

Perils & Promise: *Reaching the Summit of Cultural Competency & Inclusion*



Cultural Competency & Inclusion Forum

Aboriginal Health Strategy Initiatives

Vancouver Coastal Health

Presented February 26, 2009

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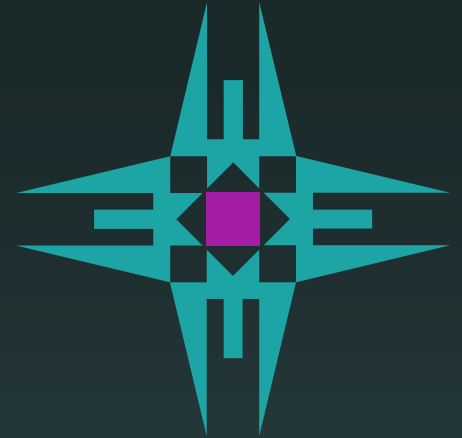
The Central Issue of Culture

The Basis of Culture



- ▶ The word culture is derived from the root word cultura, which literally means a respectful relationship with the earth.
- ▶ When holistically understood, culture consists of the inherent knowledge, wisdom & prevailing value patterns that shape, sustain & actuate a people.

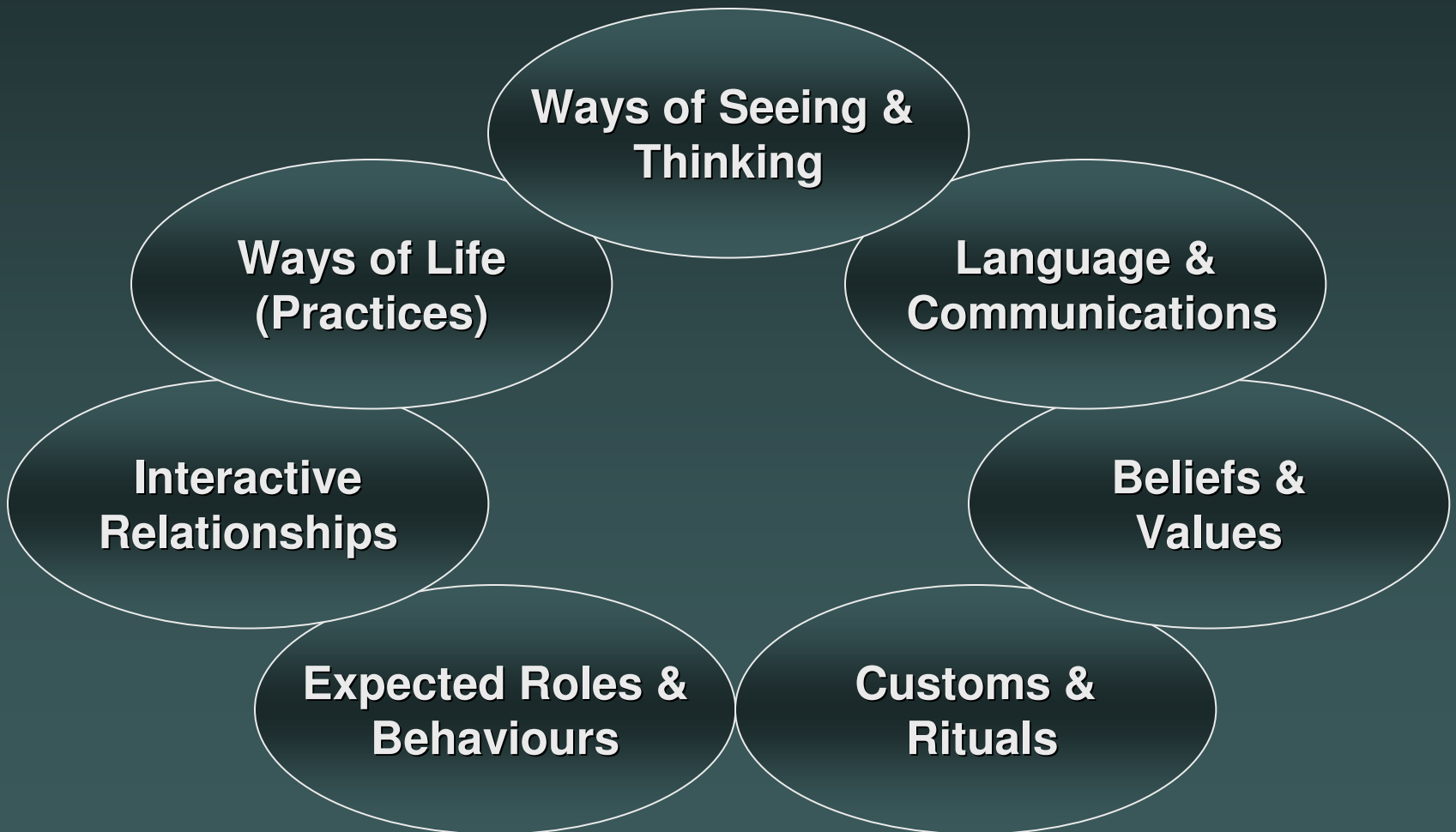
Culture Defined



Culture... is ... the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual & emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes... modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions & beliefs.

World Conference on Cultural Policies

Culture - An Integrated Pattern of Human Life & Behavior Which is Transmitted Through the Generations



Cultural Diversity



While in practice cultural diversity may lead to a lack of understanding, it is also the lifeblood of creativity. Like bio-diversity, it is an irreplaceable asset, bringing people into contact with the entire range of human experience, knowledge & wisdom. Culture is not something 'to be taken into consideration', it is rather fundamental to the flourishing of human life in all its forms.

Commission for Culture & Development

Characteristics of Culture

Virtually all human cultures & sub-cultures embody the following characteristics:

- ▶ Human culture becomes common or shared when individuals agree on the way in which they identify, understand & respond to reality.
- ▶ Culture is often identified through its dynamic creation of symbols such as language, dress, music, arts, beliefs & behaviors.



