



TRIBAL TRADE

SACRED MEDICINES

and SMUDGING GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

When it comes to understanding the worldview of North America's indigenous cultures, *connecting with all creation* is foundational.



Native Spirituality stems from the belief that all living things on earth have individual spirits, and that humans should respect and be grateful for each one.

Understanding our **connection** with our mother (planet earth) and grandmother (the moon) keeps our spirits robust. Fostering our connections with all creation invigorates the spirit, and can be embraced by all peoples around the globe.

Natural plants play a crucial role in indigenous spirituality. As the sacred medicines our mother has given us, they contain **powerful gifts** that can connect our bodies, minds, and spirits.

The four sacred medicines—tobacco, sweetgrass, sage, and cedar—are unique, extremely versatile gifts that can be used to help overcome a number of difficult situations we occasionally find ourselves in.

Among the most common uses of the four sacred medicines is **smudging**. A form of purification that cleanses your mind, body, and spirit, smudging creates a clear connection between the thoughts and feelings that flow throughout your entire being, and throughout the spirit world as well.

As with most indigenous cultural knowledge, there are teachings surrounding the significance of the smudging ceremony and when to perform it. Many indigenous nations and tribes have various teachings about smudging that have been passed down through storytelling since the dawn of time.

Even though indigenous cultural beliefs can vary in ways large and small, it's important to respect the beliefs of different nations and religions because all people walk the earth together and will share the same future.



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Introduction to **SACRED MEDICINES**



The primary sacred medicines of Anishinabek people are tobacco, sweetgrass, sage, and cedar.

Tobacco is most often used by Native American people as a prayer offering. Cedar, sage, and sweetgrass are commonly used for smudging and purification purposes.

People of many cultural backgrounds have embraced smudging into their own lives. The cleansing ceremony known as smudging involves smoke rising and carrying prayers to the Creator and lifting away negative energies and emotions.

The smoke created from burning cedar, sage and sweetgrass is often used to purify areas, individuals, healers, and ceremonial objects. The smudging of traditional herbs is believed to balance energies as they heal the mind, body, and spirit.





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TOBACCO

Prior to contact with Europeans, tobacco was used by Indigenous Peoples in North and South American ceremonies.

Back then, the sacred use of tobacco was presented at every stage of life: birthing rituals, courtship, marriage, death and personal prayer. Sacred tobacco can include a blend of a variety of plants, among them kinnikinick and red osier dogwood bark.

The smoke from tobacco is believed to be the most direct pathway to the spirit world. It carries all thoughts, feelings and prayers from the holder to the Creator.

HOW TO USE TOBACCO:

Tobacco can be tossed directly into a fire to deliver messages, but it is more commonly burned in a hand-made cigar or pipe. The smoke from the pipe isn't inhaled; it's allowed to rise up to the Creator.

Tobacco is also offered by hunters using their left hands (the hand closest to the heart) to offer thanks to the Creator before and after taking an animal's spirit.



Spreading tobacco on the ground as an offering to the Earth, or on the water as acknowledgment for its crucial role in life or to ask for safe passage, tobacco is also frequently given as a gift before a request for guidance, knowledge sharing, etc.

The Anishnaabe People follow very sacred traditions. They believe that when anyone takes something from the Earth (for example, when sweetgrass is picked) an explanation to the spirit about why it is being chosen and how it will be used is required. The explanation is always accompanied by an offering of tobacco in return for the generosity shown by the earth and the plant, both of which have shared in the creation of the sacred medicine.

SWEETGRASS

Sweetgrass is most commonly used for smudging and purification purposes. Among indigenous people, it is believed sweetgrass was the first plant to grow on mother earth.

HARVESTING SWEETGRASS

The best time to harvest sweetgrass is from late June to early July. The best way to harvest sweetgrass is to cut the strands low to the ground to avoid pulling the stems and to preserve the root system. Taking more than needed is never acceptable, nor is damaging the patch during harvest.

The next step is to dry the sweetgrass by placing it in direct sunlight for at least 6 hours. When the drying process is complete, sweetgrass can be used for braiding, basket making and ceremonial uses.

To the Anishnaabe Nation, sweetgrass is believed to be the sacred hair of Mother Earth. The Anishnaabe Nation also believes that sweetgrass braiding bolsters and represents the strength and prowess of those who hunted. The fiber is frequently braided into three sections to represent body, mind and spirit.

Sweetgrass is used in smudges, healing and talking circles because of its professed ability to heal. The smoke from sweetgrass is believed to purify thoughts, one's surroundings, and to eliminate unhelpful thoughts.

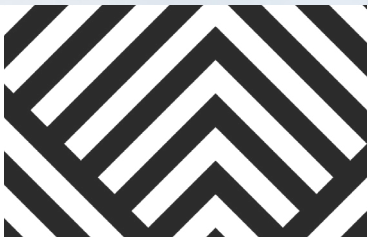


“Taking more than needed is never acceptable, nor is damaging the patch during harvest.”



SAGE

All of the sacred medicines are extremely versatile; they have been used in different ways by tribes and nations. Sage, the woman's medicine, offers a calming effect. It can be used in medicine pouches. It can be spread across the bottom of sweat lodges. It is also used for healing, to exile bad spirits/energies, to purify, and to calm the spirit.



White Sage and Desert Sage: Different & Distinct Uses

Employ the smoke from white sage (*Artemisia californica*) to purify mind, body and spirit and to prepare sacred articles before using them in prayers and ceremonies.

Burn white sage during meditation, when smudging, and/or when cleansing a spirit or a dwelling place. Some tribes and nations believe white sage keeps negative spirits from entering rooms while sacred ceremonies are underway.

