



Indigenous  
Education

# Knowledge Keepers Program



*Indigenous Education Cultural  
Handbook & Protocols*

2023



# *Lets'emo:t, Lets'eth'a:le*

## *One Heart, One Mind*

### **Acknowledgment**

Éy swáyel. We acknowledge that the Abbotsford School District is located on the traditional territory of the Stó:lō people, the Semá:th and Mathxwí First Nation. With this, we respect the longstanding relationships that Indigenous Nations have to this land, as they are the original caretakers. We acknowledge historical and ongoing injustices that Indigenous Peoples endure in Canada, and we accept responsibility as a public educational institution to contribute toward revealing and correcting miseducation as well as renewing respectful relationships with Indigenous communities through our teaching and community engagement.

### **Contributors**

This handbook was created by the Indigenous Education Department with the intention of connecting Knowledge Keepers from our local community with Abbotsford School District educators. We extend heartfelt thanks to the following districts in British Columbia who provided information about how Knowledge Keeper programs are structured in their school districts: North Okanagan (#38), Kootney Lake (#8), Central Okanagan (#23), Sea to Sky (#48), Nicola-Similkameen (#58), Greater Victoria (#61), Gold Trail (#74) and Vancouver Island North (#85)



# Connections to the work of the Abbotsford School District

## Enhancement Agreement

The Enhancement Agreement for Indigenous Students is an agreement set between the Abbotsford School District, the Ministry of Education and the Indigenous community. Extensive consultations were undertaken to choose the goals for this agreement, culminating in the development of four goals that seek to ensure success for Indigenous students at school. This program was created to support **Goal #2 - Cultural Identity**.



*Students will learn about their own Indigenous cultural identity and connect with their ancestry in a meaningful way. When Indigenous students know their identity, who they are and where they have come from, they will develop a positive sense of self and belonging.*

More specifically, this program aims to support:

- Learning about the diversity of different Indigenous cultures;
- Learning from Positive Indigenous role models and family; and
- Connecting to Elders, instilling respect and enhanced learning.

## Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan sets the direction for the school district, guiding goals, projects and financial stewardship, and was developed after thorough research and consultation with staff and community members. The district's Strategic Plan is guided by 4 key pillars - Student Success, Optimized Resources, Engaging Opportunities and Progressive Workforce.

The work of this program supports two key pillars:

- **Student Success:** Students are our top priority. Our students will be engaged, challenged, and prepared for a lifetime of success.
- **Engaging Opportunities:** We provide engage opportunities for every member of our organization to contribute to student success.

## About the Program

*“Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits and the ancestors.”*

- FIRST PEOPLES PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING

### Overview

The Abbotsford School District's Knowledge Keepers Program was developed by the Indigenous Education Department, which receives funding from the Ministry of Education to provide culturally appropriate educational programs and services to support the success of Indigenous students. The majority of support that Indigenous students receive from this funding is provided by staff in the Indigenous Education Department, including Indigenous Support Workers (ISWs) and Teachers for Indigenous Success. A portion of the funding is also allocated to schools to best support Indigenous students at their individual sites.

Innovative programs like Knowledge Keepers support the school district's work outlined in the Enhancement Agreement and Strategic Plan, providing learning opportunities for our school communities while contributing towards Reconciliation in Education.

### Intention

The Knowledge Keepers Program intends to support schools, educators and students with the opportunity to invite members of Indigenous communities into classrooms to share their cultural expertise, stories, voice and wisdom with students. Knowledge Keepers provide cultural enrichment to complement the provincial curriculum and learning opportunities provided by educators. This handbook outlines cultural protocols that school leaders and educators should be mindful of before, during and after inviting Knowledge Keepers into their schools or classrooms.

The Indigenous Education Department has worked to curate a list of preapproved Knowledge Keepers and their specializations to support teachings around First Peoples Principles of Learning.



# Knowledge Keepers

*Respected and valued members of their Indigenous Communities.*

## What is a Knowledge Keeper?

Knowledge Keepers are respected and valued members of their Indigenous communities. They may be Stó:lō or other First Nations, Métis, or Inuit, and live on or off reserve.

