

**Sweat Lodge proposal
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Sweat Lodge Proposal:

Abstract

The role of the sweat lodge in Aboriginal culture is to connect younger and older generations spiritually and culturally through teaching prayer and purification. These techniques that have been used traditionally by many Aboriginal communities across Canada for thousands of years. For Aboriginal people, the sweatlodge helps to implement familial, social cohesion and sustainable practices. This is to counteract the legislation that has restricted the spiritual practices aboriginal peoples since the colonization of Canada. However, for Thompson Rivers University's Aboriginal student population, access to a sweatlodge in Tk'emlups territory when one does not yet have relationships within the Tk'emlups community, can prove to be a barrier. This proposal outlines the steps required and costs associated with establishing a Sweat Lodge on the TRU campus. The sweat lodge will fall under the umbrella of the aboriginal education department.

Background

_____ Since the uplifting of the laws banning the potlatch in 1941 there has been a return to traditional ways by aboriginal people, however the damage caused by the residential schools that nearly wiped out indigenous practices and spirituality. Since the revival of the practices within communities aboriginal students new to campus generally have access to traditional purification and prayer practices. Although there are many resources for all students on campus such as counseling, social activities, tutoring and spirituality. In spite of all these resources Aboriginal students lack access to a place to practice traditional spirituality. The gathering place provides all of the above services but lacks a place to practice smudging, sweating and private one on one elder counseling. The need for such a facility has been expressed to me by many of the elders, students and faculty. This proposal aims to address this problem by outlining the materials, methods and funding required in order to make the vision of the Sweat Lodge committee a reality.

Project Description and Articulation of Benefits

The Gathering Place will be the hub through which all students of TRU will be able to access information about the Sweat Lodge. There they will have the opportunity to attend elder guided workshops that would outline the requirement that would need to be met in order to attend the ceremony. Tk'emlups Indian Band and spiritual leadership have been consulted and have given permission to lead the Sweat Lodge committee and oversee the building of the lodge on their traditional territory subject to us following protocol and having an established operation policy in place. The Faculty of Nursing will be able to access and learn about First Nations medical practices. Trades and Technology students will have the opportunity to be involved in the building of the facilities such as the compost toilets. Cultural Anthropology students will be able to access aboriginal elders for cultural information and access to truly indigenous spiritual practices, subject to cultural protocol being respected. The Social Work students would be welcome to learn the familial and social practices of the First Nations people. Dale Parkes from TRU's Architectural and Engineering Technology Department offered to design the structure surrounding the lodge with the actual lodge to be built by the committee members. The Faculty of Science has offered its services in designing a 'green' building using modern energy, heat and water technologies in order to create an 'Earth Ship'-style lodge in subsequent phases. Facilities Services has informed me that there are no plans for one proposed location at the end of parking lot N outlined on the map below.



This lodge will introduce aboriginal spirituality that is focused on sharing, inclusivity and restraint into the TRU campus. The lodge's primary purpose will be educational in that it will introduce Aboriginal principals on how to live with the land, as well as alleviating well-known stereotypes of Aboriginal people and promoting the empowerment of the individual which would strengthen our community. TRU would be building the first 'in-town' sweat lodge in Interior BC, setting the standard for universities and empowering aboriginal students. Aboriginal people of Kamloops currently have no access to a place of purification and prayer, preventing the grounding and self-empowering effects of the lodge.

True aboriginal culture, sustainability and health care focus on healing from the inside out, with the focus being on spiritual, emotional, mental and physical wellbeing. Physical wellbeing begins with spiritual well being stemming from the exposure to nature and natural medicines, which are well known but have been ignored by western science and society since the passing of the Indian Act of 1876. The 10 Indian Commandments are outlined below, through very interpersonal (emotional and mental) verbal histories:

- 1) Treat the earth and all that dwell there on with respect
- 2) Remain close to the great spirit (your spirit)
- 3) Show great respect for your fellow beings
- 4) Work together for the benefit of all mankind
- 5) Give assistance and kindness where needed
- 6) Do what you know to be right
- 7) Look after the wellbeing of the mind and body
- 8) Dedicate a share of your efforts to the greater good
- 9) Be truthful and honest at all times
- 10) Take full responsibilities for your actions

All of the above principles are worthwhile principles to guide the development of a sustainable campus through social sustainability.

