

SMUDGING / PIPE CEREMONIES

Background

Greater St. Albert Catholic Schools encourages initiatives and supports cultural practices that actively align with the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's 94 Calls to Action](#) (2015), the [United Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(UNDRIP\)](#) and the [Alberta Teaching Quality Standards](#). In the spirit of reconciliation and to foster an atmosphere of respect, understanding and inclusivity, the Division recognizes the importance of smudging for many Indigenous Peoples and permits the practice of smudging in Division schools, following the procedures outlined below.

Definition

Smudging is an Indigenous tradition which involves the burning of sage, sweetgrass, willow fungus and/or cedar. Smudge produces a distinct odour, but the smoke associated with it is minimal and lasts a very short time. With First Nations and Métis who smudge, sacred plants are burned to cleanse the body, mind, spirit of any bad feelings, negative thoughts, or negative energy - cleansing both physically and spiritually. Smudging allows people to remember, to connect and to be grounded in the present.

Pipe Ceremony - a particular type of ceremonial smoking pipe, used by a number of Indigenous cultures in their sacred ceremonies. Traditionally they are used to open a ceremony, to make a ceremonial commitment, or to seal a covenant or treaty.

Elder refers to someone recognized by their community as having attained a high degree of understanding of First Nations, Métis or Inuit history, spirituality, traditional language, cultural teachings, ceremonies or healing practices.

Knowledge Keepers are individuals recognized by Elders and their community as having knowledge and wisdom related to First Nations, Métis, or Inuit cultural practices, customs, history, values and/or language. Knowledge Keepers can sometimes be referred to as "cultural advisors."

Procedures

1. If smudging or a pipe ceremony is to take place in a Division building or designated site, principals/supervisors must ensure staff understand the associated protocols and importance of smudging and pipe ceremonies as part of Indigenous traditional ways of life.
 - 1.1. Administration and school staff will refer to **Appendix A: GSACRD Guiding Document on Smudging** when leading or organizing a smudge. The person conducting the smudge may be a(n):
 - a) Elder or Knowledge Keeper;

- b) cultural teacher or advisor;
 - c) knowledgeable staff member;
 - d) family member or guardian; and/or student.
- 1.2 Pipe ceremonies are typically led by an elder and require permission from the Assistant Superintendent of Learning Services.
- 2. The principal will:
 - 2.1 Inform staff, students, and parents of the opportunities for smudging at the beginning of the school year.
 - 2.2 Communicate location of smudging sites in the school.
 - 2.3 Ensure appropriate signage is posted at space for smudging.
- 3 If smudging or a pipe ceremony is to take place in a Division building, it will be in a designated area. Any locations designated as smudging or pipe ceremony areas are to be well ventilated and approved by the principal in consultation with the Manager of Operations and Maintenance.
- 4 Designated smudging or pipe ceremony areas must contain a fully charged fire extinguisher and staff responsible for overseeing a smudging or pipe ceremony must follow safety procedures as listed in the GSACRD Guiding Document on Smudging.
- 5 When smudging or pipe ceremonies are completed, the materials must be fully extinguished and stored in a culturally appropriate manner in accordance with the GSACRD Guiding Document on Smudging.
- 6 When smudging or pipe ceremonies occur in a Division building, [appropriate signage](#) shall be displayed outside of the space used for smudging and any other space that is appropriate for the location, (i.e. at the main entrance or main office).
- 7 When students are offered the opportunity to participate in a smudge, efforts will be made to communicate the significance of smudging with students and parents/guardians. In following Indigenous values, participation in smudging is ***always voluntary***.
 - 6.1 People should never be forced or pressured to smudge.
 - 6.2 It is completely acceptable for a person to indicate that they do not want to smudge and that person may choose to stay in the room and refrain or leave the room during a smudge.
 - 6.3 It is done with respect for those who choose not to be involved, as well as those who choose to be involved.