Knowledge Keepers carry teachings about:

- Indigenous cultural practices and traditions;
- Indigenous languages;
- Cultural protocols;
- Indigenous history, traditional and contemporary processes, ways of making, art, regalia, stories, songs, or dances;
- Hunting, fishing, and plant gathering;
- The use and care for natural resources;
- Traditional health and wellness; and
- Traditional knowledge about ecological relationships.

## How are Knowledge Keepers Different from Elders?

Like Knowledge Keepers, Elders are also respected and valued members of their Indigenous communities. They may be Stó:lō or other First Nations, Métis, or Inuit, and live on or off reserve.

Elders have knowledge from the past, the present and a vision to support the well-being of future generations, including you and your students. We hope that bringing an Elder or Knowledge Keeper into your classroom will encourage students to connect with the wisdom and teachings provided by our Knowledge Keepers. This connection is an important step to building respect and cultivating relationships. Furthermore, we encourage schools and educators to incorporate some of the wisdom these experiences share into their practice as we all work to walk forward together and continue to deepen our understanding of Truth and Reconciliation in Canada.



*According to these teachings, important knowledge and wisdom contain power. If one comes to understand and appreciate the power of a particular knowledge, then one must be ready to share and teach it respectfully and responsibly to others in order for this knowledge, and its power, to continue. One cannot be said to have wisdom until others acknowledge an individual's respectful and responsible use and teaching of knowledge to others. Usually, wisdom is attributed only to Elders, but this is not because they have lived a long time. What one does with knowledge and the insight gained from knowledge are the criteria for being called an "Elder." Continuation of the Stó:lō knowledge and power relationship happens through a reciprocal process between teachers and learners.*

EXCERPT FROM *INDIGENOUS STORYWORK* BY DR. JO-ANN ARCHIBALD  
A LOCAL STÓ:LŌ ELDER AND UBC PROFESSOR.

The intention of working with an Elder is to create a reciprocal relationship with someone who can guide you to work on personal growth, as opposed to having someone come in to present to your students. This relationship can be a place to share ideas, knowledge and ways of knowing to help guide your practice.

## Role of a Knowledge Keeper

Knowledge Keepers can be invited into schools or classrooms to:

- Share teachings on a specific topic;
- Provide guidance on traditional ceremonies or activities;
- Lead hands-on learning opportunities;
- Help facilitate a cultural field trip; and
- Share stories or experiences.

Knowledge Keepers are diverse and provide different services depending on their expertise. Some Knowledge Keepers have preferences for the ages of the students they are presenting to and the group size, which is reflected in their speaker profile.

## Requesting a Knowledge Keeper

School District staff may request a Knowledge Keeper by completing a "Knowledge Keeper Request Form." If you would like to apply requesting a reciprocal relationship with an Elder, please complete an "Elder Relationship Application Form."

Requests must be made as soon as possible and at least 3 weeks before your event. Request forms will first be reviewed/approved by your School Principal. Upon your School Principal's approval, request forms will be reviewed/approved by the District Principal or Vice Principal of Indigenous Education.

→ [Appendix: Knowledge Keeper Request Form](#)

## Payment & Fees

The Knowledge Keeper is paid using school funds. Payment is only issued if the "Knowledge Keeper Request Form" has been received and approved by both your School Principal and the District Principal or Vice Principal of Indigenous Education. As reflected in the request form, a GL code is required as part of the booking process.

The Abbotsford School District's Knowledge Keeper rate is based on how long the Knowledge Keeper is on-site at the school, and these rates include mileage. There is a limit to how much each Knowledge Keeper can earn through this program each year.

Knowledge Keeper rates as of March 2023 are:

- **\$150** | 1 block (with a maximum of 30 students) between 75 – 120 minutes
- **\$300** | 2 blocks (with a maximum of 30 students)

Any costs for supplies needed for the presentation are the responsibility of the school and the person who is applying to host a Knowledge Keeper.

