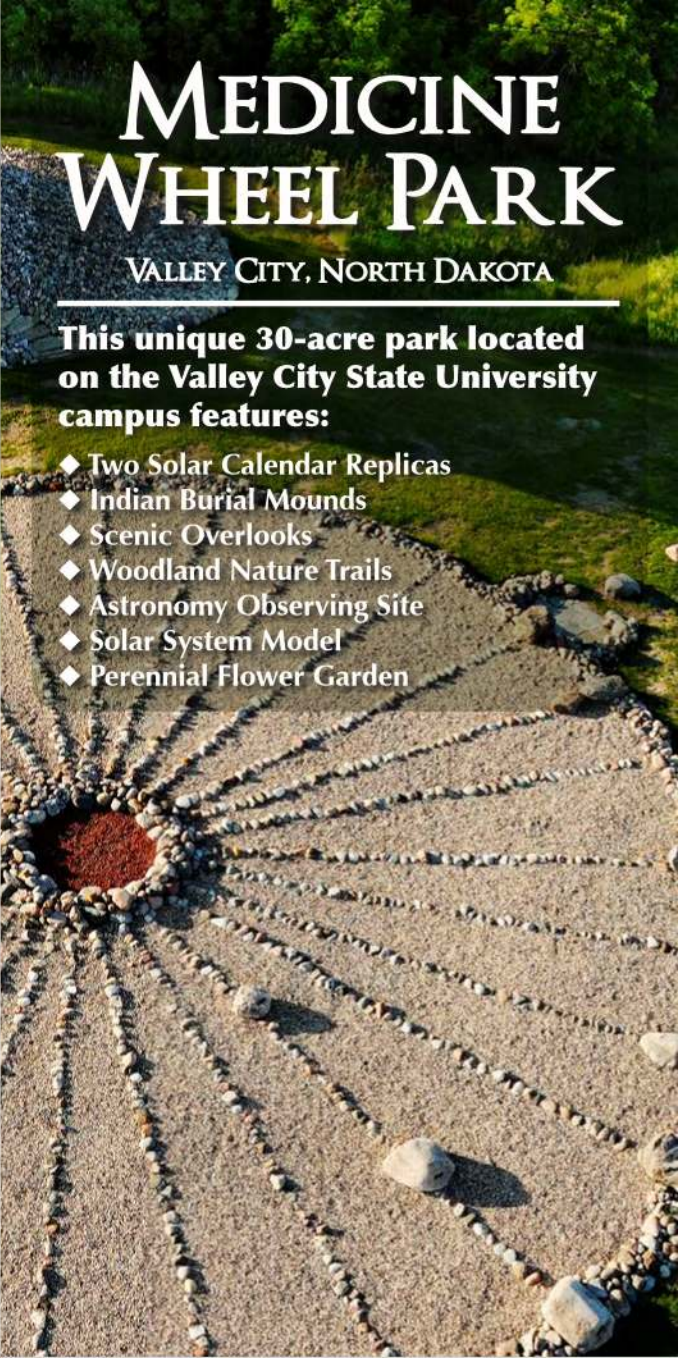
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# MEDICINE WHEEL PARK

VALLEY CITY, NORTH DAKOTA

**This unique 30-acre park located on the Valley City State University campus features:**

- ◆ Two Solar Calendar Replicas
- ◆ Indian Burial Mounds
- ◆ Scenic Overlooks
- ◆ Woodland Nature Trails
- ◆ Astronomy Observing Site
- ◆ Solar System Model
- ◆ Perennial Flower Garden



**"The rock is ephemeral,  
the wind eternal."**

Ann Zwinger



### Walking Tour of the Solar System

The Solar System model stretches from the Sun (represented by the center of the Medicine Wheel) to Pluto, one third of a mile away on the edge of the Regional Technology Center parking lot. Boulders representing the planets are spaced in exact proportion to their distances from the Sun on a scale with one foot equaling approximately three million miles. The Earth’s orbit corresponds to the outer circle of the Medicine Wheel. Mercury and Venus are inside the circle and Mars just outside. The large rock near the parking lot symbolizes Jupiter. By walking on the path east of Jupiter you will pass by Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto. A panel at the scenic overlook between Uranus and Neptune describes the early history of Valley City.

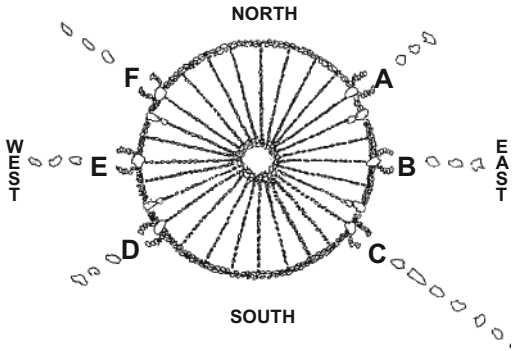
### Meridian Calendar

The 38 foot utility pole and rock alignment nearest to the Medicine Wheel serve as a reminder of another ancient method of keeping track of the seasons. This type of calendar uses the length of the shadow cast by the utility pole at local apparent noon when the sun is highest in the sky. At this moment, the shadow points directly north. The 15 foot shadow cast by the utility pole on the first day of summer lengthens to over 100 feet on the first day of winter. Three large boulders in the rock alignment mark the top of the pole’s shadow at the beginning of each season. Evidence suggests that the Ancestral Pueblo Indians of southwestern United States used meridian calendars to monitor the seasons.

### North Country National Scenic Trail (NCT)

The NCT is a 4,600 mile footpath linking communities, forests, and prairies across seven northern states from Lake Sakakawea, North Dakota to Crown Point, New York. Over 2,000 miles of this trail have already been completed. A segment of this trail winds through the wooded hillside of Medicine Wheel Park and along the Path of the Planets. Whether you walk, hike, backpack, bird watch, snowshoe, or cross-country ski, there is a section of trail waiting for you to enjoy. For more information, visit: [www.northcountrytrail.org/srv](http://www.northcountrytrail.org/srv) email: [srv@northcountrytrail.org](mailto:srv@northcountrytrail.org) phone: 701-845-2970 (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers).

### How to Use the Wheel as a Calendar



First Day of Season	Sunset Position	Sunrise Position
Summer	C to F	D to A
Fall	B to E	E to B
Winter	A to D	F to C
Spring	B to E	E to B

By standing at the lettered cairns (the horseshoe-shaped figures) around the outer circle and looking directly across the center of the Medicine Wheel to the opposite cairn, the horizon locations of the sunrises and sunsets on the first day of each season can be observed (see table above for details).

For example, stand in cairn C and look across the Wheel to cairn F. This alignment points to the horizon position of the setting Sun on the first day of Summer. Moving to cairn A and looking across the Wheel to cairn D points to the position on the horizon of the setting Sun on the first day of Winter. At this latitude the Winter and Summer extremes are separated by an angle of 72 degrees. The Spring and Fall alignments are the same and midway between the Winter and Summer positions.

