

# Procedure to Address Indigenous Smudging and Pipe Ceremony Requests

## Introduction

Smudging is a traditional cleansing ceremony commonly practiced by First Nations and Métis people. The ceremony requires the burning of sacred medicines (most often sage, cedar, tobacco and sweetgrass, though other medicines may be used) to create the cleansing smoke, and it is a holistic health practice that is considered sacred, similar to sacramental ceremonies in other traditions and is used for healing of body, mind and spirit.

Pipe ceremony is a traditional practice that some First Nations people and communities perform in groups, typically at negotiations or meetings, in order to set a tone on partnership for truthful, respectful discussions.

Among Inuit, some spiritual practices may include the use of a qulliq, which is a type of low-intensity oil lamp made from soapstone and an arctic cotton and moss wick fueled by animal oil.

Providence Health Care (PHC) recognizes these practices and supports access for patients, residents and families to these and other ceremonies and customs at our sites.

## Purpose

This procedure provides PHC staff and Medical Staff with accepted practices for facilitating traditional Indigenous ceremonies in patient/resident areas and alternatives where the burning of medicines is not safely possible.

## Site Applicability

This procedure applies to all Providence Health Care facilities and sites. Due to the unique circumstances of each PHC site, Facilities Management and Plant Services will have specific steps or contacts relevant to each site.

## Practice Level

All members of PHC Staff, including Medical Staff. For the purposes of this procedure, PHC Staff and Medical Staff will be referred to as "Staff".

This material has been prepared solely for use at Providence Health Care (PHC). PHC accept no responsibility for use of this material by any person or organization not associated with PHC. A printed copy of this document may not reflect the current electronic version.

## Need to Know

- Those individuals with chronic respiratory illnesses (e.g., asthma, COPD, etc.) not directly present for a ceremony involving the burning of Traditional medicines may experience reactions if they come into indirect contact and have higher sensitivity to triggers.
- Medicines and Tobacco are to be respected and stored in a safe and accessible place for use by Indigenous patient/resident as determined, in collaboration with the Indigenous Traditional Practitioner, PHC staff, or Indigenous patient/resident and/or the clinical practice guidelines established by the PHC Indigenous Wellness Team.

## Exclusions

Nothing in this procedure is intended to be used to permit exceptions to PHC's [Smoke and Vape-Free Premises policy](#).

## Supplies and Equipment

- Medicines and related ceremonial materials
  - Generally, the patient/resident, family, extended family or Indigenous healing practitioner will provide the supplies required for these ceremonies. The Indigenous Wellness Team or Spiritual Health staff are also able to provide supplies and assist with ceremony and with escorting Elders to and from clinical areas if required.

## Procedure

Staff made aware of a request for a Traditional Indigenous Ceremony (e.g., Smudging, Pipe Ceremony, Sweats, Brushing, etc.) from a patient and/or family member are to contact the Indigenous Wellness Team by phone: 604-682-2344 ext. 62937 or email: [IWL@providencehealth.bc.ca](mailto:IWL@providencehealth.bc.ca) to assist with fulfilling the request, or for the Team's awareness in the event that the patient or family make their own arrangements. Staff with Cerner access may also submit a Consult to the Indigenous Wellness Team.

Indigenous Wellness Team members will act as the lead in coordinating the request unless there are no Indigenous Wellness Team members available at the time of the request. In that event, Staff will identify one member of the care team members to lead the request, following the steps below.

## Locations

PHC Staff will arrange for the ceremony to take place in a designated Ceremonial area. At St Paul's Hospital, the All Nations Sacred Space ("the Sacred Space") is located on Burrard Level 4, room 451, and is accessible 24/7 via security. The Sacred Space includes a ventilation unit that should be switched on and the door to the room remain closed for the duration of the ceremony.

This material has been prepared solely for use at Providence Health Care (PHC). PHC accept no responsibility for use of this material by any person or organization not associated with PHC. A printed copy of this document may not reflect the current electronic version.