## Responsibilities of the Host Teacher/School

Staff and schools hosting a Knowledge Keeper are expected to be familiar with protocols and considerations listed in this handbook before submitting a request. Staff are to adhere to these recommendations before/during/after the Knowledge Keeper's visit.

### *Not Included in the Knowledge Keepers Program...*

- **Other Creators/Elders/Advisors (for example some professional or community artists/writers/dancers/makers, etc.):** The Knowledge Keepers Program is inclusive of only the Knowledge Keepers who are on the Abbotsford School District Knowledge Keepers Lists. If you are reaching outside of this list, those costs would be the responsibility of the school.
- **Professional Development:** If a school (or the District) wishes to invite a Knowledge Keeper to facilitate a professional-development session for staff (or a District Pro-D day), the school (or District) would be responsible for the honoraria (and is not reflected in the costs listed above).
- **Official Openings/Ceremonies:** If a school wishes to invite a Knowledge Keeper to do an official opening or blessing at an event/gather, Indigenous Education can assist with the planning, but the honoraria is to be paid for by the school.

### **Cultural Safety & Sensitivity Considerations**

Due to historical and ongoing injustices Indigenous communities face, coming into a school can cause some level of stress and anxiety for Knowledge Keepers. Proper preparation, planning, and clear and open communication can significantly mitigate this. It cannot be emphasized enough how important it is for the host teacher to adequately prepare for the presence of a Knowledge Keeper in your school.

→ Refer to the “Indigenous Guest Speakers: Protocols and Considerations for Schools” to know how to greet, show respect, and introduce the Knowledge Keeper.

A few additional tips...

- Give respect to the culture, land acknowledgements and protocols.
- Ensure that they are comfortable with the presentation topic.

- Be prepared to intervene if the session is becoming too emotional for the Knowledge Keeper.
- Maintain respectful behavior by students.
- Communicate and demonstrate gratitude.

### **Student Considerations**

Ensure the safety and comfort of all students in your class, and that that content is age appropriate. Due to the sensitive nature of Canadian history and the effects of colonialism, some topics can be potentially triggering for students, particularly those that have experienced the intergenerational impacts of residential schools, children in care, and children who have experienced trauma. Please communicate with families in advance of the presentation if there are content-sensitivity concerns.

### **Safety Considerations**

Field trips are to be planned by Classroom Teachers following Abbotsford School District’s Field Trip Procedures and Policies. Knowledge Keepers are



facilitators, not school district staff, and Classroom Teachers and Administrators are responsible for ensuring student safety. Students/staff may witness Indigenous cultural teachings but are not expected to practice the cultural teachings if they do not want to. Students/staff allergies and preferences must be respected when Indigenous foods or teas or smudging are offered.

The Abbotsford School District Smudging Policy is available. If smudging is to be a part of the Knowledge

Keeper's presentation, you are asked to check in with the District Principal of Indigenous Education for guidance first and inform the families. Students are not to use or take home Indigenous traditional medicines unless permission has been granted by their parent/guardian. Teachers are to ascertain if any games or use of any tools/instruments used during a Knowledge Keeper presentation are safe, given the ages of the students.



# Indigenous Guest Speakers: Protocols & Considerations

*Protocols are very important any time you are inviting a member of an Indigenous community, a Knowledge Keeper, or an Indigenous Guest Speaker to your class/school.*

Cree scholar and UBC professor, Verna Kirkness and Ray Barnhardt, Indigenous Education Researcher, has identified 4 Rs in to support teachers who are moving to support truth and reconciliation in the classroom. The 4 Rs are Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity and Responsibility.

- **Respect** – Giving respect to the culture, land acknowledgements, protocols.
- **Relevance** – You create relevance when respect is embedded in content, practice, instruction, worldviews and perspectives.
- **Reciprocity** – The learning journey is relational and reciprocal (students are learning from you, and you are learning from your students).
- **Responsibility** – Learning and making change as a result of the learning is the responsibility of students and teachers.

Below are some general considerations.

