
Purpose / Background

The Division supports the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action and Competency 5 of Alberta Education's Teaching Quality Standard. It acknowledges and respects the cultural and spiritual needs and practices of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. Recognizing the cultural, spiritual, and symbolic importance of the tipi to many Indigenous communities, the Division allows the raising and care of tipis, provided that proper ceremonial protocols, permissions, and safety measures are followed.

Definition

A tipi is a traditional, cone-shaped structure, which holds deep cultural, spiritual, community, and ceremonial significance across various Indigenous communities. They may be built with different materials such as animal hide or canvas and wooden poles. Each aspect of the tipi holds value in history, teachings and symbolism. Tipis may vary in design and appearance depending on the community or nation, reflecting unique cultural teachings, practices and traditions.

Procedures

1. Schools wishing to purchase and/or raise a tipi must work receive approval from the Director of Indigenous Learning to begin the process.
2. After receiving approval to begin the process, administration must complete the Tipi Installation and Storage Form and submit it to Asset Planner.
3. Administration will engage the operations department to contact Alberta One Call if stakes will be deeper than 12". This will be done at a cost to the school.
4. Administration will confirm with local jurisdiction any permits which are needed and will complete applicable permit applications.
5. Administration will confirm with local jurisdiction and fire department if occupancy must be completed and complete applicable applications.
6. Administration will complete a safety plan and hazard assessment for the raising and lowering of the tipi.
7. Staff and students are not permitted to harvest or raise poles. A request including the appropriate cultural protocol and honourarium will be made to the Elder who is supporting the tipi raising.
8. Should the tipi be painted, SDS (Safety Data Sheet) sheets should be followed during the use of the paint. While not mandatory, it is preferred that paints used are water based rather than oil based.

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9. Cultural guidelines are as follows and will be supported by the branch:
- 9.1. Tipis should be raised in collaboration with the Indigenous Learning branch and Elders or Knowledge Keepers. The branch will support pre-existing relationships or connect schools with Elders and/or Knowledge Keepers who provide cultural teachings and support.
 - 9.2. In working with the branch, schools must have developed an understanding of Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being and the significance of a tipi, including the respect and reverence which must be held for it at all stages of its use before considering the purchase and raising of a tipi. Important considerations include the goal of the tipi raising, long term planning, financial planning to ensure that it is upkept in a respectful manner and learning which is required ahead of the initiative.
 - 9.3. With the support of the Indigenous learning branch, a relationship must be built with the Elder or Knowledge Keeper who acts as a cultural advisor and whose teachings and guidance should be followed. In addition to approval from the Director of Indigenous Learning, permission to pursue the purchase and raising of a tipi must be offered by the cultural advisor before a tipi initiative can begin.
 - 9.4. Schools should understand the value of and hold reverence for the information which is shared by Elders and Knowledge Keepers. Estimated costs should be determined ahead of commitment to the purchase and raising of a tipi in a culturally appropriate manner. Costs of maintenance and seasonal raising and lowering of the tipi should be taken into consideration when determining the feasibility of hosting a tipi. Any questions or concerns about Elder protocol or the rationale for costs should be directed to the Director of Indigenous Learning rather than the Elder or Knowledge Keeper.
 - 9.5. As specific protocols exist for the painting of tipis which vary from community to community, painting of tipis should be done under the guidance and permissions of the Elder or Knowledge Keeper supporting the initiative.
 - 9.6. Schools should consult the Indigenous learning branch in the case of damage to or retirement of a tipi.
 - 9.7. The school community should be offered access to information and education about the significance of the tipi to facilitate respect and safety in the community which will serve to prevent vandalism etc.
 - 9.8. Elders and Knowledge Keepers who share teachings should be members of the community of the nation on which the school historically sits. Tipis and tipi teachings vary from nation to nation and it is critical for the physical features of the tipi, symbolism, and the teachings to be consistent with the appropriate nation. Teachings address aspects such as symbolism, protocols for which parts of a tipi may be touched, who may raise and maintain the tipi, uses, and history of tipis etc. They are rooted in deep meaning and importance for different nations.

- 9.9. To the best of our ability, cultural teachings and guidance must be adhered to. As teachings and advice from the Indigenous community are requested, it is important that the information received is honoured and followed. Any concerns about teachings or protocols should be directed to the Indigenous learning branch.
- 9.10. When considering the location of the tipi, it is important to work in collaboration with Elders and Knowledge Keepers to determine an appropriate area as there are many considerations to include. For example, the door of a tipi most often faces east to meet the sun as it rises, limiting the ability to place it in some areas in which a fence or building might be a hinderance to the sun reaching the tipi or to open access to the door of the tipi.

Reference:

- Alberta Education Teaching Quality Standard
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action