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WRH Indigenous Practice Protocol

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1.0 PROTOCOL

Cultural practices play a central role in the health and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples. This includes ceremonies associated with emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing. Each ceremony is performed with specific intention, such as to promote or give thanks for healing as well as to honor the passing of relative or friend. For Indigenous patients who may be far from home when receiving medical care, ceremony often provides a sense of connection and peace. As such, it is important for healthcare providers to facilitate ceremony in a safe a respectful way.


In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada put forward 94 Calls to Action which sought to advance the process of Canadian reconciliation. Amongst these, Call to Action number 22 appeals to “those who can affect change within the Canadian health-care system to recognize the value of Aboriginal healing practices and use them in the treatment of Aboriginal patients in collaboration with Aboriginal healers and Elders where requested by Aboriginal patients” (TRC, 2015. Pg. 3).

2.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of this protocol is to assist WRH staff to:

- Provide culturally and spiritually appropriate care to Indigenous patients and their families that request ceremony.
- Facilitate the procedure to safely perform a smudging ceremony for First Nations and Métis patients and their families in accordance with WRH guidelines.
- Facilitate the procedure to safely perform a Qulliq lighting ceremony for Inuit patients and their families in accordance with WRH guidelines.

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3.0 SCOPE

This procedure applies to all clinical staff, affiliates, & professional staff of WRH.

4.0 DEFINITIONS - [See Appendix A](#)

5.0 PROCEDURE

5.1 Pre Ceremony

When a request is received from the patient or family for an Indigenous ceremony, the healthcare provider will contact their operational manager or if after hours, the After Hours Manager. [Also see Appendix C: Algorithm.](#)

i. The manager will:

- Facilitate the location for the ceremony as requested by the family.
- Contact:
 - Spiritual Care through Switchboard (519) 254-5577
 - Indigenous Navigator:
 - Cancer Patients: Louise Cervini ext. 58504 or Cell (519) 995-1469
 - Non-Cancer Patients: Laura Meloche ext. 32885 or Cell (226) 759-8756
 - Engineering/Facilities through Switchboard (519) 254-5577
 - Security: ext. 33192 (Ouellette Campus) or ext. 52215 (Met Campus)
- If escalation is needed for an issue, contact EIDAR Director: ext. 52875 / (519) 995-6324


ii. The Family:

- May contact an Elder to perform the ceremony
- May coordinate the ceremony through the Indigenous Navigators above if Elders are not contacted
- May choose to provide the ceremonial items.
- May desire to perform the ceremony themselves. In this case, they will be asked respectfully to follow WRH protocols.
- May indicate their preferred location for the ceremony. This could be the:
 - Multi-Faith Space at either site.
 - An available meeting room. Some patients may not want to be around any sort of religious symbolism. As such, a neutral meeting room is the preferred space in this scenario.
 - The patient room itself. This may be the preference in instances where a patient is immobile, palliative, or receiving end-of-life care.

iii. Spiritual Care & Indigenous Navigator will:

- Facilitate access to **Indigenous ceremonial items, if not provided by family:**
 - Indigenous Ceremony items (See [Appendix B](#));
 - Items listed above will be kept securely and respectfully in an appropriate box within a labelled cupboard (Ouellette: Spiritual Care office on 1st floor, Met: Spiritual Care office on 4th floor, or Indigenous Navigator offices at the Cancer Centre and Ouellette).
 - These items may be reordered by contacting the EIDAR Director, Indigenous Navigator, or received as donation.