### Before Asking:

Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity & Responsibility	Notes to support personal organization and reflection
<input type="checkbox"/> I have determined the <u>purpose</u> of the presentation (Relevance & Respect)	<i>The purpose is....</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> I have connected curriculum learning outcomes for the class or course (Relevance & Responsibility)	<i>Intended learning outcomes are....</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> I have identified learning opportunities to do before the presentation to prepare students, and after the presentation to deepen student understanding	<i>Learning opportunities before:</i>  <i>Learning opportunities after:</i>

(Responsibility & Reciprocity)	
<input type="checkbox"/> I have chosen and purchased a gift for the presenter who will be sharing their time and knowledge with us (Respect & Reciprocity).	<i>Gift: Examples include Journal, tea, travel mug, a plant, a box of nice cookies, key chain, candle, scarf, something you have personally made. Consult with the Indigenous Support Worker at your school about ideas.</i>

**During your Ask:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Introduce yourself – Your name and the role that you are playing on this land (Respect & Responsibility).	<i>“Hi, my name is _____. I am an educator at _____ school who is about teaching _____. I am contacting you through the Knowledge Keeper Program with the school district.”</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Talk to the speaker about the details of the presentation and the class: the date and time of the presentation; the course or grade level of the students, the approximate number of students and the age of the students; let the speaker know if there are any topics that are not appropriate to share based on who your students are. Let the speaker know what learning experiences the students have had connected to the topic (Responsibility, Relevance & Respect).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Date:</li> <li>• Time:</li> <li>• Grade Level and Age of students:</li> <li>• Approximate number of students:</li> <li>• Concerns for students’ needs have been communicated.</li> <li>• Speaker is aware of previous learning experiences.</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> Arrange details with the speaker for the day of the presentation: transportation, mobility in and around the school, meeting spot, handouts photocopied, equipment or supplies, any speaker needs, how would they like the classroom arranged. Think about all details (Respect & Responsibility).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does your speaker require support with transportation/mobility within the school?</li> <li>• Where will you meet them (please note if you are meeting at the office, a teacher or students needs to be there to greet them as they arrive)?</li> <li>• Communicated with presenter about school entrance requirements (ie. doorbell, health scan, parking, etc.)</li> <li>• Copying handouts (if requested)</li> <li>• Equipment/supplies ready</li> <li>• Helpers/Greeters have been notified (ie. someone to help bring in materials)</li> <li>• Classroom Arrangement:</li> <li>• Other speaker needs:</li> </ul>

<input type="checkbox"/> Ask the speaker how they would like to be honoured in the introduction to the students. For example: Where are they from? Communities they belong to. Contributions the speaker would like highlighted (Respect, Relevance & Responsibility).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name:</li> <li>• Community/Communities:</li> <li>• Highlighted contributions:</li> <li>• I have practiced the pronunciation of the speakers name and community (Ask for support if you need it).</li> <li>• I have visioned how to honour and celebrate the arrival of the speaker with my students.</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> I have checked in with the speaker to see that they are feeling comfortable with accepting the booking, and have thanked them for their time and consideration (Respect & Responsibility).	<p><i>Example: “_____, I’d like to review that you comfortable with sharing your knowledge about _____ on _____ (date) at _____ (time). We will meet you _____... etc. Thank you so much for chatting with me today and I look forward to hosting you soon. If something changes, here is how you can contact me _____.”</i></p> <p><i>**If your request is declined, you still thank them for the consideration and their time.</i></p>

**Preparing the students and the space (the day before):**

<input type="checkbox"/> I have discussed listening and speaking protocols with the students ahead of time. (Respect, Reciprocity, Relevance & Responsibility)	<p>What does listening to and learning from a Knowledge Keeper look, sound and feel like? Traditionally only one person speaks at a time. We do not speak on top of/interrupt our peers or the speaker. Students should wait to be invited to ask a question by the Knowledge Keeper. Encourage students to be in the moment (ie. Raising a hand during the presentation shifts your mind from focusing on learning from the presentation to forming a question).</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> I have shared with the students about how to host and care for our guest.  <input type="checkbox"/> I have asked for volunteers (1-2 per assignment) (Respect, Reciprocity, Relevance & Responsibility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who will be the greeter and where will they meet the guest?</li> <li>• Who will assist in bringing supplies to the room?</li> <li>• Who will set up the area that the Knowledge Keeper will present from (a nice chair, tissues, a place to put the water class, if they need stands or table space)?</li> <li>• Who will be in charge of the beverage(s)?</li> <li>• Who will make a sign for our door letting the school know not to interrupt as we have a presentation happening?</li> <li>• Who will set up our space in the way that our Knowledge Keeper prefers (ie. Chairs in a circle, etc.)</li> <li>• The teacher will thank the Knowledge Keeper, but who will give the gift to them?</li> <li>• Who will make sure that everyone in our class has signed the card?</li> </ul>

