

#358853

IMDE
IMDE-E-1
IMDE-E-2

SMUDGING PRACTICES

How do we Smudge?

A smudge is led by a person who has an understanding of what a smudge is and why it is done. The person may be an Elder or Cultural teacher who has been invited in to a school; it can be a staff person who feels knowledgeable and comfortable to lead the smudge; it can be a parent/guardian; it can be a student.

Traditional medicines are placed in a smudge container. The container may be a shell, a ceramic bowl, a stone bowl, a copper bowl, a brass or cast-iron pan. The medicine is lit, preferably with a wooden match, but at times all that may be available is a lighter. Once the medicine is lit, the smoke may be pushed forward with a feather or a fan. The person who lights the smudge is first to smudge.

When we smudge, we first cleanse our hands with the smoke as if we were washing our hands. We then draw the smoke over our heads, eyes, ears, mouths and our bodies. These actions remind us to think good thoughts, see good things, hear good things, speak good things, touch others in a good way, and walk gently upon the earth.

Smudging Procedures

1. Decide when and where smudging will be allowed. It may be done in a designated place on school grounds, approved by the Division's Workplace Health and Safety Officer to ensure that there is proper ventilation. The most important thing is that when a smudge is lit, it is done with respect.

Requiring a smudge to take place outdoors if the event is not an outdoor event, or hidden away, is not respectful and is a reminder of the days when Indigenous cultural traditions were banned.

2. Communicate with parents/guardians; staff and students what smudging is, why people smudge and when and where smudging will be taking place. This should be an ongoing process. We encourage parents/guardians and staff to ask questions or express their concerns.
3. Ensure students who are smudging have written parental/guardian permission to do so. (Exhibit IMDE-E-2, Parent/Guardian Consent for Participation in Smudging at School).

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4. Give parents/guardians, staff and students advanced notice at the beginning of the year about smudging protocols in your building. Have smudging posters posted in the building for parents to see (IMDE-E-3 Poster for Smudging).
5. Use only traditional medicines to smudge. It can produce a very strong, distinct aroma. As students learn more, they will come to learn about the other common medicines as well.
6. When introducing the tradition of smudging, it is best to access an Elder or traditional teacher who can explain smudging, the medicines, the teachings and the protocols. It is hoped that smudging will become an accepted and regular part of the school culture and capacity will be built within the division over time so that others will become comfortable to lead a smudge.
7. Ensure that participating in smudging is voluntary.
8. Ashes from smudging should be returned to the ground. The location should be where no one would step on the ashes, such as by the trunk of a tree.

SOURCE: Smudging Protocol and Guidelines, Indigenous Inclusion Directorate, Manitoba Education and Training, 2019

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