



crcna.org/Indigenous

cimc@crcna.org

Gifts of Tobacco

Tobacco is one of the four sacred medicines used by many First Nations and Métis communities. Giving a gift of tobacco is a gesture of honour when asking for help or for knowledge to be shared. For example, when an Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Indigenous guest is invited to share their teaching and culture through ceremony, conversation, speaking, a workshop, or a blanket exercise.

A gift of tobacco is intended to be a gift from the heart, and if accepted, it's a promise from the receiver to give the help that has been asked for. In this way, it is a tangible expression of exchanging hearts. It's not something that should be taken for granted, or used outside of relationships with Indigenous people. It's also important to remember that not all Indigenous peoples practice the gifting of tobacco, so it's important to get to know the Indigenous person you intend to honour, and ensure that it's a gift that is meaningful to them. If it's not, consider other gifts from the heart that may be appropriate to their culture, or to your own.

Perhaps there is an Indigenous leader you will be approaching to invite to speak at your church, school, or event. Perhaps there's one you have already learned from who you would like to thank, now that you know about this practice. Or, you may want to prepare a gift of tobacco with the intention of building a relationship with an Indigenous leader in your local context. Use the instructions below to make and offer a tobacco tie.



Learn More!



[Watch this video with Dr. Kenny Wallace.](#)

Making Tobacco Ties

Tobacco is offered in a tobacco tie. To make one, simply cut a piece of fabric into a square (approximately 3x3 inches), and place the tobacco in the centre. Gather up the edges and tie it closed with a red string, yarn, or ribbon. You can pray over the tobacco tie as you make it, and when you give it.

When you offer tobacco, use your left hand because it is the closest to your heart. You can say something like *'I'm offering you this gift of tobacco to acknowledge that I'm asking you to share with us'* or *'to thank you for what you've agreed to share with us.'*

Tobacco is offered when first requesting the person's help, but if you're unable to be present in person to request, it can be offered when a person arrives, or at the beginning of an event. If done publicly, it's helpful to share why you're offering it, so that the participants can learn. The Indigenous person you've invited may also desire to share what tobacco means to them.

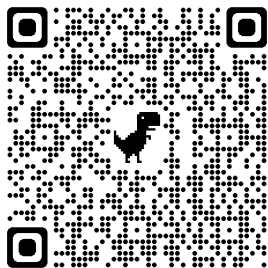
Tobacco is usually offered in its traditional form. If you want to make tobacco ties on your own but if you're unable to find traditional tobacco, loose smoking tobacco will suffice. Traditional tobacco can be ordered online from turtlelodgetradingpost.ca or motherearthtobacco.com.

Sources:

Dr. Kenny Wallace (Aboha 'a Chihowa, African American Choctaw Pawnee)

[U of Ottawa Guide to Indigenous Protocols](#)

[KAIROS Canada Tobacco Protocol](#)



For more information, [read this Network article](#) about inviting an Indigenous speaker by the CRC's Indigenous Ministry.

