



THE FOUR SACRED PLANTS OF THE ANISHINAABEK PEOPLE

Samah (Tobacco)

Samah, or tobacco, is one of the four sacred plants, representing the eastern direction. The Ojibwe used a form of tobacco known as Kinikinik, or red willow, but many use store bought tobacco. Samah is used in the offering of prayer to the Creator, acting as medium for communications. It is either offered to the fire, so the smoke can lift the prayers to the Creator or it is set on the ground in a nice clean place at the base of a tree, or on the water. This is done on a daily basis as each new day is greeted with prayers of thankfulness. Elders say to hold it in your left hand, as that is the hand closest to your heart. It is always good to offer Samah when seeking knowledge or advice from an elder to when a pipe is present.

Keezhik (Cedar)

Keezhik, or cedar, represents the southern direction. The leaves are cleansed from the stems and separated into small pieces, which are used in many ways. When burned, Keezhik acts as a purifier, cleansing to the area in which it is burned and emitting a pleasant scent. Elders say put some in your shoes and goodness will come your way.

Shkodawabuk (Sage)

Shkodawabuk, also known as sage, is used in much the same way as Keezhik (Cedar). It is burned as a purifier, but when compared to the spicy scent of cedar, sage has spicy air. Shkodawabuk represents the western direction.

Weengush (Sweet grass)

Weengush, the sweet grass, is known for its beautifully sweet aromatic scent, which is enhanced when it rains or when it is burned. This, too, is a purifier. It is often braided and thus signifies the hair of O'gushnan (our Mother the Earth). Each of the three sections that go into the braid has a specific meaning, being: Mind, body and spirit.

Because native people live life in a very sacred manner, when taking from the Earth, one should always explain to the spirit of the plant why it is being done, and offer some tobacco in return for the generosity and help of the plant which shared itself so freely. The native culture can be a lifeline for those who are searching for direction and meaning in their life. When we learn our spiritual culture, we discover ourselves.

Bawating Gallery

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