

Sacred Prayer Pipe Ceremony

Overview:

In this module we will discuss the Sacred Pipe and its use in religious spiritual practice. The Sacred Pipe is an integral part of many Native American Ceremonies. It is to be considered sacred, and treated as such. The Sacred Pipe should not be considered as property, therefore it should not be owned, instead having a steward "*Pipe Carrier*". Each Pipe Carrier has a sacred duty to the Sacred Pipe to always care for it, clean it, and use it with great respect.

The Sacred Pipe is used to make prayers and is used in conjunction with sacred herbs such as Indian tobacco (*Nicotina rustica*), Cannabis, Sumac, Sage, Sweet Grass, Red Willow-Bark, and so forth. A combination of herbs, known by some western tribes as "*kinnikinick*", is also smoked.

Part One: The Symbolisms of the Sacred Pipe

The Sacred Pipe is used by many cultures, and as such, there are many different symbolisms with various meanings. For the sake of this module, we will be using basic symbolisms that seem to be popular in modern Native American culture. The Sacred Pipe is typically comprised of two parts, the bowl and the stem. The bowl can be made of antlers, carved stone, wood, clay, or some other natural material. The stem is usually carved from wood (Typically cedar or sumac), though some are made of bone or antler. Many Sacred Pipes are adorned with effigies and feathers, and the bowl and stem are sometimes carved to represent the personality of its carrier.

The Bowl: is generally typified as a representation of Mother Earth and is therefore considered the *feminine* aspect of the Sacred Pipe. The sacred herbs are placed in this bowl and can represent the seeds of life.

The Stem: represents all things that grow on the Earth and is considered to be *masculine* (because man is formed from the Earth).

The Smoke: is a representation of prayers. They pass through this stem into the body of the one smoking the Sacred Pipe and are exhaled as an offering to the Great Spirit. (Note: one does not have to inhale the smoke.)

The bowl and the stem are connected, and when the stem (masculine) and bowl (feminine) are united, the Sacred Pipe is considered One; just as the Creator embodies both the masculine and the feminine, and is therefore One.

Part Two: The Sacred Pipe Ceremony

The following is an example of how a Medicine Person would use a Sacred Pipe in a personal Ceremony. The Sacred Pipe is used in a similar fashion for many other Ceremonies, and they will be covered in other modules.

Step One: Remove the Sacred Pipe from its bag or bundle and place it respectfully in front of you with the bowl closest to you and the stem facing away from you.

Step Two: The Sacred Pipe is often smudged before it is used just in case it was disrespected in some way.

Step Three: The Pipe Carrier will then take out a pinch of the Sacred Herbs and offer a prayer to each of the four directions, and also to Father Sky and to Mother Earth.

Step Four: After each pinch of Sacred Herbs are placed into the bowl, the Pipe Carrier will then light the Sacred Herbs and inhale it into the mouth or lungs. Then the prayer is made. The prayer is then exhaled and sent to the Great Spirit in the smoke. (Note: Often the Sacred Smoke is offered in prayer to each of the four directions and also to Father Sky and to Mother Earth as well.)

Step Five: After the prayers have been sent, the Sacred Pipe is to be carefully placed back in its bundle and should never be left uncovered. If this Ceremony is done with others, the Sacred Pipe is often smudged before it is put away in case it was handled by one with negative intentions.

Remember:

Each Medicine Person should prayerfully consider what works for them and let the Great Spirit guide them as to which way to perform this Ceremony. This Ceremony is between you and the Creator so be open to allow the Spirit to guide you to greater understanding about the symbolism of the Sacred Pipe and the Sacraments that you should use. (Note: If you decide to use Sacraments that in some states are controlled substances, it is always best to perform your Ceremonies with a traditional Native American Pipe. It is easier to defend your legal religious rights when you can clearly show you are using the Sacrament in religious Ceremony using religious items/icons.)