

SACRED ITEMS

When we carry sacred items, we carry them with the recognition that everything in Creation has spirit, including the animals and plants, the rocks, the water, the moon and the stars. Even one feather of a bird has spirit. When we carry a feather in our bundle and use it for our personal prayers and in ceremony, we are calling on the spirit of that bird for help and guidance.

~ Pipe ~

A pipe can be a Grandmother or a Grandfather. Usually when women carry it, it is referred to as a Grandmother; when men carry it, it is called a Grandfather.

The pipe itself represents the woman and man, the bowl representing the woman, the stem, the man. The pipe was given to Native people as a way of communicating with the Creator; a direct link is formed. When the pipe is smoked or touched, people are putting their thoughts and prayers into it.

~ Drum ~

The drum is the heartbeat of our people; it's the heartbeat of life. We live the first nine months of our lives within our mothers and we listen to the heartbeat; it sets the pattern of existence.

~ Drumstick ~

There are various types of drumsticks. Some people refer to the drumstick as being part of the Thunderbirds. Other teachings say the drumstick is the arm of the Great Spirit who gives us a heart beat.

~ Rattle ~

It is said that before the Creator made everyone, the universe was in darkness and the only sound was the sound that a shaker makes, the shaking of seeds in a gourd.

The spirits are drawn in when many people use their shakers as they sing a song.

~ Eagle Feather ~

The eagle is one of the ones who is closest to the Creator because he can fly so high and he spoke for the people.

In the old ways, if you did something remarkable for your people you had the right to an eagle feather. If a warrior proved himself in battle, facing an enemy, he received a feather.

Today, the greatest enemy Native people face is alcohol and drugs. If you are in battle with one of these, you are in a battle for your life. When you overcome alcohol or drugs, you have won that battle and you become a warrior.

You earn an eagle feather and you have to live by it. It is a high honour to receive an eagle feather.

SACRED BUNDLES

Many First Nations people who follow their Traditional Teachings will have sacred items to help and guide them.

A sacred bundle can consist of one or

many sacred items. It can be the little tobacco pouch that someone wears around their neck or it can be the items that the spirits have given to a person to carry for the people.

~ Personal Bundles ~

You may have a personal bundle that you have built with items you have gathered and that you take care of. This bundle is sacred to you. It contains items that help you in your personal development; it contains items that have given you a teaching and that you use in ceremonies. Maybe your parents or your grandparents or an Elder gave you something to help you on your path. All the contents of your bundle relate to you.

Your personal bundle may include medicines, your drum, a bowl, a rock, your colours, a feather, a staff, a rattle and your pipe. You may also carry a clan marker, something that represents your clan, such as a bear claw if you are of the Bear clan. Tobacco is always first in your bundle. These items remind us of the beauty of Creation.

~ Bundles for the People ~

The bundles for the people are used for healing and ceremonies. It is said that these bundles contain things that the Nations need to survive. The Healers who carry the medicine bundles say they do not own these bundles. They say that our people's understanding is that we do not own anything, not even our physical body which is given back to the earth when

we die. They carry these items as gifts for the people. The Healers who take care of these bundles have been chosen by the spirits to carry on the teachings, the work and the responsibilities that come with these bundles.

RESPECTING AND HONOURING SACRED ITEMS AND BUNDLES

Some people display their sacred items in a special room on an altar. Others keep them in the bundle until they are ready to use in a ceremony. Some leave their feathers out as these may have been given to them to create calmness in the home.

People feast their sacred items four times a year with the seasons or twice a year in the spring and fall. Some people feast them every time they do a ceremony.

As our awareness and knowledge of our traditions and culture increases, so does our honour and respect for these ways. This has not always been the case in our communities. There are always those who present themselves as Healers, Elders or Medicine People who have not earned that title and may use the teachings and medicines in the wrong way. It is important for everyone, especially young people, to be aware of this and to exercise caution when they seek healing, teachings or advice. It is advisable to consult with people whom you trust to get referrals to respected and recognized Traditional Elders, Healers or Medicine People.

Other pamphlets in this series include:

- Approaching Healers, Elders and Medicine People
- Fasting
- Clans
- Your Name and Colours
- Feasts and GiveAways
- Sweat Lodge
- Moontime
- Traditional Healing
- Four Sacred Medicines

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SACRED ITEMS AND BUNDLES

“Native Teachings are about a Way of Life”

The information in this pamphlet is only a small portion of the many and extensive Native Teachings that exist. Teachings vary from First Nation to First Nation and even from one geographic region to another. For more information, please consult with a Traditional Elder, Healer or Medicine Person.

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