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- Assist with coordination of ceremony; guide, but not necessarily participate.
- In preparation for an Indigenous ceremony, Spiritual Care, the Indigenous Navigator or the manager should ask the patient or substitute decision maker which family/friends/staff will participate. Based on the number of participants and patient needs, a space where participants can assemble in a circle should be facilitated.
 - The suggested spaces for use depending on the needs can be the Multi-Faith Space at either site, an available meeting room at either site, or the patient’s room itself.
- Will ensure that other persons in the area are made aware that this ceremony is taking place, by placing of the “[Indigenous Ceremony taking place](#)” sign (Form #1356) outside the door.
- Provide ceremony items if Elder is not available to perform the ceremony.

iv. Facilities will:

- Assist with preparing an appropriate space to safely conduct the ceremony. This space can be the Multi-faith Space at either site, an available meeting room at either site, or the patient room as needed.
- Temporarily place fire alarm system in appropriate bypass, if necessary (as per Hot Work policy).

v. Security will:

- Will assist in obtaining Indigenous Ceremony items (respecting moontime protocols).
- Assist with the preparation of the designated space if needed.

5.2 The Ceremony

- In cases where it may not be possible to move the patient to ceremony area, efforts should be made to create a circle in their space if it is feasible.
- Family members, and/or Elder may assist in the Indigenous ceremony if requested. It is preferable that persons familiar with the ceremony perform the Indigenous ceremony.
- Staff may be invited to participate in the ceremony by the patient or family and may participate, if comfortable doing so.
- Sacred medicines may spark when fanned rapidly or waved during ceremony.
- A container of water or spray bottle will be readily available to extinguish any sparks that may escape.

5.2.1 The Smudging Ceremony


The smudging ceremony is a spiritually healing ceremony performed by some First Nations and Métis people and may be requested by Indigenous patients and their families receiving health services at Windsor Regional Hospital (WRH). Smudging involves the practice of brushing smoke created by the burning of sacred medicines over the body of the participant (this could include the patient, their family members, and/or staff) as a cleansing ritual.

*Note: it is respectfully requested that women on their moontime (includes 2 days prior, during, and 2 days after menstrual cycle) not obtain or handle the smudging equipment/supplies or participate in the smudging ceremony. Women and their partners who are pregnant are asked to make their situation known because of their strength in relation to the use of medicines.

5.2.2 Alternative to a Smudging Ceremony

A patient on oxygen (who cannot safely take part in a smudging ceremony due to oxygen requirements) or patients with other constraints (such as immobility in the ICU) are encouraged to participate in an alternative ceremony.

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This could include the use of smudge spray, lotion or cream (i.e. mixture of herbs collected and processed through ceremony). As long as this does not raise concerns for a reaction the patient should be allowed to participate. In the event that medicines are not available at the hospital, patients and families shall be encouraged to bring their own.

- A smudge spray is available for use within the Indigenous Ceremony Items.

5.2.3 Lighting the Qulliq

The Qulliq is an oil lamp that provides light and warmth to the Earth. Oil is typically used in combination with a mix of cotton, which absorbs the oil below and is lit. Once lit, the cotton slowly burns and is tended to with a hook-shaped tool called a taquti. The lamp is traditionally used by women to take care of their families. This ceremony may result in a fine smoke. Families typically have their own Qulliq, but one may also be requested.

A patient on oxygen, who cannot safely take part in a lighting ceremony due to oxygen requirements, are encouraged to participate in an alternative ceremony.

5.3 Post Ceremony

- Upon completion of the ceremony, remaining smoke should be ventilated if possible. Any ashes from the ceremony will be transferred to a jar and returned outside as required by tradition by the facilitator at a later time.
- If using WRH items, the ceremonial items are to be returned to the space which they are kept in Spiritual Care or in the office of the Indigenous Navigator. If after hours, call Security to allow access to Spiritual Care.
- Upon completion of the ceremony:
 - An inventory sheet should be completed by the facilitator. The sign in/out tracking sheet is attached. It is the responsibility of the facilitator to notify one of the following in writing: the Indigenous Navigator/Spiritual Care as soon as possible if any item is not present or in need of repair/replenishment.
 - Upon completion of the ceremony, a quality monitoring sheet should be completed by the HCP (TBD upon development of sheet) and shared with the Indigenous Navigator.
- Healthcare Provider to document performance of ceremony in patient health record.
 - ⓘ Notify Security and Facilities that the ceremony is complete and the smoke has been ventilated for reactivation of the fire alarm system.


