

Greeting and Thanking Traditional Visitors

All cultures are enriched by certain valuable and unique individuals. Such individuals possess a wide range of knowledge -knowledge that once shared, can expand students' insight beyond the perspectives of the teacher and classroom resources.

Why Involve Elders and Senators?

Each First Nations Elder and Métis Senator can add a great deal to educational activities in our schools. In particular, Elders and Senators are integral to the revival, maintenance, and preservation of their cultures. Elder and Senator participation in support of curricular objectives develops the positive identity of First Nations and Métis students and enhances self-esteem for all students. All students may acquire a heightened awareness and sensitivity that inevitably promotes anti-racist education. It is important to note that the title Elder and Senator does not necessarily indicate age. In First Nation one is designated an Elder after acquiring significant wisdom and understanding of First Nation history. Métis Senators are elected or appointed by local councils and are often the holders of significant Métis history, traditional teachings, ceremonies, healing practices and experience. Elders and Senators have earned the respect from their community to pass on this knowledge to others and give advice and guidance on personal issues, as well as issues affecting their communities and nations.

Elder and Senator Protocol

When requesting guidance or assistance, there is a protocol used in approaching Elders, which is not as formal for Senators, but which can be followed for both. Before following any protocol check with what has worked best with the community from which the Senator or Elder comes from whom you wish to approach. The Métis Council, MNO education and training office, district chief's office, tribal council office, or a reserve's band council, or the school's education committee may be able to assist you. Prior to a Senator or Elder sharing knowledge, it is essential that you and your students complete the cycle of giving and receiving through an appropriate offering. This offering represents respect and appreciation for knowledge being shared. One must ascertain the nature of the offering prior to an Elder's visit as traditions differ throughout First Nation communities. Also, there may be a fee for service or to cover the travel which is arranged through the school board. In our local Anishinaabe communities, a gift of tobacco in a small piece of cloth is a traditional offering. In addition, should your school (or school district) normally offer honoraria and/or expense reimbursement to visiting instructors, it would be similarly appropriate to extend such considerations to a visiting Senator/Elder.

First Nations Elders and Métis Senators often have helpers who work with them and receive training. Ask the helper how to approach a particular Elder or Senator since each Nation has its own tradition. Always use respect, ask permission, seek clarification if there is something you do not understand, and follow the direction you are given.

If you would like an Elder and/or Senator to do opening and closing ceremonies for an event, you need to explain the event to them and it is okay to have both. Determine if a gift of tobacco should be offered before a prayer is said. Acceptance of gifts means acceptance of the invitation. Make it as easy as possible for Senators and Elders to get to the event. An opening and closing observance must be completed. The opening observance gives thanks to the Creator and serves to bless the event. The Elder and Senator may ask a helper to smudge the people gathered. Smudging is when a medicine such as sage is lit so that it is smoldering. This smudge is then taken around the circle and a feather is usually used to spread that smoke around all those gathered. Smudging is done to cleanse everyone gathered so that the event runs smoothly and everyone is in a good frame of mind. It is important to note that not every Elder or Senator smudges. To find out the proper process or when in doubt, seek clarification and ask questions. If there's something you do not understand, follow the direction you are given.

Note: Check you school's policy on smudging activities prior to approaching the Elder or Senator.

Senator Protocol

To contact a Métis Senator, call your local Métis community council or Métis Nation of Ontario for guidance. Senators are elected life positions who are great storytellers and enjoy sharing wisdom. If you would like a Senator for opening/closing ceremonies, invite the Senator the same way as you would ask an Elder, consultant or an advisor. An offering of tobacco is not necessary but a gift is appreciated. An honorarium and logistics reimbursed would be necessary in many cases. When in doubt, seek clarification and ask questions.

Seeking an Elder and Senator

To initiate the process of dialogue and participation, a letter may be sent to the local band council or an Aboriginal community agency requesting an Elder's or a Senator's participation and indicating the role the Elder and Senator would have within the program. A list of names of persons who have the recognized skills that would meet your specific needs will be provided. It is recommended that prior consultation occur with the Elder or Senator to share expectations for learning outcomes.

