

**SUBJECT:**           **NATIVE SPIRITUALITY**

**PURPOSE:**

1. To provide reasonable opportunity and support for all offenders in all custodial facilities to participate in native spiritual traditions and practices.
2. To ensure every offender's right to possess sacred articles, and to the respectful treatment of these articles, in all custodial facilities providing they do not compromise custodial facility order, security and safety.

**POLICY:**

**Authority**

1. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees everyone the fundamental freedom of conscience and religion, and:
  - 1.1 section 9(1)(d) and section 9(2) of *The Human Rights Act* (Manitoba) defines discrimination as a "failure to make reasonable accommodation for the special needs of any individual or group, if those special needs are based upon..." characteristics such as religion or creed, ancestry and ethnic background;
  - 1.2 section 2(2)(f) of the General Principles in *The Correctional Services Act* (Manitoba) states, "The policies, programs and practices used or provided in the administration of this Act should take into account the age, sex, cultural differences and abilities of offenders whenever appropriate."

**Elder or Aboriginal Support Worker Services**

2. Facility heads shall make reasonable efforts to secure the services of an elder or aboriginal support worker, to arrange for regular and ongoing services:
  - 2.1 elders or aboriginal support workers involved in providing custodial facility services must be recognized as spiritual leaders within the local native community; and
  - 2.2 preferably, these services are arranged through a contract with a local native organization.

**Assistance and Support by Elder or Aboriginal Support Worker**

3. The facility head shall ensure that all staff members are informed about the elder or aboriginal support worker and their role, in order to provide support and assistance:
  - 3.1 custodial facility standing orders and staff member training will provide for the identification and handling of sacred articles;
  - 3.2 a staff member will be assigned to directly facilitate and assist the elder or aboriginal

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- support worker; and
- 3.3 a native advisory board may also be utilized to provide support and assistance.

**Role of the Elder or Aboriginal Support Worker**

- 4. Elders or aboriginal support workers will provide for, and personally direct such spiritual traditions and ceremonies as the sacred circle, the pipe ceremony, sweatlodges, feasting, and fasting, and:
  - 4.1 they may be called on for staff member training and to generally assist staff members to appreciate native spiritual practices and traditions; and
  - 4.2 they will consult with staff members before finalizing plans for ceremonies like a native feast, and keep designated staff members informed of events, as appropriate.

**Sweatlodge**

- 5. The elder or aboriginal support worker will determine if a sweatlodge can be erected on custodial facility grounds, and supervise its construction, if approved by the facility head:
  - 5.1 the elder or aboriginal support worker will determine the frequency and scheduling of sweatlodge ceremonies, in consultation with designated staff members; and
  - 5.2 participants will be identified by the elder or aboriginal support worker, and they will not be prevented from participating except for specific medical or security reasons; and
  - 5.3 upon request, offenders will be provided with written reasons if not permitted to participate in sweatlodge ceremonies.

**Sweetgrass**

- 6. Offenders shall be permitted to retain sweetgrass in their possession although the burning of sweetgrass may be restricted to designated areas:
  - 6.1 normally sweetgrass is distributed by an elder or aboriginal support worker; and
  - 6.2 under the supervision of an elder or aboriginal support worker, selected offenders may be involved in the harvest of sweetgrass.

**Headbands and Braids**

- 7. There are no restrictions on headbands and braids, except:
  - 7.1 headbands or braiding materials created through the destruction of custodial facility property; and
  - 7.2 headbands or braiding material that bears gang colours or insignia.

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**Meeting of Elders and Aboriginal Support Workers**

8. The Spiritual Care Coordinator will arrange a provincial meeting of all custodial facility elders or aboriginal support workers, at least annually, for them to exchange views, concerns and ideas, as well as to provide advice and guidance on offenders spiritual needs to Manitoba Corrections.

*original signed by*

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Executive Director  
Community & Youth Correctional Services

*original signed by*

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Executive Director  
Adult Correctional Services

Related Policy  
Religious Services