



Box 210
290 Zielke Drive
Beausejour, Manitoba R0E 0C0
204-268-3913
connect@sandysaulteaux.ca

Families Sweatlodge Ceremony Info

Family Sweatlodge Ceremonies Basic Information

Sweatlodge Information

The Sweatlodge is a dome shaped structure made of small trees and covered with canvas tarps. We attend Sweatlodge ceremonies to cleanse our mind, body, spirit and emotions and to help us heal. In the environments in which we live, we pick up toxins from the air, water, food, products we use, etc. We need to sweat out these toxins to help stay in a healthy state. In between the Sweatlodge ceremonies, we often cover the canvas tarps with a poly tarp just to keep it drier from the rains and snow. We use only the canvas tarps to cover the lodge during the actual ceremony. It is common to rebuild a new Sweatlodge each spring so the earth has time to recover.

Different Teachings

Each Knowledge Keeper has usually spent decades in training from *their* Knowledge Keepers. Depending upon the geographical location and Indigenous Nation, the specific teachings around ceremonies may differ, however, the same basic truth is inherent in the teachings. The Knowledge Keeper conducting the ceremony will share instructions and direction according to their teachings.

What happens to prepare for a Ceremony

Prior to the actual ceremony itself, it takes many hours to prepare for the ceremony and it happens in a spiritual and sacred way. When we gather the rocks from the gravel pit (grandfathers and grandmothers), we offer tobacco and prayers before we even choose the first rock. When we use medicines in ceremonies, tobacco and prayers are offered before the very first plant is picked, and often we have travelled many km to gather the medicines. Different medicines grow in different areas and the medicines need to be picked in their own specific season, dried and then cleaned and prepared according to the teachings.

The Sweatlodge Ceremony

When you arrive for a Sweatlodge ceremony, the Firekeeper and Knowledge Keeper have been working for a number of hours to prepare. Each Knowledge Keeper has specific teachings they follow in regard to protocols around the fire and Sweatlodge. The Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre has a waiver for all participants to sign prior to coming into the ceremony. For those under 18, a parent/guardian will sign. Please leave jewelry (watches, rings, earrings) at home as we don't want metal on our body inside the lodge. We sweat all year round!

Each person is encouraged to:

- Drink lots **WATER** (coffee, tea, juice, pop does not count) for approx. 3 days before the ceremony so you are well hydrated. This will help you sweat! We don't bring water into the Sweatlodge with us.
- Bring a couple of towels with you. One to take inside the ceremony and the other to use afterward.

Girls/Women: **

When we are on our moontime or menstrual cycle (our own special and sacred cleansing time), we do not attend a Sweatlodge ceremony. All those identifying as girls/women wear long skirts or long wraps to traditional ceremonies (we often wear leggings or winter pants underneath, depending upon the season and weather). Thrift stores usually have long skirts available. Having a dry skirt and T-shirt to change into after the Sweatlodge ceremony is a good idea.

- Those identifying as girls/women wear a long skirt and short sleeve T-shirt inside the lodge and are welcome to wear leggings or shorts underneath if you would like. If you wish to wear a bra under your t-shirt, a sports bra is encouraged so there is no metal. Another alternative is getting a long and large flannel nightgown from the thrift store. Those who identify as boys/men wear outdoor shorts. T-shirts are optional. We do not wear socks or shoes in the lodge. We leave our outside clothing/shoes/boots on a tarp at the Sweatlodge, just before we go into the ceremony.

The Ceremony Inside the Lodge

The Knowledge Keeper will instruct the participants as to where they will sit inside the Sweatlodge. Once participants are seated inside the lodge, the hot grandfathers/grandmothers will be brought in and placed inside the pit. The canvas tarps will enable the Sweatlodge to be pitch black inside except for the glow of the rocks. Medicines will be placed on the hot rocks so that a beautiful steam will arise and help us sweat out those toxins. The Knowledge Keeper will direct the ceremony through prayer, drumming and rattles. Teachings will be given throughout the ceremony inside the lodge. The doorway of the lodge is opened in between the four rounds and more grandfathers/grandmothers will be brought in each round. If you or your child wish to come out of the lodge before the ceremony has finished, please speak with the Knowledge Keeper and they will assist you. If a child wishes to come out of the Sweatlodge, their parent/guardian needs to go with them to supervise.

When the fourth round has been completed, we come out of the Sweatlodge, ready to feast together as a community. The more hands we have to carry back items and help to care for the lodge, the easier it is for all of us.

We have people of all ages, abilities, cultures and backgrounds come into the lodge. We ask that you come with an open heart and respect the directions and teachings you are given.

The Sweatlodge ceremony for families is a gentler ceremony and is a good place to come if you have never participated in one before or you have younger children. For those of you who are experienced 'sweaters' you are welcome!

What to Bring

- Feast Food to share with all (potluck) after the ceremony
- Your offering of tobacco for the tobacco bowl as you will use this with your prayers prior to going into the lodge and again upon coming out.
- 2 towels per person (1 for inside the lodge, 1 to dry off afterward)
- Change of clothing for afterward
- Each person brings their own bowl, plate, cup, knife, fork, spoon (this is traditional).

As you can see, the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre incurs expenses to be able to offer these ceremonies to the wider community. If you are able, we encourage you to make a financial contribution to help cover the costs. Donations can be made online when you register or online anytime at sandysaulteaux.ca/donate. You may also bring a cheque (made out to Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre) or cash donation. Donations of \$20 and over are eligible for a tax receipt if you include your name and mailing address with your gift.

Questions & Registration

The Centre will have a list of dates of upcoming Sweatlodge Ceremonies on our website: sandysaulteaux.ca/events! You can also sign up for our e-newsletter to receive announcements by email: sandysaulteaux.ca/news/newsletter-signup. Be sure to check off “Local News”.

In order to have an idea of how many participants will be attending, we ask that you register on the Centre’s website: sandysaulteaux.ca/events. 50 people vs 10 people is a big difference and helps us plan and prepare!

In the unlikely event of a cancellation, because of extreme weather, or our Knowledge Keeper becoming sick, we will send an email out to everyone who has registered and we will update the event page on our website by 10:00 am on the day of the sweat. Please check your email or our website before you come to make sure there is no notice of cancellation.

Please call the Centre at 204-268-3913 or email connect@sandysaulteaux.ca to ask about anything you are not sure about. We welcome you to come and participate!

Knowledge Keeper for the Families Sweatlodge Ceremonies: Melody McKellar