

**ELDERS WISDOM CIRCLE**  
**RETREAT**  
**April 28 & 29, 2011**

The Elders Wisdom Circle completed their first Retreat at the Grant MacEwan College and University on April 28 & 29, 2011. It was a very productive two days and the Elders achieved their goal of reviewing the Elders Wisdom Circle Terms of Reference. Many other discussions took place, including developing a criteria for Elders, maintaining the Elders who were in the Circle and now are not, a Ceremony for the existing Elders and for those who will be entering the Circle. It was suggested that a Ceremony for the current Elders be held in September 2011, and that Biographies for the Elders be prepared. There are Bio's from the past in the ANFCA files and these should be located and included in a book or binder to honor their contributions.

Criteria for the Elders Biographies include: who you are, and where you came from, family of origin, and how you grew up. Outline what gifts you have e.g. songs, history, storytelling, medicines, language, culture, sewing, or arts and crafts. What your involvement with Friendship Centres' has been, for how long and with which Centres'. Were other members of your family involved, and in what ways e.g. volunteers, board members, program participants or any other way. A picture should be included with each biography. Honoring those who went before us, was also a topic of discussion and how to remember those who were in the Elders Wisdom Circle in the past.

For Elders attending events with the Elders Wisdom Circle, it should be a requirement that medical alerts be on file for those with medical conditions, e.g. diabetes, heart conditions, allergies or any other condition that could affect them while they are away from home. If an Elder requires constant care and/or assistance, then a Caregiver should be sent with them, to prevent incidences where they could experience harmful occurrences like falling, forgetting medications, or people not being able to respond in an appropriate manner if they should experience medical issues. The possibility of medical insurance was also discussed. Funding for Caregivers was also discussed and more research into this matter is required. The most important factor is the care and well-being of our Elders. Lifetime membership criteria was also discussed for the members of the Elders Wisdom Circle, this needs to be discussed further and more research completed.

Planning must be done for further Retreats for the Elders Wisdom Circle, and research for funding possibilities must be done. Topics for the planning will include a schedule, location, agenda's and who will be in attendance. Funding for the Retreats must be considered, how can funds be raised, or applied for (New Horizons for Seniors) and any other ways. Technical resources for the Elders Wisdom Circle are required, as there is much information and knowledge shared that could be captured and utilized for future endeavors.

Topics for future retreats would include teaching language, identifying medicines, ceremonies, protocols for youth, traditional family teaching versus the modern western family, parenting and providing guidance to your children and grandchildren, teaching your young ones how to listen, healing the residential school experience, elder abuse, and history from a positive accurate aboriginal perspective, so people will understand how things came to be the way they are now and the elimination of “shame” based teachings.

Valuable teachings were shared including “Creator gave you two ears and one mouth, so you could listen twice as much as you talk.” Another area discussed was the importance of coming into “age” ceremonies for our youth, and when they ceased to be a part of our young peoples’ lives, the young people got lost as they had no knowledge of the expectations of them as young adults and then adults. Also family dynamics have changed so radically that very few “traditional” families exist, and we need to help people regain strong family values and tradition, in order to improve life for our young people.

Elders Criteria was determined to include; knows culture and is able to live it, displays honor and respect, recognized as an Elder by their family and community, role models healthy behaviors and lifestyle, represents local centre, performs activities as an Elder in their community and has leaned from life experience. It was a general consensus that there are no “young” Elders, but there are “helpers” or “o ska pay oos.”

For the Quarterly Meetings, most of the Elders arrive on Thursday evening, and the majority thought there could be short presentations/training for the Elders on topics like Elder Abuse, Pension benefits or any other topic. A list of topics should be developed and given to Nelson Mayer.

This first time ever Elder Wisdom Circle Retreat was very productive in developing criteria for the Circle and in honoring our Elders. We also had gentle exercise and a trip to the Museum, where the President and Executive Director were given Seniors Rates. This positive activity should be continued as the results will be long lasting for the ANFCA, Elders and Youth. Facilitation was done by Merle White and Linda Boudreau-Semaganis, with close to 20 Elders in attendance.

Scribed by Linda Boudreau-Semaganis  
Chairperson, Elders Wisdom Circle  
May 2011