



# Spirit Prayer Sticks, Divine Partners

## A Brief History & Overview

By Shaman Bob ©2022

Humankind has quite a history with the common wooden stick. Since at least the times of the ancient Egyptians, sticks have served as prominent visual accessories for powerful leaders and religious elites. Decorated, carved, and adorned, these sticks have been recorded in civilizations across the world, such as Sumerian, African, Greek, Persian, Ancient Indian, Japanese, Chinese, Siberian, European and so many others. Even today, some form of those ancient sticks is symbolically employed by both governments and religions in some countries and regions.

Carefully chosen and prepared wooden sticks also figure prominently in some shamanic traditions, the most significant of which is for use as a sacred ally that will propel an individual or group above mere temporal power by fusing the triad of body, mind and spirit with the preeminent spiritual realms of universal service, healing and communion. And while it may be commonly referred to as a prayer stick, competent users know it to be an instrument of transformation.

I hope this brief paper will help you discern why something as ordinary as a stick can help to ignite and accelerate your spiritual understanding, experience and compassion. It offers perspectives on its efficacy for healers of any type, as well as for those who meditate and practice other forms of the contemplative arts. And finally, I offer thoughts about why these Prayer Sticks I now offer to the public rely on Lilac wood for their being. The key is **Gratitude and JOY!**

### Why Lilac Wood?



Imagine a warm, sunny day in the early spring with the unmistakable fragrance of lilac floating in the air, uplifting your spirits and enlivening the day as the Lilac whisks away winter's lingering hold. In fact, lilac's pervading presence is immediately evident to all of your senses—body, mind and spirit—a colorful, blooming messenger of renewal, and joy! Even when the plant is unseen, its wonderful heady aroma wends its way around any barrier to confirm the promise of creation, a reminder of the life force cycle that overcomes the barren season and renews itself again...and again. Because it bestows this

hopeful and recurring grace, the Lilac is an apt symbol for the life-giving union between the sky and the ground, the infusion of Spirit into the material world.

No wonder, then, that Lilac is a favorite of many healers who add it to their smudging mixtures and essential oil therapies. Its medicine has long been recognized through the ages for its inherent properties to treat fever, reduce stress and anxiety and to relieve digestive issues and conditions. Salves and lotions containing Lilac oil—whether from its blossoms or leaves—are recognized as premier ways to restore healthy skin. It's even embraced by those who have found it beneficial to unlock psychic/extra sensory abilities. (\*Please see below.)



Alternative healing practices often utilize earth-based products as natural and energetic tools that serve to aid the process of personal healing and spiritual awareness. It is only right, then, that you can call on a lilac wood prayer stick to be a soothing ally for help in your ceremonies and meditations. Just like I use sacred hardwoods to make Lightning-Struck Drums and other high energy healing aids, I have chosen the softer, precious wood of the beautiful Lilac for the gentler, decisively feminine energies for the Spirit Joy Prayer Stick. But whether I make drums and spirit sticks from lightning struck hardwoods or aged and weathered Lilac, all of the wood I use is not taken off a living plant. The woods I use for shamanic work have been made available for their transformation into healing tools after their transition by natural causes.

For prayer sticks, it wasn't a lightning charge that transformed them, but a beneficial thinning carried out by boring insects. (Who, incidentally, knew when this enormous and overgrown bush needed sunlight and air to revitalize it, and at the same time knew it would provide food for their own colony.) My part in the process began after I simply asked the bush for permission to repurpose its cast-away wood in order to carry on what it does best: spreading joy.

And that's where you come in!

## **Your Partnership with a Sacred Prayer Stick**

Healers learn about working with energy and develop the partnership with Spirit that's required for this sacred work. That concept is central to your partnership with a Prayer Stick.

There are other elements to being an effective healer, though, such as the sense of joy and an intention for healing, which 1.) direct the healer's mind and 2.) raise the frequency and resonance to allow for a healing experience. The ancients knew that the healer's state of mind was critical to success but what was once understood so long ago became lost upon the emergence of formal, Newtonian-like sciences several hundred years ago. It taught that the universe and reality itself is a mechanical construct that runs like a clock. They believed that what can't be known with

the five physical senses can't be "real" and that time runs in a straight line from past to present to future, with a beginning and an end. Most people today still orient themselves to this worldview.

