



Indigenous Initiatives

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 & Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action](#) (TRC, 2015), Western recognizes the significant role of Indigenous Elders and cultural teachers 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. Across the university, Indigenous peoples are often invited to participate in university activities in the areas of learning, research, and service. For example, Indigenous peoples can be invited to conduct openings and closings of large events, sit on committees including 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 and they offer commonly accepted cultural protocols for inviting, hosting, and appropriately recognizing Indigenous community members. The purpose of these guidelines are to promote consistency across the university in extending invitations and providing honorarium 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 following guidelines apply specifically to Indigenous community members who are engaged in Western activities (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 organization 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, and act as advisors on committees, etc... In an effort 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 appropriately recognize 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 assuming this practice. The acceptance of tobacco by an Indigenous person generally confirms their commitment to help and share Indigenous cultural knowledge and wisdom. When giving tobacco, it is advised that the organizer share the purpose and intention of their request/event, the expected role of the invited Indigenous person, the length of time that they will be needed, and the honorarium amount.

Advice & Support

The [Office of Indigenous Initiatives](#) is available to support Western members in developing the cultural acumen necessary for preparing and offering tobacco, identifying and liaising with Indigenous community members, and working respectfully with Indigenous peoples. Upon request, the Office of Indigenous Initiatives can also partner with Faculties and Units on campus to share costs associated with paying for Elders and cultural speakers. For more information contact: indigenousoffices@uwo.ca

HONORARIA

When inviting members of the Indigenous community to share their knowledge and expertise in a university setting, it is customary to recognize them ASAP in the form of an honorarium. Honorariums are for services for which fees are not typically paid. Honorariums are provided on a non-routine basis as a thank you; this recognizes people for their time and expertise. Ideally, honoraria can be paid by direct deposit or cheque. Honorarium requests can be processed early in order to be able to present cheques, if required, to Indigenous community member(s) on the day of the event. To achieve this, organizers are to complete the [Indigenous Honorarium Payment Form](#) and follow the weekly pay deadline weeks in advance of the event in order for the cheques to be processed before the event date. Cheques will need to be picked up from Human Resources by the organizers to deliver to the Indigenous person directly.

If payments are to be made by direct deposit, please direct the Indigenous community member to contact Human Resources at 519-661-2194 to provide their banking information via telephone. Human Resources will require the **Indigenous Honorarium Payment Form** with payment information before being able to update direct deposit information.

Recommended honorarium amounts should be a minimum of:

- \$75 per hour;
- \$250 for half day;
- \$500 full day.

Processing payments:

- Organizers are to use the **Indigenous Honorarium Payment Form** to request a payment to an Indigenous community member.
- If organizers would like to cost share and partner with the Office of Indigenous Initiatives, they must email indigenousoffices@uwo.ca ASAP

Important: The university is required to issue an income tax slip to all individuals paid by honorarium, and thereby, will request for individuals' home address, social insurance number, and date of birth when processing their payment. Based on federal tax regulations, total payments to an individual that exceed \$500 are taxable income that should be claimed by the individual in the income tax process. Honorarium payments made to non-

employees will be paid by the university without withholding 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 preapproved outside Indigenous food caterers external to Western in order to prepare traditional foods accordingly. Also, upon request, Western's Great Hall is available to prepare Indigenous-inspired food options.

GIFTS

Gifting is also a customary practice among many Indigenous peoples. Gifting 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 to purchase Indigenous-made gifts. Western's Bookstore also carries a growing variety of Indigenous gift and Indigenous Initiatives paraphernalia options.

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 pre-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 whenever possible (e.g. course planning, research projects etc...). In addition, individuals should consider eligibility of expenses and whether any additional restrictions apply (i.e. funding agency or faculty/department restrictions).

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Check in well in advance in the event that the Indigenous person will want to smudge. For more on smudging procedures go to Western's [Procedure for Burning Traditional Medicines \(Smudging\)](#).
- Check whether the Indigenous person will be bringing any guests with them (i.e. 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 in whether Indigenous people have accessibility needs, dietary needs and/or 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 collective community. An Elder does not reach Elder status because of their age necessarily, but rather this designation is based on their knowledge and life's experiences within Indigenous community contexts.

Indigenous – is a global term used 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 are also considered 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/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/smudging-brochure.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

Office of Indigenous Initiatives
indigenousinitiatives@uwo.ca