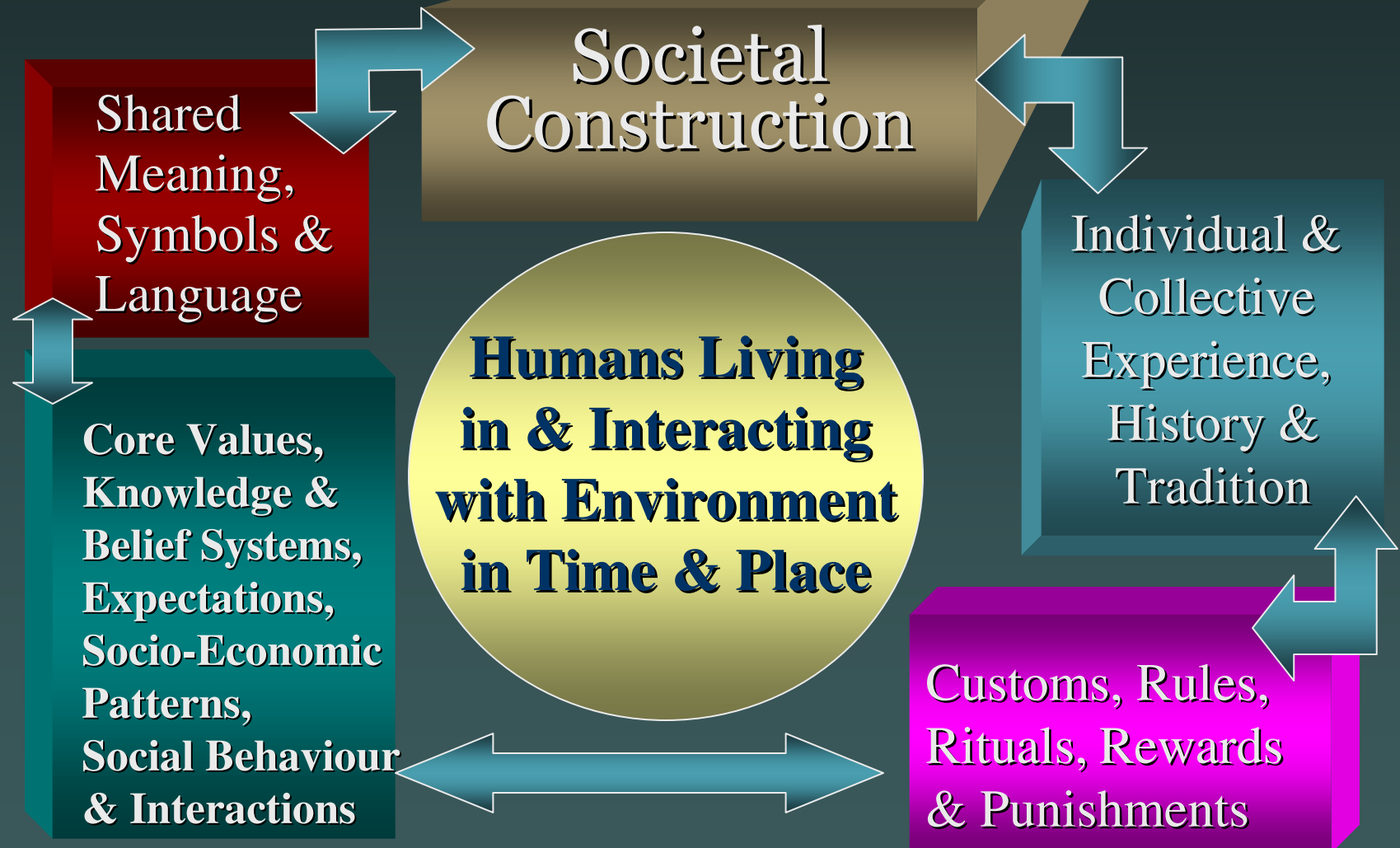
Unveiling of Ilanaa
April 23, 2005

Characteristics of Culture



- ▶ Culture is learned & passed down through the generations, & adapts in response to changes in the world, & to events/interactions taking place in the individual's personal experiences & environment.
- ▶ It is integrated with, spans & effects all dimensions of individual, family & community life.

