National Multicultural Interpreter Project
American Indian/Alaskan Native
Curriculum Modules:
General Cultural Knowledge and Sensitivity
Interpreting Skill Development
Decision-Making

DACUM Curriculum Collaboratively Developed By:

NMIP Advisory Board Representation:
Dr. Glenn B. Anderson, Grant Consultant-Research & Evaluation (1996-2000)
Will Yaska IDC President 1996
Jerry Hassell and Skee Mervol, IDC Representatives 1997
Linda Carroll, IDC President 1998 - 2000
James Woodenlegs, IDC Spiritual Leader 1996-2000
Evangeline Tenorio, Student (1997)
Jonathan Hopkins, American Indian/Alaskan Native Team Leader (1996-2000)
and Tupper Dunbar, American Indian/Alaskan Native Co -Team Leader (1997-2000)
Dr. Howard Busby, Senior Editor

1996 - DACUM Participants 1997- DACUM Participants

Mark Azure  Mark Azure
Linda Carroll Linda Carroll
Tupper Dunbar Tupper Dunbar
Jonathan Hopkins Jonathan Hopkins
Melanie McKay -Cody Melanie McKay-Cody
James Woodenlegs, James Woodenlegs Donnette Reins
James Woodenlegs

American Indian/Alaskan Native Consumer/Interpreting Input:
1996 IDC Conference - Toppenish, Washington
1997 IDC Conference - Turtle Mountain, North Dakota
1998 IDC Conference - Beardy's Okemasis Reserve ,Duck Lake, Sask., Canada
1999 IDC Conference, Oneida Reserve, Ontario, Canada
2000 IDC Conference, Fairbanks, Alaska
2000 NAU/AIRRTC/IDC/NMIP American Indian Summer Institute,
    MSD, Santa Fe, NM

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College or the Department of Education.
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Module Title  American Indian and Alaskan Native Cultural Background Knowledge and Sensitivity

Module Description

This module introduces the participants to general demographics, cultural knowledge, and terminology from the complex American Indian and Alaskan Native cultural perspectives. Introduces the diversity within American Indians and Alaskan Natives. Introduces cultural values, identity, group norms, roles of social interaction and traditions commonly held by members of various Nations. Identifies language usage prevalent within the American Indian and Alaskan Native Deaf Communities. Provides an overview of several significant historical, educational trends, and other contemporary issues that affect the context of interpreting within the American Indian and Alaskan Native Deaf Communities. Assists the participants in developing cross-cultural competencies and behaviors that will enhance communication and interpreting interactions.

Participants' Prerequisites

Assumes that the participants are familiar with the concepts of human diversity theory introduced in the General Multicultural Knowledge and Sensitivity Modules.

Instructor Qualifications

The instructor should possess:

A high level of comfort addressing racial, ethnic, cultural, and other issues of diversity related to American Indian and Alaskan Natives. The ability to guide participants through the process of presenting fair and unbiased classroom discussions.

A strong working cultural knowledge and background in both interpersonal and interpreting experiences within the American Indian and Alaskan Native communities, both Deaf and Hearing.

An ability to recruit and develop a diverse pool of community resources, instructional materials, and presenters to represent both Deaf and Hearing issues within the American Indian and Alaskan Native communities.

Learning Objectives

The participants will:

1. Identify and explore the diversity of labels and cultural communities encompassed by the term American Indian/Alaskan Native.

2. Recognize the demographic and historical perspectives of American Indian and Alaskan Native communities in relationship to the United States, including the impact of the arrival of Europeans to North America.

3. List the implications and impacts of demographics and geographic locations of American Indian and Alaskan Natives in general and what is known regarding the percentage of D/deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind in those communities.
4. Identify the positive contributions made by American Indians and Alaskan Natives that are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf-Blind and Hearing to society in general, to language and sign language, to principles of government, and in other areas.

5. Identify the myths and stereotypes about American Indian/Alaskan Natives and the impact that the dominant United States culture has on individuals and groups.

6. List and discuss the importance of respect for the core values, group norms, rules of social interaction, taboos and traditions of the Indian Way, including the concept of “Harmony.”

7. List the basic common traditional spiritual beliefs and “Ceremonies” frequently encountered in intertribal gatherings.

8. Define “Medicine” and healing from a traditional Indian perspective contrasted to a Western view of medical and mental health.

9. Discuss the factors of cultural individual and group identity and diversity, roles and status for cultural membership between an American Indian or Alaskan Native and their Nation, tribal, or village affiliations, include an awareness of the various degrees of assimilation and/or enculturation to include factors of urban and reservation life.

10. Identify the continuum of languages and communication modes, including spoken, signed, and written, used within the American Indian and Alaskan Native communities by both the Deaf and Hearing.

11. Define general cultural terminology used by and related to American Indian and Alaskan Natives, including the denotative and connotative meanings of specific cultural vocabularies.

12. List the significant educational trends, employment, health and political issues and issues impacting the American Indian and Alaskan Native, both Deaf and Hearing, communities.

13. Identify the emerging American Indian and Alaskan Native Deaf organizations including Intertribal Deaf Council and others.

14. Demonstrate appropriate cultural behaviors and communication competencies for establishing rapport, and participation at public American Indian and Alaska Native events.

