

SMUDGING IN DIVISION FACILITIES

Background:

Elk Island Public Schools 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 and the spirit of reconciliation between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous Peoples. To that end, the Division recognizes the importance of smudging for many Indigenous Peoples and permits the practice of smudging in Division schools, following the procedures outlined below.

Definitions:

Smudging:

is an Indigenous tradition that involves the burning of sage, sweetgrass, willow fungus or cedar. Smudge produces smoke and a distinct odour, which are minimal and that last for a short time. The sacred plants are burned to cleanse the body, mind and spirit of any negative feelings, thoughts or energy—cleansing both physically and spiritually. Smudging also allows people to remember, connect and feel grounded in the present.

Elder:

is a First Nations, Métis or Inuit individual recognized by their community for their wisdom—passed down through generations—concerning traditions, knowledge, spirituality, culture and language.

Knowledge Keeper:

is an individual recognized by Elders and their community as having knowledge and wisdom related to First Nations, Métis or Inuit cultural practices, customs, history, values and language. A knowledge keeper is also sometimes referred to as a cultural advisor.

Procedures:

1. When smudging takes place in a Division building, the Principal or Director shall ensure staff are aware of the [Guide to Smudging in Elk Island Public Schools](#) (Appendix 159-A) and the importance of smudging—for many Indigenous Peoples smudging is a tradition and way of life.
2. Before the first smudge can occur at a school or EIPS facility, the Principal or Director shall contact an EIPS-based First Nations, Métis and Inuit consultant.
3. The area designated for the smudging shall be well ventilated and approved by the Principal or Director.
4. The area designated for the smudging shall follow proper fire-safety precautions as outlined in the [Guide to Smudging in Elk Island Public Schools](#) (Appendix 159-A).

5. Before the smudging occurs, the Principal or Director shall notify the Facility Service Centre about the ceremony in case there are implications for the building, the alarm or fire detection.
 - 5.1. Whenever possible, before a smudging ceremony, the Principal or Director shall provide the Facility Service Centre with at least one-hour notice.
 - 5.2. When smudging occurs regularly within a school or Division building, the Principal or Director shall notify the Facility Service Centre about the regular schedule, routine and procedure.
6. When smudging occurs in a Division building, appropriate signage shall be displayed outside of the area designated for the smudging, and any other appropriate location—such as the main entrance or main office.
7. Smudging ceremonies are led by a person who understands what a smudge is and why it is conducted; has consent from an Elder or knowledge keeper to lead the smudge; and has confirmed it with an EIPS First Nations, Métis and Inuit consultant.
 - 7.1. The person conducting the smudge shall be a(n):
 - 7.1.1. Elder;
 - 7.1.2. cultural teacher;
 - 7.1.3. knowledgeable staff member;
 - 7.1.4. family member or guardian; or
 - 7.1.5. student.
8. Once a smudging ceremony is finished, the Principal or Director must ensure the proper protocols are followed in terms of the materials used during the smudge as outlined in the [Guide to Smudging in Elk Island Public Schools](#) (Appendix 159-A).
9. Students who participate in a smudging ceremony shall receive and complete the [Consent for Smudging in School](#) (Form 159-1), signed by a parent/guardian, and returned to the school before the start of the ceremony.
 - 9.1. To follow Indigenous values, participation in a smudging ceremony is always voluntary.
 - 9.1.1. No one shall be forced or pressured to smudge.
 - 9.1.2. It is OK for a person not to want to smudge, to stay in the smudging room and refrain from the ceremony, or to leave the smudging area during a smudge.
 - 9.1.3. A smudging ceremony is conducted with respect to those involved and those who are not involved.

Reference:

Section 16, 197 *Education Act*

[Appendix 159-A: Guide to Smudging in Elk Island Public Schools](#)