

ELDERS HANDBOOK

How the Medical School Engages and Works With Aboriginal Elders



Northern Ontario
School of Medicine

École de médecine
du Nord de l'Ontario

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The Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) is grateful to the individual Elders who graciously contributed to this Handbook by providing details as to how and why the School can benefit from the presence and participation of Elders in the larger School community. These Elders include:

- Josias Fiddler, Sandy Lake First Nation, Sandy Lake, ON
- Alice Kelly, Ochiichagwebabigoing First Nation, Dalles, ON
- Clarence White, Naotkamegwaning, Whitefish Bay, ON
- Josephine King, Tikinagan Child & Family Services Nodin/CFI, Sioux Lookout, ON
- Ernie and Charlotte Kwandibens, Thunder Bay, ON
- Robert McKay, Métis Nation of Ontario, Thunder Bay, ON
- The Late Greta Mosquito, Michikan First Nation, Bearskin Lake, ON
- Julie and Frank Ozawagosh, Whitefish Lake First Nation, ON

Consultations with the Elders occurred during the Trent University Elders Gathering in Peterborough, Ontario in February 2007, and during a day-long workshop session with staff from the NOSM Aboriginal Affairs Unit in March 2007. Elder input has continued with a two-day Elders Gathering in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario in September, 2008.

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ELDERS HANDBOOK

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Purpose of Handbook	6
Personal Characteristics of NOSM Aboriginal Elders	7
Roles of NOSM Aboriginal Elders	16
NOSM Aboriginal Elders and Their Importance to the School	21
How Aboriginal Elders are Integrated into NOSM	25

The Elders Handbook is dedicated to the memory of Elder Greta Mosquito of Michikan Lake First Nation. Her selfless commitment to her community and people, and more recently her contributions to development of the School and Aboriginal Affairs Unit as a NOSM Elder during community engagement events, are a few examples of the gifts left for everyone by Greta Mosquito.

PURPOSE OF HANDBOOK

This Handbook is designed as a resource document for the staff, faculty, learners, and Elders at NOSM. It describes the NOSM Aboriginal Affairs Unit's Elders Program and how learners, staff, and faculty can benefit from Aboriginal Elders in their personal, academic, and professional lives.

About the Northern Ontario School of Medicine

A medical school for the whole of Northern Ontario, the Northern Ontario School of Medicine is a pioneering faculty of medicine. A joint initiative of Lakehead University in Thunder Bay and Laurentian University in Sudbury, NOSM offers a distinctive four-year M.D. program. Its unique curriculum has multiple teaching and research sites distributed across Northern Ontario, including large and small communities. NOSM contributes to improving the health of people in Northern Ontario. By educating skilled physicians and undertaking health research suited to community needs, the School will become a cornerstone of community health care in Northern Ontario.

Grounded in the North

A medical school like no other, the Northern Ontario School of Medicine has a strong emphasis on the special features of Northern Ontario. These include: a diversity of cultures – Aboriginal, Francophone, remote communities, small town rural, large rural community and regional centres; varying illness, injury and health status patterns with their specific clinical challenges; a wide range of health service delivery models which emphasize supporting local health care and interdisciplinary teamwork; and the personal and professional challenges, rewards and satisfactions of medical practice in northern and rural environments.

The NOSM Elders Program is another of the many innovative ways which NOSM is addressing its mandate of social accountability in Northern Ontario.



PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF NOSM ABORIGINAL ELDERS

NOSM Elders are Aboriginal persons who have certain gifts for working with community members. Each of these gifts, separately or together, is related to maintaining the holistic health of a community, and each of these gifts could be utilized in a 'healing' effort by Elders.

At the same time, all Elders share qualities or characteristics which are recognized by the community as qualities or characteristics which the community may reference when bestowing Elder status on an individual. Personal qualities which an Elder may possess include:

Respect

Elders radiate and demonstrate respect in everything they do, in their dealings with individuals, families, communities, and with all else in Creation.

Age

While no community or person claims to provide a definitive age at which someone becomes an Elder, it is universally accepted that someone is recognized by their community as an Elder when they have “traveled a full cycle” in their life. The person has lived through all the stages of life — as an infant, child, youth, young adult and parent — and they are now a grandparent. They have raised their own children and generally have two or more grandchildren.

