



Culture is Our Best Protective Factor and Healing Practice

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Overview

- ▶ Going to discuss how cultures in can be a protective factor for us as Native people, or what you might experience when working with Native people, as a service provider
- ▶ Barriers to accessing services for Native people and communities:
 - ▶ Communication barriers: forms of non-verbal communication, regionalized language and phrases
 - ▶ Geography
- ▶ Other types of connection among Indigenous people
- ▶ How to resolve some of the barriers we as Native people experience when trying to access services



Language and communication

Non-verbal communication

- ▶ Expressive facial expressions, for example:
 - ▶ Eyebrow raising to agree or say yes
 - ▶ Squinting or frowning to disagree or say no
- ▶ As service providers, be aware of non-verbal cues
 - ▶ Eye contact, it's common in Alaska to avoid eye contact as a sign of respect
 - ▶ We often talk with hand motions, and use shoulder shrugging
 - ▶ Pointing with your lips or your forehead
- ▶ We're comfortable with longer pauses during conversation or when asked a question, we take a long pause before answering

Being aware of and Comfortable with Silence

- ▶ In many Cultures, responses are thought out and take longer
- ▶ It's not uncommon to use stories as a way of explaining something or explaining how to do something
- ▶ Many Native people learn by observation, We are visual learners and learn by watching our parents and elders do things
- ▶ Traditionally taught not to speak out when people in authority positions are speaking
- ▶ Many taught to think through reaction before acting
- ▶ We need to encourage our people to continue to speak out on social issues
- ▶ There are some issues that need to be spoken about, often and loudly

Examples of regionalized phrases and beliefs

He/She is
bothering me
They are acting funny

- He/she is annoying me
- He/she is molesting me

I am feeling bum

- Difference between feeling sick, sadness, depressed, suicide

Birds have different
meaning in different
regions

- Owls
- Ravens

We or they are going
for a walk in the
Woods.

- some don't talk of death
- how does your area talk about it

Why are these important to know?

- ▶ Phrases and words with more than one meaning can influence the types of services Native people receive depending on what their service provider understands
- ▶ Traditional beliefs ground and strengthen us as Native people
- ▶ Traditional beliefs can affect our mental and emotional health
- ▶ Superstitious beliefs are common in Indigenous people, and give you insight into the people you work with, and where they're from. We often hold these deep and affect us in how we walk through the world
- ▶ Just because you do not believe something, that doesn't make it any less real for the people who do believe it

Other Forms of Connection

- ▶ Our cultures show affection through hugs when greeting and leaving
- ▶ Historical, multi-generational and modern trauma have impacted our connection to one another
- ▶ Many interruptions such as: boarding schools and colonization have affected our cultural teachings
- ▶ Many cultures traditionally separated into gender roles for socializing, learning, gathering, and hunting. We are seeing a shift in these roles today
- ▶ Covid-19 has impacted our connections to each other. It has touched every aspect of our lives. How will this impact us long term?
 - ▶ Cultural activities
 - ▶ Emotional and mental health
 - ▶ Community gatherings to celebrate and grieve.



The Power of our Native Languages

- ▶ Words can get lost during translation to English
- ▶ In some Native languages there is a depth of meaning that can't translate to English or to other languages
- ▶ Native people can experience barriers in written language
- ▶ Speech patterns can differ from each other, or region to region
 - ▶ Volume differences
 - ▶ Mixing up of pronouns
 - ▶ Regional accents
- ▶ Our Native Languages give us a different world view than other groups of people
- ▶ Our brain thinks in our first language and must translate (even if you have not spoken your language)?



Continued...

- ▶ Our languages are medicine
 - ▶ It's healing to hear, speak and sing in the language your ancestors spoke
 - ▶ It's also healing to help revitalize what was almost lost
- ▶ Our languages can affect the types of services we receive or create barriers to services
- ▶ As service providers, we need to know the cultural differences in the areas we work.



Protective Factors

What is a protective factor?

