

PART ONE: FOUNDATIONS

2. Involving Local First Nations Communities

Many of the activities in these units suggest working with an Elder or other Knowledge-keepers from a local First Nations community. These suggestions are the ideal, but of course it will not be feasible to invite speakers in every instance.

Also, it is important to remember that not every Elder or knowledge-keeper holds knowledge about every cultural topic. In most Indigenous societies, certain knowledge is held by specialists who are trained to use and pass on the knowledge. People often have specific roles and responsibilities within the community. As well, people have different life experiences to draw on.

Making Connections with the Community

Bringing First Peoples perspectives of science into the classroom means in part connecting with the local First Nations community. It is important to understand, respect and practice the local protocols when:

- inviting Elders and other knowledgeable community members into the classroom to speak
- interacting with the natural world when going out on field trips
- visiting First Nations lands and territories
- interviewing people
- holding special events such as a celebratory feast
- developing science units

Most communities have protocols in place to be followed when working with Elders and knowledge-keepers. This may include showing respect by offering a gift to the person, or perhaps to the land when on a field trip.

Make contact with the local First Nations communities through workers in schools or through the local Band Council. There may be a School District staff member such as an Aboriginal District Principal, Aboriginal Helping Teacher, Resource worker or other liaison person to help with the initial contact. Guidance can be sought from local learning centres and community organizations such as Friendship Centres, First Nations offices, Tribal Councils or cultural centres.

It is important to work with the appropriate agencies to make sure that certain Elders and knowledge-keepers do not get over-worked or called upon too often.

All knowledge shared by local First Nations is inherently their intellectual property. Respect their right to keep certain knowledge private.

PART ONE: FOUNDATIONS

Diverse School-Community Relationships

How you make connections with the local community and develop locally-based activities may depend on where your school is located:

First Nations Community

For schools in a First Nations community, students will likely focus on the knowledge and resources in their community. Students may have direct experience with the land of the territories of their people. They may have family members who are involved in the traditional resource gathering practices. The First Nations language may be taught in the school.

Public Schools that serve one or more First Nations communities

For public schools which serve one or more First Nations communities, there likely is a relationship built up between the school and community. They likely have a large number of students from one or more local communities, with established liaisons between school and community. The First Nations language may be taught in the school.

Schools with a significant population of Indigenous students from diverse communities

For town or city schools which have a significant number of Indigenous students from diverse communities, build on the strengths of the knowledge of the students in the class, where appropriate. (Don't necessarily expect Indigenous students to want to or be able to speak about Indigenous knowledge related to their home communities.)

Schools with few Indigenous Students

Even though your school may have few or no First Nations students, it is still important to incorporate Indigenous content. For schools with few First Nations students, build an understanding of the traditional territories on which the school is located. Identify ways to establish connections with other schools with significant numbers of First Nations students and First Nations communities. In their studies students could undertake comparative studies of First Nations practices in different parts of the province.

PART ONE: FOUNDATIONS

First Peoples Guest Speaker Considerations

It is important to follow protocols when inviting a member of a First Nations community or Aboriginal organization to a classroom or school. Below are some general considerations and processes. There are also often protocols specific to local communities. School district Aboriginal education departments or community education departments can also provide guidance regarding those specific protocols.

These considerations can also be adapted when taking students on field trips or into field learning experiences that will be led by, or facilitated by, a member of a First Nations community or Aboriginal organization.

Before the Visit

- Determine the purpose of the visit (how it is connected to the curriculum or learning standards for the class or course). If it is not directly connected to the curriculum, be clear about the intended learning standards so that the guest visit is meaningful experience for all involved.
- It is a culturally appropriate protocol for guest speakers to be provided with a gift and/or honourarium for sharing their time and knowledge.
 - Consult with the school district's Aboriginal education department or First Nations community to determine the appropriate amount or gift (if the speaker has not already indicated an amount for an honourarium).
 - Determine where funds will come from in advance. Check to see if the school or PAC can contribute.
 - If the school and/or school district requires any paperwork to be completed before payment can be issued, ensure that this is done well in advance of the visit so that payment can be issued at the time of visit or as soon as possible afterward.
- Talk with the speaker about the details of the visit:
 - Date and time of the visit
 - The course and grade levels of the students
 - Approximate number of students
 - Let the speaker know what content/learning has led up to the visit.
- Ask the speaker about any specific needs:
 - Are there any hand-outs that need to be photocopied in advance, or any equipment or supplies needed?
 - Is there any specific information that students should know before the visit?
 - Are there any specific protocols that the students and adults need to follow during the visit?
 - Is there anything else that will help make the visit more comfortable for the speaker (especially if it is an Elder)?
 - Would it help to have the classroom/space organized in a specific way?
 - Ask for permission to take photos or videotape (if desired).
- Ask the speaker for some background information that can be used to introduce the speaker to the students (for example, where the speaker is from, his or her role or occupation, noteworthy experiences or accomplishments).

PART ONE: FOUNDATIONS

- Arrange arrival details:
 - Ensure everyone knows where the speaker will be met. For example, arrange to have the speaker met in the parking lot, at the front door of the school, or in the main office.
 - In some situations, the speaker may need transportation from home.
 - If possible, include students in the greeting.
- Ensure the students are prepared prior to the visit:
 - Connect speaker's visit to students' previous learning
 - Review respectful behaviour with students, including non-verbal communication
 - Model for students how to introduce themselves
 - Brainstorm with students questions that they can ask
 - Prepare students to provide a thank-you to speaker
- Ensure office staff and administrators know that a guest is expected.

Day of Visit

- Prepare physical space of classroom. Set up any necessary equipment.
- Welcome guest, offering water/tea/coffee. Let them know where washrooms are located.
- Introduce speaker to students and if appropriate do acknowledgment of territory.
- If students will be introducing themselves to the speaker, consider a talking circle format, saying name and where they are from.
 - Ensure there is time for questions/discussion at the end of the session.
 - Have student(s) formally thank the speaker and present gift or honourarium.
 - If possible, debrief the session with speaker.
 - Walk the guest out.

*It is important that the teacher stay present for the session as this models for the students a valuing of the knowledge and time of the speaker. If any behavioural challenges occur, it is the teacher's responsibility to address them, not the speaker's.

After the Visit

- Debrief the session with the students.
- Do follow-up activity with students.
- Have students follow up with thank-you letter.
- Touch base with speaker to ensure that honourarium was received (if not presented on day of session).