

When doing activities with fire, it is important to remember that fires are very sacred and must be respected at all times. In Anishinaabe culture, it is believed that the spirits of the ancestors are in the fire, and because of this, the smoke can provide medicine to food as it is cooked. Respecting fire is a way to show respect for the ancestors. There are a few things that you should always remember in order to light a fire respectfully:



Before you light a fire, put down tobacco for the ancestors. This is a way to show gratitude and respect. Ideally, you should put down seven offerings (one for each of the directions).



Don't jump over a fire. Instead, always walk around the fire clockwise.



Fire is not a toy, so we shouldn't play with it (with sticks, etc.). If you play with fire, Koko* says you might wet the bed.



Instead of putting out your fire with water, be patient and wait for it to burn out naturally. There's no need to be in a hurry!



For those who have taken the time to practice observing fires, much knowledge can be gathered from watching the flames. For example, depending on the hue of the flame, you can tell what type of tree the wood came from, and even what the weather will be like that day.



Remember to take time to show gratitude to all the other creatures who make fire building possible. Did you know that after damp weather, beavers can help us find dry wood by chipping away the soggy exterior?

SACRED FIRE

Sometimes fires can seem a bit scary, especially when large events like forest fires happen. But traditional Anishinaabe knowledge tells us that we shouldn't be too frightened when these things happen. When a forest fire occurs naturally, this can be Earth's way of cleansing itself, and periodic forest fires are actually very important to the ecosystem!

So, rushing to put out every naturally caused forest fire might not be the best idea.

So, when building a fire, always remember to be safe and be respectful!

*Koko is a term used for a grandmother type figure, can also be used as Kokum. It is also used as a respectful name for a female Elder in the community.