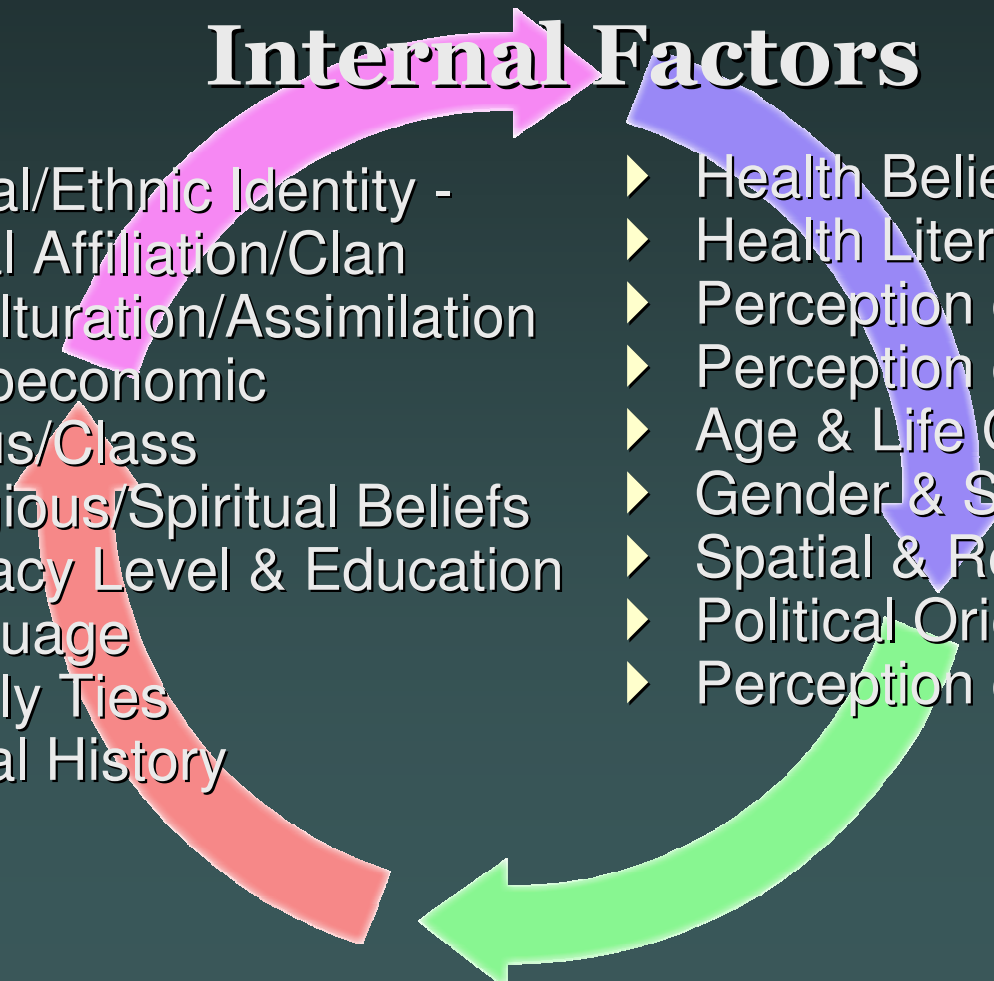
The Human Culture System



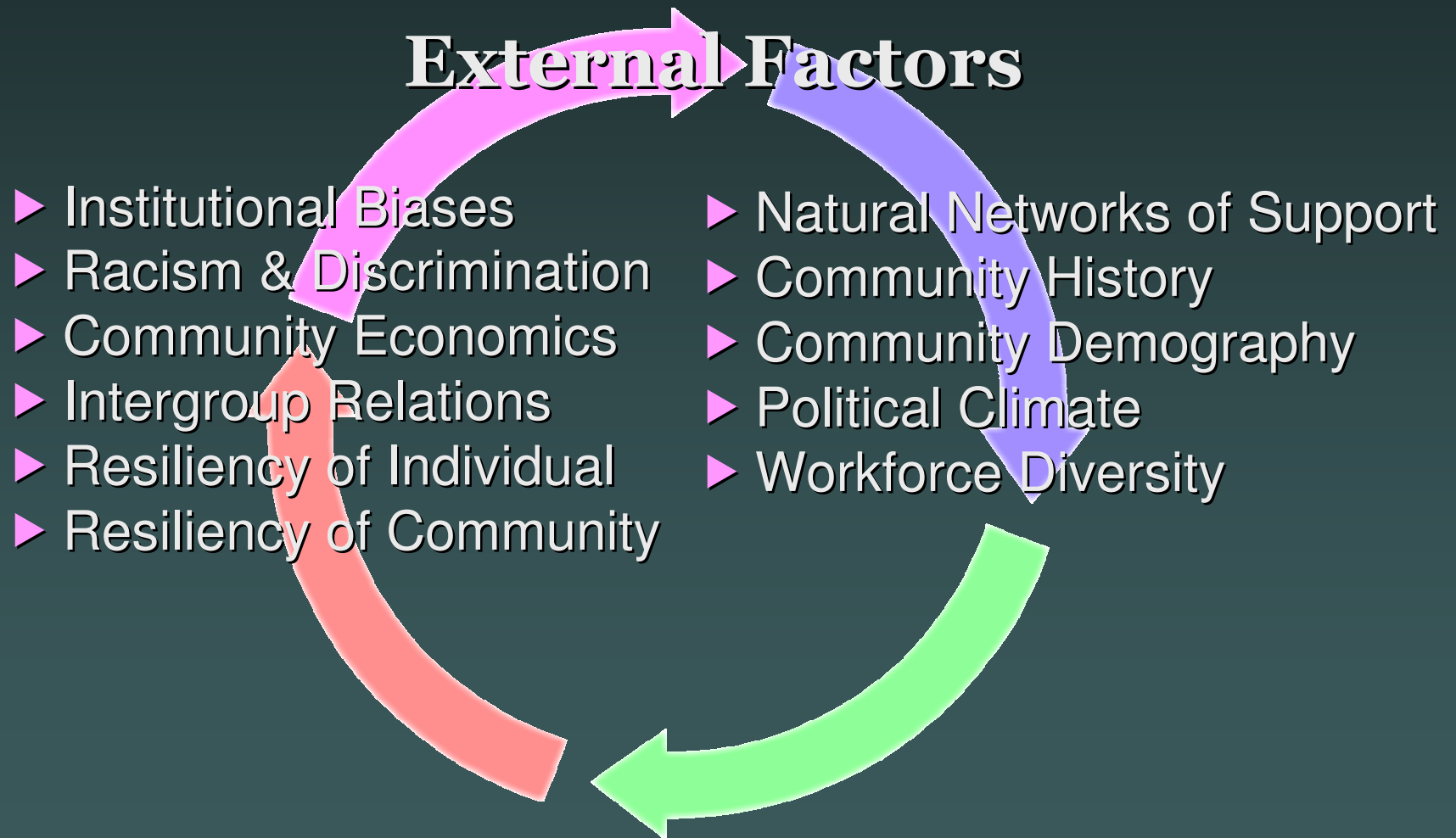
Adapted from: O. Kanitsaki, *The influence of culture on aged care delivery*

Cultural Factors Affecting Diversity Among Individuals & Groups

Internal Factors

- 
- ▶ Racial/Ethnic Identity - Tribal Affiliation/Clan
 - ▶ Acculturation/Assimilation
 - ▶ Socioeconomic Status/Class
 - ▶ Religious/Spiritual Beliefs
 - ▶ Literacy Level & Education
 - ▶ Language
 - ▶ Family Ties
 - ▶ Social History
 - ▶ Health Beliefs & Practices
 - ▶ Health Literacy
 - ▶ Perception of Disability
 - ▶ Perception of Mental Health
 - ▶ Age & Life Cycle Issues
 - ▶ Gender & Sexual identity
 - ▶ Spatial & Regional Patterns
 - ▶ Political Orientation/Affiliation
 - ▶ Perception of Time