Friendship Centres, Métis Community Councils, and Health Centres (Anishnaabe Mushkiki) across the province are active at the community level and often present cultural workshops and activities in cooperation with Elders/Senators and other recognized resource people. Teachers and schools may wish to contact the organizations in the First Nation, Métis, Inuit Community Agency Contacts section on the back of this document for Elder and Senator referrals.



Resources

AWPI Employer Toolkit. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. Chapter 5: Aboriginal Awareness.
<http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/emp/ae/awp/etk/ove-eng.asp>

Interviewing Elders, Guidelines from the National Aboriginal Health Organization, <http://www.naho.ca/english/documents/InterviewingElders--FINAL.pdf>

Saskatchewan Education: First Nations, Métis & Community Learning Program
<http://www.education.gov.sk.ca/FNM-Learning-Program>

Métis Nation of Ontario; 226 May Street South; Thunder Bay, ON
P7E 1B4 (807)624-5018

Métis Culture and Heritage Resource Centre Inc., Michif
Language Lessons: <http://www.metisresourcecentre.mb.ca>

Aahnii/Boozhoo
Hello
Tanishi
Bonjour
Qanuipit

Lawrence Baxter on Language ...

"Also, just from my travels in the north, I noticed the language/dialect along the Albany River all the way from Marten Falls to Cat Lake are the same with sub-dialect in each community or within the community.

As you go further north, the Ojibway language is again different. There you have a Severn River dialect and Winisk River dialect. These are the two major dialects and to some extent they are similar, again there are sub-dialects in each of the communities.

When I was growing up, families went to their respective traplines over extended periods of time and they developed their own lingos. I sometimes hear Chomish paraphrase oldtimers he heard talk when he was a young man, the language back then was quite different. My generation does not use it. In essence, the language is lost because it wasn't written. So the language changes with time.

Traditional Wisdom

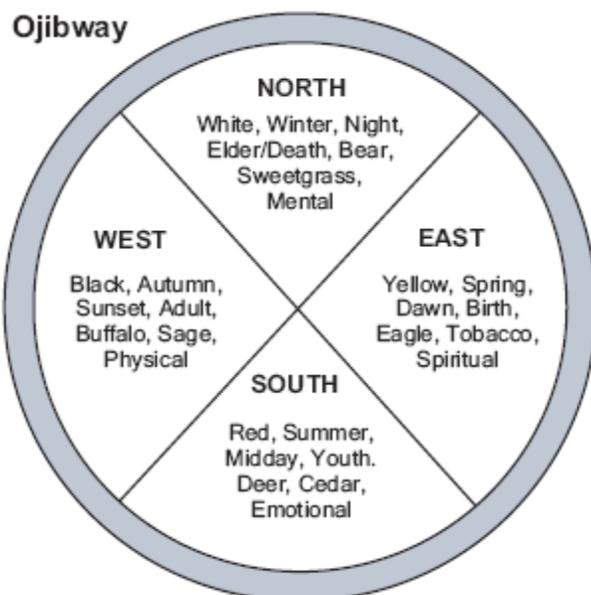
Circle Traditions and Teachings

The Circle teachings come from the Anishinaabe people, commonly known as the Ojibway nation. Ontario Métis may follow these teachings, or a variation of them, depending on the community. Check respectfully with those from your school and board for which traditions they follow. The Ojibway and many other First Nations have a teaching that the medicine wheel is the circle of life, and all things in life are circular, (e.g., the earth, sun, moon, and all planets and stars; the cycle of seasons, and day and night, the life cycle). Depending on the nation, the colours may be different and placed in different locations. The most common colours are yellow, red, black and white. These represent the cycle of seasons, day and night, the life cycle from birth to childhood to adulthood to old age, and finally death and rebirth. These teachings are divided into the four directions (TDSB, 2006). The medicine wheel is an ancient symbol that reflects values, world views, and practices, and is used by many First Nations today (Bopp et al. 1989). Each person's medicine wheel is unique to the teachings that they have received.

