**Indigenous Celebration Day**

We are very excited about our upcoming Indigenous Day at Cooper’s Crossing School. Students will learn about cultural diversity with First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples, discovering and exploring the rich history and teachings.

Information

**What are Elder’s?**

Elders are essential to the health and strength of Indigenous communities. Within Indigenous cultures, Elders and traditional knowledge keepers are treated with respect for all of their many contributions.

Elders help us remember where we come from and help us to find the way forward. “Elder” refers to a person’s status in the community and cultural/ traditional knowledge that person holds rather than their age.

Recognition Gifting Tobacco, sage, cedar, or sweet grass wrapped in a cloth bundle is often a gift offered to an Elder. Gifting an honorarium is also a way of acknowledging and respecting the teachings shared by an Elder.

**How do you greet an Elder?**

When you greet an Elder, expect a soft handshake, do not apply pressure. During the ceremony, everyone stands, hats removed, heads’ bowed, hands by side or clasped in front. Don’t sit down until you are sure the Elder has finished speaking. Do not talk, text or take phone calls during the ceremony. Be in the moment and ask the group or audience to also be in the moment.

Most of our Aboriginal people who aspire to a particular specialty have worked with Elders for at least twenty years and more, much like an apprentice. Aboriginal people in their thirties, forties, and fifties, who work to serve their communities, work with Elders who have a particular specialty of interest to them: for example, Medicine People, or those who know how to conduct Pipe, Sweat Lodge, Sun Dance, Lodge, and other ceremonies, such as the Chicken Dance and Horse Dance.

**What is the tobacco offering?**

*For First Nations or Métis Elders, one must offer tobacco. T*obacco is one of the four sacred medicines, and it is offered when making a request. The offering can be in the form of a tobacco pouch or tobacco tie (loose tobacco wrapped in a small cloth).  The tobacco pouch or tie should be prepared by the person making the request.  As the pouch or tie is being made it is good to think about what you are asking for and put good thoughts into the offering.  When making a request, offer the tobacco by holding it in your left hand (in front of you), state your request (be specific), and if the Elder accepts your request place the tobacco in their left hand. (Refer to the [Tobacco Offering Protocol](https://carleton.ca/indigenous/tobacco-offering-protocol/) for guidelines on how to make a tobacco tie.)

* Historically, many Aboriginal people used Sacred Tobacco in combination with other plants/herbs to treat some illnesses. Also, the growing and harvesting of tobacco was considered a sacred act.
* The smoke from tobacco burned on sacred fires or in sacred pipes rises to the sky, carrying prayers to the spirit world.
* Sacred Tobacco can be used as a daily offering to give thanks for all the gifts.
* Tobacco is placed onto Mother Earth in a quiet place where no one walks as acknowledgement for providing all the things that help sustain our physical beings. Offering Tobacco to water is an acknowledgement of the lifeblood that sustains us. Without water, we would cease to exist.
* Offering Sacred Tobacco is a way of giving thanks in advance of a request. Whenever there is a request for guidance, advice, ceremonies or taking from the animal or spirit world, Sacred Tobacco is always offered first.
* The smoke from the tobacco plant is used in ceremonies to cleanse or purify an individual, object, or place that is part of that ceremony.

In contrast, tobacco use today, including inhaling, has no connection with First Nations spirituality. Using traditional tobacco for ceremonial and medicinal reasons is part of the Aboriginal heritage

**What is a land acknowledgement?**

A Land Acknowledgement is a formal statement that recognizes the unique and enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories.

**Why do we do land acknowledgements?**

A territorial or land acknowledgement is an act of reconciliation that involves making a statement recognizing the traditional territory of the Indigenous people who called the land home before the arrival of settlers, and in many cases still do call it home.

Its purpose is to recognize that we, as settlers and as people who are not part of First Nations or Indigenous groups, are here on their land.

To recognize the land is an expression of gratitude and appreciation to those whose territory you reside on, and a way of honouring the Indigenous people who have been living and working on the land from time immemorial. It is important to understand the long-standing history that has brought you to reside on the land, and to seek to understand your place within that history. Land acknowledgements do not exist in a past tense, or historical context: colonialism is a current ongoing process, and we need to build our mindfulness of our present participation. It is also worth noting that acknowledging the land is Indigenous protocol.

**Why are land acknowledgements necessary?**

Inspired by the [94 recommended calls to action](https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/truth-and-reconciliation-94-calls-to-action-1.3362258) contained in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (now known as the [National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation](https://nctr.ca/map.php), or NCTR), land acknowledgements are [a necessary first step](https://newsinteractives.cbc.ca/longform-single/beyond-94?&cta=1) toward honouring the original occupants of a place. They also help Canadians recognize and respect Indigenous peoples’ inherent kinship beliefs when it comes to the [land](https://locallove.ca/issues/land-acknowledgements-uncovering-an-oral-history-of-tkaronto/), especially since those beliefs were restricted for so long.

**How Should we act during land acknowledgements?**

Be mindful of the thoughts that go through your head when you hear or see a land acknowledgement.