

National Resource Center



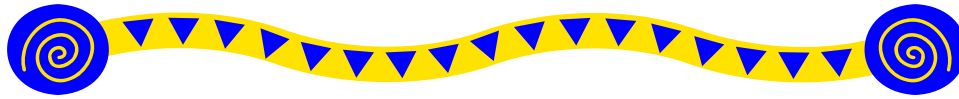
American Indians, Alaska Natives & Native Hawaiian Elders

“Voices of Our Elders”

Bridging the Cultural Gap

Site Manager's Workshop: October 2006

Juneau, AK



Developing Cultural Competencies

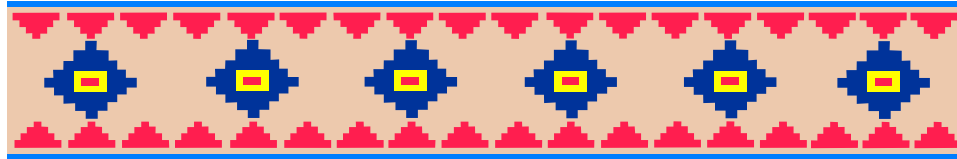
“Communications is never perfect and always approximate.” (Father Michael Oleksa)

Introductions:

Presenters and participants

Expectations and Challenges of the Topic

Overview of syllabus/agenda – Interactive



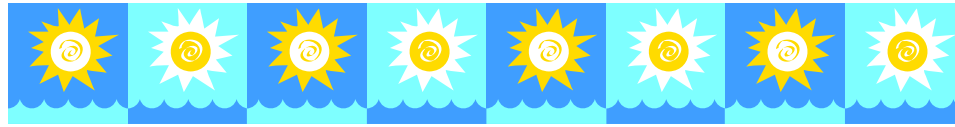
Concept – “First, know yourself.”

- In order to effectively communicate cross culturally, or intra-culturally, first have a grounded understanding of yourself as an individual.
- It is important to understand your cultural strengths and challenges
- Begin a journey of adding to your cultural knowledge.



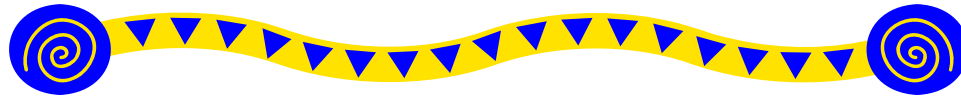
Know yourself, continued

- It is important to understand what your traditional values are and
- Do they complement or are different from those traditional values of elders?
- Some come from a traditional background while others are on a continuum towards assimilation.



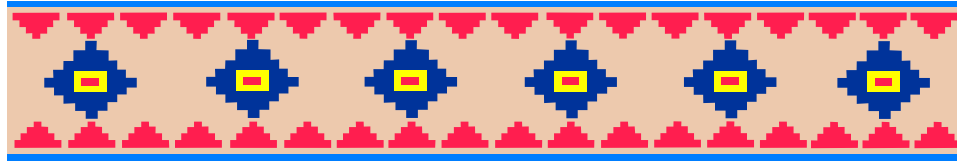
Know yourself, continued

- Some care providers are from a Western/European culture and
- It is equally important to get to know and understand their cultural background and
- Even their organizational culture.



Know yourself, continued

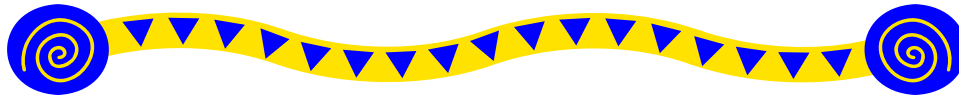
- Understanding these practical ideas can be the beginning of developing your own cultural competencies and
- Will improve your communications with elders that you and other agencies that provide a service to them.



Become a Cultural Navigator

- We are a nation of many transitory peoples. Alaska is no exception.
- Elders and their families have been moving within and outside of their historical place of birth and traditional residences for many years.
- Some become elders “in place” but find that their care giver is from another culture, time and place.
- These realities can stress out effective cross cultural communications.

Here are some cultural differences between Indigenous people and western/European people:



Dichotomy of Cultural Characteristics

“No one culture is better than the other, just different”

Indigenous Culture

Spirituality

Slow to Trust

Respect for Nature

Respect for Elders

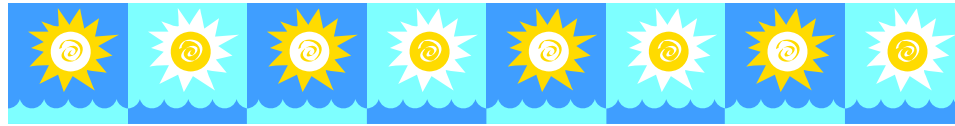
Western Culture

Christianity

Quick to make friends

Dominion over environment

Youth focused



Cultural Characteristics, Continued

Silence

Talk too much and loudly

Little or no Eye Contact

Looking directly, Staring

Respectful speech

Talk too fast

Want to know who you are

Want to get the job done

Handshake soft

Handshake firm

Avoidance of conflict

Adversarial relationship



Cultural Characteristics, continued

Community focused

Individual focused (rights)

