



Cultural Protocol Guidelines Recommended Practice and Observances

(Version 04092025)

I - Purpose

These regional guidelines outline cultural observances to be followed by University of Calgary students, faculty and staff who wish to engage Traditional Knowledge Keepers or cultural resource experts in the sharing and transfer of Indigenous knowledge and experiences, both on- and off-campus. First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples of Canada have distinct histories, complex belief systems, and diverse cultural and social practices. The cultural protocols included herein provide guiding principles for the University of Calgary community as it strives to respect and honour the First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples of Canada, and aligns with important strategic documents including [Ahead of Tomorrow](#) and the [Indigenous Strategy: ii' taa'poh'to'p](#):

a. Ahead of Tomorrow

The University of Calgary's *Ahead of Tomorrow Strategy* shapes our journey toward 2030, considered through long-term, foundational commitments to: Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility; Indigenous Engagement; Mental Health; Global Engagement; and Sustainability. Key to our success as a university is an inclusive, curiosity-driven and respectful campus culture. Establishing cultural protocol guidelines for engaging First Nations, Métis and Inuit¹ communities directly contributes to a campus where all peoples are valued and respected. Our Academic and Research Plans help us attract scholars from around the world, with diversity of thought, culture and respect for alternatives.

b. Indigenous Strategy: *ii' taa'poh'to'p*

The guidelines included in the document align with the University of Calgary's Indigenous Strategy, which "will guide the University of Calgary on its path of transformation and communicate its commitment and responsibility for truth and reconciliation."² Through the Indigenous Strategy, the university has committed to developing a campus community that understands the histories and worldviews of Indigenous peoples and the importance of connection to land.³

¹ For advice on protocol for Inuit Traditional Knowledge Keepers, please contact the [Arctic Institute of North America](#).

² <https://www.ucalgary.ca/indigenous-strategy/>

³ <https://www.ucalgary.ca/indigenous-strategy/>

II - Engaging Traditional Knowledge Keepers

Traditional Knowledge Keepers may be invited to the University of Calgary by students, faculty, and staff to participate in various cultural events⁴, course offerings (such as class lectures), and community consultations. Traditional Knowledge Keepers who are willing to share traditional knowledge and cultural practices enrich university life by informing research and teaching, educating faculty, students, and staff, and leading cultural events on campus. To establish and maintain positive relationships with community, it is imperative that representatives of the university honour, respect, and learn the cultural protocols of Traditional Knowledge Keepers from the point of contact, throughout the engagement, and beyond.

When engaging traditional knowledge keepers, ceremonialists, traditional drummers and/or dancers for special events that include the serving of alcohol, please consult the Office of Indigenous Engagement for advice on appropriate protocol.

All costs associated with the engagement of Traditional Knowledge Keepers are the sole responsibility of the individual unit that has extended the invitation.

2.1 Protocol and Procedures for Cultural Requests⁵

For most of Alberta, it is customary to honour Traditional Knowledge Keepers or cultural resource experts with gifts of gratitude, which may be non-monetary and monetary in nature. When inviting Traditional Knowledge Keepers or cultural resource experts to campus, the following protocol is recommended:

a. Invitation /Request

When inviting a Traditional Knowledge Keeper to share their knowledge (lecture), lead a ceremony, offer blessings, or engage in consultation, it is important to make the request as specific as possible. Requests for personal ceremonial guidance and/or spiritual teachings should be made in person. The acceptance of tobacco in the Alberta and Western Prairies region (and cloth if appropriate) signifies a commitment or acceptance of the request. For more in-depth, knowledge around protocol in other regions of the country, it is imperative that individuals connect appropriately with Traditional Knowledge Keepers⁶ and/or local cultural resource people from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities.

b. Offerings (Cultural)

Traditional Knowledge Keepers within the Alberta region customarily accept tobacco (usually pouch) as an acknowledgment of a ceremonial request such as a prayer, blessing, or special ceremony. The acceptance of an offering signifies an acceptance of the request. For larger ceremonial events, square metre cuts of cotton broadcloth, representing each of the primary colours (blue, red, white, and yellow)⁷, may be presented along with the tobacco offering. Tobacco (and cloth if appropriate) is customarily presented at the time of the request, or just prior to the ceremony or blessing.

- [How to make a tobacco tie](#)
- [How to offer tobacco](#) (protocol is the same with a can of tobacco or other packaging)

⁴ May include, but is not limited to: opening prayers, honour songs, blessing of the food, smudge ceremonies, pipe ceremonies, talking circles, sweat lodge ceremonies, honouring ceremonies (feather gifting, naming, etc.)

⁵ For more information, please contact the Office of the Vice Provost (Indigenous Engagement) or The Native Centre

⁶ May include, but is not limited to: elders, cultural resource experts, recognized ceremonialists, spiritual advisors, and spiritual leaders

⁷ While these colors are most appropriate and broadly accepted for this region, the colors may vary in other tribal regions. Please check with the Office of Indigenous Engagement if you have any questions.

c. Honoraria (financial)

It is customary that Traditional Knowledge Keepers and/or cultural resource experts be provided with a financial gift⁸ directly after the event or ceremony is completed.

