



## **Conducting tours/visits on Indigenous Land**

### **Introduction:**

Ethical space is a concept that means balancing worldviews. In Canada, it is often applied to balancing ways of knowing, doing, thinking, and being between Indigenous Nations, and colonial Euro-western Canadian society. Other similar terms include: two-eyed seeing, walking in two worlds, and strong like two people. Ethical space as applied to this document means creating ethical space between canoe culture, and the Indigenous nations that are local to the areas of guiding.

It is important to recognize that canoe culture is similar across Canada, and North America. Consider the similar terms, the similar practices, and similar set of training and credentials that guides are given to be authorized for leading trips.

Indigenous nations are diverse and unique even within small areas, and certainly in the North. Each Peoples in Canada developed a language, culture, knowledge system, and knowledge base, over time on the Land they evolved on. Remember, wherever you are in Canada, you ARE on Indigenous land. That Land comes with ways of knowing, doing, and thinking. It comes with language. It comes with protocol. That does not mean canoe culture is wrong, or that it doesn't have a place. But when travelling on Indigenous lands with Indigenous peoples, it should not be dominant over the culture of the place and the people.

There are ways to frame and lead trips, that offer the advice and knowledge of canoe culture in a way that makes space and respects the cultures of the Land. This is the balance of ethical space. The following are introductory recommendations that offers starting guidance for appropriate engagement on Indigenous Lands.

### **Recommendations:**

#### **1) Seek consent**

It is essential that the operator and guides have permission to be travelling/guiding on Indigenous Land. It is good practice to meet with the local Nation before embarking on the trip to seek consent for travel. The owner of the company or a representative with similar authority should be reaching out at this stage. If you don't know where to start, there are usually many organizations that are well-versed in the local politics and that work on the Land themselves, that could provide advice and guidance.

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## **2) Do your homework**

It would be elementary that all guides are comfortable with the history and current cultural/socio-political background of the areas in which they are conducting trips. This should be more than introductory knowledge. There are organizations that offer this type of training, and on top of that there can be designated time for questions and discussion within the organization.

## **3) Get to know the routes**

Guides doing the same trip more than once is beneficial. This is in contrast to much of canoe culture but is culturally appropriate and helps the guide to build knowledge and understanding of the area, the people, and the culture. There is so much to learn and know, and it is impossible to scratch the surface through one trip.

## **4) Build deeper relationships**

Relationship building is very important to most Indigenous peoples and central to most Indigenous cultures. Ensure there is communication with guests well ahead of time and that their individual needs are considered in the planning.

## **5) Consider your demographics**

It is at this stage that one of three scenarios will emerge:

1. A group of non-Indigenous guests, perhaps they are from the area or perhaps not.
2. A group of mixed Indigenous and non-Indigenous guests
3. A group of majority Indigenous guests

## **6) Share learning ahead of time**

For scenario 1 and for non-Indigenous participants in scenario 2, consider sending pre-reading, videos, audio, etc. about the route that has been created in collaboration with the Nations. This type of material can begin to be created or shared when first seeking consent and building a relationship with the local Nation (recommendation 1). Wherever possible, ensure that local people are telling their own stories.

## **7) Work dynamically with knowledge holders**

For scenarios 2 and 3, relationship building beforehand becomes even more essential. Do you have an Elder or experienced knowledge holder joining the trip? If so, meeting with them beforehand to determine roles will be extra important. The operator should consider extra measures, such as offering compensation (or partnering with the Nation to offer compensation) for time and knowledge on the trip. The operator can also consider several consultation meetings ahead of time, determining who will lead what – safety, knowledge sharing, etc.

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## **8) Be prepared for scenarios that may arise with Indigenous guests**

- Consider local and seasonal food. You may be travelling during an important harvest, where a certain food is in season – for instance, fish throughout the summer. If you plan ahead and have the right supplies, food from the Land can become a healthy and appropriate part of the trip menu. Indigenous food can be quite different from the food usually provided on guided canoe trips.
- Consider protocols for dealing with animals and plants – for instance, what to do if you see a bear? Are there plants or animals that require specific attention or that should be left alone?
- Consider the route – the route you have mapped out may not make sense for someone who has travelled the Land for a long time. Indigenous guests may have varying ideas on where to travel, camp, etc.
- Consider the possible presence of sacred or important sites along the route. There may be ways to behave around or at the sites, perhaps there are places to be avoided.
- Consider the language used. Indigenous languages are the languages of the Land and travelling on the Land can be a beautiful way to share and appreciate Indigenous language. Words for animals, places, scenarios, and people can all be integrated into a trip.
- Consider differences in philosophy on the Land between Indigenous cultures and canoe culture and be prepared... there are many. For instance, canoe culture tends to be strong on a 'leave no trace' philosophy. Many Indigenous cultures build and leave camps and supplies on the Land for future and communal use. The sign of people on the Land is a good thing, as people are part of Land and the Land wants us to be there in a good, respectful, and healthy way.