

	<b><i>Tipi and Smudging</i></b>	
	<b>Policy Type:</b>	Governance Process
	<b>Number:</b>	GP-D-2.4
	<b>To be Reviewed:</b>	Once per term
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	<b>Revised Date(s):</b>	

### **Policy Statement**

The Town of Okotoks (Town) shall have written policy that protects the Blackfoot people’s oral protocols which directs the care and use of the Town’s Painted Lodge (Tipi) and supports the use of smudging within the Town.

### **Policy Purpose**

The purpose of this Policy is to align western (written) culture with the oral traditions of the Blackfoot people. Further, this policy serves as written documentation of care and custody of the Town’s Tipi and supports the use of smudging.

### **Background**

On June 3, 2023, [Mayor Thorn \(Rock Woman\)](#) was transferred the rights to a traditional Blackfoot Painted Lodge (Tipi) on behalf of the Town. Led by Blackfoot Elder Doctor Reg Crowshoe (Deer Chief) of the Piikani First Nation, the transfer ceremony was conducted at the Laudan Park.

Town Councillors, [Chief Administrative Officer \(CAO\) Vincent \(Green Grass Woman\)](#), staff, invited guests, and community members attended and witnessed the transfer.

During the ceremony, Mayor Thorn, in the form of a [Vow](#), asked for the Blackfoot elders to transfer her the Okotoks Painted Lodge. In response to Mayor Thorn’s vow, elders transferred the Tipi to her, with [four \(4\) songs](#), the Blackfoot equivalent of a physical document of rights and privileges (mortgage). As part of the ceremony, both Mayor Thorn and CAO Vincent were given traditional [Blackfoot names](#).

The Tipi transfer is a tangible demonstration of the Town’s commitment to continuing to nurture relationships with our Indigenous community members and neighbours.

## **1. The Tipi**

- 1.1. The Okotoks Tipi is a traditional Blackfoot Painted Lodge.
- 1.2. The Okotoks Tipi design was created by Blackfoot elders who gathered with the Mayor and representatives of administration during the months before the transfer.
- 1.3. The Tipi design tells the Okotoks story, whereby the:
  - 1.3.1. water represents the Sheep River that runs through the community;
  - 1.3.2. birds are the meadowlark, a part of Napi and the Rock creation story;
  - 1.3.3. yellow represents the sun (also known as Napi Naatosi – the old man);
  - 1.3.4. black represents the spirit world; and
  - 1.3.5. bottom red mountains represent the Blackfoot’s relationship to the mountains and how close we are to the mountains, Okotoks.

- 1.4. The internal Tipi liner is decorated with:
  - 1.4.1. handprints created by Okotoks Council, staff, and community members, representing the community – the bond and commitment of the community’s strength and connectedness; and
  - 1.4.2. an image of the Big Rock, which pays homage to the Town’s name and the Blackfoot creation story of Napi and the Rock.
- 1.5. The Tipi is a safe and ethical space where teaching, celebration, and conversation can take place.
- 1.6. The Tipi is a sacred space, validated in ceremony, through smudge, which invited the creator to be present.

## **2. Authority**

- 2.1. In ceremony, on June 3, 2023, the rights and privileges, care, and custody of the Blackfoot Painted Lodge were transferred to Mayor Thorn as the representative and leader of the community.
- 2.2. CAO Vincent also received rights and privileges in ceremony, allowing her to support Mayor Thorn by providing oversight to Tipi use, care, and custody.
- 2.3. With their authority, Mayor Thorn and CAO Vincent may direct decision-making related to when, where, and why the Tipi will be used.
- 2.4. The Tipi may be used:
  - 2.4.1. for events that include a component of indigenous education (e.g. National Indigenous Peoples Day, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation);
  - 2.4.2. as an ethical space for conversations which include indigenous matters (e.g. meetings with First Nations peoples); and
  - 2.4.3. for events that the Mayor or CAO deem appropriate for Tipi inclusion.
- 2.5. The Tipi may be used within or outside the Town.
- 2.6. Mayor Thorn and CAO Vincent may delegate their authority, care, and custody of the Tipi.
- 2.7. Should Mayor Thorn no longer hold Office of Mayor with the Town, following Blackfoot oral protocol, the care and custody of the Tipi remains hers.
  - 2.7.1. If Mayor Thorn chooses to do so, she may transfer, in ceremony, the rights and privileges of the Blackfoot Painted Lodge to the incoming Mayor, or someone within the Town.

### 3. Care and Custody

- 3.1. The Tipi must be protected and honoured within the intention and spirit of the Tipi transfer and its use.
- 3.2. [Tipi rules](#) as described by Blackfoot Elder Doctor Reg Crowshoe must be observed when using the Tipi, as follows:
  - 3.2.1. When setting up the Tipi, always respect the Tipi poles.
    - a. Do not walk over the poles while setting up the Tipi.
    - b. Do not step on the Tipi design.
  - 3.2.2. When the Tipi has been put up, you must make alter and your first smudge to acknowledge that the design is up – this is helping to create a safe space.
  - 3.2.3. Once the alter and the smudge has been made, no one can walk over or cross the alter; rather you must walk around to get the other side of the Tipi.
    - a. Do not chop wood inside of the Tipi.
    - b. Do not talk or call through the walls of the Tipi.
    - c. Come to the door with a physical presence to have a conversation.
    - d. Do not sit in front of the Tipi door; rather sit on either side of the door.
  - 3.2.4. When you have made a fire inside, it never leaves the Tipi.
    - a. Do not blow at or fan the fire.
    - b. If your fire needs help, use the stem of your pipe to blow.
    - c. Use the flaps at the top of the Tipi to control smoke inside of the Tipi.
  - 3.2.5. Do not leave the Tipi unattended overnight. You must stay with the Tipi overnight.

### 4. Smudging

- 4.1. Smudging is a commonality among all Indigenous and First Nations peoples. Smudging is meant to cleanse and purify hardships, anxiety, turmoil, depression, anger, etc., away from participants.
- 4.2. As part of the Tipi transfer on June 3, 2023, Mayor Thorn made alter by turning the earth and burning sweet grass which was accompanied by the smudge song, giving her the transferred rights to make alter and smudge (with sweet grass).
- 4.3. Council recognizes, endorses, and supports the practice of smudging within Town facilities and during Town events, if and when appropriate.