



GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WITH INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY MEMBERS

PREAMBLE & PURPOSE

With an emphasis on actualizing [Western's Indigenous Strategic Plan \(ISP, 2016\)](#) and implementing the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action](#), Western recognizes the significant role of Indigenous Elders and knowledge keepers in bringing Indigenous perspectives and ways of knowing into the academic learning and research environment. Elders and cultural teachers are held in high regard by Indigenous communities, as they carry rights and responsibilities to hold, protect and share Indigenous ways of knowing. Indigenous peoples are often invited to participate in university activities in the areas of learning, research and service. For example, Indigenous peoples are invited to conduct openings and closings of events, sit on committees (e.g., thesis examinations), and speak at conferences or in classrooms.

These guidelines have been created to assist members of the Western community to work in a respectful manner with Indigenous communities, by outlining expectations and cultural protocols. They will help promote consistency across the university in extending invitations and providing honoraria or payments to Indigenous community members. The goal of these guidelines is to facilitate the development of respectful and reciprocal relationships with Indigenous peoples.

SCOPE

These guidelines apply specifically to Indigenous community members who are engaged in activities at Western (i.e., teaching, research and service) across faculties and units, on or off campus, including online, and who are not employed at Western at the time of the activity.

ENGAGING INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Indigenous peoples from communities and organizations are often invited to participate in university-related activities in the areas of learning, research and service. For example, they may be invited to speak at conference events or in classrooms, or act as advisors on committees. To build and maintain equitable and reciprocal relationships with Indigenous communities, these guidelines recommend that all members of the Western community observe culturally safe and ethical protocols when inviting Indigenous peoples to engage in Western-related activities.

INVITATION / REQUEST

When making requests of Indigenous peoples to participate in university activities, it is important that these invitations are both culturally appropriate and compensate people for their time and expertise.

Tobacco offering

Many local Indigenous people observe the protocol of offering sacred tobacco—a cultural way of asking for help that is usually done in person prior to the event. Generally, tobacco signifies a deep respect for cultural knowledge and Indigenous ways of sharing. While this is a common practice among many Indigenous peoples, not every Indigenous Nation or individual practices tobacco offerings, and so it is important to consult with community members before engaging in this practice. The acceptance of tobacco by an Indigenous person generally confirms their commitment to help share Indigenous cultural knowledge and wisdom. When giving tobacco it is advised that the organizers share the purpose and intention of their request/event, the expectations and outcomes that the invited Indigenous person would help to achieve, the length of time that they will be needed, and discuss the appropriate honorarium amount.

Advice and Support

[The Office of Indigenous Initiatives](#) (OII) is available to support members of the Western community in developing the cultural acumen necessary for preparing and offering tobacco; identifying and liaising with Indigenous community members; and working respectfully with Indigenous peoples. For more information contact indigenousoffice@uwo.ca

Tokenism

Engaging in meaningful Indigenous cultural programming will broaden and strengthen the Western community and help to avoid “tokenism” that involves Indigenous people at only the most superficial of levels (e.g., ticking boxes or one-time engagements).

Across campus, many faculties, units, and departments endeavour to further the work of Truth and Reconciliation. Within this work, it is important to reflect on the purpose and intent of an invitation to Indigenous knowledge keepers to your event, program, or classroom. Begin by asking the following questions:

1. Is the proposed inclusion meaningful? Are you providing the guest with adequate time and a respectful and safe environment conducive to learning and the sharing of knowledge?
2. Are you creating a responsive and relational learning environment for dialogue that provides pathways of learning and unlearning?
3. Do you plan to engage with the invited guest beforehand as part of creating a relational space? This allows for conversation around appropriate protocol and expectations.
4. Where possible, are you planning to build upon the learning and sharing opportunity for continued learning?

HONORARIA

When inviting members of the Indigenous community to share their knowledge and expertise in a university setting, it is customary to recognize them as soon as possible in the form of an honorarium.

Honoraria are for services for which fees are not typically paid. Honoraria are provided on a non-routine basis to express gratitude and to recognize people for their time and expertise. Ideally, honoraria can be paid by direct deposit or a cheque. Processing honorarium requests early provides time for them to be fulfilled on the day of the event; organizers can do so by completing the [Indigenous honorarium payment form](#) and following the weekly pay deadline. **At a minimum, submit the payment form 4 weeks in advance of the event.** Cheques will need to be picked up from Human Resources by the organizers to deliver directly on the day of the event.

For payments made by direct deposit, OII's Administrative Officer will be in contact with Elders/community members to collect necessary information. OII will require the Indigenous honorarium payment form with payment information before updating direct deposit information.

It is important to engage with the invited guest/Elder to determine the appropriate honorarium. The guide below is a starting point.

*Recommended honorarium amounts should be a **minimum** of:*

- \$100 per hour
- \$350 half-day
- \$700 full-day

Processing payments:

- Where possible and convenient, the Office of Indigenous Initiatives will make honoraria payments and cost recover through the process of journaling. This process requires speed codes and account numbers, and will be handled by OII's Administrative Officer.
- Departments with existing relationships with OII are to use the [Indigenous honorarium payment form](#) to request a payment to an Indigenous community member.

