

Smudging Protocols & Guidelines

2025 - 2026

American Indian Education
one91
Burnsville · Eagan · Savage
Each Student. Future Ready. Community Strong.

One91 American Indian Education Program

One91 American Indian Education Program
Smudging Protocols & Guidelines
2025 - 2026

Background

Minnesota Department of Education - American Indian Education

Mission Statement:

The Office of American Indian Education works to strengthen and promote positive experiences and educational outcomes for American Indian students statewide.

We work to accomplish this mission by:

1. Building meaningful relationships
2. Engaging in timely and courageous conversations
3. Providing education and professional development
4. Proposing and supporting policies
5. Efficiently providing guidance and resources to districts and stakeholders
6. Actualizing the *Ten Minnesota Commitments to Equity*

We value:

1. Language, culture, and the significant and complex history of Indigenous peoples
2. The input of Minnesota's Tribal Nations and communities
3. The perspective of parents and students
4. The gifts and unique cultural needs of American Indian students
5. Effective and innovative programming options

Vision Statement:

American Indian students will reach their full potential within their school communities through meaningful, equitable, and targeted educational experiences that affirms and values their unique cultural identities.

Tribal Nations of Minnesota

There are 11 sovereign tribal nations within the state of Minnesota, comprised of seven Anishinaabe reservations and four Dakota communities, each with its own distinct government. Additionally, Minnesota is also home to the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe (MCT). MCT is comprised of six of the seven Ojibwe bands and is a federally recognized tribal government that promotes and protects the member bands.

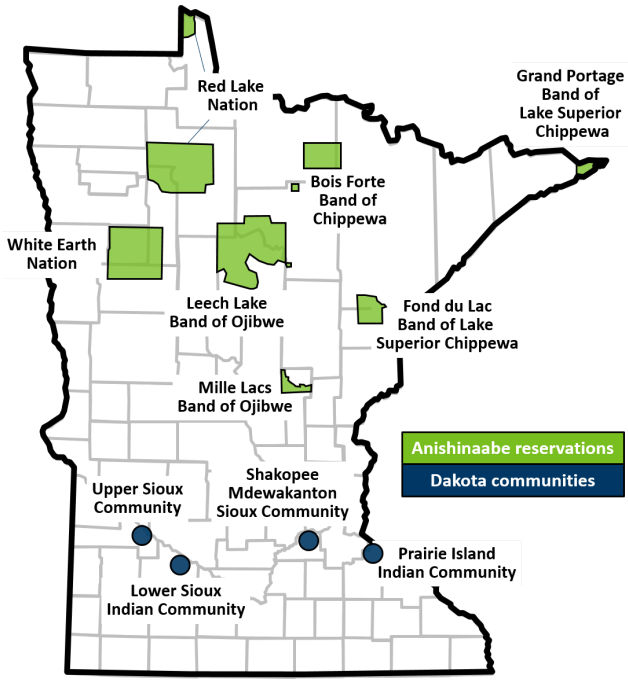


Figure 1. Minnesota Tribal Map.
Minnesota Department of Health

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) engages in meaningful and collaborative educational efforts with each of these nations through their tribal leaders and through their
Tribal Nations Education Committee (TNEC) representative, with the shared goal of eliminating educational inequities and improving the outcomes of American Indian learners statewide. These partnerships are extremely valuable, and MDE is deeply grateful to tribal partners for generously sharing their time, unique cultural perspectives, and expertise.

Minnesota State Statute

121A.08 SMUDGING PERMITTED.
An American Indian student or staff member may use tobacco, sage, sweetgrass, and cedar to conduct individual or group smudging in a public school. The process for conducting smudging is determined by the building or site administrator. Smudging must be conducted under the direct supervision of an appropriate staff member, as determined by the building or site administrator.

One91 Board Policy 419, IV. Exceptions

Policy 419
IV. Exceptions

A. A violation of this policy does not occur when an American Indian adult lights tobacco on school district property as a part of a traditional American Indian spiritual or cultural ceremony. An American Indian student may carry a medicine pouch containing loose tobacco intended as observance of traditional or cultural practices. An American Indian is a person who is a member of an American Indian tribe as defined under Minnesota law and/or self identifies as an American Indian.

What is Smudging?

Smudging is a practice among American Indian/Indigenous cultures, which involves the burning of one or more plant medicines for the purpose of prayer. These plant medicines have ceremonial purposes and most commonly include: sage, cedar, sweetgrass, and tobacco. With the most frequently being used, Sage.



Smudging allows people to slow down, become mindfully centered, and balanced. It can be utilized individually, as a grounding tool in group setting, and it can vary from nation to nation in how it is performed.

Smudging is always voluntary. No student or staff should ever feel forced or pressured to smudge. It is acceptable to deny smudging practices and remove oneself from the room when it is occurring. Respect is the guiding principle under many Indigenous core values.

How Do We Smudge?

When smudging a ball of medicine is placed within a shell or a bowl and lit with flame from matches or a lighter. The supervising staff is the only person to have access to matches or flames and will only allow students to use it under direct supervision. Once the medicine is burning it is blown out to create smoke that the individual will then utilize to fan over themselves, while praying. Once the smudging is complete the medicine is burned out naturally or the ember is pressed out.

Guidelines for Smudging:

1. Students should always refer to a supervising staff member to help guide them through the process of smudging.
2. Students at Burnsville Public Schools can request at any time, under the supervision of staff, to smudge in a private space in the school building. For example, at Burnsville High School the American Indian Education Program has a designated program classroom where students can request a pass to go to, for the purpose of smudging, any time of the day.
3. Staff should assist a student to smudge in a well ventilated area and use only enough plant medicine for the individual.
4. Parents/guardians can request for their student to refrain from smudging practices by emailing staff within the American Indian Education program. Staff are fully committed to respecting the individual practices students have in place at home. Parents/guardians should also make staff aware of any potential health risks of their student such as asthma or respiratory issues so that staff can accommodate those needs.

Plant Medicine Identification

It is important for staff to recognize that American Indian/Indigenous students are protected by district policy and state law to carry plant medicines on them while at school. Staff can always reach out to American Indian Education Program staff for guidance on identification of plant medicines, but this section will help you for quick reference. In addition, American Indian Education staff will provide students with a mesh bag to carry these items if requested.

Minnesota/ Plains Sage	**Cedar**	**Tobacco**	**Sweetgrass**
Characterized by silvery, white, fuzzy, elliptical leaves.	Characterized by green flat foliage, resembling fern like patterns.	Characterized by brown leaves, broken up into peppery shreds.	Characterized by long blades of braided green grass, sometimes purple on the ends.
			

Who can help me with smudging practices in One91?

The American Indian Education Program staff are happy to assist students, staff, and parents navigating proper protocols of smudging. Please reach out to either staff member for questions or concerns:

Madison McKinney
American Indian Program Specialist
mamckinney@isd191.org
612-490-8277

Marlene Bad Warrior
Indigenous Cultural Liaison
mbadwarrior@isd191.org
952-707-2327