If there is no designated space for ceremonies or if it is undesirable to transport the patient/resident to such a space, the following steps will be taken:

- Making ceremonial space available within the patient's/resident's room
- Making ceremonial space available within the clinical setting
- Creating appropriate ceremonial space out of doors
- Working with the Indigenous Wellness Team, Plant Services and Risk Management to determine a suitable location

### Forms

Staff are required to complete the [Physical Plant Services Smudging & Nebulizer Authorization Form](#). All requests must be reported to Plant Services to ensure adherence to building protocols and proper ventilation.

- *As there are changes to the form from time to time, Staff are strongly encouraged to seek the form hosted on PHC Connect and are strongly discouraged from saving a blank copy of the form.*

### Inpatient Rooms or Areas Protected by Smoke Detectors

Staff will notify Plant Services of the planned ceremony well in advance of the commencement of the ceremony:

- It is preferable to give 24 hours advanced notice. If that is not possible, a minimum of 1-2 hours' notice is requested.
- In the case of urgent situations (e.g., End of Life), all efforts will be made to meet the request as soon as possible.

If the request comes after 3:00 PM or is urgent, the lead member will call the shift engineer at your site directly. Other possible contacts to try if the request is urgent and the shift engineer is unreachable include the Physical Plant Electrical Office or the Physical Plant Chief Engineer.

Staff will review the fire response procedures for the unit and identify the location of pull stations and fire extinguishers in the immediate area.

It is advised that patient/resident's Nurse, as well as the Nurse in Charge and the Unit Clerk be notified of the forthcoming ceremony in case other people present on the unit inquire about or report the smell.

Plant Services staff attends the location and determines the smoke detector device number, room number, and/or disable the device(s).

Once the device(s) has/have been disabled, Plant Services notifies the health care practitioner.

This material has been prepared solely for use at Providence Health Care (PHC). PHC accept no responsibility for use of this material by any person or organization not associated with PHC. A printed copy of this document may not reflect the current electronic version.

Upon completion of the ceremony, Staff will notify Plant Services who are responsible for ensuring the smoke alarms are reactivated.

***Where it is deemed unsuitable to burn medicines (e.g. Intensive Care Unit), the Indigenous Elder or Traditional Practitioner and the patient/resident and family members should be consulted about alternatives to smudging.***

#### **Post-Ceremony**

Upon completion of the ceremony, Staff will ensure that the door of the room used for the ceremony stays closed for up to 30 minutes after the ceremony, or until the air is cleared, before the room is reopened for general use by patients, residents or family members.

- A slight scent from the medicines may linger for awhile after the ceremony.

#### **Shared Occupancy**

Staff will notify other occupants in the room of the upcoming ceremony, and will give those occupants the option to leave for the duration of the ceremony if they wish it.

#### **Oxygen units**

Staff will ensure that all free flowing oxygen bagging units in the room are turned off during the ceremony.

#### **Air Fans**

Upon completion of the ceremony, Staff may turn on any room fans to assist in clearing the air.

#### **Burnt Remains**

Staff will consult with the Indigenous person leading the ceremony to ensure all remains of the smudge/cleansing ceremony are appropriately taken care of in accordance with the protocols of the Indigenous person leading the ceremony. This will usually be taken care of by the Indigenous person in charge of the ceremony.

#### **Documentation**

Documentation of the Smudging ceremony will be included as part of the patient's/resident's care plan. Documentation will not include the particulars of specific cultural practices but will provide a statement that a ceremony or traditional healing practice, including cultural self-care practices, occurred as part of the person's overall wellness care/plan.

## Related Policies

[Cultural and Ceremonial Use of Indigenous Traditional Medicines, Foods, and Practices](#)

[Indigenous Cultural Safety Policy](#)

[Smoke and Vape-Free Premises](#)

## References

1. *A Definition of Smudging*. Indigenous Corporate Training Inc. February 2017.
2. *Pipe Ceremony*. Indigenous Saskatchewan Encyclopedia.
3. *Fact Sheet: Information about the Qulliq*. National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

This material has been prepared solely for use at Providence Health Care (PHC). PHC accept no responsibility for use of this material by any person or organization not associated with PHC. A printed copy of this document may not reflect the current electronic version.