

Indigenous Education | Cultural Protocols



learning | **as unique** | as every student



**Calgary Board
of Education**

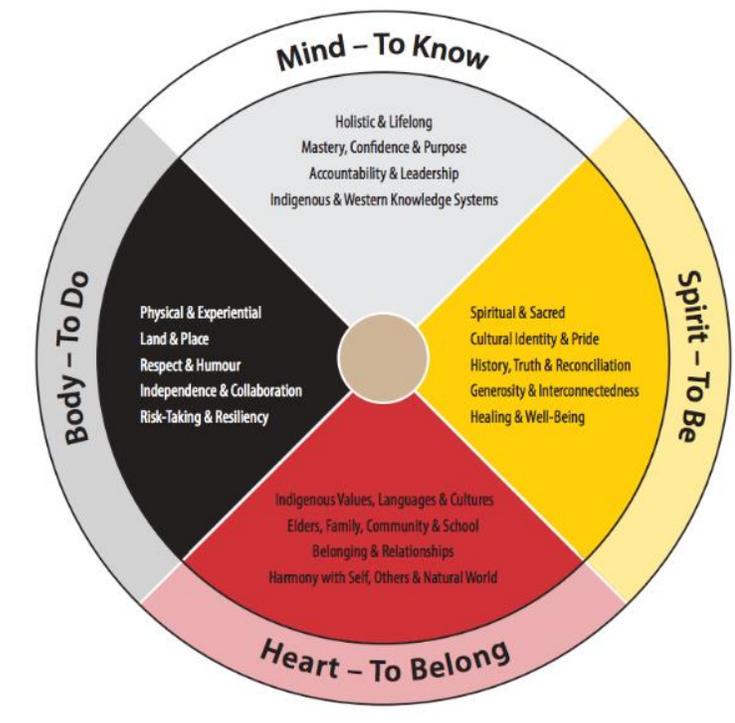
Table of Contents | Guidelines

Indigenous Cultural Protocol Guidelines	3
What are Protocols?.....	4
Acknowledging the Land	4
Indigenous Flags	6
Indigenous Cultural Supports	6
Tobacco Offerings.....	8
Ceremony	8
Smudge	9
Naming	11
Hosting	11
Gatherings, Food & Hospitality	12
Helpers	12
Honouring Knowledge.....	13
Acknowledgement.....	14
Appendix.....	14
Additional Resources.....	16
References.....	17

Indigenous Cultural Protocol Guidelines



The Calgary Board of Education (CBE) is committed to working in ways that reflect worldviews and Indigenous ways of being, belonging, doing and knowing that strengthen learning experiences for each student. To build meaningful relationships and to honour knowledge systems, it is critical that cultural protocols, perspectives, and voice are reflected in and through our ways of working, guided by the [CBE Indigenous Education Holistic Lifelong Learning Framework](#).



The CBE Indigenous Education Holistic Lifelong Learning Framework positions us to reach our goal to embed Indigenous ways of being, belonging, doing and knowing within the K-12 curriculum in the most meaningful way that will support the learning of all our students. We strive to incorporate multiple perspectives within the curriculum so all students can see themselves reflected. Teachers and leaders strive to develop and apply foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit for the benefit of all students, as required in the Alberta Education [Teacher Quality Standard](#), [Leadership Quality Standard](#), and [Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard](#). All staff in the CBE have an important role to play in promoting an inclusive school climate and learning environment as well as the implementation of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action as we engage in Education for Reconciliation (Education for [ReconciliACTION](#)).

As First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities access and revitalize their spirituality, cultures, languages, laws, and governance systems, and as non-Aboriginal Canadians increasingly come to understand Indigenous history within Canada and to recognize and respect Indigenous approaches to establishing and maintaining respectful relationships, Canadians can work together to forge a new covenant of reconciliation. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015)

The CBE Indigenous Education Team has sought guidance, wisdom and teachings from Indigenous Elders and community Knowledge Keepers of Treaty 7 regarding cultural protocols over several years. This document represents a summary of those teachings, and includes knowledge gained from other educational organizations and community research.

This protocol document has been created to provide guiding principles for CBE staff as we work together to meet the key outcomes of the [CBE Education Plan](#). First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples have distinct and diverse protocols and teachings. Learning comes from asking, practicing, and building relationships. When asked how to enter into Indigenous Education, Elders have suggested to enter with an open heart and good intentions.

