

Elder

- Educate on the:
 - ~Vision of life
 - ~First nation philosophies
 - ~How to live a healthy life and be stronger in identity and self
- Teachers to grandchildren and all young people, some may be specialists in certain teachings
- Advisors, law-givers, dispensers of justice
- Directions to guide the peoples' lives
- Advise to fight for their land
- Symbolic connection to the past
- Knowledge in traditional ways, teachings, stories, and ceremonies
- Help with decisions
- Refers to people with wisdom from experience, old enough to speak of life from experience, lived through difficult times and learned from it, is a state of being
- Active role in community development
- Not for image or personal gain:
 - Some people "pretend" to be elders for personal gain and power
- Not only know of but teachers of, good listener, patient
- Not only enjoying life as an elder but learning and practicing, visits their own elders to ask questions
- With elders everyone can talk to them, everyone can sit with them and elders will have total respect for how they are
- Translator of cross cultures
- Are not born, are not appointed or elected/nominated by others; instead recognized over time, as they age
- Able to tell a story that's meaningful as if a piece of art
- Advise others to a solution based on the need
- Participation in events, elder conferences and visiting other tribes
 - ~attends ceremonies: pipe ceremony, naming ceremonies, the sweetgrass ceremony, etc.
- Healing: health complaints and addressing with ceremony herbs and other remedies
- Doesn't take sides with anyone
- Not a figurehead or symbol but part of the whole part of the family: helpers
- Keep everything confidential

A Day in the Life of an Elder

An elder, whom who has lived long enough to speak of life from experience. One who not only knows of, but teaches of the traditions, philosophies, and principles of aboriginal life. They who not only enjoys, but also learns and practices. Elders are people we look up to in times of doubt: the trail blazers in whose path we tread on. Elders are the most respectable and honorable role in the first people's culture, for without them we'd make the same mistakes countless times, and have no one to guide us along the path of life that they once walked upon. Without the living links to the past, we'd be nothing more than cavemen living life for the first time with no history, no culture, nothing.

Elders spend their days educating, spreading wisdom, and giving advice to ones in need of an answer. They provide perspective on the future. They tell stories that are more than words, but an artistic masterpiece. The advisors, law - givers, dispensers of justice, and the translators of cross cultures. Elders are overworked, because they can't refuse anything; they're given the great responsibility of advising the nation and guiding it through hard times, making sure that the nation fights for its land.

Elders aren't born, they're not nominated, elected or appointed; people become elders over time. Through the ups and downs of life, the hardships, one finds oneself as an elder when the community acknowledges them for their aptitude, their knowledge, and the quality of one as a person. Being an elder may seem like a position, a role, but it's more: a state of being, and only when you've seen the horrors of what we call life will you reach it. There are some who "claim" the role for themselves as a way to gain image and influence. However a true elder is one who is given the title by the community and uses it to spread knowledge and experience.

Being an elder means that everyone can talk to you, anyone can sit with you and you'll have complete respect for who they are as a person and part of the whole. Everything you tell elders will be kept sacred and confidential. You'll know that they won't take anyone's side. They encourage humility, and spread their wisdom to help the nation reach unity and harmony. Passing on their experiences both good and bad to anyone and everyone who wants to learn, to make sure that the ones after them don't make the same mistakes they had.

After sunset peaks, elders may seem like only advisors, counselors. But they are still part of the whole, part of the family. They're not separate from us, they have respect and power in ways many would only dream of; but in the end they are like the grandparents of the nation. We are all part of the greater whole and elders are just a part of it like all of us are, striving to make a better tomorrow.