

CAAN Elders Policy

DEFINITION of an Elder in the Context of Working with CAAN*

An Elder is a First Nation or Métis person or Inuk who follows a traditional or spiritual path to safeguard customs, language and culture for the coming seven generations. An Elder has the respect of the people, earned by “walking the talk” in all aspects of life. The community recognizes an Elder and the wisdom he or she possesses through caring for history, language, customs, ceremonies, songs and stories. An Elder does not qualify as such by age alone, and an older person is not automatically an Elder. Rather, he or she has earned this status through dedication and experience, working closely with teachers who traveled the path before them, continually adding to their own understanding and wisdom, and gradually gaining the trust and respect of the community.

PURPOSE

In recognition of the advice and guidance Elders provide, CAAN seeks to respectfully work with Elders in accordance with the Terms of Reference outlined below:

IDEAL CANDIDATES

Ideal candidates for the position of Elder with CAAN will have comfort discussing, and preferably knowledge of, topics about HIV and AIDS, sexual health and related issues. They must be comfortable with diverse expressions of sexuality and open to meeting people ‘where they are at’ in the context of mental health and the use of alcohol and drugs. Living with or affected by HIV or AIDS is not a prerequisite for this position but would be considered an asset.

Committee work, conference participation and contributing to presentations and/or events are central to engagement with CAAN and ideally would be enjoyable for an Elder. Additionally, an Elder may possess interest and relevant experience in policy development and Board governance issues. Given the National Scope of CAAN’s work and limited budgets, we need the Elder to be able to travel safely on their own.

EXPECTATIONS

CAAN staff will talk with the Elder(s) before each meeting or event to clarify the context and the specific nature of any requests for that time. Furthermore, a description of duties and responsibilities are outlined below. A traditional offering will be given to the Elder(s) when they are with CAAN staff in person. At times when the Elder and staff member cannot personally connect, staff will make an offering from their location to the Elder and leave the offering outside. A honourarium, as described below, is separate from the traditional offering.

Specific expectations:

1. The Elder will indicate if they are comfortable being asked specific questions about traditional offerings, honourarium, etc. or if they would prefer to identify a helper who could be contacted by staff should questions arise.
2. Arrangements should be confirmed in advance whenever possible to avoid putting the Elder or staff on the spot.

* many thanks to Elder Maggie Paul and Nelson Milley for sharing “*Interacting Respectfully with Elders*”

3. Honourariums will be prepared in advance, most often as a cheque, and presented to the Elder when they arrive at the event.
4. All travel arrangements will be made for the Elder by CAAN.
5. A volunteer Elder's helper will be made available at all times as is deemed necessary, or requested by the Elder. All efforts will be made by CAAN as an organization, by individual staff, committee/project team members and volunteers to support the Elder as needed. (Understanding that not all Elders need nor want a helper, this will be asked about when first approaching an Elder.)
6. CAAN will continue to seek the assistance and participation of local Elders in public and other events it may hold across the country respecting local protocols.
7. CAAN staff will monitor the amount of time and attention requested from the Elder so that engagement with CAAN is respectful of these expectations.

DUTIES and RESPONSIBILITIES

The role of the Elder will be to provide moral, spiritual, cultural and emotional support and guidance to participants in CAAN meetings and events. This may consist of any or all of the following: offering Opening and Closing Ceremonies, Smudging, song, healing or grounding ceremony, talking individually and/or participating in discussions to help as a mediator. Elders are not expected to be professional counsellors.

Specifically, the Elder will:

- a) Attend all meetings of the CAAN project team or committee in person and through technology;
- b) Provide ongoing advice and guidance to the CAAN staff working on the project and/or supporting the committee;
- c) Advise CAAN staff with respect to seeking the assistance of local Elders at CAAN functions;
- d) Contribute towards evaluations of CAAN events and activities as a basis for improvement;

EXPENSES and HONOURARIUMS

CAAN will cover all travel expenses i.e. transport to and from airport; air/train fees or mileage and hotel based upon CAAN's Organizational Policies and Procedures with are in compliance with Treasury Board of Canada and Funder guidelines. A per diem will be issued for meals and incidentals while on travel status.

Money is a means of offering support for an Elder's living needs and also a means of thanking an Elder for their guidance during a meeting or event. There are different degrees of engagement requested from an Elder depending on the scope of the meeting or event. For example, events such as conferences may ask more of an Elder in terms of responsibility for the wellbeing of many delegates and potential one-on-one requests for support therefore, a different level of honourarium is warranted. The following list is a guideline for CAAN that outlines the maximum the organization will offer. Elders may indicate a preference for different honourariums up to these rates or request support in a form other than monetary i.e. gift cards or a donation to charity in their name. Every effort will be made to accommodate this with appreciation.

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Events:	honourarium of \$500 per day for each day of the event – with consideration that an event day may include opening and closing ceremonies, periods of engagement and quiet and evening activities
In person meetings:	honourarium of \$400 for each day of meetings
Travelling:	one additional day of honourarium of \$300 will be offered if travel is required in addition to the specific meeting or event days
Conference Calls:	honourarium of \$75 will be issued after the call
Committee involvement:	honourarium of \$400/year to respect time spent responding to emails, corresponding with staff, etc.

NOTE: As a registered charity, CAAN is required by law to issue a T4A for income tax reporting for all payments for services, including honourariums for Elders. This means that CAAN is required to request an Elder's Social Insurance Number and to ask the Elder to sign a receipt of payment statement for each honourarium. Failure to do this could result in CAAN losing charitable status and/or all funding.