While the protocols shared in this document represent teachings from many Indigenous peoples, it does not represent knowledge and ways of being for all Indigenous peoples. Information shared in the protocol document re: food service and tobacco is in alignment with [CBE AR 2060: Employee Business and Travel Expenses](#). CBE staff are invited to seek additional information regarding protocols shared below from the Indigenous Education Team by submitting a [Request for Support](#) via Staff Insite.

What are Protocols?

The way knowledge is honoured matters. The importance of following protocols cannot be overstated. Protocols refer to the guidelines, manners, etiquettes and rules that are in place to keep Indigenous ways of being, belonging, doing and knowing at the forefront in a respectful and safe way. Honouring protocols is a first step to establishing good relations. It acknowledges that time has been spent learning Indigenous protocols and recognizing their importance.

Protocol Events are activities that involve consideration for the customs and regulations dealing with diplomatic or cultural formality, precedence and etiquette. *Engaging with Elders* (n.d.) tells us that protocols “are part of our natural laws and keep things respectful of the process. They are ways to acknowledge the roles and responsibilities that each of us has to play when interacting with each other and Creator.”

Acknowledging the Land Where We Gather

[Acknowledging the land where we gather](#) demonstrates our ongoing commitment to the original spirit and intent of Treaty 7, also known as the Blackfoot Treaty. This agreement is to share the land and live well together, in peace for ‘as long as the sun shines, the grass grows, and the river flows.’ This acknowledgement is an act of Truth and Reconciliation to honour the Indigenous peoples who have cared for their traditional territories since time immemorial and leads us to consider our individual and collective roles and responsibilities to the treaty relationship.

“We always make sure that we are using protocols and...that knowledge holders and Elders are present and consulted along the way.”

Elder Miiksika’am, Dr.
Clarence Wolfleg,
Siksika Nation

CBE Acknowledgement of the Land

Oki, Dādánast'áda, Ába Wathtec, Tânisî, Taanishi, Bonjour, Hello

The Calgary Board of Education acknowledges the traditional territories and oral practices of the Treaty 7 Nations, including the Siksikaitsitapi, comprised of the Siksika, the Kainai, the Piikani, and the Amskapi Piikani Nations. We acknowledge the Tsuut'ina Nation, the Îyârhe Nakoda, comprised of the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Goodstoney Nations, the Métis Nation within Alberta, and all people who make their homes in the Treaty 7 region of southern Alberta.

This land on which we gather is traditionally known as Moh'kinstsis (Blackfoot), Guts'ists'i (Tsuut'ina), Wîchîspa (Nakoda), and otôskwanîhk (Northern Michif & Cree). As a learning organization, we are committed to advancing the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action focused on Education for ReconciliACTION.

Tip: Take a cell phone picture of the CBE Acknowledgement of the Land for quick reference

When do schools acknowledge the land?

At minimum:

- At the beginning of the year, e.g., the first assembly of the year
- At the end of the year, e.g., the final assembly of the year
- At significant school celebrations, e.g., graduation, Indigenous Veterans Day, Remembrance Day, Indigenous Awareness Week, Truth & Reconciliation Week

Other possibilities include:

- To begin the school week
- During parent council meetings
- When hosting Indigenous Cultural Supports, such as Elders & Knowledge Keepers
- To begin staff meetings or professional learning
- Teaching and learning about it in the classroom

When do service units acknowledge the land?

At minimum:

- At significant celebrations, e.g., retirements and long-service awards
- At significant system meetings and events, e.g., Leadership Meetings

Other possibilities include:

- To begin professional learning offerings
- When meeting with outside agencies
- When hosting Indigenous Cultural Supports, such as Elders & Knowledge Keepers
- To begin meetings

How do I pronounce the names of the Nations?

[The CBE Land Acknowledgement Indigenous Languages Guide](#) has been created to support CBE staff and students to learn the greetings, Nation names, and place names included in the CBE Land Acknowledgement. Learning and then sharing your learning of the pronunciations is important for *acknowledging the*

land where we gather in a meaningful way.

To review other resources related to *acknowledging the land where we gather*, visit the [Acknowledging the Land](#) page on Staff Insite.



