

Why and When to Offer Tobacco

Offering tobacco in the form of a tobacco tie is a custom that is shared by many Indigenous peoples. Tobacco is offered for many reasons and in many different contexts. The custom of presenting a tobacco tie is an act of respect and care for Indigenous peoples.

It is appropriate when asking for assistance, help, guidance, or protection from an Indigenous elder, knowledge keeper, or person to offer tobacco. When the person accepts the tobacco, they are agreeing to help in some way. Offering tobacco is a respectful way of asking for assistance and not as a symbol of gratitude after help is provided.

When someone accepts tobacco, they are agreeing to listen openly and without judgement and to support you as best they can.

It is appropriate to offer tobacco when asking for a song, an opening prayer, a teaching, Indigenous knowledge, or advice. This should not replace remuneration or honoraria.

There are many ways of presenting tobacco but commonly, it is given as a tobacco tie, as pictured and described below.

How to Make a Tobacco Tie

1. State of Being
 - a. Ensure you are drug-free, alcohol-free, and in a good state of mind. Only prepare ties if you are not on your Moon Time.
 - b. Ground yourself to the intent of gifting in a good way,
2. Acquire Tobacco
 - a. Finding traditional ceremonial tobacco is the best option, however, it is okay to offer no additive loose tobacco. Traditional ceremonial tobacco is available online, in the Strategic Human Resources Managers workspace., as well as from the Tom Thomson Art Gallery.
3. Obtain Cloth
 - a. Fabric is used to make the tobacco tie, preferably in colours such as red, yellow, white, green, purple, or blue. Cotton cloth can be purchased from a fabric store, and is available in the Strategic Human Resources Managers workspace, as well as from the Tom Thomson Art Gallery.
4. Preparing the Tobacco Offering
 - a. The person making the request should prepare the tobacco tie or pouch. As you prepare the offering it is important to think about what you are requesting, for whom you are preparing it for, and to have good thoughts while you prepare the tobacco tie.
 - b. Each guest you will be meeting with should receive a tobacco tie.
5. Preparing the Tobacco Tie

- a. Cut your fabric into a square (4 inches by 4 inches)
- b. Put a small amount of tobacco in the centre of the cloth
- c. Fold all the ends of the cloth together
- d. Tie the tobacco with a piece of yarn or twine, you may also cut a strip of fabric to make a tie



6. Making a Request

- a. Offer the tobacco tie or pouch when you make your initial request. To make a request, offer the tobacco tie or pouch by holding it in your left hand, as it is closest to the heart), in front of you, state your request, and wait for the person to accept your request, place the tobacco in their left hand.
- b. Be careful with this sacred medicine by not dropping it, or placing it next to something that may spill, or anything unclean.
- c. Example of what to say when making your request and offering tobacco:
 - i. I am offering you this tobacco for...
 1. ...the opening and closing remarks at (name of the event)
 2. ...the smudging ceremony.
 3. ...your guidance with (name of request).
 4. ...to respectfully ask you to share with us.

Definitions Used in Document:

“Moon Time” means the time of menstruation

“Traditional Ceremonial Tobacco” means semaa tobacco that is used for ceremony, healing giving thanks, and smudging, and the smoke is said to open the soul to allow the spirits to bring their healing powers and remove negative energy.