

CHOOSE LIFE NEWSLETTER



Nishnawbe
Aski Nation
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Our team acknowledges that NAN communities have varying dialects, languages, and cultural teachings. 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. With respect to this, our newsletter will do our best to be inclusive to both Ojibwe, Ojicree, and Cree teachings that are shared. Please share any teachings that you are comfortable sharing and it will be included in our newsletter. Protocols will be followed with semaa (tobacco).

JANUARY: Spirit Moon

OJIBWE: MANIDOO GIIZIS

The first moon of creation is Spirit Moon and is manifested through the Northern Lights. It is a time to honour the silence and realize our place within all of Great Mystery's creatures.



JANUARY: Frost Exploding Moon

CREE: OHJAMEKIISEKAN PIISIM

Trees crackle from cold temperatures and extreme cold starts.

THIRTEEN MOON TEACHINGS

The cycles of the moon determine our yearly calendar. The changes that come with each passing moon indicate the times for planting, harvesting, hunting and gathering. In the Anishnawbe calendar the names of each month include the word 'moon' and reflect the close connection between the cycles of the moon and the plant and animal life on Turtle Island.

GRANDMOTHER MOON: THE FEMALE ENERGY

It is said that Grandmother Moon watches over the waters of the Earth. We see this in her regulating of the tides. Grandmother Moon controls all female life. Much of the water life spawn according to the cycles of the moon. It is said that Grandmother Moon is especially close to women because she governs the woman's cleansing cycle, the natural cycle of menstruation known as the moon time. Just as Grandmother Moon watches over the waters of the Earth, it is said that women watch over the waters of the people. Water always comes before new life.

CEDAR TEACHINGS

GIISHIK/MAASCHIISK

HOW TO PREPARE CEDAR MEDICINE

1. Collect cedar branches following traditional protocols.
2. Place 2 cups of fresh cedar into a large pot with 8 cups (2 litres) of water.
3. Bring the cedar to a boil, and keep boiling for about 10 minutes until golden and you smell the aroma throughout your home.
4. Take big calming breaths, breathing in the steam.
5. You may also place in a bowl to directly breathe in the steam.
6. Once boiled, remove pot from heat and let liquid cool. Strain cooled liquid into another clean container.

Once strained, it is ready to be warmed up to drink as tea, adding honey, maple syrup or other sweetener if you like. It is best to drink it warm. You may continue this procedure as long as you wish.

Recommended amount: Maximum 4 cups/day



STAFF CONTACT UPDATE FORM

Has your team had any recent staff changes? Please let us know so we can update your contact information in our database. Scan the QR code to the right or contact Rauslyn Laviolette our Choose Life Officer and she will provide you with the link to complete the form.



CEDAR IN CULTURE AND CEREMONIES, EVERYDAY WELLNESS

By Grandmother Kim Wheatley

Aaniin, Boozhoo, Tawnsii, She:kon, Kwe Kwe kinawiiya (Greetings my relatives!)

Curiosity about traditional medicines has really entered the media spaces today as we try to navigate the pandemic of COVID19.

This is a great time for our ancestral Indigenous knowledge to step forward into everyday practice. In my journeys learning a little bit about identification, usage, protocols, and locations has been very helpful.

Today I would like to explore our grandmother medicine commonly called Cedar or "giishik" in my Anishinaabe language. This beautiful being is often referred to as a grandmother and all of her body is medicinal in a wide variety of ways. She comes in many varieties but in the territory I come from we access white cedar.

This beautiful medicine is so abundant and loves moist wet environments. Her roots, stems, bark, and body are and have been used for centuries in so many ways. Cedar boxes and trunks were once so common that almost everyone owned one. It was a great way to keep the moths away from treasured clothing and handmade items. Cedar blocks and hangers in closets are still quite common and leave a delicious scent as well.

In traditional practices cedar was used in so many ways that I will only refer to a few in this share with you today. Communities would gather cedar roots to "sew" with for many birchbark items and for canoe making. Harvesting cedar roots involves bog and marshy areas where you feed a lot of mosquitoes and follow intertwined roots beneath mossy wet undershirts of bushy areas. Cedar was used to make many everyday implements and is a softwood that is used for hand-drum frames due to its light in weight nature.

Many types of furniture are still made of cedar today and it's a durable but light wood that was used in canoe building, paddles, houses, boxes, totem poles & tools. The bark was used for making mats, clothing, baskets, nets, fishing lines and medicines and so much more.

