

# Learning from Indigenous Perspectives

## Land-Based Learning in Early Years Settings

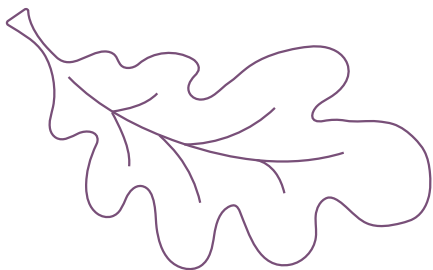
FAQS

# Frequently Asked Questions

<b>Getting Started</b>	<b>4</b>
What are Indigenous perspectives and pedagogies?	4
What is Land-Based Learning?	4
Where can I learn more?	5
How do I reach out and establish relationships with Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Educators, and Friendship Centres?	5
Where can I find appropriate resources for my classroom?	7
<b>Ongoing Learning</b>	<b>8</b>
Why is it important to teach all children about Indigenous perspectives?	8
Should I be incorporating Indigenous history, cultures, and perspectives into my program as a non-Indigenous person? Do we only teach about Indigenous perspectives if we have Indigenous children and families in our program?	8
What about other cultures?	8



How do I share Indigenous perspectives and pedagogies?	9
What is appropriate for me to teach as a non-Indigenous person?	10
How do I acknowledge where the teachings that were shared with me come from?	11
How do I teach about Indigenous Spirituality in a public childcare/school?	11
I know that it is my responsibility to teach about Indigenous culture, however I have my own religion and I feel conflicted. How do I deal with this?	12
What do I do when children or families ask questions that I can't answer?	12



The following ideas have been compiled as part of the research project, *Designing and Implementing Environmental Inquiry Strategies in Early Years Programs 2020-2024* under the guidance of our advisor and team member, Lori Budge, who is a member of the Wikwemikong Unceded First Nation and faculty member at George Brown College.

## Getting Started

### 1 What are Indigenous perspectives and pedagogies?

Indigenous Peoples represent many cultures, languages, perspectives, and practices. However, there are some overarching commonalities. Indigenous perspectives on Land-Based Learning offer alternative ways to promote children's well-being, and the well-being of educators, through learning with and from traditional teachings including greeting and expressing gratitude for the gifts of nature, recognizing human interconnectedness with the natural world, and building reciprocal relationships with, and showing care and responsibility for nature.

### 2 What is Land-Based Learning?

Indigenous Land-Based Learning encompasses many different meanings and practices across Indigenous communities in Canada. This general definition was recommended by Lori Budge, Indigenous advisor to our Land-Based Learning project:

**“Land-based education assumes an environmental approach to learning that recognizes the deep connection and relationship of Indigenous peoples to the Land. It seeks to offer education pertaining to the Land that is grounded within Indigenous Knowledge and pedagogy. Through this approach it is acknowledged that it is the cultivation and observation of the relationship between people and the Land that knowing and learning occurs”**

[OISE Library News, Boon, 2018](#)

### 3 Where can I learn more?

- Research what land you are on and the First Peoples, languages and Treaties ([native-land.ca](http://native-land.ca)).
- Find local Indigenous owned sources for books and resources such as [Goodminds.com](http://Goodminds.com) in Ontario and [StrongNations.com](http://StrongNations.com) on the West Coast.
- Connect with Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and educators in your local area.
- Check out the resources and links on the [project website](#).

### 4 How do I reach out and establish relationships with Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Educators, and Friendship Centres?

#### a) Who do I contact?

Many of these are in the city of Toronto as our project was located there.

- [Finding our Power Together](#) (Toronto)
- [Native Child and Family Services Mount Dennis](#) (Toronto)
- **Friendship Centres** (Across the country)
- [Indigenous Services Canada](#)
- [First Nations Child and Family Services](#)
- [Métis Nation of Ontario](#)
- **Local school boards**
- **Local colleges and universities**
- [Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres](#)
- [Native Canadian Centre of Toronto](#)
- [Ontario Native Women's Association](#)
- [Native Child and Family Services of Toronto](#)
- [Toronto District School Board Partnership Management Services](#)  
(Search “Indigenous”)

## b) What do I say? How do I start the conversation?

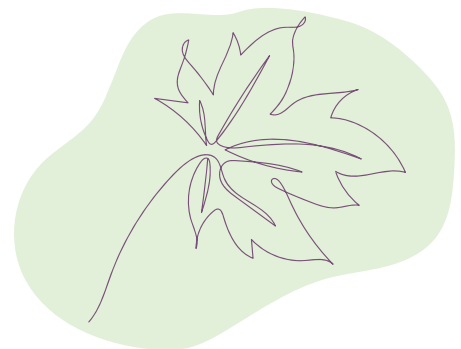
- **Do some homework.** Research what land you are on ([native-land.ca](http://native-land.ca)). You can review some of the educator newsletters [on our website](#).
- **Be prepared to share a little about yourself and your learning.**
- **Have clear intentions.** What is this relationship going to look like? If you do not know your intentions, you may seem performative.
- **Recognize that relationships take time.**
- **Be okay with being corrected.** Our education system and the media have led to a great deal of incorrect and biased information about Indigenous Peoples.

