

## PROCEDURE

Procedure Title	<b>Procedure for College Engagement with Elders and Knowledge-Keepers</b>
Procedure Holder	<b>S. Brenda Small</b>
Procedure Approver(s)	<b>Senior Team</b>
Related Policies	Policy for College Engagement with Elders and Knowledge-Keepers <a href="#">Gift Card Policy</a> <a href="#">Honourarium Policy</a>
Related Procedures	<a href="#">Gift Card Procedure</a>
Appendices	<a href="#">Negahneewin Vision</a>
Storage Location	Website - <a href="https://www.confederationcollege.ca/policies-and-procedures">https://www.confederationcollege.ca/policies-and-procedures</a>
Effective Date	2022-05-03
Next Review Date	2023-05-03

### 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. Knowledge-Keepers may also be called Knowledge-Holders

### **Elder's Helper**

This individual is a person chosen by the Elder to support their work with others. A Helper is learning about the practices of the Elder and providing support by accompanying the Elder for travel, and presentations.

### **Fire-Keeper**

The role of the Fire-Keeper is to prepare and watch over the sacred fire that is created for ceremonies. The Fire-Keeper has the responsibility to create the fire and to monitor it to make sure that it continues throughout the specific event. This is a sacred role which is taught and maintained by community members to support Elders and Knowledge-Keepers who are using the fire for ceremonies.

### **Teaching/Teachings**

This term is used to describe the way in which Elders, Knowledge-Keepers and other esteemed individual offer their experience and expertise through a process of sharing. In providing information and sharing customary knowledge the individual is giving a lesson or teaching.

## **1. Beginning the Process**

### **Respect for Elders**

- 1.1. It is important that you always look at this as a learning experience and showing respect towards Elders in accordance with their role in the Indigenous community. Always ask for clarification if there is something that you do not know or understand.

### **Liaison Through Staff**

- 1.2. Negahneewin Student Services (through designated staff—that is, Indigenous Student Navigators and Indigenous Counsellors) is responsible for providing assistance to those who wish to obtain the guidance of an Elder or Knowledge-Keeper at Confederation College. If this is your first time approaching an Elder, please contact Negahneewin Student Services on the main concourse of the Shuniah Building.
- 1.3. Once the initial liaison has been made, Negahneewin Student Services can offer ongoing advice in navigating the relationship with an Elder.

## 2. Contacting an Elder or Knowledge-Keeper

- 2.1. It is very important to be specific in making your request and in determining why you are seeking out an Elder. Think about questions such as:
  - 2.1.1. What is the nature of your request?
  - 2.1.2. Are you asking for guidance and assistance?
  - 2.1.3. Are you asking that an Elder provide a teaching to you and a group?
  - 2.1.4. Are you asking an Elder to be a guest speaker?
  - 2.1.5. Do you want an Elder to open an event?
  - 2.1.6. Are you requesting that an Elder provide ceremonial expertise?

### Communication Protocol

- 2.2. It is recommended to contact an Elder in person whenever possible; however, some Elders might accept an invitation by phone or e-mail.
- 2.3. When you approach an Elder in person it is essential to bring tobacco and/or a gift offering. Tobacco is one of the four sacred medicines, and it is offered when making a request of an Elder. The four sacred medicines are tobacco, sweetgrass, sage and cedar.
- 2.4. A tobacco pouch or tie, as it is called, should be prepared by the person making the request. You are to prepare this tie. In contemplating your request, you are expected to put your own thoughts and prayers into the offering as you prepare it. Alternatively, one may wish to contact an Indigenous Student Navigator regarding the tobacco offering as it might be possible to provide you with one of these ties if they are available.
- 2.5. When you make the request by phone or e-mail, mention to the Elder that you have a tobacco and/or gift offering.
- 2.6. When making arrangements with an Elder, remember to ask them the following:
  - 2.6.1. How he/she wishes to be addressed
  - 2.6.2. The correct spelling of her/his name
  - 2.6.3. The correct pronunciation of his/her name
  - 2.6.4. Complete and correct contact information
  - 2.6.5. If there are mobility concerns or accommodation needs
  - 2.6.6. If the Elder has specific food and dietary needs
  - 2.6.7. If the Elder will have the assistance of their Helper who may accompany them
  - 2.6.8. The meeting location and which resources are required by the Elder
  - 2.6.9. A need for assistance in transportation

### Timeliness

- 2.7. A request to participate in an event must be sent to the Elder *well in advance of the event* that you are planning.
- 2.8. It is good practice to contact the Elder again a few weeks and days before the event to confirm all arrangements.
- 2.9. At times, an Elder may have to cancel due to community events or health issues. In such a case, inviting another Elder is appropriate.
- 2.10. There should be a host/escort available and arranged in advance at the College to guide the Elder on campus. Please consult with the Indigenous Student Navigators regarding additional support for Elders.

### Elders' Helpers

- 2.11. Elders may sometimes be accompanied by an Elder's Helper who assists them with whatever they need, particularly with ceremonial or spiritual practice. Further consideration for the Elder's Helper may be required. Note that the selection of an Elder's Helper is entirely the choice of the Elder.
- 2.12. Elders may, from time to time request the use of the College's fire pit and may request the assistance of a Fire-Keeper.

