

#1718980

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SWEATLODGES

A path to an Indigenous-inclusive education system is grounded in Indigenous histories, cultures, languages, traditional values and knowledge, and contemporary lifestyles. An equitable, inclusive, and diverse education system fosters a sense of belonging in all learners so that they feel they can succeed, take responsibility, find their purpose in life, and achieve The Good Life. St. James-Assiniboia School Division is committed to providing authentic, rich learning experiences for all students. To ensure that schools are inclusive and culturally responsive, First Nation, Métis and Inuit perspectives are integrated into the curriculum and the school community. The Division shares this perspective with staff, students and community to foster a culture of respect, understanding and inclusivity. This policy and regulation have been developed in accordance with the Indigenous Education Policy (IFCA) and Regulation (IFCA-R), as well as *Mamàhtawisiwin* (2022), developed by the Indigenous Inclusion Directorate, Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning.

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).

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. Grandfather 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 Grandfather rocks to create steam which heats the lodge. The lodge is dark during the ceremony.

The Division recognizes that participation in a sweatlodge is always voluntary for students and staff. They also have the opportunity to leave the lodge at any time. For those choosing not to participate, they will have the opportunity to sit outside of the lodge so that they can still engage in the learning experience.

Sweatlodge conductors (Elders or Lodge Keepers) are people who have trained for many years to earn the right to conduct sweats. They have received the

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teachings and have gone through ceremonies to develop the gift that is given to them. The sweatlodge conductor knows the protocol and history of their lodge. (Anishnawbe Health Toronto, 2000). The health and well-being of the participants is always their first priority.

See IJOAB-R for additional sweatlodge information.

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