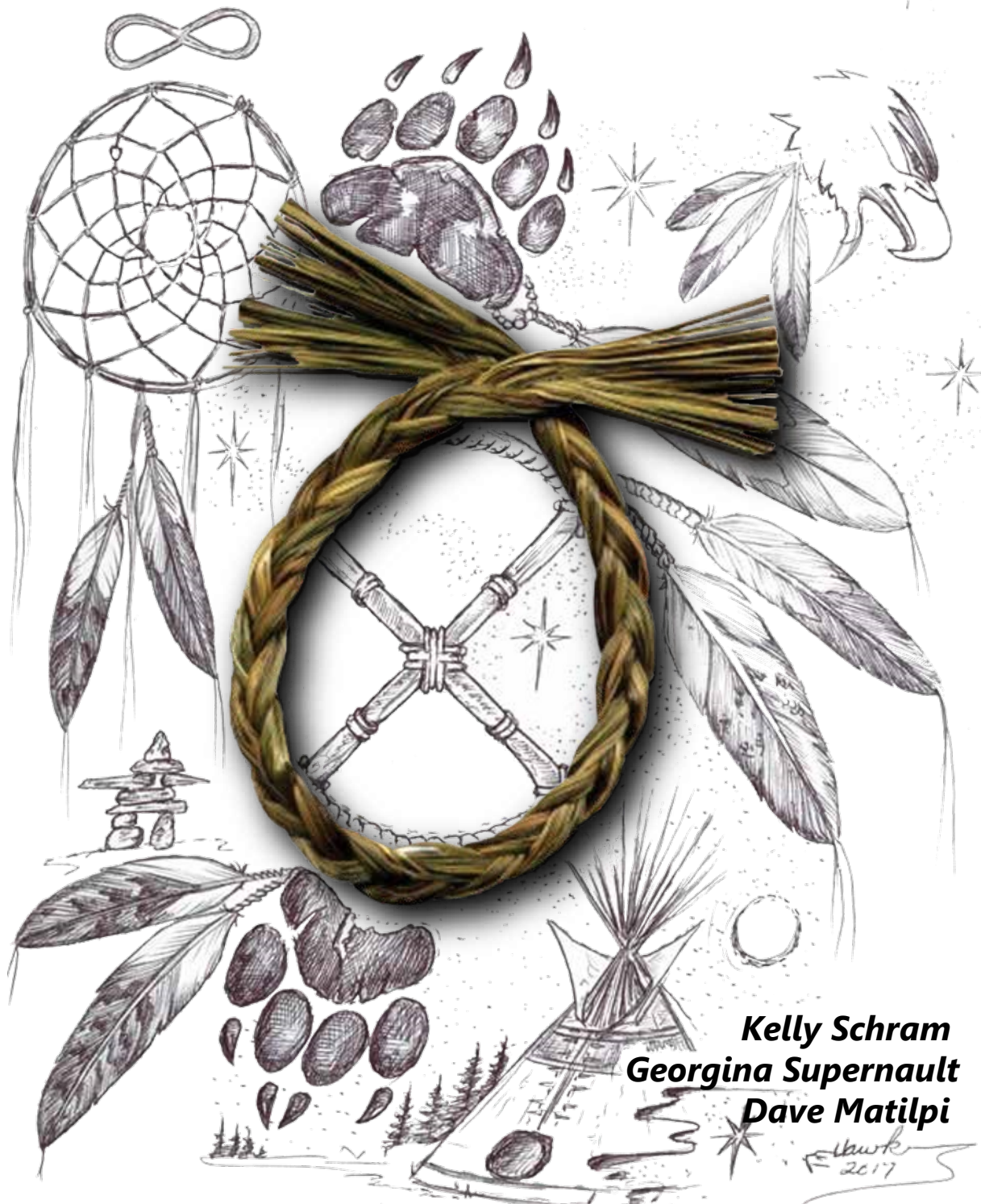


Indigenous Learning

in the CALP Model

Participants Manual

Creating Safer Spaces



Kelly Schram
Georgina Supernault
Dave Matilpi

hawk
2017

Developed for Alberta's



With support from the Government of Alberta

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Community Learning Network
4107 - 99 Street NW
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email: news@calp.ca

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Dave Matilpi

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Mary Richard
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Edward Parenteau
Wilson Gauchey

A special note:

Dave,

In ***Your Broken Journey*** your honesty and generosity in sharing your story was a seed for this project. It created an idea that we feel is moving our community towards healing. It is our wish that what we learned from your generous sharing of your story, your wisdom, and your continued mentorship, will allow that same healing to ripple through other communities in Alberta.

It is our sincere hope that something we do here will create continued healing in your journey.

All our relations,

Kelly and Georgina



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THE PROJECT



Many adult educators are aware it is difficult to lump different cultural groups into our classrooms seamlessly. We train on cross-cultural sensitivity and make adjustments to be sensitive to cultural norms within our educational environments to make our students feel more comfortable. However, when it comes to Indigenous learners we somehow fail to make ourselves aware of what cultural issues we need to be aware of. These learners are coming from a different perspective from many of the immigrant learners we may be more accustomed to serving. Indigenous learners are not coming to Canada looking for a better way of life; they have been colonized and in some cases brutalized by the dominant culture. In addition, like many minority groups who have been marginalized, the Indigenous learners we spoke to throughout this project wanted to be looked at, not as needing help, but as having something to offer.

When we started this project, we knew we were not succeeding to attract and retain Indigenous learners. We knew we were making some mistakes but were unable to identify the specifics. Then the two creators of this training, one Métis and one Caucasian, started discussing how we interacted on an individual level. When we began exploring some of the aspects of this project, we started looking at the areas of misunderstanding between ourselves as a starting point. We identified some pretty profound learning we have had in these past years, and also began to quantify what we had not realized we learned in the ten years we have worked together. We hope you find some of that learning useful.

WELCOME

We will be exploring some traditional practices that show respect for the culture from our community's perspective. We encourage you to explore some of your community's own practices and guidelines.

We are also asking you to feel comfortable in discomfort. Our respective cultures often teach us unconscious guidelines we live by but don't realize we have internalized. Be comfortable with discomfort. It is your opportunity to learn.

Workshop Discussion Guidelines

We are asking you to challenge your assumptions and your view of your own experience for the benefit of your learners. This is a challenging situation.

We want people to be frank and respectful. However, when we are exploring a difficult topic together, we will feel uncomfortable, certain issues will trigger us. Please feel free to explore this discomfort. At the bottom of it may be some cultural pressure points that you may need to address in your work.

What rules should we make that allow us to learn from each other's experience?

These rules can be added to throughout the workshop.

What class rules do you think worked the best? Which will you use?

Challenge Your Assumptions

In our experience, there are a number of things that we need to let go of in order to meet the needs of Indigenous learners. First, whether you are Indigenous or Non-Indigenous, you likely need to be more aware of your culture in your interactions.

In our experience, most of us are still in the process of figuring out our own culture. This is normal. We don't always understand the way our culture affects our assumptions, our communication styles, or our attitudes towards education. All of these cultural assumptions are part of how we communicate with and deal with people we work with.

Indigenous learners, like all of us, have conscious and unconscious assumptions about education, communication, family, authority, and relationships that affect how they feel and how they learn in a formal and informal environment.

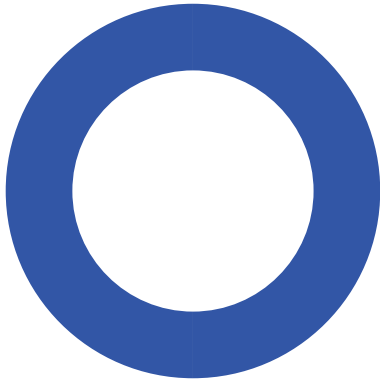
What we have found is that when we work in an area that is as fraught with negative history, as education is for many Indigenous learners, we can cause confusion or division without our knowledge.

