



RESPECTING USE OF TRADITIONAL MEDICINES & SACRED TOBACCO IN INDIGENOUS CEREMONIES

WRHA Smoke-Free Policy 10.00.010 outlines the need to “respect and support the traditional use of sacred tobacco and medicines within Indigenous healing ceremonies.” It also defines the worksite as “a place of work by one or more WRHA staff, including a client’s home” and outlines the expectations for adhering to a smoke-free workplace. Access to Indigenous Ceremony Policy 80.00.050 outlines the process to support such requests in a facility setting. This information sheet is intended to help staff provide culturally appropriate service to Indigenous patients/clients.

*There are several types of ceremonies that may be done indoors/outdoors (e.g., healing ceremonies, prayers, and end of life ceremonies, etc). **Smudging** is often one part of these ceremonies, and involves burning of traditional medicines such as tobacco, sage, cedar and sweetgrass for purification of the mind, body, and spirit.*

Culturally Appropriate Service Delivery



Requesting Ceremonies/Cultural Care in Hospital

- Anyone may contact WRHA Indigenous Health (IH) for access to the IH Spiritual Cultural Care Provider in the hospital setting. [Call 204-940-8880](tel:204-940-8880), or fax the referral form on website, or see IH on site at HSC, SOGH, SBH, GGH or CGH.
- Anyone may contact Security/Spiritual Health Services at a hospital to request access to the designated smudge room and medicines.
- Patients are able to perform ceremonies on their own, or with an IH Spiritual Cultural Care Provider, or with a healer of their own choosing.
- Be aware that there may be different practices re: retention of body parts, so they can be returned to “mother earth.” See [WRHA policy on Pathology Specimens – Acute Care, 110.220.070](#).

Respecting the Use of Ceremonies in the Home

- The Safety Assessment Form Tool and Safe Visit Plan (SVP) forms contain a section that pertains to the Smoke-Free policy expectations, and provides suggested wording for staff task sheets when visiting the home.

Client/Household member(s) use sacred tobacco/medicine in the home/site. No SVP required, if compliant with WRHA Smoke-Free policy. Notify staff in comments section of task sheet (“The client burns sacred tobacco/medicine to do Indigenous healing ceremonies; the scent can linger and has, at times, been mistaken for the smell of marijuana, but it is not”). Refer to Standard/Safe Work Procedure.

Respecting the Use of Sacred Objects in Hospital or in the Home

- Sacred Objects may be carried by a person to use for healing and should not be touched by staff (i.e. a medicine bundle, pipe, smudge bowl, cloth materials, and feather).
- It may be helpful to post a sign in the room to inform staff about the items, and to ask that they not be touched.

