



Sweet grass

Sweat Lodge Ceremony Canadian Aboriginal and Native American

The sweat lodge is a sacred spiritual ceremony for physical, mental, emotional and spiritual purification and healing. Participants come to pray and connect to Creator (in what ever way each person conceptualizes that). They also come to prepare for other ceremonies, to seek guidance for important questions, and to ask for healing in body, mind, emotions and spirit.

The ceremony integrates the four fundamental elements of fire, wood, water and stone (rocks). It is conducted in the darkness of an enclosed structure made of natural materials. The stones, called grandfathers, are heated in an outside fire and brought in symbolic numbers into the lodge and place in a central pit. Water poured over the rocks induces sweating. The herbs picture here are four sacred herbs that are used during the

ceremony: sage, sweet grass, cedar and tobacco

The ceremony consists of four rounds in which singing, praying and sharing occur. Drums and rattles are often used in the lodge. Between rounds the door is opened and participants may take a short break. As a sacred ceremony, all that transpires in the lodge is left there and not shared elsewhere.

Sweat lodge ceremonies are used by many groups of people, including many non-natives, who view this as supportive of their own spirituality. It is not seen as part of any organized religion and honors those of all faiths who choose to participate. Many programs for youth and adults which serve Aboriginal (Native) people offer sweat lodge ceremonies as part of their programs. These include child & youth programs, substance abuse and victim violence services and those who are incarcerated. A lodge in a rural area may look something like the following picture



Sage



Expectations

Participants dress modestly. Women wear a long (maxi length) skirt, dress or nightgown. A good flannel gown makes an excellent sweat dress! Men wear shorts or boxer style bathing trunks. A generous size towel is important for wiping moisture and covering oneself in case of excess heat. Women and men sit on opposite sides of the lodge and every effort is made to not intrude on the space of another person.

Cautions:

Women in their moon (menses) do not enter the sweat lodge.

All persons are expected to abstain from alcohol for 4 days before sweating.



Flat Cedar

This lodge will be held by Casey Eagle Speaker who is a Blackfoot Elder and cultural and spiritual advisor at Hull Homes and the Native Center at the University of Calgary. He also regularly offers sweat lodges for Sunrise addictions services, other local agencies and the general public. Some lodges are restricted to those preparing for the annual Sundance Ceremony. This is not such a lodge.

What One Traditionally Brings

Participants usually bring gifts for the ceremony Elder. These are explained below.

- Tobacco (preferably pouch or Native) if asking for special prayers.
- Print (broad cloth in traditional colours of white, red, green, blue, yellow) if asking for special prayers.
- Monetary gift for the elder and fire keeper. Traditional gifts of horses, blankets and buffalo hides and meat have been replaced by our modern economy.
- Ceremonial drum or rattle
- Water
- Food to share at the post-lodge feast

NOTE: For this special conference sweat lodge ceremony many participants will be coming from out of town. In their honour the organizers will arrange for the traditional gifts and the feast. Your contribution to the workshop day will help to defray these expenses.



Sage



*Kinnikinnik
(Native tobacco)*

The sweat lodge is located in south Calgary. It is readily available by public transit. However, we are in the process of arranging possible transportation.

Important reminders

The sweat lodge will take place in the afternoon following a morning workshop on Native spirituality. This workshop will also be held on the grounds of Hull Homes. The workshop will conclude with a light lunch (provided). Participants will be present during the entire ceremonial process which begins with assembling the rocks and starting the fire. People unable for any reason to enter the lodge are encouraged to stay and offer support through their presence. The lodge will end with a feast of traditional food.

Those who have a medical condition such as diabetes can, and often do participate. Please enquire if this is a concern. Dress for the weather - it may be comfortably warm or a cold wind may blow through. A couple layers of clothing should suffice. Please turn off your cell phones during the ceremony.