Knowledgeable

Elders are people who possess significant knowledge of traditional, cultural, spiritual, and Christian customs and practices. This knowledge is gained through a full life of learning, experiences, and teachings received from other Elders and traditional people.

Spiritually Grounded

All Elders, regardless of their individual religious beliefs and practices, are intensely spiritual persons. Their thoughts, actions and deliberations have a strong and fundamental spiritual component. Elders describe themselves as being “*messengers of*” or “*workers for*” their Creator, or God. Elders, and the communities which endorse them, see themselves as conduits to the world of the living for the will of their Creator. An Elder may follow traditional Aboriginal and/or Aboriginal Christian spiritual beliefs and practices.

Compassionate Approach

Elders exhibit genuine and universal love and caring for the overall well-being of their community and all of Creation. This extends from the individual, through to the family and beyond.

Wisdom

Elders are seen as very wise individuals that have the ability to utilize their personal and collective knowledge, experience, common sense, and insight.

Honesty

Elders demonstrate genuine honesty and sincerity, free from deceit or fraud.

Patience

Like many older people, Elders have an abundance of patience. True to the Aboriginal worldview regarding time, Elders do not exhibit restlessness or annoyance when confronted with what others may perceive as delay.

Humility

Elders are humble. They are modest, courteous, and respectful to all Creation. They do not exhibit pride or arrogance.

Trustworthy

Elders are seen by their community as people whom are worthy of trust or belief, and are seen as people who will take responsibility for their own conduct and obligations.

Life-Long Dedication to the Holistic Well-Being of the Community

Elders are seen by the community as selfless persons who dedicate their lives to the health and well-being of all of Creation. Their dedication is towards all aspects of life – spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual – for all persons, beings, and things.

Life-long Dedication to Learning

Elders dedicate themselves to the well-being of others and see themselves as instruments of the Creator. Elders recognize that they must always continue learning, not only from other Elders and the past, but also from their current situation and events to come which may affect people's lives.

Perception of their Role in Life

Elders understand their role in life, and acknowledge the special qualities and characteristics inherent in their role for themselves and for other Elders.

Communicators

Elders use well-developed communication and story-telling skills to fulfill their roles in a community. Tactful communication skills are necessary for a person to provide Elders' advice. This advice allows the recipient of the advice to see and understand the situation in such a way that they make their own decisions on a particular matter. As a result, the person demonstrates ownership of their decision and the subsequent results, thereby increasing the probability of success.

Openness and Acceptance

True to their other qualities, Elders are genuinely accepting of the perspectives of others, and will not attempt to persuade others of their own personal views.

Community Leader

Elders are seen as activists who are constantly affecting community change. They do so through thoughtful advice and reflection on holistic approaches to issues affecting all of Creation, and with a view to the past, present and future of humankind. They are recognized by their community as a direct result of their years of activism for the benefit of the entire community. At the same time, however, Elders rarely provide advice or reflection unless they are requested to do so.

Community-Designated

Like Elders elsewhere, NOSM Elders are individuals who have been recognized by their home community (and sometimes by the larger community with which the individual Elder regularly works) as persons who possess qualities and characteristics of an Elder, and who are utilized by their community as an Elder.

INDIVIDUAL GIFTS OR SKILLS OF ELDERS

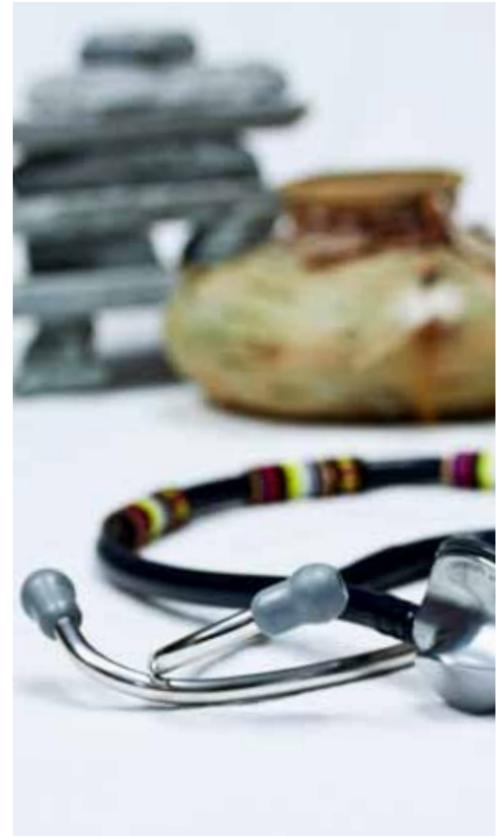
Various gifts and unique skills of Elders may be shared with a community, and no two Elders are alike. Areas of expertise which individual Elders may possess include:

Women's and Men's Teachings

These teachings cover the traditional and contemporary role of adults in society, and include the particular individual aspects of each genders' role.

Medicine Person

Certain Elders, as a result of their life-long study of medicinal plants and years of apprenticeship as a healer, are recognized by their community as being Medicine Persons. Medicine Persons – or Healers – provide healing services to community members, combining specific natural remedies with ceremonial practices and prayers in an effort to assist the individual in achieving holistic well-being.



Providing Guidance, Reflection, and Balance

As a result of the qualities and characteristics many Elders share, as noted in the previous section, Elders are often suitable for observing and reflecting on deliberations of a group of people, whether it be a small task-oriented staff group or a larger group mandated to provide overall leadership and management for an organization. While Elders are never decision-makers in their role, they will provide thoughtful reflection and advice on a group's deliberations.

Spirituality

Respect for and acknowledgement of the spiritual realm is a fundamental aspect of Aboriginal life. Elders, as keepers of cultural knowledge and as devoutly spiritual individuals, are key to communities and people who are facing spiritual issues or questions. As well, Elders are seen as spiritual beings who may communicate with the spirit world, bringing with them into modern forums and situations an aura of devoutness and piety which is often absent otherwise. This influence can have a profoundly positive impact on individual or group deliberations. There are many Elders of Christian faith whom are highly regarded in many communities.

Time-Honoured Aboriginal Ceremonies

These ceremonies cover a range of life events and purpose, and may include: Spiritual Naming, Sunrise, Openings, Sweat Lodge, Walking-Out, Healing (varied purposes and styles), Singing and Dancing, Cleansing, and Funeral/Passing-On Ceremonies.

Cultural Teachings and Life Skills

Knowledge, life-long experience with traditional teachings, and life skills are common gifts of many Elders. Specific teachings may vary slightly from Aboriginal community to Aboriginal community, but many commonalities exist across Northern Ontario. Examples of these teachings and skills include:

- The Seven Grandfather Teachings;
- The Creation Story and its demonstration of how people are to live together in Creation;
- Understanding of the Aboriginal views on the cycle of life;
- Aboriginal worldview and other perspectives;
- The clan system and its function in traditional and contemporary society;
- Aboriginal languages, their effect on culture, and what the language says about cultural and social norms;
- Sewing, beading, leatherwork, and many other crafts;
- Food harvesting, preservation and preparation;
- Traditional survival skills for living on the land;
- Seasonal cycles and the changing of the seasons;
- Story telling;
- Humility and its role in on-going health and healing;
- Holistic health; and,
- General knowledge of traditional medicines.

Midwifery

Midwifery may be explored together with an Elder to better understand the crucial role of midwives in traditional and contemporary Aboriginal life.

Conflict Resolution

As a result of their often revered position and role in communities, Elders are particularly well-suited to resolving conflict between individuals or groups of individuals in either traditional or contemporary situations. Elders are, by definition, objective and do not take sides. Rather, Elders are committed to facilitating fair and just outcomes to best achieve the overall holistic health of a community.

Cross-Cultural Training

Because of their ability to live comfortably in both the Aboriginal world and that of predominant society, together with their general qualities and characteristics as noted in the previous section, Elders are well-suited to helping others better understand people of another culture.

