

# Cultural Safety Internet Resource for Indigenous Arts

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## TERMINOLOGY

The United Nations General Assembly document, *Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Study on the Role of Languages and Culture in the Promotion and Protection of the Rights and Identity of Indigenous Peoples* ([https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/IPeoples/EMRIP/Session5/A-HRC-EMRIP-2012-3\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/IPeoples/EMRIP/Session5/A-HRC-EMRIP-2012-3_en.pdf)), provides excellent examples of descriptions of terms that are commonly applied when discussing cultural safety for Indigenous peoples:

*Indigenous peoples' cultures include tangible and intangible manifestations of their ways of life, achievements and creativity, are an expression of their self-determination and of their spiritual and physical relationships with their lands, territories and resources.*

[Human Rights Council, *Expert Mechanism* p.13 A("Definition of Culture").52]

*Think Before You appropriate: Things to Know and Questions to Ask in Order to Avoid Misappropriating Indigenous Cultures*

([https://www.sfu.ca/ipinch/sites/default/files/resources/teaching\\_resources/think\\_before\\_you\\_appropriate\\_jan\\_2016.pdf](https://www.sfu.ca/ipinch/sites/default/files/resources/teaching_resources/think_before_you_appropriate_jan_2016.pdf)) prepared by Simon Fraser University for the Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage Project is an informative brochure that outlines some of the challenges and pitfalls that could otherwise lead to cultural appropriation, by expanding on concepts surrounding the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge in cultural products.

*"Tangible heritage" refers to the material products of culture, such as objects and architecture. "Intangible heritage" refers to cultural expressions, practices, and knowledge including language, dances, stories, designs, and techniques.*

(Intellectual Property Issues, *Think Before* p.2)

The approaches for responsible creative collaboration advocated by the Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage Project include: "free prior and informed consent, shared control over process and product, acknowledgement and attribution, respect for cultural differences, [and] reciprocity and benefit-sharing." (Intellectual Property Issues, *Think Before* pp.6-7)

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### MEDIA AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY FOR INDIGENOUS TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE (TK)

The World Intellectual Property Organization distributes a document titled *Protect and Promote Your Culture: A Practical Guide to Intellectual Property for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities* ([https://www.wipo.int/edocs/pubdocs/en/wipo\\_pub\\_1048.pdf](https://www.wipo.int/edocs/pubdocs/en/wipo_pub_1048.pdf)) that summarizes things to consider around sharing traditional knowledge and defining intellectual property in plain language.

*Traditional knowledge (TK) is generally understood to mean the know-how, skills, innovations and practices developed by indigenous peoples and local communities, while traditional cultural expressions (TCEs) are generally understood as the tangible and intangible forms in which traditional knowledge and cultures are expressed.*

(WIPO, *Protect and Promote* p.9)

For info more directly related to media production, imagineNATIVE discusses the details of cultural safety on set in the publication, *On-Screen Protocols and Pathways: A Media Production Guide to Working with First Nations Métis and Inuit Communities, Cultures, Concepts and Stories*. (<https://teleglobe.ca/wp-content/uploads/ospp-guide-en.pdf>)

Standards for image use are everyone's civil liberties. In keeping with this, Indigenous knowledge should only be communicated with the expressed intention that was conveyed when the knowledge was shared.

(Stryker, *Rights Talk* p.55)

(<https://bccla.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/2013-Handbook-Rights-Talk.pdf>)

Reflective Questions:

- *What kind of relationship with living Indigenous peoples does my approach and resulting work reflect?*
- *If I embark on a project that is inspired by Indigenous cultural heritage, what steps will I take to ensure that it leads to a respectful and responsible collaboration?*

(Intellectual Property Issues, *Think Before* p.20)

- Are all copyright and intellectual property rights being respected?
- Are cultural products in the public domain actually traditional knowledge?
- Are traditional knowledge rights being considered?

(WIPO, *Protect and Promote*)

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### ELDER PROTOCOLS

Indigenous elder protocols will vary from Indigenous community to tribal culture. The University of Concordia's Indigenous Directions Leadership Group publishes a helpful guide called, *Indigenous Elder and Community Protocols: Guidelines for Acknowledging Territory / Protocols for Working with Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Community Members*

(<https://www.concordia.ca/content/dam/concordia/offices/oce/IDLG/Indigenous-Elder-and-Community-Protocols.pdf>) that outlines common sense recommendations for communication, courtesy and respectful engagement with Indigenous elders to support mutual awareness of culture-specific expectations around Indigenous elder protocols. These include suggestions for requesting Indigenous elders and knowledge keepers to act as speakers at events:

- Inquire about ceremonial speaking and listening practices
- Inquire about preferred gift offering as appreciation for knowledge sharing (cash, gift, tobacco)
- Compensate travel and parking  
(Indigenous Directions, *Indigenous Elder*)

In Judy Iseke's article, "Spirituality as Decolonizing: Elders Albert Desjarlais, George McDermott, and Tom McCallum Share Understandings of Life in Healing Practice,"

(<https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/19142/16235>) Iseke discusses her work with Indigenous elders in film and digital storytelling, and shares her wisdom that, "Researchers and digital storytellers have a responsibility to ensure that the Elders are comfortable with the finished product." (Iseke, "Spirituality" p.44)

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### TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Territorial acknowledgements are distinct in every locale, with phrasing that is suited to individual communities. However, there is agreement across communities that a territorial acknowledgement should be conducted at the start of proceedings by the host or introducer, and that every effort should be made by the host to learn correct pronunciation of tribal names.

