Guidance on Indigenous Cultural Protocols for Association Subgroups

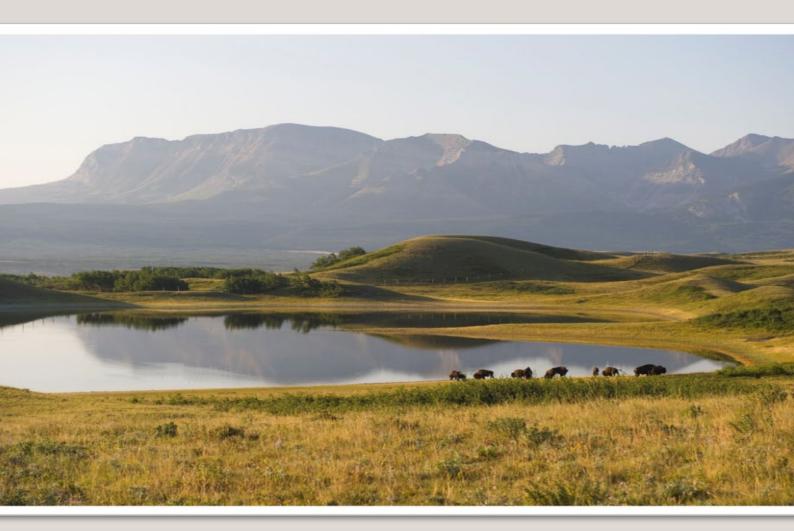


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Acknowledgements

The Alberta Teachers' Association respectfully acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 4, 6, 7, 8 and 10 territories—the travelling route, gathering place and meeting grounds for Indigenous Peoples, including the Siksikaitsitapi, comprised of the Siksika, Kainai, Piikani, Amskapi Piikani First Nations; the Tsuut'ina First Nation; and the Îyârhe Nakoda, including the Chiniki, Bearspaw and Goodstoney First Nations; and the Nehiyaw, Denesuliné, Dene Tha', Dane-zaa, Nakota Sioux, Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Métis Otipemisiwak and Esikisimu Nunangat, whose histories, languages, cultures and traditions continue to influence our vibrant community. We are grateful for the traditional Knowledge Keepers and Elders who are still with us today and those who have gone before us. We recognize the land as an act of reconciliation and gratitude to those whose territory we reside on or are visiting.

The Alberta Teachers' Association is grateful for the guidance and contributions of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Elders and Knowledge Keepers from the Association's Indigenous Advisory Circle; without their generosity and wisdom this resource guide would not be possible. Information shared throughout this resource guide will evolve based on continuous guidance from Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Peoples, Nations, communities and partners.

Purpose

This document is a resource guide to accompany the Association's Elder Protocol Stepping Stones resource (www.teachers.ab.ca > Professional development > Indigenous education and Walking Together > Resources). This resource guide is intended to provide Association subgroups with an introduction to Cultural Protocols when engaging with Indigenous Peoples, Lands and Knowledges for Association meetings, events and conferences. It is not intended to generalize First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Cultural Protocols or diminish the importance of relationship building within Indigenous Peoples, Lands and Knowledges. Identifying the "correct" way within Indigenous Cultural Protocols for Association subgroups is nearly impossible. Cultural Protocols are a way of life and living and are guided by Indigenous Knowledge systems that vary between Nations, communities, families, and Lands. Through ongoing listening and learning from Indigenous Peoples, Lands and Knowledges, your understandings of Cultural Protocols will continue to increase and expand.

Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Cultural Advisors

How do I know who is an Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Cultural Advisor?

Often Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Cultural Advisors will not refer to themselves as an *Elder*, *Knowledge Keeper* or *Cultural Advisor*. This is often due to their humble nature, or that they prefer, or are identified through, terms within their Indigenous language.

Generally, it is through First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities and Nations that individuals are recognized and identified as those who have acquired and earned the gifts of an Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Cultural Advisor.

Review the Association's *Elder Protocol* Stepping Stones resource for additional information (www.teachers.ab.ca > Professional development > Indigenous education and Walking Together > Resources).

