

APPENDIX 6: RESOURCES AND PROTOCOLS FOR DEEPENING YOUR LEARNING

The best resources to consult on Indigenous content are Elders, knowledge-keepers and subject experts from Indigenous Community. Indigenous Peoples have long-evolved knowledge systems based on experiential and cultural teachings and learnings, art and creative forms, design and innovation methods, and education and governance approaches that have much to teach the non-Indigenous peoples and worlds. Places where you can contact and connect with Elders and Indigenous experts include urban friendship and cultural centres, cultural lodges, Indigenous Studies departments and Indigenous student services at universities, and the Indigenous engagement and relations staff at organizations, businesses and government departments.

However, it may be necessary to supplement direct Indigenous expertise and stories with additional research, frameworks and content. When identifying resources on Indigenous content, these three elements should inform your search.¹

- **Content and accuracy:** Make sure that the content portrays Indigenous Peoples in a whole-person and accurate way. Choose topics and resources that reflect who your partners are and where you are in your learning journey.
- **Authorship:** Try to privilege Indigenous authors as they have situated cultural and empirical knowledge and lived experience on the topics covered. There are many non-Indigenous people with expertise in Indigenous studies and associated topics but it is important to check that they have authentic expertise.
- **Diversity:** Indigenous Peoples have knowledge of content, lived experience and both professional and cultural expertise that touches on all subject areas and span fields and sectors so practitioners can integrate Indigenous content into any process and project. Including Indigenous content and co-creation at every level of a project reinforces and deepens your commitment to engagement and the multi-dimensional sophistication of Indigenous knowledges.

1. Adapted from: Freeman, K., McDonald, S. and Morcom, L. (May 2018). Truth and Reconciliation in YOUR Classroom, Education Canada.

RESOURCE AND REFERENCE LIST

Indigenous Climate & Environmental Stewardship

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Climate Resilience & Nature-based Solutions

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Truth, Justice and Reconciliation & Civic-Indigenous Relationships and Perspectives (Including international frameworks)

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Open Public Spaces, Resilience + Indigenous Inclusion

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PROTOCOLS

Land Acknowledgements: A Sacred Responsibility

A land acknowledgement is a meaningful act of recognition and respect. It should be delivered by a single individual at the beginning of an event to honor the spirit and significance of the land. This practice is rooted in Indigenous Knowledge, where the land is not merely a physical space, but a living entity with a spirit—one that has sustained and was sustained by its original caretakers for generations.

Every part of North, Central and South America has an Indigenous name, reflecting the deep connection between the land and the people who had lived in respect and reciprocity with it since time immemorial. When we acknowledge the land, we are not only recognizing its Indigenous name, but we should express gratitude to the spirit of the land for allowing us to be present.

This act of recognition creates a sense of harmony and respect, helping to restore the relationship between people, animals, and the land—relationships that were destroyed by imperialism and colonization. We should also honor the original caretakers of that land, whose stewardship of the land in some parts continues to this day.

By acknowledging the land in this way, we take a step toward healing, Truth and Reconciliation, and a more respectful coexistence.

Role of Land Acknowledgements

- Reconciliation starts with repairing and renewing our

relationships with the Earth and more-than-human kin to be more respectful, reciprocal, regenerative and seven generations oriented.

- Land Acknowledgments invite us to reflect on our own lineages and the lineage of place, reminding us that each person has somewhere in their lineages cultural traditions connected to land and place.
 - > They call on us to recognize and honour our sacred relationships with the Earth and Spirit.
- Land Acknowledgments remind us that each of us has a relationship to coloniality and a responsibility to decoloniality at individual and collective levels. All settlers on Turtle Island, whether by force, by conflict or by choice, are here due to conquest and systemic and structural violence.
 - > It is our collective responsibility to make visible and disrupt that violence and occupation through our actions to decolonize our systems and mindsets, and to come into right relationship with the Earth and First Peoples.
- Land Acknowledgments provide us an opportunity to reflect on and activate our recognition, gratitude and responsibilities to the First Peoples and their homelands, including Elders, Knowledge Keepers, land stewards and land defenders past present and future – of the lands where we live, play and work.

