

SMUDGING AND PIPE CEREMONIES IN SCHOOLS

Background

HPSD recognizes that smudging, pipe ceremonies and the use of herbs and tobacco are a part of the Indigenous traditional way of life and are essential in assisting our community in having the opportunity for cultural teachings in HPSP. Due to the intergenerational trauma of residential schools, and the loss of cultural identity and spirituality for Indigenous peoples, much of the Indigenous culture was lost. As a result, Indigenous people were deprived of generations of Elder teachings. Having smudging and pipe ceremonies in schools will directly benefit our Indigenous population with a sense of belonging that they require to lead healthier, productive lives. They will be permitted in HPSP schools, subject to proper safety measures.

Definitions

Smudging - an Indigenous tradition which involves the burning of sage, sweet grass, willow fungus and/or cedar. Smudge produces a distinct odour, but the smoke associated with it is minimal and lasts a very short time. A smudge is burned to cleanse the body, mind and spirit of any bad feelings, negative thoughts, or negative energy – cleansing both physically and spiritually.

Indigenous - refers to the descendants of the original inhabitants of North America. The Canadian Constitution recognizes three groups of Indigenous people – First Nations, Metis, and Inuit. These are three separate peoples with unique heritages, languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs.

Pipe Ceremony - a particular type of ceremonial smoking pipe, used by a number of Indigenous cultures in their sacred ceremonies. Traditionally they are used to open a ceremony, to make a ceremonial commitment, or to seal a covenant or treaty.

Procedures

1. General

Indigenous practices in HPSP schools respect Canada's agreement of Treaty 8 with the Cree people and local cultural, spiritual and traditional knowledge. When smudging takes place in an HPSP building, Principals/supervisors must ensure staff understand the associated protocols and importance of smudging and pipe ceremonies as part of the Indigenous traditional way of life.

- 1.1. A smudge is led by a person who has an understanding of what a smudge is and why it is done.
 - 1.1.1. That person may be:
 - 1.1.1.1. an elder or cultural teacher who has been invited to the school;
 - 1.1.1.2. a knowledgeable staff member;
 - 1.1.1.3. a family member or guardian; or
 - 1.1.1.4. a student.
- 1.2. Smudging is used to begin ceremonies, meetings, or other gatherings, though it can also be performed on its own.
- 1.3. Smudging may be used to commence a new day.
- 1.4. The smudge is lit, and the resulting smoke is regarded as a purifying agent for the mind, body and spirit.
- 1.5. Smudging is a sacred practice that is honoring of culture and will be done in accordance with the protocol of the local area. It is important to educate and inform students, staff, and families about smudging.
 - 1.5.1. An invitation for any students, parents, or staff to participate is extended with that understanding.
 - 1.5.2. Schools will embrace and encourage dialogue about smudging, pipe ceremonies or other ceremonial practices including the similarities and difference to ceremonial practices of other cultures.
- 1.6. Smudging will occur in a respectful manner and place that recognizes the needs of all students and staff in the school building. There is acknowledgement that requiring a smudge to occur outdoors or in an out-of-way location can be an historical reminder when Indigenous practices were illegal, forbidden, or unwelcome.

- 1.7. Smudging is a voluntary informed act.
 - 1.7.1. The entire school community will be informed in advance of smudging.
 - 1.7.2. In elementary schools, parents will be informed and may exclude their child from participation.
 - 1.7.3. Secondary students may choose to participate or not.
 - 1.7.4. Nonparticipating students will be provided alternative programming.
2. Communication about smudging will occur with students, staff, and families. They will be informed about why people smudge, what smudging is, when it will occur and where it will take place. This will be an ongoing process.
3. Request for smudging will be reviewed by the principal to determine how to proceed.
 - 3.1. An elder or cultural teacher who has been invited may make requests to the school, a staff member, a family member or guardian, or a student.
 - 3.2. Requests will identify participants, location, and time.
 - 3.3. Requests will identify who will be leading the smudge. When it is a student, the request will identify who is supervising.
4. When smudging takes place in an HPSD building, it will be in a designated area.
 - 4.1. Any areas designated as smudging areas are to be ventilated by a window or fume hood.
 - 4.2. Designated smudging areas must contain a fully charged fire extinguisher.
 - 4.2.1. Staff responsible must be instructed on the use of fire extinguishers.
5. When smudging ceremonies are completed, the materials must be fully extinguished and disposed of in an appropriate manner.
 - 5.1. Smoking or warm smudging materials need to burn out on their own.
 - 5.2. Smudge remnants and matches are to be placed in a tin can and saved or returned to earth in a place where people will not be walking. (i.e. under a tree).
 - 5.3. Smudge remnants are never to be placed in a trash receptacle.
6. Tobacco is used in pipe ceremonies and only by a pipe carrier.

References

Tobacco and Smoking Reduction Act and Regulations
Education Act, Section 53

Cross References

[Administrative Procedure 173 – Smoke, Vape and Tobacco Use](#)