Our Symbol: Center of American Indian and Minority Health

Miinens & Manidoominens & Pathways

Symbolism of this icon and how it represents our center

Miinens is the Ojibwe word for this plant (hawthorn) and comes from the word for seed. Manidoominens is the Ojibwe word for beadwork and for bead. The two are linked because seeds were the original beads (manidoominens literally means “little spirit seed”), because of the leaves, flowers and fruit appearing in traditional beadwork patterns, and because the thorn was used as an awl to pierce buckskin for beadwork.

Miinens is also medicine—heart, gut, kidneys, anxiety/depression and insomnia. With diabetes as a top Indian health concern, support for heart and kidney health is particularly relevant. Likewise, as suicide is a leading cause of death, especially among our youth, depression is also a key issue.

This imagery draws on the fullness of potential that lies within each seed; the spiral path of beadwork that begins with just one bead. In this way, it represents our students rising to their full potential through a committed life-long journey of learning and service.

In this symbol we see cycles—the life cycle / stages, the seasons of the year (since it is overlaid on a medicine wheel), that can also be seen as the academic year (which our students do about 20 times before reaching their goal) and the cycle of goals: from excitement/inspiration, to learning/growth, through challenges/perseverance, and finally breakthrough/achievement (which leads to renewed excitement, and the cycle continues).

By showing the stages of the plant in each season, it also represents those we are serving—young children (with CBSAs / K-8 programs), youth (our high school and college students, maybe beginning medical school), maturity (graduating medical students, young professionals) and elders (community, as in our Advisory Board and the students themselves as they grow into that role). The cycle / spiral pathway imagery represents our hope that these students will ultimately return to their communities to serve and inspire, beginning the cycle again in the younger generations.

The Center of American Indian and Minority Health is part of the University of Minnesota Medical School. Learn more about the center at our website: caimh.umn.edu

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