Main Topic: Spirituality
Sub Topic: Symbols

Many symbols associated with Aboriginal ceremonies are similar to those used in the religious rituals of the Catholic Church.

### FIRE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aboriginal</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campfires are important hubs of the community where people gather and information and food is shared.</td>
<td>On Pentecost Sunday, the Apostles, gathered as a community of people, were filled with knowledge by the Holy Spirit who appeared through the symbol of fire.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fire is used for creating a sense of togetherness, a sense of belonging, strengthening identity</td>
<td>Through that gift of knowledge, they became elders and were to pass on knowledge throughout the world.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural knowledge is often maintained when people gather around campfires (e.g. stories, ceremonies).</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fire is used for cleansing and purification.</td>
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### SMOKING

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<tr>
<td>A smoking ceremony cleanses and heals the body and spirit.</td>
<td>In Benediction, the priest burns incense to make smoke to purify and sanctify the church before the exposition of the blessed sacrament.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A smoking ceremony is used in the practice of warding off unwanted spirits, eg cleansing a person, home or area.</td>
<td>Incense smoke is used in the sanctification of the body during a Requiem Mass.</td>
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### OILS

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<td>Animal oils are used for healing purposes.</td>
<td>Special oils are used in anointing and for healing purposes, in the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, Healing of the Sick &amp; Holy Orders.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Application of certain oils can assist in helping one connect with his/her spiritual side.</td>
<td>Anointing of the body prior to death prepares for meeting with God.</td>
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### BREAD

**ABORIGINAL**  
Damper is the result of a collective of activities. Aboriginal women:  
- collect seed  
- crush into flour  
- make dough  
- cook dough  

When the dough is cooked in the ground it is known as damper.  
This is then shared by community members.  
Anything that is cooked in the ground has a spiritual influence.

**CATHOLIC**  
Unleavened bread is the result of a communal effort:  
- farmers harvest the crop  
- the grain is crushed to make flour  
- bakers make the dough  
- the dough is cooked  

When the dough is cooked it is known as unleavened bread.  
In the Mass we bring ourselves and our lives to the community in the Offertory.  
The priest blesses and through the power of the Holy Spirit, changes the bread & wine into the body & blood of Christ and it is shared amongst the congregation.

### MATURITY RITES

**ABORIGINAL**  
Aboriginal youth are introduced to the sacred meaning of life through certain ceremonies.  
They acquire knowledge of ceremonies and rituals which is an inherent part of reaching adulthood.  
As they receive more knowledge, their participation in ceremony increases.

**CATHOLIC**  
Youth are fully initiated into the Catholic faith through the sacraments.  
The youth upon receiving the gifts of each sacrament, participate more fully in the life of the Church.  
Eucharist is about full initiation.

### ART

**ABORIGINAL**  
Paintings or engravings on the walls of caves or in other sacred places, depict the spirituality of Aboriginal life.  
Spirit ancestors, eg Wandjina, Mimi, Waakarl, feature in ancient rock art.  
Reminders of connection to the land and spirituality abound in nature all around.

**CATHOLIC**  
Churches use a crucifix and Stations of the Cross which depict important events in the life of Jesus.  
Churches usually have pictures and statues of saints.  
Other art works may decorate a church and are symbolic of God in nature and all around. eg banners, floral arrangements, focus area.  
These forms of art are a reminder of beliefs and encourage participation in prayer.
### DECORATION

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| Decorations are used to convey the things that are important to the living and spiritual world of Aboriginal people. | The priest’s vestments immediately identify him as the leader of the faith community.  
- White Alb - Baptism  
- Stole – sign of office  
- Chasuble – historical link to Jewish high priest  
- Colours reflect the liturgical season  
Vestments indicate that the priest is acting out Christ’s role in leading the community in worship. |
| Natural body paint and other materials are used for decoration. |  |
| People can be immediately recognised by the decorations used |  |

### CELEBRATION

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<td>Ceremonies are performed to reinforce the connection between the living world of the Aboriginal people and the spirit world.</td>
<td>Church celebrations follow the liturgical seasons and help create a deeper relationship between people and God.</td>
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### STORIES

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| **Dreaming Stories:**  
- Help maintain order (convey rules)  
- Convey Stories of Creation  
- Convey a moral code  
- Convey sanctions (if rules are broken)  
- Convey the relationship with nature  
- Convey the spiritual connection to all things | **Bible Stories:**  
- inform past, present & future  
- story of creation  
- 10 commandments  
- 2 commandments  
- parables  
- prophets  
- Jesus  
- stewardship of the earth  
- ideal integration of physical and spiritual life |