

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education

Background

Consistent with 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 our Indigenous students and to increase understanding and acceptance of Indigenous cultures for all students, staff and community. Foothills School Division is committed to improving education outcomes and creating opportunities for our First Nations, Métis and Inuit students. Student success is a shared responsibility that is best supported through collaboration with students, parents, school, elders, knowledge keepers and cultural advisors, local leaders and community. 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 expected and celebrated, where each learner is welcomed, cared for, respected and safe. We work on ensuring that our students and staff are knowledgeable; understanding and respectful of the rich diversity of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Cultures, languages and histories; the importance of Treaties and the legacy of residential schools, to strengthen and support the learning experiences of all students.

Procedures

1. Foothills School Division is committed to providing high quality instructional programs and educational services for our Indigenous students and to increase understanding and acceptance of Indigenous cultures for all students, staff and community.
2. Foothills School Division is committed to improving education outcomes and creating opportunities for our First Nations, Métis and Inuit students. First Nations Métis and Inuit educational programs and services will operate in accordance with Alberta Education policy, guidelines and regulations to ensure high quality inclusive and culturally respectful learning and teaching opportunities.
3. Student success is a shared responsibility that is 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 and an inclusive culture of belonging.

4. Foothills School Division will provide support, resources and professional learning to support the learning and achievement of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students.
5. Foothills School Division will report progress on an annual basis of the achievement of students who are First Nations, Métis and Inuit, as well as, the strategies used to support student success.
6. Principals will support the school community in acquiring and applying foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit for the benefit of all students, staff and community.
7. Principals will pursue opportunities and engage in practices to facilitate reconciliation within the school community including the use of Land Acknowledgements, as well as, 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.*
8. 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.
9. All students and staff will recognize and respect cultural practices, as well as, the role, participation and expertise of elders, knowledge keepers and cultural advisors in the school, classroom and during school activities, assemblies, events and celebrations. Schools will ensure a staff and student will greet and host these cultural guests while in their school by providing introductions, answering questions and supplying food and refreshments.
10. Foothills School Division recognizes the significance and importance of Smudging and Pipe Ceremonies. Many schools are incorporating the tradition of smudging as part of learning experiences in the classroom, during particular events, celebrations and ceremonies, or as part of the regular school day. Foothills School Division recognizes that smudging - the burning of sage, sweet grass and/or cedar and 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/or artists/performers at 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 understanding of 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 smudge, pipe ceremony or sunrise ceremony, must be planned only in consultation of an elder.
- Extend invitation 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, sweet grass, sage, cedar or a small gift.
- Greet 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 presenting the offering in your left hand, out in front of you and stating the request. If they accept your request, they will accept the offering which is similar 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.
- The request should specify the purpose of the event; who will be attending; the exact time and location; and the time frame you have allotted for their participation. Developing 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.

- 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.
- 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. Do not interrupt and 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 same rate as guest teachers. The rate for a full day is \$212.00 and a half day would be \$106.00. Mileage is on top of the guest teacher rate at .55 cents per kilometer.
- Professional performers/artists that are hired would set their own rate.
- Ask what gift and or honorarium and expenses they require to participate in the event.
- 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.
- Ceremonial tins of Tobacco may be purchased at <http://imaginationgroup.ca/imagination-tobacco/>

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, medicines, teachings and protocols of the ceremony of smudging should be explained by 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 placed in tin can and saved then disposed of outside. Remnants should never be placed in the garbage.