Eons before microbiology science made its entrance, First Peoples revered desert sage (*Salvia apiana*) for its medicinal attributes. And their ancient belief in it has been validated by scientific analysis of its properties. It contains natural ingredients that protect cells from toxins and organisms that cause infections. A powerhouse of protection, desert sage it is antifungal, antiseptic and an astringent.



CEDAR/CYPRESS

What's in a name?

What most of us call a cedar isn't a true cedar. Western Red Cedar (and Yellow Cedar) actually belong to the Cypress family. Both of these species are part and parcel of sacred indigenous ceremonies in the Pacific Northwest, although yellow cedar is less commonly used than red. In the eastern provinces, members of the Juniper family, with similar characteristics, are used in native ceremonies.

Like sweetgrass, cedar smoke is burned during prayers to carry them aloft to the Creator. Some First Nations tribes burn cedar to expel negative energies and to welcome positive energies. And cedar boughs are commonly waved to decontaminate dwellings.

Scientifically, yellow cedar bark contains an anti-inflammatory agent. It has been used for eons to dress wounds. Cedar has also been employed by indigenous peoples in cleansing river, lake and ocean baths. The process involves plunging into cold water and using bundles of cedar and other medicinal plants to scrub the body.



The red cedar has been referred to as the “Tree of Life” because it helped sustain and refresh the mind, body and spirit. Every part of the red cedar was employed in sustaining native lives and cultures. It was used to build baskets, canoes, capes, clothes, ceremonial masks, cooking utensils, hats, longhouses, totem poles and ropes and in medicines and spiritual ceremonies.

Some coastal First Nations firmly believe that whenever a cedar tree is harvested improperly—without due respect and homage—the person who fells it is cursed by other cedars.



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Culturally Modified Trees Prove Native Reverence for All Creation

During post-European contact, thousands of Culturally Modified Trees (CMT) in the Pacific Northwest, tragically, were callously logged and their historical tales lost forever. But more recently, still-existing CMTs trees are identified, tagged, preserved (even if they’re dead but still standing) and protected during logging operations to preserve them as cultural icons.

Cedar is a sacred healing medicine often incorporated into teas or committed to sacred fires.



the SMUDGING PROCESS

1.

Have all required ingredients before you begin.

- Abalone shell (or substitute with clay bowl)
- Matches
- Tobacco and your choice of medicine (sage, cedar, sweetgrass)
- Eagle Feather (in lieu of an eagle feather, you can use your hand)



2.

Start by lighting the medicine with a match and placing it in the shell or bowl.

Don't blow the resulting smoke. Use an eagle feather (or your hand) to fan and spread it.



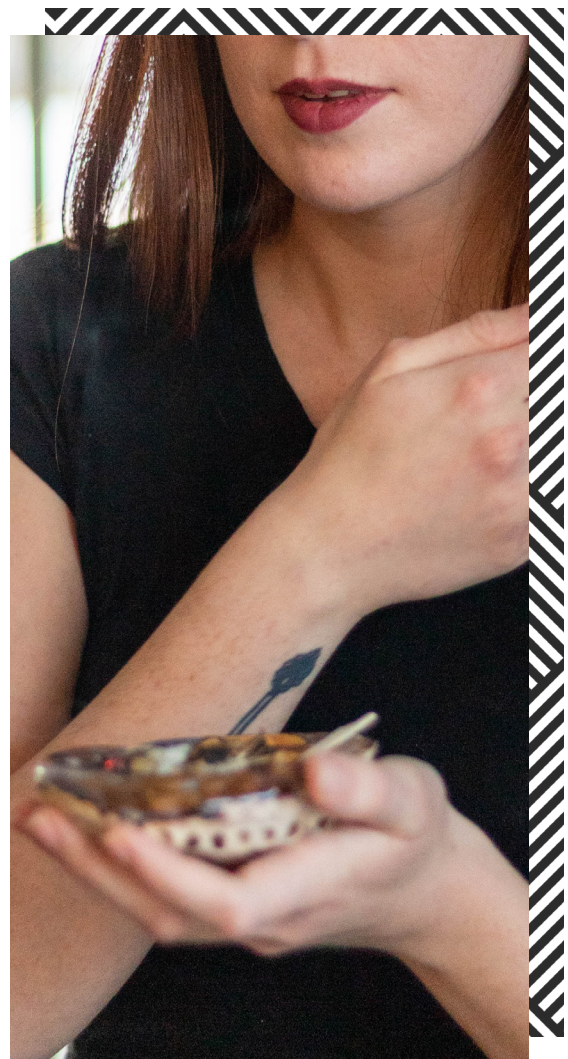
3.

When the lit medicine has created enough smoke to spread using the feather or your hand, fan the smoke toward you to allow its medicine to cleanse and purify everything it touches:

1. Head - Good Thoughts (Address your head first)
2. Eyes - Sight (address your eyes next to help create clear, keen vision)
3. Mouth - Say Good Things (Address your mouth next to create positive speech)
4. Heart – Emotions (Address your heart next to create positive emotions, sacred insights and lovingkindness)
5. Body- Health & Wisdom (Address your body next to create soundness of wisdom)

4.

After you've smudged yourself, spread the medicine to the room or other people—starting with your assistants if you have any—who are participating in the smudging ceremony by repeating smudging steps in #3.



5.

Let the sacred medicine burn out on its own without interference.



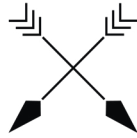
6.

Give thanks to the Creator for allowing you to use the gifts of medicine to help heal your (our) mind, body, and spirit.



For more information, visit:

- thesacredscience.com/the-art-of-smudging
- senseofpurpose.org/resources/topic/well-being/smudging/
- wikihow.com/Smudge-a-House



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