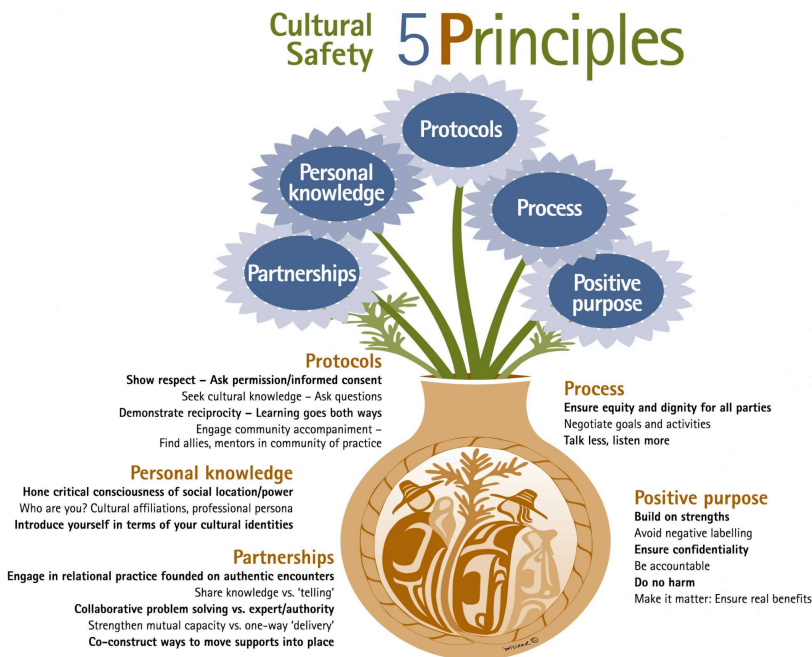


## Frequently Asked Questions

The Indigenous Education Department is guided by cultural safety practices. SD61 IED upholds a long-standing relationship with the Four Houses represented by Esquimalt First Nations, Songhees First Nations, Metis Nation of Greater Victoria and the Urban Peoples House Indigenous Advisory through the formal Indigenous Education Council/ [The Local Education Agreement](#) . It is through these houses that we consult, listen and develop resources for our district.

The following FAQs page is guided by the Agreements with the Four Houses.

### What is Cultural Safety?



[Graphic created by the UVIC Faculty of Child and Youth Care Department- Early Childhood Development Intercultural Partnership Program](#)

### ləkwənen language?

As requested by the local nations, the ləkwənen language is not to be taught in schools. See the picture below of the words that SD61 can teach while learning about indigenous plant gardens. As the local nations are in the process of reawakening their language, using only the list of words in the Indigenous [Meadow Garden Poster](#) below shows respect as they are on the journey of awakening their own language first before other people learn it.



Is done by the visitors of the land they are on. The SD61 website has a [poster](#) that has both a welcome (said by the people in their own words) and the acknowledgement (said by district community and visitors).

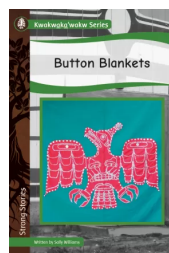
### **Which songs can I sing while drumming with my students?**

SD61 has several local songs that staff can use within our district. The songs were gifted by the composers of the songs. The well known Lekwangen Celebration Song by Yuxwelupton (Bradley Dick) and “The Equality Song” by Lyle Dick (Lyackson Nation) is one of the many songs you can find on our Drumming Google Drive that we are given permission to use. There are also many Lahal songs that are specifically used during the tournaments that occur. These songs are also shared with permission by the composers. Nations on the island have many more songs that belong to specific families and are not public. The songs on the drive are for us to use, but that too may evolve.

If you do not have access to the [“Drumming Songs”](#) google drive file filled with songs, please email the [iedlibrary@sd61.bc.ca](mailto:iedlibrary@sd61.bc.ca) for requesting access or talk with your school drum steward.

There are also songs from other nations. These songs are publicly available, sometimes found on YouTube. Your school drum steward will have some vocables posters (to be used when learning and put away once learned). Some of these songs include [“Children’s Blessing Song”](#) by Sherryl Sewepagaham, Anishnawbe [“Wildflower Song”](#) and [“The Spirit Bear Song”](#) (The Spirit Bear song not to be sung in the Winter) to name just a few. When using any of these songs or local songs, please acknowledge the composer and which nation they are from.

### **Can I make Button Blankets with my students?**



***“Not everyone has the right to make, or use, a Kwakwaka’wakw button blanket.”***

**-Sally Williams**

**“Button Blankets”**

It was an activity done in the past but now we have been asked not to do button blankets.

