

	Indigenous Cultural Ceremony Policy				
Approved By:	Executive Group (EG)				
Approval Date:	2025 08 27	Effective Date:	2025 08 27	Review Date:	2027 08 27
Responsible Portfolio/Unit/ Committee:	Equity and Inclusion				
Responsible Officer(s):	Director, Indigenous Affairs				

# 1.0 Purpose

NOSM University respects and supports Indigenous cultural ceremonies on campus that involve the use of the four sacred medicines (sage, cedar, tobacco, and sweetgrass). Such events include, but are not limited to counselling sessions, opening/closing prayers for events or meetings, smudging. NOSM U recognizes and welcomes these cultural ceremonies, as they are part of the Indigenous traditional way of life.

Under Section 13 of the Ontario Smoke Free Act, smudging, smoking, or holding lighted tobacco by First Nations and Métis persons for traditional First Nations and Metis cultural or spiritual purposes is permitted. As such, NOSM U permits the burning of any or all of the four sacred medicines in connection with Indigenous spiritual practices for personal use or at cultural and educational events.

# 2.0 Scope

This policy applies to all members of the NOSM University community, which includes, but is not limited to, staff, faculty, professional staff, librarians, Board Members, stipendiary faculty, medical residents, all NOSM University - registered and visiting learners (dietetic interns, postgraduate residents, undergraduate students), volunteers, visitors, observers, and third-party contractors) while they are acting in a capacity defined by their relationship with the University, as well as institutional administrators and officials representing NOSM University.

# **Policy**



#### 3.0 Procedure

- 3.1 NOSM University has provided cultural rooms (MSW 2015 and HSERC 138A) at each campus for ceremonies in the designated Indigenous area. These spaces are equipped to support proper ventilation during ceremonies.
- 3.2 In the spirit of Truth and Reconciliation, if rooms MSW 2015 and HSERC 138A are unsuitable due to the anticipated number of participants, smudging will be permitted in any NOSM U. classroom. In this case, a staff and/or committee member shall provide at least 48 hours' advance notice, both internally and externally, to participants and the NOSM University community that a smudge will be lit on a specific day, time, and location. This includes notice provided to Communications for publication in *The Pulse* (when applicable).
- 3.3 On the day of the cultural ceremony, the staff and/or committee member responsible for coordinating the event shall place signage in a visible location. Signage may include the following:

Today, an Indigenous Smudging Ceremony will occur in this gathering space. Smudging is often part of events/meetings at NOSM University. All are welcome to participate as a matter of choice.

- 3.4 Prior to the start of a ceremony, a staff and/or committee member should ensure that smudging does not pose a health risk to attendees and the NOSM University community, particularly individuals with severe asthma and respiratory issues.
- 3.5 If the ceremony poses a health risk to attendees or someone from the NOSM University. community, they will move outside the meeting space until the ceremony is complete. Virtual options or alternative accommodations should be offered when necessary.
- 3.6 At the time of the event, an introduction to the tradition of smudging should include an Elder or traditional teacher who can explain smudging, the medicines, the teachings and the protocols.
- 3.7 During the ceremony, a staff and/or committee member must ensure that no burning materials are left unattended and that all burning materials are doused immediately after the conclusion of the smudging ceremony.



# 4.0 Roles and Responsibilities

#### 4.1 Responsibilities of Staff.

Staff must advise their supervisor if the cultural ceremony poses a health risk to them and to work with their supervisor on a reasonable accommodation (i.e. working from home or finding an alternate work location on campus).

#### 4.2 Responsibilities of Supervisors

The supervisor is responsible for ensuring proper accommodations are made for employees with identified health risks. The supervisor shall work with Indigenous Affairs, Human Resources and/or Facilities, if needed.

### 4.3 Indigenous Affairs Unit

The Indigenous Affairs Unit will work with all interest holders to ensure cultural ceremonies are respected and staff with identified health risks are accommodated and ensure appropriate and ample notice of a cultural ceremony is provided to the NOSM University community.

#### 4.4 NOSM University Facilities

When an event takes place outside of normal business hours (8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.), Indigenous Affairs Unit will notify NOSM U Facilities who will inform the security departments of Laurentian and Lakehead Universities.

#### 5.0 Related Documents

Ontario Smoke - Free Act - Section 13

Laurentian University's Smudging and Ceremonial Practices Policy

Lakehead University's Indigenous and Aboriginal Cultural Ceremonies Policy

Ontario Human Rights - <a href="https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-discrimination-based-creed/11-indigenous-spiritual-practices">https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-discrimination-based-creed/11-indigenous-spiritual-practices</a>

Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action - #43, #45, #62, and #63 regarding reconciliation and education.



# 6.0 Getting Help

Queries regarding the interpretation of this document and resolution of issues should be directed to:

Equity and Inclusion

Northern Ontario School of Medicine University

Email: adei@nosm.ca

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1.0	2025 08 27	Original. Approved by Executive Group.			