

DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY – ELDERS-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAM

PROTOCOL

Purpose: The Elders-in-Residence Program provides support and counsel to students. The purpose of this protocol is to assist faculty, staff, and student organizations who express an interest in the services of an Elder for events such as workshops, conferences, celebrations, or other gatherings.

Approach: When contacting the Elders-in-Residence program (Elders@dal.ca or 902 494-6803 (leave a message) or 902 225-0143), be clear about what you need. Respect that Geri Musqua-LeBlanc, our Elder Coordinator, will know the appropriate ceremony to fit your needs. The Elder Coordinator will suggest an Elder based on your requirements. Elders have certain gifts and carry knowledge around specific ceremonies (Pipe Ceremonies, Opening/Closing prayers, Sweat Lodge, etc). Not all Elders carry the same knowledge/gifts.

The Elder Coordinator is there to ensure that:

- You are guided appropriately;
- You understand the respectful offering of gifts;
- Dalhousie community ensures the respectful treatment of Elders;
- The Elders-in-Residence Program builds an awareness of other services that may be available upon request.

Indigenous Council of Elders – this council is comprised of Elders participating in and guiding this program.

We feel very strongly about the respectful treatment of our Elders and the Indigenous knowledge they carry. Therefore, we have created this protocol document to assist the university community with knowledge about how and when to consult traditional Elders in a way that is respectful to our traditional peoples, cultures, and our communities. The Indigenous Council of Elders' role is to assist and protect both the Elders and Dalhousie University.

Protocol

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

Extending invitation to Elders

Elders understand modern technology. It is perfectly acceptable to make an initial request and to confirm Elder availability by phone or e-mail, but once you meet the Elder in person you must then offer tobacco. Tobacco is to be offered at the first possible opportunity and is not meant to be part of a ceremony.

Elders are offered tobacco when asked to share their knowledge. The exchange of tobacco is similar to a contract between two parties where the Elder is agreeing to do what is requested. The one offering the tobacco has obligations to respect the Teachings and the Teacher.

Preparing a tobacco tie

Tobacco can be given in a pouch prepared by wrapping the tobacco in a piece of *cotton cloth* and tied with *cotton string*. There are circumstances when even a cigarette could be offered. The Elder Coordinator will advise you when the offering of a cigarette is appropriate. The minimum amount of tobacco offered is the amount needed to fill the bowl of a pipe. Tobacco is a sacred medicine and only commercial tobacco or tobacco in its natural form (kinnikinic) is acceptable. Some people have asked if a mixture of “healthy” herbs or other medicines can be used instead of tobacco – that answer is **NO**. Whatever your views on tobacco, it is still a sacred medicine to Indigenous people.

Tobacco ties are typically offered when approaching an Elder. Please contact the Elder Coordinator if you need guidance on how to prepare tobacco ties.

Asking an Elder in Person

If you meet with the Elder Coordinator in person requesting services, bring a tobacco tie. The Elder Coordinator will accept or decline on behalf of the Elder who will do the ceremony. The Elder Coordinator will advise what next steps you should take.

Place the tobacco in front of the Elder Coordinator. State your request. Always speak to the tobacco when making your request. If the Elder Coordinator cannot accommodate your request, she will say so by not accepting the tobacco. The Elder Coordinator indicates acceptance of your request by picking up the tobacco. If you hand it directly to the Elder, you do not give the Elder the opportunity to accept or pass on your request – it takes away their choice. It is perfectly appropriate to ask for a referral if the Elder is unable to comply with your request.

Never request Traditional Teachers/Elders/Medicines/Ceremonies or drumming if alcohol is present while the ceremony is taking place.

It will be the University's responsibility to provide appropriate space based on your request.

What to do at the time of your event

Elders are never paid for their knowledge. Before the modern era, Elders were given food, clothing and other necessities in exchange for their help. Monetary gifts are acceptable if presented as a gift for their help, not payment in exchange for their knowledge event. A monetary gift is to be provided when you greet the Elder and should be discreetly placed in their palm. **The Elder Coordinator will advise you of the expected honorarium at initial contact.**

If you have not already met with the Elder Coordinator, you should discreetly make your tobacco offering at that time. Elders who travel from their community are given funds for travel. Elders who live locally are provided two taxi chits for their travel.

Elders must never be asked to sign a receipt nor asked to provide their SIN.

If you need a witness to confirm that you have given funds to the Elder, one of your co-workers should be asked to do this for you.

Expectation for your role at the event

Always provide a host/escort for the Elder attending the event. Meet the Elder at the door with a taxi chit. Take the Elder into the room and do the introductions. Include the Elder's name, where the Elder is from and state the purpose of the

Elder's visit. The Elder will then take over and request that people either sit or stand. When the Elder is finished with their teachings, s/he will hand the meeting back to you. Again, do not impose a time limit on the Elder – they know what is appropriate. Never interrupt the Elder.

Whenever your event is held in the evening, wait with the Elder until his/her taxi arrives.

When food is available at your event, it is respectful that the Elder and his or her helper are served first.

Smudging – Elders are responsible to raise awareness of allergies or sensitivities

Refer to Nova Scotia Smoke-Free Places Act – “Nothing in this Act affects the rights of Aboriginal People respecting traditional Aboriginal spiritual or cultural practices or ceremonies.”

The Smudging Ceremony is a purifying and cleansing ceremony for individuals, gatherings and spaces. Smudging is also used as a protection for the Elder. Know that smudging is an integral part of some ceremonies. The Elder will know the protocol to follow.

When you request a Smudging Ceremony, know that there is limited space on campus where smudging is permitted. It is your responsibility to determine if smudging is permitted in your space.

Personal smudging is available upon request.

The Elder Coordinator MUST BE your first contact

to request the services of an Elder.

902 225-0143 or 902-494-6803

elders@dal.ca

What to do to Engage an Elder

1. Determine the date of your event.
2. Determine the location of your event.
3. Contact the Elder Coordinator to arrange to have an Elder at your event, using one of the following methods:
 - A. by email (preferred method) at elders@dal.ca
 - B. by calling mobile 902 225-0143
 - C. by calling office 902 494-6803 (leave a message)
4. Once you and the Elder Coordinator determine the ceremony that will fit your needs, **contact Campus Bookings to book your space.**
5. Access FAMIS to submit an HVAC work order and an electrical work order to disarm smoke detectors. Remember that smudging is an integral part of some ceremonies.
6. Ensure you give Facilities Management enough time to process the work order. Currently, the lead time is 3 working days for HVAC and smoke detectors.