## 3. Recognition of the Elder

- 3.1. It is important to understand that, although we do sometimes pay Elders and Knowledge-Keepers as part of our Elders-in-Residence Program (as a paid employee), the custom of giving gifts or honouraria is not intended as consideration for work performed such as it would be in a Western employment relationship. Such compensation is meant as recognition and an expression of gratitude for the role the Elder plays.
- 3.2. If the Elder agrees to participate in your requested event and accepts the tobacco (see 2.3), it is customary in some cases to provide a gift to the Elder by the time that the event occurs. This gift is provided to the Elder to show your gratitude and appreciation towards the Elder in supporting your request as they provide you with their knowledge and wisdom.

- 3.3. Examples of such gifts are items such as blankets, birch bark baskets, beadwork, beading material, slippers, mitts, socks, scarfs for women, hats for men, towels, candles, teapots, cup sets, household items, etc.
- 3.4. You must ensure that the gift is ready at the time of the event.
- 3.5. Gifts are subject to the College's general legal and fiscal requirements concerning gifts. Gifts should not exceed a value of \$500 lest they become taxable benefits.
- 3.6. Regardless of the type of recognition being used, once it has been confirmed that the Elder will be able to participate, a request for payment must be made at least one week in advance to allow for cheque processing time or timing of direct deposit. The Elder must receive their payment on the day of the event. This payment cannot be delayed.
- 3.7. Any additional costs incurred by the Elder, such as meals, parking, accommodations, snacks, must be planned for and purchased by the department or a staff representative during the event. When you are offering meals to the Elder directly discuss all dietary concerns with this Elder in advance of the event. The Elder must not be expected to pay any out of pocket expenses for attending and participating in the activity/event. It is inappropriate to expect the Elder to assume any financial costs related to College initiatives and invitations including out of town events.
- 3.8. The College bears responsibility likewise for additional costs incurred by Elders' Helpers and Fire Keepers.

## 4. Compensation

### Honouraria

- 4.1. In many cases, it is customary to recognize Elders through the giving of honouraria. The purpose of the honourarium is to offer a monetary acknowledgement out of respect and gratitude for the Elder's assistance. It is difficult to place a dollar value for the Elder's time and expertise; however, in the broad context of our local Indigenous community we follow established parameters in providing honouraria.
- 4.2. Honouraria are subject to financial guidelines as provided by the Accounting Department based on Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) requirements. The [Confederation College Policy for giving an honourarium](#) must be followed.
- 4.3. There is a limit of \$500.00 (Five Hundred Dollars) on the amount of honouraria that can be offered to an individual within a 12-month period. Given this, it may be more appropriate to turn to the mechanism of an employment contract to recognize the Elder's contribution over a given year.

- 4.4. It is imperative that these conditions for providing an honourarium are fully communicated with the Elder in advance. The Elder must understand the conditions under which honouraria are provided.
- 4.5. Most importantly, ensure the honourarium is ready at the time of the event to demonstrate respect for the Elder's time and expertise. It is not appropriate to ask the Elder to wait for an honourarium.
- 4.6. An honourarium is paid either through cheque or direct deposit.

### **Employment Contract**

- 4.7. There are occasions when Elders with a specific expertise are sought out for a single event, such as for their knowledge of ceremonies. In this case, the giving of honouraria is appropriate. However, in some instances, the College has a more long-term relationship with the Elder, whereby the Elder may visit the College regularly to support students, i.e., Elders-in-Residence. When an Elder gives significantly of their time, it would be less than respectful to pay them a maximum of \$500 in a given year; therefore, a contract is the better option.
- 4.8. Employment contracts with Elders are subject to all the same administrative, financial and legal requirement as found in any part-time employment at the College. However, as with honouraria, it is critical that these details be explained and understood fully.

### **5. Travel**

- 5.1. All costs related to the travel, hotel accommodations, meals, taxis or mileage, and the support of an Elder's Helper must be provided by the College.
- 5.2. When an Elder is invited to be part of a College initiative or event that is out of town, for workshops longer than two hours or for full day meetings/events, the department seeking this participation by the Elder must assume responsibility in the request, travel and hotel preparations and for the entire follow up process with the help of Negahneewin Student Services.
- 5.3. Travel arrangements are to be arranged by College departments upon the approval of the departmental manager and must be made with the Elder or with someone authorized to work on their behalf.

## 6. Recording, Photography and Video

- 6.1. Ask an Elder for their consent before photographing, video recording or audio recording any teaching, storytelling, smudging and all ceremonies conducted by an Elder. If you wish to take photographs or record a short interview before or following an event you must seek explicit consent from the Elder.
- 6.2. In accordance with College policy, consent to use the image of an Elder must be sought in writing and by providing the Elder with their own copy of this related documentation.

## Non-Compliance

All staff should consult with their immediate supervisors as well as Negahneewin Support Services in order 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