Where can I find an Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Cultural Advisor?

A wise practice is to reach out to Elders, Knowledge Keepers or Cultural Advisors from the Lands that your Association subgroup and/or members reside in. Ask trusted community, members, Nations and/or community organizations to identify Elders, Knowledge Keepers or Cultural Advisors who have spiritual or traditional knowledge(s) or other gifts appropriate for your request. Possible starting points may include:

- Members within your Association subgroup,
- Locals, central office staff, liaisons, and lead teachers within Indigenous education,
- First Nations schools, Métis settlements, Métis citizen representatives, friendship centres, Indigenous student centres at post-secondary institutes, and
- Community events and gatherings such as round dances, powwows, and cultural arts events.

What are appropriate ways to connect with an Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Cultural Advisor?

Connecting with an Elder, Knowledge Keeper, or Cultural Advisor is an honor and a wonderful opportunity to learn from their wisdom and guidance. It is most respectful, when possible, to meet in person to establish a genuine relationship and thereafter to share your request well in advance. While phone or email can be used to arrange an initial meeting, it is often through heartfelt, face-to-face interactions that trust and mutual understanding are built.

Take time to visit and connect before bringing up the purpose of your request, as this honors their time and role. A respectful relationship often begins with a handshake, a word of gratitude, or a simple act of thanks for their willingness to meet. Approach these interactions with humility,

gratitude, patience, and sincerity, recognizing the sacred role they play within their communities and the depth of knowledge they carry.

What are appropriate ways to include Elders, Knowledge Keepers or Cultural Advisors?

Prior to extending an invitation to Elders, Knowledge Keepers or Cultural Advisors within the meeting or event, reflect on the purpose and intent of your request to ensure the integrity of Indigenous Knowledges. Avoid last-minute invitations to Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Cultural Advisors.

Try to find ways to involve Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Cultural Advisors beyond the opening and closing prayer (i.e., an invitation to attend a keynote speaker and breakout sessions, invitations to participate in workshops and dedicated time on the meeting agenda to share their reflections).

Inviting Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Cultural Advisors to participate in the initial planning stages is a special opportunity that can elevate your meetings, events, and conferences to new levels. Their wisdom and perspectives enrich many aspects of the experience, offering insights and meaningful guidance that can resonate deeply with organizers and participants alike.

Involving them early ensures their contributions are thoughtfully woven into the event, creating opportunities for authentic connection, cultural learning, and transformative moments that leave lasting impressions enhancing the overall impact of your event while honoring their knowledge and traditions.

If you are considering including a ceremony, such as a smudging ceremony, consultation with Elders, Knowledge Keepers or Cultural Advisors will ensure that the cultural and spiritual significance of ceremony is honored through appropriate Cultural Protocols.

Offering Cultural Protocol

What should I discuss with the invited Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Cultural Advisor *before* offering Cultural Protocol?

During your initial meeting (in-person or phone call) with the Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Cultural Advisor, it is appropriate to share details about your request before offering Cultural Protocol. This will create an opportunity for the Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Cultural Advisor to learn what you are requesting, and any other details that might impact their response.

When discussing your request, make sure to specify the purpose of the meeting, event or conference, who will be attending and the exact date, time, duration and location. This will help the Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Cultural Advisor to consider their availability to

speak on the topic. Be open to developing a plan that incorporates their advice and any specific needs they might have.

Allow the Elder, Knowledge Keeper, or Cultural Advisor time to think about your request; do not expect an immediate answer or response. Further information to discuss:

- Do they have a required amount for honoraria, gifting and expenses to fulfill your request? Provide information on how and when these will be provided, and how to submit expense claims. Be open and transparent about possible budget limitations.
- Do they have an Elder's helper supporting them? Inquire about appropriate gifting and honorarium for the Elder's helper.
- Are photographs and videos permitted of their teachings and/or knowledge shared?

Inform the Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Cultural Advisor if the event includes teaching and learning about traumatic experiences, such as residential schools or the Sixties Scoop. These topics may have an impact for which the Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Cultural Advisor will want to be prepared. Consider how appropriate mental health and well-being support can be offered during and after the meeting, event or conference.

