

Muskoka Lakes Township Public Library
LIBRARY BOARD POLICY

Policy Type: Operational	Policy Number: OP-29
Policy Title: Smudging	Policy Approval Date: 11/12/24
Chairperson: V. Duke	Policy Review Date: 09/28

Intent:

The Muskoka Lakes Public Library Board (hereinafter referred to as the Board) recognizes that smudging is an important cultural and spiritual practice. Smudging is considered by many Indigenous community members as essential to individual well-being and healing. Smudging involves the burning of sacred plants such as tobacco, sage, sweet grass, and cedar. Smudging may be used to purify a location, individuals, healers, helpers, and/or ritual objects. This policy provides guidance to support the cultural and spiritual healing practice of smudging in the Muskoka Lakes Public Library (hereinafter referred to as the Library).

Regulations:

In accordance with the Library's Mission, Vision and Statement of Values and as outlined in the Board's policy on Indigenous Awareness and Reconciliation (GF-06) the Library recognizes and embraces the principles and calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) recognizes that "organizations under provincial jurisdiction have a duty to accommodate Indigenous peoples' spiritual beliefs and practices – including ceremonies and sacred customs – under the *Code*". The OHRC recognizes smudging as a common spiritual practice and notes that a "failure to accommodate a person's Indigenous spiritual belief or practice in a timely and appropriate way may be discriminatory under the *Code*".

The *Smoke-Free Ontario Act* provides exemptions for the traditional use of tobacco by Indigenous persons

Responsibilities/Accountabilities:

All staff and/or Board members will:

- a) support requests for smudging,
- b) if invited to and agreeing to participate in the smudging ceremony, follow all cultural protocols at the direction of the person leading the ceremony,
- c) work with the person leading the smudging so that the appropriate arrangements can be made in accordance with the Library's Smudging Guidelines, which are outlined in Appendix A.

Related Documents

- *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report*
- *Ontario Human Rights Code*
- *Smoke-Free Ontario Act*
- MLPL GF-01 Mission Statement
- MLPL GF-02 Vision Statement
- MLPL GF-03 Statement of Values
- MLPL GF-06 Indigenous Awareness and Reconciliation

Appendix A

Muskoka Lakes Public Library Smudging Guidelines

- Library staff will receive notification of the date, time, and location of all smudging ceremonies and will relay that information to Fire Services and the Alarm Monitoring company. When possible, smudging ceremonies will be held in the Activity Room.
- Before the smudging ceremony is conducted, Library Staff will contact local Fire Services and the Alarm Monitoring company to notify them of when the ceremony will be held, and that the system is being put on TEST for the duration of the ceremony.
- During the ceremony, Library Staff will conduct a Fire Watch (a walk-through of the building every hour) while the system is disabled. After the ceremony, Library Staff will ensure that all fire monitoring equipment is operational by calling the Alarm Monitoring Company.
- Signage will be posted on the entrances to the building, as well as the door of the room where the smudging is being held, indicating a ceremony will be taking place. Once the aroma of the smudge has dissipated, the signs will be removed.
- No flammable materials or large quantities of combustible materials will be in the designated room during the smudging ceremony
- The person responsible for the smudge must know the location of the nearest fire extinguisher, how to properly use it and be aware of nearby combustible materials. The door(s) where the smudge is being performed will remain closed for the duration of the ceremony.
- The smudge bowl must rest in an area with non-combustible materials. The smudge bowl must be capable of withstanding the heat of the smudge bundles. Embers must be kept in a heatproof container until cold to the touch before discarding.
- The person responsible for the smudge must ensure that no burning materials are left unattended and that all burning materials are doused immediately after the conclusion of the smudging ceremony.
- The person responsible for the smudge shall ensure the safe disposal of ashes as per cultural practice.
- Library users or staff in the building, particularly those with severe asthma, respiratory issues or allergies to smoke will be advised that a ceremony will be taking place. If requested, alternative service or work arrangements will be provided.
- The room will be well ventilated after each smudging ceremony.
- These guidelines will be included in the Library's Fire Safety Plan