UM | Environmental Health and Safety Office

TITLE: Smudging and Pipe Ceremony	Version: 1
	Version Date: 2026-10-08
Signing Authority: Delaine Russo	

1 Purpose

This procedure was developed in consultation with the Office of V.P. Indigenous to provide a process for members of the UM community to coordinate and/or perform smudging and pipe ceremony at the University of Manitoba campuses and remote facilities. This process is in place to ensure smudges, pipe ceremonies and building occupants activities are not disrupted by life safety system alarms or ventilation issues.

Under the Province of Manitoba's "The Non-Smokers Health Protection Act," smudging and the use of tobacco in pipe ceremonies are permitted. The University of Manitoba recognizes that smudging and pipe ceremonies are a part of the Indigenous traditional way of life and are therefore permitted and supported on campus.

This procedure is intended to outline the process of organizing a smudge in a UM location from a technical and life safety perspective and is not intended to act as a guide for the smudging ceremony itself. For information about the cultural significance and protocols of smudging and pipe ceremony please visit the UM Indigenous page https://umanitoba.ca/indigenous/culture-and-protocol.

2 Scope

This procedure applies to all members of the UM community.

3 Definitions

Smudge and Pipe Ceremony	Smudging is an Indigenous tradition which involves the burning of sweetgrass, sage, and cedar. Sage and cedar smudges produce a very strong and distinct aroma but the smoke associated with them is minimal and lasts a very short time. Sweetgrass has a very mild aroma and produces less smoke. A smudge is burned primarily for purification and to help to create a positive mind set. Tobacco is used in pipe ceremonies by a pipe carrier.

4 Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the leadership of the UM as well as all staff, students, faculty, and guests to learn about the cultural importance of smudging and pipe ceremony.

It is the responsibility of the **Event Organizer** to:

- Ensure that cultural protocols are followed. (https://umanitoba.ca/indigenous/culture-and-protocol).

- Ensure fire watch is conducted in accordance with section 5 when required.
- Read, understand, and comply with this procedure and any applicable procedures under section 5.

It is the responsibility of **Physical Plant** to:

- Provide technical support for smudging and pipe ceremonies.

It is the responsibility of the **Environmental Health and Safety Office** to:

- Support and offer safety training when required for event organizers planning a smudge/pipe ceremony.
- Review and maintain this technical document.

5 Procedures

5.1 Preparation

Event organizers must ensure that cultural protocols are followed. The UM Indigenous community offers many resources and opportunities for education. More information about Culture and Protocol can be found on the UM Indigenous website https://umanitoba.ca/indigenous/culture-and-protocol.

Ensure the area where the smudge is to take place does not have excessive amounts of combustible materials (paper, cardboard etc.) or flammable materials (fuels, solvents etc.). If you are aware of anyone who may be affected by the smudge due to possible allergic reaction, please notify them prior to the ceremony.

Smudge-friendly locations can be used for smudging at any time without notification to Physical Plant. A form is not required for these locations as they have been previously reviewed and do not require the isolation of life safety systems. Please refer to the document titled Smudge Friendly Locations as posted on the EHSO web page for a list of locations and follow the procedures in 5.2 and 5.3 of this document.

Smudging locations that require protocols have been previously reviewed and may require Physical Plant to isolate life safety systems. Please refer to the document titled Smudge with Protocols Locations as posted on the EHSO web page. If you would like to smudge in these locations or have a new space to be reviewed by Physical Plant, please complete the Smudging Location Review Form and send to Physical Plant 10 working days prior to the smudge. This allows for time for the assessment and to ensure any required protocols can be implemented prior to the smudge.

The area will be reviewed for any protocols that may be needed in order to ensure fire alarm and ventilation issues will not disrupt the ceremony participants' or building occupants' activities. The person who submitted the review form will be contacted by Physical Plant to ensure all safety protocols can be followed and will provide any other assistance needed. This may include the need for a Fire Watch.

Smudging Fire Watch Procedure

When a smudge ceremony is performed, there may be a requirement for a temporary fire alarm shut down. This is to ensure the alarm is not activated to prevent disruption of the ceremony and the occupants of the building. In most cases individual sensors can be taken out of service in the area where the ceremony is taking place. A fire watch may be required to ensure that if a fire was to occur in the area where the detector was disabled, it will be identified by the person performing the fire watch and the nearest pull station can be activated.

Personnel performing a fire watch shall:

1. Patrol the assigned area for the entire duration of time the fire alarm system is disabled or taken out of service.
2. Carry a cell phone or radio at all times during the watch as a means of emergency communication.
3. During patrol, look for signs of fire (flames, smoke, burning odours and/or increased temperatures).
4. If signs of fire are identified, activate the nearest pull station and exit the building via the nearest emergency exit.

5.2 During the Ceremony

A notification sign must be posted on the door of the room where the smudging will take place. Please refer to the poster provided below in this document which can be printed and utilized.

During the smudge, ensure the door remains closed and any location specific procedures are followed. If Physical Plant has indicated fire watch is required, ensure it is performed for the entire duration of the fire alarm shutdown. Ensure the amount of combustible materials in the area is kept to a minimum and be aware of the location of any remaining nearby combustible materials and know the location of the nearest fire extinguisher, pull station and exit.

5.3 Post Ceremony

Once the aroma of the smudge/tobacco has dissipated, the sign shall be removed. Keep embers in a heat proof container until cold to the touch before discarding. If a fire alarm has been disabled, continue fire watch until the alarm has been reactivated.

6 Document History

Version Number	Version Date	Description of Change	Author
1.00	2023-09-22	Initial Release	Caroline Gebel
1.00	2024-09-13	Updated	Caroline Gebel
1.00	2024-09-27	Updated	Caroline Gebel
1.00	2024-10-15	Updated	Delaine Russo
1.00	2026-04-27	3-year review- no updates	Caroline Gebel
1.00	2026-10-08	Update to section 5.1	Haylee Goolcharan

University of Manitoba

SMUDGING LOCATION

THIS ROOM WILL BE USED AS A SMUDGING LOCATION

A smudging ceremony is an Indigenous tradition which involves the burning of plant medicines including: sweetgrass, sage and/or cedar. This may produce a distinct aroma, but the smoke associated with it is minimal and lasts a very short time.

Under the Province of Manitoba's "The Non-smoker's Health Protection Act" smudging is permitted. The University of Manitoba recognizes that smudging is part of the Indigenous traditional way of life and is therefore permitted on campus.

From:_____ **To:**_____

Date:_____

For more information please visit
https://umanitoba.ca/indigenous/culture-and-protocols

For more information on life safety and procedures, please contact the Environmental Health and Safety Office
EHSO@umanitoba.ca
204-474-6633

APPENDIX A
Resources for Cultural Significance and Protocols

The Indigenous community at UM offers many opportunities to engage with the social, cultural, and spiritual part of your campus experience.

Follow our events calendar to join in a wide range of Indigenous cultural activities and programs throughout the year. Most events are free and open to the entire UM community.

https://eventscalendar.umanitoba.ca/site/indigenous