Indigenous Approaches to Environmental Stewardship

Environmental and land stewardship among Indigenous Peoples embraces a holistic approach to the bioregions, landscapes and more-than-human relations, grounded in the sovereignty of Indigenous Communities to care for their lands and natural worlds.²

2. Generously curated and shared by Nêhiyaw Knowledge Keeper Delanie Passer (2025). Wapi Kihew Attention to Creative Solutions, Inc.

- **Inherent Rights to Self-Determination and Environmental Stewardship:** Indigenous Peoples have the inherent right to lead environmental practices. These practices should reflect cultural values and integrate traditional ecological knowledge with contemporary sustainability strategies.
- **Land and Resource Rights:** Indigenous Communities must have sovereign authority over environmental systems that impact their territories. This includes ensuring that projects are designed in harmony with ecological principles and Spiritual laws.
- **Rights to Protect the Environment:** Protecting the environment is a sacred responsibility rooted in Indigenous law. Indigenous Peoples have the right to prevent pollution and promote environmental stewardship as a means of preserving sacred sites and natural ecosystems.
- **Right to Participate in Decision-Making:** Indigenous Peoples must be active participants in all decisions related to projects that affect the environment. Their involvement is essential in designing, implementing, and evaluating projects that impact their communities and lands.
- **Rights to Intergenerational Well-Being:** Caring for future generations is a foundational value in Indigenous cultures. Efforts should be guided by long-term environmental stewardship, ensuring that the land remains healthy and sustainable for generations to come.
- **Cultural and Spiritual Connection:** Environmental stewardship is not a technical process—it is a cultural and spiritual duty. Indigenous Peoples view the reduction of harm to the land and the reuse of materials as expressions of respect for the land and fulfillment of spiritual obligations.

Elder Protocol and Engagement Guidelines³

Checklist for engaging Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers

- The compilation of a list of recognized Elders and their areas of expertise.
- Consistency in the offering of honoraria and/or gifts of appreciation.
- The reciprocal, respectful treatment of Elders.
- The establishment of an Advisory Committee.
- As it is extremely difficult to place a dollar value on sacred knowledge and ceremony, this document is to be used only as a guideline.

Elders and other Knowledge Keepers – The Wise Ones

The concept of an Elder in Indigenous culture is different from the Western notion of "elderly" people. In English, "Elder" is a noun, while in Indigenous languages, it is a verb describing the role of a person. Elders are not defined by their age alone, but rather by the wisdom, knowledge, and life experiences they carry.

Who is an Elder or other Knowledge Keeper?

An Elder or other Knowledge Keeper is "the one who knows" and is exceptionally wise in the ways of their culture and teachings of the Ancestors and Great Spirit. They are known for their wisdom, stability, humour, and ability to know what is appropriate in particular situations. The community looks to them for guidance and advice. Elders and other Knowledge Keepers are respected for their wisdom, philosophy on life, cultural knowledge, ceremonies, and teachings passed down over time. Typically, an individual is identified as an Elder or other Knowledge Keeper once they have

3. Generously curated and shared by Nêhiyaw Knowledge Keeper Delanie Passer (2025). Wapi Kihew Attention to Creative Solutions, Inc.

lived long enough to acquire knowledge from other Knowledge Keepers and have gained life experience. In some cases, Elders and other Knowledge Keepers may be recognized by their community as experts in specific areas such as Medicine, Ceremonies (e.g. Full Moon, Traditional Opening, Pipe, Sweat Lodge, Sun Dance), and other wisdom traditions.

Qualities of Elders and other Knowledge Keepers

- Disciplined and committed to a lifetime of learning.
- Knows traditional teachings and is committed to sharing this knowledge.
- Physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually healthy.
- Seeks or has the gift of healing through apprenticeship with a traditional healer.
- Lives a healthy lifestyle and practices traditional values.
- Offers help when asked but may refer to another Elder with expertise when needed.
- Brings traditional values into contemporary life.
- Treats everyone with respect and kindness.
- Is a positive role model for the people.
- Able to teach and correct with kindness and respect.
- Always hopeful and able to see goodness in others.
- Does not engage in destructive addictive behaviors (e.g., alcohol or drugs).
- Does not set a fee for their healing services or request gifts in return.
- Has experience with and knowledge of traditional ceremonies and medicines.