When should I offer Cultural Protocol to invited Elders, Knowledge Keepers or Cultural Advisors?

Ask the Elder, Knowledge Keeper, or Cultural Advisor about the appropriate offering for your request. Ask them for guidance on when the offering should be presented. The acceptance of the offering is similar to a contract: it signifies acceptance and a commitment by the Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Cultural Advisor to fulfill your request.

Before your specific request occurs—Provide the appropriate cultural offering (ie, tobacco) before your specific request occurs. Think of the cultural offering as the key that will open the door to the knowledge that you are requesting.

After your specific request occurs—Provide an appropriate gift and honoraria immediately following the fulfillment of your request. This demonstrates respect and reciprocity for the gift(s) of knowledge that you received.

What Cultural Protocol should I offer the invited Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Cultural Advisor?

If you are not sure, it is appropriate to ask the Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Cultural Advisor how to prepare the offering for your request. First Nations Elders, Knowledge Keepers, or Cultural Advisors often accept offerings of tobacco, one of the four sacred plants. However, depending on the area, sweetgrass, sage or cedar, as well as broadcloth may be the preferred offering. Some Métis Elders, Knowledge Keepers, or Cultural Advisors accept tobacco, while others prefer a different gift, such as tea. Inuit Elders,

Knowledge Keepers, or Cultural Advisors typically do not accept tobacco because it is not a part of their traditional practice. In this case, a small gift is an appropriate offering. Put positive thoughts and prayers into the offering as you prepare it.

Where can I purchase tobacco for the Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Cultural Advisor's offering?

Often the Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Cultural Advisor will indicate if there is a specific type of tobacco to purchase (ie, ceremonial tobacco, pipe tobacco). Offering cigarettes, a pouch of tobacco or chewing tobacco is common within some Indigenous Nations and communities. However, purchasing ceremonial organic tobacco from local tobacconists or online suppliers such as Mother Earth Tobacco or Imagination is commonly accepted if they request tobacco.

Mother Earth Tobacco: https://motherearthtobacco.com/

Imagination (ceremonial tobacco): https://imaginationgroup.ca/collections/tobacco

How do I present the offering?

Ensure that you know the appropriate Cultural Protocol for your request. When presenting the Cultural Protocol, it is generally accepted that the offering is held within your left hand and out in front of you while stating your request.

What should I say when presenting the offering?

The offering is a commitment to the request you are seeking. Be precise about the knowledge or request that you seek from the Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Cultural Advisor. For example, be specific about what you want to pray for. Make your intentions and thoughts clear when you are asking.

"I am humbly requesting your support with an opening prayer. This is what we are going to talk about today [share brief overview], and I would like to ask for spiritual strength."

"I humbly ask you for an opening invocation from your heart and mind. We rely on you to provide us an invocation on our behalf to ensure that all discussions and decisions are guided by our intentions."

Keep in mind that when requesting an invocation this might open the door for the Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Cultural Advisor to share thoughts about the meeting, event or conference.

What if the Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Cultural Advisor does not accept the offering?

If the Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Cultural Advisor cannot do what you are asking, they will say so and not accept the offering. They may direct you to other members of the community who are better suited to your request. It is good practice to take any advice or

direction from the Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Cultural Advisor with an open heart and as a learning opportunity.

Hosting Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Cultural Advisors

What are some key considerations for hosting Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Cultural Advisors (2-3 weeks prior)?

Confirm the Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Cultural Advisor's attendance. Review the event details and ask if there is anything further that they need you to provide.

Photographs or video recordings are often not acceptable during a spiritual ceremony or cultural teaching. Explicit consent *must* be received from the Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Cultural Advisor prior to taking photographs or recording.

Ask if additional audio support is required or acceptable (ie, microphone, portable sound system). Some may choose not to use a microphone during prayer, ceremony or cultural teachings.

Ask the invited Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Cultural Advisor for specific teachings on how to prepare the learning space (ie, standing, sitting, circular layout) and background knowledge for participants.

