

## 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:

#### 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 Carrier:

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 carrier has the responsibility to advise on cultural topics and share cultural perspectives.

#### Smudging:

is an Indigenous tradition that involves the burning of sage, sweetgrass, willow fungus or cedar. Smudge produces a small amount of smoke and its own distinct scent that last for a short time. The sacred plants are burned to release the body, mind and spirit of any negative feelings, thoughts or energy. Smudging also allows people to remember, connect and feel grounded in the present.

### 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 to establish the relationships described in section 7.
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 be notified about the timing and date of the smudging circle in case there are implications for the building, the alarm or fire detection.
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 circles are led by a person who understands what a smudge is and why it is conducted; has consent from an Elder or knowledge carrier 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. staff member who has received teachings;
    - 7.1.4. family member or guardian; or
    - 7.1.5. student.
  - 7.2. Relationship with EIPS First Nations, Métis and Inuit consultants throughout planning stages of the **first** smudging circle is essential to establishing the relationships described in section 7.1 in appropriate ways.
8. Once a smudging circle 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 circle 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 circle 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 circle, or to leave the smudging area during a smudge.
    - 9.1.3. A smudging circle 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](#)