

#1718785

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## **SWEATLODGES**

### **What is a sweatlodge?**

The sweatlodge ceremony is practiced by many Indigenous people in Manitoba and across North America. A traditional ceremony, it can be performed by itself or as a prelude to other ceremonies. Rocks are heated within a fire outside of the lodge, and then placed in a pit inside the lodge. Once the participants are inside the lodge, water is poured onto the rocks to create steam which heats the lodge. The lodge is dark during the ceremony.

Each sweatlodge has a different purpose and is overseen by an Elder or Lodge Keeper who provides teachings and songs throughout the ceremony. Through this experience, the body is cleansed — removing stress and improving one's mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual wellbeing. Such ceremonies are used to learn, to give thanks, to heal, to seek wisdom and to purify the mind, body and soul (Red River College, 2016).

### **Sweat Lodge Procedures**

1. The teacher in charge will discuss with their administrator about why they want to attend the sweatlodge with their student group, how it will connect to their curriculum and classroom work, who will participate, and to have some idea as to when they want to go.
2. After obtaining the approval of administration, the teacher in charge will contact a member of the Indigenous Education Team in the Division to provide a knowledgeable and experienced sweatlodge conductor.
3. Prior to attending the sweatlodge, the teacher in charge will arrange a conversation with the Elder or Lodge Keeper who will conduct the sweat. The teacher in charge will get directions on protocols and guidelines.
4. The teacher in charge will inform the families of the students attending the sweatlodge. Whenever possible, the participation of family members in the ceremony should be encouraged.

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5. The teacher in charge will be familiar with the closest hospital and ensure a first aid kit and communication device (i.e. cell phone) are brought on the trip. They will also ensure that there is access to water onsite.
6. The Elder or Lodge Keeper ensures that the sweatlodge is a safe space for everyone. The effects of thermal stress must be considered in the planning and during this learning experience. Refer to *Safework Guideline for Thermal Stress*  
<https://www.safemanitoba.com/Resources/Pages/thermal-stress-guide.aspx>. Appropriate steps must be taken to ensure the safety of all in attendance.
7. The teacher in charge will select appropriate volunteers for the activity, (see form IJOA-E-7) and provide volunteers with directions as to the requirements of the trip, appropriate cultural protocols, and their responsibilities, including criminal and child abuse checks in accordance with division policy IJOA before the departure of the activity.
8. The teacher in charge will ensure that students who are participating in the sweatlodge have written parental/guardian permission to do so, through both the St. James-Assiniboia School Division field trip consent form, and the St. James-Assiniboia School Division sweatlodge parent permission form (Exhibit IJOAB-E).
9. The teacher in charge will arrange an in-class learning opportunity with an Indigenous Education Team member from the Division prior to the experience to ensure that everyone attending (students, staff, and volunteers) understands proper safety and cultural protocols.

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