

# Medicine from **NATURE**



For thousands of years there was a natural system of medicine in our land. It was the first inhabitants who perfected that system based on their knowledge of trees and plants.

The valuable knowledge we had of plants and natural medicines enabled us to cure many illnesses. Did you know that it was **First Nations** people who **cured the scurvy** of the first Europeans to arrive here? The First Nations knew that this illness was not an infection, but the result of poor nutrition (a shortage of vitamin C in the diet).

The **sarsaparilla plant**, well known to the **Algonquin** people, has amazing properties. It nourishes and purifies the blood and strengthens the whole body. It can also be used to treat rheumatism and skin diseases.

Indigenous people also used **witch hazel** for its beneficial effects on the skin. We now find this plant used in a number of products such as creams, soaps and aftershave lotions.

The **fir, pine** and **spruce trees** that you are familiar with were used against coughs and to clear out the respiratory passages.

Indigenous people also made a **powder from sphagnum moss** to soothe skin irritations, especially the ones babies are prone to. This powder can still be found in pharmacies today; it is used to dry out wounds.

There are many other medicinal resources in nature that have not been mentioned here.