But modern science and advanced physics has shown that reality and the universe itself is far less concrete and predictable, that more is unknown than known, and certainly that what is possible and what is real is not limited to the 3rd dimensional perspective most people live by, believing that a solid reality is the only truth there is.

In short, "new science" now supports the worldview long known and embraced by shamanic healers and mystics of old. Through discoveries of quantum physics, scientists have peered into the properties of Light/energy to reveal that subtle energies exist, and that they impact the way we experience our reality. What they discovered was astonishing, and they call it "the observer effect."

In short, (among other things) we now know that one's expectations and intentions can influence outcomes and further, that there is a hidden responsiveness—consciousness—that exists in the fields of Light that make up all living things. In the matter of healing and spiritual connection, the Universe responds to us, to our attention, focus, and intentions. As we search for a sacred union with spirit, a devoted focus and clear intention pave the way for transformation, and we can achieve that unique state of mind when we are engaged in prayer. Whether in ceremonies or alone in sacred space, shamanic prayer is approached with an attitude of partnership with Creation and always involves an acknowledgment of the fullness of and gratitude for life. This interchange reflects a deep-felt respect while conveying a loving, grateful expression that acknowledges the gifts of life, even when adversity is present, and relying on an inherent trust that loving Spirit hears and provides the guidance and aid we need.

All of this forms the loving relationship and bonding available with your Prayer Stick. Now then, how does the relationship begin?

### **Spirit Prayer Sticks and Altar Totems in Union with Your Breath.**

In the eyes of many Indigenous Peoples, sticks selected for spiritual use were not mere castoffs from Tree People, but actual beings that were often activated by the user's breath. They were soulful instruments with a deeply divine purpose. These sticks were nearly always fixed with feathers and lacings and were often made even more extravagant for various uses or ceremonies. In instances where healing was desired, the supplicant or shaman would prepare the stick with trimmings that were seen to convey spiritual energies, then they would consecrate—spiritually initiate—the stick. This was accomplished by imbuing life force and intention through ones' breath with the precious stick. Simply put, sharing your breath and stating (or holding at the front of your mind) your desired positive intentions energizes your prayer stick companion.



In the old ways and still in use today, a prayer was whispered into the stick for the propitiation from Spirit to overcome disease, injury or condition in someone who suffered, and was extensively used in shamanic ceremonies. At times it was given to the patient or their family to bolster the transformational process when a healing ceremony was completed.

There were other uses as well.

### **The Stick in Community Spiritual Practice**

Another equally important use came when the stick maker would enliven the stick with a shared breath and then offer it to Spirit in one of several different ways, but generally when staked near crops or in a village or during initiation ceremonies or burials/funerary rites. This could be done by the shaman or any prepared adult in the village. This move demonstrated enumerable motives and expectations that helped elevate the individual stick maker and community into the supplication of the spirits through the offering of a sacrificial gift intended for the higher realm or world. This required hard work and personal or collective sacrifice, with hope that Spirit would intervene as an acknowledgement of worthiness.

Many (but not all) researchers over time have agreed that this appeared to have been a de facto barter system with the spirits. But I disagree.

It seems obvious that far more than barter was involved, for wise shamans have long understood their intrinsic relationship with all forms of living matter and the consciousness within all things...including a simple stick imbued with the breath of life. Indeed, perhaps the most valued and desired outcome of using the Spirit Stick comes when the supplicants are, in effect, transformed and empowered through the realization that as one works directly with Spirit, humans are on a more equal footing with spiritual forces and can be active—not passive—participants in the unseen, energetic processes of existence.



Instead of being helpless victims of circumstance, shamans understood that humans can assume responsibility for the wellbeing of the entire community and draw upon Universal energies, such as using a spiritually consecrated stick, to mitigate their challenges in a mutual partnership with Spirit.

Thus, the use of prayer sticks and altar totems propel an ecstatic awareness of the need and responsibility to acknowledge, teach and share in the loving equality of all beings, high and low, and thus to displace a long established yet artificial standard of supremacy, one over another. In its place comes the unifying manifestation of the great work, communion with All That Is.

Aho & Namaste,  
Bob



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