Elder Protocols and Guidelines

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For

Can-SOVLE CKD Network

July 31, 2017

*Working Draft*

The purpose of this document is to provide guiding principles for the Can-SOLVE CKD Network as it strives to respect and honor the protocols of our host Indigenous communities across Canada.

We begin by noting that the Indigenous Peoples of Canada have distinct histories and diverse cultural and social practices. We do not intend this to be a general guide, and recommend that presenters and organizers always be as specific as possible in their approach to protocol.

These guidelines outline observances to be followed by community members who wish to respectfully engage Indigenous Knowledge Keepers, appropriate cultural representatives, Indigenous Leaders and Elders in the sharing of Indigenous protocol, knowledge and experiences. [[1]](#footnote-1)

As with all complex issues rooted in distinct histories, discussions and dialogue on this important matter are ongoing.

The Can-SOLVE CKD Network recognizes that we are on Indigenous land. It is recognition of their presence both in the past and the present. It is a part of the Can-SOLVE CKD Network’s broader strategy to establish healthy and reciprocal relationships with Indigenous communities. These relationships are key to reconciliation, a process to which the Network is committed.

Cultural protocols are crucial in the diverse Indigenous communities throughout Canada. Respect is a universal Indigenous value and how relationships are initiated and maintained is crucial to engaging Indigenous peoples and groups.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Terms**

There are various terms associated with First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples such as Indigenous and Aboriginal, as well as various names associated with the diverse cultures, languages, and peoples across the provinces and the nation. It is important to note this diversity and our commitment to inclusion. This respect to the local communities and the traditional territory of the local people is in keeping with Indigenous protocol across the nation and around the world.[[3]](#footnote-3)

**The significance of Acknowledging Traditional Territory**

**Cultural Differences**

A connection to the land is inextricably linked to Indigenous identity. Historically, the cultural protocol of acknowledging traditional territory symbolizes the importance of place and identity for Indigenous peoples. Within many Indigenous communities, protocol requires that individuals situate themselves, and their relationships to the people and the land. For many Indigenous peoples in Canada, and increasingly in broader Canadian society, traditional territory acknowledgements are an important cultural protocol practiced at meetings and events to acknowledge and honor Indigenous peoples’ connections to their ancestral lands (McGill University, 2017)

**What is its purpose?**

The purpose of acknowledging traditional lands and territory is to recognize that for settlers, and those who are not from a First Nation or Indigenous group, are guests on their land.

Acknowledgements have become increasingly common in non-Indigenous spaces and in support of the Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) 94 Calls to Action.

Many organizations are thinking about what is needed in response to the TRC. It is about acknowledging what happened in the past and what changes can be made going forward. [[4]](#footnote-4)

A lot of people are unaware of Canada’s actual history and this gets people talking about it.

Acknowledging the traditional territory ensures:

* The Can-SOLVE CKD Network is respectful to, and honors, Indigenous histories, cultures, and identities;
* Recognition is given to the land’s history to strengthen and cultivate relationships with the local Indigenous communities;
* A welcoming space for Indigenous Elders, Leaders, patient partners, staff, and other Indigenous participants.
* An activation of Indigenous culture, and;
* An essential step toward reconciliation.

**Guidelines – Ceremonies and Events**

**Acknowledging the territorial land at ceremonies and events.**

The only people who would provide a ‘Welcome’ are the Indigenous people of the territory, anyone else, including other Indigenous people, would simply acknowledge the territory.[[5]](#footnote-5)

The host or Emcee is the only person who needs to acknowledge the traditional territory. For larger events, it is respectful to have a member of the local Indigenous Nation, preferably an Elder, provide a welcome.

**How to acknowledge the host Indigenous territory**

1. The preferred way of honoring and showing respect to the Indigenous territory or land is either to acknowledge the territory at the beginning of the event or, when appropriate, to invite a local Elder or Indigenous Leader to extend a welcome.
2. For official events, the Can-SOLVE CKD Indigenous Liaison Manager is responsible for contacting the appropriate Nation for a representative.

