

Ceremony Guide



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Ceremonies

Smudging:

Smudging is a cleansing ceremony used to bring hearts and minds together by cleaning one's heart, mind, spirit and body with the smoke of the medicines. Medicines used for smudging are Sage, Sweetgrass, and/or Cedar. Women on their moon time (menstrual cycle) will be provided direction on smudging protocols.

Feasting:

Traditional feasting highlights the importance of respect, gratitude, and communal sharing, ensuring that all participants engage in culturally appropriate and meaningful ways. Traditional foods and medicines, such as wild meats, fish, wild grains, berries, as well as Cedar, Sweetgrass, Tobacco, and Sage, are typically offered. Participants may also be invited to contribute by bringing a dish to share.

Sunrise ceremony:

This is a time when we give gratitude for the start of a new day. Gratitude is given to the rising of the sun for continuing to rise each day and provide light, heat, and energy to Mother Earth and all of parts of creation so life can continue on Mother Earth.

Pipe ceremony:

In many Indigenous nations, the pipe is a very sacred bundle item that is often gifted to someone to conduct ceremony. Pipe is used as a way to start ceremonies or gatherings. Tobacco is prayed with and placed into the pipe by the pipe ceremony conductor. When the pipe is smoked, there is acknowledgement that our ancestors are seated with us until the ceremony is completed. We are to carry ourselves and treat others in a respectful, honest, and caring manner while pipe is being taken around the circle. The pipe carrier will direct those attending the ceremony what the protocol is for the pipe being used in the ceremony.

Kullik:

A kullik is a soapstone lamp containing seal, whale, bear or caribou oil that burns very slowly, has very little smoke and a moderate smell. The kullik-burning is a ceremonial practice of the culture of the Inuit. Traditionally, the kullik provided heat, dried clothes, melted ice etc.



Ceremonial Protocols

Recognizing the diversity of traditional teachings, language, and ceremonial protocols, the following are collective understandings of ceremonial protocols shared by the IPHCC's Traditional Healing Advisory Council. These protocols are intended to build awareness to those who may not have had opportunity to attend Indigenous events that include ceremony.

When attending traditional ceremonies please keep in mind these protocols.

These are not intended to be exclusionary.

Abstinence of Substance use

All participants of the ceremony are encouraged to refrain from use of substances such as alcohol, mind altering or illicit substances on the day of and/or up to 2 days prior to attending a ceremony. In various Indigenous teachings, alcohol and substances that impact clear thinking are considered to carry their own energy that can affect ceremony.

Some conductors will have a harm reduction approach to substance use, IPHCC recognizes the differences in protocols with regards to substances.

Those who are not substance free prior to attending the ceremony should check with their conductor on how to participate. It is encouraged to be honest with the conductor, or ceremony helper.

Moon Time - Menstrual Cycle

Often this is referred to as moon time and comes with many teachings. Women on their moon time are held in the highest regard and are honored as life-givers. When on your moon time (menstruating), energetically and spiritually, this is a powerful time for Women, and much respect and care is needed. Women on their moon time are encouraged not to handle sacred items, tobacco or feast food. Women are encouraged to let the ceremony conductor, or ceremony helpers know if you are on your moon time, and direction will be provided.

When on your moon-time, you are to only be cared for, especially at ceremonies. This means, you do not help with making feast food, cleaning, or preparing for a ceremony. Others will serve you food and help care for you.

Ceremonial Dress

When attending a ceremony, you may notice a variety of regalia worn by participants. These are not costumes, but are important traditional outfits that can vary between nations, communities, families and individuals. As a non-Indigenous person, there are a few things to keep in mind when attending a ceremony.

Skirts

Women are strongly encouraged by the Grandmothers to wear long skirts during ceremonies or entering traditional and sacred spaces, to acknowledge that sacred connection between women, their gift to create life, and our Mother Earth (Shkawkaamig-Kwe). If you have been gifted with a ribbon skirt, you may wear your skirt.

IPHCC is committed to inclusion and fostering safe spaces for our 2 Spirited community members. We welcome you to "come as you are" and respect your ceremonial dress may not be gender specific.

Modesty

The Grandmothers encourage modesty in sacred, ceremonial spaces and in ceremonies to show respect to all of Creation and to the other participants. Wearing shorts, short skirts, and cut-off tops is not appropriate. If possible, participants should wear modest clothing during ceremony.

Hats

Those wearing hats are encouraged to remove them when in sacred spaces and during ceremony, unless it is part of traditional regalia or affixed with an eagle feather.

When attending ceremony be mindful of respecting and honouring sacred items and bundles

