

Pamphlet # 23

ELDERS PROTOCOL

1. Purpose

Given the University's First Choice statements, policies, and the demographics of the province, many university employees and units have expressed interest in having Elders come into their classes or having them work on cultural events and other tasks. The purpose of this policy is to establish protocol surrounding:

- the compilation of a list of recognized Elders and areas of expertise (some Elders have certain gifts and carry knowledge around specific ceremonies i.e. guest lecturers, Pipe Ceremonies, Opening/Closing prayer, Sweat Lodge, etc. – not all Elders carry the same knowledge/gifts)
- consistency in the offering of honoraria; and
- the respectful treatment/use of Elders.

The Traditional Peoples Advisory Committee (TPAC) consists of traditional Aboriginal staff of The University of Manitoba who are very familiar with both traditional Aboriginal protocol and the rules and regulations of The University of Manitoba. As part of our role on campus we are often seen as cultural brokers between the Aboriginal community and the university community. One area we feel very strongly about is respectful treatment of our Elders and the Indigenous knowledge they carry. Therefore, we have created this policy and procedures document to assist the university community with knowledge about how and when to use Traditional Elders in a way that is respectful to traditional peoples, cultures, and our communities in Manitoba. The role of TPAC is designed to assist and protect both the Elders

and The University of Manitoba while offering liaison services between the two very distinctive communities.

2. Scope

This policy and its procedures apply to all faculty and staff who utilize the experiences and knowledge of Traditional Aboriginal Elders, on or off campus, for University of Manitoba purposes.

3. Authority

The Traditional Peoples Advisory Committee (TPAC), along with the staff of the Aboriginal Student Centre, will support faculty and staff with recommendations of Elders as well as with the traditional process of inviting and thanking them for their contributions.

4. Protocol

In order to maintain a respectful attitude towards the Elders of this region, the following protocols need to be followed:

4.1 Extending invitations to Elders

Elders must be offered tobacco when you ask them to share their knowledge. Please note that it is very important to be specific in making your request. If the Elder accepts the tobacco s/he is accepting the request and will do her/his best to help you. If they cannot do what you are asking they will say so and not accept the tobacco. The exchange of tobacco is similar to a contract between two parties where the Elder is agreeing to do what is asked and the one offering the tobacco also has obligations to respect the Teachings and the Teacher, thus the protocols which explain the expectations of the host. It is therefore very important that you are specific before handing over the tobacco. It is perfectly appropriate to ask for a referral if the Elder is unable to comply with your request.

When giving tobacco, place it in front of the Elder and state your request. The Elder indicates acceptance of your request by picking up the tobacco. If you hand it directly to the Elder you do not give him/her the opportunity to accept or pass on your request – it takes away their choice. Always speak to the tobacco when making your request, BEFORE handing the Elder the tobacco.

Tobacco can be given in a pouch, wrapped in a piece of cloth or even in the form of a cigarette. The minimum amount of tobacco is the amount needed for use in a Ceremonial Pipe, but a pouch of tobacco is still the most common form. Tobacco is a sacred medicine and only commercial tobacco or tobacco in its natural form (kinikinik) is acceptable. Some people have asked if a mixture of 'healthy' herbs or other medicines can be used instead of tobacco – the answer is NO. Whatever your views are on tobacco it is still a sacred medicine to Traditional Aboriginal people.

4.2 Honorarium

Elders are never "paid" for their "work" as it would be culturally inappropriate to appear as though they are "selling" Indigenous knowledge. Traditional Indigenous and cultural knowledge is not, and cannot be owned by an individual or institution.

If the Elder agrees to become involved and accepts the tobacco it is customary to provide a gift afterwards to show your appreciation. This gift can be monetary in the form of an honorarium. Before the modern era, Elders were given food, clothing and other necessities in exchange for their help and therefore monetary gifts are acceptable if presented as a gift and not payment - in exchange for help.

Elders must never be asked to sign a "receipt" as acknowledgement of their honoraria.

Nor should they be asked for Social Insurance Numbers (SIN), or their birthdates.

4.3 Travel

Honoraria should include reimbursement of any expenses or incurred costs in connection with their involvement with you (i.e. travel, food). This can be added to the honorarium or handled separately through a travel claim.

4.5 Elder host/escort

Always ensure there is a host/escort for the Elder if s/he has been invited on campus. The host/escort is responsible for transportation, greeting the Elder and following the protocols outlined, as well as the responsibility of offering the gift /honorarium after the presentation/meeting. When offering the honorarium, make sure you have a witness and that this witness signs the Elder Honorarium Form. The purpose of the witness is to offer accountability for the money without having to ask the Elder to sign for his/her 'gift'.

4.6 Elder remuneration/reimbursement form

The Aboriginal Student Centre has an Elder Honorarium Form available through the Aboriginal Student Centre website www.umanitoba.ca/student/asc

If you require assistance with this form contact the Director of the Aboriginal Student Centre at 474-8850 kali_storm@umanitoba.ca .

If you do not know any Elders and wish to have one work with you, or if you have any questions or concerns regarding the protocols contact the Traditional Peoples Advisory Committee through the Aboriginal Student Centre or visit our website at www.umanitoba.ca/student/asc

for contact information.

Contact

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