

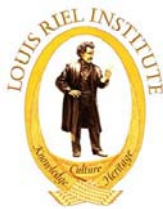
Puffball Fungus, Bovista (kaapikiyhtipayta), “the ones that smoke,” vesse-de-loup: Metis Medicine

The puffball fungus has a small round body that when mature, releases spores through a small hole in the top of the fungus when crushed. When observed on the ground, they appear to be a cluster of small white eggs. The mushroom cap and spores are used as medicine. The cottony mass in the centre of the ball can be used as a poultice on a wound to stop bleeding. One can also squirt the spores into a cut, or squirt them up a nostril, to stop a nosebleed. The spores are also used as a baby powder to prevent chafing.



Kaapikiyhtipayta, “the ones that smoke”, vesse-de-loup: At Bannock Point, 2015. Photo by L. Barkwell.

The Blackfoot called puffballs, ka-ka-taos or “fallen stars.” According to Indian legend, puffballs were stars fallen to earth during supernatural events. Puffballs and other fungi were also used as incense. Indians also used the “prairie mushroom” to heal the navels of newborn infants: its universal application to this use among the Dakota is derived their name for the puffball, Hokshi chekpa, or “baby’s navel.”



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