



## Greeting and Thanking Traditional Visitors

All cultures are enriched by certain valuable and unique individuals. Such individuals possess a wide range of knowledge - knowledge that once shared, can expand students' insight beyond the perspectives of the teacher and classroom resources.

### Why Involve Elders and/or Senators?

First Nations Elders and Métis Senators in particular are integral to the revival, maintenance, and preservation of Aboriginal cultures. Elder/Senator participation in support of curricular objectives develops the positive identity of First Nations and Métis students and enhances self-esteem. All students may acquire a heightened awareness and sensitivity that inevitably promotes anti-racist education. It is important to note that the title Elder/Senator does not necessarily indicate age. In Aboriginal and Métis societies, one is designated an Elder/Senator after acquiring significant wisdom and understanding of native/Métis history, traditional teachings, ceremonies, healing practices and experience. Elders/Senators have earned the respect from their community to pass on this knowledge to others and give advice and guidance on personal issues, as well as issues affecting their communities and nations.

### Role of an Elder/Senator

An Elder/Senator appreciates the opportunity to share their teachings, and will respond positively when approached with respect and humility. When requesting guidance or assistance, there is a protocol for approaching Elders/Senators which varies from community to community. Please do not feel intimidated when approaching an Elder or Senator. The role of an Elder/Senator is to:

- Enhance cultural perspectives and share wisdom and teachings
- Promote awareness of culture and traditions
- Build and enhance relationships between school and Aboriginal parents/guardians/communities by making them feel more comfortable in the school
- Act as a mediator and promote harmony
- Act as a mentor and role model for students
- Promote Aboriginal based languages
- Enhance and enrich classroom lessons and school cultural events with the incorporation of Aboriginal content/perspectives
- Example of an Elder/Senator program can be drumming and singing, field trips, storytelling, arts and crafts, cultural teachings, etc.

### Elder Protocol

When requesting guidance or assistance, there is a protocol used in approaching Elders, which varies from community to community. The district chief's office, tribal council office, a reserve's band council, or a community Friendship Centre may be able to assist you. Prior to an Elder sharing knowledge, it is essential that you and your students complete the cycle of giving and receiving through an appropriate offering. This offering represents respect and appreciation for knowledge shared by an Elder. One must ascertain the nature of the offering prior to an Elder's visit as traditions differ



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throughout Aboriginal communities. In addition, should your school (or school district) normally offer honoraria and/or expense reimbursement to visiting instructors, it would be similarly appropriate to extend such considerations to a visiting Elder. First Nations Elders often have helpers who work with them and receive training. Ask the helper how to approach a particular Elder since each Nation has its own tradition. Always use respect, ask permission, seek clarification if there is something you do not understand, and follow the direction you are given.

If you would like an Elder to do opening and closing ceremonies for an event, you need to explain the event to the Elder. Determine if a gift of tobacco should be offered prior to approaching the Elder. Offer tobacco to the Elder and invite them to participate. Acceptance of the tobacco means acceptance of the invitation. Find out if the Elder requires transportation to the event. An opening and closing observance must be completed. The opening observance gives thanks to the Creator and serves to bless the event. The Elder may ask a helper to smudge the people gathered. Smudging is when a medicine such as sage is lit so that it is smoldering. This smudge is then taken around the circle and a feather is usually used to spread that smoke around all those gathered. Smudging is done to cleanse everyone gathered so that the event runs smoothly and everyone is in a good frame of mind. It is important to note that not every Elder smudges. To find out the Elder process or when in doubt, seek clarification and ask questions. If there's something you do not understand, follow the direction you are given.

**Note: Check your school's policy on smudging activities prior to approaching the Elder.**

### Senator Protocol

To contact a Métis Senator, call your local Métis community council or Métis Nation of Ontario for guidance. Senators are elected life positions who are great storytellers and enjoy sharing wisdom. If you would like a Senator for opening/closing ceremonies, invite the Senator the same way as you would ask a consultant or an advisor. An offering of tobacco isn't necessary but a gift or honorarium is appreciated. When in doubt, seek clarification and ask questions.

### Seeking an Elder/Senator

To initiate the process of dialogue and participation, a letter may be sent to the local band council or an Aboriginal community agency requesting Elder/Senator participation and indicating the role the Elder/Senator would have within the program. A list of names of persons who have the recognized skills that would meet your specific needs will be provided. It is recommended that prior consultation occur with the Elder/Senator to share expectations for learning outcomes.