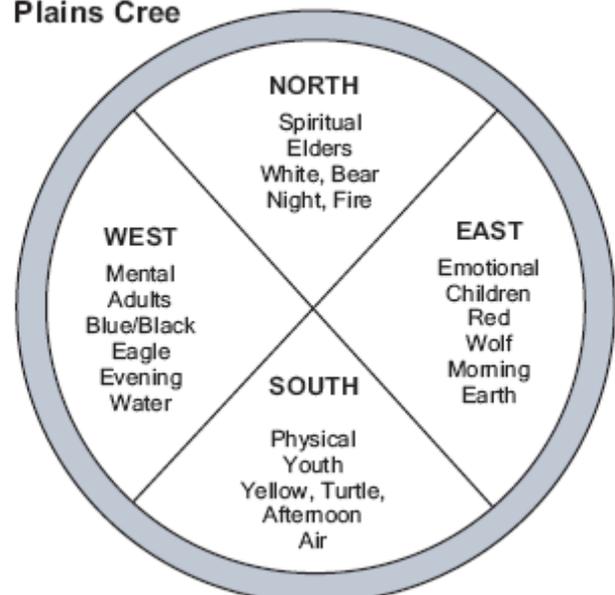
The adjacent circles are two examples of medicine wheels: one Ojibway and one Plains Cree (Western Ontario, Manitoba).

One of the main teachings from the medicine wheel is balance. For example, the medicine wheel symbolizes the four parts of an individual (spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental) which emphasizes the need to educate the "whole" child. In order for an individual to be healthy, all four areas must be balanced. The medicine wheel

Ojibway



Plains Cree



signifies the interconnected relationships among all aspects of life and provides direction and meaning to an individual (Manitoba, 2003).

Medicines (Four Sacred Plants)

Tobacco East Yellow Spiritual

Sacred to First Nations people, tobacco always comes first. It is considered one of the four original gifts from the Creator. It is used as an offering before harvesting anything from Mother Earth. An offering is placed in a respectful way on the earth near the plant or animal or stone you wish to take, and permission is asked prior to your taking the item. This ensures that more will come to take its place in nature. Tobacco is believed to open the door between our world and the spiritual World, so it is used to carry prayers to the Creator. Tobacco is placed in the hand during prayer, then it is left in a special place on Mother Earth when you are done, or offered it to a sacred fire. In most instances, the proper way to ask a favour of someone is to offer them tobacco wrapped in a small red cloth tied with a ribbon, known as tobacco ties. Tobacco can also be given as cigarettes or a pouch. Offering tobacco establishes a relationship between two people.

Sage West Black Physical

Sacred to First Nations people, sage is a woman's medicine. It is considered one of the four original gifts from the Creator. It is said to be a masculine plant, and it reduces or eliminates negative energy. Often in women's circles, only sage is used in the smudge. There are many varieties of sage growing wild in Ontario. It grows everywhere, especially where there is poison ivy, and can be picked in late August. It's silvery-green, a single-stalk plant, 12-18 inches tall. It is used to purify the body and keep one in good health. Sage is helpful to remind us of our past and focus on dreams for our life's journey.

Cedar South Red Emotional

Sacred to First Nations people, cedar offers us protection and grounding. It is considered one of the four original gifts from the Creator. Cedar is used mostly for ceremonies which include making a protective ring around the activity circle with cedar. Boughs can be hung on the entrances to your home, small leaves can be kept in the medicine bag that you wear daily or put in your shoes when you need extra grounding, and ground cedar leaves can be offered for prayers. Cedar tea is especially good to serve during times of teachings and circles, so that all can keep focused on their task at hand. Boil four palm-sized cedar leaves in about 2 litres of water for about 5 minutes. Let steep for 15-20 minutes before serving.