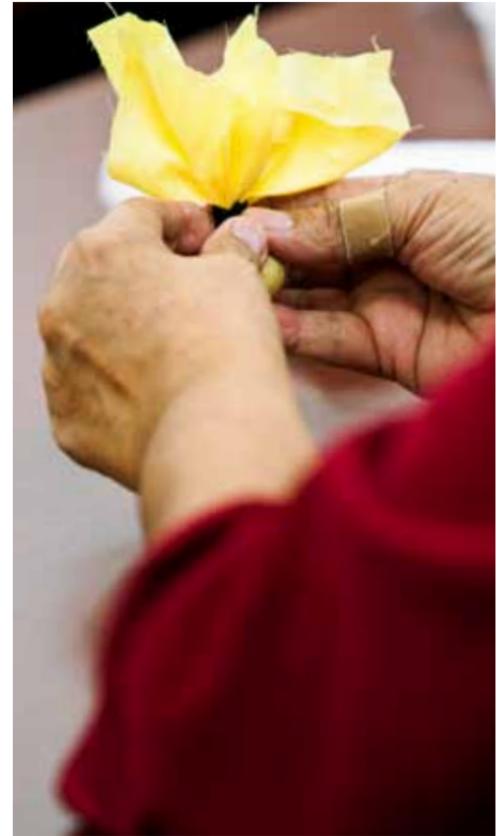
ROLES OF NOSM ABORIGINAL ELDERS

NOSM Elders are increasingly being engaged in many aspects of the School's operations. As NOSM learners, staff, and faculty become more familiar with the uses and benefits of embracing a role for Elders, this increase is expected to continue.

Some of the ways which Elders are active in the School are listed below:

Informal Support and Guidance to Senior Leadership

Members of the School's senior leadership regularly consult with one or more of the School's Elders. Cultural teachings have been sought and shared, and reflection and advice is requested and provided in an effort to ensure cultural appropriateness, sensitivity, and relevance with regards to Aboriginal topics or issues.



Participation in Senior Leadership Group

Elders at both Campuses alternate attendance at the regular monthly Senior Leadership Group (SLG) meetings held at the School. The attending Elder is considered a regular participant in the senior management meetings, though without formal decision-making authority. As Elders do, they provide appropriate teachings, reflection, and advice on relevant SLG topics.

Participation in Aboriginal Reference Group

Elders also participate in the quarterly meetings of the Aboriginal Reference Group (ARG). This Aboriginal advisory group is mandated “to provide advice to Northern Ontario School of Medicine’s initiatives... in the promotion of excellence in higher learning and accommodation of the Aboriginal world view.” The ARG consists of members of approximately nine different groups, including the three main provincial territorial organizations (Nishnawbe Aski Nation, Treaty #3, and the Union of Ontario Indians) as well as the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres, the Independent First Nations and the Métis Nation of Ontario. This group serves as the primary resource for the School in the fulfillment of its mandate to involve the Aboriginal population in the development and operation of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine.

Formal Learner Support Services

During the school year, on a weekly basis, Elders are on-site at each Campus to provide counseling and advisory services to NOSM Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners.

Aboriginal Teachings

Elders provide Aboriginal cultural teachings to learners, faculty, and staff on an informal basis.

Sweat Lodges

Sweat Lodge ceremonies are offered to interested learners, faculty, and staff on each campus. Reasons to participate could be to express gratitude, seek direction, healing, and cleansing. Aboriginal Teachings are also shared at these ceremonies.

Aboriginal Admissions Sub-Committee

The Aboriginal Admissions Sub-Committee reviews all Aboriginal admissions stream applications, makes recommendations to the Admissions Committee, and assists with the Aboriginal recruitment process. In addition to Elder participation, this Committee is comprised of an Aboriginal Faculty Member (Chair), the Assistant Dean of Admissions, the NOSM Director of Aboriginal Affairs, an Aboriginal physician, Aboriginal residents, a representative of an Aboriginal Educational Organization, an Aboriginal community Member, and NOSM Aboriginal learners.

Admissions Interviews

Elders and other volunteers are an integral part of the NOSM admissions process. Elder participation allows for a more balanced interview process, as well as providing Elders with a more complete and thorough understanding of the School.

Curriculum Development and Review of Content

NOSM's Strategic Plan calls for the development of a mechanism to integrate Aboriginal involvement in NOSM, including the participation of Aboriginal Elders, learners, faculty members, and staff in all relevant NOSM academic programs. Aboriginal staff and faculty are involved with the committee which approves all Aboriginal curriculum content. Integration of Elders' wisdom and insight into curriculum content development and review is continually evolving.

