
SMUDGING / PIPE CEREMONIES

Background

Truth and Reconciliation 48 (ii): “Respecting Indigenous peoples’ right to self determination in spiritual matters, including the right to practice, develop and teach their own spiritual and religious traditions, customs and ceremonies, consistent with article 12:1 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.”

The Division recognizes the spiritual needs of the Indigenous community. We recognize that smudging and the use of herbs and tobacco are a part of the Indigenous traditional way of life and are, therefore, permitted in Division schools, subject to proper safety measures.

Definition

Smudging is an Indigenous tradition which involves the burning of sage, sweetgrass and/or cedar. Smudge produces a distinct scent, but the smoke associated with it is minimal and lasts a very short time. A smudge is burned to cleanse the body, mind, spirit of any bad feelings, negative thoughts, or negative energy - cleansing both physically and spiritually.

Procedures

1. If smudging is to take place in a Division building, principals/supervisors must ensure staff understand the associated protocols and importance of smudging and pipe ceremonies as part of the Indigenous traditional way of life.
2. If smudging is to take place in a Division building it will be in an area that meets criteria 3,4 and 5 below.
3. Any space used as a smudging area is to be well-ventilated and approved by the Principal.
4. Smudging areas must contain a fully charged fire extinguisher.
5. Staff responsible must be instructed on the use of fire extinguishers.
6. When smudging ceremonies are completed, the materials must be fully extinguished and disposed of in an appropriate manner.
 - 6.1. Smoking or warm smudging materials need to burn out on their own;
 - 6.2. Smudge remnants and matches are to be placed in a tin can and saved;
 - 6.3. Smudge remnants are never to be placed in trash receptacles.
7. Tobacco is used in pipe ceremonies and only by a pipe carrier.