Friendship Centres and Métis Community Councils across the province, and the Misiway Milopemahatesewin Community Health Centre in Timmins are active at the community level and often present cultural workshops and activities in cooperation with Elders/Senators and other recognized resource people. Teachers and schools may wish to contact the organizations in the Aboriginal Community Agency Contacts section at the end of this document for Elder/Senator referrals.



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### **When Approaching an Elder/Senator**

Once you have acquired the Elder's/Senator's contact information and what special gifts he/she has to share, when speaking to him/her on the telephone provide the following information:

- Introduce yourself;
- Where you obtained the referral from eg. Friendship Centre, Aboriginal Community Liaison/Partnership Officer;
- The reason for your call;
- The interest to meet together to further discuss your request regarding his/her gifts/talents at his/her convenience;
- Your availability.

Elders/Senators prefer personal visits/meetings versus phone calls. They need to meet with you first. It's about establishing that relationship. Some Elders/Senators may be okay with discussing your request over the phone but usually this practice occurs only when the relationship is already established and there is that understanding between both parties. Be patient when making a request, as you may not always get an answer immediately. An Elder/Senator may wish to think about the request before committing. If the Elder is unable to accommodate your request, he/she may provide a name of another Elder/Senator for your request.

Ask the Elder/Senator if transportation arrangements are needed. In most occurrences, transportation arrangements may not be necessary but in some instances he/she may need to be picked up or taxi costs may need to be paid.

### **During Your Meeting with an Elder/Senator**

At the meeting with the Elder/Senator:

- Introduce yourself and be welcoming by offering tea/water/coffee
- Give thanks for meeting with you and tell her/him how you appreciate his/her time today
- Make your request  
e.g. "I received your name from our Aboriginal Youth Liaison Officer and in speaking with this person, he/she recommended you as a valuable resource to.....At our school or in our classroom (whichever is appropriate) we want to build cultural awareness/connect community to our classroom/create an inclusive environment/enhance learning in the classroom by.....Are you available to accommodate this request? We would require a commitment of ....."
- After you have made your request, the Elder/Senator will ask further questions for more information and let you know if he/she is able to accommodate your request.
- Ask if a gift or honorarium would be appropriate (as some may wish to volunteer their time) and explain the Board policy

### **Cultural Practice: Offering Medicines (Tobacco)**

When making requests to an Elder/Senator and if he/she accepts your request, ensure you have tobacco ties/pouches at hand. It's important that tobacco is given first at the initial meeting after the request is accepted or prior to the session/event and not after,



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unless you have a relationship already established and this practice is okay with the Elder/Senator.

Offer the tobacco tie from your left hand which signifies giving from the heart, respect and commitment. The Elder/Senator accepting your request will offer the tobacco tie in prayer on his/her own time for good positive outcomes and guidance.

It's important to note that not all Elders/Senators practice traditional ceremonies, and it is okay to ask this question. E.g. "Are you a traditional Elder/Senator? Will you accept this tobacco tie as a sign of commitment to my request?"

When making requests to Elders/Senators/Cultural Resource people, practicing cultural protocol will be acknowledged and appreciated. If you are making a request for a drum group, a pouch of tobacco would be offered versus a tobacco tie. As well, if you find out the Elder is a sacred pipe carrier, offer pipe tobacco instead of commercial tobacco. You can ask the Elder first.

If your request isn't accepted, then don't offer a tobacco tie but give thanks for their referral and time.

### How to Make a Tobacco Tie

A tobacco tie is made by cutting a small square of broad cloth (you can use any of the four colors or a nice pattern) and placing loose leaf tobacco (can be store bought, traditionally grown or pipe tobacco) in the square, thereafter tying it with ribbon (you can use any of the four colors).

If you are giving a pouch of tobacco it can be wrapped in broad cloth tied with ribbon.

When you are making the tobacco tie or wrapping the pouch of tobacco ensure you are in good spirits.

You can also contact the Aboriginal Youth Liaison Officer for your area for assistance.



### Other Considerations

Here are some other points to consider when working with an Elder/Senator:

- Find out if the Elder/Senator will be bringing a helper. If so, it would be appropriate to give a thank you gift to the helper as well.
- As a reminder, a phone call to the Elder/Senator should be made a week and/or a few days ahead of time along with the day before his/her visit.
- It's important to ensure your staff is aware of community visitors coming to your school. It is recommended to arrange a student or staff member to greet the Elder/Senator at the front door or other prearranged location (e.g. Office) and escort him/her to the appropriate destination.