Smudging Guiding Document

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Smudging Protocol Checklist Roles and Responsibilities <i>A Student / family / staff member has requested or has expressed interest in a smudge.</i>	
Before I conduct or facilitate a smudge	I have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Received proper teachings and/or permission from an Elder or knowledge holder connected to GSACRD <input type="checkbox"/> Made administration aware of detailed plans, including date, time, location and participants <input type="checkbox"/> Properly sourced materials have been obtained following protocols <input type="checkbox"/> Selected and tested the location to ensure ethical space for everyone Colleagues who are in close proximity to the smudge location are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Fully informed of the details <input type="checkbox"/> Invited to enter into respectful conversation <input type="checkbox"/> Have ongoing opportunity to ask questions <input type="checkbox"/> Invited to participate, if interest expressed
During a smudge	I have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Posted a sign on the door notifying others that a Smudge is in Progress <input type="checkbox"/> Followed teachings from an Elder or Knowledge Keeper connected to GSACRD <input type="checkbox"/> Ensured the amount of medicinal plants used does not create excess smoke

	<input type="checkbox"/> Followed the smudging Administrative Procedures 163 <input type="checkbox"/> Ensured an ethical space was held for everyone
Follow-Up after I conducted or facilitated a smudge	I have: <input type="checkbox"/> Ensured protocols for the ashes were honoured <input type="checkbox"/> Sought feedback from colleagues in close proximity <input type="checkbox"/> Addressed any issues or concerns, if any
<i>With gratitude to Elk Island Public Schools for sharing their Indigenous smudge knowledge framework.</i>	

The following are helpful suggestions from the Alberta Teacher's Association's [First Nation Traditional Plants and Uses](#) when considering smudging in your classrooms or school community:

- First and foremost, seek guidance from a local Elder, Knowledge Keeper, Cultural Advisor or other Indigenous expert.
- Provide background information on the smudging ceremony to staff, students and families in collaboration with a local Indigenous expert, including who will be offering the smudging ceremony.
- Post the time frame in the area and e-mail staff, students and families in advance.
- Explore possible allergic sensitivities for students and staff and consider well-ventilated areas internally and externally
- Expect that students and staff may prefer to observe and learn the teachings provided, rather than participate directly in the smudging ceremony.
- Inquire about existing policies and regulations within your school division, as well as discuss the possibilities with staff dedicated to building facilities.
- Smudging is personal and always voluntary. People should never be forced or pressured to smudge. It is completely acceptable for a person to indicate that he or she does not want to smudge and that person may choose to stay in the room and refrain or leave the room during a smudge. Respect for all is the guiding principle in any Indigenous practice.

Honorarium Guidelines

Although these are suggested guidelines for providing culturally responsive honoraria, the specific request will determine the respectful honoraria to provide. For example, a sweat lodge or pipe ceremony requires a great deal of preparation and time compared to an opening or closing prayer. It is imperative to clarify the honoraria with the Elder, Knowledge Keeper and Cultural Advisor prior to receiving the service requested.

Activity Type	Length of Activity	Honorarium
Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Cultural Advisors to perform opening prayer, tipi teachings and set up and closing prayer	.5 day	\$250
	1 day (over 6 hours)	\$500
Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Cultural Advisors to perform opening prayer, advice and closing prayer	.5 day	\$250
	1 day (over 6 hours)	\$400
Cultural artist to perform activities such as sewing, beading, tufting, quilling	.5 day (minimum 1 hour)	\$250 (plus supplies)
	1 day (over 6 hours)	\$500 (plus supplies)
Cultural Performance	Master of Ceremonies (facilitator)	\$250
	Dancer(s)	\$150 per person
	Singer(s)	\$150 per person
	Host drum	\$600

Additional considerations for Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Cultural Advisors include:

- Offering protocol prior to receiving the service (ie, tobacco for First Nations Elders and Tea For Métis and Inuit Elders).
 - Providing a gift following the service provided (ie, blanket, swag, student artwork);
 - Hosting by providing necessary food and refreshments;
 - Travel and lodging provided as necessary;
 - Providing the honoraria immediately following the service requested.

References:

[Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's 94 Calls to Action \(2015\)](#)

[United Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(UNDRIP\)](#)

[Alberta Teaching Quality Standards](#)

Section 16, 197, [Education Act](#)

[Elder Protocol](#)

[First Nations Traditional Plants and Uses](#)

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