

BOOKING CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

The Why

Overview

Common Booking Questions

Protocols

The Why:

Truth & Reconciliation

Wanuskewin is proud to be a place where all people can respectfully and meaningfully engage with Indigenous cultures on the collective journey of truth and reconciliation.



One of the most accessible ways we offer these experiences and deeper connections is through dance and music presentations with storytelling, and opportunities to sit with and learn from elders and knowledge keepers.

Overview:

We are honoured to work with elders, knowledge keepers, dancers, singers, musicians, and facilitators from all over Turtle Island, and close to home, who are passionate to share their experiences, talents, and teachings.

Common Booking Questions:

- Can I have the contact information of the elder/ dancers/ singers/ knowledge keeper/ facilitator?
 - *As the Booking Coordinators, we will handle all of the booking details for you, and relay any questions and details. We don't give out personal contact information.*
- Do I have to make payment directly to the individuals, or is this added to the booking?
 - *We will add any costs to the booking contract to invoice out to you, and then Wanuskewin will make up the cheques for the individuals we book in. You just need to confirm what you are requesting, sign the booking confirmation, bring the tobacco offerings, and follow protocols.*
- Can you send me more information on protocols or tobacco offerings?
 - *Absolutely. Below is some information we have been gifted from our elders over the years to share. These points are a good overview, but feel free to ask the elder, knowledge keeper, or dance group when they are on site if you want to know more on their traditions and protocols!*
- Can we have a smudge?
 - *This can be requested ahead of time if you want an elder/knowledge keeper to facilitate a smudge for your group, and requires more information on the amount of time put aside, space, and intentions for the smudge.*
 - *It is up to the discretion of the facilitator if they can accommodate the request, and we will know well ahead of time to be able to confirm with you.*
 - *Depending on the time set aside in your agenda, and the intention for the smudge, this can be:*
 - *A smudge bowl available for participants to use before they enter the gathering space.*
 - *A smudge lit for the room as part of the opening prayer and intentions for the day.*
 - *Or an opening circle, where some teachings are shared, and smudge brought around the circle of chairs for everyone to take part if they are comfortable.*

BOOKING CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

Protocols:

For some protocols to follow, we have been gifted this information by our elders' council over the years to share.

1) Tobacco Offering:

As your request and thank you, you would present the elder/ knowledge keeper/ drummer/ singer/ dancer/ facilitator with tobacco upon their arrival. The protocol we have been taught for this is holding the tobacco in your left hand and offering it to them while shaking with your right hand, saying something like:

"Thank you so much for being able to come today bringing your knowledge, and helping us honour the culture and history of the area."

Or something simple and heartfelt that talks about why you are asking them to be part of your gathering.

Preference is to be done by one person from your group at the beginning of your meeting or gathering. The tobacco offering must be done when they arrive, to open the conversation and thank them, not after the fact.

- You can ask when you meet them if they have a preference if you do this offering to them in front of the whole room/group as part of the welcome and as a teachable moment to share protocols, or in private when you meet them. Each elder and knowledge keeper is a bit different for this part!

You are responsible to bring and provide the tobacco offering, and this can be a sealed (unopened, new) pouch of tobacco, package of cigarettes, or a tobacco tie you've made.

- You can see a good link below for more information on how to make a tobacco tie:
<https://carleton.ca/indigenous/policies-procedures/tobacco-offering-protocol/>

Sample Introduction scripting if needed:

"We respectfully acknowledge that we are on Treaty 6 territory and the traditional lands of First Nations & Métis people (*or whatever your specific organizational land acknowledgement would be*).

We would like to welcome _____ to help open the day, share some of their teachings with us, and to honour the culture and history of the area. A tobacco offering has been made to _____ for being here today. We very much appreciate your time and are honoured you can be with us."

After that, they are good to take the mic!

The dancers, singers, and facilitators will have their own detailed intro after you announce them, but you can use the same scripting as above to welcome them.

WHY TOBACCO:

We have been taught by our elders that a gift of traditional tobacco is considered a sign of respect as one of the oldest original medicines, and is to be offered when asking for teachings, a service, help, guidance, or protection. This is part of the protocol of the invitation and thank you, and helps recognize the indigenous cultural connections to spirit, land, and us.

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2) No Open Alcohol:

Out of respect for Indigenous Cultures, and recognition of the ceremonial significance of the dance styles, drum, regalia, eagle feathers, and other sacred items present, there can be **NO OPEN ALCOHOL** during any Dance Presentation or Elder/Knowledge Keeper Services.

At Wanuskewin, there is no alcohol on site.

OFF SITE requests where we come to you, we ask that there is no open alcohol anywhere in the gathering space during these dance presentations, or openings and prayers.

- If you are planning on having alcohol for your gathering:
 - You can keep the bar closed until after the presentations are done, which are usually at the beginning of a gathering agenda.
 - If you will be having cocktails before, the bar will need to be shut down completely for the prayer, intentions, and dance presentations (30 - 60 minutes), and any open drink that is out would need to be removed.
 - No wine can be on the tables or in glasses.
 - Another option would be to have the dancers perform in another space, so people can remove themselves from the area where alcohol is, and enjoy the performance and presentation.
- If you think attendees will be quite intoxicated before our facilitators begin, the dancers **will not** perform, and elders/knowledge keepers/facilitators **will not** participate due to members of your group not showing respect, and not following and understanding these cultural protocols.

3) Space/Presentation Requirements:

For Elders/Knowledge Keepers:

- Name of the main contact who will be meeting them and presenting tobacco
- Copy of the agenda, or the theme/goals/ information of the gathering ahead of time
- Tobacco offering (*and gift if this is part of your protocols, and you would like to add*)
- Space to sit near the front of room (chair with arm rests is best)
- Microphone if a large group
- Possibly a small table for the smudge/their other items (depending on who is booked in)
- Coffee/water/tea
- If you are having a meal right before they are on the agenda, an invitation to them is protocol as well

For Dancers/Singers:

- Name of the main contact who will be meeting them and presenting tobacco
- a space to get ready, with a mirror and water provided in that space
- The Dancers will require about 20 feet of clear space for dancing (if on a stage, this can be flexible)
- Depending on the group size/booking, the singers(drummers) may need chairs for the large drum
- Water in the presentation space. This can be pitchers and glasses, or bottled water preferably
- Two cordless microphones if a large group (one for main presenter, and one for singers)
- A tobacco offering for each of the presenters (one for each dancer and singer as a thank-you)

When in doubt on any of this information, just know that if you are doing things with a good heart, and truly wanting to learn and follow protocols, everyone will appreciate everything you do, and we are here to help!