

Administrative Procedure 164

February 14, 2017

SMUDGING / PIPE CEREMONIES

Background

Smudging is a tradition common to many First Nations peoples. It is a cleansing process in which sage and/or sweet grass are burned. The sage rids a person of negativity, such as anger or ill will, while sweet grass draws positive energy.

The smoke purifies us and lets **lhtsi-pai-tapi-yopa** (Essence of All Life; Creator) hear our prayers.

Smudging allows people to stop, slow down, become mindful and centered. This allows people to remember, connect and be grounded in the event, task or purpose at hand. Smudging also allows people to let go of something negative. Letting go of things that inhibit a person from being balanced and focused comes from the feeling of being calm and safe while smudging.

Smudging is always voluntary. People should never be forced or pressured to smudge. It is completely acceptable for a person to indicate that he/she does not want to smudge. That person may choose to stay in the room or refrain or leave the room during a smudge. **Respect for all is the guiding principle in an Aboriginal tradition.**

Schools and school divisions are places of learning. The inclusion of relevant cultural, spiritual and traditional knowledge and practices within schools and school divisions can positively impact student success. Smudging is a relevant Aboriginal practice.

The primary goals of this procedure are to make smudging possible in all schools and division office and to ensure the health and safety of all staff and students.

Guidelines

1. Aboriginal practices in Holy Spirit Catholic School Division respect the agreement of Treaty 7 with the Blackfoot people, local customs and cultural, spiritual and traditional knowledge in the Blackfoot territory.
2. A smudge is led by a person who has an understanding of what a smudge is and why it is done. That person may be an Elder or cultural teacher who has been invited to the school and who has been given the right to lead a smudge.
3. Smudging is used to begin ceremonies, meetings or other gatherings, though it can also be performed on its own. Smudging is used to commence a new day. The smudge is lit and the resulting smoke is regarded as a purifying agent for the mind, body and spirit.

4. When smudging, the person who lights the smudge is first. Hands are initially cleansed with the smoke as if by washing them. Then the smoke is drawn over the head, eyes, ears, mouths and bodies. The actions are prayerful and are reminders to think good thoughts, see good things, hear good things, speak good things and show the good of who we are.
5. Smudging is a sacred practice that is honoring of culture. It is important to educate and inform students, staff and families about smudging. An invitation for any students, parents or staff to participate is extended with that understanding. Schools will embrace and encourage dialogue.
6. Smudging will occur in a respectful manner and place that recognizes the needs of all students and staff in the school building.
7. Smudging is a voluntary, informed act.
8. The Principal will ensure that there is teaching about smudging in the school to students, staff and families through classroom instruction, student assemblies and school council meetings. This will be an ongoing process.

Procedures

1. At the beginning of each school year, the Principal will designate one or more smudging sites in each school that will provide a dedicated site to allow individuals to conduct smudging ceremonies. Agreement on location of smudging sites shall be made in a consultative manner with the Principal of the school that the smudge is taking place at, the Director of Religious Education (or designate), the First Nation, Metis and Inuit Support Worker at that school (if applicable) and the Plant Operations Coordinator.
2. The Principal will communicate to all staff, students and parents the location of the smudging sites in the school and provide notice that smudging may occur on a regular basis at those sites.
3. For special events where the designated smudging site may not be appropriate, the Principal will provide advance notification to staff, students and parents indicating the date, time and place. It is recommended that at least 48 hours notice be provided.
4. When notified of smudging:
 - 4.1 Parents / guardians / students with independent status will report and verify any sensitivity or health matters related to smudging, and the degree to which it impacts their child's participation or attendance, to the school.
 - 4.2 Staff will report and verify any sensitivity or health matters related to smudging, and the degree to which it impacts their work, to the principal.

- 4.3 The Principal, in consultation with the Plant Operations Coordinator, will ensure the development, implementation and communication of appropriate accommodations.
5. When smudging ceremonies are completed the materials must be fully extinguished and disposed of in an appropriate manner.
 - 5.1 Smoking or warm smudging materials need to burn out on their own.
 - 5.2 Smudge remnants and matches are to be placed in a tin can and saved.
 - 5.3 Once the tin can is full, the contents must be buried.
 - 5.4 Smudge remnants are **never** to be placed in trash receptacles
6. As an integral part of large, formal ceremonies and gatherings such as round dances, pipe ceremonies are covered under these same procedures.
7. Tobacco is used in pipe ceremonies and only by a pipe carrier.
8. The Principal will communicate any concerns or issues regarding smudging to the Director of Religious Education.

References:

Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park- Ceremonies
Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada: Words First - An Evolving Terminology
Relating to Aboriginal Peoples in Canada
Smudging Protocol and Guidelines for School Divisions- Aboriginal Education Directorate Manitoba
Education and Advanced Learning 2014
Smudging Protocol and Guidelines for School District No. 58 (Nicola-Similkameen)