

This booklet was made with love by emmy akin olivo, linguist/ethnobotanist/educator of acorn.wiki and coyote mountain nature school.

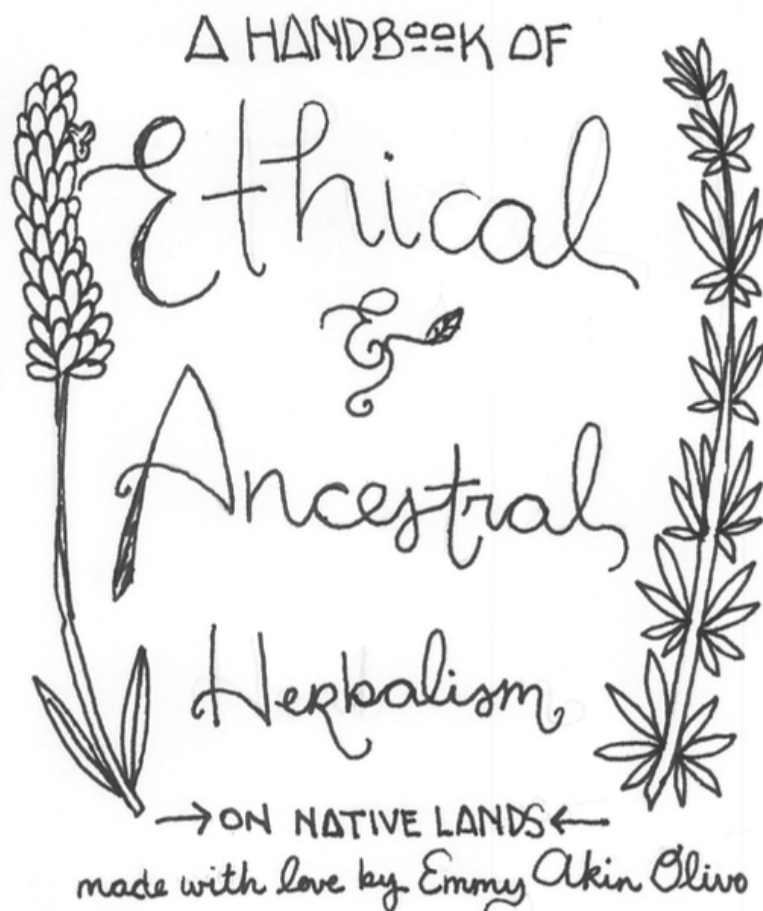
as a part of the Ethical Herbalism series, this booklet was made with respect to Indigenous peoples globally. it was made with the intention to help guide non-native residents of the americas to understand our role in the protection and liberation of plant medicines, while also sharing how each of us can reconnect with our own ancestral traditional medicines.

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www.acorn.wiki
wiki.acorn@gmail.com

instagram

@acorn.wiki



reconnection

some of us have stronger connections to our ancestry than others. some of us feel so distanced in time and space from our ancestral regions and cultures, that 'reconnecting' may feel silly. the point in the end is to research plant medicine and lifestyle practices that speak to you and inspire you to go deeper, healing the toxic disconnection instilled deep within us.

ANCESTRAL GARDEN

many of us with gardens are proud to have local native plants. do you also have a section dedicated to plants that are ancestral to you? even a single house plant can accompany you in reconnecting with your ancestry.

CLEANSE

while california sage bundles are a popular tool for cleansing, there has been a call by many native californians to stop buying bundles. how cleansing can it really be to buy and use an exploited sacred plant? luckily, our ancestors had their own way to cleanse. herbs were burned in cauldrons, bundled, or collected as 'strewing herbs' to throw on the floors, window sills, doorways and drawers of the house. what did/do the people of your ancestral lands do?

is your healing toxic?

before you step into any sweat lodge or shamanism workshop, be critical with yourself. what is it that you are seeking? connection or alignment? spiritual healing or cleansing? or are you seeking an exotic cultural or psychedelic experience? **spiritual healing is a process of addressing and alleviating traumas while breaking toxic cycles.** certain demographics have different traumas and cycles; for example, while black/indigenous/people of color (bipoc) must heal ancestral and personal traumas caused by things like slavery, genocide, and racism, white-identified people must focus more on breaking the toxic cycles that lead to things such as substance abuse, racism, and colonialism. if we choose to utilize indigenous medicine in our work, we continue the cycle of colonization of indigenous peoples and their lands. it is time for us to heal ourselves through exploring our own ancestral medicine, which we have been missing for so long. although some ceremonies and medicines are powerful enough to set any person- regardless of their heritage- on a healing path, it is more common that such medicine gets abused as a result. healing in itself is ancestral work; in our dna we carry memories as well as pre-dispositions to particular ailments. just like the best foods for your body, some of the best medicine you can find is the same medicine your ancestors used.

