

Elders and Knowledge Keepers in Schools Guidelines—Summary

The Elders and Knowledge Keepers in Schools Initiative embeds learning strategies and actions, articulated as **authentic involvement** in *Mamàhtawisiwin: The Wonder We Are Born With—An Indigenous Education Policy Framework*, to collectively realize the vision for all Manitoba students to succeed, no matter where they live, their background, or their individual circumstances. These guidelines recognize and hold up parents, families, and grandparents as the first teachers who carry and share teachings to support children to come to know where they come from, where they are going, why they are here, and who they are.

The Elders and Knowledge Keepers in Schools guidelines are grounded on the Four Rs: relevance, relationship, respect, and reciprocity. Both Dr. Verna Kirkness and Dr. Shawn Wilson discuss these embedded concepts in their research practice as fundamental toward rightful relations. Relevance, relationship, respect, and reciprocity support and strengthen our understanding of how to engage with community in what many Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Grandparents, and community members refer to as a Good Way.

Relevance ensures we are anchoring our work in community, and informing our work through policy directives while reflecting the urgency to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. This section links these guidelines with the findings of the Commission on K to Education; the priorities articulated in *Manitoba's K to 12 Education Action Plan*; and seminal documents such *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows*,

and *Our Way Is a Valid Way: Professional Educator Resource* by Western and Northern Canadian Protocol (WNCP).

Relationship outlines the importance of engaging with community members through the forming and nurturing of relationships, the following of Protocols, and through good communication.

Respect supports our understandings of how to co-create culturally safe, rich learning opportunities for students, educators, school leaders, clinicians, families, and community members. Respect ensures we are aware of and avoid cultural appropriation of Indigenous knowledge. Respect affirms the rights of Elders and Knowledge Keepers as storytellers, healers, advisors, teachers of traditional teachings and languages, and leaders of traditional ceremonies and prayers. Respect protects Indigenous knowledge and perspectives from becoming tokenized or performative.

Reciprocity explains the importance of caring for Elders and Knowledge Keepers. The concept of reciprocity is rooted in compensation for Elders and Knowledge Keepers when they share their gifts with our learning communities.

Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning acknowledges the collective voice of many who have contributed to these guidelines. We extend a special thank you to the Elders/Knowledge Keepers, families/caregivers, students, and teachers/school support staff who have shared their teachings, feelings, experiences, and insights to support authentic engagement.