

Ceremonial Use of Sacred Medicines Policy

Category:	Facilities
Number:	FA5
Responsibility:	Director of Physical Plant
Approval:	<i>June 23, 2016, Board of Governors</i>
Amendments:	To be reviewed every 2 years or as circumstances or legislation warrants

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the use of Ceremonial medicines is done in the safest possible manner, with little or no impact to other building occupants and in compliance with applicable legislation and standards.

SCOPE

This Policy applies to all members of the university community: students, staff, faculty, administration, members of the Board of Governors, visitors, and guests.

DEFINITION

Smudging is a First Nation, Métis and Inuit tradition, which involves the burning of sweet grass, sage and/or cedar. Sage smudge produces a very strong and distinct aroma but the smoke associated with it is minimal and lasts a very short time. Sweet grass has a very mild aroma and produces even less smoke than sage. A smudge is burned primarily for purification and to help create a positive mind set. Tobacco is used in pipe ceremonies by a pipe carrier.

POLICY

Algoma University respects and supports Aboriginal cultural and spiritual practices on campus. Algoma University recognizes that smudging, the use of tobacco and other Sacred Medicines are a part of the First Nation, Métis and Inuit traditional way of life and are, therefore, permitted on campus as per the requirements of this procedure.

The University also recognizes that some people are sensitive or even allergic to smoke and affirms its duty to maintain a clean and healthy air environment.

The University is committed to achieving both of the above-mentioned goals in spirit of cooperation, mutual respect and understanding.

PROCEDURES

Considerations:

1. Algoma University buildings have fire alarm systems that have heat and smoke detection capability. When a smoke or heat detector activates, the alarm system sounds, the building is evacuated and the fire department must respond. Algoma University can be billed by the fire department for malicious fire alarms or activations that could have been avoided.
2. The smoke from burning traditional medicines such as sage, cedar, and sweet grass may be an irritant and non-allergic trigger for someone with asthma.

Under the Province of Ontario's "Smoke-Free Ontario Act" smudging and the use of tobacco in pipe ceremonies are permitted. Algoma University has recognized that smudging and pipe ceremonies are a part of the First Nation, Métis and Inuit traditional way of life and may be held on campus as per the procedures below:

1. **SASA Lounge**

SH 201 has been equipped with a special exhaust system to allow for smudging in a manner that does not affect air quality in the rest of the building. Smudging may be undertaken *at any time* in the SASA Lounge, with the following procedures:

1. The door to SH 201 must be closed before smudging begins.
2. The exhaust fan must be turned on before smudging begins.
3. The fan must be left running, and the door must be left closed, for at least ten minutes after the completion of the smudging.

These rules are to be posted prominently in SH 201.

2. **Residence Rooms**

Under the Fire Code and the University Fire Safety Plan there are restrictions on burning within Residence. Further, because a residence room is a student's home, concerns about air quality and health are particularly acute. At the same time, the University recognizes that a student may wish to have his or her room smudged at the beginning of a semester. The University will permit the smudging of an individual residence room with notification to Physical Plant at least **48 hours** in advance.

3. **All Other Locations**

Smudging may take place in other locations on campus, with the adequate notification to the Director of Physical Plant. A member of faculty, staff, or students must make the request and must take responsibility for the safe and appropriate use of the sacred medicines. Prior to using a smudge or pipe, Physical Plant shall examine the location for the ceremony to check for ventilation, smoke alarm, or other concerns. **Notification must be submitted in writing to the Director of Physical Plant at least 48 hours before the ceremony is**

scheduled to begin. This timeline will allow for internal notice to be sent out to the University Community. Notice will also be posted in the area (Appendix B) Individuals are encouraged to alert their supervisors so alternate arrangements can be made for vulnerable persons in the vicinity of smudging.

In situations where an instructor foresees the use of ceremonial medicines in their classroom over the course of a semester. **Notification must be submitted in writing to the Director of Physical Plant during the first week of classes.** Instructors will be required to post notice (Appendix B) on the days when ceremonial medicines are used.

For ceremonies not in the SASA Lounge and outside of the hours of 7:00AM – 4:00PM Monday-Friday (or on dates when the University is closed), there may be costs incurred by the department or organization hosting the ceremony for the call-in of Physical Plant or additional Security staff to implement “Fire Watch” procedures. Contact the Director of Physical Plant to review. Any other costs that may be associated with smudging, or failure to follow this policy will be the responsibility of the parties holding the smudge.

Individuals or groups are encouraged to consult with the Director of the Anishinaabe Initiatives Division for information about non-combustible smudging practices (Appendix A), which may be used anywhere on campus without prior approval.

When smudging, individuals are asked to ensure that there is not excessive smoke that may activate the fire alarm. Steps must be taken to avoid smoke being released to other portions of the building. Material remaining after a Smudge Ceremony must be fully extinguished and disposed of safely. The room or rooms used must be well ventilated upon completion of a smudge ceremony.

Fire Safety

Event organizers should know the location of the nearest fire extinguisher, fire alarm pull station, emergency exits and be aware of nearby combustible materials. Material remaining after a Smudge Ceremony must be fully extinguished and disposed of safely.

Responsibility of Parties

Failure to comply with this policy may result in the activation of the fire alarm system with subsequent evacuation of the building as well as other possible health and safety risks to the University Community. The University reserves the right to pass on to anyone who is in violation of the policy some or all of the costs arising from that violation e.g. Fire Department response. Repeated failure to comply with this Policy may result in corrective action.

APPENDIX A NON-COMBUSTIBLE METHODS OF SMUDGING

1. *Smudge in a Bottle* – the four sacred medicines in a spray bottle that can be used at any time within the building.
2. *Sage* – the Elder distributes sage to each of the participants and collects after the session to burn outside of the building.
3. *Bowl of Water* – the participants place sema (tobacco) in a bowl of water before a session and the Elder takes the bowl of water with sema outside to dispose of after the session.

APPENDIX B SAMPLE NOTICE

NOTICE

This location will be used for traditional Aboriginal ceremonial purposes.

DATE: _____

Algoma University respects and supports Aboriginal cultural and spiritual practices on campus. These practices can take different forms, including smudging.

Typically the amount of smoke associated with these types of ceremonies is minimal and lasts a very short time.

For more information contact:

Anishinaabe Initiatives Division

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