## c) I know very little about Indigenous cultures, histories and perspectives. Is that OK?

- You do not need to know it all.
- Be open minded and open hearted.
- Be respectful and humble.
- Share that you are at an early stage in your learning but are eager to learn more.

## d) How do I ask about compensation? What should I offer? What is the tobacco protocol?

- Visiting Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Educators should be offered the same rate of pay as other guest speakers. You should also ask if there is a traditional protocol that they follow such as the tobacco or Semah protocol.
- This document called [Working with Elders](#) by the First Peoples Cultural Council may be helpful
- [Turtle Lodge Trading Post](#) is a source for ceremonial Semah in Ontario.



### e) How will I be received? What if I am turned away, or don't get an answer?

- It may not be a linear path and that is okay.
- People are busy. You may not receive an answer right away.

### f) What could a visit with an Elder or Knowledge Keeper look like?

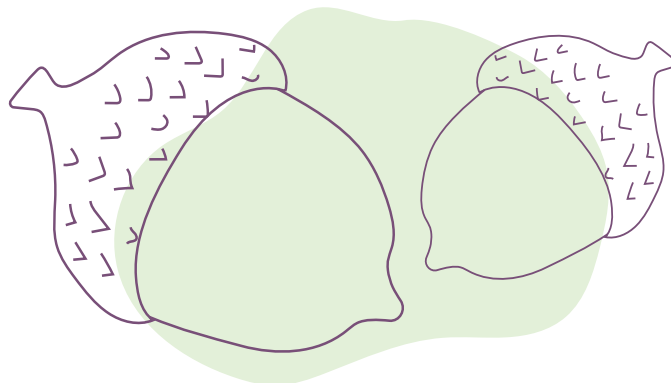
- Asking someone to come into the classroom tell a story or share teachings.
- Asking someone to speak at a workshop.
- Attending community events run by the Indigenous community.

### g) How do I keep building the relationship over time?

- There is a difference between having a guest speaker and creating a relationship.
- Think about it as an ongoing relationship instead of a one-time transaction.
- One relationship will often lead to another.
- Keep attending Indigenous-led events.

## 5 Where can I find appropriate resources for my classroom?

- [Goodminds.com](http://Goodminds.com)
- [StrongNations.com](http://StrongNations.com)



### 1 Why is it important to teach all children about Indigenous perspectives?

- We have a responsibility to learn and tell the truth about the history of the land we are on.
- We have responsibilities as treaty people to care for each other and the Land.
- Indigenous perspectives offer knowledge and practices that promote the well-being of all.

### 2 Should I be incorporating Indigenous history, cultures, and perspectives into my program as a non-Indigenous person? Do we only teach about Indigenous perspectives if we have Indigenous children and families in our program?

Everyone needs to learn about Indigenous history, cultures, and perspectives. [The Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) (2015) calls for reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and for reconciliation with the Land. It also calls for the incorporation of Indigenous history, cultures, and perspectives into curriculum at all levels of education in Canada. All people in Canada need to consider not just what we can take from the Land, but our responsibilities to give back to the First Peoples and to the natural world. You can find the [Calls to Action here](#).

### 3 What about other cultures?

It is not an “either/or” issue, but an “and” issue. We have a responsibility to learn about the First Peoples of the land we are living on, and it is important to learn about all cultures who have come to live in Canada.

## 4 How do I share Indigenous perspectives and pedagogies?

Indigenous worldviews, perspectives, and pedagogies offer ways to rethink how young children's well-being can be supported through developing their relationship to the Land. However, the distinctiveness of Indigenous worldviews needs to be acknowledged and respected in education ([Little Bear, 2000](#)). Elder Albert Marshall's concept of Two-Eyed Seeing teaches that we need to respect the value and contribution of both Indigenous and Western worldviews:

**“We often explain Etuaptmumk - Two-Eyed Seeing by saying it refers to learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the strengths of Western knowledges and ways of knowing ... and learning to use both these eyes together, for the benefit of all.”**

[Bartlett, C., Marshall, M., & Marshall, A. \(2007\)](#)

Indigenous worldviews include developing relationships of gratitude, reciprocity, and care with the Land ([Wall Kimmerer, 2013](#)) and have been largely missing from early childhood education programs in Canada with their focus on developmentalism ([Callaghan & Leonhardi, 2018](#)). Their inclusion in early years programs can not only support children's well-being, but also contribute to the decolonization of education ([Absolon, 2019; Tuck & Yang, 2012](#)) and serve as progress towards fulfilling The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action ([TRC, 2015](#)) regarding the inclusion of culturally relevant programming and connecting with our responsibilities to the Land ([TRC, 2015](#)).

