Calgary Board of Education

Sir John A. Macdonald School *"Together We Make a Difference"*
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September 1, 2024

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As part of our ongoing learning, students at Sir John A Macdonald School will have an opportunity to participate in a unique learning opportunity about the traditional practice of smudge daily. Students wishing to participate are asked to meet outside the portable doors at the Infinity Garden, in the mornings between 7:50 and 7:55.

This activity supports teaching and learning related to curricular outcomes. It also aligns with the CBE Education Plan focus of Truth & Reconciliation, Diversity and Inclusion, as well as Sir John A Macdonald's school TRC Commitment to center Indigenous Knowledge in all learning to build intercultural understanding, empathy and mutual respect.

Smudge is a practice shared by Indigenous cultures across Turtle Island (North America) and beyond. Every nation has their own protocols regarding the practice of smudge. Smudge is a land-based ceremony rooted in the practice of acknowledging our relatives and humbling ourselves as fully animate human beings—spirit, heart, body and mind—with the responsibility to walk in harmony with all our relations. Smudge typically involves burning a small piece of dried medicine such as sage, sweetgrass or cedar inside a fire-proof container, such as a cast-iron dish or abalone shell. Smudge can be done individually or in a group. The practice of smudge is an opportunity for students and staff to learn about Indigenous worldviews and perspectives, whether participating or simply observing.

When possible, we will invite an Elder/facilitator to offer teachings about this practice and its role in historical and contemporary Indigenous communities. In keeping with traditional practices, it is common for the Elder or Knowledge Keeper to close the smudge by engaging in Aatsimoyihkaan—the "sacred way of speaking". They may speak their message in their traditional language or in English. These words reinforce the spirit of collective unity and harmony and set the intention for holding a sacred space for engaging with one another in a good way. On a daily basis, we do not have an Elder/facilitator available but we still want to allow students to engage in this practice. Ms. Saker and Ms. Bethany will light the sage, but they will not offer teachings.

During an official event, when smudging in a group, participants sit or stand in a circle and listen to the Elder or facilitator offer teachings about the practice and its role in historical and contemporary Indigenous communities. In some cases, the smudge bowl is passed around the circle with the invitation for each person in circle to smudge themselves if they wish to. Please note that participation in smudge is informed, voluntary, and always connected to learning.

**Impo… …ave someone translate this for you.**

**Avis Important: Veuillez s'il vous plaît demander à quelqu'un de traduire ce document pour vous.**

**重要通知：请找人为你翻译这篇文件。**

**یادداشت مهم: لطفا شخص را با خودد ا شته باشید که این مو ضوع را به شما ترجمه نماید.**

**Thông báo quan trọng. xin quí vị vui lòng hãy tìm người phiên dịch văn kiện này.**

**ਜਰੂਰੀ ਸੂਚਨਾ। ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੇ ਲਈ ਕਿਸੇ ਤੋਂ ਅਨੁਵਾਦ ਕਰਵਾ ਲਵੋ**

اہم نوٹس براہ مہربانی.: اگر کوئی آپ کے لئے اس کا ترجمہ کر ہے

**जरूरी सूचना । किरपा करके इसे अपने लिए किसी से अनुवाद करवा लें ।**

**Aviso Importante: Por Favor entregar a alguien para traducirla para usted.**

중요한 공지: 다른 사람이 이것을 당신을 위해 번역하게 해 주십시요.

Важное замечание: Пожалуйста, попросите кого-то чтобы Вам это перевел.

**ملاحظة هامة: الرجاء ترجمة هذه المعلومات.**

In every setting, the "right to pass" is upheld. Those who choose not to participate but wish to remain in the circle teachings are welcome to signal their choice to abstain by placing their hand over their heart and passing the smudge bowl on to the next person. If, for any reason, a student chooses not to participate in the experiential learning, the teacher will ensure that an appropriate opportunity to explore associated learning outcomes is available.

The inclusion of Indigenous perspectives and experiences in classrooms is supported and encouraged by:

- The Alberta Education Act, Section 16: Provincial regulations for schools. This learning experience connects directly to Section 16: Diversity & Respect

- Alberta Teaching Quality Standard: Professional standard which all Alberta teachers are expected to meet. This learning experience connects directly to: Applying Foundational Knowledge about First Nations, Métis & Inuit

- Alberta Education for Reconciliation: This experience connects to various outcomes in the Alberta Programs of Study which demonstrates Alberta's commitment to First Nations, Metis and Inuit perspectives and experiences in curriculum.

We are honored to offer this optional learning opportunity for our students. If you would like additional information or have questions, please contact Ms. Bethany Balis and/or Michelle Hornby.

Warm regards,

*Bethany Balis* *Michelle Hornby*

Ms. Bethany Balis (bjbalis@cbe.ab.ca), Indigenous Education Strategist
Ms. Michelle Hornby (mahornby@cbe.ab.ca), Principal