

MKPNORCAL Heartbeat

Elder Distinctions—The Oral Tradition of Elder Energy

During my tenure on NorCal's Elder Council, we transformed from two leaders to seven-member Elder Council. The idea came from my co-chair Richard Winters, and soon we had an elder representing the Leader-body, LKS, Ritual Elders, Stewardship Council, and now Emeritus Lead Elders. Then we focused on nourishing elder energy by identifying our roles and functions, and recalling the stories of our shared experiences. This is our oral tradition.

We had reflected on the following list of elder functions: model curious and compassionate listening and vulnerability, inquiring of the light in darkness, holding the ancestral perspective, protecting safety, connection and the long-term view of group wellness. Elders also imagine unknowables, hold space for spirit, offer blessings and mentors others. See [What Elders Do](#).

Consider creating a dialogue among your brothers. When you convene your own dialogue on elder energy, you will discover your own version of the magic that happens when men share their experiences with elder energy. Such conversations can happen in your IGroup, and men of any age can hold elder energy for their group. Compassionate listening, vulnerability, seeking the light in darkness are fundamental MKP values and of interest to all men.

We may soon see courses and written curricula on how to be an elder. Written resources and online courses risk replacing embodied experience with cerebral comprehension, a left-brain challenge that may not well serve men wanting to re-claim their feelings. In my opinion, elder trainings feed men's reluctance to embrace elder energy by offering expertise that sets elders apart from the experts. Online activity gives us access to the wisdom of a much larger elder community. The in-person oral tradition can give a fuller mind-body-soul connection.

Elder roles remain unclear unless they are visible and accessible to the community or IGroup. The cornerstone of elder visibility is the Elder Declaration, where among peers, man identifies the personal attributes or attitudes he is leaving behind, and those he will take forward; a powerful transformation even for witnesses. IGroup elder presence is enhanced by meeting separately to reflect on matters of group wellness, which can occur with only one elder and a young elder or one interested in elder energy. This further empowers unspoken elder presence in support of group health and potential.

Jerry Green, Playful Otter; Lead Elder Emeritus