- ▶ Skills
- ▶ Strengths
- ▶ Resources and supports
- ▶ Coping strategies
- ▶ Help people deal more effectively with stressful situations and trauma
- ▶ Reduce and/or eliminate risks to individuals, families and communities
- ▶ Impacts long term effects on cultural or family groups



Culture is our Strongest Protective Factor

Cultural Values

- ▶ Promote wellness
- ▶ Ground us in our world
- ▶ Identity
 - ▶ Some areas use clan systems, we often introduce our parents and grandparents when meeting someone or tell them where our family is from
- ▶ Subsistence
- ▶ Learn our culture is healing
- ▶ We all have a role
- ▶ Builds community and connection
- ▶ Supports our emotional health, mental health, and spirituality



Worldview

- ▶ World view is based in our language and culture
- ▶ Our cultures are rapidly changing with language loss and changes
- ▶ Like any group of people our cultures are evolving with modern changes
- ▶ Collective vs individualism of today
- ▶ When we know who we are, we can stand on our own and lead together



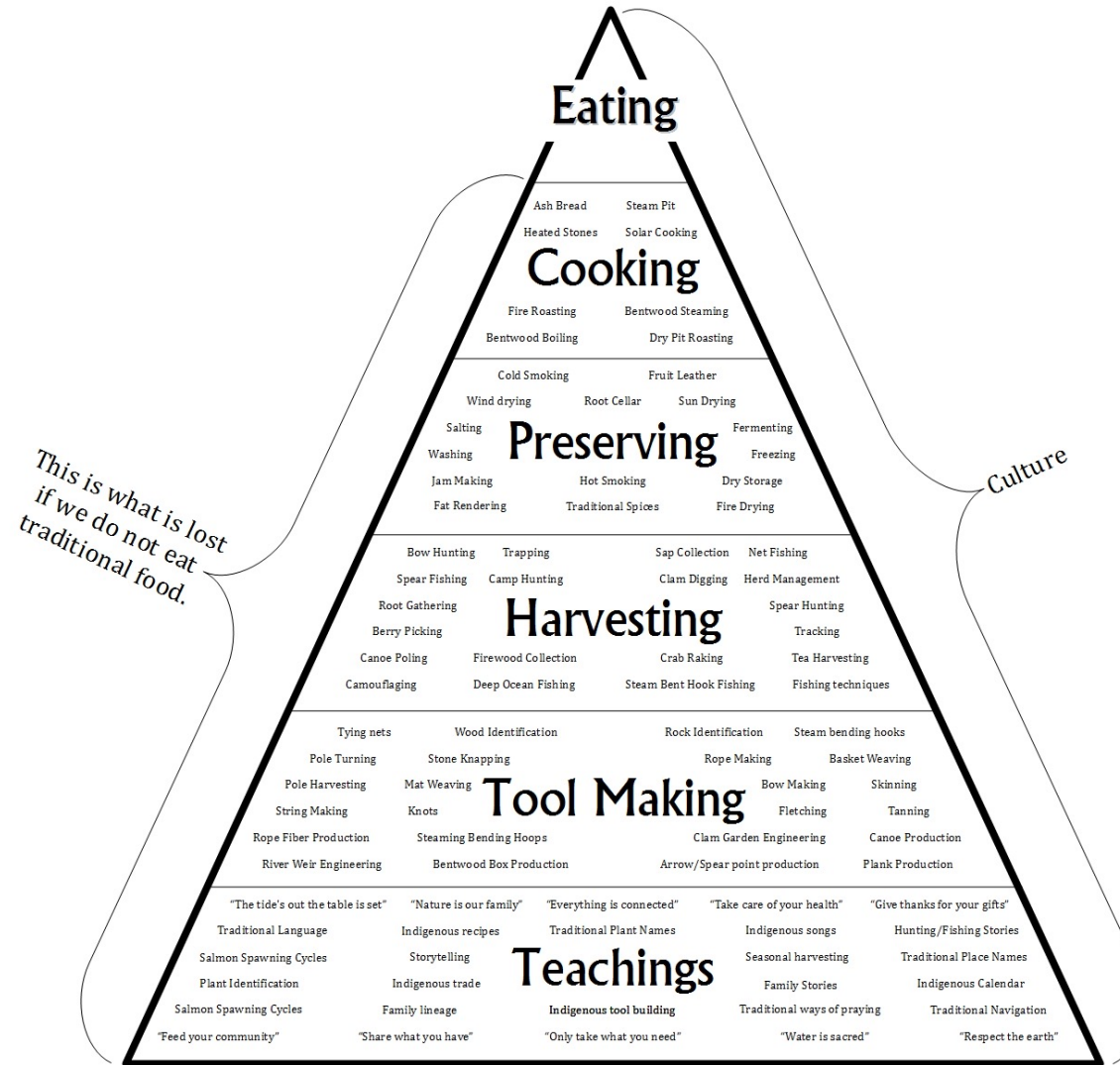
Subsistence

- ▶ Living off the land
- ▶ Respect and connections to the land and water
- ▶ Respect for animals
- ▶ Ethical Harvesting-taking no more than needed
- ▶ Providing for others in our family and community
 - ▶ We make sure all people are fed
- ▶ Traditional healing foods and medicine
- ▶ Feeds our souls
- ▶ Incorporates teaching others and working together



Why is Eating Traditional Foods Important?