Consensus building

Authoritative; "The Boss"

Triangulation

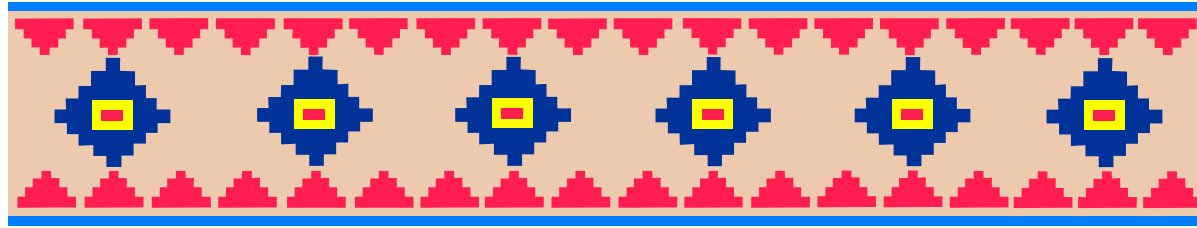
Direct talk

Oral tradition

Literature, Forms, writing

Extended family

Nuclear family



Cultural Characteristics, continued

Present oriented

Future oriented

Ecological knowledge

Scientific knowledge

“Yes” can mean ?

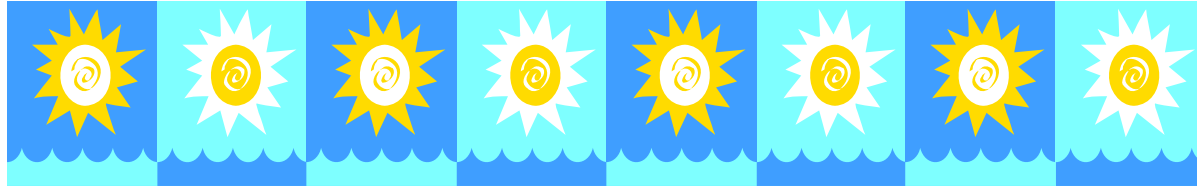
“I understand you”

Native time

Western time

Body language

Various



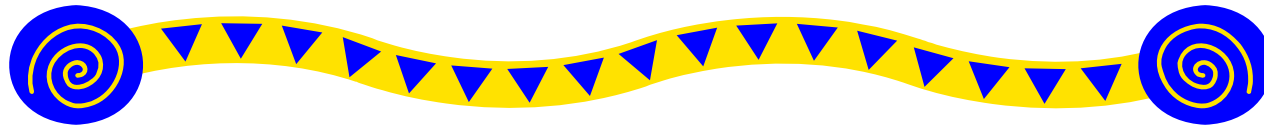
Cross-Cultural Communication Strategies between Senior Site Managers and Elders:

- Seek out appropriate community protocols
- Engage in “Active Listening”
- Look for cultural communication cues
- Develop rapport before engaging in “business”



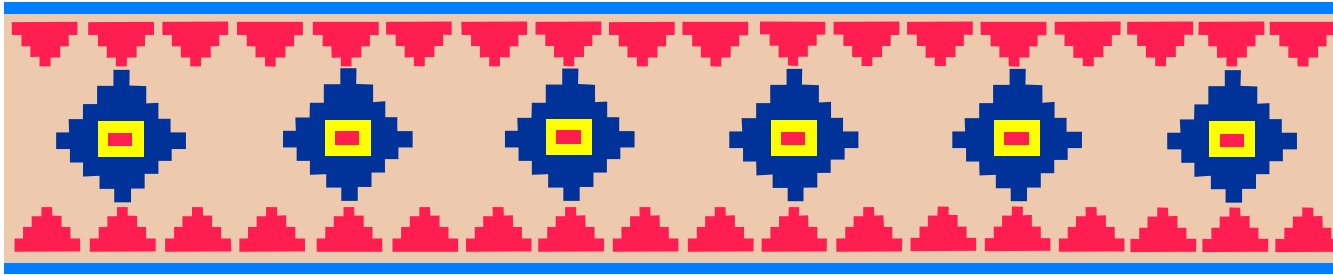
Communication Strategies, continued

- Humor reduces barriers to communication
- Leave your biases at the door
- Use translators/interpreters
- Demonstrate some knowledge of the elders culture
- Bring small gifts



Communication Strategies, continued

- Traditional Native foods-sometimes you may invited by the elder to have food with them
- Speak softer and slower
- Allow for cultural pauses in speech, do not interrupt
- Learn about historical traumas among Native American Elders



Communication Strategies, continued

- Develop cultural understanding of the body dynamics & attitudes:
 - Aches and pains: Some elders may minimize their level of pain
 - Power, motion
 - Acuity
 - Some elders are very trusting & sometimes want the health care providers to make decisions for them when there are choices of treatment

Bridging the Gap

- Remember the cultural protocol
- Demonstrating respect by listening to our elders
- Learn their language, sometimes only a few key words demonstrates your sincerity
- Learn their tribal history
- If possible get your elders to tell their life stories- Healing through remembrance

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