Provide details on parking at your meeting, event or conference. Do they require parking within close proximity? Do they require assistance?

Provide clear instructions on how to enter the venue if there are multiple entrances, where to go once inside and who will be greeting them.

How can I prepare participants prior to hosting Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Cultural Advisors?

Having the privilege of learning from an Elder, Knowledge Keeper, or Cultural Advisor is an honor, and it is equally an honor to show them the appropriate respect. Preparation can create a peaceful atmosphere in which all can feel comfortable learning and forming genuine relationships.

Prepare participants in advance on how to show respect for Elders, Knowledge Keepers or Cultural Advisors.

- **Teach Respectful Greetings**: Encourage participants to learn and use greetings in the Elder's, Knowledge Keeper's, or Cultural Advisor's language, where appropriate, as a sign of respect and recognition.
- Emphasize Attentiveness: Remind participants to remain focused and fully present during their presentation. Create a respectful and engaging environment by refraining from side conversations, cellphone use, checking emails, or engaging in unrelated work.
- Practice Active Listening: Encourage participants to be silent, observant, and
 attentive, offering their full focus to the words being shared. Interruptions are
 considered poor etiquette, so participants should wait until invited to ask questions or
 speak.
- Seek Permission for Recordings: Photographs, recordings, or note-taking should only be done with prior approval, honoring their preferences and traditions.

Hosting with Care: Ensuring that Elders, Knowledge Keepers, or Cultural Advisors feel welcome and valued is essential. Consider these steps:

- Assign a helper to assist them if needed or appropriate.
- Regularly check on their comfort throughout their visit.
- Facilitate introductions and provide a warm, inclusive atmosphere.
- Offer refreshments such as beverages or food, and ensure they have a comfortable chair.

By showing thoughtful preparation and care, you honor the wisdom the Elders, Knowledge Keepers or Cultural Advisors share, and you honor yourself and your organization as a host while creating a memorable and respectful experience for everyone involved.

Gifting and Honoraria

What is an appropriate gift?

A wise practice is to simply ask the invited Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Cultural Advisor ideas for gifting (ie, ask what do you need?").

Immediately following the request, provide the invited Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Cultural Advisor with a personalized gift (ie, student/staff artwork, swag, a "gift from your heart").

What is appropriate honoraria?

It is appropriate to ask Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Cultural Advisors what the appropriate honoraria amount should be. Sometimes they will indicate that it is up to the organizer/s of the meeting, event or conference to provide the appropriate amount. There are no standards or specific amounts for an honorarium as it will depend on the situation. However, when determining an honorarium, consider the significance of the event, the type of experience

shared and the amount of time required by the Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Cultural Advisor. If in doubt, seek advice from local communities.

Because a monetary honorarium may have tax implications, consult your financial guidelines.

Immediately following the request, provide the invited Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Cultural Advisor with cash, cheque or direct deposit. Gift cards can be provided but ensure that this is agreed upon prior to the request. Some examples of gift cards include local grocery stores, gas stations, or recreational places. Gift cards can be personalized for the Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Cultural Advisor.

Do I need to provide an offering, gift and honoraria?

Yes, provide all three.

The purpose of a gift and honorarium is to acknowledge and show appreciation for the sharing of knowledge and personal time provided by the Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Cultural Advisor. If possible, gifting and honoraria should be offered immediately after fulfillment of the specific request.

Before your specific request occurs – Provide the appropriate cultural offering (ie, tobacco) before your specific request occurs. Think of the cultural offering as the key that will open the door to the knowledge that you are requesting.

After your specific request occurs - Provide appropriate gifting and honoraria immediately following the fulfillment of your request. This demonstrates respect and reciprocity for the gift(s) of knowledge that you received.

What additional expenses should be reimbursed?

In addition to a gift and honoraria, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Cultural Advisors should be reimbursed for their out-of-pocket expenses to attend the meeting, event or conference. Expenses include kilometrage, parking, accommodation and other costs associated with travel. If hotel accommodation is required, it is best for the host to reserve and pay for the room in advance.

Additional Guidance for Association Subgroups

Can alcohol be provided when Cultural Protocols are being offered?