Indigenous Flags

All CBE schools have a Treaty 7, Métis and Inuit Flag. In kinship with the CBE Land Acknowledgement, the flags of the Indigenous Nations of Treaty 7 celebrate the original stewards of this territory and our system commitment to respect the ancestral and inherent rights of those Nations. Flag etiquette outlined in this protocol is an adaption of the [CBE AR 3074 Flag and Anthem](#) and is reflective of the practices the federal government has observed for many years. Flags are important symbols to Indigenous peoples as they represent the sovereign nationhood, rights, and freedoms associated with this territory. Below are the flag-handling protocols for display and use:

- The National Flag of Canada, the flag of Alberta, and the Treaty 7, Métis and Inuit flags are symbols of honour and pride for all Canadians; please handle them with respect.
- Flags should not touch the ground.
- The school principal must ensure that the flags are displayed in a prominent position in or near the school's main entrance/office near the CBE Land Acknowledgement when possible.
- The 3 Indigenous flags are placed on posts using silver clips and placed in the stand provided.
- Using the [Government of Canada's guide to the order of precedence for flags](#), place flags in the following order (left to right): Canada, Treaty 7, Métis, Inuit, and Alberta.
- Flags can be used as a display on the stage or gym floor during school events (such as assemblies, graduations, Remembrance Day ceremonies etc.) and during Indigenous events for grand entries.

An [Indigenous Flags Learning Resource](#) containing more information for classroom connections to deepen understanding has been created by the Indigenous Education Team and available via Staff Insite.

Indigenous Cultural Supports

This document provides some basic information as a guide to learning and working with Indigenous Cultural Supports, including Elders, Knowledge Keepers, drummers, and others.

The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples defines an Elder as:

Elders in Aboriginal communities are those recognized and respected for knowing, living and teaching traditional knowledge. They see the world through the eyes of the ancestors and interpret the contemporary world through lessons passed down through generations. Their wisdom is transferred to young people who seek their teachings. The elders are a living bridge between the past and the present. They also provide a vision for the future, a vision grounded in tradition and informed by the experience of living on the land, safeguarding and disseminating knowledge gained over centuries...The elders are willing to share if we are willing to listen.



We hope to do justice to their words. (RCAP, Volume 4, p.3)

An Elder and Knowledge Keeper is someone who has earned, or has had transferred, the rites to share traditional wisdom and spiritual knowledge.

Elders who conduct traditional ceremonies are respected as teachers and are often sought out as healers. Some people are recognized as Elders because they have spent a lifetime studying a particular aspect of their peoples' culture and traditions. Others are acknowledged as Elders because they are experienced members of sacred societies and often keepers of sacred objects such as a pipe or ceremonial knowledge. Some are elevated by their community as Elders for their wisdom, service and care of their people. In the worldview of the *Siksikaitapi*, Elders (*Aawaaahsskataiksi*) are those who are approached for everything from seeking advice, to conducting ceremonies (Bastien, p. 22). It is important to note that, contrary to the western worldview, age is not a qualifier of Eldership; Elders can be young people who have been elevated to their position through observance of community protocols or granted ceremonial rites and teachings.

Knowledge Keepers are individuals who are recognized and identified by Elders of the community as being knowledgeable about cultural practices or worldviews (Alberta Teachers Association, p. 2). Knowledge Keepers often serve as cultural advisors who hold land-based teachings, oral stories, and understanding of cultural protocols. These individuals are identified by the community as having acquired specific knowledge, under the guidance of Elders, that they are gifted to share with others.

Important Note: When seeking knowledge or support from Indigenous Cultural Support individuals, please refer to Indigenous Education's [Indigenous Cultural Supports](#) page via Staff Insite. This page outlines important processes for learning and working with Indigenous Cultural Supports, including the [Ao'takii | Circle of Indigenous Cultural Supports](#), which serves as an internal directory of Indigenous Cultural Support individuals who work within the CBE. Schools and service units seeking to access an Elder, Knowledge Keeper, drummer, and other cultural supports must first refer to the [Ao'takii](#) via Staff Insite to learn who is available to work within CBE schools and service units, and the specialized knowledge that each person holds.

When planning to learn and work with an Indigenous Cultural Support individual, several considerations ought to be observed:

- It is important to ensure that the person's teachings match the request being made;
- When requesting to work with an Indigenous Cultural Support individual for special events, celebrations, or a series of learning opportunities, the person should be an integral part in the planning and unfolding of the whole activity/event;
- Ensure that planning to care for the guest is included in your preparations (designate a staff member to meet, greet and host; provide refreshments; consider the comfort of the meeting space and proximity to washrooms);
- Provision of an honorarium at the conclusion of the meeting time (for more information, refer to the [Honouring Knowledge](#) section of this guide).