**How to request an Indigenous Elder or Leader to attend or speak at your event**

In First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures, Elders and traditional teachers play a prominent, vital and respected role. Elders and traditional teachers are held in high regard as they are the knowledge keepers. They are leaders, teachers, role models, and mentors in their respective communities who sometimes provide the same functions as advisors, professors and doctors.[[6]](#footnote-6)

**Scope**

This protocol will apply to all investigators, management, staff and contractors who engage the experiences and knowledge of Traditional Indigenous Elders, in carrying out their duties as part of the Patient Oriented Research activities.[[7]](#footnote-7)

These guidelines are for members of the Can-SOLVE CKD Network, who will be working with Elders. Members of the Network are encouraged to use the following guidelines to request and secure the services of an Elder.

**Guidelines**

Decide on the intended purpose of the Elder’s role. The Can-SOLVE CKD Indigenous Liaison Manager can help guide the process of approaching an Elder if needed. If this is your first time seeking service of an Elder, the Indigenous Liaison Manager can assist in making initial contact with the Elder.

 **Extending Invitations (how to make a request)**

A request should be sent well in advance when extending an invitation to an Elder. Here are some guidelines on how to extend an invitation to an Elder in person.

**Offer tobacco and/or gift**

For First Nations or Métis Elders one must offer tobacco. Tobacco is one of the four sacred medicines, and it is offered when making a request. The offering can be in the form of a tobacco pouch or tobacco tie (loose tobacco wrapped in small cloth). The tobacco pouch or tie should be prepared by the person making the request. As the pouch or tie is being made it is good to think about what you are asking for, and put good thoughts and prayers into the offering. When making a request, offer the tobacco by holding it in your left hand (in front of you), state your request (be specific), and if the Elder accepts your request place the tobacco in their left hand. Inuit Elders do not expect tobacco offerings, because traditionally it is not part of their custom. a small gift may be offered in the same token as one would make a request to a First Nations or Metis Elder. Place the gift in front of you and state your request, the Elder indicates acceptance of your request by taking the gift in their hands.

The exchange of tobacco/gift is like a contract between two parties where the Elder is agreeing to do what is asked, and the one offering is making a commitment to respect the process. Ask the Elder if there is anything they need for the event (Carlton University, 2017).

If the Elder cannot fulfill your request, contact the Indigenous Liaison Manager to be recommended to another Elder.

**Invitation by telephone**

Preferably, requests are made to Elders in person. However, many Elders also accept requests by telephone or by email. If you are making a request to an Elder by telephone, let the Elder know that you have tobacco or a gift to offer when you see them, then make your request.

**Follow-up**

If the Elder agrees to accept the request, you must follow-up with a telephone call a few days before the event to ensure they are still available for the occasion. Be prepared for the possibility they may change their mind, if an unforeseen circumstance arises making it impossible for them to be in attendance. In this case, you can contact the Indigenous Liaison Manager to determine whether another Elder may be available.

**Respectful Care**

Ensure to coordinate a host/escort for the Elder. The host/escort is responsible for:

* Ensuring appropriate transportation to and from the event;
* Greeting and meeting the Elder upon arrival;
* Taking care of the Elder until their departure (i.e. offer and assist with getting drinks, food, etc.).

 **Elders Helper**

In some cases, Elders may be accompanied by an “Elders Helper”. This person will have an established relationship with the Elder and will be available to assist the Elder with whatever they may need. Nevertheless, a host/escort should be arranged since the Elder and Helper likely will not know their way around the location of the meeting/event.

**Photographs, audio, and/or video recordings** are often not acceptable when an Elder is conducting a spiritual ceremony. Explicit consent must be received from the Elder before any recordings are taken. Often Elders will carry sacred items, such as pipes, qulliq[[8]](#footnote-8), eagle feathers, medicine pouches., do not touch these items unless they give you permission.

In respect of the Elder, always ask permission and seek clarification if there is something you do not understand, (Carlton University, 2017).

 **Role of Audience**

During an Elder-led ceremony, everyone stands and hats are removed. Do not sit until the Elder has finished speaking. Do not talk, text or take telephone calls during the ceremony. Be in the moment and ask the group or audience to also be in the moment. Be gentle and understanding of those with challenges.

