

# Sample essay on who is an elder

[Law](#), [Evidence](#)



Critique: Stiegelbauer, S. M. (1996) " What is an Elder ? What do Elders do?"  
(Insert Institute)

Finding a basis in the need to understand “ an elder” as a term and the depiction of the roles of an elderly person, Suzanne Stiegelbauer’s “ What is an Elder? What do Elders do?” presents research into the term amongst one of the world’s surviving traditions. The paper originates from the views First Nation Elders in Toronto and their interaction with the people, at the local and state levels. Beginning with a brief abstract, the author provides a short outline to her findings and in turn, gives an idea of what the paper entails. Stiegelbauer (1996) emphasizes on the importance of elders in the preservation of cultures and the maintenance of traditional roots among people living in urban centers. Stiegelbauer employs different methods to emphasize the importance of elders in the First Nation, their interactions with the locals and the government, and finally, their role as a link to the traditions of the people.

Elders found in the First Nation community organizations are the author’s main subject. The author depicts other members of the tribe, within and outside the organizations provide the recipient group of concepts taught in the centers. For elders to pass down their “ knowledge of traditional ways, teachings, stories, and ceremonies” (Stiegelbauer, 1996, p. 39), the center needs young people to show an interest. Said young people make up the aforementioned recipient group. In a bid to understand the elders’ notion of their roles in the communities, the author provides narratives in which different elders give their personal principles on the matter. Consequently, the research paper provides an in-depth analysis of elders inside the Innu

culture and the survival of tribal practices within an evolving world. One of the key points is experience, whereas an elder uses his or her personal experiences to give life lessons. On the other hand, the author suggests with more practice and application of culture in their lives elders manage to communicate traditional concepts to the younger generations. Eventually, an elder needs the people to recognize them as so for them to attain the status in the community. Once they attain the status, the article claims that people establish a relationship with elders and gradually, a respected elder begins to teach with the Urban Organizations.

Stiegelbauer (1996) accentuates the importance of elders in the conservation of culture, and eventually the recognition and acceptance of one's identity. The author's inclusion of personal accounts creates the major strength in Stiegelbauer's writing. For instance, an anonymous elder belonging to The Elders' Council argues for the gentleness and wisdom with which they handle the younger generations (Stiegelbauer, 1996, p. 58). In addition, there are multiple accounts given by one Gladys Kidd, such as the information on elders assuming neutrality on all matters to avoid scuffles and promote peace (Stiegelbauer, 1996, p. 57). Personal accounts provide evidence at a local level. In other words, instead of the author relying on the information the government gathers, visiting the First Nation allows her to give information with which people can relate. It is important to note that, the inclusion of real life situation allows readers to recognize familiar situations and maybe learn from the elders' solution to the same. In this case, Stiegelbauer (1996) collects evidence of the culture from its proprietors thus, preventing chances of distortion of information.

As she analyses the culture, Stiegelbauer (1996) meticulously presents an idea, evidence to the same, before finally giving her understanding about said idea. The method leaves little room for readers to refute the suggestions while at the same time, manages to keep the attention of readers to the finality of a discussion. A good illustration is evident under the subtitle “Approaching an Elder: the Importance of Relationship” (Stiegelbauer, 1996, p. 50). After comparing the meeting with an elder to swimming, she proceeds to give reasons behind an individual’s desire to talk to elders and the use of tobacco as tokens (Stiegelbauer, 1996, p. 51-52). She concludes her argument stating, “all you have to do is start talking to the Elder and things will happen” (Stiegelbauer, 1996, p. 51-52). Throughout the paper, the author adopts the same system hence ensuring all the information her report disseminates originate from actual findings. Afterwards, Stiegelbauer (1996) gives an account on the traditions applicable to approaching an elder. At the same time, the inclusion of such traditions provides a historical context to Stiegelbauer’s research. In the case of approaching elders, traditions involving the approaching of elders give insight to the beliefs of the community about the older generation. Stiegelbauer (1996) writes on the use of tobacco in different occasions including the approaching of elders (p. 50) and the selection of elders with different traits to aid in tackling a problem (p. 59). The inclusion of traditional practices reinstates the importance of culture amongst the Innu people and their desire to practice the norms despite civilizations and the changes brought by the urban world. Stiegelbauer (1996) draws many conclusions on evidence she draws from one community. In fact, she does not involve the whole community, rather, a

big percentage of her findings source from the elders themselves. Despite their being the subject in the research, a second opinion is important in the warranting of any claim. Therefore, though the researcher obtains her evidence from its primary living source, there is no guarantee that the sources are legit. For instance, the claim surrounding people using the name of their elders “ as a rationale for behavior” (Stiegelbauer, 1996, p. 40) is present in the paper. Apparently, by stating, “ my Elders tell me” or “ we involve Elders” (Stiegelbauer, 1996, p. 40) people manage to carry out different activities within the region. Problem arises when later readers become aware that the claim belongs to Beatrice Medicine, who is “ called an Elder herself by her Sioux community” (Stiegelbauer, 1996, p. 64). One cannot warrant one’s assertions and expect complete reliability in the same. Agreed, it is plausible that people can relate to such situations such as children using their parents’ names to get out of trouble. However, for such declarations in an academic paper, there has to be more evidence to the same. An example of such instances, in print form, will suffice to have young people and organizations confessing to instances of the act.

Elders provide a link between the people and their traditions. Stiegelbauer (1996) mainly concentrates on the merits of these roles entail teaching a philosophy on “ how to live a healthy life and be stronger in identity” (Stiegelbauer, 1996, p. 38). However, it is clear that these connections to the past provide some forms of hindrance to the government. For instance, a statement by a delegation from “ Sheshatshiu Native Canadian Centre” informs readers on the elders’ instructing the people to fight for their land (Stiegelbauer, 1996, p. 39). Whilst the act is admirable, defying any

government's laws counts as a criminal offence. In addition, by preventing the building of roads through the area prevents civilizations and hinders development of any kind. Consequently, as the researcher concentrates on the important roles elders play in swaying the community's decisions, she overlooks the danger their influence poses over the community. People should obey their elders, but not at the expense of their health and progress in life. It is safe to argue that, Stiegelbauer's inclusion of such information in the paper sways the person who reads from her main argument. Instead, it creates a series of questions regarding the role of elders in the communities.

Suzanne Stiegelbauer's "What is an Elder? What do Elders do?" is efficient in the understanding an elder within the First Nation and provides information on the importance of traditions among its people. Though it concentrates on the elderly population, the article provides details on the peoples' cultural norms and their views of the outside world. The elders hold the reins of the community as what they say are law. The people pay more attention to the elders than they do to contemporary law making them an important aspect in the community.