Guest Speakers

Elders are intermittently asked to speak at NOSM meetings, community consultations, and mandatory learner sessions intending to prepare learners for their one-month community visit or at community events hosted by the School.



Team Building and Conflict Resolution

Elders have conducted separate Sharing Circles for NOSM staff, faculty, and learners in the past. Staff and faculty Sharing Circles were introduced as a culturally - and organizationally - appropriate means to resolve institutional issues in a respectful and sensitive manner. Student Sharing Circles were introduced as a safe and supportive forum for the sharing of student concerns and anxieties about any issues which may be important to learners and have become a standard component of learner experiences as an opportunity to de-brief following the one month community placement that each first-year student participates in. Sharing Circles have proven to be productive and beneficial means with which to work on team building and conflict resolution.

Additional Future Roles for Elders in the School

NOSM's Aboriginal Elders, along with staff and faculty, are developing additional roles for Elders from which the School could benefit. These roles include:

- One-on-one counseling for NOSM learners;
- Cultural awareness and orientation sessions for staff, faculty, and learners; and,
- Aboriginal teaching of relevant NOSM curriculum.

Faculty Appointments for Elders

The desire to have Aboriginal Elder faculty members at the School has been expressed since the School's inception. It has yet to be determined how NOSM will proceed with this recommendation.



NOSM ABORIGINAL ELDERS AND THEIR IMPORTANCE TO THE SCHOOL

In Aboriginal culture, Elders are the essential link to the past and to the future. Elders provide continuity and complete the 'circle of life' so that individuals, family and extended family, and community view themselves, and subsequently behave, as a confident and complete whole. Their knowledgeable, wise, patient, understanding, and accepting approach is an essential part of any healthy group dynamic.

Aboriginal Elders and others have identified additional reasons for their involvement with NOSM. Elders provide a deep and solid foundation of knowledge and experience on which to 'grow a family.' Additionally, they provide a clear and easily seen connection through the generations, as they have lived almost a full cycle themselves.

For NOSM Aboriginal learners, the presence and work of Elders can be a key factor which contributes to student success. Elders help learners balance the two worlds which they may see themselves living within – that of home and that of the School.

Elders may assist Aboriginal learners in understanding their ancestry and maintaining a positive identity and self-image by gaining greater knowledge and appreciation of their roots.

For all learners, Elders can provide a safe and willing sounding board, as well as a caring, objective, accepting, and non-judgmental confidante during difficult times, whether those difficulties are academic, social, or otherwise. Elders provide advice and guidance in such a way that the recipient is sufficiently empowered and confident to make their own conclusions and subsequent decisions about an issue, thereby taking ownership and increasing probability of success.

For staff and faculty, Elders provide an open-minded and accepting approach in their observation, reflection, and advice. Informal and formal teachings are provided to raise awareness of Aboriginal history and worldview and to help both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff and faculty increase their own cultural competency.

Elders are essential consultants around new developments at the School, whether it is a student recruitment effort or a research project to be conducted in an Aboriginal community. Involving Elders early on in project conception and design is one of the best ways the School can ensure Aboriginal concerns and sensitivities are incorporated in School activities at the outset.

Elders do not provide advice and guidance randomly, or without being requested to do so. However, when asked, it is important that their input be well-heard, acknowledged, and followed through on in some manner. This is part of the reciprocal nature of an Elder's work. If they see that their role has helped to achieve positive results, they are inspired to continue in that role and improve their contribution through regular and on-going learning and professional development on their own part.

Some Elders also speak of the Seven Prophecies of the Aboriginal Peoples. The first six Prophecies accurately describe the events which have led to the present day. The Seventh Prophecy or Generation (the one people are in now) is described as the time when Aboriginal people will help non-Aboriginals understand the ways of Mother Earth so there is harmony in Creation. Elders recognize their roles and responsibility in seeing the Prophecy fulfilled.

When Elders discuss their role in NOSM, there are regular references and comparisons made with the role of Elders in a traditional family or extended family setting. Elders very much see their contemporary role in institutions as being very similar on a functional level.