Diagram by Jared Qwustenuxun Williams

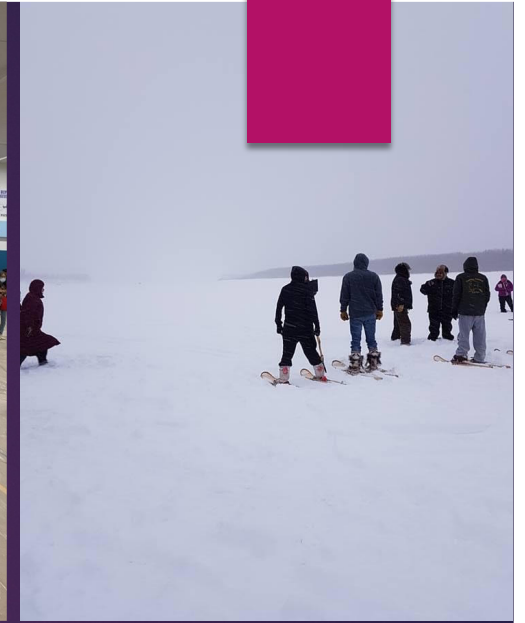


Traditional Food Production Fosters Culture

#myexistenceisresistance

Builds Community and Connections

- ▶ Physical Health
 - ▶ Traditional games
 - ▶ Subsistence
 - ▶ Endurance
- ▶ Spiritual health
 - ▶ Grieving processes
 - ▶ Healing processes
 - ▶ Resiliency
- ▶ Mental wellbeing
 - ▶ Modern social issues are changed this



We All Have A Role

- ▶ Purpose
- ▶ Gives us belonging
- ▶ Connection
- ▶ We focus on the collective well being not individual wellbeing
- ▶ It took everyone to live off the land





Builds Community and Connection

Physical health

- ▶ Surviving in harsh/extreme climates
- ▶ Traditional games
- ▶ Subsistence living
- ▶ Dancing



Spiritual health

- ▶ Grieving processes
- ▶ Healing processes
- ▶ Resiliency
- ▶ Ceremonies
- ▶ Traditional tattoos
- ▶ Traditional regala
- ▶ Speaking or hearing our languages



Mental and Emotional Health

- ▶ How have social issues influenced this?
- ▶ Behavioral Health was taken care of in our communities by collective living



Barriers to Services

- ▶ Historical shame/guilt
- ▶ Fears around confidentiality
- ▶ Safety delays in law enforcement response time
- ▶ Immediate access to Health services
- ▶ Language and communication barriers

It's difficult for Native people to stay connected to their culture, most often during the times they need it most.

What can we do?

- ▶ Talk with your elders to incorporate culture and wellness into your programs to promote healing
- ▶ Apply for grants to create victim service programs in your own communities (shelters, advocacy programs, etc....)
- ▶ Collaborate and connect with other communities to help one another develop your community resources and victim services
- ▶ Create policies and procedures that enforce issues such as confidentiality and responses
- ▶ Build healthy relationships with law enforcement in your communities and plan responses
- ▶ Start those uncomfortable conversations on issues that affect your communities
- ▶ Stand up and believe victims when they come forward
- ▶ Advocate for your communities during consultations to address issues effecting your community



We should not have to choose our homes based on access to services.



STRONGHEARTS
Native Helpline

1-844-762-8483

<https://www.strongheartshelpline.org/>

Ana Basee' Thank You!

- ▶ Alaska Native Women's Resource Center
Ph: 907-328-3990
P.O. Box 80382
Fairbanks, Alaska 99708
 - ▶ Follow us!
- ▶ <https://www.facebook.com/aknwrc>
- ▶ Mailing list: <https://bit.ly/2XjV6Dr>
- ▶ Website: www.aknwrc.org