

### First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education

#### Background

Consistent with Alberta's Teaching, Leading, and Superintendent Quality Standards, The Calls to Action for Education, Ministerial Order on Student Learning, and Alberta Education's First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework, Foothills School Division is committed to providing high quality instructional programs and educational services for Indigenous students. We aim to increase understanding and appreciation of First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures for all students, staff and community. By collaborating with students, parents, school, Elders, knowledge keepers and cultural advisors, local leaders and community, we strive to improve educational outcomes and create equitable opportunities for Indigenous students. Building and nurturing these relationships can lead to a shift in thinking and attitudes, increased inter-cultural understanding and appreciation of perspective and experiences that contributes to student success. In Foothills School Division, we believe in learning opportunities that set high expectations for all learners to grow intellectually, socially and emotionally in achieving their full potential. We foster a culture of belonging where diversity is celebrated, where each learner is welcomed, cared for, respected and safe. Our commitment includes educating students and staff so they are knowledgeable, understanding and respectful of the rich diversity and resilience of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures, languages, and histories. We continue to learn of treaties and the First Nations, Métis and Inuit experiences related to colonization, forced assimilation, and residential schools. Through this education, we aim to deepen awareness, advance reconciliation, and build strong relationships with Indigenous communities.

#### Procedures

1. In accordance with Alberta Education policy, guidelines and regulations, Foothills School Division is committed to:
  - a. Provide high quality instructional programs and educational services for Indigenous students;
  - b. Increase understanding and appreciation of First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures for all students, staff and community;
  - c. Improve education outcomes and create equitable opportunities for Indigenous students;
  - d. Provide support, resources and professional learning to support the learning and achievement of Indigenous students.
  - e. Create and support a safe, caring, and inclusive culture of belonging.
2. Foothills School Division recognizes "*...that if youth are solidly grounded in their Aboriginal identity and cultural knowledge, they will have strong personal resources to develop intellectually, physically, emotionally, and spiritually (RCAP pg. 445).*

3. Foothills School Division and school administration recognize that student success is a shared responsibility best supported through collaboration with students, parents, school, Elders and knowledge keepers, local leaders and community. Foothills School Division and school administration will commit to strengthen relationships and develop collaborative structures and systems with stakeholders to support goals of increased attendance, achievement, student success.
4. Foothills School Division will report annually on the achievement and progress of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students, including the strategies used to support student success.
5. Principals will support the school community in acquiring and applying foundational knowledge of First Nations, Métis and Inuit for the benefit of all students, staff and community.
6. Principals will pursue opportunities and engage in practices to facilitate reconciliation within the school community including the use of Land Acknowledgements, as well as the use of cultural practices as part of celebrations and ceremonies. Principals will use the FSD recommended honoraria guidelines in arranging for the engagement of Elders, knowledge keepers, cultural advisors and/or performers at events, celebrations and ceremonies. *Please refer to Appendix A for Guidelines for Engagement of Elders, Knowledge Keepers, cultural advisors and/or performers at events, celebrations and ceremonies.*
7. Principals will enable school, staff, and students to build upon their knowledge and understanding of and respect for First Nations, Métis and Inuit culture, language, and history.
8. All students and staff will recognize and respect cultural practices, and the role of Elders, knowledge keepers and cultural advisors in the school, classroom, and during school activities, assemblies, events and celebrations. Schools will ensure that staff and students greet and host cultural guests by providing introductions, answering questions, and offering food and refreshments.
9. Foothills School Division acknowledges the importance of Smudging and Pipe Ceremonies. Many schools include the tradition of smudging in ~~the~~ classroom activities, events, celebrations, and daily routines. Foothills School Division recognizes that smudging - the burning of sage, sweet grass and/or cedar, and the presentation or use of tobacco in a pipe ceremony are part of Indigenous traditions and are permitted in schools subject to proper guidelines and safety measures. *Please refer to Appendix B for Guidelines for Smudging Ceremonies in a School Environment.*

Reference: Relevant Legislation and Regulations  
Virgle Stephens, Traditional Knowledge Keeper – Stoney Nakoda First Nation, Morley, Alberta  
Phillomene Stephens, Traditional Knowledge Keeper – Stoney Nakoda First Nation, Morley, Alberta

## **Appendix A - Guidelines for Engagement of Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Cultural Advisors, and Artists/Performers at Foothills School Division Events, Celebrations and Ceremonies**

