1.0 Introduction

Queen’s University acknowledges that the use of the four sacred medicines (tobacco, sweet grass, sage and cedar) of the Aboriginal people forms part of the Aboriginal culture and heritage. This standard operating procedure outlines the University’s guidelines with regards to this matter.

The use of tobacco, in particular, is given special consideration with respect to the Queen’s University Smoking Policy (http://www.safety.queensu.ca/pol.htm). Furthermore, provisions for the use of tobacco are, in part, covered under the Tobacco Control Act, as outlined in the excerpt in Section 5.0 of this policy.

Overall, the purpose of this standard operating procedure is to ensure that the use of such medicines is done in the safest possible manner, with little or no impact to other building occupants and in compliance with applicable legislation and standards.

2.0 Applicable Legislation

Tobacco Control Act (R.S.O. 1994)
Smoking in the Workplace Act (R.S.O. 1990)
Ontario Fire Code (O. Reg. 388/97)

3.0 Considerations

1. Most buildings on Queen’s University campus have fire alarm systems that have heat and smoke detection capability. When a smoke or heat detector activates, the alarm system sounds, the building is evacuated and the fire department must respond. Queen’s is billed by Kingston Fire and Rescue for malicious fire alarms or activations that should have been avoided.

2. There is no smoking in Queen’s University buildings and any smoke producing processes are typically confined to a fume hood. For this reason, the smell of smoke in a building is typically alerted to Campus Security and Emergency Services for immediate investigation.
4.0 Procedure

The goal of this procedure is to reduce or eliminate the potential for false fire alarms and smoke odor investigations. The following steps must be taken prior to, and when traditional medicines are burned as part of Aboriginal culture and spirituality:

1. The locations where traditional medicines are being burned must be approved by the Department of Environmental Health & Safety.  safety@queensu.ca (613-533-2999)

2. If traditional medicines are to be burned as a part of an event such as a class, a workshop or a conference, approval from the Department of Environmental Health & Safety must be requested one week prior to the event.

3. Before approval is granted, the burning location will be inspected by the Queen’s University Fire Safety Co-ordinator. Fire detection devices, room ventilation and isolation from other parts of the building will be reviewed.

4. Campus Security and Emergency Services must be notified prior to beginning of the Smudge Ceremony. (613-533-6080)

5. Smudge materials must be burned in an earthen-ware bowl, large shell, or other fire proof vessel during periods of prayer and meditation.

6. A fire extinguisher must be made accessible and a person trained in its use must be present.

7. There must not be excessive smoke that may activate the fire alarm.

8. Steps must be taken to avoid smoke being released to other portions of the building.

9. Material remaining after a Smudge Ceremony must be fully extinguished and disposed of safely.

10. The room or rooms used must be well ventilated upon completion of a smudge ceremony.

11. Campus Security and Emergency Services must be notified upon completion of the smudge ceremony. (613-533-6080)
5.0  Excerpt from the Tobacco Control Act, 1994, S.O. 1994, c.10

13. (1) The purpose of this section is to acknowledge the traditional use of tobacco that forms part of Aboriginal culture and spirituality. 1994, c. 10, s. 13 (1).

Non-application of s. 3
(2) Section 3 does not prohibit a person from giving tobacco to an Aboriginal person who is or appears to be less than 19 yrs of age, if the gift is made for Aboriginal culture of spiritual purposes. 1994, c. 10, s. 13(2)

Non-application of smoking prohibitions
(3) No provision of an Act, regulation or municipal by-law that prohibits smoking in a place, including section 9 of this Act,

a) prohibits an Aboriginal person from smoking tobacco or holding lighted tobacco there, if the activity is carried out for traditional Aboriginal culture or spiritual purposes;

b) prohibits a non-Aboriginal person from smoking tobacco or holding lighted tobacco there, if the activity is carried out with an Aboriginal person and for traditional Aboriginal culture or spiritual purposes; 1994, c. 10, s. 13 (4)

Place for traditional use of tobacco
(3) At the request of an Aboriginal resident, the operator of a health facility, home or institution referred to in subsection 4 (2) shall set aside an indoor area, separate from any area where smoking is otherwise permitted, for the use of tobacco for traditional Aboriginal cultural or spiritual purposes. 1994, c. 10, s. 13 (4).

6.0  Revision History

1.0  Initial release