

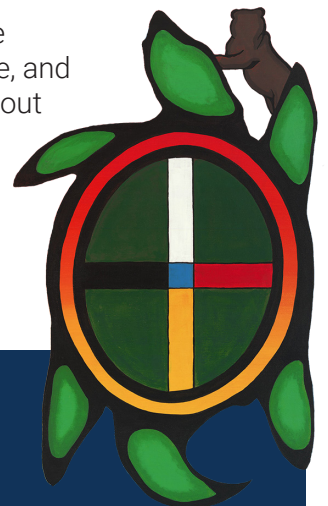
Sacred Medicines: Smudging

As part of our continued efforts to promote a culturally safe environment, we have recently introduced a new Smudging Policy and Procedure at Niagara Health, in alignment with Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

Traditional smudging is an important cultural and spiritual practice involving the burning of small amounts of sage and occasionally other sacred medicines, including cedar, sweetgrass and tobacco. Cleansing often initiates healing sessions, provides comfort and relief during times of stress and facilitates the decision-making process.

The following information is only a small portion of the many Indigenous teachings from nations that exist on Turtle Island. Teachings vary from nation-to-nation and community-to-community.

Always ask permission before gathering plants and medicine, and take only what is needed without damaging the plant. It is also important to give thanks for everything that has been provided to us.



If you have any questions about smudging at Niagara Health, please contact the Indigenous Health Services and Reconciliation team at indigenoushealthservices@niagarahealth.on.ca

SWEETGRASS

Sweetgrass sits in the northern direction of the medicine wheel, also known as Mother Earth's hair. When braiding sweetgrass it is parted in three sections it represents mind, body and spirit coming together. Each section reminds us of the past seven generations, everything they did to get us to our current seven generations and looking to the future as a reminder of the connection and responsibility to the future seven generations. Sweetgrass has a sweet taste that reminds us to allow gentleness, love and kindness into our lives. Sweetgrass can be used to make teas and for smudging and purification.



TOBACCO

Tobacco sits in the eastern direction of the medicine wheel. Tobacco is used to communicate thoughts and feelings with the spirit world and natural world. When offering tobacco to plants before harvesting, we explain our intentions to the tobacco and the tobacco communicates gratitude with the other plant life. Tobacco is also offered when asking something of an elder, healer or knowledge keeper.



SAGE

Sage sits in the western direction of the medicine wheel. Sage is used when preparing for ceremonies to protect and cleanse ourselves, homes and sacred items. Sage helps release negative energy and relieves a troubled mind. Sage also has antiseptic and anti-bacterial properties that can be used for protection.



CEDAR

Cedar sits in the southern direction of the medicine wheel. Like sage and sweetgrass, cedar is used to purify the home. Cedar can be used to make tea to heal the body of infection from the inside, and baths to heal the body on the outside. Cedar is also known as a protection medicine. When offering cedar to the fire, the cedar crackles to call on the spirits.



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