

Learning & Education Advancement Fund: Guidelines for Indigenous Initiatives

Overview

As part of your Learning & Education Advancement Fund (LEAF) project, you might have determined that you will attend to Indigenous ways of knowing and being and / or to work with Indigenous communities, Knowledge Keepers and / or Elders. If you plan to pursue a project in this space, there are key resources and steps you should be aware of:

- At the University of Toronto, we are guided in our work by [Answering the Call: Wecheehetowin—a response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada](#).
- LEAF Expression of Interests that indicate their intent to work with Indigenous communities, Knowledge Keepers and / or Elders, as well as projects that plan to attend to Indigenous ways of knowing and being in their curriculum / classroom, will be reviewed by the Office of Indigenous Initiatives and / or appropriate divisional offices.
- Prior to submitting your Expression of Interest for LEAF, there are key divisional resources you should connect with to discuss your approach, divisional policies and resources and work already occurring. You will be asked to share which offices you have engaged with as part of your Expression of Interest:
 - o Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design: [Trina Moyan, Nehiyawak Nation, Advisor & Educator, First Peoples Advisory Office](#) and / or [Jewel Amoah, Assistant Dean, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion](#)
 - o Faculty of Applied Science & Engineering: [Marisa Sterling, Assistant Dean & Director Diversity, Inclusion and Professionalism](#)
 - o Faculty of Arts & Science: [Alexandra Logue, Assistant Director, Teaching & Learning Initiatives, Office of the Dean](#)
 - o University of Toronto Mississauga: [Tee Duke, Director, Office of Indigenous Initiatives](#)
 - o University of Toronto Scarborough: [Indigenous Initiatives, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Office](#)
- If you identify as an Indigenous instructor / staff member / librarian and would prefer to undertake a verbal Expression of Interest, please reach out to vp.iue@utoronto.ca to further discuss.
- Remember, at any stage of your project, if you have questions [please connect with our team at OVPIUE for support](#).

Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Community Members

As part of your LEAF project, you might have determined that you will engage with Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers and community members.

Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers are vital to the ongoing development and transmission of Indigenous thought and philosophies. While the terms, Elder and Knowledge Keeper, may have different meanings, they often refer to an Indigenous person who is recognized by their First Nation, Métis or Inuit community for their wisdom, abilities, community contributions and spiritual gifts. They have often apprenticed for long periods of time with other Knowledge Keepers or Elders, in order to be able to

transmit their knowledge to the coming generations with care and integrity. Depending on the Nation and community, Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers may also go by other titles such as Grandmother, Medicine Person or Senator (Métis). Since pre-colonial times, Elders and Knowledge Keepers have been passing their culture, values and guidance through formal and informal education using Indigenous pedagogy.

Elders and Knowledge Keepers can provide guidance on:

- Creation Teachings
- Indigenous Languages
- Clan Teachings and Indigenous Law
- Knowledge of traditional plants and medicines
- Indigenous arts, crafts, song and design
- Ceremonial protocols and teachings
- Local Indigenous histories, wayfinding and place naming
- Traditional governance structures and processes

It is important to note that not all Elders and Knowledge Keepers carry the same teachings and may not have all of the answers you are seeking. For example, a First Nations Elder may carry different cultural perspectives and teachings than an Inuit Elder. Connect with supports in your divisional offices to discuss your project, learning goals and better understand who might be best placed to support your project.

If you have determined you will be engaging with Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers and / or community members as part of your LEAF project, it is important this engagement is a meaningful collaboration:

- You should begin conversations early. Bringing in Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers and community members from the beginning and having conversations early is a key facet of reciprocity, and signals that the project team is committed to building respectful relationships and the project is being fundamentally informed by Indigenous knowledge and perspectives.
- In your application to LEAF, you will also want to share your plans for ongoing engagement with Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers and community members. How will you share with them outcomes or invite their feedback and involvement with your project?
- It is important you follow protocol for engaging respectfully with Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers and community members. This might include:
 - o An invitation to participate in your initiative. Be clear what you are asking them to do, and how you are asking the individual or community to engage with your project (e.g., translation of words or documents, knowledge sharing, ceremony).
 - o Familiarize yourself with proper protocols. This might include providing an honorarium and a gift, such as a bundle of tobacco, or another culturally appropriate offering. Connect with your divisional office to understand what proper protocols might include.
 - o When consulting with an Elder, Knowledge Keeper or other Indigenous community member, please consult the University of Toronto's [Payments to Indigenous Payees Guidelines](#). As part of your LEAF budget, you could include costs surrounding protocols.

- For an understanding of what protocols might include, you are encouraged to [review this resource created by First Nations House that outlines protocol for engagement with Traditional Teachers at U of T.](#)

Acknowledgement

In designing this resource, the Office of the Vice-Provost, Innovations in Undergraduate Education positions itself as a learner rather than an expert in the field of Indigenous initiatives. We strive to engage with our teaching and learning community in an ongoing process of collective self-education and communication and as such welcome feedback, comments and additional support resources to help further our collective growth. We extend our thanks to numerous colleagues for their valuable input in the development of this resource:

- Andrew Bomberry, Special Projects Officer, Curriculum and Education, Office of Indigenous Initiatives
- Kelly Crawford, Assistant Director, Indigenous Initiatives, University of Toronto Scarborough
- Tee Duke, Director, Office of Indigenous Initiatives, University of Toronto Mississauga
- Shannon Simpson, Senior Director, Office of Indigenous Initiatives
- Emma Stromberg, Indigenous Partnership Advisor, Faculty of Arts & Science
- Jewel Amoah, Assistant Dean, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design