

Elders Protocol

1. Purpose

Infocus Management Consultants Ltd. (IMC) proposes that Elders play a significant role in the Primary Care Physicians In-Service on Aboriginal Homelessness.

This Protocol document sets out the guidelines for engaging Elders in community-based conversations:

- Elder Engagement
- Consistency in the offering of gifts; and
- Respect for Elders and their knowledge.

2. Scope

This protocol applies to all IMC management, staff and contractors who engage the experiences and knowledge of Traditional Aboriginal Elders, in carrying out their duties as part of the Primary Care Physicians In-Service on Aboriginal Homelessness.

3. Protocol

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

3.1 Extending invitation to Elders

Elders must be gifted when you ask them to share their knowledge. Please note that it is very important to be specific in making your request. If the Elder accepts the gift s/he is accepting the request and will do her/his best to help you. If they cannot do what you are asking they will say so and not accept the gift. Gifting is similar to a contract between two parties where the Elder is agreeing to do what is asked and the one gifting also has obligations to respect the Teachings and the Teacher, thus the protocols which explains the expectations of the host. It is therefore very important that you are specific before gifting. It is perfectly appropriate to ask for a referral if the Elder is unable to comply with your request.

When gifting, place it in front of the Elder and state your request. The Elder indicates acceptance of your request by picking up the gift. If you hand it directly to the Elder you do not give him/her the opportunity to accept or pass on your request – it takes away their choice. Always speak to the gift when making your request, BEFORE handing the Elder the gift.

If your gift is tobacco, it can be given in a pouch, wrapped in a piece of cloth or even in the form of a cigarette. The minimum amount of tobacco is the amount needed to use in a Ceremonial Pipe, but a pouch of tobacco is still the most common form. Tobacco is a sacred medicine and only commercial tobacco or tobacco in its natural form is acceptable. Some people have asked if a mixture of 'healthy' herbs or other medicines can be used instead of tobacco – the answer is NO. Whatever your views are on tobacco it is still a sacred medicine to Traditional Aboriginal people.

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Traditional Teachers/Elders/Medicines/Ceremonies should not be requested if alcohol is present.

3.2 Gift of Appreciation

Elders are never "paid" for their "work" as it would be culturally inappropriate to appear as though they are "selling" Indigenous knowledge. Traditional Indigenous and cultural knowledge is not, and cannot be owned by an individual or institution.

If the Elder agrees to become involved and accepts the gift/tobacco it is customary to provide a gift afterwards to show your appreciation. This gift can be monetary. Before the modern era, Elders were given food, clothing and other necessities in exchange for their help and therefore monetary gifts are acceptable if presented as a gift and not payment - in exchange for help.

Elders must never be asked to sign a "receipt" as acknowledgement of their gift even if it is financial. Nor should they be asked for Social Insurance Numbers (SIN), or their birthdates.

3.3 Travel

A financial reimbursement of any expenses or incurred costs in connection with the Elder's involvement with you (i.e. travel, food) should be offered to the Elder in addition to their gift, or under a separate travel claim.

3.4 Elder host/escort

Always ensure there is a host/escort for the Elder if s/he has been invited to a meeting/gathering. The host/escort is responsible for transportation, greeting the Elder and following the protocols outlined, as well as the responsibility of offering the gift of appreciation after the meeting/gathering.

When offering the gift, if it is financial, make sure you have a witness and that this witness signs the Elder Form. The purpose of the witness is to offer accountability for the money without having to ask the Elder to sign for his/her gift.

4.5 Elder remuneration/reimbursement form of financial gift

IMC has an Elder Form available from the Project Assistant.