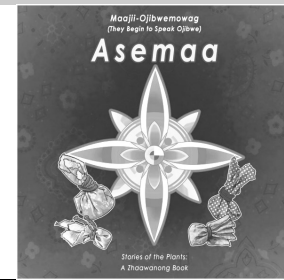


Asemaa (Tobacco)

Maajii-Ojibwemowag (They Begin To Speak Ojibwe) - ANA Language Project
Teacher/Caregiver Supplemental Document



Asemaa and the Ojibwe People

Asemaa (tobacco) is one of the four sacred medicines that the Ojibwe believe was given to them by the Creator, *Gichi-manidoo*.

Asemaa is used by the Ojibwe in everyday life, as well as during ceremonies and other important events.

Asemaa is used as an offering, such as in a prayer or as in asking another spirit or person for guidance or assistance.

There are a variety of tobaccos used by the Ojibwe, which include a dried tobacco plant itself or a mixture of different plants, known as kinnickinnick, which is often referred to as traditional tobacco.

Tobacco plants can be grown in nutrient-rich, moist soil. Some elders encourage gardeners to give special attention to their tobacco plants, such as singing and speaking to them. When ready, tobacco leaves are then dried before being cut for use.

Traditional tobacco involves the gathering of a variety of plants, such as red osier dogwood, mullein leaves, bearberry leaves, and wintergreen leaves, which are then processed and mixed together. Some plants, like dogwood, should be harvested at specific times of the year.

Once completed, asemaa can be stored in leather pouches or in air-tight containers to maintain freshness.



Tobacco plant



Preparing dogwood for kinnickinnick

Asemaa teachings



Always consult with a local tribal elder or knowledge holder to learn how to respectfully use asemaa.

When offering asemaa, place the tobacco in an area that will not be stepped on, such as the

base of a tree, in a river, or in another appropriate place. Asemaa is also used in pipes for giving prayers.

The amount of asemaa used is based on the guidance or exchange being

asked, from requesting a teaching to giving thanks to a hunter.

Asemaa is used to respectfully harvest plants and animals in and to give thanks to the spirits for providing sustenance.

Zhaawanong set: Asemaa Book Ojibwe Language Word List:

- **Asemaa** – tobacco
- **Wiikongewin** – a feast
- **Daanis** – daughter
- **Gibiindaakoojigemin** – we offer tobacco
- **Apiitendaagwad** – it is highly valued
- **Mashkiki** - medicine
- **Gichi-manidoo** – Great Spirit
- **Miskwaa** – red
- **Giizhikaandag** – cedar bough
- **Mitigoog** – trees
- **Makizinan** – moccasins
- **Nimbimose** – I am walking
- **Dikinaagan** – cradle board
- **Wiingashk** –sweet grass
- **Mino-maagwad** – it has a good smell
- **Inawemaaganag** – relatives
- **Miigwech** – thank you
- **Wiinisigobag** – wintergreen
- **Aniibiishan-inaande** – green
- **Aniibiish** – tea
- **Wiishkobi-bakwezhigan** – cake
- **Wewaagaagin** – fiddlehead fern
- **Endaayaan** – my house
- **Naboob** – soup
- **Minopogwad** – it tastes good
- **Mashkikiwan** – medicines
- **Endaso-giizhik** – every day
- **Aabajj** – to use something
- **Mii iw** – that is all

Let's make a tobacco tie! Asemaa book activity

Want to learn to make a *miskwa* (red) tobacco tie, like the one in the *Asemaa* book? Here are kid-friendly instructions for use in the classroom or at home!

Supplies:

- Asemaa (tobacco) or kinnickinnick; each tobacco tie will hold a pinch or palm-full of tobacco
- Red cotton fabric
- Yarn - such as white or yellow
- Scissors

Directions:

1. Cut red fabric in 4" x 4" squares
2. Cut yarn into 8" strings
3. Take a pinch of tobacco and place it in the middle of the fabric
4. Gather the corners of the fabric so the tobacco is gathered in the bottom of the tie
5. Pinch the fabric together above the tobacco, providing a seal keeping the tobacco in the tie
6. While holding about 2" of the yarn, use the remaining yarn to wrap around the fabric above the tobacco. Wind the yarn around twice, tightly
7. Using the remaining yarn, tie a knot to secure the tobacco tie

* Note - tobacco ties can be made in a variety of fabric and yarn colors. For different ceremonies or occasions, only specific colors are used for tobacco ties. Contact local tribal elders for more information.



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A new day - Akawe asemaa

Akawe, asemaa! (First, tobacco!)

Many Ojibwe people start their day with the giving of asemaa. This offering is to start their journey for the day on a good path and in a good mind set.



A picture of kinnickinnick, known as apaakozigan in Ojibwe

Resources:

GLIFWC Publications:

<http://www.glifwc.org/ClimateChange/TribalAdaptationMenuV1.pdf>

<http://data.glifwc.org/archive.maz/Dagwaagin.pdf>

Other publications:

<https://www.kbichealth.org/ojibwe-medicine>

<https://www.glitc.org/2020/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/tobacco-booklet-web-.pdf>

<https://keepitsacred.itcml.org/tobacco-and-tradition/traditional-tobacco-use/>