**Elder Acknowledgement**

If Elders are present at a presentation, meeting or event, it is a sign of respect to acknowledge their presence. Although you may be on a first name basis with an Elder you should use caution as people may not know that you are on a first name basis and may be offended with your use of their name. At a formal event or meeting use both the first and last name. name is stated ahead of title. **Please confirm how the Elder would like to be introduced.** [[9]](#footnote-9)

**Honoraria**

Honoraria should not be viewed as a payment for service, but rather as a gift exchange for knowledge, ceremonies, or blessings.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Ensure that the honorarium is available at the time of the event. Additional costs incurred by the Elder, such as parking, mileage, meals and accommodations, must be reimbursed.

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. Elders mus never be asked to sign a “receipt” as acknowledgement of their gift even if it is financial. Nor should they be asked for their Social Insurance Number (SIN), or their birthdates (University of Manitoba).

If you have questions about the honorarium, contact the Indigenous Liaison Manager.

**When making your request,** please provide the following information to the Can-SOLVE CKD Indigenous Liaison Manager:

* Event name;
* Purpose of event, background information, attendees and outline of program;
* Date & Time (with suggested time of arrival);
* Location, Directions, Parking;
* Dress Code: (whether business/casual/regalia)

**Sample Requests and Compensation**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Request** | **Daily Compensation** | **Travel** | **Travel & Accommodations** |
| Welcome to Territory | $150 – $200 | Taxi/mileage/parking | Hotel/Accommodation/meals |
| Welcome to Territory/Opening & Closing Prayer | $300 - $500 | Taxi/mileage/parking | Hotel/Accommodation/meals |
| Welcome to Territory/Opening & Closing Prayer/Ceremony | $600 - $800 | Taxi/mileage/parking | Hotel/Accommodation/meals |
| Welcome to Territory/Opening & Closing Prayer/Ceremony/Elder remains throughout event | $800 - $1200 | Taxi/mileage/parking | Hotel/Accommodation/meals |
| Ceremony could include: Smudging, facilitating a Sharing/Talking/Healing Circle |  |  |  |

**On-site contact at event:**

Once contact is made, a formal invitation or letter of invitation may be requested to be sent to a representative of the local Indigenous Nation. The Indigenous Liaison Manager will confirm if a representative is available to attend your event. If a representative is confirmed, please ensure that you have the correct name, pronunciation, and title of the representative before introductions are made, or event materials are printed.

**Order of Speakers**

Following the Emcees’ opening remarks; the Indigenous representative is typically the first speaker.

**Introduction of representative at event**

The following are a couple of suggested phrases that can be used by an Emcee or host prior to introducing the Indigenous elder or Leader to acknowledge the relationship with the local Indigenous Nation and the Can-SOLVE CKD presence on the said traditional territory.

“I would like to acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the \*\*\*\* First Nation, Métis, and/or Inuit peoples upon which we gather today and I will now ask \*\*\*\* to bring a welcome on behalf of the \*\*\*\*.”

“I would like to acknowledge that we are on the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the \*\*\*\* First Nations, Métis and/or Inuit peoples, and I will now ask \*\*\*\* to bring a welcome on behalf of \*\*\*\*.”

If there is no representative attending your event but you still wish to acknowledge the local Indigenous nations, you may use but are not restricted to one of the following:

“I would like to acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the First Nation, Métis and/or Inuit lands upon which we are gathered today.

“I would like to acknowledge that we are on the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the \*\*\*\* First Nation, Métis and/or Inuit peoples” (Musqueam Protocol Office).

**Elders**

Elders may be invited to participate in various Can-SOLVE CKD Network events, especially if the content involves Indigenous Peoples. In this case it is expected that a relationship already exists between Elders and members of the Network.

If they do not, we have provided some guidance below with a caution: If those relationships with the Indigenous community do not exist, care must be taken to avoid tokenizing Indigenous knowledges and reducing Indigenous content to performance. Critically reflect on why you are inviting an Elder.

To establish and maintain positive relationships with the community, it is imperative that the Can-SOLVE CKD Network representatives honor, respect, and learn the cultural protocols of communities from the point of contact, throughout the engagement, and beyond.