Cultural Communication Styles

Communication styles vary from culture to culture and of course, from individual to individual. Because we are living in the same communities, we often assume our communication styles are the same.

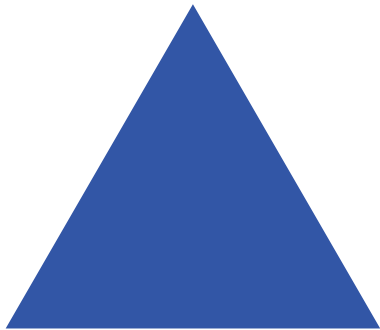
Circle Talk and Top Down Communication

Indigenous Communication:



Reg Crowfoot, from the University of Calgary, in his research into Indigenous communication styles, explains that Indigenous people tend to look at communication in terms of a circle. Everyone has an equal chance to speak and no one is in charge. Every person, no matter how old, or who they are, all have equal opportunity to speak. Much more time must be taken to come to a decision that is best for the whole community. Decisions are more likely to reflect the collective knowledge and no one person has the final say.

European Communication:



Europeans tend to look at communication as a top down model. Who speaks first, or who decides who speaks depends on who we see as 'in authority'. Meetings and brainstorming tend to have agendas; we set allotted times before decisions are made, and while decisions may have input from the group at large, the final say is given to the person 'in authority'. We look at cross talk, straying from the original discussion point as counterproductive, and in some cases, impolite. We tend to make decisions quickly because we will defer to the person in authority.

Strategies:

Some tips to handle general communication style differences we have found in our community are:

1. Direct questions can be seen as intrusive. Try drawing individuals into stories.
2. Be prepared for stories that give examples rather than direct answers.
3. We define silence differently. Europeans tend to answer more quickly to questions and don't want silence in conversation. Indigenous people tend to consider responses thoroughly before answering. They also are more comfortable with quiet in conversation.
4. Listen more. Talk less. Input is different from answering.
5. We define personal space differently. Europeans tend to have a closer personal space.
6. Watch body language and for subtle indications of retreat and engagement.
7. Advice is often seen negatively. Many Elders avoid it, instead, choosing to give experience and wisdom in stories.
8. Be patient. Time is your friend when working with Indigenous learners.

INDIGENOUS VS. EUROPEAN MODELS OF EDUCATION

Indigenous Learning Principles:

- Learning is holistic, reflexive, experiential, and rational (based on interconnectedness and a sense of place).
- Learning involves generational roles and responsibilities.
- Learning supports the wellbeing of self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.
- Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions.
- Learning involves patience and time.
- Learning involves the role of Indigenous knowledge.
- Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story.
- Learning involves the exploration of one's identity.
- Learning involves recognizing that some knowledge is sacred and only shared with permission and in certain situations.

European Learning Principles:

- Learning is based on a top down model where students learn from teachers in authority and is based largely on science, written material, and the objectivity of science.
- Learning treats childhood as a time for receiving learning and the elderly are isolated from formal learning.
- Learning is largely independent of the world view based on scientific principles. It supports the wellbeing of the individual.
- Learning involves using precedent and objective models to decide the consequences of one's actions.
- Learning is a systematic exploration of curriculum, learning goals, and outcomes.
- Learning involves an exploration of historically accepted perspectives on knowledge. It involves an exploration of knowledge through accepted scientific practice.
- Learning involves documented historical perspectives based on accepted theories. It endeavours to provide objective data but does not always interpret the ethnocentric nature of accepted facts.
- Learning also involves the exploration of identity but does not always represent the diversity of cultural experiences of identity.
- Knowledge is considered accepted when it can be scrutinized by others and duplicated in independent evaluation. Oral knowledge is often considered as an 'old wives tale' and therefore unreliable.



TO EXPLORE AT HOME

How can you make the CALP learning spaces, offices, and lobbies less formal, more inviting, and more casual?

Many Indigenous learners have a significantly different world view than Europeans. How could world view affect the relationship with learning for learners?

How can we adapt our teaching styles to help our students?

What are community events, informal and formal, where it would be appropriate for us to participate?

How can we create informal connections within the community?

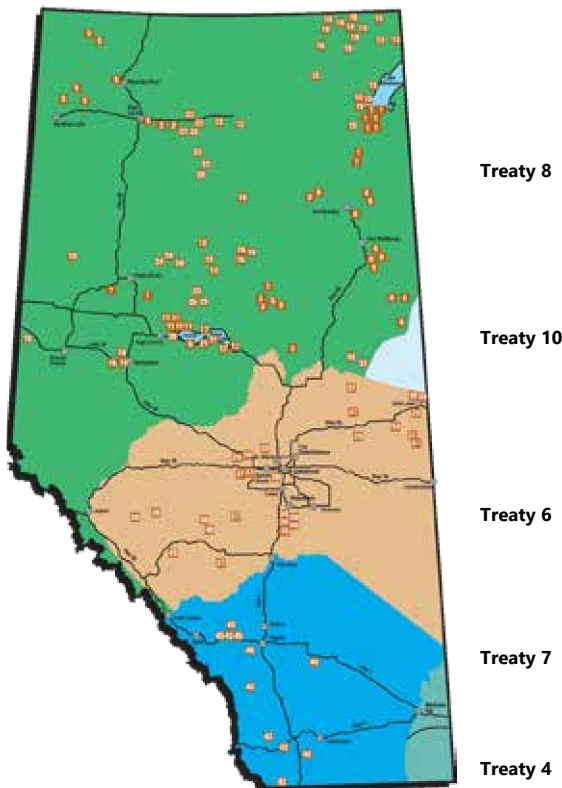
WELCOME

Welcoming

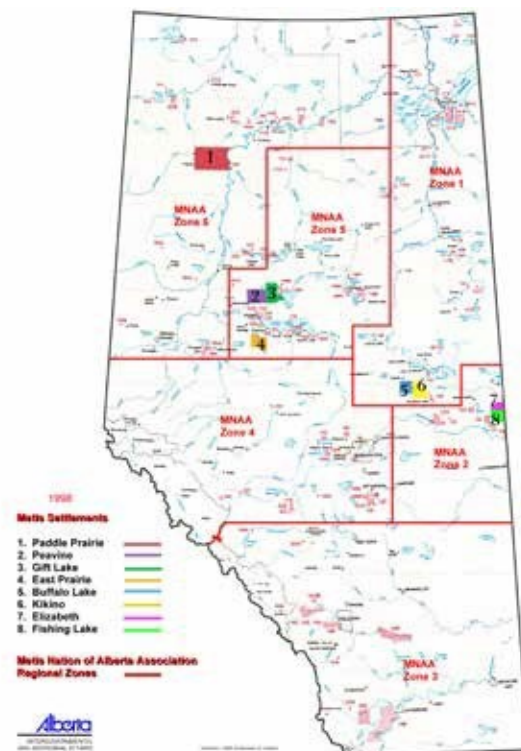
Protocols involve a welcome to the territory and acknowledgment to the nations whose territory you are on. This welcome process sets the stage for openness and authenticity and creates an ideal environment for innovation to emerge. This means putting the ego and positional power aside and being present in each moment. The key to abiding by Indigenous protocols is to be respectful, humble, and open.

WHERE YOU ARE AND WHY THAT MATTERS?

Treaty Areas and First Nations in Alberta



Métis Nation of Alberta Regions



It is customary to acknowledge the Treaty and Region Land as an acknowledgment of the existence of Indigenous territories and the agreements between our nations.

This is important not only as a political respect but as an acknowledgment of the spiritual, physical, and social connection to the land that most Indigenous people consider sacred.