Cultural Factors Affecting Diversity Among Individuals & Groups

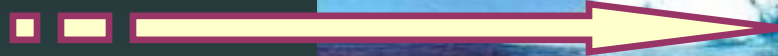


The Iceberg Analogy of Culture

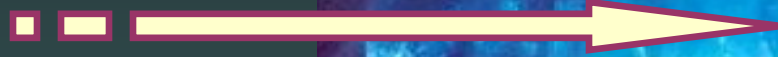
Behaviour



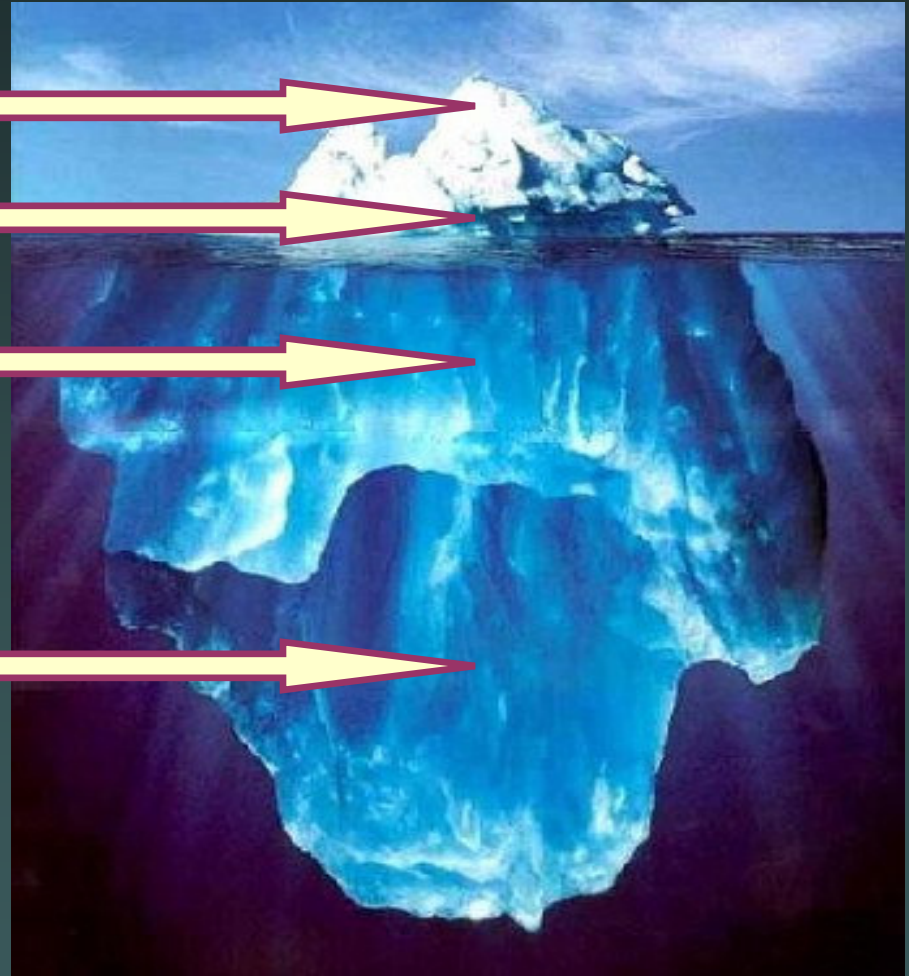
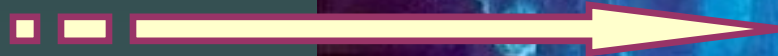
Words



Ideas



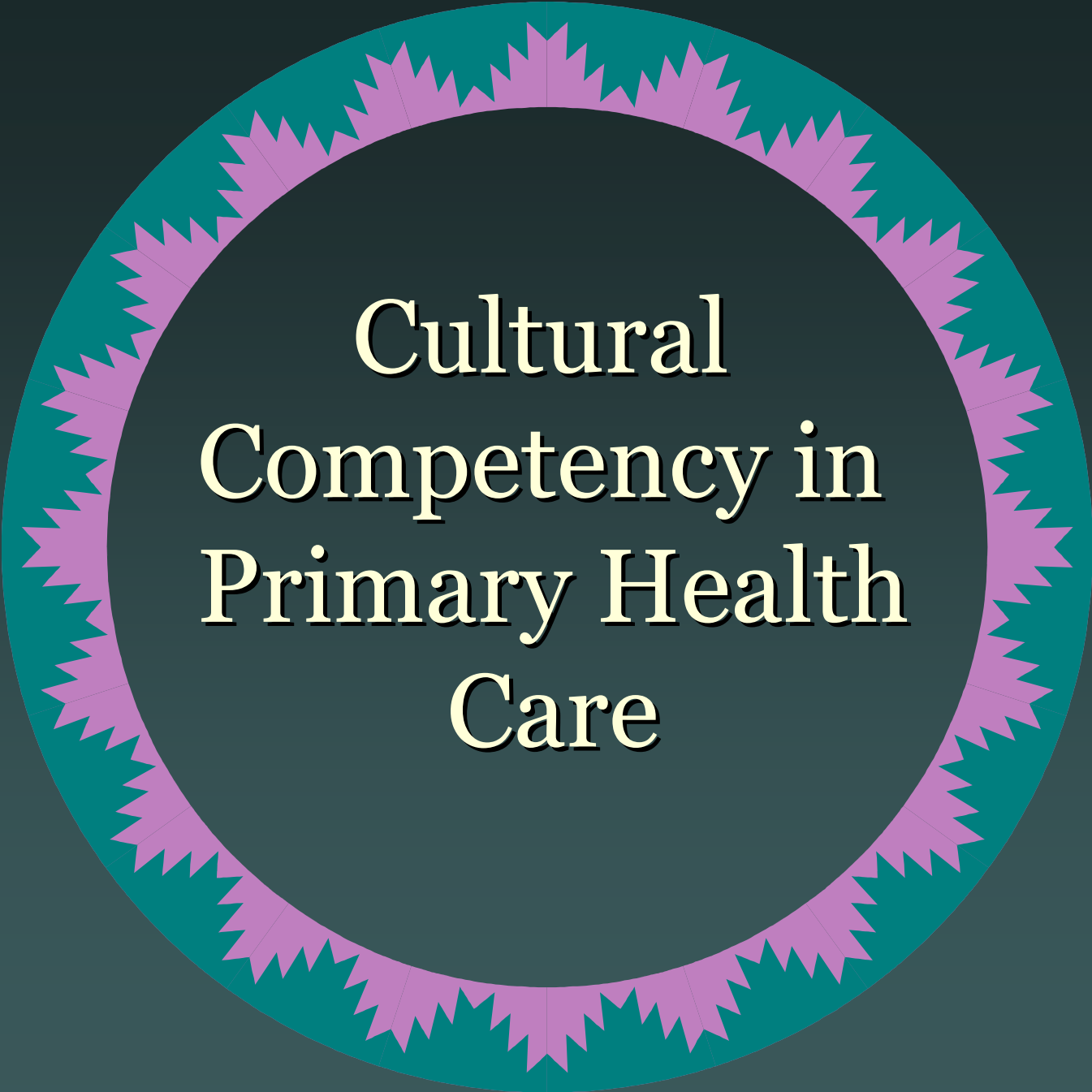
*Values &
Beliefs*



Power, Privilege Race & Equity



- ▶ The concepts of power, privilege, race & equity are interlinked. These all converge when a dominant culture group makes & enforces decisions over an ethnic minority, marginalizing that minority group & dominating it.
- ▶ Power & privilege influence the degree of access to resources, which may not be equitably allocated to all.
- ▶ Some racism is conscious & some unconscious. Either form can effect a person's ability to obtain health services, thereby impacting health status.



