



Northlands College Policy/Procedures Smudging, Pipe Ceremonies and other Indigenous Ceremonial Use of Smoke

Policy Statement

In conjunction with the Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 1996 and the Tobacco Control Act, and in keeping with Northlands College's commitment to a diverse and inclusive work and learning environment, Northlands College permits the burning of sweet grass, sage, cedar, and/or other sacred herbs and tobaccos within appropriate facilities and grounds for the purpose of smudging, pipe ceremonies or other Indigenous ceremonial uses.

The policy applies to Northlands College Board of Directors, students, employees, third-party tenants, contractors, and the general public with regard to the practice of smudging and cultural ceremonies at Northlands College.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to promote Cultural Safety and a welcoming, nurturing and empowering environment at Northlands College.

What is Smudging?

Smudging is a sacred Indigenous ceremony that involves the burning of one or more medicines gathered from the earth. The four sacred medicines used in Indigenous' ceremonies are tobacco, sage, cedar, and sweet-grass. Smudging is passed down from generation to generation. There are many ways to perform a smudge and different variations as presented by teachings of an Elder(s).

An Elder presented the following as the steps and rationale for this cleansing process:

“The purpose of this cleansing ceremony is to clear away anxieties, sadness, impurities, dark thoughts or unwanted energies that may have attached themselves to a space or an individual.”

We smudge to clear the air around us.

We smudge to clean our minds so that we will have good thoughts of others.

- We smudge our eyes so that we will only see good things in others.
- We smudge our ears so that we will only listen to good things about others.
- We smudge our mouths so that we will only speak well of others.
- We smudge our whole being so that we will portray only the good part of our self through our actions.



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Smudging also allows people to stop, slow down, and become mindful and centered. This allows people to remember, connect, and be grounded in the event, task, or purpose at hand. Likewise, Smudging allows people to let go of negative feelings and thoughts. Letting go of things that inhibit a person from being balanced and focused comes from the feeling of being calm and safe while smudging. Smudging is always voluntary. People should not be pressured to smudge and it is completely acceptable for a person to indicate that they do not want to smudge. That person may choose to stay in the room and refrain from smudging or leave the room during the smudge. Respect for all is the guiding principle in any Indigenous tradition.

Definitions

Cultural Safety: An environment that is spiritually, mentally, socially, emotionally, and physically safe for people. Culturally safe practices include actions that recognize and respect that cultural identities of others, and safely meets needs, expectations, and rights of everyone involved.

Indigenous Knowledge Keepers: Persons recognized and identified by an Indigenous community as being knowledgeable about Indigenous cultural practices or world views.

Pipe Ceremony: A sacred ritual for connecting physical and spiritual worlds. The ceremony or ritual calls for a traditional pipe person to raise and pray with a pipe for the purpose of asking for a good outcome in an event. The standard practice is to ask a knowledge keeper to prepare the way for success in anything associated with Indigenous endeavors, such as for health, good relations and for goodness and peace.

Smoke: To hold or otherwise have control over ignited materials and the burning of other herbs and elements that produce smoke.

Policy Originated: February 26, 2021	Approved by: Board of Directors
Last Approved: February 26, 2021	Signature: 