

Respectful Engagement in Indigenous Cultural and Ceremonial Events

A Resource for New Participants



Tel: 416-645-0822

Fax: 1-888-204-5170

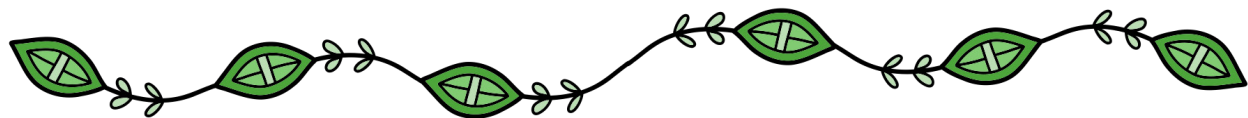
Toll free: 1-866-963 3952

Email: info@iphcc.ca

Indigenous cultures are deeply rooted in ceremonial traditions that honour the land, ancestors and community. Participating in cultural and ceremonial gatherings is a privilege that comes with the responsibility of respect and understanding. This resource offers essential principles and practice to engage appropriately.

Understanding the significance

Recognize the importance of receiving an invitation to participate in a cultural or ceremonial event- it's a genuine honour. Approach this opportunity with deep respect and appreciation, acknowledging the cultural and spiritual value it holds for the community. Before attending, don't hesitate to ask questions and learn more about the meaning behind the gathering.



Before you participate

Know there is diversity among cultures and practice: Indigenous populations are rich in diversity, each with their own unique language, traditions and histories. It's important to have an open mind, avoiding assumptions and generalizations.

Seek guidance: If possible, speak to organizers/host about what to expect and how to participate respectfully.

Understand your role as a guest: Inquire about any specific protocols or guidelines to follow during the event. Each community may have different practices.



Etiquette and Conduct



Dress protocol: For many Indigenous cultures, traditional attire holds significant cultural and spiritual meaning. It can also reflect the community's identity, values and traditions. As a guest, you may be requested to wear clothing in accordance with ceremonial protocols. For example, ribbon shirts and skirts are often encouraged due to cultural significance, spiritual respect, unity and cohesion. If you have questions about ceremonial dress, don't hesitate to consult with those who invited you for further guidance.

Ceremonial offerings: You may be asked to bring an offering. Know the types of offering that are appropriate for the ceremony, such as tobacco, sweetgrass or other culturally significant items. Follow community guidance on how and when to present these.

Respectful behaviour: Follow the lead of community members, be present and attentive to what's happening. Listen actively and learn from the experience. Ceremonies can involve storytelling and teachings that convey further understanding about Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

Respect for sacred items and bundles: Do not touch or handle ceremonial items without permission. Treat sacred objects such as pipes or drums with the utmost respect.

Your respectful participation matters

After the ceremony take the time to reflect on what you observed and learned. Your understanding on Indigenous ceremonial protocols is key to fostering respectful relationships and supporting cultural preservation. Always approach these traditions with an open heart and a willingness to learn. Your respect and consideration help build stronger, more inclusive communities.

For further guidance, consider reaching out to local Indigenous led organizations or relations@iphcc.ca.

Photos, video and social media: Always ask for permission before taking photos at ceremonies and gatherings where sacred bundle items are present. This also includes, traditional regalia, sacred fires, sweat lodges (when active).

Supportive presence: You can show a supportive presence that honours and respects our Indigenous ways of being. Offer support, by assisting community members if needed. Maintain a quiet presence, refraining from talking or using mobile devices during the ceremony.

Express gratitude: Thank the hosts and ceremonial conductors, acknowledging the honour of being part of their cultural practice. Often it is customary to gift the ceremonial conductor or hosts, to show gratitude and respect for their time. Consult beforehand, with the host or ceremonial conductor on what might be suitable.



IPHCC would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which these ceremonies are conducted and express our gratitude for their enduring connection to this land and its cultural practices.