The definition of “Elder” is not a simple task; “Elder” is a complex concept that is integrally tied to important issues relation to leadership, knowledge, intergenerational societal teaching, change, and recent history. It is emotionally charged because “Elder” represents many things to people – families, the past, strength, experiences, survival, language, communities, and Indigenous societies. “Elder” is also a politically volatile concept that has come to include both implicit and explicit ideas about authority, power, authenticity, and political correctness, and is a highly contested construct that bristles with questions about who is an Elder, what the qualifications of an Elder are, the different kinds of Elders and Elder roles.

An Indigenous Elder is a male or female adult that has earned a reputation for being traditional wisdom and spiritual knowledge keepers. Elders seldom announce their status or position; however, they are well known in their communities. Indigenous Elder figures are recognized prominently in their urban and rural communities. Many Indigenous peoples value their Elders and address them with the utmost respect. Although age is not a factor in distinction as an “Elder” they can be of any age but, typically seen as the older members of their communities.[[11]](#footnote-11)

Each Indigenous society can have its own definition of what it means to be an Elder.

In conducting research for this document, several protocol documents were used, ensuring that the diversity of Indigenous Nations across Canada were represented.

To further assist with identifying traditional territories please see the Canadian Association of University Teachers, CAUT, Guide to Acknowledging Traditional Territory, website at: <https://www.caut.ca/docs/default-source/professional-advice/list---territorial-acknowledgement-by-province.pdf?sfvrsn=12>

Native-Land.ca is an online resource to help North Americans learn more about their local history.

<https://native-land.ca/>

1. Adapted from: Ryerson University, 2017Protocol, Guidelines, and Recommended Practices of Host Indigenous Communities in Toronto,

Retrieved from <https://www.congress2017.ca/sites/default/files/sites/default/uploads/Documents/congress-2017-indigenous-protocol-and-guidelines-en.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Adapted from Indigenous Wisdom: Protocols Guide, Step Up BC

Retrieved from <https://www.stepupbc.ca/sites/default/files/downloadable-material/02%20Aboriginal%20Innovation%20Group-Protocols%20Guide.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Adapted from: University of Lethbridge, Blackfoot and First Nations, Metis and Inuit Protocol Handbook, 2013

Retrieved from: <http://www.uleth.ca/policy/blackfoot-and-first-nations-metis-and-inuit-protocol-handbook> <http://www.uleth.ca/governance/sites/governance/files/Protocol%20Document%20%28Blackfoot%20and%20FNMI%29%20GFC%20Approved%20Oct%207%202013_0.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Adapted from: CBC/Radio-Canada, 2017

Retrieved from: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/territorial-acknowledgements-indigenous-1.4175136> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Adapted from: GUIDELINES - ACKNOWLEDGING THE MUSQUEAM FIRST NATION AT CEREMONIES AND EVENTS, UBC Ceremonies Office in conjunction with the Musqueam Protocol Office and the First Nations House of Learning, 2016

Retrieved from: <http://ceremonies.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2010/10/Guidelines-Musqueam-Jan-2016.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. ##  Adapted from: Guidelines for Working with First Nations, Inuit and Métis Elders, Carlton University, 2017 Retrieved from: <https://carleton.ca/indigenous/resources/guidelines-for-working-with-elders/>

 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Adapted from the work of Traditional Peoples Advisory Committee (TRAC) at the University of Manitoba

Retrieved from: <http://umanitoba.ca/student/indigenous/tpac/1440.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Retrieved from: Inuit Cultural Resources Online, Canadian Heritage, <http://icor.ottawainuitchildrens.com/node/28> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Adapted from: Elder Protocols and Guidelines, SD 58, Aboriginal Advisory Council, 2017

Retrieved from: <https://nortonsafe.search.ask.com/web?q=Elders%20Protocols%20and%20Guidelines%20for%20School%20District%2058&o=APN11910&chn=1004490&guid=0877F5DA-0051-4CA1-9A4E-6443588CBA06&doi=2017-01-03&ver=22.8.1.14&prt=NSBU&geo=US&locale=en_US&ctype=&tpr=121> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Adapted from: Cultural Protocol Guidelines: Recommended Practices for First Nations, Metis and Inuit Cultural Engagement, University of Calgary, 2011

Retrieved from [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Adapted from: Regina Catholic Schools, First Nations & Metis Elders HANDBOOK

Retrieved from: [www.rcsd.ca](http://www.rcsd.ca) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)