Note: Depending on the Indigenous Nation and cultural protocols, genuine Knowledge Keepers do not often self-identify as Elders or promote themselves in any way. The community acknowledges them as such based on their knowledge and service.

Different Types of Knowledge Keepers

- *Medicine People or Healers* are those who diagnose and treat physical, emotional, and spiritual ailments using sacred objects such as the pipe, drum, and rattles.
- *Herbalists* are experts in traditional medicinal plants and often collaborate with medicine people and medical professionals.
- *Helpers or Knowledge Keepers in Training* (Oskapew in Nēhiyawēwin/Cree) are individuals learning traditional teachings and helping in ceremonies. They may conduct ceremonies under the guidance of a medicine person.
- *Seers*: Individuals who can look to the past and future to identify issues that need attention.
- *Ceremonialists* are Elders who are skilled in conducting specific ceremonies and know the songs and protocols for each.
- *Traditional Midwives* are Elders who assist with childbirth, using traditional knowledge to guide the woman through pregnancy, labour, and postpartum care.
- *Chief and Council/Politicians* are skilled in public speaking, often engaged in governance and at significant events such as wakes, funerals, and celebrations.
- *Knowledge Keepers* (Kehteyak in Nēhiyawēwin/Cree) are those who hold deep cultural knowledge regarding language, governance, land relationships, agriculture, hunting, genealogy, etc.

Protocol for Engaging Elders and other Knowledge Keepers⁴

To maintain a respectful attitude towards the Elders and other Knowledge Keepers of this region, the following protocols need to be followed:

Tobacco⁵ Offering and Extending the Invitation

Extending the invitation to an Elder or Knowledge Keeper is an important cultural practice so be clear in making your request and expressing your intention and the value their contribution will bring. Most Knowledge Keepers across Turtle Island and South America will accept sacred tobacco (and/or other sacred medicines) when asked to share their knowledge, however, this is not true for all Elders. Elders have diverse teachings, so always ask if they accept tobacco before making the request. If an Elder or Knowledge Keeper accepts the tobacco, they are agreeing to assist; if not, they will politely decline.

Gift of Appreciation

If the Knowledge Keepers agrees to become involved and accepts the tobacco, it is customary to provide a gift of appreciation afterwards. This gift can be monetary and may also be known as an honorarium. In traditional practice, the person requesting the Elder or Knowledge Keeper assistance determines the monetary value and type of gift. The amount and type of gift are indicators

of the gratitude felt by the person requesting the Knowledge Keeper's assistance.

Travel Expenses

It is customary to offer a financial reimbursement for any expenses incurred by the Elder or Knowledge Keeper for their involvement (e.g. travel, food, and accommodations). This should be presented in addition to the gift or as a separate travel claim.

Helpers or Knowledge Keeper in Training

Sometimes, Elder or Knowledge Keeper may bring their own helper, who assists them in the preparation of ceremonies. If the Elder or Knowledge Keeper does not bring their own helper, the requester must ensure there is someone available to help and support the Knowledge Keeper. The helper should also be compensated.

Note: Costs associated with the Elder or Knowledge Keeper involvement do not include the traditional protocol required prior to requesting their presence. For example, when requesting a Knowledge Keeper for a Traditional Ceremony, an additional traditional offering, such as a blanket, should be presented at the time of ceremony. The honorarium is given in recognition of the cultural and other forms of expertise, guidance and ceremony the Elder or Knowledge Keeper is offering.

4. Generously curated and shared by Nêhiyaw Knowledge Keeper Delanie Passer (2025). Wapi Kihew Attention to Creative Solutions, Inc.