Here are the primary reasons why non-Indigenous people typically avoid making/wearing them:

- Button blankets are not simply decorative. They are considered "living documents" that tell a family's story and are used in sacred contexts. The designs, often depicting animals like ravens, bears, or whales, represent specific crests that are owned by families.
- The designs on these blankets are often passed down through generations or earned, marking a person's place in their culture. Non-Indigenous people do not have the cultural right to adopt these specific family histories.
- These blankets are typically reserved for special events, like potlatches or, in some cases, to mark major milestones like graduations, and are not worn in daily life.

One of the kits available from the IED Library has a button blanket exercise that allows students to replicate but not keep as a "made" item to display. Button blankets hold significant cultural meaning. This activity is designed to introduce students to the process involved in their creation, allowing them to appreciate the button blankets' cultural importance without producing a completed button blanket as a finished product to keep or display.

### [Cultural Appropriation vs. cultural appreciation](#)

### [Indigenous artists call for apology after American reality TV star spotted in regalia](#)

### [Indigenous culture needs to be appreciated, not stolen, says artist](#)

#### **Can I teach about the W̱SÁNEĆ Moons?**

The School District is still in progress for allowing the W̱SÁNEĆ Moons to be taught. The department is following cultural protocols to reconcile that the moons were translated into French and distributed widely without permission. Please ask your staff not to use the moons yet. Although, the W̱SÁNEĆ moons are on the Live it Earth Website, we are still not using these moons in sd#61. Our department will direct all schools when the W̱SÁNEĆ moons can be used in our district again.

Thank you for allowing our department to do proper cultural safety and protocol practices. To do so will show respect and humility to the creators of the W̱SÁNEĆ moons. Proper steps are happening and this work does take time and patience.

#### **Can I make Totem Poles with my students?**

In the past we have made totem poles with our students, but we are shifting our focus moving forward. Instead of constructing totem poles, we will concentrate on learning about their cultural significance, including their purpose in Indigenous communities and the different types and features of poles.

To support this learning, we will use the shapes kit from the Indigenous Education Library, which includes Coast Salish art shapes and Northern Coastal First Nations formline for design exploration. These designs are for educational purposes only and should not be displayed or used on bulletin boards, in order to respect cultural protocols and the significance of these art

forms. [Order the wooden shapes from here](#) if you would like your school to have a set of their own or sign them out from our library at [iedlibrary@sd61.bc.ca](mailto:iedlibrary@sd61.bc.ca)



- [Formline Art](#) (Northern Style):
  - Core Shapes: Ovoids (rounded rectangles), U-forms, and S-forms.
  - Style: A continuous, fluid, and flowing black outline (the "formline") that defines the subject.
  - Region: Primarily used by Haida, Tlingit, Tsimshian, and others.
- [Coast Salish Design Elements](#) (Southern Style):
  - Core Shapes: Trigons (three-sided, curved triangles), crescents, and circles/ovals.
  - Style: Often more minimalist and geometric, emphasizing the relationship between positive and negative space.
  - Common Usage: Frequently seen on traditional items like spindle whorls.
  - [Coast Salish 2.0 Design Elements](#)

### What is National Ribbon Skirt Day?



National Ribbon Skirt Day in Canada, observed on January 4, is a day to celebrate the cultural significance of the ribbon skirt and to honour Indigenous culture, history, and resilience. Inspired by Isabella Kulak, who faced discrimination for wearing her ribbon skirt to a school formal, the day serves as a reminder of the importance of respect, pride, and cultural expression of Indigenous people and our regalia.

At Esquimalt High School, a student named Jodi Thompson reflects the spirit of this day through her amazing work in her textiles class. By creating and wearing a ribbon skirt, Jodi has embraced both creativity and cultural learning, and she is feeling incredibly proud of herself as she absolutely should be! Her work highlights how ribbon skirts are not just garments, but

powerful symbols of identity, strength, and celebration. Next year we recommend celebrating Ribbon Skirts and their special traditional meaning for the week beginning Jan 4 to the 8th.

### What is the meaning behind the “Red Dress”?



### Red Dresses Tell a Story

The [REDress Project](#), which uses hanging red dresses to raise awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirited people (MMIWG), was started in 2010 by Métis artist and activist Jaime Black-Morsette. The project uses red dresses, often donated, to symbolize the loss of life, and the missing presence of victims.

“The red dresses help us remember people and remind us to be kind, respectful, and caring in our community.”



Tess's Red Dress by Carolyn Roberts

A very gentle and age-appropriate way to introduce the topic to young readers.