



AP 209 INDIGENOUS CEREMONIAL ACTIVITIES: SMUDGING/PIPE CEREMONIES

Approved: May 27, 2024
Amended: May 27, 2024
Reviewed: May 27, 2024
Due: Jun 30, 2026

Background

Smudge is a traditional practice shared by Indigenous cultures across Turtle Island (North America) and beyond. Every nation has their own protocols and teachings regarding the practice of smudge. Smudge is a land-based ceremony and a cleansing practice (Alberta Recreation & Parks Association, 2020). It is imperative that in learning about smudge, individuals familiarize themselves with the teachings of the place in which they are situated (CBE, 2023). Many First Nations share a belief in the concept of the good life. Implicit within that is the understanding that all life is a ceremony; that sacred and secular are both parts of the whole and that people are whole beings consisting of body, mind, spirit and emotion (Manitoba Education and Training, 2019). This informs the way smudging, and learning about Indigenous ways of knowing are experienced in classrooms, and in our community.

The Calgary Girls Charter School respects the cultural traditions of Indigenous communities and is committed to working in ways that reflect Indigenous worldviews and Indigenous ways of being, knowing, belonging, and doing. CGCS is committed to providing time and space for staff, students, families, and community members to build relationships that honour Indigenous knowledge systems.

The Alberta Human Rights Commission, Canadian Human Rights Act, Canadian Constitution, Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples include legal protections for the fundamental right for Indigenous Peoples to freely practice spiritual traditions and to be treated fairly and inclusively. The Calgary Girls Charter School supports initiatives that actively promote the successful implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, Competency 5 of Alberta Education's Teaching Quality Standard, Competency 5 of the Alberta Leadership Quality Standard, Alberta Education Act and the spirit of reconciliation between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous Peoples. Additionally, The Tobacco, Smoking, and Vaping Reduction Act (Statutes of Alberta, 2005) does not preclude schools or individuals from engaging in smudging and the act of smudging is not listed as harmful to individuals or communities.

To this end, CGCS recognizes the importance of smudging as part of authentic Indigenous learning as outlined by Alberta Education and permits the practice of smudging, when following the procedures and practices outlined below.

Protocols for Smudging

1. Smudging is a practice in many Indigenous cultures that involves the burning of dried sage, sweetgrass and/or cedar. A smudge is burned to cleanse the body, mind, spirit of negative thoughts and feelings and is considered to cleanse people and spaces physically and spiritually. Smudge produces a distinct odor. The smoke associated is minimal and lasts a very short time.
2. Smudging is part of an Indigenous worldview, and is an inclusive ceremonial act and an educational learning opportunity for students, staff, and the entire CGCS learning community. Respect for all is the guiding principle in any Indigenous tradition. Smudging is always voluntary.
3. Smudging can take place individually or in a group and is an opportunity for students and staff to learn about Indigenous worldviews through participation, or through observation.
4. With principal approval, students can participate in smudging ceremonies on or off school grounds. Families will always be notified prior.
5. Tobacco is used in pipe ceremonies and only by a pipe carrier.
6. If a student requests a space to smudge, CGCS will support by making a space available to smudge. CGCS staff can offer additional support by lighting a smudge for students (facility limitations, schedule, etc) .

Procedures for Smudging

Prior to any smudging event taking place with CGCS students or staff, consent from the Principal or a designate is required. In providing consent for smudging, the Principal or designate will:

1. Review the completed Event Proposal and communicate approval.
2. Determine and designate the location for smudging ceremony, being considerate of ventilation, number of participants, and time of year.
3. Confirm an operational fire extinguisher is readily available and that staff are instructed on its proper use.
4. Communicate time and location of smudging to CGCS staff in writing.
5. Require staff to follow associated procedures as found below.
6. When required, ensure the Smudge Kit is readily available.

Procedure for smudging in a group:

Before:

1. The Lead Teacher will complete a CGCS Event proposal form including a smudging letter to families (Appendix A) and submit to the Principal for approval. As part of Event Proposal, the purpose of the smudging will be identified and it will be identified if there will be an Elder or Knowledge Keeper leading the smudge. CGCS staff will not lead students, or other staff members, in smudge without first receiving teachings from an Elder or Knowledge Keeper.
2. Upon approval, provide a smudging letter to Families within one week of event. Parents/guardians may opt themselves and/or their student(s), as well, students may opt themselves out of participation at any time. If a student does opt out, there will be supervision provided for the student. (AP 205)
3. In preparation, the Lead Teacher will consult the Indigenous Elder or Knowledge Keeper leading the smudge if presenting tobacco, or another medicine, at the conclusion of the event is an appropriate way to give thanks.