Traditional Family Groups

Children, Youth, and Young Adults

Their responsibility is to become productive adult family members.

Adults and Parents

Their responsibility is to teach children and facilitate the learning of knowledge and skills necessary for productive and fulfilling life.

Aunts and Uncles

Their responsibility is to make decisions affecting children, how parents or families interact with children and outside groups, provide discipline (if necessary), judge success of child learning and skills, and guide the overall work of the family.

Elders Role with Each Family Group

- Usher and welcome newborns into their family *
- Serve as surrogate parents when parents are occupied
- Provide objective mediation
- Nurture and support youth to become productive adults
- Provide family balance and child development
- Provide guidance, reflection, and advice on content and delivery of teachings
- Provide support regarding teaching challenges **

NOSM Family Groups

Medical Learners

Their responsibility is to become competent and caring physicians through placements in Aboriginal communities.

Staff and Faculty

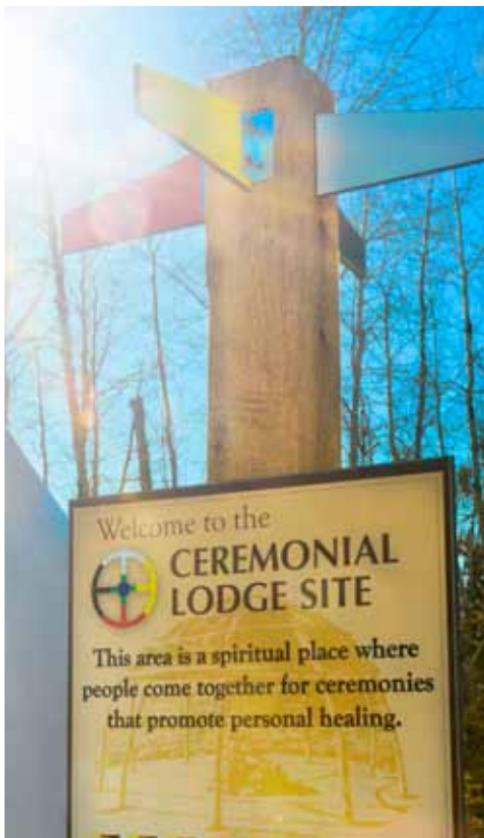
Their job is to teach/facilitate learning by Learners of medical knowledge and skills, and raising of cross-cultural awareness.

NOSM Board, SLG, and ARG

Their job is to make decisions affecting learners and how Staff/Faculty work with Learners and outside groups, provide discipline if necessary, judge success of Student learning/skills and guide the overall work of the family.

* Elders are often the first people 'seen' by infants, as it is usually Elder midwives who birth children. As well, in traditional Coming Out or Naming Ceremonies, Elders are the first persons to 'officially' greet the new person and welcome them into the family.

** Elders provide support, mentoring, monitoring, and on-going 'professional development' for each other. When an elderly person (or others) die, it is an Elder who performs the ceremony which allows the deceased to safely pass on and through to the next world.



HOW ABORIGINAL ELDERS ARE INTEGRATED INTO NOSM

Aboriginal Elders are integrated into the School in a number of ways. Existing ways in which Elders are already active in the School are described in section three of this handbook. A process is set in place to facilitate and track individual or new roles of Elders with learners, staff, or faculty.

Role of Aboriginal Affairs Unit — Cultural Enrichment Working Group

The responsibility for coordination of Elder services is assigned to staff of the Aboriginal Affairs Unit. The unit is familiar with a range of Elders engaged by the School, and serves as a liaison for the Aboriginal Affairs Cultural Enrichment Working Group. Responsibilities include:

- Promoting the role of Elders within the School;
- Assisting other units with information on Elders;
- Assisting other units with Requests for Elders; and,
- Acting on decisions of the Cultural Enrichment Working Group.

This unit administers the Elders Program on behalf of the Cultural Enrichment Working Group.

The Cultural Enrichment Working Group is responsible for the Elders program and cultural activities of the Aboriginal Affairs Unit and Learners Affairs Unit. The Cultural Working Group consist of representatives of from the following NOSM units:

- Learners Affairs Unit;
- Admissions and Learner Recruitment Unit;
- Undergraduate Medical Education;
- Postgraduate Education Unit;
- Continuing Health Professional Education Unit;
- NOSM Aboriginal learners; and,
- NOSM Elders.

