



SÉMA (TOBACCO)

TIP SHEET



Séma/Tobacco is one of the four first medicines of the Neshnabe. We use it as a gift and an honored tool for communication.



MAKING AN OFFERING OR PASSING TOBACCO

- **Prepare your séma:** This may be commercial tobacco or a traditional tobacco made with plants respectfully foraged and mixed. Seek out community wisdom keepers to learn more about traditional tobaccos, like kinnik-kinnik, ninsemaa/green séma, or 7 pines séma.
 - Some people choose to carry a pouch of loose tobacco
 - Wrapping a small amount of séma in cloth ties (see the illustration) is commonly used to carry and pass it on to others.
- **To Activate or Set your intention** before passing the tobacco, hold it in your hand (the left-hand is most common because it is the hand with a direct connection to your heart).
- **Introduce yourself and state your intention for how you will be using the semaa.**
 - Your introduction may be in English, Anishinaabemowin, or any language you prefer. If you can use the language of your ancestors, that is always good but remember that the spirits feel what's in your heart and mind and will understand you no matter what language is used.
 - **Greeting:** "Boozhoo/Hello."
 - **Your Name:** "Nin se/I am called..."; You can include your clan, tribe, or where you are from if you like.
 - **Intention:** "I would like to offer this tobacco to you (or name the person or spirit you are making the offering to) for helping with..."; "I would like to offer this tobacco to say miigwech/thank you for..."; or "Please accept this semaa for..."



***Séma/tobacco ties consist of a small amount of semaa wrapped in cloth and tied around the top. Using a square cloth, place a pinch of séma in the center; fold all the ends together; and tie using a piece of string, cloth, or yarn/twine.**



PASS THE TOBACCO

- **If passing tobacco to another person,** be specific about what you are asking of them or why you are passing the tobacco. If you accept tobacco from someone, know that this is a sincere request or gesture and following through on your word is important. In the past, this was the same as a signed agreement.
- **If praying, place the tobacco near a tree, in the water, on a rock or at the base of a tree or wherever you feel drawn to place it.** There may be times when you want to include a gift like; food, cloth, a coin, or water as part of the tobacco offering.
- **If making an offering when gathering medicines, picking rocks, feathers, or other items, place the tobacco at the base of the plant/tree or in the spot where you hope to pick up the item.**
 - Stay for a moment and "listen" (inside yourself and around you) to make sure you have permission to take what you are asking for.
 - What is your "gut" telling you? What feels right to you? If you hear no or feel like it's not right, leave the item and keep looking or trust that the spirits will be sure you will have what you need when the time and place is right.