<input type="checkbox"/> I have shared with my students about the importance of gifting (Respect, Reciprocity, Relevance & Responsibility)	<p>One way you can discuss this with your class is to share the following: From an Indigenous perspective, learning is deeply connected to relationships and the gift of sharing knowledge with someone you are in a relationship with. Gifting is a very important part of Indigenous protocol as it is a sign of respect, gratitude, and an acknowledgment of the reciprocity of teaching and learning. While providing a gift does not need to be fancy or expensive, it is good to follow the protocol of gifting. We don't take from other people; people share their gifts with us, and we share our gifts back to them. It's reciprocal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have shared with the students about the gift I purchased for our Knowledge Keeper.</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> I have informed administrative staff about our guest (Respect)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have informed the office that a guest will be joining us the next day and students will be at the door to greet.</li> <li>• I have invited the ISW at our school to join us if they like.</li> <li>• I have informed my administrator about the date of our presentation and student involvement.</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> I am prepared to be in the moment learning along-side of my students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have cleared my calendar so that my attention is undivided.</li> </ul>

### The day of your Presentation:

<input type="checkbox"/> I am starting my day grounded with a good heart and good mind. I am open and ready to learn. (Respect, Reciprocity & Responsibility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My good thoughts about today are:</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> I am supporting my students to start their day with a good heart and good mind and are open and ready to learn. (Respect, Reciprocity & Responsibility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have shared my open and positive energy with my students to set them up for a good day.</li> <li>• I have created a positive atmosphere in my classroom.</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> I have asked that student helpers begin their work for the Knowledge Keeper's arrival. (Respect, Reciprocity & Responsibility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The greeter is ready to meet the guest is at the front door</li> <li>• The person helping bringing in supplies is at the front door</li> <li>• The person setting up the area that the Knowledge Keeper will present from (a nice chair, tissues, a place to put the water class, if they need stands or table space) is completed.</li> <li>• The person in charge of beverages has a glass of water ready.</li> <li>• There is a sign on your door letting the school know not to interrupt during the presentation.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our classroom space is set up in the way that our Knowledge Keeper prefers (ie. Chairs in a circle, etc.)</li> <li>• The teacher is ready will thank the Knowledge Keeper.</li> <li>• The card has been signed and is with the gift.</li> <li>• The student has the thank you gift and is ready to give the gift to them (after the presentation is complete).</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> As the teacher, I am holding a space and modeling for the students to show active listening. (Respect & Responsibility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am remaining in the room during the presentation.</li> <li>• I am supporting student engagement (gentle reminders, proximity, etc.)</li> </ul>

**After the Presentation:**

<input type="checkbox"/> I thank the Knowledge Keeper for their time and sharing with us. (Respect, Relevance, Responsibility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some specific aspects that I am thankful for:</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> I support the students in thanking and gifting to the Knowledge Keeper. (Respect, Responsibility, Reciprocity & Relevance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student's name:</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> I support the students in helping our Knowledge Keeper out of the building/classroom. (Respect, Responsibility & Reciprocity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Greeter walks with Knowledge Keeper to their next destination (car, other classroom, washroom, etc.).</li> <li>• Student helper moves supplies back to Knowledge Keeper's vehicle.</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> I have prepared a thoughtful discussion period or reflection time for the students after. (Relevance & Reciprocity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some ideas are: class or small group discussion, walk outdoors with partners, drawing/writing ideas and reflections, etc.</li> </ul>