Alcohol should be prohibited during Association events, conferences and meetings where Cultural Protocols and items are included (ie, Elder blessing, powwow and round dance drums, dancers, eagle feathers and ceremonial pipes). Alcohol should be served after the Cultural Protocols and Association business have been concluded. Cultural items are not to be in the same location as the alcohol service.

How do I increase the number of Indigenous education presentations and exhibitors?

Consider sharing the session proposal or exhibit information directly with Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Cultural Advisors, including Indigenous teachers, school leaders, community organizations and businesses. In some instances, submitting the session proposal(s) and exhibit application(s) on their behalf or providing support on submitting the required information would be beneficial.

What are some key considerations to share with Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Cultural Advisors if session proposals need to be declined?

Provide a rationale or reason for declining Indigenous education session proposals (ie, the number of Indigenous education session proposals exceeds the number of available timeslots for Indigenous education sessions). Encourage them to reapply next time, and/or share additional conference presentation opportunities (ie, specialist council conferences).

How can the scheduling of presentations and exhibitors demonstrate respect for Indigenous Knowledge(s)?

Prioritize Indigenous People(s) as the primary sharers of Indigenous Knowledge(s). Selecting presentations and exhibitors from Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Cultural Advisors, including Indigenous teachers, school leaders, community organizations and businesses, maintains the integrity of Indigenous Knowledge(s).

High visibility, optimal timing and number of Indigenous presentations and/or exhibitors demonstrates respect, and opportunities for engagement with Indigenous knowledge(s).

The diversity within First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Knowledge systems, including stories, traditions, ceremonies, cultures, and languages, are extensive. First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Knowledge(s) are contextualized based on the Elder, Knowledge Keeper or Cultural Advisor's experiences, perspectives and ways of life. For example, a presentation from one Métis Elder on land-based learning may be different than another Métis Elder's land-based learning presentation.

How will I know if presenters or exhibitors are First Nations, Métis, or Inuit?

Include the following survey question on the session/exhibitor proposal form:

Voluntary First Nations, Métis, or Inuit self-identification

[Name of Association Subgroup] want to ensure that we are prioritizing Indigenous People(s) as the primary sharers of Indigenous Knowledge(s).

Do you self-identify as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit?

• First Nations (status and non-status)

- Métis
- Inuit
- Prefer not to say

How will I know if Cultural Protocols are required for presenters or exhibitors that submit proposals?

Follow up directly with invited First Nations, Métis and Inuit presenters, exhibitors and guests via phone, email or in-person to inquire about appropriate Cultural Protocols.

"On behalf of [Name of Association Subgroup], we would like to offer you Cultural Protocol to acknowledge and respect teachings that you will be sharing related to [insert specific request (ie, tipi teachings, storytelling, fish-scale art)]. Please advise us of appropriate Cultural Protocols for the knowledge and teachings that you will be sharing with us." If protocol is required and a moderator is attending the presentation, the moderator should:

Share the appropriate land acknowledgement, then share the following message when introducing the invited guest or presenter, and making the offering (ie, tobacco):

On behalf of [Name of Association Subgroup], we would like to offer you Cultural Protocol to acknowledge and respect the teachings that you will be sharing related to [insert specific request (ie, tipi teachings, storytelling, fish-scale art)].

If possible, provide the gift and honoraria immediately following the presentation.

How should I categorize Indigenous Education sessions on the digital program for the event?

Indigenous-focused sessions and/or exhibits should have multiple categorizations on the digital program for the event; indicate "Indigenous Education" and the subject/topic and grade levels (if applicable). For example, "Indigenous Education," "Fine Arts," and "Division 1"

Do not categorize Indigenous-focused sessions within "Diversity" or "Multicultural," unless specifically requested/indicated in the session proposal.

