

### 204 SMUDGING AND THE CEREMONIAL USE OF TOBACCO

#### Background

Smudging is a tradition, common to many Indigenous people, which involves the burning of one or more natural plants gathered from the Earth. The most common traditional plants used in smudges are sweetgrass, sage and alpine spruce. The Division recognizes 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.

Smudging is passed down from generation to generation. There are many ways and variations on how a smudge is done. The Canadian Rockies School Division supports the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge, customs and practices in its schools for the purpose of creating an atmosphere that is affirming to Indigenous students and families and that promotes respect for, and understanding of the Indigenous peoples of Canada among all students.

#### Procedures

1. Requirements for Smudging
  - a. Smudging must be approved by the Coordinator: Education Service Agreement through the school principal. This approval may be a one-time or occasional event or a regularly scheduled practice.
  - b. Local Elders and/or Knowledge Keepers should be consulted before undertaking any Indigenous ceremonies. There may be local protocols for conducting a smudge and for handling the materials, including the disposal of smudge remnants, that need to be respected.
  - c. The smudge should be conducted by someone with a thorough cultural knowledge of the appropriate traditions and an ability to transfer this knowledge to others, including children and youth. This person could be an Elder, Knowledge Keeper, cultural teacher, member of the school staff, parent/guardian or even a student.
2. Participation
  - a. Smudging is always voluntary. No one (student or staff) is to be compelled or pressured to participate.

- b. Parents/guardians should be given advance notice in writing of a smudge, either before a specific event or at the beginning of the school year if smudging will be a regular occurrence.
- c. Parents may notify the school in writing if they choose to not have their child participate or if they have specific requests around how their child should observe the ceremony.

### 3. Facilities

- a. The room or area where a smudge is taking place must be supervised by a member of the school staff, regardless of who is conducting the smudge.
- b. It is preferable to have a designated room within a school for smudging, with appropriate signage indicating how and when the room is used. Signage at the school should reference provincial laws and/or local bylaws regarding the use of tobacco.
- c. An indoor smudge requires mitigation of the health risks posed to some students by smoke and the safety risks posed to all. The room must have:
  - i. adequate ventilation, e.g., a window or stand-alone air exchange (i.e., separate from other air exchange units in the building);
  - ii. adequate room capacity; and
  - iii. zero or minimal combustible materials.
- d. If a school facility is being used by a community group for an event that includes smudging, written consent must be obtained from the Canadian Rockies School Division, and the event must comply with this Administrative Procedure.

## References

Education Act, Sections 51, 52, 53, 54, 197, 204, 222, 225  
Tobacco and Smoking Reduction Act  
Smoke-free Places Act Tobacco  
Smoking Reduction Act  
Smudging Protocol and Guidelines for School Divisions (2019)

## History

Developed: November 2022