Cultural Competency in Primary Health Care

What Cultural Competence Isn't

- ▶ Cultural Competence is not simply a technical skill that one can master, or a problem solving method to develop, or a communication technique to refine.
- ▶ Relying upon one's knowledge about certain aspects of a particular cultural group is not in itself cultural competence. Taken alone such knowledge can be biased & lead to unjustified stereotyping.



What Cultural Competence Is

- ▶ Cultural competence is an internalized process of adapting one's knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, & skills to people of another culture.
- ▶ It requires a fundamental transition in the way people think about, understand & interact with themselves & the world around them, including persons from other cultures.



Why Cultural Competence is Important

The failure to consider culture contributes to inadequate & ineffective health care. This includes:

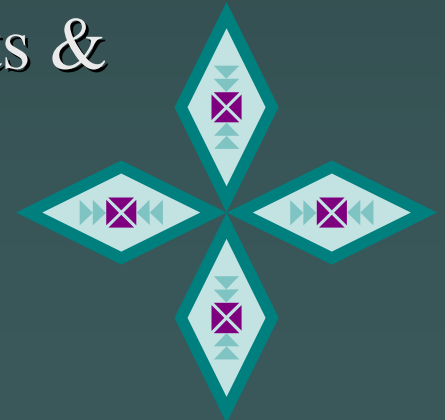
- Underutilization of effective services;
- Treatment inequities;
- Increased burdens from morbidity & mortality; & thus
- Poorer health outcomes.



Why Cultural Competence is Important

Cultural competence in health care:

- ▶ Builds trust thereby reducing fear & tension in Aboriginal clients;
- ▶ Makes more effective use of time spent with clients;
- ▶ Increases disclosure of client information;
- ▶ Improves communication with clients & helps with negotiating differences;
- ▶ Increases client satisfaction;



Why Cultural Competence is Important

- ▶ Helps service providers to grasp social changes occurring among Aboriginal peoples;
- ▶ Increases understanding of the underlying factors of diseases prevalent in Aboriginal communities;
- ▶ Addresses actual & perceived barriers faced in accessing Primary Health Care;
- ▶ Increases client compliance with treatment protocols; &
- ▶ Assuming treatment effectiveness, it enhances clinical health status outcomes.



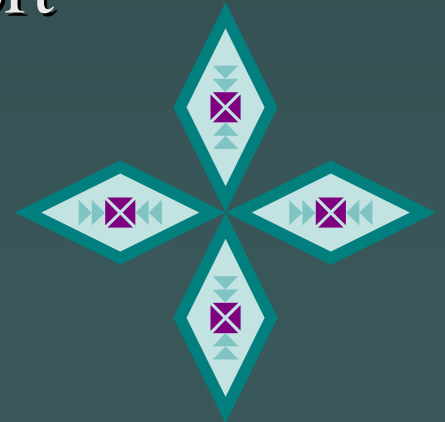
Equitable Access

- ▶ Access is the ability to enter into, use, communicate with, & exit from primary health care services. Equitable access recognizes that factors such as socio-economic barriers, geographic locations, communication styles, language of service; signage, physical design & service-delivery style all influence whether a person has reasonable access to health services.
- ▶ When people are treated *equally* their barriers & differences are ignored. However, when people are treated *equitably* their barriers are recognized & differences are respected.



Communications

- ▶ The more accurate & complete the information we have about others, including their cultural values & beliefs the more likely we will be able to interact with them in a spirit of understanding & respect.
- ▶ The more familiar we become, the more comfortable we become. With comfort & time, will come mutual trust resulting in better & mutually more effective communications.



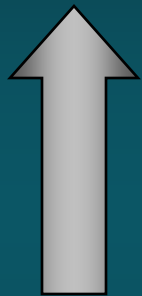
Benefits of Culturally Competent Health Care System



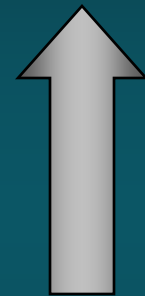
Improved Health Outcomes



Maximal Use of Limited Resources



Increased Client Satisfaction & Retention



Enhanced Access to Health Care Services

Provision of Services More in Accord with Client Needs

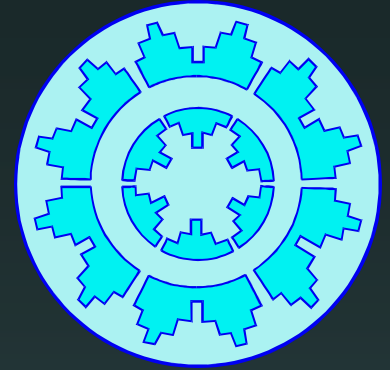
Culturally Competent Management, Staff & Practitioners

*Adapted from: American Assoc. of Health Plans,
Minority Mgt. Program, 1997*



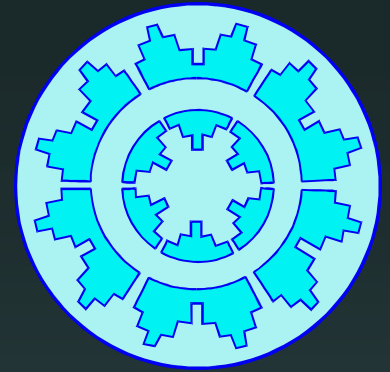
Cultural Competency & Aboriginal Peoples

Consultation: Aboriginal Community Leaders (Findings)



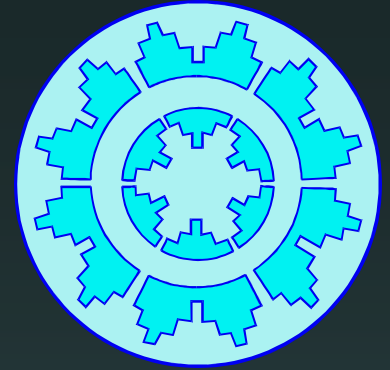
- ▶ Residential school system legacy resulting in the loss of culture, languages, traditions, & history
- ▶ Jurisdictional barriers which prevent access to health care (e.g. post-operative supporting home-care may be inaccessible)
- ▶ Geographical isolation & transportation challenges
- ▶ Historical bi-cultural misunderstandings, tensions & social isolation

Consultation: Aboriginal Community Leaders (Findings)



