

Elders in the Classroom

Elder Mike Pinay
and
Susan Beaudin
Education Consultant

Phone: 306-529-5090

Email: sbeaudin@sasktel.net

Who is an Aboriginal Elder?

Aboriginal peoples value the Elders for their traditional and cultural teachings and wisdom which they have learned through the teachings of their Elders and life experiences.

These Elders continue to assist both First Nations and non-First Nations people. Many requests come to the Elders for assistance during illness, bereavement, celebrations and traditional teachings.

They are very busy people and assist any time of day or night.

Who are these Very Important people?

Aboriginal Elders in Saskatchewan

First Nation

(Cree, Sauteaux, Dene, Nakota, Lakota, Dakota)

Métis

Inuit

Types of Elders

Traditional

- Conducts spiritual ceremonies (sweat lodge, rain/sun dance lodges, pipe ceremony, horse dance, traditional feasts and other ceremonies)
- Speak one or more First Nations' languages as their 1st language and English as the 2nd language
- Have spent many years in training with Elders as an Elders' helper or in apprenticeship training, may be male or female
- Recognized as traditional Elders in their communities
- Usually over 60 years old, but some younger people have been recognized as spiritual Elders and healers

Types of Elders Contemporary

- Does not conduct spiritual ceremonies
- Usually speaks English as their first language and may speak a First Nation's language
- Recognized in their communities as Elders who are knowledgeable about cultural teachings, may be male or female
- Has attended formal "Western" schools and may have post secondary education
- Has learned about the traditional teachings from traditional Elders - Age can be from 50 years and over

Types of Elders Senior

- May speak a First Nation's language and/or English
- May or may not attend traditional ceremonies and celebrations
- Many don't know the cultural and traditional teachings, male or female
- Has attended formal "Western" schools and may have post secondary education
- Ages range from 50 and over depending on the First Nation or 65 years old according to general society

Locating an Elder

- Staff members, administrators
- Aboriginal consultants in your school division
- Urban Métis or First Nations Organizations and Community Centers
- Tribal Councils
- First Nation band offices

*** Be specific in what you want the Elder to do so you will be directed to the right Elder.

Elders Protocol

- Pay a Visit to the Elder or call the Elder
- Approach the Elder at least one week before the event
- Be specific in what you are requesting of the Elder. Be clear on the role you wish the Elder to play and the expectations you have for the presentation
- Present the Tobacco (if the Elder agrees to the requests s/he will accept the tobacco) or direct you to another Elder

Elders Protocol

- The Elder will not request money so you will need to address this. Think of the Elders as having higher education as in a Masters or doctorate. Your school will need to budget for Elder involvement.
- Gifts are acceptable. When do you present this?
- Transportation - Elders may not always have transportation so you may need to take care of this
- Follow-up, Building the Relationship

The Arrival of the Elder

- Greet the Elder with a handshake
- Meet the Elder and introduce him/her to the other staff
- Ask if s/he would like some refreshments or a snack
- Once in the classroom, introduce the Elder to the students explaining why the Elder is there.
- Have the students shake the Elder's hand when session is over (if possible)

The Follow - Up

- Have the students make pictures or write a thank you note to the Elder
- Call the Elder and express your appreciation
- Start a list of Elders for yourself or the school identifying the Elder, contact information and the expertise of the Elder
- You may have questions for the Elder that s/he can answer. Begin a relationship for future requests be it professional or personal

Activity

- Work in pairs to identify:
 - Elders in your geographical area (if you don't know any - make a list of actual places you may go for help) (Maps).
 - Actual persons within your school or school division you can approach
 - List some ways you may wish to have Elders involved in the classroom
 - Share with the group

Your Comments, Questions, Ideas?



Thank you!