5.4 Maintenance

- The Indigenous Navigator will inspect the Indigenous Ceremony items and determine if replenishment is needed. If replenishment is needed, the EIDAR Director and/or Indigenous Navigators will arrange for additional items/supplies.

6.0 REFERENCES


- Hot Work – Existing policy
- IRCS – Indigenous Relationship & Cultural Safety Courses – Thirteen courses that will strengthen your understanding of First nation, Inuit and Métis and urban Indigenous history, culture, and health landscape in

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order to improve health outcomes and person-centered care. This Self-Learning program has been certified by the College of Family Physicians of Canada for up to 19.5 Mainpro+credits.


- Smoke Free Act – Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017, S.O. 2017, C. 26, Schedule 3 Section 19 (1) “The purpose of this section is to acknowledge the traditional use of tobacco that forms part of Indigenous culture and spirituality”.
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission – To redress the legacy of residential schools and advance reconciliation, in its report the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada called on governments, education and religious institutions, civil society groups and all Canadian to take action on the 94 Calls to Action. Calls to Action 22. “We call upon those who can effect change within the Canadian health-care system to recognize the value of Aboriginal healing practices and use them in the treatment of Aboriginal patients in collaboration with Aboriginal healers and Elders where requested by Aboriginal patients”.

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APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS

- **Aboriginal/Indigenous** – The United Nations recognizes Indigenous peoples as inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and ways of relating to people and the environment. They have retained social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live. In Canada, Section 35 of the Constitution Act (1982) refers to Indigenous peoples as Aboriginal and cites the Aboriginal peoples of Canada as including the Indian (First Nations), Inuit, and Métis peoples.
- **Cedar bath** – is a ceremony whereby a person has their body cleansed with cedar water. This can be done at times of grief/loss or End of Life.
- **Container for ashes** – a sealed airtight container that ashes can be stored in, like a glass jar. Once burned, the ashes are sacred and must be taken care of by the conductor in real time.
- **Container for water** – water can be contained in any container, preferably with a lid.
- **Drum** – a sacred instrument used to connect the Earth and Spirit world. There are various types such as hand drums, water drums, big drums & Inuit drums.
- **Eagle feather** – is considered a living being and carries the message from the person requesting the prayer directly to the Creator. It is very sacred.
- **Elders** – Elders are very important members of the First Nation, Inuit, and Metis communities.
- **First Nation** – are those peoples who historically lived in North America, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, below the Arctic. In Ontario there are 133 First Nation communities. www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca & www.chiefs-of-ontario.org
- **FNIMul** – First Nations, Inuit, Métis and Urban Indigenous.
- **Flag** – a sacred piece of cloth representing a traditional “flag” may be attached to the IV pole or bed post.
- **Indigenous Ceremony** – a distinctive custom, spirituality, tradition, procedure, practice in accordance with international human right standards. www.ohrc.on.ca
- **Indigenous Navigator** – a position created to meet the needs of identified First Nations, Inuit, Métis and urban Indigenous patients.
- **Indigenous Patients** – First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and urban Indigenous people who are patients at WRH. This may be a patient with or without evidence of one of the following: Certificate of First Nations status, Nunavut Tunngavik Enrollment Card or Metis Nation of Ontario Card.
- **Indigenous Protocol** – it is important that sacred medicines are collected respecting established collection protocols.
- **Inuit** – Inuit are the Indigenous peoples of the Arctic. The word means “the people” in the Inuit language of Inuktitut. Inuvialuit - NWT & Yukon: Nunavik - Northern Quebec: Nunatsiavut – Labrador and Nunavut. 64,235 live in Canada. www.rcaanc-cimac.gc.ca
- **Liquid smudge** – a liquid mixture of sacred medicines to be administered when the patient is not able to leave a designated area.
- **Medicine** – for the purposes of this policy, medicines refers to the four main sacred medicines: tobacco, sweetgrass, sage and cedar.
- **Métis** – the Métis are a distinct Aboriginal group comprised of descendants of people born of relations between Indian women and European men. www.metisnation.org
- **Moontime** – women who are menstruating or within 2 days prior or after menstruating. Women on their moontime do not take part in these ceremonies because of their spiritual strength.

