



## Miami Nation Smudging and Drum Ceremony Information

As explained by Miami Nation of Indians of Indiana Drum Carrier Shane Fox

### About the Smudging Ceremony:

- The smoke comes from burnt sage
  - Sage is one of four sacred herbs (sage, tobacco, sweet grass and cedar)
- The sage is burnt inside a clam shell
  - The person performing the smudging says a silent prayer as he fans the smoke on each drummer, who also may say a silent prayer
- The drum, drumming equipment, drummers and dancers are all smudging before the drumming begins
  - Once sitting at the drum, each drummer makes an offering of tobacco to the drum (spread on the top of the drum) and offers another prayer in thanks for the privilege of drumming. Drummers must also have a clear state of mind before drumming
  - Drummers may not consume alcohol, be intoxicated or even hungover before drumming
- There are multiple meanings behind the smudging ceremony
  - Cleansing of the drum and those around the drum (including spectators if they want)
  - To thank the Creator and ask for help.



### **About the Drum and Drum Songs:**

- Drums are typically named and receive special blessings
- There are two distinct types of large drums:
  - Tribal Drums: the most sacred of drums, usually kept at the tribal complex – exclusively for Miami drummers over 13 years old
  - Family/Teaching Drums: these drums are used to demonstrate drumming to younger Miami Nation members and are more accessible to the public
- The drumheads are made from buffalo hide or cow hide and are protected from the elements out of respect, as well as to preserve the health of the drum.
- There are many types of Drum songs that are played
  - Songs that honor someone or a group (i.e. The Veteran Drum song that will be performed on-field pregame)
  - Songs about people and things that are loved (e.g. family, the land)
  - Songs that are made for a specific type of dance
  - Songs for fun and for kids
    - There is a SpongeBob SquarePants song!
- Songs not created by a drumming group themselves must be gifted to them before they can be sung.
  - This means, a member of the Miami Nation drummers must hear this song from another drum group and be given permission to play it
  - Some songs are sent out as a gift to everyone (do not need to get the original drummers' permission).



### About the Drummers:

- The current group of Miami drummers ranges from high teens to the 60's – but there is no age limit (other than 13 to sit at the Tribal drum).
- The Drum Carrier is the protector of the drum and leads most songs. Others may lead as training, or to spell the lead singer, or as right of status (such as Chief, Vice Chief, or the owner of the family drum being used at the time).
- The women dancers are an integral part of drumming – a drumming is incomplete without dancers. Women of the tribe can also deny drummers' access to the drum if they see disrespect in their actions.
- The drum sticks are typically made from wood or fiberglass, with padded leather grip and head.”
- As mentioned earlier, drummers are expected to be in a pure state of mind before and during the songs:
  - Drummers must not drink the night before or day of a drum ceremony
  - No crude language, cursing or any actions deemed as a lack of respect around the drum
  - No hats around the drum (with the exception of a hat with a raptor feather)
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