

Board Development Topic: Ten Fast Facts on Indigenous Cultural Events & Celebrations

Date of Board Meeting:

April 25, 2024

Strategic Priority:

- High Quality Teaching and Learning
- Engagement of All Students, Families, and Communities
- Effective Policy and Procedures
- Healthy, Sustainable Physical & Social Environments

Presented by: Angella Pinay & Robert Severight

Quality Indicator(s):

- QI 2.6 Championing the Calls to Action by promoting reconciliation events and initiatives.
- QI 3.2 Engaging in ongoing professional learning related to board governance.
- QI 5.2 Modeling a commitment to personal and professional growth.
- QI 5.3 Fostering high-quality teaching and professional improvement.
- QI 5.4 Creating a highly effective leadership team to ensure the Division's objectives and outcomes are met.
- QI 5.5 Modeling high ethical standards of conduct.
- QI 10.1 Representing the Division in a positive, professional manner.
- QI 11.3 Establishing and maintaining positive, professional working relationships with staff and community.

Information for the Board (10 facts):

When you are invited as a Dignitary:

1. **Research and Understand the Event:** Prior to attending, familiarize yourself with the type of celebration you will be participating in, whether it is a Feast, Round Dance, Pow-wow, or any other cultural event. Understanding the significance and customs associated with the event demonstrates respect for the culture and traditions of the First Nations community. Such as:
 - a. **Pow-wow Grand Entry:** Look for an official to organize you into the lineup. Be prepared to stand for a while, as after the grand entry there may be some speeches. Be prepared to be called upon to provide greetings. Be able to say hello in the local language. There are songs called Intertribals...you are welcome to dance in those and can visit while dancing.
 - b. **Feast:** Look for an Elder's Helper to direct you with directional protocol before you are seated as there may be some seating instructions. Bring lots of containers, a bowl and utensils, napkins, tea towels and a blanket for sitting. You will likely be provided with more food than you can eat, it is disrespectful to refuse. You will likely be taking food home. If you are unable to eat it all even at home, do not throw it in the trash but rather make an offering of it somewhere outside as it is blessed.

- c. **Round Dance** – Look for an official to organize you. Be prepared to provide greetings. There may be a give-away song. If you receive an item, you will be expected to stand with all those that were gifted and dance holding the items.
2. **Respect Traditional Gender Roles:** In some First Nations communities, there may be specific seating arrangements based on gender. It is essential to respect these traditional customs. If unsure, you can inquire with event organizers or local knowledge keepers about appropriate seating arrangements.
3. **Appropriate Attire:** Consider wearing traditional attire if appropriate and respectful. For example, if attending a Pow-wow, you might consider wearing a ribbon skirt or shirt, which holds cultural significance. However, if you are unsure about what to wear, it is best to ask the event organizers or local community members for guidance.
4. **Bring a Gift:** If your organization is hosting the event, you will want to honor those you have asked to come with a gift beyond a tobacco offering such as a blanket or it could be something symbolic or culturally significant, such as traditional artwork, food, or monetary. Again, if unsure, you can ask for guidance on appropriate gifts from event organizers or local community members.
5. **Respect Sacred Items and Spaces:** Many First Nations celebrations involve the use of sacred items and spaces. It is crucial to treat these with the utmost respect and reverence. Avoid touching or interfering with any sacred items unless invited to do so and be mindful of your behavior in sacred spaces.
6. **Observe Protocols:** Prior to attending the event, inquire about any specific protocols or customs that you should observe as a dignitary. This might include how to greet elders, appropriate conduct during ceremonies, or any other cultural practices that are important to the community.
7. **Listen and Learn:** Use the opportunity to listen and learn from members of the First Nations community. Be open to understanding their perspectives, traditions, and experiences. Respectfully engage in conversations and ask questions when appropriate, but also be mindful of not intruding or being insensitive.
8. **Support Indigenous Businesses and Artisans:** If there are vendors or artisans present at the event, consider supporting Indigenous businesses by purchasing their goods or artwork. This not only provides economic support but also helps to preserve and promote Indigenous culture and traditions.
9. **Respect Photography and Videography Guidelines:** Before taking any photos or videos at the event, ensure that you are following any guidelines or protocols set forth by the organizers. Some ceremonies or performances may be considered sacred and not meant to be photographed or recorded.
10. **Express Gratitude and Appreciation:** At the conclusion of the event, express your gratitude and appreciation to the organizers, hosts, and members of the First Nations community for welcoming you and allowing you to participate in their celebration. A sincere thank you goes a long way in fostering positive relationships and mutual respect.

Respectfully submitted,

Quintin M. Robertson, Director/CEO
Good Spirit School Division