



# Commūn-I-Tea Protocol

## Indigenous Education

In alignment with the [CBE Education Plan \(2021-2024\)](#) and [Indigenous Education Holistic Lifelong Learning Framework](#), the Indigenous Education Team has designed this Commūn-I-Tea Protocol to support the following key outcomes:

- Learning Excellence: *Students who self-identify as Indigenous are supported to experience improved achievement and well-being*
- Collaborative Partnerships: *Student learning and well-being are enhanced through partnerships and engagement with students, staff, parents and community*

More specifically, the Commūn-I-Tea Protocol will position schools to enhance existing processes for gathering and utilizing Indigenous student, family and community voice to inform school actions. Commūn-I-Tea gatherings are at the heart of this essential work.

### What is a Commūn-I-Tea?

A Commūn-I-Tea gathering provides the venue, time, and setting to build meaningful relationships that nurture connections. Creating a cohesive collective between school, home and the community enriches Indigenous learners' school experiences, and can elevate staff development. While the Commūn-I-Tea Protocol has been designed to engage with Indigenous students, families and communities, in addition to this, schools are invited to use the protocol to gather voice from all community voice holders.

***"Let's visit together. Come as you are. As a person. This is protocol. This is our lodge. Our way of life. Sit with us. Visiting helps us to get to know each other, learn together, help each other, and solve problems."***

**(Elder Miiksika'am/Dr. Clarence Wolfleg, Siksika Nation)**

### What does Commūn-I-Tea mean?

Three essential components are at the heart of the Commūn-I-Tea Protocol:

1. to "commune" (a group of like-minded individuals coming together to converse about meaningful topics);
2. putting the "I" in community (honouring the role that each individual plays in creating a healthy community); and
3. "Tea"—hosting the gathering with refreshments (e.g., tea and bannock) in keeping with the custom of offering sustenance to guests as acts of hospitality, generosity, and reciprocity.

## Why *Commūn-I-Tea*?

Commūn-I-Tea is one way to create welcoming, caring, respectful and safe school communities that honour diverse ways of being, belonging, doing and knowing, and foster a sense of belonging for Indigenous students, families and staff.

Commūn-I-Tea is a grassroots approach that provides unique opportunities to build relationships, to gather student/family voice, and to strengthen bonds between home and school—factors that greatly influence school connectedness.

## How can my school host a *Commūn-I-Tea*?

When planning to host a Commūn-I-Tea, schools are advised to first gather a planning team and then consider the following:

- **Intention:** determine the purpose of the Commūn-I-Tea, and if it is the best approach to connect; context of the gathering will determine how to set the space, and what additional resources may be required (such as the presence of an Elder, Knowledge Keeper, or community agency support)
- **Frequency:** consider how often you will plan to host Commūn-I-Tea. Seasonally? Monthly?
- **Space:** identify an appropriate space to host Commūn-I-Tea; ideally, the space is warm, inviting, and provides flexible seating. Will the gathering require hosting a circle dialogue, or round-table seating? Can the space accommodate food/beverages? Consider proximity to washrooms, and the ability to smudge
- **Budget:** plan for provision of tea, coffee, water etc., and bannock and/or other snacks in hosting; if Elders or Knowledge Keepers are requested to share traditional knowledge, tobacco offering and honorarium will need to be accounted for
- **Bannock:** baked or fried, we love it all! Staff members and/or students can learn to make bannock (“Bannock is Life” Resource with video coming soon), recruit parents with the knowledge and skills to make it, or outsource to a local service
- **Invitation:** determine who should be at the gathering, and the best method of communication (phone call, email, school messenger, handbills, word-of-mouth); be mindful that for families with small children, the Commūn-I-Tea may require an alternate break-out space, seating or activities to keep young ones engaged
- **Community Engagement:** invite Elders/Knowledge Keepers and community agency partners to participate where appropriate
- **Hosts:** identify hosts to meet, greet, and care for Elders/Knowledge Keepers (serving, offering tobacco protocol if asked to open the gathering or to provide teachings, and to provide the honorarium and thanks on behalf of the school)
- **Attendance:** prepare to start small and don’t be discouraged if the first attempts do not yield the turn-out you’re hoping for; give it time and allow

families to step into Commūn-I-Tea offerings as they feel ready (in many circumstances, Commūn-I-Tea will grow as parents build familiarity with the practice, and enthusiasm ignites by word-of-mouth)

- **Feedback:** use Commūn-I-Tea as opportunities to build the gatherings with parent feedback—invite suggestions for future topics or activities (e.g., learn to make bannock together; invite community agencies in to share resources, bead or craft together; provide an orientation to the school community; engage in discussion related to Indigenous perspectives; survey parent/family voice in identifying how they can contribute to school community life; identify skills, cultural knowledge or community connections that families may be willing to share)
- **Action Staff Learning:** Through Commūn-I-Tea school leaders/staff can collaborate to discuss and identify wise practices and plan for school-based actions that improve conditions that support self-identified Indigenous students' well-being, engagement and success

If you have questions or require guidance related to the Commūn-I-Tea Protocol or with planning, first review the [Indigenous Education Cultural Protocols Document](#) on Insite, and if your questions aren't answered you can reach out to the Indigenous Education Team via [Request for Support](#) form.