

EAGLE FEATHER PRESENTATION TO STUDENTS

High Prairie School Division is committed to Truth and Reconciliation and to honouring the rights, identities, languages, cultures, and traditions of Indigenous peoples. The Division recognizes the unique historical and contemporary relationship between Indigenous peoples and Canada and affirms its responsibility to support culturally respectful, responsive, and appropriate educational practices within all schools.

The presentation of eagle feathers to Indigenous students is a sacred cultural practice that must be guided by local Indigenous protocols, community relationships, and the informed choice of students and families. This Administrative Procedure is intended to ensure that such presentations are carried out in a manner that is respectful, legally compliant, and grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

Procedures

1. Background
 - 1.1. The eagle feather is a sacred symbol in many Indigenous cultures, representing respect, honour, strength, courage, and achievement. The Division recognizes the importance of honouring Indigenous students in ways that are culturally appropriate, respectful, and community-informed.
2. Purpose
 - 2.1. This Administrative Procedure provides guidance to schools on the respectful and culturally appropriate presentation of eagle feathers to Indigenous students during graduation and other significant school events.
 - 2.2. This procedure supports schools in ensuring that such presentations are voluntary, legally compliant, and grounded in local Indigenous protocols.
3. Scope
 - 3.1. This procedure applies to all HPSD schools where eagle feathers may be presented to students.
 - 3.2. This procedure applies to graduation ceremonies and other school-based milestone events where an eagle feather presentation is being considered.
4. Cultural Significance
 - 4.1. Eagle feathers are sacred items gifted in recognition of significant milestones or accomplishments.
 - 4.2. Eagle feathers are not decorative items and must be treated with reverence, care, and respect at all times.
 - 4.3. Schools shall approach eagle feather presentations as a cultural and spiritual recognition rather than a general award or token of achievement.
5. Community Engagement and Protocol
 - 5.1. Schools must consult with local Indigenous communities, Elders, and/or Knowledge Keepers prior to organizing any eagle feather presentation.
 - 5.2. Schools must respect that protocols vary between Nations and communities; no single process shall be assumed to be universally appropriate.
 - 5.3. Where possible, schools should work in partnership with the Division's Indigenous Education team to ensure alignment with community expectations.
6. Student and Family Choice
 - 6.1. Participation in any eagle feather ceremony is voluntary.
 - 6.2. Schools shall provide clear information to students and families regarding the meaning of the eagle feather and the nature of the ceremony.
 - 6.3. Families and students must be given the opportunity to decide whether and how an eagle feather presentation will occur.
 - 6.4. Where feathers are presented at graduation, the Indigenous Education Coaches (IEC) team may invite a community representative to participate.
 - 6.5. Students retain the right to accept or decline an eagle feather at graduation without penalty or consequence.

7. Legal and Ethical Sourcing
 - 7.1. All eagle feathers must be obtained legally and in compliance with federal legislation, including the *Migratory Birds Convention Act*.
 - 7.2. The Division's Indigenous Education Coaches will support schools in accessing feathers through appropriate legal and cultural channels.
 - 7.3. Schools shall not independently source eagle feathers without guidance from the Indigenous Education team.
8. Pre-Teachings
 - 8.1. Schools are strongly encouraged to provide pre-teachings to students receiving eagle feathers.
 - 8.2. Pre-teachings should include the cultural significance of the eagle feather, appropriate handling and care, and expectations for respectful use.
 - 8.3. Pre-teachings may be facilitated by Indigenous Education staff, Elders, or Knowledge Keepers.
9. Ceremonial Practices
 - 9.1. Any ceremonial elements (e.g., smudging, prayer, drumming, or song) must occur only with the consent of the student and their family.
 - 9.2. Where appropriate, an Elder or Knowledge Keeper should be invited to guide the ceremony.
 - 9.3. Schools must ensure that ceremonies occur in a respectful setting with appropriate tone, seating, and acknowledgement of Indigenous presence.
10. Handling and Care of Eagle Feathers
 - 10.1. Eagle feathers must be treated as sacred objects.
 - 10.2. Feathers must not be dropped, mishandled, or displayed in ways that could be considered disrespectful.
 - 10.3. Schools should provide students with guidance (written or verbal) on proper care and storage of their feather.
 - 10.4. Where possible, this guidance should be developed in collaboration with Indigenous Education staff.
11. Staff Awareness and Sensitivity
 - 11.1. School administrators and staff are expected to understand the cultural and spiritual significance of eagle feathers.
 - 11.2. The Division's Indigenous Education team will support professional learning opportunities related to Indigenous cultural protocols.
 - 11.3. Staff must avoid treating the eagle feather as equivalent to a standard award or honour.
12. Honouring the Moment
 - 12.1. The presentation of an eagle feather should be student-centred, meaningful, and affirming of identity.
 - 12.2. Schools should ensure that students feel respected, celebrated, and supported during the ceremony.
 - 12.3. The ceremony should prioritize dignity, cultural integrity, and community respect over formality or spectacle.
13. Review
 - 13.1. This Administrative Procedure shall be reviewed as needed in consultation with Indigenous Education staff and local Indigenous partners.