5. Tobacco is a sacred plant medicine with specific teachings, depending on the Nation and their cultural protocols. It is used by most First Nations and Métis Nations in Ontario, Québec, the Midwest and Atlantic provinces. However, some First Nations in BC do not use tobacco and Inuit do not use it at all in their traditional and ceremonial practices. Inuit Elders will often accept traditional tea and handcrafted materials. Always ask the Knowledge Keeper or Indigenous advisor what they prefer as an offering, before the request for engagement or invitation.

Graphic: What is the Purpose of an Honorarium?⁶

Honorariums for Indigenous Speakers: Why They Matter	
<p>Purpose of an Honorarium</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "It's not a payment – it's a gesture of respect." • Honorariums recognize time, wisdom, and community leadership. 	<p>Cultural Importance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tired to traditions of gifting and reciprocity. • They reflect respect, relationship, and protocol – not transaction.
<p>What Counts as an Honorarium</p> <p>Cash (flat rate) Gift cards Tobacco, blanket, or beadwork Travel support/hotel Traditional gifts</p>	<p>When & Who Should Receive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elders • Knowledge Keepers • Cultural advisors • Survivors sharing lived experience • Youth leaders
<p>Best Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask about protocol in advance • Budget it in early • Offer respectfully & promptly • Don't make people chase it • Allow room for refusal 	<p>Sample Script</p> <p>"We offer this honorarium as a token of our respect and gratitude for your time and teachings. We honour what you've shared."</p>

Community-Based Monitoring Protocols & Toolkit Resources

Indigenous Climate Action (ICA) Toolkit

The ICA toolkit actively integrates Indigenous knowledge and scientific perspectives of climate change and is collaboratively adapted and implemented by the Indigenous Climate Action (ICA) organization in partnership with individual First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities. It provides education and guidance on climate change and Indigenous rights to enable communities and climate champions to determine how they want to participate in climate change action. It braids together Indigenous sovereignties, teachings and expertise, community insights and priorities around climate-related impacts, and scientific knowledge of climate change to increase local climate change literacy.

The Toolkit also takes a justice-based approach to climate monitoring and action as it advocated for the federal government to act on climate change under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). The aim of the ICA Toolkit is to work with Indigenous communities to reduce their vulnerability to the cumulative impacts of climate change and industrial development on or upstream from their territories, while developing adaptation options that will uphold and affirm their rights.

Indigenous Climate Monitoring Toolkit

With Indigenous community-based climate monitoring, communities self-determine what is monitored, where and how, and participate in the data collection, analysis, and mobilization of knowledge gained. The monitoring approach followed can take

6. Knight, S. (2025) What is the Purpose of an Honorarium, LinkedIn post. https://www.linkedin.com/posts/stan-knight_what-is-the-purpose-of-an-honorarium-an-activity-7372237625178394625-RFJg/

many different forms and may span a continuum of participation by community members. It can involve tracking changes to weather and climate variables as well as the impact of climate change on the land, waters, plants, and animals. Each project is unique to the ecosystem and priorities of the community.

Climate information gathered through monitoring projects can help communities develop strategies to adapt to the changing conditions and to better manage environmental resources. Sharing their data, as they self-determine, can also improve understanding of the changing environment across broader regions and scales.

Indigenous Guardians Leadership Initiative and Toolkit

The Indigenous Leadership Initiative (ILI) is an Indigenous-led and community-based conservation and environmental monitoring program that trains research, monitoring, stewardship and leadership capacities in First Nations communities. ILI promotes the cultural responsibility and self-determination of First Nations for the ecological health of their lands and species, and to make informed decisions about the ecological monitoring, protection, restoration, land use planning and governance of their territories.

The ILI Toolkit provides a framework for building and operationalizing a Guardians program, and the integrated Indigenous knowledge and scientific content and resources to carry out monitoring and conservation initiatives. There is a network of Indigenous guardians and leadership initiatives in Ontario and across Canada that brings together engaged local champions to share knowledge and resources and collaborate on decisions and actions that affect First Nations governance and environmental policy at provincial/territorial and national levels.