1. Introduction

Durham College welcomes, respects and supports the on-campus Aboriginal cultural and spiritual practices associated with the use of the four Sacred Medicines: Tobacco, Sage, Cedar and Sweet grass. Under the Province of Ontario’s “Smoke Free Ontario Act” Aboriginal persons have the right to use Tobacco if it is being used for traditional Aboriginal cultural or spiritual purposes. Durham College recognizes that Smudging and pipe ceremonies are a part of the Aboriginal traditional way of life. As a result, the College has established the following procedure to ensure that the rights and freedoms of the entire community are respected.

The purpose of this procedure is to define circumstances where Aboriginal Peoples’ rights to practice traditional spirituality by burning the Sacred Medicines are supported.

2. Definitions

2.1. Traditional Medicines

The four Sacred Medicines are Tobacco, Sage, Cedar and Sweetgrass and they may be used daily in ceremony.

2.2. Smudging

A purification ceremony where any one or a combination of the four Sacred Medicines will be lit with a match. When lit, the burning Medicines will produce smoke and a scent is given off. The smoke is drawn over the individual or area to release negative energy, create a positive mindset, and to ground the individual. Smudging is always performed voluntarily and may be done in the context of ceremony, teaching, advising, and/or counselling.
3. Procedure

3.1. Permanent Ceremony Site(s)

Durham College has designated the Aboriginal Student Centre, in Room 1264 of the Simcoe building at the Oshawa campus as a dedicated site to ensure that the cultural needs of Aboriginal Peoples are respected.

Agreement on other locations of permanent Aboriginal ceremony sites shall be made in a consultative manner with representatives of the College, Facilities, Aboriginal Student Centre, and the Office of Campus Safety and Security.

When a location has been designated as a permanent Aboriginal ceremony location, the approved signage will be placed on the door of the room. The signage shall indicate that the room is a place where Aboriginal ceremonies will take place and provide a central contact number for individuals to call for further information.

Ceremonies may be done in the context of teaching, counselling, and for personal wellness. Aboriginal students, faculty, staff, Elders and cultural teachers are free to use the Traditional Medicines in permanent ceremony sites without pre-authorization.

3.2. Occasional Use

There may be occasions when a Smudge is planned for a non-permanent location. When a Smudge or other ceremony using smoke is planned for a location other than a permanent site created under this policy the following actions will occur: (i) an On-Campus Event form will be completed and submitted for approval, (ii) a Hot Works permit will be completed and submitted to Facilities, and (iii) the Facilities department will inform the Office of Campus Safety and Security at least three (3) business days prior to the planned ceremony. Prior to using a non-permanent location for Smudging and other ceremonies using smoke, the location in question must be examined for ventilation, smoke alarms, and proximity to work or public spaces that are occupied by persons with disabilities who could be negatively impacted by the smoke or scent from the ceremonies.

The Office of Campus Safety will post signage on the doors of the room where the Smudging ceremony will take place forty eight (48) hours in advance. Signs are available through the Facilities department. Signage in accessible format will include the College’s logo and will show the date and time that the Smudge ceremony will be held. The organizers will submit a request for an announcement to be posted on ICE at least forty eight (48) hours in advance. Once the scent of the Traditional Medicines has dissipated, the sign will be removed.
3.3. Educational Sessions

In order to facilitate and support an understanding within the campus community, educational sessions will be organized and delivered at least annually by the Aboriginal Student Advisors to raise awareness about the purpose and role of Smudging. Other mediums to be used for Smudging education and awareness will include digital signage, ICE announcements, and social media.

4. Roles and responsibilities

Durham College acknowledges a collective responsibility to respect, support and implement this procedure.

The chief administrative officer and the vice-president, Student Affairs are responsible for ensuring that the Aboriginal Ceremonies on Campus procedure is fully implemented.

5. Related policies, procedures and directives

- Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, section 1, ref. “Rights and Freedoms in Canada” and section 2, ref. “Fundamental Freedoms.”
- Durham College Accessibility Policy (ADMIN-203)
- Durham College Harassment and Discrimination Policy (ADMIN-202 and 202.1)
- Durham College Health and Safety Policy (EMPL-301)
- Ontario Human Rights Code part 1, ref. “Freedom from Discrimination.”
- Smoke Free Ontario Act; Ont. Regulation 48/06
- Tobacco Control Act, 1994, S.O. 10,1994, Chapter 10, recognizes the traditional use of tobacco by Aboriginal People for the purposes of cultural and spiritual use