- ▶ Dominant societal stereotyping & biases
- ▶ Interactions with primary health care providers who appear to be insensitive & / or disrespectful
- ▶ Misconceptions around treatment protocols & compliance issues
- ▶ Little understanding among health care providers about Aboriginal culture, beliefs & values, e.g. traditional approaches to wellness & healing

Consultation: Aboriginal Community Leaders (Findings)



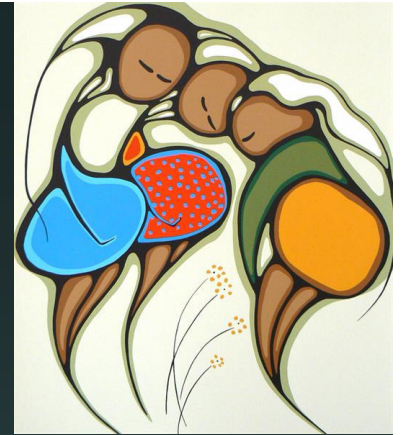
- ▶ Difficulties in the recruitment & retention of community based or on-reserve physicians
- ▶ Poor working relationships with off-reserve health professionals
- ▶ Special health concerns which include: poor nutrition patterns, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, addictions, stress & depression.

Cultural Competence & Aboriginal Peoples



- ▶ It is important to recognize that cultural variations & diversity exist among & between Canada's Aboriginal peoples
- ▶ Relationships between Aboriginal peoples & Health Care Providers should be based on mutual understanding & respect
- ▶ Health Professionals should recognize that the Health Care System presents many gaps & barriers for Aboriginal individuals & communities

Cultural Competence & Aboriginal Peoples



- ▶ Health Professionals should work proactively with Aboriginal individuals & communities to address these gaps & barriers
- ▶ Health Professionals should work consultatively & cooperatively with Aboriginal individuals & communities in providing culturally appropriate health care
- ▶ Aboriginal peoples should receive treatment in their own languages insofar as possible

Cultural Competence & Aboriginal Peoples



- ▶ Care Programs & Institutions which service large numbers of Aboriginal peoples need Cultural Interpreters & Aboriginal Health Advocates on staff
- ▶ Aboriginal Peoples should have complete access to Informed Consent regarding recommended or prospective medical treatments

Cultural Competence & Aboriginal Peoples



- ▶ Health Service Providers should be aware of the importance of family & community roles & responsibilities when serving Aboriginal individuals
- ▶ Health Professionals should respect traditional medicines & work with Aboriginal healers to find ways to ensure clients are free to choose from & access either Traditional or Western Medicine

Cultural Competence & Aboriginal Peoples



- ▶ Health Professionals should take advantage of workshops & other educational resources to become more knowledgeable about & sensitive to Aboriginal peoples
- ▶ Health Professionals should get to know on a first-hand basis the Aboriginal communities & people being served

Modern Culture of Western Medicine



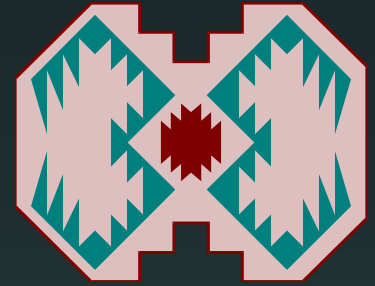
- ▶ Make it Better Speedily
- ▶ Dominate & Manipulate Nature
- ▶ Take Control & Intervene with Strong Measures
- ▶ If it Can't be Healed – Then Cut it Out
- ▶ Plan Ahead to Stay on Top of Things
- ▶ Recent is Best - Old Ways are Obsolete & Mostly Useless
- ▶ Standardize Treatment – One Approach for Everyone
- ▶ Individual is Focus of Health Care Decisions

Traditional Healing Perspective of *Aboriginal Peoples*



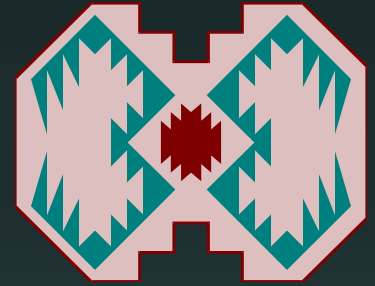
- ▶ Nature's Wheels Turn Slowly (Patience)
- ▶ Seek Balance & Harmony with Nature
- ▶ Wait & See What Unfolds
- ▶ Move with Cautious Deliberation
- ▶ Take a Gentle Approach if Possible
- ▶ Take Life as it Comes
- ▶ The Old Ways Should be Honored & Respected
- ▶ Recognize & Respect a Diversity of Treatments
- ▶ Family is Focus of Health Care Decisions

Essential Communication & Care-Giving Principles for Aboriginal Peoples



- ▶ **Respect the Individual:** Individual experience & beliefs should be considered just as valid & important as tradition or cultural norms.
- ▶ **Practice Conscious Communication:** Try to listen well & note responses
- ▶ **Use Interpreters:** Use an interpreter if there is any doubt as to fluency & understanding in English or French.
- ▶ **Involve the Family:** Often Aboriginal families will wish to be present during decision-making.

Essential Communication & Care-Giving Principles for Aboriginal Peoples



- ▶ **Consider alternative approaches to Bearing Bad News:** Some Aboriginal peoples believe that speaking of a future illness or negative consequence will help bring it to pass.
- ▶ **Practice Noninterference:** A patient's decisions should be based on a comprehensive reporting of benefits & dangers of treatment options & be fully respected & supported.
- ▶ **Allow for Traditional Medicine:** Aboriginal clients may desire & should be supported in accessing traditional healers in their treatment program.

Attitudes - Key in Aboriginal Health Care



- ▶ **Humility** (Realizing the client's thinking is as important as your own)
- ▶ **Empathy** (Putting yourself in their situation)
- ▶ **Curiosity** (Honestly wanting to know the client & his/her needs)
- ▶ **Respect** (Treating the Aboriginal client as you would want to be treated were your positions reversed)

Attitudes - Key in Aboriginal Health Care



- ▶ **Sensitivity & Compassion** (Having an understanding & caring spirit)
- ▶ **Authenticity** (Being genuine & not merely acting out a role)
- ▶ **Openness** (Being adaptive & flexible in the encounter)
- ▶ **Availability** (Ensuring the Aboriginal client knows you're accessible, if needed.)

The Encounter



You & I - We meet as strangers, each carrying a mystery within us. I cannot say who you are. I may never know you completely. But I trust that you are a person in your own right, possessed of a beauty & value that are the earth's richest treasures. So I make this promise to you; I will impose no identities upon you, but will invite you to become yourself without shame or fear. I will hold open a space for you in the world, & allow your right to fill it with purpose.

