

# Smudging in School

## Background

Northern Lights School Division #113 affirms the right of all students and staff to smudge inside the schools. Northern Lights School Division #113 recognizes the need to support First Nations, Métis and Inuit Students success and the important role First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples have in the past, present and the future of Canada.

Many First Nations share the concept of “mithopimatisiwin”, or “hotiyé ?eghena” which means “good life” in both Cree, Ojibwe and Dene. Implicit in this is the understanding that all of life is a ceremony; that the sacred and the secular are parts of the whole; that people are whole beings (body, mind, spirit, emotion); and that “mithopimatisiwin” is achieved by taking care of all aspects of one’s self. Northern Lights School Division is working to share this perspective with staff, students and community to foster an atmosphere of respect, understanding and inclusivity. Smudging is a tradition, common to many First Nations people, which involves the burning of one or more medicines gathered from the earth. The most common medicines used in smudges are sweetgrass, sage and cedar. Smudging is passed down from generation to generation. There are many ways and variations on how a smudge is done.

## Procedures

This procedure has been adapted from *Smudging Protocol for School Divisions (2013)*, developed by the Aboriginal Directorate Smudging Committee, Manitoba Education and St. James Assiniboia School Division’s smudging practices policy.

1. Northern Lights School Division recognizes that smudging is always voluntary. People are never forced or pressured to smudge. It is completely acceptable for a person to indicate that he/she does not want to smudge and that a person may choose to leave the room during a smudge. Respect for all is the guiding principle in any Aboriginal tradition.
2. Smudging provides an opportunity for 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. Schools may make the tradition of smudging a part of their practice in particular events or as part of the school day.
3. When engaging in the practice of smudging, schools need to identify a specific room(s) as their smudge room(s). The location needs to have proper ventilation such as a window or air exchange and heat sensors as opposed to smoke sensors.
4. Schools must give parents/guardians; staff and students advance notice that a smudge will be lit on a particular day, time and place. Parents/guardians may choose to write a letter asking that their child not participate in the smudge if they so wish.