Sweet Grass North White Mental

Sacred to First Nations people, sweet grass may be the best known of our plant medicines. It is said to be a feminine plant whose teaching is kindness because it bends without breaking. It is considered one of the four original gifts from the Creator. Its braids are unique to Anishinaabe culture because it is considered to be the hair of Mother Earth; we show respect to her by braiding it before it is picked. The three braids represent mind, body, and spirit. In a smudge, it is used to attract positive energy. It grows in wetlands and is ready to be picked in midsummer. Its many purposes are used in basket weaving and other gift items, where its gentle sent is renowned. In case the scent is not enough for you to identify the plant, it has a purple section that is only about 1/4 inch of its stalk. Sweet grass is available from nurseries so that you can grow it in your own garden.

Note: If picking either sage, cedar or sweet grass, an offering of tobacco is made to Mother Earth. Métis may or may not follow the medicine wheel and different colors are used depending on the traditions of the people.

Seven Gifts of the Grandfathers

Nezhwahswe Mishomisuk

This teaching or a variation of it may be adopted outside of the Mediwiwin teachings from which it derives. Métis in Ontario, for example, who are familiar with these teachings may adhere closely to them or follow a variation of them.

Wisdom/Understanding

Nbwaakaawin

To have wisdom is to know the difference between good and bad and to know the result of your actions. To cherish knowledge is to know wisdom.

Love/Kindness

Zaagidwin

Unconditional love is to know that when people are weak they need your love the most, that your love is given freely and you cannot put conditions on it or your love is not true. To know love is to know peace.

Respect

Muaadendmowin

Respect others, their beliefs and respect yourself, if you cannot show respect you cannot expect respect to be given. To honour all of Creation is to have respect.



Bravery/Courage

Askdehewin

To be brave is to do something right even if you know it is going to hurt you. Bravery is to face the foe with integrity.

Honesty

Gwekwaadziwin

To achieve honesty within yourself, to recognize who and what you are, do this and you can be honest with all others. Honesty in facing a situation is to be brave.

Humility

Dbaadendizwin

Humble yourself and recognize that no matter how much you think you know, you know very little of all the universe. Humility is to know yourself as a sacred part of Creation.

Truth

Debwewin

To learn truth, to live with truth, and to walk with truth, to speak truth. Truth is to know all of these things.

First Nation, Métis and Inuit Traditions and Celebrations

Traditional Feasts

- Adhere to very strict ceremonial guidelines that take place during the Midewiwin (Anishinaabe Medicine Lodge) ceremonies.
- Purpose is to thank all of Creation for our life.
- Begin with offering prayers and songs for the feast by a traditional teacher or Elder.
- Four sacred medicines (tobacco, cedar, sage, and sweet grass) are always present and are placed in an abalone shell, lit and used for cleansing or smudging.
- During the Smudge Ceremony, we clear our mind, body and spirit of negative thoughts and feelings. Guidance and direction may also be sought out during this practice.
- In addition to many other foods, the four sacred foods (strawberries, corn, wild rice and venison) are always present.
- An example: the The Three Fires Midewiwin (Medicine Lodge of the Anishinaabe people) hold feasts during the spring, summer, fall and mid-winter ceremonies.
- A feast is held when a member of the Midewiwin Three Fires Medicine Lodge passes away
- Midewiwin Three Fires Medicine Lodge passes such as a drum.
- A spirit plate is made up of all foods which are smudged and offered to the creator.

Contemporary Feasts

- Adapted to today's lifestyle.
- Begin with offering prayers and songs for the feast by a traditional teacher, Senator, or Elder.
- Four sacred medicines (tobacco, cedar, sage, and sweet grass) are always present.
- Only the spirit plate (a plate of food that is offered to the Creator by being placed outside for nature, after the feast) is smudged.
- Purpose is to give thanks for a good life.
- Examples of feasts include Chiefs feast, Summer Solstice, Winter Solstice, Memorial feast for ancestors, the First Kill feast, and feasts at the beginning of each season.



