

SPEAKERS GUIDE FOR HEALING CULTURAL APPROPRIATION



- **Definition:** Cultural Appropriation is the adoption of some specific elements of one culture by a different cultural group.
- It can include forms of dress, personal adornment, music, art, religion, language, or social behavior.
- Once these elements are removed from their original culture and context their original meaning can be distorted.

The attached document is The Shift Network's way of supporting a journey from **Cultural Appropriation to Cultural Appreciation**, offered as a respectful, thoughtful and much-needed support to carry out a move away from all the undesirable things that cultural appropriation can bring. Indigenous people and a few good allies are currently leading some amazing education and advocacy work regarding cultural appropriation. This guideline gives you an opportunity to walk the path of allyship and right relationship. If you belong to a dominant group, pay attention to your feelings of denial, fragility and, at times, a refusal to listen. Instead, lean in to being mindful about your choices and make important changes in your teaching.

To be clear, this set of guidelines is not a debate on 'different perspectives' regarding this matter, nor an invitation to a conversation about what 'freedom of expression' should look like — we are committed to build this culture of appreciation and respect, and we invite you to join us.



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How to respectfully share wisdom practices that are not from your own ancestral lineage.**

PRIVILEGE & ACCESS

How has your ancestry, positionality and privilege supported your access to these teachings (race/ class/ gender/ able-bodiedness etc.)?

YES!

Bravely name how your ancestors contributed to the source culture's oppression.
Donate a meaningful amount of your revenue to the communities from whom the wisdom teachings originated.

EMBRACE!

Naming the indigenous land that you are on.
Sharing how privilege created access to these teachings.

RETHINK!

Not acknowledging the originators of the wisdom you are teaching.
Claiming that wisdom teachings from oppressed cultures are for everyone to access.

SOURCE & PERMISSION

From which culture(s) does this wisdom teaching originate?

Does the source group or culture have a history of exploitation, slavery, or genocide? (creates social power dynamics)

Are the cultural originators of this wisdom benefitting directly from your teaching?

Do you have permission to teach and benefit financially?

If a song or ritual or creative piece is shared, credit the author or the originating culture.

Tell the lived history and current stories of the peoples from whom these wisdom teachings originated.

Naming the indigenous lands where the teachings you shared originated.

Obtaining permission to share and charge money for what you teach.

Honoring the lineage masters who permitted you to share the teachings.

Sharing a practice or object that you do not have permission to share.

Financially benefitting from teachings originating in communities you are not in a personal relationship with or providing direct support and leadership to.

MEANING

What is its original meaning of these teachings?

Is it represented in your session or offering?

Is the intended meaning, value or sacred nature lost, demeaned or at risk of disrespect?

Whenever possible, use neutral and respectful language & sacred objects from your own culture, and choose not to take directly or indirectly from oppressed cultures.

Having deep respect with culturally specific words such as "Namaste", "Aho" or "Ashe."

Always explain the original meaning -- and use them sincerely and sparingly.

Identifying as a shaman or guru without having been initiated in an authentic context & authorized to use the title.

Feeling you have the right to teach, unless you have been taught or trained by a "Wisdom-Keeper."

**INFLUENCED BY
Source, significance, and similarity are based on writings by Susan Scafidi, author of "Who Owns Culture? Appropriation and Authenticity in American Law."