Tobacco Offerings

When inviting or requesting help from individuals offering Indigenous Cultural Supports, it is a generally accepted protocol to offer tobacco. Requests should be clear, specific, and when possible, made in person. Some individuals may or may not accept tobacco. If they feel they can fulfill the request, they will accept tobacco. The tobacco in this instance becomes a “contract.” If the individual believes that they are not the best person to support the request, they may suggest another person in their place. It is important to follow their advice in approaching their suggested alternate. If the suggested alternate is not on the [Ao'takii](#), submit a [Request for Support](#) to the Indigenous Education team to ask that they be welcomed. This may require rescheduling the engagement later to ensure the Individual has been welcomed before it.



Typically, a pouch of tobacco, or loose tobacco wrapped in broadcloth, is used as an offering. If possible, the purchase of natural tobacco is preferred. Tobacco is usually presented at the time of the request or just before the blessing, ceremony, event or learning activity. This applies to online and virtual activities. If tobacco is offered virtually, you may present it on the screen and ask the Indigenous Cultural Support individual for guidance as to whether they would like the tobacco mailed to them or what they would like you to do with the offering. For example, the individual might ask you to place it somewhere on the land or tie it to a tree branch. For larger requests such as a ceremonial event, square meters of cotton broadcloth are appropriate to offer with tobacco. Colours carry cultural and spiritual significance, and preferred colours of cloth will vary with each person. It is important to consult with the Indigenous Cultural Support individual supporting the event regarding these details in advance.

Tobacco should be stored in a safe secure location and out of reach of students. [AR 2060](#) section 6-32 makes allowances for the purchase of tobacco for protocol events. Tobacco can be purchased online, at specialty stores and gas stations.

Ceremony

This may include holding ceremonies when appropriate. Ceremonies play an integral role in many Indigenous cultures. For example, in the worldview of the Siksikaitstapi (Blackfoot people), “the general principle of understanding one’s responsibility is through the process of participating in ceremonies. They are participatory and experiential and provide traditional forms of education. In a sense, they function as a university for traditional knowledge” (Bastien, p. 115).

There are various processes and protocols that are required to engage in ceremony. In many cases, individuals in the community, such as Elders and Knowledge Keepers, carry the rites to specific ceremonial responsibilities, such as “teaching, performing, and advising”, and certain ceremonies correspond with specific seasons (Bastien, p. 65-66 & 113).

To ensure appropriate protocols are followed, please submit a [Request for Support](#) to the Indigenous Education team if your school or service unit is looking to host a ceremony.

Smudge

“The focus of school is to be a place of learning. The inclusion of relevant cultural, spiritual, and traditional knowledge and practices in school can positively impact student success.”

Wetaskiwin Regional
Public Schools

This section provides basic information as a guide to support developing understanding of the practice of smudge in CBE schools.

“I think the most important message of smudging is that it recognizes the power and the life in the earth and that we are related to that.”

[Niigaan Sinclair](#)

Smudge is a traditional practice shared by Indigenous cultures across *Na’a* (Mother Earth in Blackfoot). Every nation has their own protocols and teachings regarding the practice of smudge. Smudge is a land-based ceremony rooted in the practice of acknowledging all relatives and reinforcing connection with Creator; it is a cleansing practice that sets the space for truth-telling (Alberta Recreation & Parks Association, 2020). It is imperative that in learning about smudge, individuals familiarize themselves with the teachings of the place in which they are situated.

In Treaty 7 territory, smudge typically involves burning a small piece of dried medicine such as sage, sweetgrass or cedar inside a fire-proof container, such as a cast-iron dish or abalone shell. According to Dr. Elder Reg Crowshoe, smudge serves as a “call to order” (Alberta Recreation & Parks Association, 2020). In our learning context, smudge serves in a similar manner to the school bell that heralds classroom teaching.