The Pow-Wow

- A spiritual, as well as social gathering, to celebrate life.
- The drum represents the heartbeat of mother earth and acknowledges the grandmother and grandfather spirits, spirits of the four directions, the veterans, the unborn and those who have passed on.
- There are two kinds of Pow-Wows: Competition and Traditional.
- Competition Pow-Wows involve competing with other dancers in your category and age – usually for money prizes.
- Drum groups also compete for the title of Championship Drum.
- Traditional Pow-Wows are announced in advance to give time to prepare things such as: food for the feasts that go along with most Pow-Wows; obtaining gifts for the Elders, singers, dancers, and for the guests; and construction of the arbor (an open walled hut with a cedar floor and willow thatched roof that houses the host drum).
- The host drum is specifically invited to sing traditional songs, handed down over the centuries at the Opening and Closing Ceremonies.
- During certain times of the Pow-Wow no pictures are allowed (e.g., Grand Entry, honour songs or flag songs).
- Women: traditional dancers (wear deerskin dresses with fringes and carry fans and shawls staying firmly connected with the earth when they dance), jingle dancers (do healing dances and wear dresses covered in metallic cones) and fancy shawl dancers (look like beautiful butterflies as they whirl with their long fringes and shawls).
- Men: traditional dancers wear their deerskin regalia, grass dancers wear their colourful regalia and long flowing fringes, and fancy dancers who wear brilliantly coloured regalia and dance in a very energetic manner.
- It is important for students to understand all components and it is appropriate to ask an individual to come in and share their teaching with the class. It is not appropriate to organize a Pow-Wow in your class by having students make drums and dress up.



Sweat Lodge Ceremony

The sweat lodge ceremony is used by First Nations as a way to seek prayer, healing and purification. Not all Aboriginal peoples participate in a sweat lodge ceremony which goes back to keeping the Cultural Continuum in mind. The ceremony didn't exist until the influence of European culture (alcohol) had corrupting effects. Participating in a sweat lodge ceremony brings one back to the traditional ways of living. The sweat lodge makes the people repair the damage done to their spirits and acquire answers and guidance from the Creator and mother earth. A medicine man and/or woman would be present in the ceremony.

Rendezvous

- Annual gatherings Métis celebrate, usually during the summer and organized by regional councils.
- Celebrate Métis culture.
- Voyageur games include shooting, throwing axes, making bannock, etc.
- Sometimes there are canoe races.
- Always there are Métis entertainers, jigging and fiddling.

Métis Jigging

The Métis people established the dance "The Red River Jig" which has been the centrepiece in Métis music for hundreds of years. The dance in itself is unique even though it's similar to the Irish step dance as it involves complicated footwork of Native dancing mixed with European music and a main instrument such as the fiddle is used. In the past, the Métis peoples made their own fiddles out of maple wood and birch bark as the instruments were difficult to obtain and expensive to purchase.

In the past, jigging would be a type of dance occurring from dusk lasting to dawn. Today, jigging is enjoyed in Métis and cultural celebrations, conferences, events, powwows and competitions. Métis peoples held fiddle and jigging contests as a symbolic gesture of nationhood and pride.

Other traditional Metis dances include the Waltz Quadrille, the Square dance, Drops of Brandy, the Duck dance and La Double Gigue.

Anishinaabe
original or first person
premiere personne

Pimaatisiwin
way of life
mode de vie

Kikinoomaakewikamikong
place of learning
lieu d`apprentissage



Resources

Leitch, Cynthia. Jingle Dancer. New York: Smith Morrow Books, 2000. Posters available through Native Reflections Catalogue (classroom resources, posters, etc.) 1-2040268-4075 www.nativereflections.com

Benton-Banai, Edward. The Mishomis Book: The voice of the Ojibway. Saint Paul, MN: Little Red School House, 1998.

Bopp, Judie, Michael Bopp, Lee Brown, and Phil Lane. The Sacred Tree. Wilmot, WI: Lotus Light, 1989.

Ojibway Ceremonies, Basil Johnston, McClelland & Stewart, 1983.

Cultural Education Program, Dilico, Thunder Bay: Available on Default Library Author: Denise Baxter

Integrating Aboriginal Perspectives in Curricula
<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ks4/docs/policy/abpersp/index.html>

Ningwakwe Learning Press <http://www.ningwakwe.on.ca/>

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