

The Four Sacred Medicines

Tobacco-Cistemaw



East

Tobacco-Cistemaw means tobacco in the Ininiwak (Cree) Language. Cistemaw is our prayer medicine which has the responsibility of taking prayers to Creator. Tobacco is offered as a gift to those from whom we need support. When we pass or accept tobacco, it should always be with good intention and humility. It is also used in pipe ceremonies or offered to a sacred fire. The spirit of Cistemaw carries our prayers and will take our heart, mind

(dreams and visions) and intention (commitment) to Kise Manito (God) in a good way. When we hold Cistemaw, we are holding our relatives, our families, Mother Earth, the water, the animal – all life. Spirits like Cistemaw too, and some nations believe it came from Creator’s heart. Traditionally, tobacco was a mixture of several medicines – Red Willow Bark, Wild Mint, Kinikinik, Beaver Gall, Weekas, and Spirit Powder (Mantoasinni – quartz rock powder).

Cedar-Mâsikes



South

Like Sage (Paskwawihwaskwa) and Sweetgrass (Wihkask), Cedar is used to purify the home. It also has many restorative medicinal uses. Cedar baths are healing. When Cedar is put in the fire with Tobacco, it crackles. When it does this, it is calling the attention of the spirits to the offering that is being made. When feeling weak and hungry, put Cedar in your mouth to rejuvenate oneself. Cedar is used in fasting and sweat lodge ceremonies as a form of protection. Cedar branches cover the floor of the sweat lodge and a circle of

Cedar surrounds the faster's lodge.

Sage-Paskwawihwaskwa



West

Paskwawihwaskwa is used the same as Sweetgrass (Wihkask), but is considered a female medicine. The smudge of this medicine is very strong and nurturing like the woman. With the smudge, wash your hair, your mind (to think positively), your eyes (to see positive things), your ears (to hear positive things), mouth (to speak positively) and heart (to make everyone feel welcome). Wash your whole body and ask the spirit of this medicine to take care of

you. Paskwawihwaskwa is used to prepare people for ceremonies and teachings. Because it is more medicinal and stronger than Sweetgrass, it tends to be used more often in ceremonies.

Paskwawihwaskwa is used for releasing what is troubling the mind and for removing negative energy. It is also used for cleansing homes and sacred items. It also has other medicinal uses. There is male Sage and female Sage. The female Sage is used by women.

Sweetgrass-Wihkask



North

Wihkask comes from the word Wikaskotihen which means to walk through the hard times. Therefore, smudging with Wihkask will help you be strong when times are tough.

Sweetgrass is the sacred hair of Mother Earth. The three braids of the sweetgrass can represent past, present, and future; love, peace and harmony; or mind, body and spirit. Its sweet aroma reminds people of the gentleness, love and kindness she has for the people. When Sweetgrass is used in a healing circle it has a calming

effect. Like Sage and Cedar, Sweetgrass is used for smudging and purification. We use Wihkask to cleanse negativity from our being and our space.