



What is smudging?

Smudging is a spiritual and cultural practice observed by many Indigenous Peoples (First Nations & Métis predominantly) that involves the burning of one or more sacred medicines including, but not limited to, tobacco, sweetgrass, sage and/or cedar. The smoke is used to cleanse a room, person or group.



This guide was created to answer frequently asked questions about smudging.

Campus Contacts:

indigenousinitiatives@uwo.ca
Manager, Fire Safety: firesafety@uwo.ca
Accessibility Services: accessibility@uwo.ca

References

- Canadian Encyclopedia (2018) Smudging. Web.
- Indigenous Inclusion Directorate: Manitoba Education & Training (2018) Smudging Protocol & Guidelines for School Divisions
- KiiskeeNtum (n.d.) Gifts from the Creator for Man's Use...The Smudging Ceremony (www.ammsa.com)
- Mohagheghzadeh, A. et al. (2006) Medicinal Smokes. *Journal of Ethnopharmacology*. 108 (2) 161-184.

Western University Procedure for Burning Traditional Medicines



Why do Indigenous Peoples smudge?

Smudging promotes and encourages Indigenous Peoples to ground themselves and stay connected. Teachings vary from nation to nation, but generally, as they smudge, they are cleansing the air around them, as well as:

- Their minds so they have good thoughts about others
- Their eyes so they only see good things in others
- Their ears so they only hear good things about others
- Their mouths so they only speak well of others
- Their whole being so that they bring out the good parts of themselves through their actions

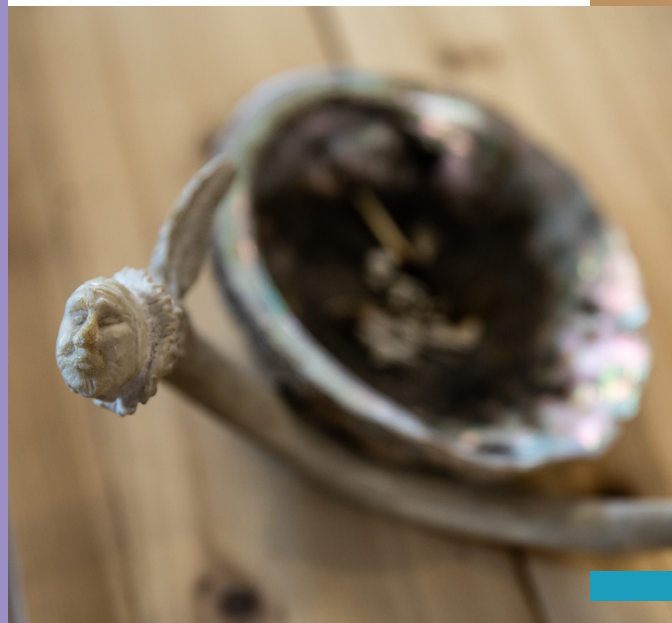
If you have more questions about smudging or pipe ceremonies, contact the Office of Indigenous Initiatives or speak to a Knowledge Keeper or an Elder.

When might an Indigenous community member smudge?

- In keeping practice with and according to their teachings
- As a guest speaker, before/after their talk
- As an Elder or Knowledge Keeper opening an event
- As a student, faculty member or employee presenting a workshop

Did you know?

- Smudging is generally not considered a religious practice among most Indigenous Peoples but a holistic way of life.
- Colonization has had a devastating impact on Indigenous spiritual and cultural practices to this day. Until the 1950s, the *Indian Act* broadly outlawed all Indigenous acts of culture and spirituality, including Potlatch and Sundance ceremonies, as well as smudging.



Procedures

Designated “smudge-friendly” locations

- Indigenous Student Centre, Western Student Services (WSS) Rm 2100
- Indigenous Studies, Social Science Centre (SCC) Rm 3207
- Indigenous Education, Faculty of Education, Rm 1092
- Indigenous Student Space, Health Sciences Addition, Rm 43

To use a non-designated space for smudging:

- Email indigenoussmudge@uwo.ca at least one week in advance, stating:
 - Organizer’s full name and contact information;
 - Department, building and room location
 - Date, including start & end time
- Post sign that a smudge ceremony is taking place at least one day prior to the event (template on the Office of Indigenous Initiative’s website)
- Prior to event, learn location of nearest fire extinguisher, exit and alarm-pull station
- Ensure a proper container is used for burning the smudge. i.e. abalone shell, stone bowl, copper, brass or cast-iron pan
- Depending on ventilation, be prepared to open a window and/or close a door

Relevant & Related Legislation

Canadian Human Rights Act, 1985
Canadian Charter of Rights & Freedoms,
Constitution Act, 1982
Ontario Human Rights Code,
Preventing Discrimination based on Creed, 2015
Tobacco Control Act, 1994
Smoke Free Policy, Western University 2019