**SMUDGING IN SCHOOLS**

**GREATER SASKATOON CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**

Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools believes that First Nations and Metis students should experience First Nations and Metis culture and traditions within the context of Catholic education, and that all students benefit from an enhanced understanding of First Nations and Metis spiritual-cultural traditions. We believe that clarity and guidelines helps to ensure that students can participate in First Nations and Metis spiritual-cultural traditions while respecting choice and healthy learning and work environments.

Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools ensures that our schools are inclusive and culturally responsive by integrating First Nations and Metis perspectives in curriculum and school culture. We work with First Nations and Metis families and communities to develop FNM students in mind, body, spirit and emotion. In addition, we endeavour to have all students experience opportunities to learn about First Nations and Metis cultures and traditions.

First Nations and Metis peoples are diverse in their languages and cultures. There are, however, common characteristics, such as the way First Nations and Métis peoples see themselves in relation to a distinct worldview. This worldview describes humans living in a universe made by a loving Creator and endeavouring to live in harmony with themselves, one another and with the natural world. Each Indigenous culture expresses this worldview in a different way, with different teachings and cultural practices.

A common shared experience among many First Nations and Metis peoples is the tradition of smudging. Smudging involves the burning of one or more plants gathered from the land. The four sacred plants commonly used in ceremonies are tobacco, sage, cedar, and sweetgrass. The most common used in smudging is sage.

This ceremony has been passed down from generation to generation. There are many ways and variations on how a smudge is done. A smudge invites people to become mindful and center themselves. This allows people to remember, connect and to be grounded in the event, task or purpose at hand. It is considered to be a cleansing ceremony.

Smudging is always voluntary.People should never be forced or pressured to participate. It is acceptable for a person to say that he/she does not want to smudge and may choose to stay in the room while the ceremony takes place or leave the room before the ceremony begins.

A smudge is led by a person who has an understanding of what a smudge is and why it is done.That person may be an Elder, a knowledge keeper, or a cultural advisor. It may also be a member of a school staff who is knowledgeable about the tradition of smudging. It could be a parent, guardian or a student, as long as they are aware of the teachings and protocols.

The plant is placed in a smudge container such as a shell, a ceramic bowl or a metal pan. The plant is lit with a match. Once it is lit, the smoke may be pushed forward with a feather or fan. The person who lights the plant smudges themselves first.

When we smudge, we first cleanse our hands with the smoke as if we were washing our hands. We then draw the smoke over our heads, eyes, ears, mouths and our bodies. These actions remind us to think good thoughts, see good actions, hear good sounds, speak good words and show the good of who we are.

**GUIDELINES**

1. It is the responsibility of the principal to ensure that the First Nations and Metis Ceremony Administrative Planning Guide (Appendix A) is completed and filed at the school prior to classroom or school-wide smudges (one-time or ongoing).
2. When introducing the tradition of the smudge, it is the responsibility of the principal to secure the participation of an Elder or traditional teacher to explain smudging teachings and protocols. FNME Team members are available to assist with securing a resource person or to provide the appropriate teachings.
3. The principal is responsible to communicate with parents/guardians, staff and students regarding the purpose of the smudge and when and where the smudging will occur.
4. The Classroom and School-Based Smudge Parent Information Letter (Appendix B) must be distributed to parents/guardians prior to a classroom-based smudge, or at the beginning of the school-year before routine school-wide smudges.
5. Parents may choose to have their child opt-out of the classroom or school-wide smudge. These students must be accommodated with a respectful and productive alternative.
6. Should any students or staff express health-related concerns with smudging in the school, they must be accommodated.

The principal is always welcome to contact any member of the First Nations and Metis Education Team for consultation and advice in preparing for a smudge or to answer any other questions related to First Nations and Metis spiritual-cultural practices.

**Appendix A: First Nations and Metis Ceremony Administrative Planning Guide**

**School: St. Edward Date: August, 30, 2018**

1. What is the purpose of smudging in the classroom/school?

We would like to gather as a whole school community at the beginning of each week to help focus our thoughts and actions and prepare us for a week of learning.

1. How does this practice align with curriculum (Examples are provided for your consideration)?

* Treaty Outcome and Indicator: SI7 Examine role of ceremonial traditions and story in transforming knowledge from generation to generation.
* Treaty Outcome and Indicator: SI3 Analyze how First Nations people’s beliefs guide relationships with the land and natural world.
* Treaty Outcome and Indicator: HCK3 Explore the connection all people have to the land as expressed through stories, traditions, and ceremonies.
* Social Studies 8 Outcome and Indicator: IN8.1 Investigate the meaning of culture and the origins of Canadian cultural diversity.
* Science 7 Outcome and Indicator: IE7.1 Gather information about traditional Indigenous practices with respect to the relationship and connections between people and their ecological environment.

❐ Other:

1. Please check if students have received pre-teaching: Yes
2. Have you shared the following information with your school-community in advance of the ceremony?

* Date and time of the ceremony.
* Purpose of the ceremony.
* Opportunity to opt-out of the ceremony.

❐ Other (Please list)

1. What accommodations have been made for non-participating students?

* Providing an alternate location.
* Providing adequate supervision.

❐ Providing a parallel learning activity.

❐ Other (Please list)

1. What accommodations have been made for students and staff with health-related concerns?

* Smudging in a well ventilated area.

❐ Smudging outside of regular school hours.

❐ Selecting an alternative to smudging.

* Other (Please identify): Smudging outside if the weather permits

**School/Classroom-Based Smudge**

**Parent Information Letter**

**What is smudging?**

Smudging is a tradition common to many First Nations and Metis peoples. It involves the burning of sacred plants gathered from the land. There are many ways and variations on how a smudge is conducted. A smudge invites people to become mindful and be grounded in the event, task, or purpose at hand.

Smudging is always voluntary.No one will beforced or pressured to take part. It is acceptable for a person to say that he/she does not want to smudge and may choose to stay in the room while the ceremony takes place or leave the room before the ceremony begins. Respect for all is the guiding principle.

**Why are we smudging?**

As part of our studies, we are examining worldview of First Nations and Metis peoples. We will be using smudging as a teaching tool to discuss Indigenous worldviews.

**When and where will a smudge take place?**

As a part of our learning program, every Monday morning, students in grades PreK-8 at St. Edward School are invited to participate in a smudge.

You are welcome to call the principal, Theresa Laroque at 306-659-7301 should you have any questions or concerns. If you prefer not to have your child participate in the smudge, please complete and return the bottom portion of this letter to your child’s classroom teacher.

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My child, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, will not be participating in the smudging at St. Edward School on Monday mornings.

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Parent/Guardian Signature Date