

SMUDGING AND 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. 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.

Definition

Smudging - an Indigenous tradition which involves the burning of sage, sweetgrass, fungus, 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, and spirit of any bad feelings, negative thoughts, or negative energy - cleansing both physically and spiritually. Participating in a smudge promotes wellness and supports Catholic teachings regarding the importance of caring for our whole being: mind, body, and spirit.

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.

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 a designated area.
3. Any areas designated as smudging areas are to be well-ventilated area, preferably with windows that open, and approved by the Principal. The room's fire detection system must not include smoke detectors (sprinklers and heat detectors only). This includes areas immediately adjacent.
4. Designated smudging areas must contain a fully charged fire extinguisher.

5. Staff responsible must be instructed on the use of fire extinguishers.
6. Smudging should occur in the same space as where subsequent teachings, work, or meetings will take place. There is acknowledgement that requiring a smudge to occur in an out-of-way location can be a historical reminder when Indigenous practices were illegal, forbidden, or unwelcome.
7. When smudging ceremonies are completed the materials must be fully extinguished and disposed of in an appropriate manner.
 - 7.1. Smoking or warm smudging materials need to burn out on their own.
 - 7.2. Smudge remnants and matches are to be placed in a non-flammable container and saved.
 - 7.3. Smudge remnants should be returned to the earth in a natural area such as a meadow or park. Remnants are never to be placed in trash receptacles.
8. Tobacco is used in pipe ceremonies and only by a pipe carrier.

Reference:

Sections 52, 53, 54, 197, 204, 222, 225, Education Act
Tobacco, Smoking and Vaping Reduction Act

Cross References:

AP 155 Event Protocol
AP 160 Inclusive Catholic Communities Providing Safe Caring Learning Environments
AP 163 Tobacco Free Environment
AP 165 Emergency Plans