### **Cultural Protocol** (Walking Together: Education for Reconciliation: The Alberta Teacher's Association)

- An Elder, knowledge keeper and cultural advisor's perspective and presence can foster inclusion and promote a deeper understanding of Truth and Reconciliation.
- Elders, knowledge keepers and cultural advisors are respected role models and mentors to everyone. Elders have worked and studied with other Elders to earn the right to pass on knowledge and give advice on personal community matters. Knowledge keepers and cultural advisors have been identified by Elders as knowledgeable about cultural practices and world views.
- Educators who connect with an Elder, knowledge keeper or cultural advisor are serving as ambassador for the profession as a whole. It is important to engage in respectful relations with elders, knowledge keepers and cultural advisors, and to treat them with deference and in a spirit of learning. When in doubt, show humility, demonstrate respect and ask questions.
- Consideration should be given to the appropriateness, practicality and precedent in involving an Elder, knowledge keeper or cultural advisor in events.
- A pipe ceremony or sunrise ceremony, must be planned and led only in consultation with an Elder or knowledge holder.
- A smudge may be planned and led in consultation with an Elder, or someone who is experienced and has been gifted teachings from an Elder or knowledge keeper (for example this could be a student, staff, or community member).
- Extend invitations to an Elder, knowledge keeper or cultural advisor well in advance.
- Meet face to face to establish a relationship, discuss request and preferred protocol including type of offering they would prefer and how it should be presented.
- Offerings may include tobacco, tea, sweet grass, sage, cedar or a small gift.
- Greet an Elder, knowledge keeper or cultural advisor by shaking their hand and thanking them for meeting with you.
- Understand the protocol in presenting the offering which includes holding the offering (generally ceremonial tobacco, tea, broad cloth or other requested medicines) in your left hand, out in front of you stating the request. If your request is accepted, they will accept the offering and then shake your hand. This is equivalent to a contract. If they cannot accept request, they will not accept offering. They may direct you to other members of the community better suited to the request.
- It is appropriate to ask if the offering can be presented at the beginning of the event in front of the audience. Some Elders, knowledge keepers and cultural advisors may prefer the offering done prior in private.

- The request should specify the purpose of the event, including: who will be attending, the exact time and location, and the time frame you have allotted for their participation. Develop a plan that meets the needs of the Elder, knowledge keeper and cultural advisor.
- One or two weeks prior to the event, make contact to confirm attendance and anything they may need. It is helpful to send a reminder the day before the event.
- Photographs or video recordings are often not acceptable when an Elder, knowledge keeper or cultural advisor is conducting a spiritual ceremony or providing cultural teachings. Ask and discuss any recordings and photographs with your guest ahead of time.
- It is important to make the Elder, knowledge keeper or cultural advisor feel welcome when they arrive and to make sure they are properly hosted throughout the event. Ensure proper introductions, offer a comfortable chair and serve beverages and food and ensure comfort level throughout the visit.
- Be sure to prepare teachers, students and community in advance of how to show respect and provide full attention to presentations by elders, knowledge keepers and cultural advisors. Turn off cellphones.

## **Honorariums and Payment**

- The purpose of a gift and/or honorarium is to acknowledge and show appreciation for the sharing of knowledge and personal time provided by the elder, knowledge keeper or cultural advisor.
- Elders, knowledge keepers and cultural advisors must be reimbursed for their out-of-pocket expenses to attend the event.
- Depending on the activity, Elders, knowledge keepers and cultural advisors will be accompanied by their helper and the helper's honorarium and expenses must also be paid.
- Honorariums for Elders, knowledge keepers and cultural advisors that participate in school/divisional activities is set at the following rate: full day \$500.00 and half day would be \$250.00.
- Professional performers/artists may negotiate their own rate.
- Guests from out of town may claim accommodation, meals and mileage expenses as outlined in Administrative Procedure 514.
- The following information will be required for payment including: Name, Address, SIN and invoice with total expenses.
- A cheque request should be submitted well in advance to ensure it is available to the Elder, knowledge keeper, cultural advisor or artists/performer on the date of the event, celebration, performance or celebration.
- Cheques should be delivered to the school in advance, so they may be presented in person to the Elder, knowledge keeper, cultural advisor or performer/artist at the end of their presentation.
- Ceremonial tins of Tobacco may be purchased at <http://imaginationgroup.ca/imagination-tobacco/>

### Quick Guide

1. Contact Elder, knowledge keeper, cultural advisory or performer/artist with request for availability.
2. Clearly explain the request, discuss appropriate honorarium.
3. Order ceremonial tobacco, gift, and/or honorarium cheque to have ready and present to the Elder, knowledge keeper, cultural advisory or performer/artist when they are attend.
4. Welcome and host Elder, knowledge keeper, cultural advisory or performer/artist by ensuring comforts are met.
5. Offer ceremonial tobacco in private before the event begins, or while introducing the guest if they are planning to explain the tradition of gifting tobacco.
6. At the conclusion of the event present the Elder, knowledge keeper, cultural advisory or performer/artist with the honorarium and/or gift.

## **Appendix B - Guidelines for Smudging Ceremonies in a School Environment**

The tradition of smudging has been passed down from generation to generation and represents cleansing oneself of negative ideas, feelings and thoughts. “Smudging allows people to stop, slow down and become mindful and centered. This allows people to remember, connect, and be grounded in the event, task or purpose at hand.” *(Government of Manitoba-Smudging Protocol and Guidelines for School Divisions, 2018).*

- Explanations of the tradition and recognition of the historical significance of smudging, sacred medicines, teachings and protocols of the ceremony of smudging should be explained by an elder or knowledge keeper, or someone who is experienced and has been gifted teachings from an elder or knowledge keeper.
- Students, staff, parents and community should be educated and informed about the tradition of smudging.
- Communicate to students, staff and parents in advance, the day, time, place and purpose of the smudge. Make individuals feel safe to make inquiries, ask questions and express concerns about the tradition of smudging.
- A smudge is led by a person who has an understanding of what a smudge is, why and how it is performed. That person should be an elder or knowledge keeper who has been invited into the school. It can be a teacher knowledgeable about the tradition of smudging. It can be a parent/guardian or student.
- Smudging is always voluntary and performed with respect to those that choose to participate or not to participate.
- Smudging will take place in a well-ventilated area with access to a fully charged fire extinguisher.
- When smudging is complete, all materials must be fully extinguished by burning out on their own and then disposed of in a proper manner. Smudging remnants and matches can be placed in a tin can and saved, then disposed of outside. Remnants should never be placed in the garbage.