During:

1. All participants in the smudge may opt in or opt out at any point as smudging is always invitational and voluntary.
2. A smudge kit, provided by the school or provided by an Elder or Knowledge Keeper, will be used for the smudging. (Appendix B). Staff are encouraged to consult an Elder about smudging with sage only, as we are a girls school, and other medicines should not be used during *moon time*.
3. The Lead Teacher will ensure smudging is taking place in the principal approved space.
4. Lead Teacher will ensure an operational fire extinguisher is readily accessible.

After:

1. A smudge ball may burn out naturally, while the person leading the smudge watches, paying close attention until the smudge has burned out entirely. Depending on time of year, ash or ends of Sweetgrass or sage, may be buried on or off site or washed away with water. An Elder or Knowledge Keeper should be consulted about specific protocols.
2. If deemed appropriate, the Indigenous Elder or Knowledge Keeper will be presented tobacco, or another medicine, in thanks.

Procedure for smudging individually:

1. In the event an Indigenous individual (staff or student) requests to smudge individually the Principal, or a designate, will use discretion when allocating resources available to support the set up and facilitation of the smudge.

Reference: Education Act 27, 33, 52, 53, 196, 197, 222
Prevention of Youth Tobacco Use Act and Regulation 13/2003
The Tobacco, Smoking, and Vaping Reduction Act (Statutes of Alberta, 2005)
Alberta Human Rights Commission
CBE AP(2023)
Manitoba Education and Training document, 2019
Canadian Human Rights Act
Canadian Constitution 1982
Charter of Rights and Freedoms
United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
Indigenous Foundations -University of British Columbia
<https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/home/>

Appendix A: Sample Letter

Appendix B: Smudging Kit Equipment and Supplies

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As part of our ongoing learning, students in grade [grade] at Calgary Girls Charter School will have an opportunity to participate in a traditional smudge on [date].

Smudge involves burning a small amount of dried plant such as sage, sweetgrass or cedar inside a cast iron dish or abalone shell. During smudge, participants sit in a circle and listen to an Indigenous Elder, Knowledge Keeper, or a group facilitator offer teachings about the practice and its role in historical and contemporary Indigenous communities. The smudge bowl may be passed around the circle as part of this traditional way of opening or beginning time together. Participation in smudge is informed, always voluntary, and will be connected to learning. If, for any reason, a student is not participating in the experiential learning, the teacher will ensure that associated learning outcomes are available.

The inclusion of Indigenous perspectives and experiences in classrooms is supported and encouraged by the Alberta Human Rights Commission, Canadian Human Rights Act, Canadian Constitution, Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Additionally, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action and Alberta Education's Teaching Quality Standard, which all teachers are expected to meet, are foundational to this practice.

This learning experience aligns directly to Alberta's Education for Reconciliation and connects to various outcomes in the Alberta Programs of Study which demonstrates Alberta's commitment to First Nations, Metis and Inuit Perspectives and experiences in curriculum.

We are honoured to offer this learning opportunity to our students. If your student has health concerns that may impact their participation, or if you have additional questions please contact your student's classroom teacher.

Warm Regards,

[Name] [Position title]

Appendix B

Included in the Smudging Kit for individuals or groups will be:

- Abalone shell or cast iron dish
- Medicinal herb including: sage, sweetgrass, cedar or other
 - **Staff are encouraged to consult an Elder about smudging with sage only, as we are a girls school, and other medicines should not be used during *moon time*.
- Box of matches
- Silicone Mat (for protection of surfaces)
- Water bottle
- Glass Jar (for disposal of ashes and matches)

NOTES:

* The Smudging Kit will be stored in a secure, locked location, maintained by the Principal or designate.

*A fire extinguisher must be used with this kit, but may not be stored with it.

*Access to a fan, if available, may also be considered.

*A loose tobacco offering wrapped in broadcloth will be stored with the smudge kit, and is available to present to Indigenous Elders or Knowledge Keepers for their leadership in smudging with staff or students