

1.0. General Administration
1.B. Student Management

SMUDGING PRACTICES IN SCHOOL

Adopted: April 26, 2016, December 8, 2020

Reviewed by Committee:

Policy Reference: EL-1.1

In cooperation with the Aboriginal Education Directorate's recommendation to permit smudging in schools, the following guidelines are provided for school administration whenever smudging is to occur in a school or is part of a school event. In all cases, it is expected that the smudge facilitator inform the school administrator in advance of the smudge to allow for adherence to the expectations identified below.

Location

A room with an exterior door or a window that can be opened to the outside is expected.

Composition

It is recommended to use sage to smudge because all people can smudge with sage during anytime of the month. Tobacco shall never be used in schools.

Students/Participants

Explicit parent/guardian permission is required for participation (Appendix A). An opt-in is required and information about the purpose and process of the smudge must be communicated to parents (Appendix B).

General information shall be provided to the broader school population, as determined necessary by the school principal i.e. if this is a newer offering at the school.

Students will always have the option to pass and can still be part of the circle and experiential learning.

Students will have the option to join the sharing circle at a later juncture, if the student has concerns regarding the smoke or aroma.

Strategies to Mitigate Smoke and Aroma for Indoor Circles

The room being used for the smudge will have the interior door closed at all times.

The room being used for the smudge shall have the exterior door or window open to allow for ventilation.

Classroom doors in nearby areas shall be closed.

Upon completion of the smudge, any residual mixture shall be placed in a tin with a lid and placed outside the school if possible.

An information sheet is to be used to educate staff, students, parents/guardians each time a smudge takes place (Appendix B).

Acknowledgements: Mountain View School Division – Smudging Guidelines

Reference: Smudging Protocol and Guidelines (2014) Aboriginal Education Directorate, Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning.

Appendix A

Sample Smudging Permission Form

Date:

Dear Parents/Guardians:

On _____ our class/school will be performing a smudge. The purpose of the smudge is to _____.

Lakeshore School Division has developed Regulations and Procedures which will be followed for the smudge. Participation in the smudge is voluntary. Please read the accompanying information about smudging. Please sign the permission form below if you would like your son/daughter to participate in the smudge.

Sincerely,

I give permission for my son/daughter _____ to participate in the smudge being held on _____.

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

Appendix B

Smudging Information

Smudging is a purification ceremony that has its roots in the indigenous cultures of the world. As a tradition, it has been passed down from generation to generation and many ways and variations of how it is done exist. Smudging is an Aboriginal tradition that involves the burning of sweetgrass, sage, and/or cedar. Sage smudge produces a strong and distinct odour, but the smoke associated with it is minimal and lasts a very short time. Sweetgrass has a very mild aroma and produces even less smoke than sage. A smudge is burned primarily for purification and to help create a positive mindset: it helps to centre ourselves. It is taught through oral tradition that when the Great Spirit placed the four kingdoms here on Mother Earth – mineral, plant, animal and human – that four sacred plants entered into an agreement with humans. These four plants agreed to sacrifice their lives so that people could have purifying smoke to cleanse with, maintaining a balance within ourselves and each other, in exchange for our respectful treatment of them. The four plants, known as the sacred medicines, that entered into this agreement include: sage, sweetgrass, cedar and tobacco. Within our schools, we are not incorporating tobacco into our smudges.

Sweetgrass: Sweetgrass represents the North and the hair of Mother Earth. It provides clarity of the mind and purifies.

Sage: Sage represents the West. It is seen as a women's medicine, and offers strength, wisdom, and clarity of purpose.

Cedar: Cedar represents the South. It is used for purification and to attract positive energy.

Tobacco: Tobacco represents the East. Tobacco is used as an offering before you harvest anything from Mother Earth.

The Process:

The three medicines are placed in an abalone shell and lit with matches. The smoke from the dried medicines is pushed forward with an Eagle Feather. When we smudge, we first cleanse our hands with the smoke rising from the smudge bowl, as if we were washing our hands. We then draw the smoke over our hearts, our mouths, eyes, ears, and our feet.

- We cleanse our heart to open it up to compassion.
- We cleanse our mouth so that what we speak will be truthful and honest and said in a caring manner.
- We cleanse our eyes so that they will see the Truth in the world, the beauty of Mother Earth.
- We cleanse our ears so that we will clearly hear the messages of others and understand the truth.
- We cleanse our feet so that we will walk the True path of positive choices in our lives.
- The smudge bowl is offered by one person within the circle in a clockwise direction. Individuals in the group may choose to pass or to smudge.