

**Assembling Strength - Education for Reconciliation**

# Protocols for Elders and Knowledge Keepers

While it is an honour to have an Elder or Knowledge Keeper within your school authority, there are also protocols in which to consider for their wisdom and expertise within their respective fields.

The role of the Elder- Knowledge Keeper can consist of the following:

* Prayers and blessings before meetings and before a shared meal
* Sharing their traditional knowledge
* Providing spiritual advice when asked
* Demonstrating traditional arts, crafts and practices
* Engaging in traditional ceremony
* Visiting and engaging with students as an invited guest

The following protocols listed are a guiding way to extend an invitation to an Elder- Knowledge Keeper to your learning environment.

* Before engaging or making any requests, begin with acknowledging with proper and respectful protocol.
* Start from where you are within your own contexts, focus on the traditional territory on which your learning environment is situated, then proceed.
* Tobacco is a sacred plant, as is sweetgrass, sage and cedar. When offering tobacco, it can be given as cigarettes, pouch tobacco, or a tobacco tie- loose tobacco wrapped in a small square cloth. This display of respect establishes a relationship between yourself and the Elder-Knowledge Keeper.
* Inuit Elders- Knowledge Keepers do not expect a tobacco offering. A small gift may be offered in appreciation of the time shared within your learning environment.
* If it is a traditional ceremony or spiritual ceremony, do not take photographs or recordings during this sacred event.
* During an Honour song, everyone stands and removes headwear.
* Smudging is considered a private ceremony and therefore pictures and recordings are not allowed.
* Provide a small gift or honorarium for their time and the gift of their knowledge and wisdom.

Elders and or Knowledge Keepers are honoured with respect, appreciation and should be treated as such! To advance reconciliation we acknowledge the role they have with passing on culture, traditions and connections to the past.

*Adapted from Walking Together – Elder Wisdom in the Classroom*