



# Protocol

## Significance of Cultural Protocols

Cultural protocols are codes of behaviour that express the values of a community and describe ways to respectfully interact with one another and the environment. By incorporating protocols into our work, we are able to demonstrate respect for Indigenous cultures and perspectives and recognize Indigenous peoples' unique position as original inhabitants and stewards of the land we live on. Such understanding can help us more effectively build relationships with Indigenous communities, as well as contribute to more thoughtful work with Indigenous stories and cultural materials.

This resource sheet provides general guidelines for certain protocols and resources for further learning. However, please keep in mind that as each community is unique, different cultural protocols are observed by different Indigenous peoples. If we are on another community's traditional territory, we have a responsibility to follow the protocols of that community. Please make sure to contact a local First Nation administration office, ask a family member from your program, or connect with an Indigenous agency such as the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society or a nearby Friendship Centre to find out the proper protocols to follow.

## Acknowledging Territory

Indigenous peoples have always acknowledged one another's lands. This demonstrates respect and expresses gratitude for the community's careful stewardship of the land. Today, acknowledging territory is also a way for us to insert an awareness of Indigenous presence, the history and continuing impacts of colonialism, and the need for change.

Recognition and respect are essential elements of building healthy, reciprocal relationships.

When you are invited to a community other than your own for a gathering or to deliver a workshop or presentation, begin by acknowledging whose territory you are on and thank the community for allowing you to be a guest on their traditional lands. There are many online resources that can help you acknowledge territory in your programs, including this [Guide to Acknowledging First Peoples & Traditional Territory](#) and [Native Land](#).

## Elders & Knowledge Keepers

Elders and knowledge keepers are those who hold the teachings of a community's culture. They are respected for their wisdom and survival. Through the greatest adversity and transitions in society, Elders have protected the stories, languages, and teachings that define their communities. Elders and knowledge keepers teach us to do things "in a good way", which means we have a responsibility to all our relations to act in ways that are respectful, non-judgmental, and reciprocal. Elder involvement is therefore a vital component of quality, culturally-based early childhood curricula.

If you would like to invite an Elder or knowledge keeper into your program, it is protocol in some communities to visit the person and present them with a gift to make your request. Gifts that are commonly offered include tobacco tied in red cloth, a sweetgrass braid or buffalo sage tie, or cedar. The protocol of gifting shows the speaker that you honour the gifts they will bring to the program. For further guidance on working with Elders, please refer to our [What you need to know about the](#)

[inclusion of Elders in early childhood development settings](#) resource sheet.

## Stories

The stories included in our kits are able to be shared respectfully if you observe the suggested outlines discussed in this section. In Indigenous cultures, stories are not simply told to entertain. Storytelling is a primary mode of teaching and transmitting cultural knowledge. It is through the sharing of stories that worldviews, protocols, traditions and values are passed from generation to generation. Sharing both traditional and contemporary Indigenous stories will help children develop an appreciation and respect for Indigenous communities, their values, and their experiences. If we want to use Indigenous stories in our classrooms, we must begin the process of learning about the nature of stories and how we use them.

Stó:lō educator, scholar, and storyteller Dr. Jo-ann Archibald's book *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit* is an important read for those who want to engage in Indigenous storytelling practices in their preschools in ways that are respectful, demonstrate respect and reciprocity, and assume responsibility. She tells us, when using Indigenous stories in your classroom, to prepare by understanding what types of stories exist in the community in which you are teaching and learning how to use these stories in ways that respect cultural protocols. For instance, the telling of certain stories may be restricted to a time of year, ceremony or other special occasion. Other stories may be under the stewardship of a community or family so only certain members of that community or family can tell them.

Additionally, it is customary in Indigenous cultures to give credit and acknowledgement to the creators of art, story, music, and land. Whenever possible, it is best practice to invite an Elder from the community where the story originates to tell the story. In some situations, however, it may not be possible to include an Elder or knowledge keeper

from the community due to your geographic location. However, as long as you acknowledge where the story is from, who has given you permission to re-tell it, and share it with a good heart and a good mind, then you will have followed the appropriate protocol. Some general guidelines for using Indigenous stories include:

- Connect with the Elders, storytellers and knowledge keepers in your territory and find someone to be your mentor or coach.
- Use only stories that have been developed and published by Indigenous people, and are meant to be publically shared.
- Seek permission from knowledge keepers and Elders for the use of certain kinds of stories and find out what protocols must be observed.
- Ask knowledge keepers and Elders about some of the meanings and purposes of the story.
- Always acknowledge the source and context of the story.

## Song & Regalia

Many of the protocols for stories also apply to other cultural materials. Some songs, for instance, belong to individual families, some of whom have handed their songs down through generations for thousands of years. Only the family who owns a song can decide who can use it, and at least one member of the family must be present when the song is used. Songs are shown respect by being remembered and sung. In many cultures, songs are thought to be alive because when we sing them, we are giving them the life-giving breath from our lungs. As with all living things, we must treat songs with respect. When you learn a new song, ask if it is appropriate for you to share.

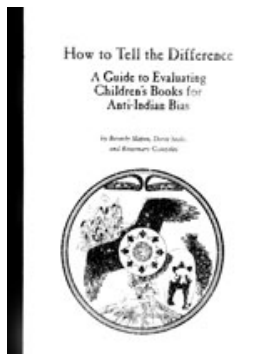
Regalia is the proper term for the clothing and adornments worn by dancers at traditional gatherings such as powwows and for ceremonial purposes. There is much meaning and symbolism in the colours and choices of accessories used in regalia. This knowledge is also passed down

through many generations. Regalia itself may be passed down, or made by friends, relatives, professional artists or dancers. To create regalia, a variety of skills are involved, including leatherworking, sewing, beading, and colour selection. Some of the pieces are extremely old, some are sacred, and they all take a long time to make. Please do not touch or use any regalia without first asking for permission and understanding the protocols associated with them.

### Additional Resources

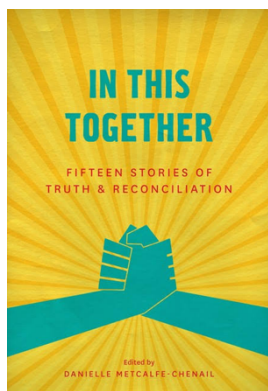
Keep in mind that following these protocols should take place within the larger context of genuine and ongoing work to establish real understanding, and to challenge the legacies of colonialism, including the intergenerational impacts of residential schools. To learn more about Indigenous histories, current issues, and the reconciliation process, please refer to these resources available online and from our lending library, or contact us to book a workshop.

### BCACCS Resource Centre



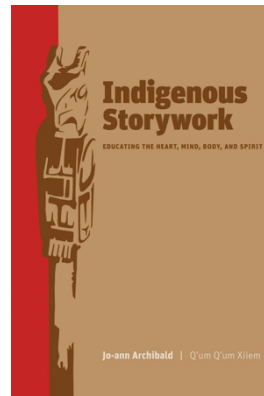
#### [How to Tell the Difference](#)

This book provides basic criteria to help parents, students, teachers, and librarians evaluate and choose undistorted books about Indigenous peoples and themes.



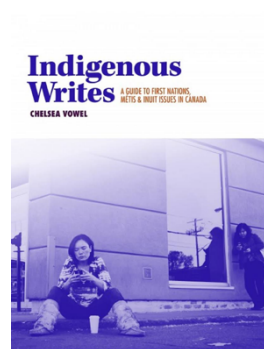
#### [In This Together](#)

A collection of essays about reconciliation and anti-racism by Indigenous and non-Indigenous contributors from across Canada.



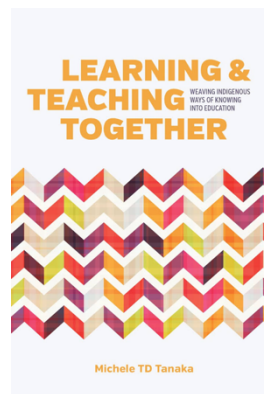
#### [Indigenous Storywork](#)

This book forms a framework for understanding the characteristics of Indigenous stories and storytelling.



#### [Indigenous Writes](#)

The author answers questions related to the terminology of relationships; culture and identity; myth-busting; state violence; and land, learning, law and treaties, and wider social beliefs about these issues.



#### [Learning & Teaching Together](#)

Stories about how teachers across Canada are seeking ways to respectfully weave Indigenous content into their lessons.



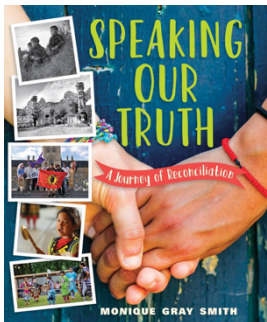
#### [Looks Like Daylight: Voices of Indigenous Kids](#)

This is a collection of interviews with Indigenous children aged nine to eighteen, who tell their heartbreaking and hopeful stories.



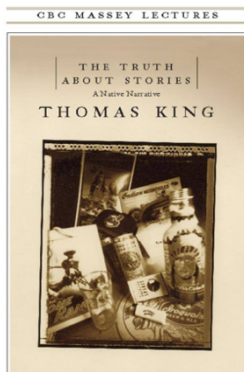
### [My Conversations with Canadians](#)

Lee Maracle addresses subjects such as citizenship and reconciliation, drawing from her experiences as a First Nations leader, a Canadian, a woman, mother and grandmother.



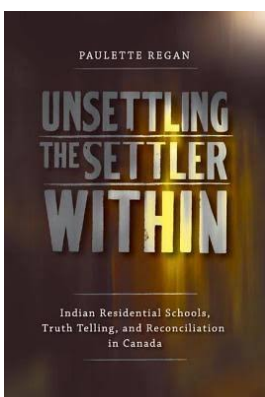
### [Speaking Our Truth](#)

Monique Gray Smith guides us in learning about the lives of residential school survivors and listening to those who seek to heal Canada's relationship with Indigenous peoples.



### [The Truth About Stories](#)

Thomas King weaves his way through literature, history, religion, politics, popular culture, and social protest, to highlight the importance of stories and North America's relationship with Indigenous peoples.



### [Unsettling the Settler Within](#)

This book argues that non-Indigenous Canadians must undergo their own process of decolonization in order to truly participate in the transformative possibilities of reconciliation.



### [We Were Children](#)

This emotional film shows the profound impact of the residential school system as conveyed through the eyes of two children who were forced to face hardships beyond their years.

### Online Resources

- [On Including Indigenous Stories](#). In this video, Dr. Jo Ann Archibald discusses some of the protocols and processes that accompany the inclusion of Indigenous stories within curricula.
- [Orange Shirt Day](#). September 30 is an annual event that provides an opportunity to discuss the impacts of residential school.
- [Cultural Safety in Practice with Children, Families and Communities](#). This poster outlines the principles of cultural safety when working with Indigenous children and families.
- [Exploring reconciliation in early childhood practice Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#). Australian educators talk about the role of reconciliation in early childhood education and care.
- [Indigenous Cultural Competency Video Modules for ECEs](#). This five-part cultural competency video series was created specifically for early childhood educators.
- [Stereotypes of First Nations](#). A short video on how stereotypes can impact on a person's identity and connection to their culture.
- [Stolen Children](#). A news report on how residential schools affected survivors, their children, and their grandchildren.
- [Understanding Aboriginal Identity](#). This film explores the complex issue of self-identification for Indigenous peoples in Canada.
- [Where Are the Children?](#) This video focusses on healing the legacy of residential schools.