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**Tribal Affiliation Presented:** Standing Rock Sioux Tribe (Lakota)

**Introduction:**

This cultural lesson will provide students information about two natural materials that are important to the Lakota people, mint and sage. Synthesizing mint with water to create a tea for healing, and sage with fire to create a pungent smoke used for a variety of purification purposes, are two ways Lakota people use these materials.

**Cultural Objective:**

The students will learn that natural materials were used in the past and continue to be used today, to create medicine for healing practices and purification.

**Cultural Information:**

Wild Dakota Plains Mint Plant (*Mentha Arvensis*) -

Mentha Arvenis, or Wild Mint, grows throughout North America and other parts of the world. This mint used by the Lakota for **Ceyaka** tea is considered the finest native plant for tea. It usually grows in Springtime in creek bottoms, along river inlets, and other wet areas. The mint is harvested in late June or early July, after the plant has flowered. It is then left out to dry.



Once the mint is dry, leaves and flowers are pulled off the stems. This mint is stored in a cool dry place. In contemporary times, plastic baggies or plastic containers are used for storage. The dried leaves can be packed with various foods to impart a mint flavor to them, and they can also be packed with clothing as a sachet. Eventually, over time the mint leaves will lose their scent and start to deteriorate.

Medicinally, the tea is a universal balm for stomach upsets and indigestion. Ceyaka tea was shared at ceremonies such as inipi or sun dances, and even naming ceremonies. Depending on the abundance of the harvest, this tea would be used as a treat or to quench thirst.

### Traditional Ceyaka Tea Recipe

1 handful harvested mint

1-quart water

Bring materials to a boil. Let cool or drink hot.

### Contemporary Ceyaka Tea Recipe

3 Bags Peppermint Tea Bags

1 quart of water

Bring Materials to a Boil add 1tbsp honey or sugar or sweeten to taste

### Wild Plains Sage Plant (*Artemisa Ludoviciana*) -

Sage is a multipurpose material used by the Lakota. It is a grey single stem leafy plant that grows in the wild on the prairie. It can grow anywhere from 6"-24" tall depending on the amount of moisture available. It is

harvested at the end of June to early July before the heads of the flowers open.

It is harvested using a knife or scissor to cut lower on the stem and below the leaves and is not pulled. What is harvested is then laid out to dry. Once dry, the sage is stored in bulk or tied into smaller bundles. Sage leaves lose their scent and potency over time. They are best to be used within a year.



Sage is used by the Lakota for Purification purposes. Stems are removed from the bundle and using thumb and forefinger, leaves are peeled from the stem. The leaves are then rolled and formed into a ball. The ball is placed into an abalone shell or some sort of shallow container and fire is introduced. The burning of the sage creates smoke.

The smoke created by the synthesis of fire and sage is used for a variety of purposes. Using sage in this way can be for purification of oneself, it can be used for ceremonial purposes, and it is used to *Azilia* homes to purify and rid spaces of bad energy (spirits).

### Terms

Synthesis: Means to combine a number of different pieces into a whole.

Cheyaka: Lakota word for field mint. This mint is used in a tea also called Cheyaka.

Azilia: Lakota word meaning to smudge.

### Questions:

1. What is the Lakota word for purifying your home?
2. What is another natural material that you could synthesize?