



YUKON  
FIRST NATION  
EDUCATION  
DIRECTORATE

YUKON FIRST NATIONS

# Elders and Knowledge Keepers

*When an Elder or Knowledge Keeper speaks to your students, it is important to follow community protocols. In most communities, it is appropriate to respect Elders and Knowledge Keepers in the following ways:*

- ✿ Contact the Elder or Knowledge Keeper you wish to invite in person;
- ✿ Allow the Elder or Knowledge Keeper some time to think about the offer - do not expect an answer immediately;
- ✿ If the Elder or Knowledge Keeper agrees, arrange to meet in person before the activity to develop a plan together. Explain what the topic is and work with the Elder to find out what he or she wants to teach;
- ✿ Help your students generate questions for the Elder or Knowledge Keeper ahead of time;
- ✿ Call the Elder or Knowledge Keeper the day before to confirm;
- ✿ Arrange for a helper to ensure the Elder or Knowledge Keeper has everything he or she needs throughout the activity;
- ✿ Make sure there is transportation for the Elder or Knowledge Keeper;
- ✿ Open up the environment so the Elder or Knowledge Keeper can move freely;
- ✿ Put desks and chairs in a circle, and ensure the Elder or Knowledge Keeper has a comfortable chair;
- ✿ Help your students greet the Elder or Knowledge Keeper respectfully;
- ✿ Have students greet the Elder or Knowledge Keeper in his or her language;
- ✿ Offer tea and refreshments;
- ✿ Listen respectfully;
- ✿ Be relaxed;
- ✿ Wait for the Elder or Knowledge Keeper to speak;
- ✿ Don't ask about topics that are considered sacred or sensitive;
- ✿ Look into the appropriateness of eye contact in your community;
- ✿ Arrange for payment to be ready when the Elder or Knowledge Keeper come to work with your students (check with your school administration assistant beforehand to find out the process and how long it will take);
- ✿ Consider ways to present all traditional stories, songs and dances in the most dynamic way possible;
- ✿ Meet the Elder in an environment outside the classroom, for example a cultural camp, local cultural centre, local community hall, or his or her home;
- ✿ Present the Elder or Knowledge Keeper with a gift as a thank you, for example cards made by the students, food items or a small handmade gift.

This protocol was developed in consultation with all 14 Yukon First Nations.

