

# Smudging

## Indigenization Column: April 17, 2017

Aaniin Boozhoo Kina Wiya (Hello everyone!)

Smudging is an everyday practice at the Indigenous Studies Centre, and is sometimes done throughout the college campuses. You may have seen signs up indicating that a Smudging Ceremony is in process. This week, I'd like to share a small amount of the immense knowledge surrounding traditional medicines and the cultural significance of smudging and how it relates to the Medicine Wheel. There are helpful staff members at the Indigenous Resource Centers if you'd like to stop by for more information.

Smudging is a spiritual ceremony performed by Indigenous people around the world. For the Anishnaabeg (Ojibwe) people, smudging is the burning of the Four Sacred Medicines; tobacco, cedar, sage, and sweet grass. These Medicines are represented in the Medicine Wheel, which is a circle separated into four quadrants, with layers of significance and cultural meaning.

- ❖ Sema (seh-mah) Tobacco sits in the East quadrant, Waabanong, of the Medicine Wheel. This quadrant is yellow and represents the beginning of life and springtime. Tobacco is a medicine that is used to show gratitude, and is offered to Elders when asking for their guidance.
- ❖ Giizhik (gee-zhick) Cedar sits in the South, Zhaawanong, of the Medicine Wheel. This quadrant is red and represents youth and summertime. It is a place to find balance and foundation, cedar tea is used for cleansing and to rid ourselves of unbalancing energy in body and soul.
- ❖ Mshkodewaashk (mush-koh-day-washk) Sage sits in the West, Ebingishmog, of the Medicine Wheel. This quadrant is black and represents adulthood and the autumn season. It signifies the harvest of life and appreciation for things that we have learned. Sage is used for cleansing of energy and releasing what is troubling the mind.
- ❖ Wiingashk (ween-gah-shk) Sweet grass sits in the North, Giiwednong, of the Medicine Wheel. This quadrant is white and represents Elders and the winter season. This is a place of rest and rebirth, as well as remembrance and wisdom. Sweet grass is typically braided to represent the hair of Mother Earth and her gentleness, with each strand representing mind, body, and spirit.

The smoke of these sacred plants purifies the air, spirit, mind, body, and energies in the space the ceremony is performed. Many Anishnaabeg people smudge on a daily basis and it is generally used to open meetings or sessions to set a tone of gratitude and positivity. Smudging is common to all nationalities around the world, including the burning of censers in Christianity and incense in Eastern religions. It is a wonderful way to align yourself in spiritual and mental positivity and clear negativity from spaces and the mind.

For more information please visit <http://www.fourdirectionsteachings.com> and click on the Ojibwe Medicine Wheel. Also feel free to check out the other links found in the site for additional information about the Blackfoot, Cree, Mohawk, and M'ikmaq people.