**Amik Sweat Lodges Are for Purification**

Our people were given sweat lodges to purify ourselves – our minds and our bodies.  Your body and your mind will let you know how long to stay in, or when you need to go in.

When we sweat, we’re supposed to use our own language; we cannot hold a sweat using the English language.  That is because the Creator gave us the Ojibwe language, and we are supposed to use it in our ceremonies – not just during sweats, but also during our naming ceremonies, our funeral ceremonies, all of our ceremonies. You can’t do a ceremony using the English language.

We were also given cedar, sage, sweetgrass, and other plants to use for purifying ourselves, to prepare ourselves for communicating with the Creator.

There are different types of sweat lodges.  Different tribes have sweat lodges for different purposes, and they’re run differently, too.

I remember how it was for the people who raised me.  When they sweat, they sweat inside the house.  My dad had made a structure and covered it up with blankets.  They would go inside it and sweat there in their house.  It wasn’t necessary for them to go out in the woods and build a great big lodge.

But other tribes will do that – they will build a great big sweat lodge and use it year-round outdoors.  That’s their way.  Some of our people have adopted that, which is OK.  But I don’t think there’s any set rule or way to do that.

The opening to my dad’s sweat lodge in the house, where you crawled in, faced west, but there was not a specific reason for this.  Other tribes vary about which direction their lodges face.

Other tribes might also have co-ed sweat lodges, but ours are usually not co-ed.  And other tribes sometimes have five to ten people in there.  But with our tribe, I remember that sometimes just one person would go into a sweat lodge.  A lot of the Elders would sweat individually.  They wouldn’t do a big ceremony – they would just get in there, pray, and offer tobacco.

There is no set schedule for how often you should sweat.  That is pretty much up to each individual.  You decide, because it helps you relax and purify yourself.

I want to add – not just about the sweat lodge, but also about other things I put on paper – there are no experts on anything.  There are only people who have knowledge of certain things.  The things that I know are things that I’ve seen, things that I’ve lived, and things that I’ve learned from my Elders.