

# Guidelines for Indigenous Smudge Ceremony



As part of its commitment to being inclusive and culturally responsive, Ranch Ehrlo has created a *Smudging Notification Procedure* to enable participants and staff who choose to participate in smudging ceremonies while being respectful to those who are sensitive to smoke. All staff should be aware of this procedure and contact the Indigenous Advisor if wanting to plan a smudge ceremony.

## What is Smudging?

Smudging is a ceremonial practice that is common among many First Nations and Métis communities. It involves burning one or more sacred medicines, to create a fragrant smoke. The four sacred medicines used in these ceremonies are tobacco, sage, cedar, and sweetgrass. There are different ways and styles of performing a smudge, but all smudges are done to cleanse and connect our spirit with the Creator.

## Why Smudge?

Smudging is a practice that allows people to take a break from their busy lives and become grounded and centred. Smudging helps people release negative energies and let go of things that might be inhibiting their balance and focus. It is important to feel calm and safe while smudging to achieve this release of negativities. It is a way of cleansing oneself and is considered sacred.

Smudging was banned in Canada until the 1960s as part of the Indian Act. It is important to remember that smudging, as part of indigenous religion and culture is a right of participants. The guiding principle for all Aboriginal traditions is respect for all.

*Smudging is always voluntary. People should never be forced or pressured to smudge. It is completely acceptable for a person to indicate that they do not want to smudge, and that person may choose to stay in the room and refrain or leave the room.*

## How do we smudge?

The act of clearing the air, mind, spirit and emotions may be accomplished in a variety of ways, but according to First Nations' practice, a smudge is led by a person who understands what it is and why it is done. That person may be an Elder or traditional teacher who has been invited to an event or a staff person who is knowledgeable about the

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## How do we smudge?

A container such as a shell, ceramic or stone bowl, or a copper, brass or cast-iron pan is typically used to hold the medicine. A match is used to light the medicine and once lit, the smoke is pushed forward with a feather or fan. The person who lights the smudge is the first to use it.

Sage is one of the commonly used medicines, and a "smudge ball" is made by rolling the plant's leaves into a ball for burning. This medicine can produce a large amount of smoke so the smudge ball is kept relatively small. Only a small stream of smoke is needed for the person who is smudging.

When we smudge, we first cleanse our hands with the smoke, as if we were washing them. Then, we draw the smoke over our heads, eyes, ears, mouths, and 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.

### The following are steps and rationale for the cleaning process – smudge:

- We smudge to clear the air around us.
- We smudge to clean our minds so that we will have good thoughts of others.
- We smudge our eyes so that we will only see the good in others.
- We smudge our ears so that we will only listen to positive things about others.
- We smudge our mouths so that we will only speak well of others.
- We smudge our whole being, so we will portray only the good part of our self through our actions.

