

EMBRACING SMUDGE IN RECREATION SPACES

WHAT IS SMUDGE?

Smudge is a traditional practice that is common among many Indigenous peoples in Canada, and around the world. While the practice of smudge may vary from group to group, it is typically used for medicinal, ceremonial, and spiritual purposes and involves prayer and the burning of sacred medicines such as: sweetgrass, sage, cedar and tobacco to name a few.



Burned in small amounts and carried in a small vessel (usually a small bowl or shell), the smudge produces smoke which rises and symbolizes the connection to the Creator, and provides communities with a way to gain spiritual protection and blessings, as well as to improve spiritual health. The smoke is also known for purifying the body and soul, and bringing clarity to the mind.

In traditional Indigenous ceremonies/events, smudging is typically led by an Elder or Knowledge Keeper, however, anyone can perform their own smudge should they feel it necessary and so long as they remain genuine and respectful.

WHY CAN'T SMUDGE BE MOVED OUTSIDE?

While smudge is most often conducted inside the home and/or in ceremonial and communal spaces, it is a practice that is increasingly being brought into professional buildings and public facilities. However, many Indigenous peoples continue to face barriers for practicing smudge in urban settings, with many facilities and/or infrastructure placing bans on smudging because of the smoke it produces.

Though it may seem like a well-intentioned solution, asking Indigenous peoples to move their smudge outside is often considered an act of disrespect because it continues to perpetuate colonial attitudes towards Indigenous culture, practices and protocols. Smudge was just one of many traditional practices that were banned during the early years of colonialism, and continues to be in many places today.

When looking to incorporate smudging in the workplace or other indoor settings, it is important to consider these barriers and explore ways to help reduce them.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO ACCOMMODATE SMUDGE?

- 1 Seek to understand smudge through the perspectives of Indigenous peoples. Start by watching the following videos:
 - ▶ [Smudging with Reg & Rose Crowshoe](#)
 - ▶ [The Importance of Smudge with Elder Violet March](#)
- 2 Book venues that are accepting of Indigenous protocols and practices like smudge.
- 3 Ask where Indigenous partners wish to smudge during an event. Work with them versus assuming what they want. Be prepared to accommodate this by using some of the suggested steps in this list.
- 4 Allocate a designated space (i.e. preferably near windows or doors) for smudge to be safely conducted indoors within your facility. Open a door or window for ventilation to accommodate those with smoke sensitivities.
- 5 Train staff on how to disengage the fire alarm system and then to be on stand-by during a smudge to monitor the situation during a certain time.
- 6 Adjust your facility's policy to include accommodations for cultural protocols and practices like smudge.
- 7 Communicate openly about the smudging process so people can decide if they want to be involved.

ARPA'S RECONCILIATION JOURNEY



The Alberta Recreation & Parks Association (ARPA) is on its own reconciliation journey with diverse Indigenous peoples and communities across Alberta. As a member based organization, we strive to demonstrate our dedication to moving forward in partnership with Indigenous communities in the spirit of reconciliation and collaboration. In recognition of our Indigenous friends, colleagues and partners, we have embraced the practice of Smudge as a way to meaningfully blend Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of knowing into our organizational practices. This has become integral to the way in which we open and close many staff meetings, virtual get-togethers and in-person events.



CASE STUDY: ARPA & FAIRMONT

During ARPA's Annual Conferences, we have coordinated with the Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise and Jasper Park Lodge to have the fire alarm systems turned off during smudging. We work with their staff to confirm the time(s) at which a smudge will take place and ensure someone is there to keep watch.