How to follow First Nation protocol on First Nations treaty lands

I would like to thank the Treaty (e.g. Treaty 8) for agreeing to meet with us today and for welcoming us to your treaty lands specifically the (e.g. Cree and Dene). This is also home to Métis Region (e.g. Region

1). University of Calgary, Cultural Protocol Guidelines: Recommended Practices for First Nations, Métis and Inuit
Cultural Engagement congress2016.ca/cultural-protocol-guidelines-ucalgary-feb2016.pdf

PRAYERS BY ELDERS

Identifying and Honouring Elders

Identifying Elders in the community who would be appropriate to engage with your programs can be a challenge. Elders and Knowledge Keepers are held in the highest regard for their wisdom and central role in community life. They are valued for their ability to provide insight and involving a circle of Elders in any decision-making process is central to Indigenous practices. **An Elder is not necessarily a function of age but is determined more by the ability to provide wisdom, be authentic, and able to hold different perspectives.** Elders have always been relied on to interpret the deeper meaning of life experiences, mentoring authentic self-reflection so that all community members are aware of their gifts and contribute to the community with purpose. Elders and Knowledge Keepers are held in high regard as they are the keepers of wisdom. They are leaders, teachers, role models, and mentors in their respective communities.

There will be many Elders in your community and it is a challenge to identify who would be most appropriate.

Many communities have an 'Elder' list, but not all. Ask a wide range of people whom they consider an Elder.

Then ask the people closest to the Elder how to approach them about being involved in community programs. Ease them into it. Be prepared for informal visits, potentially many of them, to create a relationship and for you to build trust. Understand that some may not feel comfortable taking on a role in a formal environment.

Once you have an Elder involved in the programs, be very aware that how compassionate and respectful you are will indicate how long the Elder is involved in the program. Many have very traumatic relationships with the educational system. Be aware when asking them to share their experience that you are acknowledging the vulnerability they are experiencing.

Offer Tobacco and/or a Gift

It is customary to offer a gift to an Elder when asking for their advice. It is important to realize that charging for the teachings is not appropriate as the teachings do not belong to an individual but rather to the community. However, some Elders do charge an honorarium for their time. Tobacco and blankets are traditional gifts. It is appropriate for you to ask what gifts you might bring when talking to an Elder.

The offering may be in the form of a tobacco pouch or tobacco tie (loose tobacco wrapped in a small cloth). Tobacco is one of the four sacred medicines, and it is offered when making a request to an Elder. The tobacco should be prepared by the person making the request. It is good to think about what you are asking for as you are preparing your gift. Cash can also be given to cover costs for participating in a program though some Elders consider this awkward or even offensive, so ask first.

The exchange of tobacco/gift is similar to a contract between two parties where the Elder is agreeing to do what is asked, and the offering is making a commitment to respect the process.

When giving tobacco it is customary to shake the Elder's hand as a sign of respect. Thank the Elder with a handshake, gift, and thank them for sharing their wisdom.

SMUDGING

Smudging Protocol and Guidelines

Smudging is a tradition passed down through the generations of Indigenous peoples, which involves the burning of one or more medicines gathered from the earth. The four sacred medicines used in ceremonies are tobacco, sage, cedar, and sweetgrass. There are many variations on how a smudge is done.

Historically, Métis and Inuit people did not smudge; however, today many Métis and Inuit people have incorporated smudging into their lives.

Steps to smudging:

- We smudge to clear the air around us.
- We smudge to clean our minds so that we will have good thoughts of others.
- We smudge our eyes so that we will only see the good in others.
- We smudge our ears so that we will only listen to positive things about others.
- We smudge our mouths so that we will only speak well of others.
- We smudge our whole being so we will portray only the good part of our self through our actions.

Smudging allows people to stop, slow down, become mindful and centred. This allows people to remember, connect and be grounded in the event, task, or purpose at hand.

Smudging is always voluntary. People should never be forced or pressured to smudge. It is completely acceptable for a person to indicate that he/she does not want to smudge. That person may choose to stay in the room and refrain or leave the room during a smudge. It is, however, customary to simply step back instead of receiving the smudge. In some communities it is customary for women to

wear a skirt for a smudge or in ceremony. Check if that is required and wear something longer and flowing so if you have to sit on the floor you will feel comfortable. Respect for all is the guiding principle in any Indigenous tradition.

When women are on their moon time, an Elder may require them to refrain from smudging unless sage is being used for the smudge. It is seen that a woman is already going through a 'cleansing'. According to the teachings, a woman is at her most powerful because it is an affirmation of her ability to bring life. It may feel awkward, but be prepared to step out of the circle or wave off the smudge if an Elder requests it.

Community Protocols

Most communities have influences that are unique to the cultural groups and language groups that exist in their community. In our area we have Métis, some Dene to the north, and other Indigenous individuals that have moved to the community. The Métis are mostly of French and Cree descent and their traditions and rituals are unique. **Remember, not all Indigenous people are comfortable with traditional Ceremony and prefer to follow European tradition, while others consider Ceremony to be private and will not participate in public.** As has been stressed, always ask the individuals you are working with what they prefer. They will tell you how they feel about including traditional ceremonies in the work you do. Some Elders have very strong feelings and wading through the complexity can be very tough. Never assume.

Also, a Non-Indigenous person should never perform Ceremony or try to use teachings without the participation of an Elder or Knowledge Keeper. A comfort with these traditions is respectful but never as a lead. However, as a host you should always be welcoming and perform the protocols to the best of your ability and with reverence.

When you go into a meeting, workshop, or presentation where there are Indigenous people, they will begin with an opening prayer and/or a smudge. Cultural protocols are crucial in the diverse Indigenous communities throughout Canada.

We have offered some general Guidelines of Protocols based on our community.

WHO ARE YOUR STUDENTS?

In short, the exploration of 'identity' can be exceptionally complex and personal. Yet to pretend that the colonization of these diverse peoples has not affected their confidence and sense of self is counterproductive. We are finding that giving students opportunities and support to explore identity, history, and culture when we are teaching literacy skills is a rich and rewarding experience.

It is respectful to ask and let Indigenous students feel free to explain, however they want to, how they define themselves and why. To give you an idea of the complexity of some of these definitions, we have included a small glossary.

Glossary

Indigenous Peoples: An international term meaning the original inhabitants of a given area. This term replaces the commonly used term 'Aboriginal'. In Canada, Indigenous Peoples include First Nations, Inuit, and Métis.

Aboriginal Peoples: A general definition of the first inhabitants of Canada which include First Nations, Inuit, and Métis.

Inuit: Indigenous peoples of the Arctic.

Métis: Aboriginal Peoples who descend from the First Nations and White Canada, post colonization.

European definitions:

Native: An outdated collective term referring to Indians (Status, Non-status, Treaty), Métis, and Inuit but has largely been replaced by 'Indigenous'. While some First Nations individuals refer to themselves as Native that doesn't give Non-Indigenous people license to do so without specific requests by individuals.

Colonial Definitions that reflect funding in Canada

Status Indians: those who are registered under the Indian Act.

Non-status Indians: those who, generally speaking, have two distinct qualities: (1) they lack status under the Indian Act; and (2) they have Indigenous heritage. In other words, they have lost their status under former or current provisions of the Indian Act or their ancestors were never registered under the Indian Act.

Treaty Indians: those who are members of a community whose ancestors signed a treaty with the Crown and as a result are entitled to treaty benefits.

*Always ask clients and students what term they are comfortable with. If a person uses an outdated term such as 'Indian' or 'Native', it is a rule of thumb for Non-Indigenous people to avoid it. *How an individual refers to themselves is a part of their story. Respect the term they use. It is a good practice to ask how they identify themselves, especially as it pertains to reporting. However, it cannot be stressed enough, using the terms 'Indian' or 'Native' is considered offensive and outdated respectively and should be avoided by Non-Indigenous people.



TO EXPLORE AT HOME

Challenges we explored:

How many indigenous people are in our community?

Who are the language and cultural groups in our community? Métis cultural practices are different from Cree which are different from the Blackfoot, and each community can have differences that makes it unique from others in the same area.

How many Indigenous learners attend your programs? How does that compare to the broader population?

How many stay? How many come in and leave without completing?

How many come back to take more programs?

How do we currently recruit learners? Is this marketing reaching the target group?

How does culture affect our marketing, our programs, and our best practices?

How do we acknowledge that Indigenous people may not feel comfortable in our learning environment?

Identify informal ways we can change our environment to encourage comfort and inclusion (coffee served, food served, casual atmosphere, drop in programming).

LEARNING STYLES

Because the exploration of land, identity, story, and language is something that can be very complex and potentially controversial (not to mention the issues of making these cultural teachings fundable within the CALP framework), we have created opportunities for students to explore their own identity.

The following is an excerpt from ***Indigenous Learning and Foundational Learning for Indigenous Learners***

Indigenous

Visions and dreams: The importance of dreams was addressed by Virgil Bullshoe, "Dreams are telling you something." He considers dreams a part of the learning process related to participation in ceremonies as it provides a way of remembering.

Origin Stories: Origin and creation stories are elemental to the process of learning in ceremonies. "Without knowledge of the stories behind the ritual one will be lost in understanding the ways of the Blackfoot." Dr. Reg Crowshoe believes that Blackfoot oral tradition and learning process is documented through ceremony."

Language: According to Hungry Wolf, the language has influence on the learning process. "...the learner doesn't grasp the full implications of ceremonial knowledge without knowing the language."

Elders: Shade revealed that the Elders were careful in the kinds of advances imposed upon the learner.

Four Developmental Stages by Jean Piaget are based on the idea that the developing child builds cognitive structures-in other words, mental maps, schemes, or networked concepts for understanding and responding to physical experiences within his or her environment.

Rite of transfer: In the learning process of ceremony one obtains knowledge through a rite of passage.

Mainstream (theories)

Behaviorism by B. F. Skinner, holds a theory of animal and human learning that only focuses on objectively observable behaviours and discounts mental activities. Behaviour theorists define learning as nothing more than the acquisition of new behaviour.

Control Theory by William Glasser, which holds that behaviour is never caused by a response to an outside stimulus. Instead, the control theory states that behaviour is inspired by what a person wants most at any given time: survival, love, power, freedom, or any other basic human need.

"It seems like you not only had one main teacher but you had a lot of other teachers. Each teacher brought in a different perspective to the whole." He related that the teachers taught in both group and individual situations. Although the learner had one principal instructor, other teachers assisted in the learning process. Shade believes that the multiplicity of teachers added to a more rounded out understanding.

Social Cognition by L. S. Vygotsky, which asserts that culture is the prime determinant of individual development. Humans are the only species to have created culture, and every human child develops in the context of a culture.

Brain-based Learning that is based on the structure of the brain. As long as the brain is not prohibited from fulfilling its normal processes, learning will occur. Neuroscience states that the nervous system and brain are the physical foundation of the human learning process. It links our observations learning process.

Ritual is used as a method to bestow the entitlement of the individual to obtain certain knowledge within distinct parameters. The qualification to begin learning within the select boundaries is commonly called the right of transfer.

Experiential Learning: The learning process of ceremony is a hands-on approach. Since much of the learning process is experiential, the learner must gain sharp observational and listening skills.

Developmental Learning: Ceremonial learning process is best achieved when the children are provided the opportunity to learn the traditional ways. Beverly Hungry Wolf said infants are nurtured in a serene environment to insure the "spirit" of the baby is ensured. Taking care of the spirit is transmitted during the raising of the children."

Holistic Concepts: The concept of an integrated whole of ceremonies is expressed through the assertion that everything is related. Acceptance of humanism as part of the learning process is expressed in the interviews. Intellectual and emotional aspects of being human are accepted in ceremonial learning and activity as part of the process. Although reverential spirituality is utmost in ceremony, contextual humanness is accepted to the point of mirth and jesting.

Critical thinking: Critical thinking is tied to storytelling and metaphor used in the learning process. The Elders' teaching methodology causes the learner to analyze information for meaning. The Elder is more of a helper in the learning process. "...the Elder will help the learner find needed information by presenting a series of discussions on matters related to the situation. The learner must then draw their own conclusions from the information presented."

Environmental Learning: Learning from the environment involved a communication with nature and the animals. The environment was our classroom. Observational Learning by Albert Bandura, a social learning theory which states that learning occurs when an observer changes after viewing the behaviour of a model.

It links our observations about cognitive behaviour with the actual physical processes that support such behaviour. This theory is still "young" and is undergoing rapid controversial development.

Right Brain vs. Left Brain is a theory of the structure and functions of the mind that suggests the two different sides of the brain control two different modes of thinking. It also suggests that each of us prefers or uses one mode more than the other.

Learning Styles is an approach to learning that emphasizes the fact that individuals perceive and process information in very different ways. The learning styles theory implies that how much individuals learn has more to do with whether the educational experience is geared toward their particular style of learning than whether or not they are smart.

Multiple Intelligences is a theory of human intelligence, developed by psychologist Howard Gardner, which suggests there are at least seven ways that people have of perceiving and understanding the world. Gardner labels each of these ways a distinct intelligence—in other words, a set of skills allowing individuals to find and resolve genuine problems they face.

Constructivism, a philosophy of learning founded on the premise that, by reflecting on our experiences, we construct our own understanding of the world. Each of us generates our own rules and mental models we use to make sense of our experiences. Learning is simply a process of adjusting our mental models to accommodate new experiences.

Indigenous Literacy and Foundational Learning for Indigenous Adults. Susanne McLeod M.A. PHD candidate and Métis Calgary Family Services Society for Calgary Learns. July 2016)



TO EXPLORE AT HOME

Issues to explore:

How do we encourage and attract Indigenous learners?

How could we incorporate cultural teachings respectfully even if the staff is Non-Indigenous?

How do different world views affect attitudes toward education, educators, and curriculum?

How can we make families, learners, and their communities part of our learning environment?

How do we incorporate hands on learning and teaching in our practice?

How can we incorporate the exploration of the land and nature in our practice?

How to make families, learners, and their communities part of our learning environment:

Suggestions:

- Family Tree making using the computer
- Incorporate storytelling and journaling in literacy
- Sharing circles
- Ask students to identify strategies by exploring learning that has worked in the past
- Hands on activities work well
- Teamwork and peer teaching activities

Relationship Building

One of the most important things we learned was how little our communities were integrated. Because we have lived and worked side by side, we made assumptions about our communities.

Some Non-Indigenous people may assume Indigenous people are “exactly like us”. And they are in many ways. That similarity creates kinship. However, culture is both rich and has conscious and unconscious components that can create awkwardness, discomfort, and misunderstanding.



TO EXPLORE AT HOME

Challenges to explore:

Who are the leaders of the community, family, home, and school?

Is there anyone who has shown community leadership in the area of learning and teaching (i.e. people who work in or with Indigenous communities, former students)?

Is there anyone who has demonstrated leadership in the community, family, or healing?

What is the relationship like to formal learning and informal learning for the Elder(s) you are working with?

Do you know how a specific Elder would like to be asked, acknowledged and thanked (honourarium, tobacco, gifts)?

How are you creating relationships with individuals?