## 5 What is appropriate for me to teach as a non-Indigenous person?

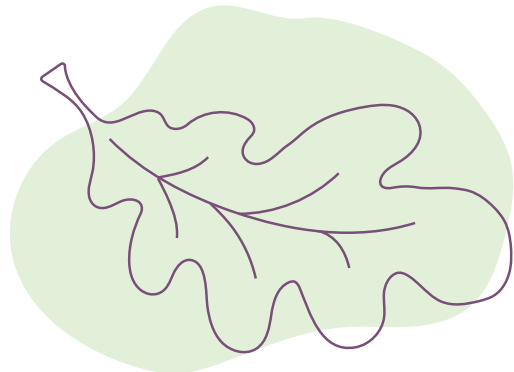
One of the issues that educators have shared with us in this project is their concern about appropriating Indigenous culture. Our advisor, Lori Budge offered these thoughts to guide us.

To be inclusive and to work toward decolonization and reconciliation, you should teach about Indigenous cultural practices. However, it is important not to mimic Indigenous cultural practices, clothing, or objects. It is not appropriate to practice or perform them yourselves if you are non-Indigenous or are not being led by an Indigenous person.

For example, you can prepare a discussion, read a book by an Indigenous author, or show a video of Indigenous dancing, drumming, and singing and tell the children that these are important practices for Indigenous people to communicate things such as gratitude, healing, or to celebrate being together after a long absence. Then, non-Indigenous people can adapt these concepts, for example gratitude for the gifts of the earth, and create their own songs or dances or other ways of expressing gratitude. However, these experiences will not be the same as they are for Indigenous people because they have a special relationship with the earth through these ceremonies.

The idea is to provide a context where you make your own meaning about what you are doing. This ensures that you are not mimicking or appropriating Indigenous culture. Non-Indigenous educators should not refer to these activities as if they are doing 'Indigenous dancing' or 'Indigenous drumming'.

Regalia (traditional clothing) and cultural objects are sacred to Indigenous Peoples and need to be treated with respect. Just as educators would not promote children playing with objects or practices that have sacred significance for some Christians, such as crucifixes or rosary beads, or pretending to serve communion, it is not appropriate to play dress up with clothing that is meant to look like regalia or use Indigenous cultural objects like replica totem poles as props in games or lessons.



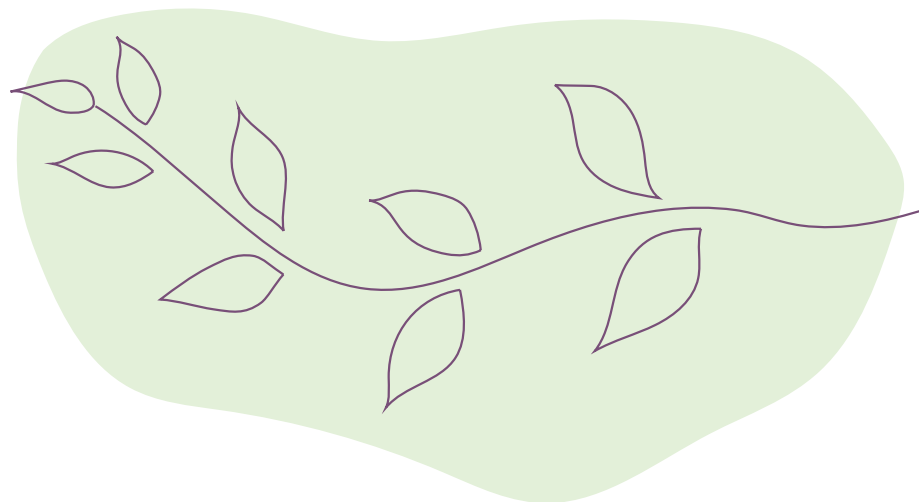
## 6 How do I acknowledge where the teachings that were shared with me come from?

- Acknowledge the name of the speaker or writer and their nation.
- Explain where you learned the knowledge from (e.g., the person, book, video, etc.)

## 7 How do I teach about Indigenous Spirituality in a public childcare/school?

In a mainstream classroom setting, it is appropriate for educators to teach about “everyday” and ceremonial Indigenous spirituality, but only practice the “everyday” experiences. The ceremonial practices are for Indigenous people to lead. Non-Indigenous people may be invited to participate in some ceremonies by Indigenous leaders but should not initiate them on their own.

On the project website, see the document titled, [How can Non-Indigenous Educators' Understand and Respect Indigenous Spirituality?](#)



## 8 I know that it is my responsibility to teach about Indigenous culture, however I have my own religion and I feel conflicted. How do I deal with this?

- Start with reflection.
- Remember that you are not practicing a religion, you are learning and teaching about Indigenous perspectives and ways of living.

## 9 What do I do when children or families ask questions that I can't answer?

- Point out that we are all learning.
- Offer to research their question or point them to resources where they can find the answers.
- Offer the [six family newsletters](#) on the project website

