

York University Statement on Smudging During University Events

Approved February 6, 2014—VPFA Brewer and VPA Lenton

York University honours and respects the meaningful First Nations and Métis tradition of smudging. This document clarifies York University's commitment to and application of s. 13 of the smoke Free Ontario Act in respect to the use of smoke in traditional First Nations and Métis cultural or spiritual ceremonies. Section 13 of the Smoke Free Ontario Act exempt in these circumstances.

York University also recognizes that its community is made up of a wide and diverse population. In facilitating smudging ceremonies, the university wants to balance the rights of all and accordingly has created these guidelines to help ensure that these traditional smudging practices are honoured and supported.

Smudging Ceremonies

Smudging is a traditional First Nations and Métis ceremony held when an officiate believes it is appropriate to cleanse an area and/or participants involved in an activity. The officiate of the ceremony circulates a bowl or shell normally with sage, sweet-grass, tobacco, or cedar. These medicines are burned in small quantities and participants voluntarily use the smoke from the medicines to cleanse themselves. York University respects the right of First Nations and Métis people to smudge and has developed these guidelines to provide direction for the practice of smudging during university events. In the interest of the whole of the community the university requests advance notice when smudging is planned at a campus event.

In order to facilitate an event with smudging, advance notice is important, and participants are asked to adhere to the following guidelines:

A. Fire safety precautions:

Contact CSBO Building & Fire Code Compliance for a trial test with University Fire Inspectors. If the sample smudging causes any false fire alarm signal on the fire panel, another location or pathway must be selected to verify safe to do without causing any false fire alarm.

Be aware of the location of the nearest fire extinguisher.

Never leave any building material unattended and douse the burning material immediately after the conclusion of the smudging ceremony. Do not let the smudge smolder during the entire event.

B. Allergy and scent alerts:

In order to educate, inform and give notice to members in an area, the organizer of the event will affix the poster noted below in the area at least 48 hours in advance of smudge.

At a suitable time prior to the commencement of the ceremony, inform anyone who may be exposed to the smoke or scent of the medicines and make arrangements for those that are outdoors. Direct managers/employees/students in the ceremonial area to the York University guideline on scented products:

http://www.yorku.ca/dohs/doc/GuidelinesNotices/Scented_products/scentedproducts.pdf

The University has created a Notice of Smudging poster

<https://aboriginal.info.yorku.ca/files/2020/05/Notice-of-Smudging-2020TB.pdf?x87945> to be printed and posted to give notice, educate and address questions members of the York community may have regarding smudging.

Note: Two rooms in the Centre for Aboriginal Student Services (CASS) have been equipped with additional ventilation for smudging ceremonies. The Centre also has a 5lb class fire extinguisher for loan. CASS will maintain a list of spaces where smudging has taken place with CSBO Building & Fire Code Compliance for a trial test with University Fire Inspectors.

For more information see the following factsheet:

<http://www.mh.gov.on.ca/en/smoke-free/factsheet/aboriginal.asp>

To see what smudging looks like, you can refer to this video

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s4bgqX_FiEw&feature=related

if you have any questions regarding this statement, please contact the Centre at 416-736-5571 or via email at cassinfo@yorku.ca