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- **Pipe** (opwaagan) – considered a sacred and living being once the bowl is connected to the stem. It is an instrument used to connect with all the elements and the Creator. No one but the owner, unless instructed otherwise, should ever touch this item.
- **Qulliq** – a type of low-intensity oil lamp made from soapstone and an arctic cotton and moss wick fueled by animal oil. It was traditionally used by the Inuit primarily as a survival tool for staying warm in the home, drying clothes and cooking. It is used as a ritual teaching tool and as part of opening and closing ceremonies at gatherings. www.ohrc.on.ca
- **Rattle** – a sacred handheld instrument used to connect the Earth and Spirit world.
- **Sacred apparel** – could be a piece of clothing that has been through a sacred ceremony.
- **Sacred cloth** – a cloth that may be used in a ceremony to provide comfort to patient, for instance when they may not be able to participate in a smudging ceremony.
- **Sacred medicines** – there are many sacred medicines but the main four are cedar, sage, sweet grass, traditional tobacco.
- **Signage** – “Indigenous Ceremony Taking Place” – a door hanger be posted outside the room advising persons the room is being used for a smudging ceremony.
- **Smudging** - is a sacred Indigenous practice that involves the igniting of sacred medicines in an abalone shell, which creates a smudge (smoke) that is used to cleanse the individual or room and makes it a sacred space.
- **Smudging pot or Abalone shell** – a smudge pot can be clay, iron or a shell.
- **Wooden matches** in safe storage container – wooden matches are usually stored in a box and once they have been lit they can be discarded in a glass jar.


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APPENDIX B: INDIGENOUS CEREMONY INVENTORY LIST & LOG (FORM# 1299-U, pages 1 & 2)


- [Printable version](#)
- Screenshot:

		INDIGENOUS CEREMONY INVENTORY LIST & LOG	
INDIGENOUS CEREMONY - ITEM LIST			
Smudging Ceremony	Qulliq Ceremony	Pipe Ceremony	Other Ceremony
<input type="checkbox"/> Eagle feather <input type="checkbox"/> Sacred Medicines <input type="checkbox"/> Cedar <input type="checkbox"/> Sage <input type="checkbox"/> Sweet Grass <input type="checkbox"/> Tobacco (Ceremonial) <input type="checkbox"/> Wooden matches (in safe storage container) <input type="checkbox"/> Smudging pot or Abalone shell <input type="checkbox"/> Container for ashes <input type="checkbox"/> Spray bottle of water <input type="checkbox"/> Signage – “Ceremony taking place” <input type="checkbox"/> Liquid smudge <input type="checkbox"/> Cloth <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Qulliq (oil lamp) <input type="checkbox"/> Oil & Cotton <input type="checkbox"/> Signage – “Ceremony taking place” <input type="checkbox"/> Ceremonial apparel <input type="checkbox"/> Spray bottle of water <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Sacred item: Do not touch <input type="checkbox"/> Container for water <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Drums <input type="checkbox"/> Pail/basin <input type="checkbox"/> Wooden Bowl <input type="checkbox"/> Wash cloth(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Gloves <input type="checkbox"/> Garbage Bag <input type="checkbox"/> Feast <input type="checkbox"/> 8 washcloths / cedar bath <input type="checkbox"/> Spray bottle of water
Phone Numbers		FAQs	
Indigenous Navigator, Louise Cervini	(519) 995-1469	Names of ceremonies: Smudging ceremony, pipe ceremony, cedar bath, birthing ceremony, singing someone home, (Christian or traditional songs) feast, Qulliq lighting of the lamp ceremony, ceremony can be completed by male or female or combination of both, especially at times of birth and death. See “WRH Indigenous Practice Protocol” Policy (PC-U-110) Appendix E for more.	
Indigenous Transitions Facilitator, Laura Meloche	(226) 759-8756		
EIDAR Director, Sarah Mushtaq	(519-995-6324)		
1299-U PC L1 (Rev: 06/20/2023)		Appendix B to “WRH Indigenous Practice Protocol” Policy (PC-U-110) NPC: Return to Indigenous Navigator	
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 INDIGENOUS CEREMONY INVENTORY LIST & LOG							
Ceremony Date	Duration	Participants	Supplies Used (See attached list of Supplies)	Comments / Issues	Elder / Facilitator Name & FN Community	Reviewed / Addressed	
Ceremony Time	Ceremony Type				WRH Staff Logging (Name & Initials)	Indigenous Navigator Initials	
			<input type="checkbox"/> Family provided WRH provided: <input type="checkbox"/> Eagle Feather <input type="checkbox"/> Abalone Shell <input type="checkbox"/> Sweetgrass <input type="checkbox"/> Sage <input type="checkbox"/> Tobacco <input type="checkbox"/> Cedar <input type="checkbox"/> Liquid Smudge <input type="checkbox"/> Qulliq lamp <input type="checkbox"/> Oil	<input type="checkbox"/> Patient/Participant on oxygen - spray/cloth offered <input type="checkbox"/> Patient not able to be moved Alternative: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Issue: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Other comments: _____			
			<input type="checkbox"/> Family provided WRH provided: <input type="checkbox"/> Eagle Feather <input type="checkbox"/> Abalone Shell <input type="checkbox"/> Sweetgrass <input type="checkbox"/> Sage <input type="checkbox"/> Tobacco <input type="checkbox"/> Cedar <input type="checkbox"/> Liquid Smudge <input type="checkbox"/> Qulliq lamp <input type="checkbox"/> Oil	<input type="checkbox"/> Patient/Participant on oxygen - spray/cloth offered <input type="checkbox"/> Patient not able to be moved Alternative: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Issue: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Other comments: _____			
			<input type="checkbox"/> Family provided WRH provided: <input type="checkbox"/> Eagle Feather <input type="checkbox"/> Abalone Shell <input type="checkbox"/> Sweetgrass <input type="checkbox"/> Sage <input type="checkbox"/> Tobacco <input type="checkbox"/> Cedar <input type="checkbox"/> Liquid Smudge <input type="checkbox"/> Qulliq lamp <input type="checkbox"/> Oil	<input type="checkbox"/> Patient/Participant on oxygen - spray/cloth offered <input type="checkbox"/> Patient not able to be moved Alternative: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Issue: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Other comments: _____			
			<input type="checkbox"/> Family provided WRH provided: <input type="checkbox"/> Eagle Feather <input type="checkbox"/> Abalone Shell <input type="checkbox"/> Sweetgrass <input type="checkbox"/> Sage <input type="checkbox"/> Tobacco <input type="checkbox"/> Cedar <input type="checkbox"/> Liquid Smudge <input type="checkbox"/> Qulliq lamp <input type="checkbox"/> Oil	<input type="checkbox"/> Patient/Participant on oxygen - spray/cloth offered <input type="checkbox"/> Patient not able to be moved Alternative: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Issue: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Other comments: _____			

Legend for Type of Ceremony: Sm= Smudging Qu= Qulliq Pi= Pipe Ot= Other *Appendix B to "WRH Indigenous Practice Protocol" Policy (PC-U-110)*

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APPENDIX C: INDIGENOUS PRACTICE PROTOCOL – ALGORITHM

- [Printable version](#)
- Screenshot:

