

Policy Title: Indigenous Cultural Facilitation Guidelines	Category: Guidelines
Applies to: Employees	Approved: November 24, 2025 Revised:
Monitoring Frequency: Every three years	Starting When: November 2028

GENERAL STATEMENT

The WDM works with many Indigenous individuals, groups and organizations and affirms their rights to culture and heritage, including the right to practice their spiritual traditions, customs and ceremonies, enshrined in and protected by several international, national and provincial treaties, legislation, agreements and codes.¹ The WDM will facilitate and support Indigenous peoples to perform their spiritual and cultural practices while attending WDM facilities, meetings, events and programs in ways that work for them. The WDM is committed to creating safer spaces that are inclusive and free from harassment.

BACKGROUND

A diverse Indigenous population has lived in what is today called Saskatchewan since time immemorial. The WDM operates facilities in Treaty 6 and Treaty 4 territories and, as a provincial museum, also represents people in Treaty 2, 5, 8 and 10. Cree, Saulteaux, Dene, Dakota, Lakota and Nakota First Nations and the Métis Nation in each of these Treaty territories have unique cultural and spiritual practices.

There are some shared values and traditions, such as the importance of oral tradition, food and feasting, smudging, pipe ceremonies, the use of traditional medicines, prayers and blessings.

When working with Indigenous people, WDM staff should strive to understand their unique cultural and spiritual needs. Asking when you don't know is always the best policy; do not assume each person or group does things the same way.

CULTURAL PROTOCOLS

Each nation has their own unique cultural and spiritual protocols. When working with Indigenous stakeholders, WDM staff should strive to learn the ways and cultural and spiritual protocols of that group. Working with a community liaison, Elder or knowledge keeper is best practice for learning the appropriate protocols of each Elder, nation, tribal council or group. Each nation uses different terms for their Elders and knowledge keepers, sometimes referring to these important people as "the old people" or "wisdom holders," among other terms.

There are protocols for greetings and handshakes, land acknowledgments, direction of business (i.e. introductions would generally go clockwise), prayers (i.e. removing hats and glasses),

¹ i.e. Treaty 4 (1874); Treaty 6 (1876); A Self-Government Treaty Recognizing the Whitecap Dakota Nation (2023); the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; and the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code.

appropriate dress and attire, seating and room setup requirements, privacy, Elder needs, gift giving and honoraria, tobacco presentations and food handling. Be respectful of the person teaching you the protocol and listen to their instructions. If you need further clarification make sure to ask. Ensure you understand the significance of the protocols; the pipe ceremony, for example, is a sacred ceremony to be taken very seriously and it is an honour to attend.

Some ceremonies have different protocols for men, women and two-spirit identifying people. Be sure to understand what is expected along gender lines and seek support when needed. It may not be appropriate for women on their 'Moon Time' (menstruation) to attend certain ceremonies. It is best to consult with an Elder or knowledge keeper about questions related to gender, or organizations like OUTSaskatoon or the Two-Spirit Youth Chief of the FSIN.

Exception to Gift Policy for accepting Indigenous gifts: If an employee is presented a gift during, or as a result of, an Indigenous ceremony in the course of their employment with the WDM, they must accept and retain the gift as their own in following with Indigenous cultural protocol. They must do so regardless of the monetary value of the gift. In these cases, there is no definable monetary gain in receiving the gift and the spirit and intent of the gift given as cultural recognition of having witnessed an event or proceeding or cementing a relationship in ceremony would be lost.

HONORARIA AND TOBACCO PRESENTATIONS

It is customary in almost every Indigenous nation to present an Elder or knowledge keeper with an honorarium and tobacco when you are asking something of them. Generally, the honorarium is presented as cash in an envelope accompanied by tobacco. Sometimes a cheque is acceptable but generally cash is more culturally appropriate as not all Elders have bank accounts they regularly use. Most Elders will accept any form of tobacco. In Saskatchewan, one package of commercial cigarettes of any brand is the generally preferred type of tobacco. However, some Elders prefer a package of loose smoking tobacco. The general custom is to present the Elder with the envelope and tobacco package on top and ask them clearly and concisely for what you are asking them to do (i.e. give a blessing at an event or for an oral history interview). In some nations, a small bolt of cloth is also presented with the honorarium and tobacco (i.e. about the size of a tea towel and generally cotton).

The amount of the honorarium differs for each Elder. In the last few years, the base honorarium has tended to be about \$250 for a prayer, blessing, or short consultation. A slightly longer oral history interview would be \$300. For a pipe ceremony or feast leader, this amount is generally \$500. If unsure about the Elders' honorarium amount, you can ask their helper. Some prominent Elders can expect a \$1,000 honorarium for their time (i.e. a former politician or someone giving a keynote).

The WDM should also pay for the travel expenses of the Elder if they are being invited from afar for a WDM event or program. Budget should also be allocated for meals and beverages for the Elder and their helpers. The provincial per diem rates should be used to calculate these costs.

The WDM regrettably does not normally have funds to allocate related to Elders' travel for partner events and/or rentals only its own events or programs.

Any questions about Elder preferences can be directed to the Elders helper or other representatives of the nation (like a Councilor).

Honoraria will be processed like any other financial transaction at the WDM, including the accompanying evidentiary paperwork and GL account or fund account codes from which the funds will be drawn submitted to Administration. Normally, it is not required to produce a receipt for acceptance of the honoraria. The evidentiary paperwork for the processing of the honoraria is sufficient to demonstrate why it was approved and where it was given to the honoree. This respects the cultural protocol of not asking an Elder to acknowledge receipt of the gift of an honorarium and tobacco.

One exception exists and that is related to payouts at the National Indigenous Peoples Day Powwow at the WDM North Battleford as this total sum of money exceeds normal honorarium amounts. The WDM North Battleford and Kanawayimik Child and Family Services will co-develop a respectful process to distribute the payouts that aligns culturally for participants and meets the financial process requirements of the WDM, in consultation with the CEO and the Financial Controller.

FOOD AND FEASTING

Feasts and eating together often occur after ceremonies. Food is considered sacred for most Indigenous cultures and must be served according to each nation's protocols. The hosting group or nation will advise on the proper protocols which the WDM will accommodate.

It will usually be that WDM staff will not be asked to serve the feast food. Servers are selected from the community and asked in a sacred manner to serve the feast. There are specific protocols for serving the food which must be adhered to. Feasts are often eaten on the ground in a circular fashion, sitting on cushions or sometimes on chairs. A special ground cover or tarp may be brought by the group. This should not be cleaned up by a WDM staff member unless directed.

Outside food may need to be brought in for the feast, rather than ordered from and prepared by the WDM. Catering exceptions will be made for Indigenous feasts to be brought in from outside the WDM. Feast preparations are conducted in a sacred manner by knowledge keepers and the food is handled according to cultural protocols. Moreover, there is very specific cultural food used for a feast.

The WDM may be asked to provide take-out containers for leftover food from the feast as it cannot be thrown in the garbage. The WDM may be asked to help with clean-up, or clean-up may have to occur after everyone has exited the feast. The WDM staff member should follow the instructions to the best of their ability. If a WDM staff member is asked to serve, they will

be presented with tobacco and asked to be a server. This is an honour that should be taken very seriously. The person asking will explain how to do the serving.

SMUDGING AND PIPE CEREMONIES

Smudging is a common cultural and spiritual cleansing practice for Indigenous people. Smudging will be accommodated in all WDM spaces when required. Spaces and/or artifacts may require smudging.

Indigenous partners and stakeholders may request to perform an indoor or outdoor sacred pipe ceremony related to their work with the Museum. The pipe ceremony involves smoking sacred tobacco from a pipe.