Relationship Building Strategies:

Many Indigenous people have little reason to trust the Non-Indigenous community. Some suggestions we can give you:

1. Welcome discomfort. If you are unsure or off balance because you don't feel like you fit in, sit back and watch, listen, and be compassionate. Allow yourself to feel discomfort and then unpack it.
2. Create connections in the Indigenous community. Sometimes people will say, "talk to an Elder," as if this is an easy process. However, if we assume that knowledge is sacred, we must gain trust before we get it. Whom individuals consider 'Elders' is sacred and they will protect those precious members of their community. So, start with the members of the community you know. Build that relationship, gain their trust and move slowly. When they trust you enough for the next step, thank them for their wisdom. Tobacco is never considered an insult.
3. "Slip in behind Kokum." If an Elder or Knowledge Keeper asks for your attendance at a meeting or wants to see what you are doing, welcome them. Thank them. Move gently and slowly.
4. Bring food. Breaking bread is considered an honour in any culture.
5. Welcome discomfort. If you do something wrong and ask for wisdom on how to do it right in the future, then you are honouring their culture and the rules that guide their community.
6. Each community has different rules, each person has their own rules. Ask what the expectations are.
7. Laugh a lot, be authentic, and welcome being off balance. Whether Indigenous or Non-Indigenous, we all have our story. Honour the wisdom, experience, and resilience that is demonstrated in that story.
8. Be authentic in your story; people want to know what is important to you and why you care about the people around you. They want to know why they should trust you. Don't hide behind walls if you want a relationship.
9. Be prepared to feel uneasy. See your culture as a set of rules you have accepted, sometimes without conscious thought. Those unconscious thoughts and assumptions are going to be challenged as we build bridges between our communities. We will feel off balance and uncomfortable if we are to make that bridge work.

INDIGENOUS LEARNING PRINCIPLES

1. Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).

Indigenous learning is always more profound when it is put into the context of how it will affect learners' lives, help their families, and improve their community. Students may not want to be involved in a program but just talk to them. Ask them what they need in the short term and long term, and how you can help in the process. Create opportunities to get to know them and what is important to them. Students are more motivated to attend programming if they feel it will benefit their families and community.

An Elder once pointed out to me that I hid behind my role as a teacher.

- If I saw a learner as a member of my family, how would I react to a learning situation differently?
- Am I always a teacher in a situation? Am I learner in any given situation?
- What factors are influencing a student's learning in any given situation?

Another concept of a learner is the holistic and relational. A person, according to the Medicine Wheel teachings, is made up of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual components, and **teaching them acknowledges the reflection of all components of an individual**. This may seem too overwhelming for many Non-Indigenous people to absorb, but if you think of a student as your niece or nephew, you naturally see the dynamic and changing interaction of influences that reflects the student's ability to learn.

Sharing Circles

The sharing circle is a simple practice that is significant in most Indigenous cultures in Alberta. It is a process that confirms the importance of community and the importance of each member. It also demonstrates some of the most important differences between communication styles of the Indigenous community and European community. Any group member can lead a sharing circle if you have been taught the process. It is acceptable for a Non-Indigenous person to lead one. Each person in the group has the same right to speak. This emphasizes the egalitarian nature of Indigenous cultures. All people have a role and are important to the community, and the circle is a symbol of that community.

The process of a sharing circle is very symbolic of the way community is formed and maintained:

1. The person who leads the circle holds an object, a “talking stick” is common, but any object can be used. It is customary to have an object that has some importance to the group to emphasize the importance of the process, but is not necessary. The “leader” speaks first. This person will have time to speak, and may offer parameters for sharing, such as a topic or suggestions for input.
2. You move clockwise in the group.
3. The “leader” always emphasizes that you can pass rather than share in the group.
4. Stress the importance of the confidentiality of the group.
5. Each person is given uninterrupted time to speak. Talking when someone else is speaking is not acceptable. Interrupting is considered rude.
6. Feedback or advice on what anyone has said in the circle is not acceptable. In fact, advice giving, unless it is requested, is always considered inappropriate in and out of the circle.
7. Some people will take more time and some will take less, but stopping someone from talking is done reluctantly and very gently. As a facilitator or participant in the circle it is appropriate to share honestly, but make the length of time you speak appropriate so that you are modeling not being too wordy. Take the process seriously and honour its intent while modeling a length that will not be too much for the whole group.

Sharing circles are a very good way to debrief if you have had an emotional or challenging day. It gives participants a way to share their feelings. When dealing with issues having to do with colonialism, Canadian history, residential schools, etc., there is a very high chance that students will be triggered. Honour that. Also, don't take it personally if a student is triggered by you as a European teacher. Residential school survivors can have very emotional responses. Honour that they feel safe enough to react.



TO EXPLORE AT HOME

Challenges to explore:

How do we respectfully include Indigenous teachings such as the Medicine Wheel, Smudging, or Storytelling in our classrooms and informal learning?

What have you seen and noticed about how gender roles, age differences, relationships with family affect learning?

In the Indigenous Community, events often have a family component; be prepared for children and grandparents in programs. Also, be prepared for non-traditional family relationships; young people may have a lot of responsibility in the family. Fostering relationships can be informal and very short term. Be prepared for some young people to need mentoring with life skills. Are we prepared to have a formal role as a teacher and an informal role as mentor?

How does our relationship affect our learning situation?

2. Learning involves generational roles and responsibilities.

The role of Elders in an Indigenous community is complex and multi-layered and their importance cannot be overstated.

The role of Elders in an Indigenous community is complex and multi-layered and their importance cannot be overstated. Elders are often seen as advisors, advocates, teachers, nurturers and a connection to the community and the past. For some, the Elder is also seen as a connection to the land and to the spirituality of a community. You may also come across the term Knowledge Keeper, now a common term in some communities to honour those people who may not quite have the status as an Elder but may be honoured and experienced in the community.

Who is an Elder? Well the simple answer is, an honoured and respected teacher in the community. Ask who is an Elder in your community and you may find yourself confused. It is not simply a function of being older. **It is a function of wisdom, respect, community connections, and in some cases, abilities as a teacher, advocate, and nurturer in the community.** The community decides who an Elder is. If you ask an 'Elder' if they are an 'Elder' you are almost never going to hear a yes. Be prepared to ask the question many times and get different answers. If you are invited to community events find out who they have invited as an Elder.

Role of Elders

Who is an 'Elder' as answered by our Indigenous Advisory Council and Elders:

- An 'Elder' in a school situation might be different than in a work situation.
- A 'Leader' in the community may not be considered an 'Elder'.
- Each group and subgroup may identify different people as 'Elders'.
- Ask different people in your community who they consider 'Elders'. Find the consensus.
- An Elder is not necessarily old, and an old person is not necessarily an Elder.
- Different people have different needs and will consult different Elders depending on the life experience of that Elder.
- An Elder has walked the Red Path to authenticity and healing. They are not perfect but they are working toward living in a way that helps their community.
- Elders often feel a lack of confidence when taking the role. Nurturing and supporting those Elders is the responsibility of the community and you as a helper are also responsible for supporting them.
- An Elder is someone who lives in a holistic and balanced life.
- An Elder will accept the role of Elder in a given situation if they feel they can offer leadership, healing and support in that situation.
- Don't be offended if it takes a while for them to accept your request to be involved in a program. Build a relationship with an Elder much the same as the community observing protocols. They will lead you on what they expect.

Another thing we learned, was that each group in the community is considered intrinsic and important in the community. Elders, Knowledge Keepers, youth, and children are considered precious and important and activities are rarely limited to one group or the other. Be prepared to have children at adult events. Be prepared to see community members drop by and check out what you are doing.



TO EXPLORE AT HOME

Challenges to explore:

Who are Elders and Knowledge Keepers in our community?

What makes an Elder an Elder in our community?

As one of the Elders we worked with pointed out, young people have specific knowledge of their community. Empower those young people to learn and teach where it is important. Who are the youth leaders in our learning space?

Each individual has skills that can be shared in your learning community. How can you use skill sets of students to work in your learning environment?

What are the protocols for working with each individual Elder?

Do you have debriefing and evaluation procedures for your Elders?

What does the Elder expect for thanks?

How are you supporting Elders in your community?

Elder and Knowledge Keeper strategies:

- Creating an atmosphere of learning and safety is key.
- Familiarity sometimes creates a false sense of trust. Being around Indigenous learners is not the same as understanding their world view (which is profoundly unique to individuals) and earning their trust.
- Consider each group of individuals as a community. Ask who the leader is in the group. Who *keeps the knowledge*?
- Involve Elders and Knowledge Keepers in your programs using their particular skill set.
- Ask them to talk about their role in the community.
- Ask how best to support them; Elders do not always get the support they need.

3. Learning ultimately supports the well-being of self, family, community, the land, and ancestors.

“And all my ancestors.” It is a statement sometimes made by the Elders in this community at the closing of a story or to thank a speaker for their wisdom or story. It is a statement that profoundly illustrates the difference between how Indigenous people see their role in the world and the Non-Indigenous world. Indigenous people see themselves as a part of a web of interconnected parts that cannot exist without all the other components being healthy and strong. Not only is the current web of relationships important to them, but also their relationship to the past and the people who preceded them.

Many European people would be hard pressed to define their relationship to the community and ancestors, but in short, it is a way of acknowledging the history of the family and community when meeting or speaking with someone you respect. While European people tend to see things in the individual, Indigenous cultures tend to see things collectively. When speaking, learning, and making decisions, the impacts on the individual, family, community, land, and ancestors are always considered. It is a fundamental difference in world view which is so embedded in the sense of identity culture and place.

One of the key initiatives we undertook was a community consultation with the Indigenous learners of our community. When we invited them to consultations that were for the broader community very few attended so we felt we needed to host a consultation of their own.

When we approached Elders to be involved in the process we asked how they would approach it. We wanted to identify barriers to learning and strategies to overcome them. One of our Elders asked us why we were holding a consultation to identify barriers we likely already knew: transportation, childcare, educational trauma, literacy, etc. Another pointed out that we may have better results if we approached this consultation from a strength-based position.

We hired an Elder, Dennis Whitford, who led a process called ***Appreciative Inquiry***. One of the exercises we engaged in was an Aboriginal Community Learner Review. It was a community consultation we called ***Finding our Strengths***, where we invited members of the Aboriginal Community to discuss their learning successes and asked what things had worked. Our goals were:

1. To have the opportunity to connect with the community.
2. Let the community know our mandate and services.
3. Help learners identify some of their positive learning experiences.
4. Identify their own strength-based strategies in learning.
5. Create some first steps in building strategies.

When our Elder proposed **Appreciative Inquiry** we were very excited. He suggested that we needed each of our learners to identify what learning successes they had, what strategies they could identify and how to replicate that in our learning environment.

Appreciative Inquiry

The Principles of Appreciative Inquiry are:

1. The constructionist principle proposes that what we believe to be true determines what we do, how we think and act.
 - We asked learners to identify positive learning experiences they had and why they worked.
2. The **principle of simultaneity** proposes that as we inquire into human systems we change them, and this changes the things people think and talk about. What questions we ask determines what we change in our environment.
 - We asked participants to evaluate their own learning environments, what worked, and what priorities we should focus on.
3. The **poetic principle** proposes that organizational life is expressed in the stories people tell each other every day, and the story of the organization is constantly being co-authored.
 - This is particularly applicable in the Indigenous framework: the importance of story as well as the sharing circle.
 - We asked learners to form groups and illustrate the strategies and priorities they felt meant the most to them.
4. The **anticipatory principle** posits that what we do today is guided by our image of the future. Appreciative inquiry uses artful creation of positive imagery on a collective basis to refashion anticipatory reality.
 - We created a mission statement that created a positive intention for learning in the Manning area.
5. The **positive principle** proposes that momentum and sustainable change requires positive affect and social bonding. Sentiments like hope, excitement, inspiration, camaraderie and joy increase creativity, openness to new ideas and people, and cognitive flexibility.
 - We asked our learners to identify ways in which they could participate in the learning environment in the community and an Indigenous Advisory Council was formed from this initiative.



TO EXPLORE AT HOME

Challenges to explore:

How do our clients define family and community?

What does family and community mean to us?

How do we make the centre more 'family friendly'?

What learning opportunities will support our idea of community and family?

Where can we get input from our community on the cultural norms about education, family, and the role of informal and formal learning in our community?

How do we include the community in our learning opportunities and in our learning space?

How do we invite and respect Elders and the broader community?

Community Building Strategies:

1. Host a community consultation inviting Indigenous learners, families, and community members.
2. Use strength-based approaches when asking questions. Reframe your perspective to build on what they already know, what works.
3. Build a relationship. Host open houses, free lunches, have conversations.
4. Provide child care and child friendly learning spaces.
5. Invite community members and family to celebrate achievements.
6. Create assignments that allow students to discuss their community, family, and perspective.
7. Do genealogy and family trees for assignments.
8. Incorporate journaling.

4. Learning involves recognizing the consequences of ones actions.

An Elder we were working with asked me how I would teach my son or a nephew. Would I assume that they came with baggage? Would I respect the impact that their family, history, or personal challenges and respect that these all have an impact on their learning?

My response was, "Of course." I would know that person's history or their potential challenges and would nurture that whole individual as a being with mental capacity, emotional needs, physical realities, and spiritual beliefs.

This Elder then pointed out to me, that when I teach a client, I hide behind a desk or behind my role. This was a major turning point in my seeing the difference between how the European tradition of education was different from the Indigenous. We see our role as teacher. When we are teaching, we as teachers, separate from our story as an individual. We expect our learners to come *ready to learn*.

Our impacts on our community are a reflection of our own wellness and vice versa. Teaching an individual means meeting the needs of the **whole** individual: mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual. This concept, stemming from the Medicine Wheel teachings, asks us to realize that the balanced human being can learn by cause and effect. Being balanced and whole allows us to see our impacts on ourselves and the community around us. Giving advice on what a person should do is often counterproductive because our journey involves learning how individual wellness is dependent on 'wholeness'. By extension, the Medicine Wheel teaches us that our individual wellness benefits the community. And community wellness is dependent on individual wellness.



TO EXPLORE AT HOME

Issues to explore:

How do you encourage learners to stay? Build their confidence? Problem solve?

How are communications styles the same and different between the European and Indigenous cultures?

Using storytelling: The use of language and story is key to creating a sense of connection. We have found that finding opportunities to have learners speak their own truths and tell their own stories creates a sense of connection. How can you incorporate story into your practice?

In our experience, does culture/trauma affect how Indigenous students learn?

Is there a way to incorporate mentorship and community support into our programming?

Mentorship Strategies With Students:

1. Create mentorship relationships wherever possible. Your students can mentor each other. This teaches confidence and helps them see their interrelated role with the community.
2. Realize that you are an instructor and a mentor. Your advice is not needed but your example is.
3. Bring in Elders to create a sense of family and mutual support.
4. Realize your relationship with the student will allow you to hold students accountable. Be gentle and kind.
5. Ask for learners' stories about learning, they will tell you what works and what doesn't.
6. Set priorities with students. They can tell you what their most immediate goals are. Help them achieve their goals.
7. Commenting directly on an issue or challenge is not appreciated.
8. Help individuals with referrals and advocacy.
9. Invite Elders and community members in to form relationships with students.
10. Get to know your students in casual environments.
11. Have a round table in your office to meet students around.
12. Have coffee available and food to create informal, homey opportunities.

5. Learning involves patience and time.

In the European Culture learning is direct, largely linear, and scientific. What we have learned through our work is that our learners learn in more experiential ways. They are hands on. Learning is more concrete and informal but no less a part of their lives.

Observations:

- Ask a direct question, be prepared for an indirect answer.
- Relationship is important before learning.
- Students consider every space a place for relationship. Ask about their day, how their family is doing.
Celebrate their achievements in and out of school.
- Food is important.
- Good stuff is not to be rushed.
- Keep it casual. You may have a student for a year before they admit they need to learn a skill. Expect them to come in, ask for one thing, need another, and give them small steps in the right direction.



TO EXPLORE AT HOME

Challenges to explore:

How do we create relationships with the Indigenous community in our area?

What are key community events? Can we participate informally?

Create partnerships with community leaders. Who are our community advocates and leaders?

Who cooks good bannock? Who has a really good stew recipe? Who is seen as a good cook? Use them! Don't make it fancy — make it familiar.

Who is family? They matter. Their needs matter. How can we help the whole unit?

How does a particular student learn best?

Have students identify a favourite learning experience and why it worked for them.

What are your student's learning styles, and communication styles, and how do they affect teaching that individual?

What is going on in their lives? Use it. Fill short term goals and long term ones wherever possible.

How do we identify and adapt to learning disabilities without embarrassing learners?

Trust Building Strategies:

1. Slip in behind community leaders. Find people who are champions of learning or healing in the community. Use their passion to get a step in the door.
2. Create relationships with your learners and with the community.
3. Bring food.
4. Be prepared to meet many times before you get anywhere. You have to be trusted in order to do what you do.
5. Take your time.
6. A learner may come back multiple times before they are ready to move forward with an idea or learning.
7. Create casual learning opportunities. Learning Coaches provide one-on-one learning opportunities that are short term and goal oriented. You may see them in multiple casual learning situations before they stick in a program.
8. Most learners with disabilities are not segregated from the learning population; inclusion involves adaptation without identification.

6. Learning recognizes the role of Indigenous knowledge.

Indigenous knowledge is a broad description of living, learning and existing that is difficult to summarize in any concrete way. It is about learning how to live in the world in ways that are healthy for yourself, for the community, and for the land.

On the advice from an Elder, we posed the question of how Non-Indigenous educators can incorporate Indigenous practices in their spaces. Sharing Circles, Medicine Wheel Teachings, Smudging, and Drumming are all practices that non-Indigenous learners can use, if done respectfully. Some Non-Indigenous instructors have been advised by Elders on how to respectfully incorporate these things in their teaching. However, it should be noted that the Non-Indigenous culture has taken a tremendous amount from Indigenous cultures, and to share this with your students would be dependent on first the teaching and support of an Elder, as well as the comfort of the students in the space. If someone in the classroom is comfortable leading ceremony in the space, let that person take the role of a Knowledge Keeper within the space. If an Elder is available, this is always preferable. If you were to explore Smudging or Medicine Wheel teachings in a classroom, encourage your students to share their knowledge and experience, and take the role of a Knowledge Keeper.

It can be very delicate but not impossible for Non-Indigenous staff to explore cultural teachings. First feel free to ask Elders what teachings you are welcome to share. Always encourage your students to learn and to take opportunities to share their experience. Be aware as an outsider you must always respect the collective knowledge of the group and the community.



TO EXPLORE AT HOME

Challenges to explore:

Who are the Elders and Knowledge Keepers in our community?

What is the world view of learners in our community? Be careful assuming that traditional Indigenous teachings are universally accepted. In addition, not all teachings are shared across communities.

How can we incorporate these views in our programming?

How do we incorporate cultural teachings respectfully? This will differ if you are Indigenous from another community, a member of the community, or Non-Indigenous.

Incorporating Indigenous Knowledge Suggestions:

1. Use Indigenous content where possible; stories written by and for Indigenous people.
2. Involve Elders and Knowledge Keepers in designing of programs and activities.
3. When using Indigenous content realize that some students of Indigenous descent have negative memories and triggers related to the use of their language and culture.
4. Respect hesitation and body language.
5. Use the Medicine Wheel concept in your classroom. Students are spiritual mental, emotional, and physical beings.
6. Welcome family into your learning space wherever possible.
7. Don't hide behind a role. Be authentic, be patient, and be compassionate.

7. Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story.

Indigenous language, history and culture are almost entirely oral in nature. They are passed on orally, through story. European culture relies heavily on written documentation to pass these on. These are profoundly different ways of looking at teaching, and passing on cultural and linguistic teachings. Yet because of this, Indigenous cultures rely profoundly on oral traditions and storytelling.

In the Indigenous tradition, everyone has a story. Your story is not only the facts of your experience, but also the impact your experience has had on your life journey. Your experience and wisdom are your story. Your story involves your history, your experiences, the things you value, and your memories. Each individual story is woven into the story of your family, and each family's story is woven into the story of the community. All of your ancestors' stories are a part of yours. The collective story is the collective knowledge that makes up the story of your community. That story is what makes you who you are.

It also needs to be explained to Non-Indigenous educators that you too have a story. To share your story with your students is both an honour and a method of creating a relationship with your students. Be humble, be authentic, and be compassionate. Know that when you are given the honour of hearing your clients' stories, you need also to share your own. Embedded in these stories is your history, your culture and your language, and they are as much a part of you as theirs is for them.

We have tried to incorporate the idea of story into our practice. Using the wisdom and experience of your students is one of the most empowering things you can do with Indigenous learners. Giving them the opportunity to share their perspective, wisdom and experience of your community is not only a method of building skills; it also provides them with an opportunity to heal.



TO EXPLORE AT HOME

Challenges to explore:

Using storytelling: The use of language and story is key to creating a sense of connection. How can we incorporate story into our practice?

Ask Elders and students for their stories about learning.

How do we incorporate storytelling and the exploration of identity in our practice?

Incorporating Story and Language Strategies:

1. Create relationships by encouraging clients to share their culture, language, and stories.
2. Bring food.
3. Take small steps. Create safety in the exploration of culture and traditions.
4. Use the Medicine Wheel concept and journaling for goal setting.
5. Expect to see them repeatedly. Take it slowly and respect the relationship.
6. Create a connection between real life and learning.
7. Use Sharing Circles.

8. Learning requires the exploration of one's identity.

The idea that learning requires the exploration of one's identity can be a difficult concept to incorporate into our programs when we are funded to develop foundational literacy skills. Alberta's Community Adult Learning Program funds foundational learning opportunities in these areas:

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Basic Computer Skills
- Skills for Learning
- English Language Learning

However, in most Indigenous learning research, the exploration of one's identity is key to the development of good self-esteem. The exploration of the individuals and communities history, culture, and sense of place in the community and society as a whole is necessary. This concept came to me when I asked the question of how Non-Indigenous teachers can help Indigenous learners explore their identity.

The loss of identity is one of the biggest challenges Indigenous communities identify. The role of colonialization and residential schools cannot be overstated. The experience of residential schools is common to many Indigenous people in our communities; the impact on the generations that followed is more subtle but profoundly important to understand.

During the development of this project, we participated in a seminar on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on 'Indian Residential Schools'. This is a concept that has profoundly coloured the sense of safety and sense of self within the concept of education. The Residential School era is a cultural event that has coloured how Indigenous people see their role in the broader society. It is a profoundly traumatic event. Knowledge of that event and all its atrocities is largely glazed over in the history books, and a surprising number of Canadians are still unaware. One of the first things we can do as teachers is educate ourselves on the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada, including the history and legacy of 'Indian Residential Schools'. However, in the Truth and Reconciliation process one of the key themes is the idea of resiliency and survival of Indigenous peoples. They have survived and continued within the broader Canadian context.

We also recommend all CALP practitioners participate in a 'Blanket Exercise'. Written and designed by Elders, it retells the history of Canada, colonialization and residential schools, from an Indigenous perspective. It allows us to understand the trauma and survival that has also become a part of Indigenous peoples' culture.

One of the simplest way we can help students explore their identity is the use of resources that reflect their history, culture, and way of life.

However, it should be noted that the exploration of 'Identity' is a largely individual exercise supported by cultural and historical knowledge. We have found that we are able to give cultural and historical context from a perspective that is more culturally consistent through programs like the Blanket Exercise and using culturally relevant resources to encourage students to reflect on how they experience understanding their own identities. In our community there are widely disparate views on how traditional and European perspectives have been incorporated into any individual's' exploration of identity. If an Elder introduces a cultural or historical teaching, ask students to reflect on it. Ask them what this has taught them about their own identity or if it has raised questions they would like to explore.

Exploration of identity is the exploration of the history, culture and teachings of Indigenous peoples and how they survive and prosper within Canada. To provide a context where a student's strengths, resilience and fortitude are emphasized is the greatest gift you can give any student.



