

# Sweet Grass (*Weengush*)

December 1-3, 2017

Camp Asbury, Hiram, Ohio



Weengush, or Sweet grass is used to cleanse the mind, body and spirit. It is considered sacred because it is symbolic of purification. It represents the **Northern direction** and the body. The elders tell us that scent of these natural herbs is pleasing to the creator and will incline him to hear the ceremony with favor. The

smoke is considered distasteful to all evil beings and thwarts their powers. This plant plays an important part in ceremonies of spiritual significance. When Weengush is used in ceremony, each person is to fan the sweet grass smoke, first to their heart, second to their mind, third around their body and lastly, return the smoke to their heart. The prayer said during this process is: "Great Mystery, please cleanse me of my negativity and fill me with the positive energies of love, so that, as I am healed so may I work for the healing of our Earth Mother."

Because it signifies the hair of Nokimis Akiin (Our Grandmother the Earth) it is usually braided. Each of the three sections that go into the braid have a specific meaning, being mind, body and spirit. Because the Anishnaabe people live life in a very sacred manner, when taking something from the Earth, they always explain to the spirit of the plant why it is being done and offer some tobacco in return for the generosity and help of the plant which shared itself so freely.

Many sacred and cultural objects re made with Weengush. The Men's grass dance outfits are symbolic of the sacred plant. A braid of sweet grass was traditionally tied to the dancers' belts. The colorful yarn or fringe that sways from their regalia symbolizes sweet grass swaying in the wind. Weengush is also used to make coiled baskets, called unity baskets. These Unity baskets are not for sale. It is said that in the old days very small ones kept children's navel cords. Sweet grass is a very powerful herb.

## **Unity**

The elders tell us that "Sweet Grass is the [hair of our Mother](#), each strand alone is not as strong as when braided together." The braid represents to us the great strength a united tribe has opposed to a divided one.

## **Abuses**

Alot of New Age businesses have been harvesting sweet grass for commercial use. They have no respect and they pull it out by the roots and at the wrong times of the year so that the plant cannot grow back.

When harvesting medicines, a traditional

NDN shows respect by never taking more than 1 /10 of what's there. Medicine is only taken at certain times of the year and tobacco is always given back in gratitude. No one should buy sweet grass unless they are absolutely sure that the earth hasn't been "strip-mined" to get it.



Collecting medicines is a long complicated process. It mustn't be done haphazardly for commercial profit. Great care must be taken in harvesting by an elder who understands the plant and can develop a relationship with it. This cannot be done as quickly and efficiently as most consumers would like. The roots of a sweet grass plant are very fragile and can be easily uprooted in the harvesting of the grass. There are places in the Northeast where sweet grass can no longer grow because it was not harvested in a good way by hundreds New Ager. If you don't know for sure that care was taken gathering sweet grass, don't buy it. The herb should always be treated with respect and dignity. New Age practices such as selling sweet grass Christmas wreaths is sacrilegious. Don't support it.

***Think about it. Our sacred Weengush represents the hair of Nokimis Akiin! Do you really want anything to do with hair that's pulled out from the roots?***



We must always remember that the ends don't justify the means. Some of these New Age seekers are overly concerned about where they can buy sacred objects. They don't understand that the *object* isn't sacred. Only sacred plant is addressed in a Native language, by an elder who is entitled to do so, does it become sacred. NDNS and nonNDNS alike need to learn that they must pay attention to the whole process! It must have integrity! The planting, the harvesting, the giving back. One of our grandmas has a warning for the New Age seekers. She says, "It's almost always a bad idea to try to buy "sacred objects". The person doing this should be asking themselves why they need to do this and deal with that shortcoming first."

#### **Gratitude**

Our sacred plants have a special role to play in our lives. We need to keep the idea of gratitude ever present in our mind. We cannot keep our NDN worldview alive without fully appreciating the concept of gratitude. Proper use of our sacred plants helps us to convey the meaning of gratitude. Whenever we take something, we must remember to give. We must be able to be grateful **before** receiving. To appreciate that life is a gift and that everything that comes with it - our successes and our defeats -- is truly a gift in itself. Tobacco is what is offered back to Nokimis Akiin - grandmother earth. When we find a feather or collect medicines, we take them with us as a gift from her. We offer tobacco. When we hunt animals, we offer tobacco to the earth and to the chief spirit (Manitou) of the plant or animal we're asking to give of itself. We also offer tobacco when we cross a river, before thunderstorms when someone dies, when we see an eagle. This idea of gratitude is what binds us together as native people and keeps us strong. The four sacred herbs complete the cycle of life. Their smoke is used to cleanse the mind, spirit, body and soul. They can remove negative forces and refresh us.

**What to expect:**

The workshop will do several shamanic journeys over the course of the weekend. A large altar/vortex is created with many stones. This creates a massive energetic field.

### **Who Should Come:**

All interested parties with journey experience.

### **What to Bring:**

Please bring any rocks or cedar related items that want to come along. A journal with colored pencils or pens is encouraged as well as any comforts such as blankets, pillows, etc.

### **Meals**

Dinner will be served on Friday night, Saturday- breakfast, lunch and dinner, Sunday breakfast and lunch---departure at 3 pm

### **When and Where to Come**

Registration will begin at 12:00 noon on Friday, December 1st at Camp Asbury. The workshop will begin Friday running into the night, Sat-all day and into the evening, and Sunday 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The workshop will be held at Camp Asbury, 10776 Asbury Rd., Hiram Ohio 44234

### **What to Pay**

The fee for the workshop is \$450 if paid in full by October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017. If paid after October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017, the fee is \$495. This includes room and six hot meals as listed above. The deposit will not be transferred or refunded. It will be applied to the guaranteed fee of Camp Asbury.

To hold your space, send \$120.00 nonrefundable deposit now.

For further information, kindly call Lauren at 216-272-8438 or e-mail [lauren@therockgirls.com](mailto:lauren@therockgirls.com) to reserve a space in the circle. Please send a check, payable to The Rock Girls Inc. Mail the check to White Silent Wisdom PO Box 24455, Cleveland Ohio 44124. Once paid-in-full you will receive info on your stay at Camp Asbury.

**Due to the workshop focus and the unique facilities, the attendance will be limited to 26 people.**



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