The Cultural Enrichment Working Group regularly meets by teleconference to plan overall activities, make decisions on Unit requests, and consults with existing NOSM Elders regarding issues related to the Elders Program.

To Apply for the Services of an Elder

NOSM learners, faculty, and staff are encouraged to use the following procedure to request and secure the services of an Elder.

1. Make final decision on intended purpose of the Elder role, and discuss this with the Aboriginal Affairs Unit.
2. Retrieve a **Request For Elder Services Form** from the Aboriginal Affairs Unit or from the School's intranet, MyNOSM.
3. Complete the relevant sections of the form.
 - If you do not have a particular Elder in mind, indicate this on the form and ensure that your intended purpose is well-defined.
 - Ensure that the location for your intended purpose is identified.
 - Complete other relevant form sections.
4. Submit the form to the Aboriginal Affairs Unit.

Once the **Request For Elder Services Form** is submitted to the Aboriginal Affairs Unit, it will be reviewed to ensure all sections are completed. Forms will then be presented to the Cultural Enrichment Working Group for their review and recommendation of a suitable Elder which meets the purpose(s) of the request.

Contacting and Requesting an Elder

Depending on the Elder identified by the Cultural Enrichment Working Group, the Aboriginal Affairs Unit may make the initial contact on behalf of the requesting Unit, or staff themselves may make the initial contact if the particular Elder is known to them.

- If the Elder is reached by phone and agrees to provide the service, the Elder is provided with a gift at the first opportunity.
- If the Elder can be approached in person, then a gift is personally presented to the Elder by either the Aboriginal Affairs Units or the person making the request.

Gifts for Elders

Gifts for Elders were traditionally a means of support with which Elders would feed, clothe, and shelter themselves. People gave genuinely what they could afford in essentials such as fabric, clothes, fur, meat, or firewood. In contemporary times, the gifts may be traditional, or exclusively ceremonial and the Elder is financially supported through a system of honoraria. If a ceremonial gift is provided, it may be tobacco, a household item, or food. Generally, Elders expect to be 'given' only what people or groups can afford.

If the Elder declines, they may be willing to provide a referral to a colleague which the Aboriginal Affairs Unit can take back to the Cultural Enrichment Working Group for their direction. The Cultural Enrichment Working Group will select another Elder to approach.

Once the Elder request is completed, preparations begin for the event and the necessary arrangements for supporting the Elder are made. These arrangements may include, if necessary:

- Event space needs (consider smudging);
- Support and escort for Elder;
- Assistant services;
- Elder transportation, meals, accommodation; and,
- Special needs of the Elder related to event.

If the person or Unit making the Request is uncertain of an appropriate gift for a particular Elder or the role of the Elder, they should consult with the Aboriginal Affairs.

Request For Elder Services Form

The Request For Elder Services Form contains the following information:

- **NOSM Unit** and name of the staff making the request, including date request is made;
- **Purpose of Elder services** (i.e., ceremony, counseling, Sharing Circle, attendance at meeting, consultation, etc), and if necessary, a description of what it is that the requesting Unit wishes to achieve through Elder participation;
- **Event details** including location, date, time, and contact person if different than person making request;
- **Special materials, equipment, and space** which may be required for the event; and,
- **Honoraria details** outlining the remuneration amount and authorization information.

The Request for Elder Service form contains additional space in which the Aboriginal Affairs Unit provides additional information concerning the request, such as:

- **Indication of log entry** in database of current Elders;
- **Authorizations and conditions**, financial or otherwise (to be completed by the Aboriginal Affairs Unit or requesting Unit); and,
- **Form tracking information** to ensure proper approvals are received, etc; and,
- **Special travel consideration.**

A new Request for Elder Service Form will be initiated for each separate request and if the first Elder identified declines the request and a second Elder is identified.