Further Resources

ATA Elder Protocol Stepping Stones resource https://teachers.ab.ca/professional-development/indigenous-education-and-walking-together

Indigenous education and Walking Together workshop, Being in good relations – an introduction to Cultural Protocols (https://teachers.ab.ca/professional-development/workshops-and-presentations/indigenous-education-workshops)

Cultural Protocols

- A toolkit for working with ITA and its members (Indigenous Tourism
 Alberta) https://indigenoustourismalberta.ca/industry-resources/a-toolkit-for-working-with-ita-and-its-members/ Cultural Awareness and Relationship Building with Indigenous Peoples (Town of Devon) https://www.devon.ca/Portals/0/Documents/Plans-Reports/2020-05-01-Indigenous-Engagement-Framework v1.pdf
- Blackfoot and First Nations Métis and Inuit Protocol
 Handbook https://www.ulethbridge.ca/sites/default/files/2018/01/protocol_document_blackfoot_and_fnmi_approved_oct_7_2013_1.pdf
- Cultural Protocols (City of Grande Prairie) https://cityofgp.com/culture-community/indigenous-relations-tawawwelcome/cultural-protocols
- ii' taa'poh'to'p (by the University of Calgary) https://www.ucalgary.ca/live-uc-ucalgary-site/sites/default/files/teams/136/Indigenous%20Strategy_Publication_digital_Sep2019.pgdf
- Indigenous Edmonton Cultural Protocols (CBE) https://www.cbe.ab.ca/programs/supports-for-students/Documents/Indigenous-Education-Cultural-Protocols.pdf
- Indigenous Relations: Protocols (City of Calgary) https://www.calgary.ca/communities/indigenous/collaboration.html
- Municipal-Indigenous Relations (Alberta Municipalities) https://www.abmunis.ca/advocacy-resources/governance/municipal-indigenous-relations
- Walking Together FNMI Worldviews Protocols (Learn Alberta) https://www.learnalberta.ca/content/aswt/worldviews/documents/protocols.pdf

Current Practices

- Affirming and Acknowledging Indigenous Ceremonial Practices at the University of Alberta https://www.ualberta.ca/en/indigenous/media-library/guidelines-indigenous-ceremonial-practices.pdf
- Alberta RCMP Path to Reconciliation https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/ab/community-communaute/reconciliation-strategy-strategie-de-reconciliation-eng.htm
- Indigenous Justice Strategy (Alberta Courts) https://albertacourts.ca/docs/default-source/pc/acoj-indigenous-justice-strategy---august-2023.pdf
- Town of Banff Indigenous
 Framework https://banff.ca/DocumentCenter/View/15404/Indigenous-Framework
- Working with Indigenous Populations and Communities (Alberta Psychological Association) https://www.cap.ab.ca/Portals/0/adam/Content/hBoa24UzV0qoTK43dmxH-Q/Link/Practice%20Guideline%20-%20Working%20with%20Indigenous%20Populations%20and%20Communities%20final.pdf

Honorarium Guidelines

- Administrative Procedure 222 (by the Foothills School
 Division) https://media.foothillsschooldivision.ca/media/Default/medialib/222-first-nations-metis-inuit-education-updated-november-21.6a72617166.pdf
 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.
- A Journey to Indigenous Cultural Understanding in Alberta (by the Alberta Government and Align Association of Community Services) https://alignab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/ALIGN-Indigenous-Cultural-Understanding-in-Alberta-ICUF-Revised-14-October-2022.pdf - elders should receive honorariums and be recognized as research assistants
- Alberta University of the Arts Indigenous honorarium payments procedure https://auarts.ca/sites/default/files/2024-02/20240205 Indigenous Honorarium Payments Procedure.pdf
- Cultural Awareness and Relationship Building with Indigenous Peoples (Town of Devon) https://www.devon.ca/Portals/0/Documents/Plans-Reports/2020-05-01- Indigenous-Engagement-Framework v1.pdf

- Elder Protocol and Guidelines (by the University of Alberta) https://www.ualberta.ca/en/media-library/ualberta/students/first-peoples-house/documents/elder-protocol.pdf
- Engaging with Elders: A Co-created Story (Calgary Board of Education) https://www.cbe.ab.ca/about-us/advisory-councils/FineArtsAdvisoryCouncilDocuments/elders-protocol.pdf