The WDM will follow the exemptions laid out in the Government of Saskatchewan, Human Resource Manual, Section 812 *Smoke-Free Workplace Policy* relating to Indigenous spiritual and cultural practices involving smoke from tobacco, sweetgrass, sage, cedar or other sacred combustible smoke-producing material in an indoor and/or outdoor setting on or in its properties.

The overseeing manager or director will ensure they have taken steps to communicate to their staff, volunteers, local OHS committee and other relevant stakeholders of instances where smoke related to an Indigenous ceremony may be present in or around a WDM facility. Staff requiring a health accommodation should arrange with their supervisor for alternative or remote work during this time if the presence of smoke poses a serious health risk or concern to them. Assistance and advice with ventilation and clearing the smoke can be sought from the location OHS committee.

If regular smudging will be an occurrence in your location it is recommended to acquire a portable fire extinguisher and bucket filled with sand. These can be kept discretely in the area where the smudging occurs so as to not cause offense and should only be used if a fire ensues.

WDM Operations Managers should ensure all smoke detectors are disabled prior to an indoor event when a group would like to smudge or have a pipe ceremony.

WDM staff may be asked to smudge or smoke the pipe during a ceremony or event. Staff can ask an Elder or knowledge keeper to explain the significance of smudging and smoking the pipe and how to receive the smudge or the pipe.

If you have a respiratory, or other medical condition, or spiritual reason for not smudging, advise the stakeholders and they will explain how to politely decline the smudge or pipe.

FURTHER POLICY GUIDANCE

Further guidelines related specifically to protocol and policy around repatriation and in-trust safekeeping agreements is found in the *Collections Management Policies*.

WDM LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Land acknowledgements are an important step public institutions and individuals can take in promoting Truth and Reconciliation in Canada. Land acknowledgments show respect and honour the traditional territories of Indigenous peoples who have lived in what is now called Canada since time immemorial. The WDM has four approved land acknowledgements but encourages staff to personalize their acknowledgments when appropriate.

WDM Saskatoon: The WDM Saskatoon is located on Treaty Six Territory and the Homeland of the Métis. This is the traditional territory of the Cree, Saulteaux, Dene, Dakota and Nakota First Nations and the Métis people. We wish also to acknowledge our friends at Whitecap Dakota First Nation just down the road here, who have their own history of Treaty-making with the Crown. The WDM is committed to working towards a new relationship anchored in the spirit of the Treaties and to educating Saskatchewan people about their shared history of Treaty-making.

WDM North Battleford: The WDM North Battleford is located on Treaty Six Territory and the Homeland of the Métis. This is the traditional territory of the Cree, Saulteaux, Dene, Dakota and Nakota First Nations and the Métis people. The WDM is committed to working towards a new relationship anchored in the spirit of the Treaties and to educating Saskatchewan people about their shared history of Treaty-making.

WDM Moose Jaw:

The WDM Moose Jaw is located on Treaty Four territory and the Homeland of the Métis. This is the traditional territory of the Cree, Saulteaux, Dakota, Lakota and Nakota First Nations and the Métis people. The WDM is committed to working towards a new relationship anchored in the spirit of the Treaties and to educating Saskatchewan people about their shared history of Treaty-making.

WDM Yorkton:

The WDM Yorkton is located on Treaty Four territory and the Homeland of the Métis. This is the traditional territory of the Cree, Saulteaux, Dakota, Lakota and Nakota First Nations and the Métis people. The WDM is committed to working towards a new relationship anchored in the spirit of the Treaties and to educating Saskatchewan people about their shared history of Treaty-making.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sections of this policy were drawn from similar policies and guidelines, including: “ayisiyiniwak: A Communications Guide,” City of Saskatoon (2019); GOV-040-025 Appendix B “Guidelines for Practicing Indigenous Traditional Protocols at the University of Regina;” and “First Nations and Métis Traditional Practices and Foods,” Government of Saskatchewan.