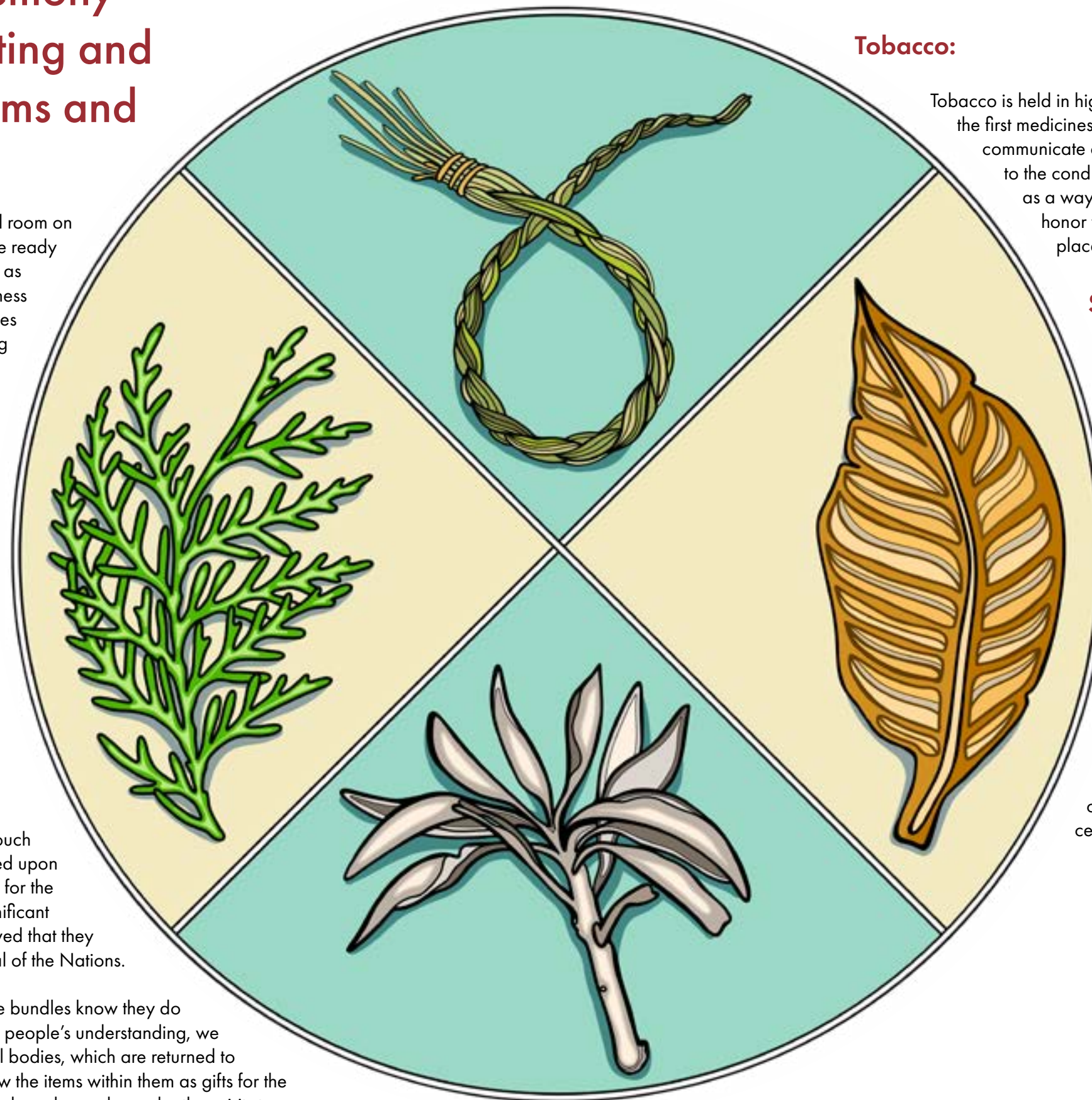
Some people display their sacred items in a special room on an altar. Others keep them in a bundle until they are ready to use in a ceremony. Some leave their feathers out as these may have been given to them to create calmness in the home. People feast their sacred items four times a year with the seasons or twice a year in the spring and fall. Some people feast them every time they conduct ceremony. The protocols for moon time and substances is also in effect

Traditional Bundle:

When handling sacred items, it is important to recognize that all elements of Creation have a spirit, including animals, plants, rocks, water, the moon, and the stars. The utilization of eagle feathers within our sacred bundle, both for personal prayers and ceremonial purposes, signifies our invocation of the bird's spirit for assistance and guidance. Many Indigenous peoples adhere to Traditional Teachings and possess sacred items that serve as sources of support and direction.

A sacred bundle can encompass single or multiple sacred items. It may manifest as a small tobacco pouch worn around one's neck or comprise items bestowed upon a person by spirits, entrusted with their safekeeping for the benefit of the community. These bundles play a significant role in healing and ceremonial practices. It is believed that they contain essential elements necessary for the survival of the Nations.

The Healers responsible for carrying these medicine bundles know they do not possess ownership over them. According to our people's understanding, we do not truly possess anything, not even our physical bodies, which are returned to the earth upon death. Instead, these individuals view the items within them as gifts for the people. The Healers who take care of these bundles have been chosen by the spirits to carry on the teachings, the work and the responsibilities that come with these bundles.



Tobacco:

Tobacco is held in high regard in many Indigenous teachings as one of the first medicines, and/or seen as a gift from Creator as a way to communicate one's prayers with Spirit. Offerings of tobacco are given to the conductors, the traditional healers, and knowledge keepers as a way to honor the spiritual connections taking place, and to honor what they are providing to conduct the ceremony taking place.

Sacred Fire:

To start the ceremony, a sacred fire will be lit by designated firekeepers. A sacred fire is to be respected and only tobacco and feast food should be put into the fire. In many Indigenous teachings, a sacred fire has its own spirit, and fire offers us a way to connect with spirit. Firekeepers are designated to care for the fire. You are encouraged to ask any questions or speak to the firekeeper before putting anything into the sacred fire.

Medicines:

Sage, Sweetgrass, Cedar, and Tobacco are four essential Traditional Medicines employed in ceremonies. Depending on the conductor and the specific ceremony, additional medicines may also be utilized. It is important to note that the handling of medicines is the responsibility of the conductor or ceremony helpers.