

VIDEO #4 – “Elder’s / Knowledge Carriers”:

- Boozhoo Diinaahwehmahgahniitook, Geh Neen Anikay-Keesic Dezhahniikaaz, Maang Dodem. My given name is EJ Kwandibens and I am a member of the Loon Clan. I originate from the Robinson Superior 1850 Treaty Territory. My First Nation name is known as Waahbiidaahgaah which translates to Whitesand however I am presently residing in the beautiful City of Toronto.
- In this video, we will briefly be discussing a topic that relates to, “Elders / Knowledge Carriers.” But before we do that, we must be able to define what an Elder or Knowledge Carrier is. The best way to view this is an individual who has been ushered into this role by the community. This individual has the ability to possess certain, gifts, knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that relate to our traditional ways of knowing and being that is all encompassing of our philosophies, customs and belief systems. As is for Knowledge Carriers, the same applies to these individuals, they have the ability to possess certain knowledge and gifts that are very crucial and pertinent to our traditional ways of knowing and being.
- So then how does one approach an Elder or Knowledge Carrier? Well it's quite simple, traditionally we have the understanding regardless of which nation one comes from on Turtle Island, that we offer of “Asema” (Our Traditional Tobacco) Now there would be many different ways to referring to tobacco for nation names however in the Ojibway or the Northern Woodland Anishinawbe People, we refer to our traditional tobacco as “Asema”. Offering your tobacco is the first order of business when wanting to or wishing to enquire or ask direction and/or teachings, or guidance from an elder or knowledge carrier. It's important we offer our tobacco as it is a form of humbling ourselves knowing that the individual that we are asking information too can assist and support us in the best way they're able too. It's also important to acknowledge when a person offers tobacco to an elder or knowledge carrier that the possibility of the elder or knowledge carrier declining the offering of tobacco can be possible, only because if the individual is unable to support, direct or provide teachings and guidance, language or whatever the issue the individual is requesting of the elder or knowledge carrier, they might be able to respectfully decline the acceptance of tobacco but then further assistance to direct the individual who they might be able to speak to.
- So, in our communities, elders and knowledge carriers are often viewed as very important people, they are the link to our traditional ways of knowing and being. We often will see these individuals leading invocations, prayers or ceremonies at social functions perhaps at powwows, ceremonial circles, sharing circles or community public events. Therefore, when we do speak to an elder or knowledge carrier, we must be able to do so in such a way that is respectful and come from that place of understanding and compassion and to know that we are all human and that having a simple conversation between human to human with the understanding of offering the power of tobacco is the common practice that requires and come to appreciate in our traditional ways of knowing and being. Meegwetch.