TO EXPLORE AT HOME

Challenges to explore:

How does history, culture, and identity affect learning?

Ask Elders' suggestions for teaching history when the Indigenous perspective is not written down.

Ask community members and Elders how to incorporate cultural teachings and historical teachings respectfully.

What are the things prospective students consider their successes in learning and how did it happen?
Did we help identify strategies that work for them?

Identify ways that our organization makes learners feel more comfortable with learning. What input have we received that we have not been able to address?

How do we discuss residential school history and residential school trauma in our learning spaces?

Do we have debriefing strategies identified for any controversial topic?

Incorporating Identity Strategies:

1. Invite an Elder to discuss their path in learning and have students journal about it.
2. Do a family tree for the purpose of getting their Métis card using basic computer skills, basic writing and research skills.
3. Take your students to a powwow and ask them to do a journal assignment before and after the event to explore what they learned.
4. Host a bush skills course and have them teach some of the things they know. Invite an expert and exchange ideas of what new things they can teach each other. Have each student do a report on what they learned.
5. Find culturally appropriate resources.
6. Do a Blanket Exercise. It provides a profoundly moving way of presenting the history of Indigenous Peoples in Canada from an Indigenous perspective.

*In each of these ideas we are making students part of the teaching process. We are encouraging them to teach what they know, build and use communication skills, build writing skills, use computers. They will consider the main purpose to **explore their identity**. As a facilitator, you are building a connection between who they are and what they know and the community. You are teaching them skills that they can pass on. They become Knowledge Keepers in their own small groups. They learn a sense of self and place within the framework of their own identity their own small groups. They are also building skills that allow them to better navigate the broader community, workplace, and society.*

9. Learning involves recognizing that some knowledge is sacred and shared with permission and in certain circumstances.

We learned that for Indigenous people, life and learning are synonymous. Learning is not limited to a place, or specific experience. It is a journey, a sometimes-broken journey, that takes time.

In our experience on this project, in order to receive the gift of his story, we needed to create a relationship with the Elder who shared it. He needed to know why we wanted him to tell his story to strangers. He needed to trust our intent and trust us. That took time. He demonstrated his method with other people in the numerous meetings we had at the school where he worked. He told stories and at times, clarified the questions we asked. We found direct questions are often talked around. His teaching was not limited to the presentations he's made, but in the ongoing relationship with us. He was teaching us at every moment.

It is important to realize that as you build a relationship with this community you become in some ways responsible for helping to support it. It is a challenging relationship based not on "helping" but on facilitating its continued healing and resilience. Build from a place of strength and remember anything that you learn is to be treated as a gift. Ask how you can use what you learn. Ask for input. Act on that input. Always remember that much has been taken from this community by European colonialization and European educational systems. Realize that your involvement in these communities must always be with the intent that you are there not to fix, but rather to support. And when you learn, make sure to ask how you can use that learning to respect the community.

Ultimately our participation and the trust given to us by this community must always be respected. Our relationship must be based not only on trust but on the assumption that we are being trained and changed by our relationship with them. Learning about them is a privilege. Allowing ourselves and our values to be influenced by the community and the individuals is our gift.



TO EXPLORE AT HOME

Questions to explore:

How can we make this space more comfortable?

How can we make this space more casual, less institutional?

How can our organization adapt to be more casual, short-term, and goal oriented?

How can we work respectfully, acknowledging the role of residential schools and intergenerational trauma in learning?

How can we create community and trust?

Have we asked permission to use the information, content, or intent of the teaching?

Incorporating Sacred Knowledge Strategies:

1. Incorporate casual spaces and outdoor spaces into the learning environment.
2. Provide casual learning opportunities that allow learners to come and go as needed.
3. Provide life skills programs that build life skills that will help learners navigate the work and social world.
4. Encourage Elders and Knowledge Keepers to be a part of teaching life skills. Students need to build confidence in order to tackle new challenges.
5. Be sure to discuss where information and learning will be used, and that any consent or release is fully understood and accepted.
6. Remember, much has been taken from the Indigenous community by the outside world. Whenever you use information, teachings, and wisdom, clearly explain the purpose of the project, and ask specific permission for how you intend to use it.
7. Make sure you have acknowledged and thanked the Elders and community for their input.
8. If you have been shown something, do not assume you can use it without specifically asking.



APPENDIX ONE

The Medicine Wheel: Keeping the Circle Strong **Holistic Balance: The Four Aspects of Everyone's Nature**

The Medicine Wheel is a valuable teaching based on the concept of holistic balance. It is an expression of an Indigenous world view that supports the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual balance. In the Indigenous teachings all aspects of the individual and world must be in balance. There are any number of ways the Medicine Wheel can be used: goal setting, setting priorities, assessing community needs, discussing needs for responding to a life situation, to name just a few. The depth of the practice of the Medicine Wheel is dependent on the individual - what you put into it, you get out of it.

Individuals must be in balance in order to learn. The way we use the Medicine Wheel is to assess the holistic balance of the individual and the community. The greatest teacher anyone will ever have is him- or herself. Each quadrant has something to teach us about our nature, our wellness, and our role in the community.

The four aspects of humans – physical, emotional, spiritual and mental.

The idea is to try and keep these four aspects in balance to maintain a good rhythm and lead a balanced life:

The **physical** is the relationship of us to our body and health.

- The physical lets you know when you must see a doctor.
- What is the condition of my physical health?
- What are my physical needs?
- What do I do to exercise and feed my body?
- What does my body language say?
- What activities can I do to enhance my physical wellbeing?
- What harmful things must I avoid?
- What are my goals? Where do I see myself in two years?

The **emotional** is the direction of feelings. We must learn to experience our emotions in a healthy manner and not suppress them due to negative reactions or feedback we receive. It is the direction of counselors.

- What condition is my emotional health?
- What are my emotional needs?
- Do I have positive self-esteem?
- Do I trust people?
- What are my coping strategies?
- Am I maintaining healthy relationships?
- What can I do to nurture positive relationships?
- How have I incorporated prayer/meditation into my daily life?

The **spiritual** is the direction of energy. It is the alternate reality or mirror image of the physical. When our energy levels are low it affects all the other aspects. When we speak of someone being 'in good spirits', we think of them as being happy.

- Do I have meaning and purpose in my life?
- Do I live up to my principles, beliefs, and values?
- Do I take time out for prayers, fasting, meditation, enjoyment of nature?
- What effort do I make to develop qualities or virtues?
- Am I honest, humble, trustworthy and helpful?
- Do I feel a sense of connectedness and pride to my culture and my sense of Creation?
- What positive activities can I do to nurture my spiritual life?

The **mental** is conscious and unconscious learning. The mind can be trained until it becomes a highly developed instrument.

- Are we mindful of the words we use to talk about ourselves?
- What is my self talk usually like?
- Am I positive and humble?
- What are my general intellectual or learning activities?
- What are my creative activities and how can I foster them?
- Do I take time to reflect on what is happening in my life?
- What are my problem solving skills and how can I improve them?
- Is time management a problem in my life?
- What activities can I do to enhance my life in mental and intellectual spheres?

Each of these gifts must be in balance with one another to maintain a good rhythm and lead a good life.

Exercise 1: Self

Exercise 2:

Wellness Balance Check-in:

Check-in:

How are you feeling today?

Rank your wellness in each of the following components: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual (1-

What can we learn about us that can help us deal with our challenges today and help others?



Exercise 3:
Community

What already exists in our community that supports the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual?

Does what already exists work for the Indigenous clients in our program?

What physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual gaps exist in our community?

Are these supports working for the Indigenous clients in our program?

What can CALPs do to provide support for the whole person? Physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual.

Which gaps fall within our mandate? What supports can we offer to fill those gaps?

What gaps can we fill that can be supported with community partners?

How are CALPs able to support relationships between learners and the community?

How are CALPs supporting and engaging Elders and youth?





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