NIAGARA FALLS PUBLIC LIBRARY	DATE EFFECTED: September 16, 2026 DATE REVISED:	SMUDGING POLICY
Associated Policies: Community Space Rental Policy, Code of Conduct		

PURPOSE

The Niagara Falls Public Library recognizes the cultural and spiritual significance of Indigenous ceremonial practices and is committed to supporting Indigenous peoples' rights while ensuring the health, safety, and accessibility of Library spaces for all.

The purpose of this policy is for the Niagara Falls Public Library (hereinafter “NFPL”, “the library”) to:

- Support a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment that honours the rights of Indigenous peoples to conduct traditional smudging ceremonies in Library facilities.
- Recognize smudging as an important traditional spiritual practice that involves the burning of sacred medicines including but not limited to sweetgrass, tobacco, sage, and cedar.
- Acknowledge that smudging is protected under the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Smoke-Free Ontario Act (s. 19).
- Outline how the library will facilitate smudging in library spaces.

SCOPE

NFPL will maintain an operational procedure to support the safe, respectful, and culturally appropriate facilitation of smudging ceremonies in Library facilities.

The procedure will establish the operational requirements for designated spaces, notification, facility and HVAC arrangements, signage and communication, reasonable accommodations, staff guidance, and other applicable health and safety measures.

SMUDGING IN LIBRARY FACILITIES

NFPL permits smudging ceremonies in Library facilities, subject to reasonable measures to support the safety, accessibility, and comfort of Library users, and others using Library spaces.

Smudging may take place in designated Library spaces and, where appropriate, in other Library areas with manager approval.

NFPL will make reasonable efforts to accommodate smudging ceremonies while balancing the needs of individuals participating in the ceremony with the health, safety, accessibility, and operational needs of others using Library facilities.

NFPL will provide reasonable advance notice to staff and others who may be affected when a smudging ceremony is scheduled to occur in a Library facility.

Where appropriate, signage may be used to communicate that a smudging ceremony is scheduled or in progress.

CEREMONIAL MATERIALS

Sacred medicines and other materials used for smudging will be determined by the individual, group, or program leader conducting the ceremony and may vary according to the nature and cultural practices associated with the ceremony.

NFPL will respect the cultural practices and traditions of those conducting the ceremony while ensuring applicable health, safety, and facility requirements are met.

HEALTH, SAFETY, AND ACCESSIBILITY

NFPL will take reasonable measures to support the safe facilitation of smudging ceremonies, including consideration of ventilation, fire safety, accessibility, and the potential impact on others using Library facilities.

Where a health, safety, or accessibility concern arises, NFPL will work with the individual or group conducting the ceremony to identify a reasonable and culturally appropriate accommodation where possible.

REFERENCES

1. Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017, S.O. 2017, section 19 - Traditional Use of Tobacco by Indigenous Persons (https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/17s26#BK26)
2. Ontario Fire Code, O.Reg. 213/07 (https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/070213?_ga=1.229399066.789700275.1429199030)
3. Human Rights Code, R.S.O. 1990, c. H.19 (ontario.ca) (https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/17s26)
4. Accommodation: Organizations and individuals are required to make reasonable accommodations for smudging, ensuring it can be practiced in a safe and culturally appropriate way. This may involve designating specific spaces, providing necessary materials, or adjusting schedules to allow for smudging ceremonies.

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