### Honorariums/Gifts

The purpose of honorariums and gifts is to acknowledge and show appreciation for the sharing of knowledge and respect for personal time given. Traditionally, food, clothing, medicines, etc., would have been used to gift the Elder/Senator. Today, these items and/or monetary honorarium may be given as a demonstration of respect and appreciation. The practice of giving is culturally appropriate and is implemented



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through many agencies in throughout our Board. An Elder/Senator does not expect to receive the honorarium, but appreciates the gesture of what is given. Giving from the heart is what counts. Not all Elders/Senators will accept the gift, and may voluntarily give their time at no cost as well.

**The proposed minimum amounts listed are recommended, but not mandatory:**

- Gift (blanket, gift certificate, broad cloth, craft supplies, practical items etc.)
- One hour - \$25.00 or gift of equivalent value
- Half day (or less) - \$50.00 or gift of equivalent value, plus materials
- Full day \$100.00 or gift of equivalent value, plus materials
- Please let the Elder/Senator know if a gift or honorarium will be given, or if you are not able to meet these honorarium guidelines. Some Elders/Senators may prefer a gift over an honorarium so ask the Elder/Senator about his/her preference.
- The honorarium should be ready and presented with a thank you card or in an envelope right after the presentation.
- Tobacco may also be given but it is good to inquire with the Elder/Senator first to find out if this is appropriate protocol. It is okay to ask the person if he/she accepts tobacco or not.

**Suggested Honorariums (e.g., Social POW WOW)**

Item	Honorarium (travel, accommodation are responsibility of individuals)	Notes
Host Drum	\$500	
Co-Host Drum	\$300	(if applicable)
Registered Drum Groups (max. 3)	\$200	
Master of Ceremony	\$250	
Arena Director	\$200	
Head Dancer (M, F)	\$200	One male, one female
Hoop Dancer	\$200	
Youth Dancer (M, F)	\$100	One male, one female
Elder (M, F)	\$100	One male, one female
Veteran	\$100	
Fire Keeper	\$50	



## Smudging Ceremony Protocol

### Background

Smudging is an Aboriginal tradition which involves the burning of sweetgrass, sage, and/or cedar. Sage smudge produces a very strong and distinct aroma but the smoke associated with it is minimal and lasts a very short time.

Sweetgrass has a very mild aroma and produces even less smoke than sage. A smudge is burned primarily for purification and to help to create a positive mind set.

Tobacco is extremely important to the Aboriginal cultures of the region – it is one of the sacred medicines. Tobacco is used to open communication, whether to talk with an Elder to ask questions or when requesting a ceremony, or when praying to the Creator. Tobacco is also smoked in sacred pipes.

The *Smoke-Free Ontario Act* which came into effect on May 31, 2006 provides that an Aboriginal person has the right to use tobacco if it is being used for traditional Aboriginal cultural or spiritual purposes.

### Procedure

1. Principals will designate areas within the school or on school property, with consultation from the Aboriginal Youth Liaison Officers, where smudging can take place.
2. In order to reduce the number of inquiries regarding the smell of smoke in buildings, the supervising teacher/staff member will send a notification email out to all staff at the school advising when smudging ceremonies will be taking place (either on a regular schedule or when appropriate).
3. When smudging ceremonies are performed, the supervising teacher/staff member will post the approved signage where it will be taking place.



# Smudging Ceremony Location

THIS AREA WILL  
BE USED AS A SMUDGING CEREMONY  
LOCATION ON:

## **What is Smudging?**

- Smudging is a ritual cleansing ceremony practiced by Native North American peoples;
- One or more of the sacred medicines are burned: Tobacco, Cedar, Sage, and Sweetgrass;
- Smudging happens when hosting an Aboriginal community event, meeting and/or inviting Elder(s) or Aboriginal artist(s) to schools;
- People smudge: regalia, drums, themselves, room/area, and other items;
- Participation in smudging is voluntary – if you do not wish to or are unable to participate in smudging, you may step back or not stand up.

## **Why is a Smudging Ceremony Conducted?**

- To bring about a sense of grounding, direction and connection;
- To see, feel, think and act with clarity;
- To help create a positive mindset;
- To cleanse/purify a person, place or object of negative energies, feelings or thoughts.

## **How is a Smudging Ceremony Conducted?**

- Sacred medicine(s) will be burned in a natural vessel – clay bowl, abalone shell, etc.
- An eagle feather or hands are put in the smoke which is then brought onto the body;
- Participants usually remove any metal (rings, watches, glasses, etc.) prior to the ceremony.