Preparing Students

Have a discussion with your students before any elders come about how you expect them to behave. I asked three experienced Native teachers from different villages how to prepare students to listen to elders speak and they came up with the following list of how elders expected children to listen.

* Stay sitting quietly without moving around.
* Children should not have anything in their hands.
* Do not interrupt or ask a lot of questions.

Conversation with Cathy Moses, Rosalie Lincoln, and Sheila Wallace, 2014.

Have students go to the bathroom and get a drink beforehand and remind them that they have to stay seated when the elder is talking. To reinforce the guidelines the ask students,

* “Can you get a drink of water when the elder is talking?” (No)
* “Do you need to get up and get something when the elder is talking?” (No)
* “Do you need to have a pencil in your hands to listen?” (No)
* “What will happen if you have something in your hands?” (You’ll take it away)
* “When can you ask questions?” (At the end after the elders story is over)