



Annual Women's Gathering

Friday June 5th – Sunday June 7th 2026

Open to all women 16+

(Indigenous and non-Indigenous)

Fee: \$150 (subsidies available)



Included in this weekend:

- Traditional Crafts
- Teachings
- Sweatlodge Ceremonies

For more information and to register, please visit
www.minlodge.com/womensgathering

No alcohol, illicit drugs, cannabis, or pets allowed

Women's Gathering FAQ~!

1. Can I bring my cellphone? Is there electricity to charge it?

Yes and yes! We will have charging stations in the dining hall – please note you are responsible for your phone. Please don't leave it unattended.

2. Can I bring my kids? Pets?

The minimum age for the Women's Gathering is 16. Anyone under that age will not be permitted to attend. No pets are permitted.

3. What time does the bus come/leave?

The bus leaves at 12:30pm Friday June 7th from Minwaashin, and goes straight to the camp. Sunday June 7th the bus leaves 1pm from the camp back to Minwaashin main office (2323 St. Laurent Blvd).

4. Can I drive instead of taking the bus?

Yes you can drive, although you are encouraged to take the bus. The parking lot is primarily for Minwaashin staff, so you will have to park on the road. The road is quite busy and the speeds are around 80km, so please be careful when entering and exiting your vehicle.

5. Am I allowed to smoke?

Yes, there are designated smoking areas which you will see near the bathrooms. Out of respect for others, please only smoke in this area. Please note that illicit substances are not allowed. If you are under the influence of a substance, you may be asked to leave.

6. Will there be swimming?

Yes! We plan to have a lifeguard booked for the pool for the afternoon of Saturday (weather pending of course). Swimming in the river is prohibited.

7. How do I sign up for workshops?

The list of workshops and sign up sheets will be in the Recreation Hall (which will have a sign), where you go to register. Please make sure you register once you have arrived. Workshops are first come first served. Workshops may be subject to change.

8. I have a question/need help/first aid. Who do I talk to?

Minwaashin staff will have either Minwaashin hats or lanyards. Please don't hesitate to ask for help! There will be a first aid station located in the Dining Hall.

9. I have a special food for dietary reasons I need to keep refrigerated. What should I do?

No problem, we have a fridge we can store items. Just make sure to label it and talk to a staff person at a meal time. Please note that we cannot accommodate any life threatening dietary allergies due to the nature of this event

10. What else should I know?

During the Gathering, there will be Medicines burned: sage, sweetgrass, cedar, and tobacco. These may cause reactions to those with sensitivities. Also you will be expected to cleanup any garbage in your cabin before leaving on Sunday. There is also a zero tolerance policy for violent or aggressive behavior. Please be respectful of others. If someone is being violent or aggressive towards you, please let staff know ASAP.

If you still have questions, **please email asylvester@minlodge.com**

Things you Need to Bring

- Sleeping bag or blanket and pillow
- Two items for “give-away”. They should be of personal value and significance, eg., picture frame, candles, hand-made items
- Hand drums and rattles (We will also have some available for you)
- Flashlight
- Bug spray
- Sun block
- Sun hat
- Rain gear
- Warm clothing
- Loose-fitting skirt or shorts and a t-shirt or tank top and towel for Sweat Lodge Ceremony
- There is no electricity in the cabins, so you may want to bring a battery-operated lantern.
- Bathing suit and towel if you wish to swim
- Candles are not permitted in the cabins.

Volunteering

If you would like to, and are able, you may want to volunteer some of your time. Please see the staff member in charge of the Sacred Fire.

Sacred Fire Keeper

- To ensure the Sacred Fire is not extinguished at any time during the Gathering.
- To ensure participants show proper respect for the Sacred Fire, ie, no garbage of any kind, including cigarette butts, may be thrown into the Sacred Fire
- Prayer offerings of tobacco and “spirit plates” only may be put in the Sacred Fire
- To maintain a quiet, respectful atmosphere in and around the Sacred Fire

Sweat Lodge Helper

- You will be given complete direction from the Sweat Lodge Keepers

Participating in a Sweat Lodge Ceremony

Here are a few things to consider when preparing for the Sweat:

- Offer a tobacco pouch to the lodge keeper before going into the Lodge.
- Wear proper and comfortable clothing, such as a loose-fitting dress/skirt/shorts and tank top or t-shirt.
- Bring a towel and remove all jewelry and contact lenses.
- Discuss health concerns (medications, illnesses with your doctor) prior to taking part in a sweat. If you have any concerns, please speak with the sweat lodge keeper.

2026 Agenda

Friday, June 5

3:00-5:00 pm	Check-in / Register for Workshops
5:30-6:30 pm	Opening Ceremonies Announcements Walk/Drumming to Sacred Fire Site Sacred Fire teachings – lighting of the fire
6:30-7:30 pm	Supper
7:30-9:30 pm	Workshops / Sweat lodge
8:30 pm	Light snack

Saturday, June 6

7:30-8:30 am	Breakfast
10 am – noon	Workshops
12:30-2 pm	Lunch
2:30-5 pm	Workshops & Sweat lodges
1pm – 4pm	Pool is open (weather pending)
5:30-7:00 pm	Supper
7:30-9:30 pm	Workshops
7:00-8:30 pm	Sweat lodge (First Timers and Experienced)
8:30 pm	Light snack

Sunday, June 7

7:30-8:30 am	Breakfast
9:30-10:30am	Closing ceremonies - Giveaway
11-noon	Lunch & clean up
1:00 pm	Bus Arrives for pick-up

The word for the purification ceremony is oenikika, which means the breath of life

The Sweat Lodge

The Sweat Lodge legend is one of the oldest myths that originated on the American continent. In this rather complex myth involving no less than four distinct star formations, [Corona](#) [Borealis](#) becomes **Matootisan**, the sweat lodge.