The Victoria School District SD61 leaflet, *Acknowledgement of Traditional Territory*, (<https://aned.public.sd61.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/112/2020/01/ACKNOWLEDGEMENT-OF-TRADITIONAL-TERRITORY.pdf>) explains the reason that a territorial acknowledgement is important.

The British Columbia Government publication, "A Guide to the Pronunciation of Indigenous Communities and Organizations in BC" from the *Guide to Aboriginal Organizations and Services in British Columbia* ([https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/indigenous-people/aboriginal-peoples-documents/a\\_guide\\_to\\_pronunciation\\_of\\_bc\\_first\\_nations\\_-\\_oct\\_29\\_2018.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/indigenous-people/aboriginal-peoples-documents/a_guide_to_pronunciation_of_bc_first_nations_-_oct_29_2018.pdf)) offers a pronunciation key to the place names associated with Indigenous organizations through the province.

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### CULTURAL SAFETY AND ALLYSHIP

Some definitions that are attributed to cultural safety frameworks can be applied to decolonization practices. Lauren Baba's definitions in *Cultural Safety in First Nations, Inuit and Métis Public Health: Environmental Scan of Cultural Competency and Safety in Education, Training and Health Services* (<https://www.ccnsa-nccah.ca/docs/emerging/RPT-CulturalSafetyPublicHealth-Baba-EN.pdf>) translate well into the definitions to build a framework for acceptable practices in Indigenous arts and culture. These are:

- Cultural Awareness: "acknowledgement of difference," awareness that Indigenous peoples may have different needs, expectations, aspirations, customs than mainstream society
- Cultural Sensitivity: "respect cultural differences," being considerate and respectful without imposing expectations or assumptions of how Indigenous persons should seem
- Cultural Competence: cultural knowledge and interest with ability to communicate and function cross-culturally
- Cultural Safety: cultural competence with reflective assessment and awareness of power imbalances and situations of 'power over', historic circumstances of oppression, impact and implications, ethical engagement  
(Baba, Cultural Safety pp.7-8)

The First Nations Health Authority's. "FNHA's Policy Statement on Cultural Safety and Humility: 'It Starts With Me,' " (<https://www.fnha.ca/Documents/FNHA-Policy-Statement-Cultural-Safety-and-Humility.pdf>) presents strategies to implement cultural safety at both the individual and organizational levels, and states that the, "Development of measures to assess cultural safety and humility across an organization or program, [is] a part of quality improvement." (FNHA, "FNHA's Policy" p.16)

An awareness of cultural safety is important for Indigenous allyship to be effective. Some self-reflective questions for Indigenous allies could include: What is my interest? Who does my allyship serve? What is my contribution? How does my allyship affect my self-image?

(Swiftwolf, Indigenous Ally p.3)

([http://reseaumtlnetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Ally\\_March.pdf](http://reseaumtlnetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Ally_March.pdf))

Cultural safety includes being receptive to differences and unknowns. Spirituality can be a decolonizing practice and may be integrated into an engagement with Indigenous peoples. (Iseke, "Spirituality") Perceiving this as an opportunity to learn something new will help maintain a healthy connection that is culturally safe.

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### WELLNESS INDICATORS AND WORLDVIEWS

Indigenous peoples' cultures, values and practices may entail continual reassessment of our understandings of Indigenous wellness indicators. A working knowledge of Indigenous worldviews can contribute to healthier cultural exchange.

Dawn Hill, in her article "*Traditional Medicine in Contemporary Contexts: Protecting and Respecting Indigenous Knowledge and Medicine*," ([https://www.hhr-rhs.ca/en/?option=com\\_mtree&task=att\\_download&link\\_id=7873&cf\\_id=68](https://www.hhr-rhs.ca/en/?option=com_mtree&task=att_download&link_id=7873&cf_id=68)) summarizes the viewpoint that, "Indigenous knowledge of traditional medicine would inherently be tied to land and expressed through language and culture," describing the connection for Indigenous arts and culture with land based wellness practices.

The ideas Hill describes are integrated into a First Nations Health Council Backgrounder intended to recognize priorities in social determinants of health: "Land, water and environment, Lifelong learning, Income and employment, Early life, Social support networks, Gender, Physical environment, Personal health practices and coping skills." (FNHC, *What Are*)

Learning about Indigenous approaches to wellness and transformation is a good way to introduce Indigenous worldviews into a practice. The Medicine Wheel is a well-known symbol of an Indigenous cosmology. Movement through the four cardinal directions of the Medicine Wheel represents the development of insight through a path of learning/inner spirituality, independence of thought/emotional healing, responsibility in action/physical and community health, and sharing/meaningful experience.

(Côté and Manitowabi, "Foreward" pp.6-7; Hill, "A Holistic")

([https://scholars.wlu.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1023&context=scwk\\_faculty](https://scholars.wlu.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1023&context=scwk_faculty))

Another Indigenous practice is knowledge and sharing of the "Seven Grandfather Teachings of Love, Bravery, Honesty, Wisdom, Respect, Humility and Truth" (Nabigon and Wenger-Nabigon, "Wise Practices" p.50) in words and action.

The City of Vancouver's report on *Indigenous Wellness Indicators: Including Urban Indigenous Wellness Indicators in the Healthy City Strategy* ([https://sustain.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/2018-62%20Indigenous%20Wellness%20Indicators\\_Heggie.pdf](https://sustain.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/2018-62%20Indigenous%20Wellness%20Indicators_Heggie.pdf)) emphasizes the importance of "1. Indigenous Leadership, 2. Respectful Relationships, 3. Culturally Appropriate [Engagement], 4. [Strengths-Focused], 5. Capacity-Building." (Heggie, *Indigenous Wellness* p.5)

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