

The Four Main Mishkiki (Medicines) by Mike Bisson

Wiingashk (Sweatgrass) is known as grandmothers' hair and is commonly seen as a braid as it is a binding plant. Each strand represents mind, body and spirit. When smoldering, the smoke is gentle and reminds us to be humble, kind and gentle with our actions and words.

Sweetgrass braids are commonly put into vehicles for protection of safe travels. It is also made into beautiful artwork of basket making.

Mushkodaywushk (Sage) is the first medicine used as smudge to cleanse space. At gatherings and ceremonies, it is used to cleanse the space. It is brought around to the people to help the mind to have good thoughts and release negativity, and to prepare for ceremony what they are to do and what they are about to receive.

Traditionally in this geographical area, the prairie sage or buffalo sage does not grow naturally. Rosemary sage/Pearly Everlast was used by women.

Giizhik (Cedar) is very important to the Anishinaabe in this geographical area, it is a medicine for protection and is used for its strength. An example is a deer eats it in wintertime to help it through the hardship of winter. Traditionally cedar is used to give first baths when babies come into this world, and as a last bath as a person leaves. Today, it is more commonly used in ceremony to help with grief and trauma.

Cedar has properties to create a space that clears negative energy and is used for protection against it. It is used in majority of ceremonies, and for some it is the main component that is used to dress the ceremonial area. Traditionally, Cedar is the medicine that was used to smudge.

Asemaa (Tobacco) a medicine from the creation story, to be used as an asemaake (offering) in reciprocation when addressing Gitchee Manidoo (Creator and the Spirit World). This is the first medicine used above all. The act of giving and not just taking. This is why it is so important to present tobacco when requesting anything.

When presenting tobacco, it can be loose or in a tobacco tie.

