

Background Information

Traditional Use of Tobacco

First Nations and Métis Cultures

Sacred - Ways of life, rituals, and teachings that are important, respected, and valued.

Tradition - A story or custom that is passed down from generation to generation. There is no universal singular First Nations tradition.

Traditional - Anything that follows the customs that are passed down from generation to generation.

Traditional/Sacred Tobacco - The original tobacco plant used by First Nations peoples are considered traditional or sacred tobacco (e.g., kiniknik, kinnikinic).

There are protocols in some cultures for using these plants:

- Tobacco is placed onto Mother Earth in a quiet place where no one walks as acknowledgement for providing all the things that help sustain our physical beings (e.g., offering tobacco to water is an acknowledgement and appreciation for life).
- Offering sacred tobacco is a way of giving thanks in advance of a request. Whenever there is a request for guidance, advice, ceremonies or taking from the animal or spirit world, sacred tobacco is offered first.

For more information on sacred tobacco, see the following links:

<http://www.makeapact.ca/content/sacred-tobacco/sacred-tobacco-is-important>

http://www.nnapf.org/sites/default/files/pdf/en/tobacco_cessation/NNAPF_Keeping_Sacred_Tobacco.pdf

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Who is an Elder?

There is no single definition of an Elder. In some First Nations and Métis cultures, Elders are people who are usually older, and are recognized by the community as having great wisdom and experience. Elders may be called upon as an authority to advise on important community matters.

In many cultures, Elders are respected and assume leadership roles within their communities. Elders may also be associated with the ability to communicate cultural heritage and language and in some cases, spiritual knowledge.

Note: Not all First Nations and Métis cultures use the term “Elder” (e.g., Cree).



For more information on Elder descriptions, see the following link:

<http://www.niichro.com/Elders/Elders7.html>

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It is important to understand that there are variances and differences within every culture, including First Nations and Métis cultures. The following information is meant to reflect the way that some, not all, First Nations and Métis peoples, use tobacco culturally.

“Traditionally, for many First Nations and Métis cultures, tobacco was only to be used for ceremonies, prayer, and/or healing purposes. Tobacco was never meant to be taken into the body (e.g., use of commercial tobacco products such as cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, etc.). Many people who use tobacco for ceremonies, prayer, and/or healing purposes find the use of tobacco in a non-culturally traditional way to be disrespectful of the spiritual, medicinal, and traditional uses of tobacco. Tobacco was never meant to enter our bodies, and we must respect it and not abuse it: to do so endangers our lives and the lives of the future generations.”

- National Native Addictions Partnership Foundation, NNAPF, 2006



For more information on sacred tobacco, see the following link:
http://www.nnapf.org/sites/default/files/pdf/en/tobacco_cessation/NNAPF_Keeping_Sacred_Tobacco.pdf

For more information on First Nations and Métis cultural use of tobacco, see the following links:

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fnihah-spnia/substan/tobac-tabac/index-eng.php>

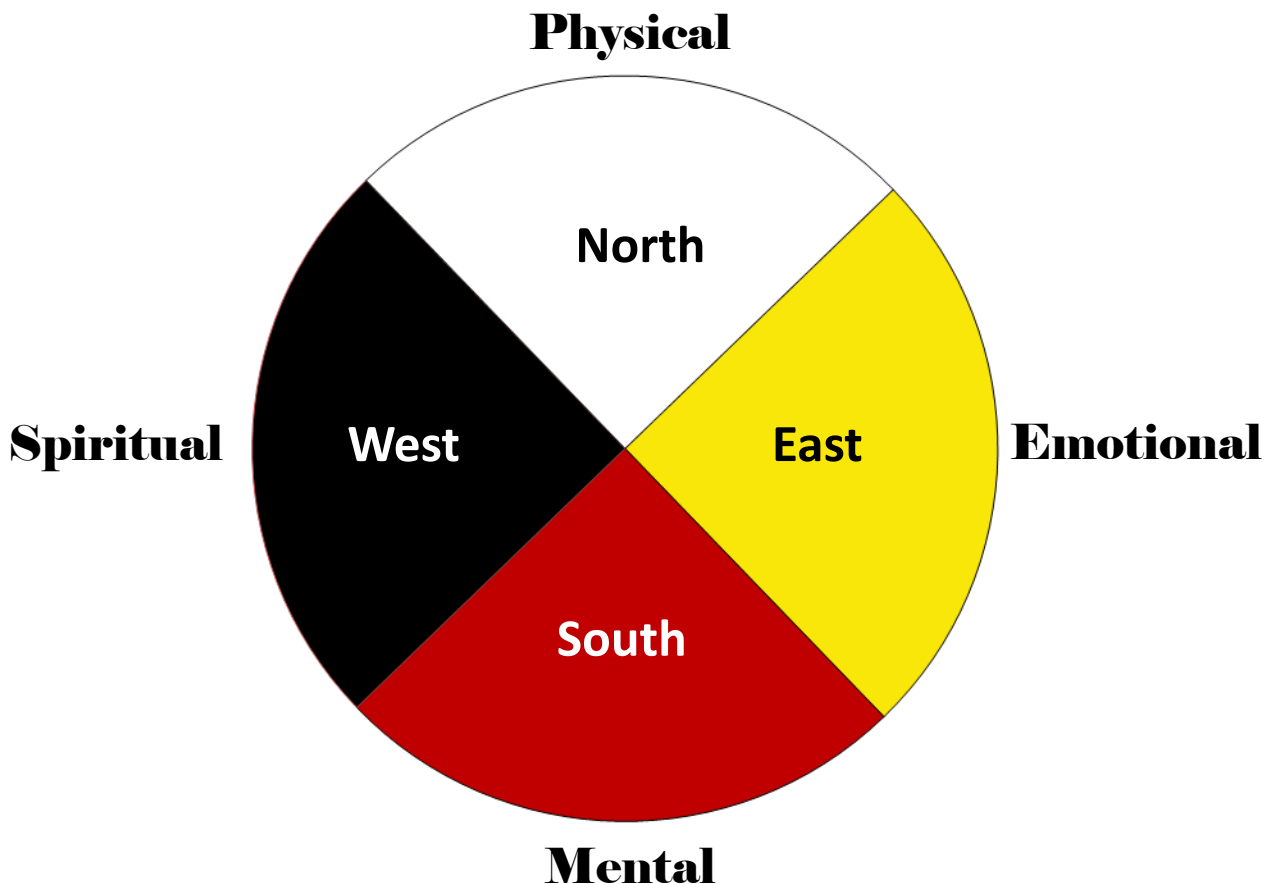
http://www.niichro.com/Tobacco%202002/tob02_4.html

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Examining tobacco addiction through a holistic approach and/or what is known as the Four Directions or Medicine Wheel, can be beneficial for daily life events as well treating addictions. This allows one to explore the spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical aspects of their tobacco addiction while understanding the reasons for quitting. The wheel represents a state of balance in all aspects of life. If one aspect is out of balance, then harmony is not achieved.



For more information on traditional use of tobacco and the medicine wheel, see the following link:

<http://www.makeapact.ca/content/sacred-tobacco/sacred-tobacco-is-important>