Current Listing of NOSM Elders

The current listing of NOSM Elders, available through the Aboriginal Affairs Unit, is to be updated on an annual basis and at other times as necessary due to changes in the availability of Elders. This current listing contains basic information on each individual Elder, and includes:

- Elder's name;
- Elder's areas of expertise (each individual's gifts);
- Services already provided to the School;
- Geographic area in which Elder will work; and,
- Date of update.

Aboriginal Affairs Unit Database of Current NOSM Elders

A database of current NOSM Elders is to be maintained by the Aboriginal Affairs Unit. The Cultural Enrichment Working Group assists in selecting appropriate Elders to meet the needs of the School, and for purposes of managing the Elders program. This information is to include:

- **Contact information** (name, address, phone, fax, email address, other family contact in case of emergency);
- **Areas of expertise** (the particular gifts an Elder may possess which are included in the expertise which an Elder may share with the School);
- **Special needs and considerations** regarding accommodations, transportation, escort, need for translator, materials needed, requirements for an assistant, health concerns, special instructions regarding requests for services and gifting;
- **Remuneration and compensation** if different from the regular system within NOSM; and,
- **Activity log** database fields for brief dated entries on each event where a particular Elder has provided services to the School. These fields should include a simple word or two to describe Elder role, the date that it occurred, and any event-specific notes deemed relevant.

AN ABORIGINAL VOICE AT NOSM

The Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) is committed to meeting the needs of the people of Northern Ontario. At the earliest stages of development, NOSM engaged the Aboriginal communities of Northern Ontario as part of its mandate to be accountable to the cultural diversity of Northern Ontario.

In 2003, Aboriginal people attended a workshop to provide input on the development of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. Participants of the **Follow Your Dreams** workshop identified that Aboriginal people were looking for NOSM to be an “Aboriginal friendly” medical school which would:

- Encourage and nurture Aboriginal learners into and through medical school;
- Acknowledge and respect Aboriginal history, traditions and cultures;
- Access the expertise and resources in Aboriginal communities;
- Establish partnerships with Aboriginal communities; and,
- Incorporate the challenges and specific health priorities of the Aboriginal communities into the NOSM Undergraduate curriculum.

In 2006, at the **Keeping the Vision** (KTV) workshop, several of the NOSM Associate Deans and Directors provided update presentations to the Workshop participants which detailed how each of the respective School units had addressed the recommendations from the previous workshop in the three or four year period between the community events.

We have provided a Keeping The Vision workshop report to the communities outlining the relative achievements since 2003.

In 2011, the ***Living the Vision*** (LTV) workshop was held in Sudbury. Aboriginal community representatives, the Métis Nation of Ontario and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine achieved a number of distinct purposes, including:

1. to provide a forum for Aboriginal peoples to communicate ongoing desired role within NOSM;
2. to provide an update of activities to date from the previous ***Keeping the Vision*** workshop; and,
3. to evaluate NOSM progress in relation to its Aboriginal partners.

Each of the Workshops have resulted in a series of recommendations in five separate areas of the School's work: Admissions, Communications, Community Engagement, Curriculum, and Research. These recommendations have in real ways constituted a 'blueprint' for the on-going efforts by the School in being socially accountable to the Aboriginal peoples and communities in Northern Ontario.

NOSM's Aboriginal Affairs Unit works to carry out the recommendations of the workshops. The Elders Handbook is one of many ways that the Aboriginal Affairs Unit has implemented a new initiative in support of the School's commitment to Aboriginal communities.

APPENDIX

Additional resources for Aboriginal Elders and Traditional Resource People or Advisors can be found at:

University of Manitoba Policies on Elders Protocol

<http://umanitoba.ca/student/asc/tpac/protocol.html>

Council of Elders in INAC Head Office

http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ai/aw/kumik_e.html

University of Victoria Law School Cultural Awareness Camps

<http://web.uvic.ca/ablo/documents/Aborigineelderswelcomelawlearners.pdf>

Elders in Saskatchewan Schools

<http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/fn-me/docs/eldoutgde.pdf>

SPECIAL THANKS

The Northern Ontario School of Medicine would like to acknowledge the Aboriginal Elders, and NOSM's Aboriginal Affairs and Communications Units whom have contributed to the development of the Elders Handbook.





Northern Ontario
School of Medicine

École de médecine
du Nord de l'Ontario

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