

HANDOUT: UTE PLANT LEGENDS

GRANDFATHER CEDAR

A long time ago, as time goes, Sinawavi, the Creator, made the trees, and as each tree was created, the Creator asked what they were going to do for their being created. Pōwape, the Cedar, spoke:

"I'll be green for all seasons and I'll be shelter for little birds who stay around for the winter seasons to add cheer to the cold, sullen days. Also, I'll be a shade and shelter for all creatures too, and most of all mankind. When they need help, I'll be there for them. They can gather my leaves and dry them to sprinkle on red coals to bless themselves and to purify their bodies for the ceremonies they will have. Also, my green leaves will be used for their stomach troubles. A drink can be made from my fresh branches by holding them over a flame and then putting the fine ashes into a cup and adding a little water. They can boil my branches and leaves in water and use this solution in the bath to ease aches and pains of their bones and to soak their sores. I will be very good to relieve itching from hives or poison ivy. They can boil my leaves and strain them to drink for their colds. This and other things I will do for mankind."

"All right," said Sinawavi, "but mankind will have to learn to respect you by doing certain things first. He must ask permission to use you and must also tell you for what purpose you are going to be used. Then he must make an offering to you of something. First, he must offer it to the four Grandfathers in the four directions: the Grandfather in the East, and Grandfather South, then Grandfather in the West, and then to our Grandfather in the North, then to Father Sky and to Mother Earth. In doing this he will learn more of how to use you for his benefit. So your request to be green for all seasons will be granted. Then no one will ever see you shed and renew your leaves. Great blessing be with you for all time."

Now we will do the things we were told to do. We'll offer a smoke to the four Grandfathers in the four directions. When we get through we will tie a scarf of green for Grandfather Cedar so he can bestow his blessings to us for what we need from him. Then we will gather some of his branches and leaves. We could get some of his bark too, which is good for dogs when they get into trouble with the porcupine. We boil it and use it to wash the sore places on their faces. It can be used as a poultice too.

When we get home, we will place it in a paper sack to dry. Then when it is dry, we will put it into drawstring pouches to be stored for future use. The pouches can be made of buckskin or other fabrics and can be decorated with beads, shells, feathers or other decorations. The cedar can be stored in cans or jars. Cedar is put on rocks in sweat lodges for purification. It is also used in the Native American Church to put on the red coals for good blessings. It is used in Sun Dances to purify the dancers every morning for them to gain strength. It is used in all ceremonies of the Indian people. This is the story and the uses of cedar for our people which was told a long time ago.

CEDAR RECIPES

For A Tub Soak.....Boil two large handfuls of cedar leaves in

three gallons of water for five minutes and let steep covered for one half an hour. Strain and add to three inches of water in the bathtub. Bathe your skin for five minutes to relieve itching and do not dry off with a towel. Instead, let the cedar solution air-dry on your body.

For A Medicinal Tea....Steep one teaspoon of cedar leaves in one pint of boiling water, cover and let steep for ten minutes. Then strain and drink about one fourth a cup.

For A Dog....Steep a strip of cedar bark about one half an inch wide and seven inches long in one quart of covered boiling water for thirty minutes. Wash affected areas and when the skin is loose, the quills of the porcupine can be removed.