Overcoming Barriers Posed by Health Care Provider's & Clinical Settings to Aboriginal Clients & Communities

Ethnic & Interracial Biases

MD & RN Allopathic Bias

Socio-Economic & Cultural Dominance / Dissimilarities

Foreignness of Medical Thinking & Language

Cultural Competency Interventions:

- Cross-Cultural Training
- Cultural Self-Assessment
- Aboriginal Community & Culture Exposure
- Bridging Language Gaps & Health Illiteracy
- Ensuring Informed & Participatory Decision-Making

Health Care Provider & Client Relationship:

- Good Communication
- Working Partnership
- Mutual Respect
- Growing Trust

The Continuum



I - Cultural Destructiveness

This most negative end of the continuum, is represented by attitudes, policies & practices that are destructive to Aboriginal cultures & individuals. Forcibly removing Aboriginal children from their families & communities & placing them in residential schools, & outlawing traditional medicine are historic examples of planned & systemic cultural destructiveness.



II – *Cultural Incapacity*

This occurs when system or service agency does not intentionally attempt to destroy Aboriginal culture, but it lacks the capacity to really help Aboriginal peoples &/or communities. The agency or system believes it is in a morally & intellectually superior position, convinced that its own culture & way of “doing” things is clearly the best.



III - Cultural Blindness

This is the belief that culture actually makes no difference & that all cultures are essentially the same. A system or service agency that is culturally blind believes that the “helpful” approaches used by the dominant culture are universally acceptable. Assimilation of Aboriginal people is actively encouraged as a worthwhile practical & political goal.



IV – Cultural Pre-Competence

At this point a system or service agency realizes its weaknesses & tries to improve. It seeks to reach out to Aboriginal clients & hire Aboriginal staff, provides some limited employee cultural sensitivity training & sincerely wants to deliver good quality services. However, the agency feels fully satisfied with its efforts & if unsuccessful, it is not committed to trying again.



V - Cultural Competence

The system or agency accepts & respects differences & conducts continuous self-assessment of staff & policies regarding Aboriginal cultures. It trains staff in effectively managing social & cultural differences, while expanding its cultural knowledge base. It seeks committed Aboriginal staff & supports all staff in working effectively in cross-cultural situations. It consistently consults with the Aboriginal community.



VI – *Cultural Proficiency*

Aboriginal cultures are held in high esteem. Culturally competent practices are enhanced by research & support of viable traditional healing approaches, & by disseminating the results. Staff hold expertise in culturally competent practice. It works cooperatively with Aboriginal communities, & traditional healers. It increasingly builds its cultural knowledge, uses self-assessment procedures & understands cultural dynamics. Policies are flexible, & culturally impartial.





Attaining Personal Cultural Competency



“If I am asked to learn about cultural competence, then they must be implying that I am incompetent.”

(Manager) “If I am authentic about this, it will stir up a hornet’s nest in this office. Then there will be repercussions. I am not willing to take that risk.”

**“Aboriginal cultures are a thing of the past.
Why bother?”**

“I am a person of color. I know what it means to be culturally competent. I don’t need any special training.”

“I’ve read some reports about Aboriginal peoples, changed some of my thoughts & now feel competent.”

“I may discover I have more biases than I care to admit.”

“If we really get into this my colleagues will discover that I don’t know as much as I think I know.”

Key Steps to Personal Cultural Competence



- ▶ Examine & question your own values, beliefs, assumptions & behaviours, strive to be non-judgmental
- ▶ Try to understand what Aboriginal clients think & feel, seeking to be open minded, while celebrating & honoring differences.
- ▶ Recognize racism, including the beliefs, practices & institutions that breed racism.

Key Steps to Personal Cultural Competence



- ▶ Engage in activities that help you to reframe your thinking, allowing you to hear & appreciate other world views & perspectives.
- ▶ Familiarize yourself with core culture of the people you serve, including: physical conditions, concepts of time, space & physical contact, communication approaches, social expectations, socioeconomic structures, & gender roles.

Key Steps to Personal Cultural Competence



- ▶ Engage clients in sharing their reality. Unique experiences & histories of individuals will result in differences in their behaviors, values & needs.
- ▶ Learn how Aboriginal cultures define, name & understand diseases & their treatment. Engage your individual clients to share with you how they view & describe their ailments.

Key Steps to Personal Cultural Competence



- ▶ Develop a relationship of trust with clients & co-workers by interacting with openness, sensitivity & willingness to hear different perceptions.
- ▶ Create a welcoming environment that respects & reflects the values & concerns of the people & communities that you serve.

Personal Cultural Competence



Who we are determines how we see others... It is not what is around us but rather what is within us that determines what we see.

John Maxwell

To be culturally competent doesn't mean you are an authority in the values & beliefs of every culture. What it means is that you hold a deep respect for cultural differences & are eager to learn, & willing to accept, that there are many ways of viewing the world.

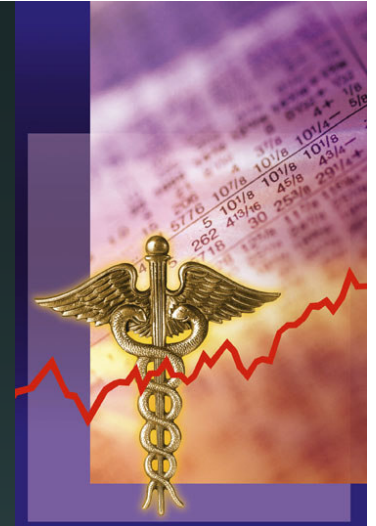
Okokon Udo



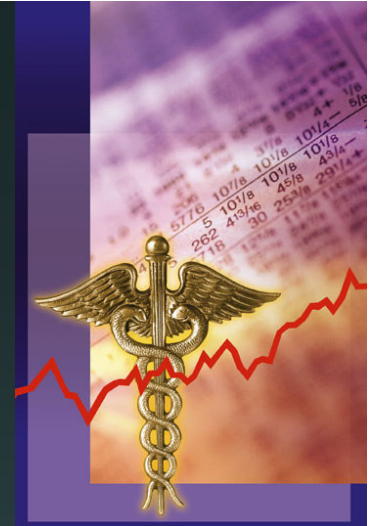
Attaining Organizational Cultural Competency