Important: The University is required to issue an income tax slip to all individuals paid by honorarium. This involves collecting an individual's home address, social insurance number, and date of birth when processing their payment. Under federal tax regulations, total payments to an individual that exceed \$500 are taxable income that should be claimed by the individual when filing. Honorarium payments made to non-employees will be paid by the University without income taxes or other statutory deductions. Honorarium payments made to current Western employees will be added to their next pay as employment income, subject to all deductions.

FOOD

When hosting Indigenous events, offering Indigenous traditional foods is a respectful and culturally appropriate practice. Many traditional foods are prepared by local Indigenous community members in distinct ways. Therefore, some events may require engaging pre-approved Indigenous food caterers external to Western, in order to prepare traditional foods. Also, upon request, Western's Great Hall is available to prepare Indigenous-inspired food options.

GIFTS

Gift-giving is also a customary practice among many Indigenous peoples. Gift-giving signifies respect for the sharing of Indigenous ways of knowing. Indigenous-made gifts carry significant value among Indigenous

peoples. As part of this longstanding customary practice, gifts are often presented to Indigenous Elders and cultural teachers in addition to honoraria. The [Office of Indigenous Initiatives](#) can support Western members in identifying local Indigenous artisans and gift shops for purchasing Indigenous made gifts.

TRAVEL & EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT

Anyone invited to participate in Western events should be reimbursed for out-of-pocket costs incurred to participate in Western activities (i.e., meals, travel, supplies, and accommodations). Where possible, expense and travel arrangements should be arranged in advance, coordinated, and covered directly by the University through the Western event organizer. Reimbursement of out-of-pocket expense(s) should not be added to an honorarium request. Guidance on submitting a claim for travel and expense reimbursement, including claim forms for non-employees, can be found on the [Western Financial Services Website](#).

Important: The costs associated with honoraria, food, gifts, and travel should be factored into budget planning processes wherever possible (e.g., course planning, research projects). In addition, individuals should consider eligibility of expenses and whether any additional restrictions apply (e.g., funding agency or faculty/department restrictions).

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Inquire well in advance if the Indigenous guest will want to smudge. For more on smudging procedures see Western's procedure for [Burning Traditional Medicines \(Smudging\)](#).
- Check whether the Indigenous person will be bringing any guests with them (e.g., ceremonial helpers) who will require accommodation.
- Assign someone to be the main contact for the visit and to meet the Elder at parking upon arrival.
- Share campus locations, directions, and maps as well as parking passes with Indigenous visitors well in advance.
- Check whether the invitee has accessibility needs and/or dietary needs/restrictions.
- If staying on campus for an extended duration, offer the guest a quiet office space to rest and store items.
- Offer food and water.

DEFINITIONS

Elder - an Elder is a well-respected member of an Indigenous community widely recognized for their cultural knowledge and experience serving Indigenous communities. Elders are not self-proclaimed. Their title has been bestowed upon them by the community. These individuals do not reach Elder status necessarily because of their age, but rather based on their knowledge and life experiences within Indigenous community contexts.

Indigenous - a global term that refers to the original people of the land and place. In the context of Turtle Island (also known as North America), the term Indigenous refers to First Nations, Inuit, or Métis people, as well as Native American, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian people.

Cultural teachers/Knowledge Keepers - Knowledge Keepers are Indigenous individuals who hold specific traditional/spiritual/linguistic knowledge and skills to conduct ceremonies, share language, stories,

and/or perform or maintain cultural practices. Knowledge Keepers have extensive experience in community contexts and vary in age.

RESOURCES

Elleby, J.H. (2006). *Working with Indigenous Elders: An introductory handbook for institution-based and health care professional based on teachings of Winnipeg-area Aboriginal Elders and Cultural Teachings*, 3rd ed. Native Studies Press.

Stiegelbauer, S.M. (1996). What is an elder? What do elders do?: First Nation Elders as teachers in culture based urban organizations. *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* XVI, 1, 37-66.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future. Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

(2015) [www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/Honouring the Truth Reconciling for the Future July 23 2015.pdf](http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/Honouring_the_Truth_Reconciling_for_the_Future_July_23_2015.pdf)

Tri-Council Policy Statement, 2nd Edition, Chapter 9 Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit, and Metis People of Canada. (2014). www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/chapter9-chapitre9/

Western University Smudging Brochure (August, 2020).

<https://indigenous.uwo.ca/initiatives/smudgingbrochure.pdf>

Western University Guide for Working with Indigenous Students (August, 2018).

<https://teaching.uwo.ca/teaching/indigenousguide.html>

Western University Indigenous Strategic Plan. (November, 2016).

http://indigenous.uwo.ca/about_us/indigenization_at_western/indigenous_strategic_plan.html

CONTACTS

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