- Honoraria should not be viewed as a payment for service, but rather as a gift in exchange for knowledge, ceremonies, or blessings.
- Honoraria should be presented on the day of the event or ceremony in cheque or cash honoraria.
- Please see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/finance/expenses-reimbursement> for detailed finance procedure on cash advances for cash honoraria payments.
- Please consult with the Accounts Payable Manager (aptier3@ucalgary.ca) at least 3 weeks in advance of your event for help with expediting a cash advance.

d. Gifts (non-financial)

In addition to honoraria, gifts of gratitude, including blankets and cards are customarily presented after the ceremony or blessing has been completed. Non-monetary gifts are in addition to honoraria.

e. Meals, travel, accommodation

If engagement of a Traditional Knowledge Keeper requires travel, it is most appropriate for the institution to take into consideration the costs of travel (within the honoraria and/or via reimbursement) and accommodation. (University Milage rate: .65 cents/Km as per 3.3 of the [Travel and expense Handbook](#))

f. Parking and Access

Campus Maps should be provided, noting the location of the meeting and the parking lot specified by the pass. Traditional Knowledge Keepers invited to the university campus should also be provided with parking pass upon arrival or in advance of their visit.

g. Attendants

Traditional Knowledge Keepers invited to the campus may be accompanied by another person for help and support. Attendants, especially ceremonial assistants, may require compensation.

h. Host/s

It is imperative that Traditional Knowledge Keepers are greeted personally when and where⁹ they arrive on campus and are escorted to the set location on campus. Short bios may be requested in advance for introductory purposes.

⁸ Please consult with the Office of Indigenous Engagement, the Writing Symbols Lodge, Indigenous faculty, and/or the most relevant First Nations community office in Alberta for advice regarding honoraria amounts specific to the region, event, or specific request prior to the invitation or the offering of a financial gift.

⁹ It is often appropriate to meet the Traditional Knowledge Keepers or cultural guests in the designated parking lot and escort them to the appropriate building. Some of our cultural guests are not familiar with the campus and/or may require special assistance.

Additional References and Resources

a. Treaty 7

Bear Robe, A. (2010). *The Victorian Treaties: Sovereign Crown-First Nations Relations and Treaty Federalism*, PhD Dissertation, University of Calgary.

Dempsey, Hugh. A., (2015) *The Great Blackfoot Treaties*. Heritage House, (paperback)

Ottawa, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. (reproduced 1966). *The Treaty and Supplementary Treaty No. 7 between Her Majesty the Queen and the Blackfeet and other Indian Tribes, at the Blackfoot Crossing of the Bow River and Fort Macleod, 1877* Ottawa, Queens Printer.

Treaty 7 Tribal Council. *The True Spirit and Original Intent of Treaty 7*. Montreal, McGill-Queens University Press.

b. Research Protocol

First Nation's Information Governance Centre ownership (OCAP), control access and possession of data obtained regarding Aboriginal People. . <http://fnigc.ca/ocap.html>

Alberta First Nations Information Governance Centre (AFNIGC), OCAP Calgary, Alberta.
<http://www.afnigc.ca/main/index.php?id=home>

Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, Chapter 9 Ottawa, 2014:
www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/Default

c. Indigenous Knowledge

Bastien, B. (2004). *Blackfoot Ways of Knowing: The Worldview of the Siksikaitstapi*. 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. pp. 35-56.

Erimine, W. (2007). *The ethical space of engagement*, *Indigenous Law Journal*, 6 (1), 193-203.

Erimine, W. (2000). Aboriginal Epistemology. In M. Battiste, & J. Barman, *First Nations Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds* (pp. 101-112). Vancouver: UBC Press.

Graveline, F. J. (1998). *Circle Works: Transforming Eurocentric Consciousness*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press Incorporated.

Little Bear, L. (2000). Jagged Worldviews Colliding. In M. Battiste, *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*. Vancouver: UBC Press. pp. 77-85.

Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. New York: Zed Books Ltd.

Wilson, A. C. (2004). Reclaiming our Humanity: Decolonization and the Recovery of Indigenous Knowledge. In D. A. Mihesuah, & A. C. Wilson, *Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities* (pp. 69-85). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

d. Foundational documents

Final Report on Truth and Reconciliation (2015), retrieved from

http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Honouring_the_Truth_Reconciling_for_the_Future_July_23_2015.pdf

Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal peoples (1996) retrieved from

<https://lop.parl.ca/content/lop/researchpublications/prb9924-e.htm>

University of Calgary Travel and Expense Reimbursement Handbook

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/finance/sites/default/files/teams/5/ap-travel-and-expense-reimbursement-handbook.pdf>

e. Recommended Websites

- [Blackfoot Confederacy](#)
- [Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park.](#)
- [Glenbow Museum](#)
- [Stoney Nakoda First Nations](#)
- [Tsuut'ina Nation](#)
- [Metis Nation of Alberta](#)
- [Gabriel Dumont Institute](#)
- [Arctic Institute of North America](#)

V - Acknowledgements

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