



Offering Asemaa (Tobacco)

Significance of Tobacco:

Asemaa (tobacco) is considered a sacred medicine by many Indigenous Nations and has ceremonial and medicinal purposes. It is honoured as the first medicine that was received from Creator and is used to set good intentions and honour promises. A gift of tobacco is a sign of respect and may be offered when asking for help, guidance, or protection.

Tobacco is offered to:

- Elders, Knowledge Keepers or Community Members in exchange for knowledge or help
- Plants or animals when harvesting/hunting to show respect and gratitude

Offering Asemaa (Tobacco) to an Elder, Knowledge Keeper, or other Individual:

It is customary to offer a tobacco tie to those you are asking for help from in order to properly honour and respect their traditions. This can be an Indigenous Elder, Knowledge Keeper or community member. Note, however, that Indigenous groups have different protocols regarding the gifting of tobacco, so it is important to inquire into the protocols local to the territory you are situated on. For individual teachings, a tobacco tie is used; for multiple teachings or special events/projects, a tobacco bundle is offered.

How to Make a Tobacco Tie:

Materials needed:

- Asemaa (tobacco) or Kinnicknick (herbal blend)
- Red cloth (Anishinaabe); white cloth (Haudenosaunee)
- Leather lacing, sinew, cordage, or strip of cloth for a tie
- Scissors
- Intent of offering

1. Cut a 5cm x 5cm square of cloth
2. Break up or cut the tobacco leaf
3. Hold tobacco in your left hand (heart hand) and think about the intent of your request. Then place the tobacco in the center of the square cloth
4. Gather the corners together, drawing them up to hold tobacco in the center of the cloth square
5. Wrap cordage around the cloth above the tobacco making sure it is tight enough not to let the tobacco fall out. If you tie it in a knot, make sure it is easy to untie.





When to Offer your Tobacco Tie:

Tobacco should be offered first, always. Offer your bundle *prior* to receiving teachings. Consider it a teaching moment. It should be done at the very first opportunity, i.e., during the introduction to your students. Explain why you are offering your tobacco tie. The offering of tobacco is considered a contract.

How to Make the Tobacco Tie Offering:

Tobacco ties are always created and given by the left hand. The left hand is known as the “Heart Hand” as it is closest to the heart. Words you can use: “I am offering this tobacco tie to you for sharing your teaching and knowledge on (state your specific request).”

Offering Asemaa (Tobacco) to Plants/Animals:

Tobacco is offered to Mother Earth before gathering medicines, roots, plants, or when animals are being hunted. It can also be offered to the water as an acknowledgment to its critical role in life and to ask for safe passage. Offering tobacco is a way that Indigenous people show their respect for the earth and the gifts received from it.

When offering tobacco before harvesting a plant, it is important that you do it before and that you use your left hand, since it is closest to your heart. Think and/or say what your intentions are and express your gratitude for the plant or animal.

Ceremonial vs. Commercial Use of Tobacco:

Ceremonial Use	Commercial Use
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has been used traditionally for thousands of years• Used for healing and giving thanks• Generally, not smoked except for on special ceremonial occasions, where it is burned in a pipe and the smoke is not inhaled• Tobacco plants are treated with respect – only a few branches or leaves are taken at a time to not kill the plant	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cigarette use became popular in the United States in the early 1800’s• Combined with chemicals and toxins that are addictive and make you sick over time• Often smoked in cigarettes, but also in chewing tobacco and cigars• Mass produced and produced and sold for profit