Smudge can be done individually or in a group. In schools, the practice of smudge is an opportunity for students and staff to learn about Indigenous worldviews and perspectives, whether participating or simply observing. If Indigenous students request access to smudge, it is important that schools support the students by making smudge available. A staff member who holds teachings about smudge and understands the protocols should support with preparing the medicines and lighting the smudge for the students. *There is a difference between offering space and access to medicines for smudge, and leading or teaching about smudge.*

Anyone who is familiar with the practice is welcome to smudge individually, but there are important considerations for teaching about or leading a smudge that ought to be adhered to:

- A staff member conducting smudge must hold the appropriate teachings in observation of protocol to ensure that the act of smudging is done in a good way;
- The practice of smudge in learning settings is accompanied with setting learning intentions tied to curricular outcomes that include an understanding about the cultural, historical, and contemporary significance of smudge;
- Guardians will be informed and have the opportunity for their child to opt out of the learning experience; (see [Appendix](#) for an example of a letter of consent).
- Elders who support school learning requests about smudge are sharing their knowledge and wisdom—this does not fundamentally mean that the

Elder is transferring the teaching rites;

- It is never appropriate to take pictures or video record a smudge when it is in practice;
- While smudge is a practice that benefits all staff and students, it is a *critical factor* to support belonging and well-being of Indigenous students, families, and community;
- In every setting, the “right to pass” is upheld;
- Staff members who have not received the rites to teach about smudge in a public context can submit a [Request for Support](#) with the Indigenous Education Team for guidance.

In keeping with traditional practices, it is common for an Elder or Knowledge Keeper to close the smudge by engaging in *Aatsimoyihkaan*—the “sacred way of speaking” (Bastien, 2004). They may speak these words in their traditional language or in English. These words reinforce the spirit of collective unity and harmony and set the intention for holding a sacred space for engaging with one another in a good way. When planning to host a smudge it is important that staff, students, and parents/caregivers are given this information ahead of time.

There are many reasons why an individual might choose not to engage with the practice of smudge. Individuals who are pregnant, experiencing their moontime (menses cycle), hold cultural teachings of their own that prohibit participation, or who have respiratory concerns that can be triggered by smoke are examples. It is critical that staff who are coordinating this learning activity plan to accommodate these individuals and provide the opportunity to opt out. The hosting staff members can consult with the Elder or Knowledge Keeper prior to smudge to identify the best way and time to signal to individuals when to exit and return to the circle.

Prior to engaging with the practice of smudge, it is critical to note that in keeping with traditional protocol, *participation is always voluntary*. While we provide the space and learning opportunity in CBE settings for staff and students to smudge, we do not demand compliance with this cultural practice. Additionally, please ensure that you have reviewed and are familiar with [CBE Smudging Guidelines](#) available on Staff Insite.

While smudging during CBE events or in schools, please be aware of the following protocols:

- To create culturally safe spaces for Indigenous students, families, and community, and to reinforce welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments that honour diversity, it is essential to pre-teach the school community about smudge; this will support building familiarity with the scent and protocols observed. To support this pre-teaching, the Indigenous Education team has created a [video](#) that is available on Staff Insite.
- When smudging with students or participants under 18, parents and guardians must be informed prior and have the option to withdraw from the learning experience (see [Appendix](#) for an example of a letter of consent).
- Smudge is led by an individual with transferred rites to do so.

- Use a well-ventilated space when possible (e.g., open window).
- Communicate smudge location and time with students, staff and families.
- Contact building administration at all CBE sites (e.g., CT Centre, Area offices, schools) for building specific protocols around smudging.
- When smudging in the CBE Education Centre, 24 hours' notice is required and is permitted in designated spaces only. Contact the Security Desk for further information.

Naming

Naming protocols are foundational to Indigenous epistemologies. Traditional names contain the stories and the histories that teach us who we are. Names are identity-forming, a call to action, and inhabited by the stories that define us.

The practice of naming and reclaiming traditional names is an act of resistance for Indigenous peoples. Due to the colonial practice of claiming and renaming landscapes, people groups or individuals, Indigenous peoples suffered loss of access to cultural identities, knowledge, and land-based connection. When considering engaging in a naming process, it is important to be mindful of one's positionality within a contemporary context and setting.

The practice of naming is a ceremonial process with its own protocols and traditions. In CBE, it is critical to understand the relevance and purpose of traditional naming practices and the responsibilities that accompany naming a person, place, event or activity. When thinking about or planning for naming, school leaders and staff are asked to consider:

- Intention – How does naming benefit Indigenous students, families and community? How does it serve the greater good of the school community?
- Accountability - How does the practice of naming reflect whole-school learning and an ongoing commitment to maintain and sustain the meaning of the name?
- Legacy - How will the naming be storied, and how will schools ensure that the story becomes a part of the place/space?

For schools or individual staff seeking guidance related to Indigenous naming protocols, please submit a [Request for Support](#) to the Indigenous Education Team.

Hosting

Indigenous Cultural Supports, including Elders and Knowledge Keepers are to be treated with great respect and held in the highest esteem. It is important that when hosting individuals, this is reinforced and shared with students and staff. As it is customary not to interrupt Elders and Knowledge Keepers as they speak, allow for extra time in your itinerary for them to share their wisdom and knowledge. During the visit, Indigenous Cultural Support guests should be provided with the following:

- Parking (communicate ahead of arrival)
- A warm welcome at the door (light handshakes are well received)
- Water, tea/coffee

- Meal and/or snack
- An orientation to washroom
- Priority seating
- A school staff member or youth volunteer to stay with them throughout the event
- For lengthy events, it is customary to have a quiet room for the guest to rest. The quiet room should be equipped with chairs, beverages, and snacks.

Gatherings, Food & Hospitality

Food plays a vital and important role in meetings, gatherings, ceremonies and Indigenous protocols. *Na'a* (Mother Earth in Blackfoot) gives food to all beings and sustains people in spirit, heart, body and mind. Food protocols include ethics around respect, reciprocity, relationality, sustainability, connectedness, and community. Be mindful of dietary restrictions and ask guests ahead of time.

The late Blackfoot Elder and scholar Narcisse Blood from the Kainai First Nation and Dr. Cynthia Chambers remind us of the following teaching:

As well as being a highly valued social activity, *áakssissawáato'op*, or visiting a place, is a primary means of knowledge exchange for *Niitsítapiiksi*. A visit holds an expectation that one will spend time, be amicable and relaxed, stay awhile, be a guest, converse, and probably eat a meal and drink a cup of tea. (2010, p.15)

Hospitality should be forefront at gatherings (e.g., [Commūn-I-Tea](#)), meetings, learning opportunities, and a part of everything we do. Additionally, if a meal is being served, Indigenous Cultural Support guests should be served their meal first. They should never serve themselves, unless they request otherwise. This shows respect for people and the knowledge they bring. Elders and Knowledge Keepers may share important teachings about gatherings and should be consulted ahead of the event to see if they have preferences for blessing the food etc.

Helpers

Elders and other Indigenous Cultural Support individuals may be accompanied by another person for help and support. Helpers (*Sspoómmihataawa* in Blackfoot, or *oskâpêwis* in Cree) should be treated in the same manner as the Elders, and provided an honorarium (see Honouring Knowledge section below). It is suggested to always ask the Indigenous Cultural Support individual in advance if they will be accompanied by a helper. If the person they are planning to bring with them is not already on the [Ao'takii](#), then submit a [Request for Support](#) to the Indigenous Education team to request that they be welcomed prior to the engagement. Please ensure that these needs are clarified early enough in your planning to provide adequate time for the welcoming process.

Significant others of the Elders and other Indigenous Cultural Support individuals may also attend events/ceremonies and play an important role. Schools should follow the same protocol as above.

Honouring Knowledge

This section provides some basic information to the protocol of honorariums and reciprocity when working with individuals offering Indigenous Cultural Supports. This includes Elders, Knowledge Keepers, drummers, dancers, artists and others. For details on how to request honorariums, please review and follow the processes outlined on the [Indigenous Cultural Supports](#) page via Staff Insite.

An honorarium is offered as a thank you, a gesture of reciprocity in recognizing wisdom and guidance that the person offers. It is a way to honour the gifts and knowledge held and express gratitude to the person for the trust they have shown in their willingness to share.

In addition to an honorarium, expressions of gratitude such as traditional medicines (sage, sweetgrass, cedar), blankets, mugs, cards, beaded craft, broadcloth or art may be presented after the teaching, ceremony, or individual's contribution to an event is completed. It is suggested that the honorarium be placed inside of a thank-you card and offered to the person with a handshake. It is customary to provide the honorarium in a discrete and thoughtful manner—with genuine expression of thanks.

The scale provided (below) shows the CBE standard amounts that need to be budgeted when hosting an Indigenous Cultural Support individual in a school or service unit. In addition to an honorarium, all individuals offering Indigenous Cultural Supports also receive mileage reimbursement that covers travel to and from the person's home address to the place of the engagement. The current mileage rate is \$.51 per kilometer and is subject to change. Other expenses can also be reimbursed over the honorarium amount, such as cost of materials, meals, and accommodations. In these cases, receipts must be provided. Please reference [AR2060](#) for further information. In cases when an Indigenous Cultural Support individual requests more than the CBE standard honorarium, please submit a [Request for Support](#) to the Indigenous Education Team for guidance.

Half Day	\$250
Full Day	\$500
Half Day Helper	\$50
Full Day Helper	\$100

Finally, when planning to engage with individuals offering Indigenous Cultural Supports, remember that generosity and hospitality are highly regarded values. They are esteemed individuals in the community; how you prepare to meet, greet and care for their needs will establish the future course of your relationship. Sometimes an Elder or Knowledge Keeper may be accompanied by someone who is also considered an Elder or Knowledge Keeper in the community, and therefore the full honorarium rate should be budgeted for both in attendance (this is often the case when a person is accompanied by their significant other and both individuals share cultural teachings). When in doubt, ask; it is better to clarify intent and understanding, than to risk damaging a relationship that can provide a multitude of opportunities for rich learning.

Additional considerations:

- When building relationships with Indigenous Cultural Support individuals, seeking their voice and guidance from the beginning of your planning is essential. This often requires initial consultation; honorarium is also appropriate in this context. It is also good practice to connect with the individual before the event to remind them of event details.
- If the learning is happening virtually, be aware that assistance with technology may be necessary and prepare a support plan in this regard.
- It is important to communicate how and when the individual will receive an honorarium if the meeting is not in-person (e.g., mailed or delivered post event).
- We remind staff teams who are planning to host Indigenous Cultural Support individuals to refer to the CBE Service Provider Decision Grid for On Site School Activities.

Important Note: To ensure adequate time to care for necessary protocols related to honorarium requests, schools and service units must review the processes for working with [Indigenous Cultural Supports](#) on Staff Insite and submit the [CBE Honorarium form](#) and request at least two weeks in advance of the booking date.

Acknowledgement

The CBE acknowledges the countless Elders, Knowledge Keepers, community members, students, families and staff who have contributed their knowledge and understanding to this work overtime.

Appendix

The following text is to be used in a message to parents/guardians prior to a smudge:

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As part of our ongoing learning, students in Grade [grade] at [school] will have an opportunity to participate in a unique learning opportunity about the traditional practice of smudge on [date/recurring day/time].

This activity supports teaching and learning related to curricular outcomes, and supports the Spirit, Heart, Body and Mind Domains of the [CBE Indigenous Education Holistic Lifelong Learning Framework](#):

- [identify curricular outcomes]

Smudge is a practice shared by many Indigenous cultures. Every nation has their own protocols regarding the practice of smudge. Smudge is a land-based ceremony rooted in the practice of acknowledging our relatives and humbling ourselves as fully animate human beings—spirit, heart, body and mind—with the responsibility to walk in harmony with all our relations. Smudge typically involves burning a small piece of dried medicine such as sage, sweetgrass or cedar inside a fire-proof container, such as a cast-iron dish or abalone shell. Smudge can be done individually or in a group. The practice of smudge is an opportunity for students and staff to learn about Indigenous worldviews and perspectives, whether participating or simply observing. It is also one way that schools can hold space for self-identified Indigenous students to connect with culture.

During the smudge, participants will listen to the Elder/facilitator offer teachings about this practice and its role in historical and contemporary Indigenous communities. In keeping with traditional practices, it is common for the Elder or Knowledge Keeper to close the smudge by engaging in *Aatsimoyihkaan*—the “sacred way of speaking”. They may speak their message in their traditional language or in English. These words reinforce the spirit of collective unity and harmony and set the intention for holding a sacred space for engaging with one another in a good way.

When smudging in a group, participants sit or stand in a circle and listen to the Elder or facilitator offer teachings about the practice and its role in historical and contemporary Indigenous communities. In some cases, the smudge bowl is passed around the circle with the invitation for each person in circle to smudge themselves if they wish to. ***Please note that participation in smudge is informed, voluntary, and always connected to learning.***

In every setting, the “right to pass” is upheld. Those who choose not to participate but wish to remain in the circle teachings are welcome to signal their choice to abstain by placing their hand over their heart and passing the smudge bowl on to the next person. If, for any reason, a student chooses not to participate in the experiential learning, the teacher will ensure that an appropriate opportunity to explore associated learning outcomes is available.

The inclusion of Indigenous perspectives and experiences in classrooms is supported and encouraged by:

- **The Education Act, Section 16:** Provincial regulations for schools. This learning experience connects directly to Section 16: Diversity & Respect
- **Teaching Quality Standard:** Professional standard which all Alberta teachers are expected to meet. This learning experience connects directly to: Applying Foundational Knowledge about First Nations, Métis & Inuit
- **Alberta's Education for Reconciliation:** This experience connects to various outcomes in the Alberta Programs of Study which demonstrates Alberta's commitment to First Nations, Metis and Inuit perspectives and experiences in curriculum

We are honoured to offer this learning opportunity to our students.

