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<b>SECTION:</b>	PROTECTION AND ENFORCEMENT
<b>DEPARTMENT/DIVISION:</b>	STRATEGIC INITIATIVES & ENGAGEMENT (INDIGENOUS RELATIONS)
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	SACRED FIRES

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## **POLICY STATEMENT**

The City of Thunder Bay allows Sacred Fires to take place within the municipal boundaries separate from the Recreational Burning Permit system. The following provides municipal staff and members of the public with guidance on the Sacred Fire Notification System.

For the purposes of this Policy Statement, a Sacred Fire is an important part of Indigenous spirituality. The City of Thunder Bay, through the implementation of its Indigenous Relations and Inclusion Strategy (2019), supports community members who wish to practice their cultural traditions and customs, including Sacred Fires.

This Policy Statement will not supersede the authority granted to the Fire Chief under the *Fire Protection and Prevention Act* (1997) with respect to open burning. Instead, this Policy Statement provides a notification system which takes into account community safety while respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Corporation's desire to be more inclusive.

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Policy Statement is to provide a pathway for municipal staff and the community to understand what a Sacred Fire is, when and where they might occur, and why they can occur outside of the usual Recreational Burning Permit system.

This Policy Statement also makes available resources through the Indigenous Relations Section for municipal staff.

## **GUIDELINES**

### **Indigenous Relations and Inclusion Strategy**

In accordance with Pillar 2 of the Strategy, the Corporation continues to address systemic racism by reducing barriers and making policies and procedures more inclusive.

### **United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – Articles 11.1 & 12.1**

#### Article 11.1

“Indigenous peoples have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artefacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature.”

## Article 12.1

“Indigenous peoples have the right to manifest, practice, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs and ceremonies; the right to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites; the right to the use and control of their ceremonial objects; the right to the repatriation of their human remains.”

### **PROCEDURES**

#### **Sacred Fire Notification System**

Sacred fires are considered to be separate from the Fire Permit system currently in place because they are held in an Indigenous ceremonial context, and individuals taking part are practicing their culture.

In order to support fire safety in the community, the Indigenous Relations Office, in collaboration with Thunder Bay Fire Rescue has instituted an online Sacred Fire Notification System that allows individuals who are planning to have a Sacred Fire to let the Corporation know that it is occurring. This notification will help municipal staff respond in a supportive manner to any potential concerns from the public, ensure community safety, and allow for the collection of statistics, among other benefits. Complimentary training and online materials have also been created and will be maintained, enhanced, and updated as needed.

#### **Designated Sacred Fire Sites**

In addition to the ability of those wishing to practice their culture in their own homes, there are designated Sacred Fire Sites located within the City on public lands. These sites have the benefit of existing infrastructure (e.g. a fire pit) and have already been inspected by Thunder Bay Fire Rescue. New designated sites may be considered in the future with input from Parks and Open Spaces and the community at large.

To view a list of existing designated sites, please see Appendix 1.

#### **Policy Review Schedule**

It is recommended that after one year in place, this Policy Statement and its associated procedures should be reviewed to ensure that all parties involved are satisfied with its contents.

It is recommended that regular review of the Policy Statement and its associated procedures take place beyond one year.

**APPENDIX 1 – DESIGNATED SACRED FIRE SITES**

## 1. Marina Park – The Honouring Circle

<b>APPROVED BY:</b> <b>Replacing/Amending:</b>	City Council	<b>Date:</b>	April 24, 2023
<b>Originating Department:</b>	Strategic Initiatives & Engagement – Indigenous Relations		
<b>Contact:</b>	Manager, Indigenous Relations		
<b>Departmental Procedural Manual:</b>	Park Permit Application (Infrastructure & Operations), Open Burning Assessment for City Parks (Parks and Open Spaces), Sacred Fire Training (Indigenous Relations)		
<b>Affected Departments:</b>	Thunder Bay Fire Rescue, Strategic Initiatives & Engagement – Indigenous Relations, Parks and Open Spaces, Infrastructure & Operations.		