



In a Good Way: Drama, Dance and Indigenous Studies

What is cultural appropriation?

According to Susan Scafidi, the author of *Who Owns Culture? Appropriation and Authenticity in American Law*, cultural appropriation can be defined as “taking intellectual property, traditional knowledge, cultural expressions, or artifacts from someone else’s culture without permission.”

To elaborate: “It’s most likely to be harmful when the source community is a minority group that has been oppressed or exploited in other ways or when the object of appropriation is particularly sensitive. E.g. sacred objects” (Scafidi). Especially when they have been denied their culture and practices for so long, as was the ramifications of the 1880 amendment of Canada’s Indian Act, where it stated that “Every Indian or other person who engages in or assists in celebrating the Indian festival known as the “Potlatch”...is guilty of a misdemeanor.” This was law until 1952.

Within this definition, it is important to define culture as including the language, dance, song, ceremony, ritual, medicine, clothing, design, sacred objects, oral tradition, etc, of a group of people.

“The whole process is an understanding of all cultures. How you approach it and take it in now becomes a personal experience and connection. We never looked at our dancing, singing, carving, beading as artwork. It was always a lifestyle, which is why we have to have a connection.” Ray John Jr

That said, in order to avoid cultural appropriation, you must have a personal connection to the material. Our role is to stay in the history and invite cultural knowledge keepers to support cultural learning.

Suggest video (created by the Ontario Arts Council): Indigenous Arts Protocols:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c6VuHJi6O0Q>

Guidelines

CODE recognizes with thanks the guidance and advice of traditional knowledge keepers in developing the following guidelines.

Special thanks to Ray John Jr. (Oneida Nation), Alanis King (Odawa), and Troy Maracle (Mohawk of the Bay of Quinte) for their contributions to this document.

- **Respect and reciprocity.** Create a relationship that is based on sharing and mutual benefit for everyone involved: Have a connection with your content. Develop a relationship with a knowledge keeper before seeking community relationship.
- **Seek permission first.** When considering using knowledge or teachings in the classroom, educators must always have permission from the person (e.g. Elder or Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK) keeper) or community from which the information is coming from to ensure accountability. The source of knowledge must always be acknowledged and referenced.
- **Build a relationship with Knowledge holders** (e.g. Elder) in your traditional territory. This is foundational for ensuring respect and building partnerships. With an established relationship, educators will be able to access information and local knowledge that is based on reciprocity and reconciliation. Building relationships will foster an inclusive and respectful learning community.
- **Acknowledge traditional territory**
Land acknowledgement is a complex issue. Some choose to acknowledge natural sources. Consult with the knowledge keepers and grandma and grandpas in your area for guidance. Make it personal and relevant and explain why it is being done.
- Projects must **involve the local Indigenous community** that owns/holds the knowledge. Community should be approached as a partner in learning from the beginning.
- Take time to **reflect** on the project with all partners involved.
- **Disclose** the origin of all Indigenous Knowledge accessed and used.
- Exercise extreme caution when using the internet as a resource as there are many inaccuracies and misrepresentations circulating. When looking at resources, always check to see **whose voice is telling the story** or providing the information.

Do	Avoid	Here's Why	Why not try?
Invite an Elder to give a teaching	Avoid teaching about sacred items.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Indigenous people lived through having these objects violently removed from them. -Appropriation was legislated policy. -Privilege Indigenous voices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Invite Indigenous partners to teach about culture, ceremony, stories -Forge partnerships with the local First Nations community, especially for anything relating to the culture -Seek out your own learning opportunities before sharing knowledge to be the best informed -Create relationships!
Use Indigenous plays/stories to discuss universal themes	Performing plays with Indigenous characters using non Indigenous actors when in a performance setting (as opposed to a classroom for process)	This appropriates voice.	Find connections to students' lived experiences
Stay in the shared history - Treaty Education, Water, Mother Earth, Solar System	<p>Avoid teaching about cultural practices and "tokenism" ie. replicating or recreating artifacts or experiences with students.</p> <p>Avoid only teaching from an historical perspective (e.g., teaching as if Indigenous people are in our past, or romanticized versions of Indigenous people).</p>	<p>Experiences and artifacts are intrinsically linked to that culture and Indigenous world views.</p> <p>Lends to limiting perspective and contemporary issues and contributions of Indigenous people.</p>	Focus on issues, history and relevant contemporary news, not on cultural practices, unless lead by a guest Elder or ITK keeper
Quote and cite	Avoid using	Ask yourself, is this	Ask your local Indigenous

sources, check accuracy	information you can't verify.	intellectual property? Do you have permission to share the information?	Education team for advice. All boards should have an Indigenous lead. Connect with the lead in your board.
<p>Use Contemporary materials that present First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in a variety of contexts (within urban, rural, 'reserve' communities) and across a range of social-economic circumstances.</p> <p>It is important to have an Asset based lens-- see the complexity of Indigenous knowledge systems and level of expertise.</p>	<p>Avoid stereotypical materials going unchallenged.</p> <p>Avoid focusing on historical material exclusively.</p>	<p>Focusing on the historical negates the contemporary experiences, lives and existence of Indigenous people.</p> <p>Reinforcing stereotypes dehumanizes and reinforces colonial perspectives.</p>	<p>Ensure that positive contemporary images and people are present in the classroom and in the school. Ie. Autumn Peltier (Water Walker), Christi Belcourt (artist/activist)</p> <p>Deconstruct visual images and representation in learning resources when encountered Ie. challenge pictures with negative connotations.</p>

Resources

First Nations, Metis and Inuit Education Association of Ontario
www.fnmieao.com

- http://fnmieao.com/resources/PDF's/ik_guidelines.pdf

National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation - Calls to Action
www.nctr.ca

ETFO resource: www.etfofnmi.ca

Dufferin-Peel Catholic DSB resource teacher resource:

<https://www.helpingourmotherearth.com/>

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Key Documents

TRC: Education Focus - call #62 and 63

62. We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to:

- i. Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students.
- ii. Provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms.
- iii. Provide the necessary funding to Aboriginal schools to utilize Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods in classrooms.
- iv. Establish senior-level positions in government at the assistant deputy minister level or higher dedicated to Aboriginal content in education.

63. We call upon the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to maintain an annual commitment to Aboriginal education issues, including:

- i. Developing and implementing Kindergarten to Grade Twelve curriculum and learning resources on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history, and the history and legacy of residential schools.
- ii. Sharing information and best practices on teaching curriculum related to residential schools and Aboriginal history.
- iii. Building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect.
- iv. Identifying teacher-training needs relating to the above.

Arts Focus - call #83 We call upon the Canada Council for the Arts to establish, as a funding priority, a strategy for Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists to undertake collaborative projects and produce works that contribute to the reconciliation process.

UN DECLARATION for the rights of Indigenous Peoples

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html>

Canada is now a signatory on this bill so we MUST remember Article 11 as teachers of the arts:

Article 11 1. Indigenous peoples have the right to practise and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artefacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature. 2. States shall provide redress through effective mechanisms, which may include restitution, developed in conjunction with indigenous peoples, with respect to their cultural, intellectual, religious and spiritual property taken without their free, prior and informed consent or in violation of their laws, traditions and customs.

Youth version:

http://files.unicef.org/policyanalysis/rights/files/HRBAP_UN_Rights_Indig_Peoples.pdf

Works Cited

Scafidi, Susan. *Who Owns Culture?: Appropriation and Authenticity in American Law*. Rutgers University Press, 2005.