If you wish to opt out of this learning activity for your child, or for additional information and questions, please contact [Name, email address].

Warm Regards, [Name] [Position title]

Additional Resources

Alberta Teacher's Association. (2018). *Stepping stones: Elder protocol*
Retrieved from

<https://legacy.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/For%20Members/ProfessionalDevelopment/Walking%20Together/PD-WT-16g%20-%20Elder%20Protocol.pdf>

Engaging with Elders: A co-created story. (n.d). *With support of Native Counselling Services of Alberta*. Retrieved from <https://www.cbe.ab.ca/about-us/advisory-councils/FineArtsAdvisoryCouncilDocuments/elders-protocol.pdf>

Manitoba Education. (2014). Smudging protocol and guidelines: Smudging protocol and guidelines for school divisions. Retrieved from https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/iid/publications/pdf/smudging_guidelines.pdf

Nicola-Similkameen School division. (2016). Smudging protocol and guidelines. Retrieved from <https://www.kiyeli.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Smudging-Protocol.pdf>

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (n.d). Retrieved from: <https://nctr.ca/map.php>

University of Calgary. (2023). *Cultural protocol guidelines: Recommended practices for First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultural engagement*. Retrieved from <https://www.ucalgary.ca/live-uc-ucalgary-site/sites/default/files/teams/136/cultural-protocol-guidelines-ucalgary-final.october%202023.pdf>

University of Calgary. (2018). *Territorial land acknowledgement*. Retrieved from <https://www.ucalgary.ca/indigenous/cultural-teachings/territorial-land-acknowledgement#:~:text=The%20University%20of%20Calgary%2C%20located,First%20Nation%2C%20and%20the%20Stoney>

References

- Alberta Recreation & Parks Association. (2020). *Smudging with Reg and Rose Crowshoe* [Video]. Youtube. [Smudging with Reg and Rose Crowshoe](#)
- Alberta Teachers Association: Walking Together Education for Reconciliation. (2017). Stepping Stones: Elder protocol.
<https://legacy.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/For%20Members/ProfessionalDevelopment/Walking%20Together/PD-WT-16g%20-%20Elder%20Protocol.pdf>
- Alberta Teachers Association: Walking Together Education for Reconciliation. (2018). Stepping stones: A note on terminology.
<https://legacy.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/For%20Members/ProfessionalDevelopment/Walking%20Together/PD-WT-16a%20-%20Terminology.pdf>
- Basso, K. (1996). *Wisdom sits in place: Landscape and language among the Western Apache*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Bastien, B. (2004). *Blackfoot ways of knowing: The worldview of the Siksikaititapi*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press.
- Battiste, M., & Henderson Youngblood, J. (2000). What is Indigenous knowledge?. In M. Battiste, & J Henderson Youngblood, *Protecting Indigenous knowledge and heritage*. Saskatoon: Purich. 35-56.
- Blood, N.J., Chambers C., (2009). Love thy neighbour: Repatriating precarious Blackfoot sites. *International Journal of Canadian Studies*. 39-40. Retrieved from: <https://www.erudit.org/en/journals/ijcs/2009-n39-40-ijcs3712/040832ar.pdf>
- Calgary Board of Education. (2024-2027). Three Year Education Plan. Retrieved from: <https://www.cbe.ab.ca/FormsManuals/Education-Plan.pdf>
- Engaging with Elders: A Co-created Story. (n.d). Retrieved from: https://www.abmunis.ca/sites/default/files/Advocacy/Programs_Initiatives/WIC/elders_protocol_by_native_counselling_services_of_alberta_2017.pdf
- Little Bear, L., (2002). Jagged worldviews colliding. In M. Battiste, *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*. Vancouver: UBC Press. 77-85.
- Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. [Ottawa]: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996.
- Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. (1996). *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Perspectives and Realities* (Vol. 4). Ottawa: Canada Communication Group – Publishing.
- Troian, M. (2016, December 30). Smudging in public schools: Reconciliation or religious act? *CBC News*.
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/reference_list_electronic_sources.html
- Wetaskiwin Regional Public Schools. (2016). Administrative Procedure 164: Smudging in Schools.