

**Subject:** Smudging  
**Effective:** July 2017  
**Revised:**

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## 1.0 PURPOSE

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The purpose of this policy is to inform library staff and the public about the tradition of smudging, and to provide guidance for holding smudging ceremonies at New Brunswick's public libraries.

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## 2.0 APPLICATION

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This policy applies to library staff and participants in smudging ceremonies held in any library of the New Brunswick Public Library Service (NBPLS).

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## 3.0 DEFINITIONS

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Smudging is a traditional First Nations practice involving the burning of sacred medicine, as a cleansing process for the air, mind, spirit and emotions.

The sacred medicines are sweet grass, tobacco, sage, and cedar.

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## 4.0 LEGAL AUTHORITY

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[New Brunswick Public Libraries Act.](#)

[Fire Prevention Act.](#)

Section 23 (a.1) of the Fire Prevention Act (R.S.N.B. 1973, c. F-13) reads as follows:

23 Every person who ...

(a.1) without the written authorization of the fire marshal, the deputy fire marshal, a fire prevention officer, a fire investigator or a local assistant, tampers with exit doors, portable or fixed fire extinguishing equipment, automatic sprinkler systems, automatic fire or smoke detection systems or manual or automatic fire alarm systems, except for maintenance and repairs; ...

commits an offence.

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## 5.0 GOALS / PRINCIPLES

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The New Brunswick Public Library Service (NBPLS) promotes awareness of Indigenous history and culture as a practice of inclusiveness, as well as in support of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action through its collections, services and programs.

Smudging involves the burning of sacred plants (tobacco, sage, sweet grass and/or cedar), and the resulting smoke is believed to purify the body, mind and spirit. Smudging is always a voluntary practice and is led by a person who understands what smudging is and why it is done. That person would ideally be an Elder or traditional teacher, in order to build community connections and to show respect for smudging as an Indigenous tradition. A person might smudge on their own to start a new day, to cleanse a space, or in connection with prayer. In group settings, smudging might be used to begin a ceremony, a meeting, or another type of gathering.

The medicine is placed in a smudge container (a shell, a stone or ceramic bowl, or a copper, brass or cast iron pan) and is lit with a match. The smoke is drawn forward using a feather or a fan.

The person lighting the smudge goes first, cleansing the hands with the smoke as if washing them, and then drawing the smoke over the head, eyes, ears, mouth and body. These actions are reminders to think good thoughts, see good actions, hear good sounds, speak good words, and show the good of who we are.

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## 6.0 REQUIREMENTS / STANDARDS

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6.1 A smudging ceremony may be conducted on library premises as part of a library-sponsored program or event, or as part of a group meeting held at the library. Any request to have a smudging ceremony must be presented at least one week in advance to the Library Manager or Director, in order that the Library Manager or Director can make arrangements to accommodate staff or patrons with severe asthma or respiratory issues. Participants of an event where there may be a smudging ceremony should be notified in advance, in the publicity for the event and also on the library's website.

6.2 Fire safety must be addressed before permitting a smudging ceremony to be held. Library Managers/Directors are to contact their local fire marshal or designate for assistance.

6.3 Staff or a designate participating in a smudging ceremony must be trained and capable of using a fire extinguisher.

6.4 While it is customary to allow the medicines to extinguish on their own, they must not be left unattended. The person responsible for requesting authorization to hold the smudging shall be responsible to ensure that there is no open flame and no embers 30 minutes after the end of the event.

6.5 Libraries holding smudging ceremonies must post a notice to inform people that smudging is taking place. See standard wording below:

Date:

**SMUDGING OCCURS IN THIS ROOM**

Smudging is an Indigenous purification ceremony. It involves the lighting of sacred plants such as sweet grass, tobacco, sage, and cedar. Although these plants have distinct aromas, minimal smoke is associated with smudging.

The New Brunswick Public Library Service recognizes smudging as an important Indigenous cultural practice, and through its Smudging Policy allows smudging to be incorporated into meetings and events held at New Brunswick's public libraries. The Smudging Policy may be viewed at [www.gnb.ca/publiclibraries](http://www.gnb.ca/publiclibraries).

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**7.0 GUIDELINES / RECOMMENDATIONS**

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None.

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**8.0 REGIONAL GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES**

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In consultation with the Provincial Office, Regional Directors may develop additional guidelines and procedures consistent with and necessary to support this policy.

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## 9.0 REFERENCES

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[New Brunswick Public Libraries Act](#). Government of New Brunswick

[Fire Prevention Act](#). Government of New Brunswick.

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## 10.0 CONTACTS FOR MORE INFORMATION

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NBPLS Provincial Office, (506) 453-2354

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