

Sacred Medicines

Tobacco

Tobacco was the first medicine given to the Anishinaabae people. The Creator gave the gift of tobacco to open the doorway to the West - the spirit world. This allows us to speak directly to the great spirit, and if needed, to allow the spirits to come and help.

Cedar

Cedar is the medicine that helps protect us from the unknown or unseen, and the emotions and feelings of others. It is used as a shield or a cleansing medicine against lingering spirits that can disrupt daily life.

Sage

Sage protects us from ourselves by offering relief from internal struggles. Smudging or lighting sage brings calm, which allows us to make good decisions. Sage is burned to start a meeting or discussion, or to begin your day in a good way. This is the medicine for the women.

Sweetgrass

Sweetgrass represents sharing, caring, and love; Mother, father, child. The sweet aroma calms us with thoughts of family and loved ones. Our hair symbolizes sweetgrass. Unbraided hair is like sweetgrass moving in the breeze. When braiding our hair, we are to think only good, kind thoughts to have a day filled with respect for ourselves and others.

Acknowledgments

The City of Winnipeg is located in Treaty No. 1 territory and the traditional homeland of the Métis Nation. Our drinking water comes from Shoal Lake 40 First Nation in Treaty No. 3 territory.

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Teachings and guidance were provided by Knowledge Keeper Carolyn Moar. Teachings vary from Nation to Nation.

“When I teach, it is not to recruit, but to educate others, especially our youth, to know we are strong, loving, and beautiful people. Please walk beside me or behind me, not ahead of me, to help to make change for all of us.”

- Carolyn Moar

Medicine Gardens and the Four Directional Teachings



The Medicine Wheel and Medicine Gardens

The Medicine Wheel is used as a holistic teaching tool. It consists of four quadrants that relate to the cardinal directions: East, South, West, and North. Each direction is represented by specific teachings and emblems, such as four colours, four seasons, and the four stages of life. The circle symbolizes and resembles many cycles in the natural world and is a symbol of equity - All my relations.

Medicine Gardens are planted to honour the Medicine Wheel, and to grow Sacred Medicines associated with directional teachings.

There are four Sacred Medicines: Tobacco, cedar, sage, and sweetgrass. These are traditional medicines that have physical qualities for medicinal purposes, and a spiritual aspect used in traditional healing and ceremonies.

Care and attention should be given when harvesting Sacred Medicines. Leave roots and seeds and only harvest what is needed. A tobacco gift should be placed in the garden, as nothing is taken without something given in return.

Teachings vary from Nation to Nation. For example, the ground Medicine Wheel in some territories consist of 36 Grandfather rocks, each with a teaching for children and youth. It is good practice to consult with an Elder or Knowledge Keeper to learn more on the harvest and use of Sacred Medicines, the Medicine Wheel, and directional teachings.

East



Animal teachings of sacrifice, sharing, and nurturing.



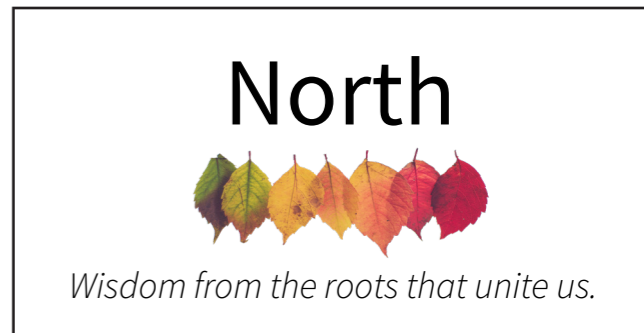
South

Grasses grow and willows bend. Nature teaches kindness.



West

Even the strongest stone will change over time.



North

Wisdom from the roots that unite us.

Teachings of the East

The East represents love and new beginnings. As winter ends, spring brings birth and rebirth. It is a connection to babies and children.

The East melds the sense of spirit with the physical world. Connectedness and belief in the unseen and illumination are centered in the East, yet are grounded in responsibility for the Earth. Gifts of the East include guidance, leadership, and service, as well as joy, truthfulness, trust, and acceptance of others.

Animals teach of a parent's protection, their nurturing behaviours, and providing for others. Mothers may pretend to be wounded to lure away a predator, putting themselves at risk for their children. Predators, after eating their fill, still leave some of the kill behind. This allows them to share their bounty with others.

Teachings of the South

The South represents learning, discipline, and expression of emotions. This sense of growth and development is linked to youthful energies.

The South represents how you seek to shape yourself and the world you live in. Expressions of unconditional love, loyalty, balance, and control are a focus of this direction. There is also an emphasis on justice, a rejection of violence, and one's ability to put others before themselves.

Teachings of kindness are found in the resilience of plants. Grasses spring back when cut down or stepped on; willows survive harsh weather and wind but continue to bend and grow. Kindness, like the resilience of those plants, should be the response to great challenges and at the heart of personal growth.

Teachings of the West

The West represents depth of self, strength, and respect. Other aspects of this direction such as perseverance, patience, and will, are found within the adult phase of life.

Spirituality is strongly linked to the West. Sacred fires, ceremonies, medicine pouches, old spirits, and the unknown are aligned with this direction. Reflection, mediation, and prayer are all a focus of the West.

Mountains and rocks are called Grandmothers and Grandfathers. They are made of the oldest and strongest material, and have endured many changes since the beginning. Water can erode a Grandfather, but it needs to repeatedly hit the same area for thousands of years to change its shape. The Grandmothers and Grandfathers teach us strength and patience in this way.

Teachings of the North

Teachings of the North are associated with a life long-lived, representing the Elder phase. Knowledge, wisdom, critical thought, and the use of experience in predicting the future are gifts of the North.

The North expresses the Elder's ability to assess what matters most. There is an emphasis on freedom from fear and hate, and a freedom to love and learn. They emanate the strengths of their Nation, including history, politics, and justice.

Teachings of unity between Earth and life are found in the North. The tree that grows to the North of the sacred circle has deep roots that are intertwined with culture, personal connections and growth, and Mother Earth. Trees with shallow roots can be overturned.

Emblems of the East

Medicine: Tobacco
Animal: Eagle
Life Stage: Infant
Season: Spring
Element: Earth

Emblems of the South

Medicine: Cedar
Animal: Mouse or Wolf
Life Stage: Youth
Season: Summer
Element: Fire

Emblems of the West

Medicine: Sage
Animal: Bear
Life Stage: Adult
Season: Fall
Element: Water

Emblems of the North

Medicine: Sweetgrass
Animal: Bison
Life Stage: Elder
Season: Winter
Element: Air