Barriers to Organizational Cultural Competence

- ▶ Lack of understanding of the value & importance of making the needed changes
- ▶ Lack of human, material or financial resources to make it happen
- ▶ Lack of a genuine leadership commitment to actualizing the goal
- ▶ Lack of readily available training tools, resources & opportunities
- ▶ Internal staff disinterest, or possible resistance



Basic Goals for Institutional Cultural Competence

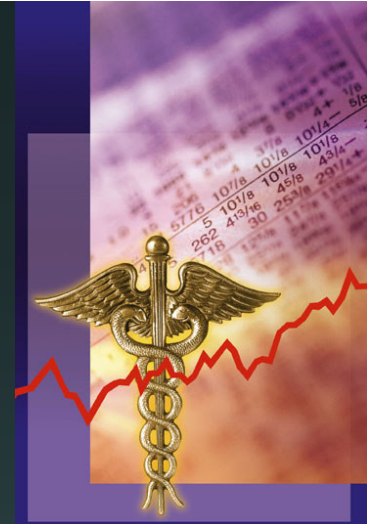


- ▶ Value Diversity
- ▶ Periodically Conduct Cultural Self-Assessment
- ▶ Manage the Dynamics of Difference
- ▶ Acquire & Institutionalize Cultural Knowledge
- ▶ Adapt to Diversity & Cultural Contexts of Peoples Being Served

*Transform: Policies, Structures,
Values, & Services*

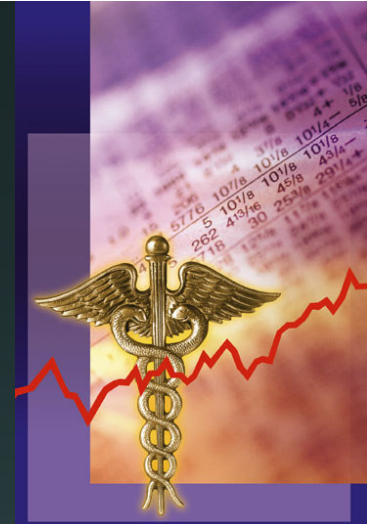
Benefits of Organizational Cultural Competence

- ▶ Promotes greater inclusiveness & equity at all levels & in all activities
- ▶ Improves dialogue with & participation of Aboriginal clients
- ▶ Increases levels of mutual respect & understanding in internal as well as external interactions & relationships
- ▶ Generates & sustains a spirit of mutual trust & cooperation between the service agency & the Aboriginal client population



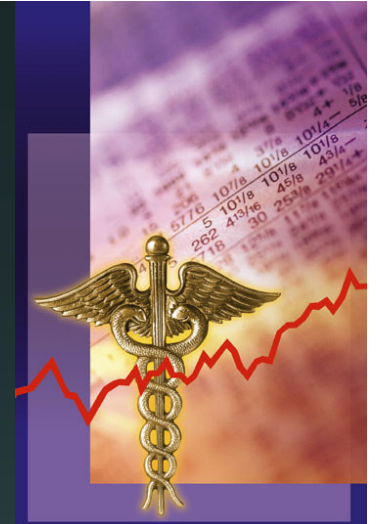
Benefits of Organizational Cultural Competence

- ▶ Increases civility & success in problem-solving through the use of newly discovered perspectives, ideas, & strategies
- ▶ Decreases unwanted surprises & conflicts that can impede & undermine fulfillment of service objectives
- ▶ Helps to lessen the fear of making mistakes, & reduces unnecessary conflicts



Organizational Transformation for Cultural Competence

- ▶ Value diversity
- ▶ Conduct periodic cultural competency self-assessments
- ▶ Acquire & institutionalize Aboriginal cultural knowledge
- ▶ Adapt to the diversity & cultural contexts of Aboriginal peoples being served
- ▶ Adapt & modify Structures, Policies, Attitudes, Practices, & Services





Organizational Cultural Competence

Level of
Compatibility
& Cross-
Cultural
Capacity
Determines
Organizational
Cultural
Competence &
Health Care
Delivery
Effectiveness

High Level
Compatibility with &
Adaptability to
Knowledge & Culture
of Aboriginal
Population(s) Being
Served

TRANSFORMED
Organizational
Domain & Direct
Service Functions

Outcomes:
Enhanced Access
to Effective Primary
Health Care, Leads
to Sustained
Health
Improvements



Organizational Cultural Transformation

Areas for Change

**Organizational
Governance &
Infrastructure**

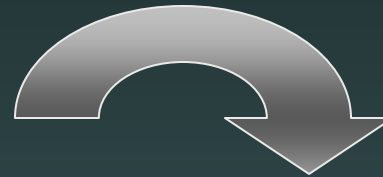
**Organizational Values,
Goals & Policies**

**Planning, Monitoring &
Evaluation**

**Staff Training &
Development**

Client/Community Inputs

Services & Interventions



**Transformed
Structures
Processes &
Outputs**



Indicators



**Transformed
Outcomes**

- ▶ **Organizational**
- ▶ **Clients &**
- ▶ **Communities**



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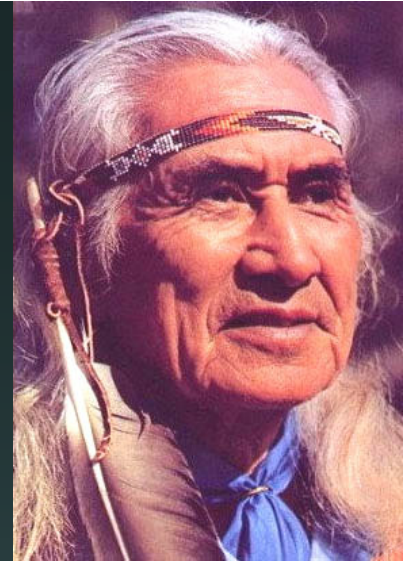


- ▶ Self-Initiated Learning about Aboriginal Cultures, Peoples & Communities
- ▶ Ownership of & Commitment to Implementing *Cultural Competency Change Processes*
- ▶ Articulation of Clear Goals & Expectations
- ▶ Responsible Leadership & Accountability over Time

Closing Words

“O Great Spirit whose voice I hear in the winds I come to you as one of your many children. I need your strength & your wisdom. Make me strong not to be superior to my brother, but to be able to fight my greatest enemy: Myself.”

Chief Dan George (Teswahno) 1899-1981



Art Credits

Daphne Odjig



Roy Thomas



Norval Morriseau



Compliments of: *Bear Claw Gallery*, Edmonton

Joan Laroca



<http://www.sacredspacesart.com/Images/pages/wheel.htm> 505.699.2295