this booklet was written with the intention to connect with herbalists, healers, botanists, plant friends, hippies, activists and others who are identified as white, in an attempt to help guide folks to an ethical path of herbalism and healing.

in the middle ages, during the time of the witch hunts (and even beforehand), knowledgeable medicine women were captured and killed by the catholic church in an attempt to eliminate any and all indigenous/pagan religions of europe. after hundreds of more years of colonization and immigration/displacement, most of us are left without much connection to our ancestral ties to the earth. this has left many of us with a deep thirst for spirituality that honors all life and the interconnectedness we share between the earth, waters, plants, animals, and one another.

up until 1978, it was illegal for native americans of the united states to conduct any ceremony - with or without plant medicine. as native americans gradually recuperate their traditional dances and ceremonial practices after such a prolonged injustice, it is important that white-identified people understand that our ancestral role as colonizers and settlers put us in a position in which utilizing indigenous medicine in an inappropriate way is a power play. we do not need to reach into foreign cultures that have been colonized in order to build a relationship with plant medicine.

what can be done?

following native american protocol is one of the most respectful things we can do as non-native residents. for example, sage bundles are not usually bought from stores, but gifted. if native herbalists ask not to wildcraft certain plants, it is best to listen. if a tribe claims that a Shaman working on their territory is not legitimate, support them in their struggle to protect their ancestral land from exploitation.

be extremely critical of any non-native Shaman who offers to provide you ceremony. what are their credentials— is the plant medicine they offer ancestral to them? are the lands they choose to hold ceremony ancestral to the plant? are they charging money? a lot of money?

every ceremony and plant medicine has its own protocol. many ceremonies function on an invitation-only basis. ceremonies should not have a cost associated with them, and if a Shaman is not a direct relative (native to the same land) of the plant medicine they are offering, it is likely they are not legitimate. if you are not sure if a healer you are working with is authentic, your intuition is probably correct.

protest the consumption and abuse of native medicines. hold discussions about how the commodification of ceremonies, and abuse of medicine plants (such as ayahuasca or cocaine) affect not only the environment, but native communities around the world.



honey, beeswax, & propolis are ancestral medicines native to europe. while the americas host their own diverse variety of native bees, the honeybees we see pollinating and making honey come from europe. honey is used for all kinds of medicine, including mead.

lavender is one of the best plants for cleansing. featuring the latin root word lavare meaning to wash, it is one of the most ancient european plants used to cleanse a space and the people who inhabit it. it can be bundled or strewn.

rosemary is a lovely strewing herb used to cleanse, and is easy to bundle. rosemary is often associated with remembrance; it is a wonderful aide in not only pulling back personal memories, but can help in ceremonial contexts to reconnect with one's ancestry. rosemary can also aide in returning confidence to those who struggle with self-respect, much like the european variety of mugwort.



plants from my father's side



s a c r e d



p r o f a n e

the sacred/profane dichotomy witnessed in ethnobotany, as described by dr. mark merlin of university of hawai'i at mānoa, is the phenomenon in which sacred plant medicines and other ceremonial forms of healing can be abused and transformed into 'profane' and even toxic industries.

coca is a sacred plant native to the andean region of south america. its rich nutrients and life-giving properties are what makes this powerful medicine part of the backbone of andean cultures. it is used to communicate with the landscape and spirit world, making it central to life and death in the andes.

fermented & distilled beverages like beer, whiskey, mead and wine were traditionally made in europe as a form of medicine and sustenance. alcoholic beverages were originally taken as a community in ceremonial or celebratory contexts, or as a medicinal, nutrient-rich drink.

ayahuasca is a powerful & sacred plant medicine (brewed in combination with other plants) native to the amazon, used traditionally by various amazonian nations. it is a powerful medicine used to cure many ailments, always in ceremony by a healer who was born and raised in intensive training to be able to work with such medicine.

cocaine, one of the psychoactive properties of coca that gives energy to humans, is also the name of the toxic powdery substance used as a party drug. making cocaine requires near-enslavement of coca farmers, child soldiers to protect the factories, and has caused the death of thousands in south america as a result of production.

alcoholism/alcohol abuse is one of the most common ailments in the human experience. after generations of alcohol being used as a form of payment for indentured servants instead of its original sacred context, alcohol abuse is now a source of violence and addiction.

\$hamanism, or the commodification of ceremonies, has especially affected ayahuasca. peru has been ravaged by foreign tourists searching for healing- and most likely these tourists take ayahuasca from non-shipibo/ amazonian peruvians or worse, other foreigners. ayahuasca is not the only plant medicine to fall victim to \$hamanism

discuss: what are other medicines and toxic substances & industries that fall along the sacred/profane scale?