Key Elements of the Sweat Lodge Ceremony:

- **The Structure:** Represents the womb or an upside down Nest (creators nest) , a place of rebirth and transformation.
- **The Stones:** Known as “grandparents/ relatives ” these heated stones embody wisdom and the enduring connection to creation.
- **The Fire:** A sacred element that heats the stones, symbolizing purification and the transformative power of spirit.
- **The Water:** When poured over the stones, water creates steam, representing the union of Earth and spirit with fire/ water/ air and song.

The History of Sweat Lodge Ceremonies

- **Lakota Inipi:** In Lakota tradition, the Inipi (sweat lodge) ceremony is a cornerstone of spiritual practice. Stones are heated in a sacred fire and placed in the lodge, where participants offer prayers and songs to connect with the Great Spirit.
- **Mesoamerican Temazcal:** In ancient Mesoamerican cultures, the temazcal was used for healing, childbirth, and spiritual rituals. The name itself means “house of heat” in Nahuatl.
- **Modern Usage:** Today, sweat lodges are embraced by Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants alike, often as a way to reconnect with ancient wisdom and find solace in a chaotic world.

Each element of the ceremony carries profound significance, reflecting interconnectedness and respect for all life.

1. **Connection to the Four Elements:** The sweat lodge incorporates Earth (stones), Fire (heat), Water (steam), and Air (breath), uniting participants with the fundamental forces of nature.
2. **Purification and Renewal:** The heat and steam help cleanse toxins from the body while prayers and songs cleanse the mind and spirit, offering a holistic sense of renewal.
3. **Symbol of Rebirth:** Entering the sweat lodge is likened to returning to the safety of the womb. Participants emerge feeling renewed and refreshed.
4. **Community and Unity:** The circle formation fosters equality and connection, reminding participants that all are one.

What Happens During a Sweat Lodge Ceremony?

Understanding the flow of a sweat lodge ceremony helps participants prepare for the transformative experience. While each ceremony is unique, here's a general outline:

1. **Preparation**
 - The firekeeper heats the stones in an outdoor fire.
 - Participants prepare themselves with prayers or intentions.
 - The sweat lodge is blessed, often with sage or sweetgrass.
2. **Entering the Lodge**
 - Participants enter the lodge in a clockwise direction, symbolizing the path of the sun.
 - The door is closed, creating complete darkness to enhance introspection.
3. **Ceremonial Rounds**
 - The ceremony typically consists of four rounds, each representing a different aspect of spiritual growth (e.g., cleansing, reflection, gratitude, and rebirth).
 - During each round, water is poured over the heated stones, and participants offer prayers, sing songs, or remain in meditative silence.
4. **Closing and Reflection**
 - After the final round, participants exit the lodge, often crawling on hands and knees to symbolize humility and rebirth.
 - A communal feast or gathering may follow to celebrate the shared experience.

What should I bring to a sweat?

- Water for you to drink before and after the sweat.
- A folding chair/lawn chair or blanket to sit on before and after sweat.
- If the sweat runs into the evening it is helpful to bring a flashlight.
- If it's cool or may rain bring a jacket, bring any clothing required to stay warm before and after sweat.
- Have a large towel to take into the sweat with you and a second towel to dry yourself after the sweat.

- Before and after sweat wear appropriate weather shoes for outdoor activity. When entering the sweat leave shoes near the sweat but not at the altar

What should I wear to sweat?

Do not wear revealing clothing or see thru clothing

During the sweat wear cotton blended clothes or cotton blend swimming trunks or shorts /skirts/ wraps/ long length towels.

Some wear shorts/ cotton tops/ skirts/ full length flannels

Make sure that what you wear is thick enough or dark enough so that it does not become revealing when wet.

How to Respectfully Participate in a Sweat Lodge Ceremony

Respecting the origins and traditions of the sweat lodge is essential for meaningful participation. Here are some guidelines:

1. **Seek Authentic Leaders:** Ensure the ceremony is led by a trained and culturally knowledgeable leader.
2. **Understand the Protocol:** Follow the instructions provided by the leader, including attire, behavior, and participation.
3. **Practice Gratitude:** Offer thanks to the leader, the community, and the natural elements involved in the ceremony.
4. **Avoid Appropriation:** Approach the sweat lodge with respect, understanding its cultural and spiritual roots.

Sources: [Lesson Five: Sweat Lodge – Exploring Indigenous People in Canada and Traditional Health Practices](#) [Native American Star Lore Cree](#) [Sweat Lodge Ceremony: Sacred Teachings & Rituals Explained](#) [sweat_lodge_faq.pdf](#)