

POLICY

Policy Title	Policy for College Engagement with Elders and Knowledge-Keepers
Policy Holder	S. Brenda Small, Vice President, Negahneewin Research Centre
Policy Approver(s)	Senior Team
Related Policies	Gift Card Policy Honourarium Policy
Related Procedures	Procedure for College Engagement with Elders and Knowledge-Keepers Gift Card Procedure
Appendices	Negahneewin Vision
Storage Location	Website - https://www.confederationcollege.ca/policies-and-procedures
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Preamble

Confederation College is committed to working with Indigenous communities as reflected in the Strategic Plan “Kaa-anokaatekin” (2020 – 2025) which refers to “the work that is now carried.” The College and Negahneewin Council, an Indigenous community-based Council, work together to advance Indigenous education priorities. The Negahneewin Vision, created by Negahneewin Council in 2012 and renewed in 2020, informs the College’s strategic planning into the future to improve outcomes for Indigenous learners. Further, the Vision advances Indigenous knowledges so that all graduates have an informed awareness of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous Ways of Knowing, along with the skills and attitudes to promote decolonization and global citizenship.

This Policy and Procedure together constitute a protocol for working with Elders and Knowledge-Keepers. This protocol is dependent upon our authentic relationships with these esteemed representatives from local and regional Indigenous communities. The way in which one engages with Elders is based upon customary practices and protocols of the Anishinaabe peoples in which one demonstrates humility in seeking the knowledge, experience, and wisdom of Elders.

Scope

All College community members should become familiar with this Policy and its accompanying Procedure to prepare for engagement with Elders, Knowledge-Keepers, and Indigenous peoples.

The prospect of learning from Elders and Knowledge-Keepers is more likely in current postsecondary settings as institutional change is being measured by steps toward “decolonization” and “Indigenization.” These goals to address systemic racism and to address colonial structures within public institutions has increased discussion about how Indigenous knowledges can help in transforming public organizations. These directives are available to assist the College community in navigating this emerging landscape and to improve relationships with Indigenous peoples. We are individually and collectively responsible for our relationships with Elders as this reflects overall on the College community.

Definitions

Elder

An Elder is a culturally knowledgeable and respected individual who represents their community/nation in a responsible way. The role of Elder is held by a member of an Indigenous community who has the experience, knowledge, and wisdom gained from their understanding of cultural principles, customary practices, and sacred teachings. Elders are called upon for ceremonial purposes, healing approaches, guidance, advisement and spiritual knowledge. The Elders representing their communities/nations have been taught historic, sacred, cultural knowledges which they carry in their lifetime to support everyone in their community. The role of Elders is a responsible and highly respected one whereby they are entrusted to teach wholistic and sacred knowledges. The Elder is the resource person who will provide others with an understanding of Indigenous peoples’ Ways of Knowing. An Elder is not necessarily regarded as such due to their age; rather they are known for the responsibilities that they hold as a leader among teachers in communities.

Knowledge-Keeper

A Knowledge-Keeper is a person who has cultural, ceremonial, and customary knowledges that they share with others. These knowledges are further supported by life experience and applied practices that inform teaching/facilitating and understanding of cultural frameworks. There are Knowledge-Keepers who possess specialized knowledges while others are generalists. A Knowledge-Keeper is distinguished from an Elder because they may not provide healing and ceremonial practices for others.

Governing Laws and Regulations

Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015).

1. General Principles for Approaching Elders

- 1.1. Approaching Elders requires respect and kindness. It is important to be polite, to listen, and to be patient and gentle in all interaction with Elders.
- 1.2. Introducing oneself to an Elder must reflect cultural protocols. Initial and ongoing interactions are all part of building an authentic relationship. Relationships developed with Elders will demonstrate open and generous communication.

2. Relationship-Building Principles

Prioritizing Requests

- 2.1. An Elder who is visiting and working with the College community is here to provide Indigenous students with the cultural support that they need and want from Elders. While Elders can assist faculty, staff, and administrators they are invited into the College to give Indigenous students support, cultural knowledge, guidance, and advisement.
- 2.2. It is imperative that Indigenous students continue to receive support through academic and wrap around services to ensure that their learning experiences are affirming. Indigenous students enrolled at the College are the main reason to provide an Elders in Residence program. The following are services through which Indigenous students may engage in cultural activities with Elders:
 - 2.2.1. Negahneewin Student Services provides Indigenous specific supports through available counsellors, navigators, and academic advisors;
 - 2.2.2. The School of Health, Negahneewin and Community Services includes Indigenous Studies certificates, diplomas and other credentials whereby Indigenous faculty are available to support Indigenous students in their academic studies; and
 - 2.2.3. The Indigenous student lounge called APIWIN on the main concourse (Shuniah Building) is where many cultural activities are hosted by the College.
- 2.3. While students are the priority, it is common for faculty, staff, and administrators to seek out the advice of Elders. In the post Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action (2015), the Canadian context is such that seeking out

the experience and knowledge of Elders has increased among non-Indigenous people. Where these conversations emerge in postsecondary educational settings, requests by non-Indigenous people to spend more time with Elders have become part of the learning environment.

Initiating a Request

- 2.4. When one decides to pursue their interest in working with Elders there are specific, culturally informed steps to take. The Procedure for College Engagement with Elders and Knowledge-Keepers provides necessary information to help people in their work with Elders at the College.

Language

- 2.5. The choice of language in referring to Elders comes with the caveat that Elders do not belong to the College. It is important to recognize that Elders are not “owned” by the College so the term “our Elders” should not be used in reference to Elders.

Non-Compliance

All staff should consult with their immediate supervisors as well as Negahneewin Student Services to ensure that they are complying with the principles laid out by this Policy and the accompanying Procedure. Lack of compliance can have serious consequences for the College’s relationships with Indigenous community members which could, in turn, negatively impact the educational experience of Indigenous students. Further, the absence of authentic relationships with Indigenous communities will jeopardize the College’s ability to meet its own goals with the Strategic Plan and the Negahneewin Vision.

Revision History

Version	Change	Author	Date of Change
Original	New	S.B. Small	2022-05-03