This lodge would put TRU on the map, as the only university on the interior and one of two university campuses in western Canada supporting the establishment and maintenance of a First Nations Sweat Lodge.

People, Partnerships, and Performance Measurement

- Dean of the Faculty of Human, Social and Educational Development, Dr. Airinie - Financial and Workshop support
- Dean of Science, Dr. Dickinson - Financial and Consultation
- Dean of Students, Christine Adams- Support
- Dean of Law, Bradford W. Morse – Financial, Legal and Policy support

- Facilities Coordinator, Les Tabata warren something – Facilities Consultation
- Architectural Engineering Professor, Dale Parkes – Planning and Feasibility
- Gathering Place Elders, Estella Patrick Mollen, Jimmy Jack, Mike Arnouse, and Doreen Kenoras – Policy Consultation, Elders teachings, and Lodge keeper mentorship
- Kamloops Indian Band Chief and Council - Permission
- T’Kamloops Indian band spiritual leaderships, Freda and Janette Jules, and Neil and Debby Leonard – Spiritual permission and consultation
- Director of Aboriginal Education, Paul Michel – Financial, Consultation and Policy establishment
- Jordan Robinson- Student mentor, Bachelor of Science student and Contractor- Sweat Lodge Panel Leader

- Sweat Lodge Panel:
 - Mike Arnouse, Estella Patrick Moller, Vernie Clement, Jordan Robinson, Sonya Charlie, Justin Young, Heather Louis, Chad Alexander

Project Feasibility and Planning

The 'Earthship' first nations temple would need to move forward 3 phases:

Phase 1:

Based on conversations with current Lodge Keepers we have calculated a \$46,250 budget for site preparation, construction of a walled enclosure, either establishment of water and electrical utilities or the use of a water tank, and acquisition of materials and maintenance equipment.

This is broken down in more detail in the Sustainability Grant Fund Budget attached.

The protocol workshop would be funded by the deans and the Executive Director of Aboriginal Education and facilitated by the elders of the gathering place.

Discussion with the Deans has indicated an umbrella type of support where each faculty will contribute 500\$ each per year in order to maintain the faculty.

Initial discussions supported the establishment of the lodge in phases, phasing with the initial stage including 2 lodges, one for coed and males and the other for females only. This would be in conjunction with Secwepemc traditions and open the lodge for other guest lodge keepers.

We would require a truck and trailer to collect the rocks(granite or lava) for each season, 49/sweat, 12 sweats per season, at least 588 rocks per season, each set of rocks would require wood to burn it and would involve the voluntary collection by local participants of the lodge, usually young men, which would include an honorarium for their time.

For each lodge there would need to be a lodge keeper, who is backed up by at least 3 elders and 5 helpers, 1 for fire, 1 for earth/rocks, 1 for water, 1 for air and 1 for love(familial support and food). So if we have a 3 lodge system we would need a panel of 9 elders, but it would be ideal to have 12 elders and 4 lodges. This would be consistent with the teachings of the 4 directions, aspects of the body, mind, emotion and spirit.

Phase 2:

The 'Earth Ship' phase would need to be further discussed with the due to the larger cost of building the structure, which has been estimated at 300\$/ square foot. For a 30 foot Lodge protection it would cost \$211, 950 which would need to be taken up with facilities and the Vice president of administration and finance, Matt Milovick, external contributors and T'Kamloops Indian Band in order to move forward.

Phase 3:

To extend the scope of the lodge to a proper 4 lodge system and establish the first post-colonial truly aboriginal temple with a projected cost of an extra \$40,000 to build.

Schematic:

