



Smudging Protocol

Purpose

St. Thomas University acknowledges and respects the inherent right of Indigenous peoples to actively participate in cultural and spiritual practices on campus. This Protocol affirms the right of Indigenous peoples to practice smudging safely and respectfully, while offering information and guidance to the University community to ensure that Indigenous peoples feel acknowledged and supported in their cultural and spiritual practices.

What is Smudging?

Smudging is a ceremonial practice performed by various Indigenous cultures across North America. It involves the burning of specific medicinal plants, such as sage, tobacco, cedar, and sweetgrass. The smoke generated in this process is believed to have cleansing and purifying properties, which are used to purify the energy of a person, space, or object.

How to Smudge

A smudging ceremony is facilitated by an individual who possesses a deep understanding of its significance and purpose. The medicines (cedar, sage, and sweetgrass) are placed into a smudge container, this may be a shell, a ceramic or stone bowl, etc. (Tobacco is not permitted to be burned as part of the smudging ceremony but can be offered in a sacred fire or outside to mother earth) The medicine is then lit, either with a match or lighter. After the medicine is lit, it smolders and creates a small amount of smoke but does not burn with a flame. Smudging can look different for everyone. For the most part, smoke is wafted with a feather. Often starting by cleansing hands with the smoke, and then drawing smoke over one's head, eyes, ears, mouth, feet, and body. These actions serve as a powerful reminder to nurture positive thoughts, see good acts, hear good sounds, speak good words, walk in a good way, and show the goodness within.

Non-Indigenous students, faculty, and staff may observe or participate in smudging on a voluntary basis. Observers are asked to do so quietly and respectfully.

Once the smudge is over, the small amount of medicine will burn out naturally, while the person leading the smudge watches until it is completely out. Some people smother the medicines to put them out. Ashes are then discarded either by washing away with water or burying.

Smudging on Campus

Permanent Sites

The following sites are available for Indigenous people who wish to smudge, and do not require any special arrangements or notification:

1. The Wabanaki Student Centre (JDH 209) has a sacred space equipped with smudging materials and is open daily until 10pm.

2. Any outdoor space on the STU campus, more than 6 meters from a building doorway, window or ventilation intake.

Offices

Faculty or staff wishing to smudge in their offices are invited to do so, given the following:

1. Contact Facilities Management at least 3 days in advance. They will perform a ventilation and fire risk assessment of the space and note any concerns. This step is only required once.
2. Make note of the nearest fire extinguisher, fire exits, and fire alarm pull stations.
3. Notify those in close proximity and/or post a “Smudging in Progress” sign on the office door.
4. Keep the door closed during the smudge and open a window if possible.
5. Ensure that all ash is appropriately extinguished and disposed of once smudging is complete.

Residence Rooms

Students wishing to smudge in their residence room are invited to do so, given the following:

1. Make note of the nearest fire extinguisher, fire exits, and fire alarm pull stations.
2. If there is a concern with the space or a roommate, the Residence Life office will work with all involved to find a solution.
3. Keep the door closed during the smudge and open a window.
4. Ensure that all ash is appropriately extinguished and disposed of once smudging is complete.
5. If you require assistance or want to learn more about the ceremony and smudging in your resident room, staff at the Wabanaki Centre are available to help you through the ceremony.

Other Indoor Spaces (classrooms, foyers, etc.)

As a community, we recognize that smudging is performed for various reasons and purposes. To accommodate smudging for various purpose while a person or group is on campus, please adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Contact Facilities Management at least 3 days in advance. They will perform a ventilation and fire risk assessment of the space and note any concerns.
2. Make note of the nearest fire extinguisher, fire exits, and fire alarm pull stations.
3. Post “Smudging in Progress” signs in the area.
4. Inform all gathered that participation in smudging is voluntary.
5. Where possible, keep the door closed during the smudge and open a window.
6. Ensure that all ash is appropriately extinguished and disposed of once smudging is complete.

Please note there are smudging guideline index cards available in your residence to assist you.

Prepared by the Senate Committee on Reconciliation and approved by Facilities Management, July 26, 2024.