I would like to focus on its medicinal usage. It is said that its one of the first medicines used when interacting with the first settler nations to arrive on our shores who were suffering from scurvy which is a lack of Vitamin C. This beautiful medicine is also helpful with constipation.

Cedar is full of vitamin C and can be easily brewed into a tea with its branches steeped in water for a short time. It also has great healing properties to clean skin and wounds. It is gathered in Anishinaabe ceremonies by women and cleaned of debris and seeds and placed into bowls for offerings in our sacred fires.

Cedar baths are a common form of healing & preparation for newborn babies and newly deceased relatives that are considered ceremonial in practice. It is considered a form of protection physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Ceremonial lodges are surrounded in cedar boughs as are sacred mounds and can be harvested year-round. It keeps its magnificent green colour and is easy to spot in white winter landscapes but also in other seasons as well.

My first time cleaning cedar was a surprise as my fingers began to look a shade of black...it was simply the oils of this plant coating my fingers as I removed debris and seeds in preparation for ceremony. I must say I loved the beautiful fragrant oil and have come to learn burning dried cedar in your home is one way to clean the atmosphere!

As you can see there are many, many ways to utilize this beautiful grandmother tree and maybe you will be inspired to seek her out and ask for her help in your world. Why not share some of the ways you have learned to interact with her and what she is called in your territory.

Best of luck in learning about your grandmother "giishiik"!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Choose Life Networking Calls are back! Please join our team and let's stay connected with one another!

Dates: Every second Wednesday of the month

Jan 11 | Feb 8 | Mar 8 | Apr 12 | May 10 | Jun 7
Jul 12 | Aug 9 | Sept 13 | Oct 11 | Nov 8 | Dec 13

Time: Log in @ 10:45AM EST
Starts @ 11:00AM EST

There will be **attendance prizes!**

Training Opportunity! Mental Health First Aid
March 23 & 24, 2023. All spots have been filled!
Our Team is looking forward to seeing you there!

WELCOME TO THE TEAM

Welcome Rauslyn! She is our new Choose Life Officer. Rauslyn has ten years of experience working in the health care sector, including first response and acute care. She has experience in a variety of mental health avenues. Rauslyn loves to travel and she enjoys spending her summers anywhere that she can be near the water. Her family and friends are her lifeline so she enjoys spending as much time as she can with them outside of work. Rauslyn's life mantra would be "that no act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted."



RESOURCES

NAN HOPE
CALL 1-844-NAN-HOPE (626-4673) nanhope.ca

Hope for Wellness Help Line
CALL 1-855-242-3310
hopeforwellness.ca

Talk4Healing
CALL 1-855-554-HEAL (4325)
talk4healing.com

Please reach out if you need support!

Kids Help Phone
CALL 1-800-668-6868 Text
686868 kidshelpphone.ca

CMHA Crisis Response
thunderbay.cmha.ca
Call Thunder Bay: 807-346-8282

District / Toll-Free: 1-888-269-3100 Northwest Region:
1-866-888-8988

Crisis Services Canada
crisisservicescanada.ca
CALL 1-833-456-4566
TEXT 45645

REFERENCES

<http://onlc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/13-Moon-curriculum2.pdf>
<https://mushkiki.com/our-programs/moontime-and-grandmother-moon/>
<https://www.creehealth.org/health-tips/traditional-medicine-cedar>
<https://iswo.ca/cedar/>

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(* RECENT STAFF CHANGES)

NAN Choose Life welcomes new staff and wishes those who have left the Choose Life Team many thanks for their role in Choose Life and well wishes as they journey forward.

CULTURAL DATABASE

If you can share any Cultural Resources that you would like to make accessible on the Cultural Database or if you know of anyone interested in sharing their cultural or land-based teachings/skills/gifts with Choose Life, please fill out the Cultural Helpers Form. It is accessible at: Choose Life - Nishnawbe Aski Nation (nan.ca). You can also scan our QR code or click the link below the code. If you have any questions regarding the database, please contact Kiaya Drake.



HOW CAN I CONTRIBUTE?

You can contribute to the newsletter by emailing Kiaya Drake to share teachings, resource links, photos, activities and/or events which took place in your community that you wish to highlight and share with other Choose Life Teams throughout NAN. You can also nominate someone for our Honorable Mentions section. You can do this by scanning the QR code.