Note: The NMIP editorial decision to use “American Indian and Alaskan Native” is based on respect for the resolution passed by the National Congress of American Indians, with full recognition that “Native American” has widespread use and is also considered by some respectable, though a non-specific term.
Topic Outline

I. American Indian/Alaskan Native Cultural Identity and Related Terminology

A. Diversity and complexity of identity and labels
   1. Issues of identity formation among American Indian/Alaskan Natives
   2. Issues of identity formation among American Indian/Alaskan Native Deaf

B. Definition and use of terms for American Indians and Alaskan Natives
   1. Preferred usage in the United States
   2. Preferred usage in Canada
   3. Preferred usage in Mexico

C. Nations and tribal names
   1. Tribal languages
   2. English

D. Pejorative terms and disrespectful usage of words

E. Frequently used terminology and an acronyms

II. American Indian/Alaskan Native Historical Perspectives and Demographics

A. Historical chronology before European contact

B. Historical chronology after first contact “discovery or invasion”
   1. American Indian view of first contact and invasion
   2. European view of discovery versus invasion

C. Disrespect for Indian culture and religious practices

D. Historical first contacts with Europeans
   1. Incompatibility of European values and Indian’s values
   2. Interactions with traders, missionaries, settlers, and soldiers

E. Sources of tribal treaty rights

F. History of oppression and decimation of Indian peoples

III. Demographics of Tribal Nations

A. United States federal definition of a tribe or nation

B. Recognized tribes - 557 federally recognized tribes in the United States

C. Number and size of nations or tribes

D. Demographics: current Indian population and census

E. National distribution of Indians
   1. Reservation populations
   2. Urban populations

F. Geographical distribution and land ownership

G. Definition of a “legal” Indian

H. Complexities of blood quantum
   1. Definitions of blood quantum - “full blood” - non-determinable
   2. Contemporary issues of blood quantum
   3. Long range implications of dilution of blood-quantum
   4. Membership and officers of Intertribal Deaf Council

I. Global concepts of indigenous peoples - “Brotherhood of Man” - “All My Relations”

IV. Positive Contributions of American Indians and Alaskan Natives

A. Positive contributions of American Indians and Alaskan Natives
   1. National contributions
   2. Regional contributions

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3. Local contributions
B. American Indian and Alaskan Native role models
   1. American Indian and Alaskan Native Deaf role models
   2. American Indian and Alaskan Native role models
C. Sources and impact of negative portrayal and stereotypes

V. American Indian World View and Cultural Attitudes, Values, and Behaviors
A. Native people’s world view and orientation
B. Attitudes, values and beliefs
C. Nation and tribes culturally specific behaviors
D. Cultural variables: nations, tribes, regions, clans, degrees of assimilation
E. Cultural view of time - “Indian Time”
F. Use of space: Indian Country, community living space and sacred sites
G. Cultural thinking and cognitive styles
H. Decision-making, problem solving, and work styles
I. Social behaviors, protocols and taboos
J. Physical behaviors, use of touch, and gestures
K. Non-manual behaviors and eye contact

VI. Identity, Roles and Status in Indian Community Life
A. Respect for the individual member’s contribution to community
B. Value for members as individuals
C. Gender related behaviors
   1. Roles of men and women
   2. “Double Spirited” and the “Tradition of Berdache”
D. Social, economic and class identification, hierarchy, and status
E. Clan, family status, and extended family
F. Tribal Elders
G. Identity formation and conflict - “Living in Two Worlds”
   1. Indian world - White world
   2. Indian Deaf world - White Deaf world
      a. Degrees of assimilation and enculturation
      b. Reservation versus urban up-bringing
      c. Educational experiences
      d. Religious affiliations
   3. Deaf identity formation and self-identity
H. Status and acceptance of non-Indians
I. Suspect relationships with non-indians

VII. Traditional Spiritual Practices and View of “Medicine”
A. Spiritual beliefs common to most Nations
B. Native American Church (NAC)
C. American Indian Religious Freedom Act
D. Historical and contemporary influence of Christianity
E. Concepts of wellness, balance, and physical and mental illness
F. View of “Medicine” as spiritual practices, and concepts
G. Medicine men and women as spiritual healers and leaders
H. Views of Western medical practices
I. Some tribal views of the Western term “disability”
0. **American Indian and Alaskan Native Ceremonies and Community Events**

A. Ceremonies and Events  
B. Public celebrations and events  
   1. PowWows  
   2. Dances and other events  
C. General guidelines for participation  
   1. Visiting reservations and pueblos  
   2. Photography rules  
   3. Participation guidelines for non-Indians  
D. Private spiritual ceremonies and dances  
   1. Respect and use of sacred places, plants and objects  
      a. General descriptions  
E. Use of “Ceremonies” by “New Age” groups and others

IX. **American Indian/Alaskan Native Language Use and Cultural Vocabularies**

A. American Indian and Alaskan Native language use and discourse patterns  
   1. Tribal language use  
   2. English language use including “rezbonics”  
   3. Conversational discourse patterns  
      a. Use of “silence”  
      b. Turn-taking  
      c. Respect for elders  
      d. Non-verbal behaviors and gestures systems  
   4. Value for oral tradition and storytelling  
   5. Respect for ceremonial language and prayers  

B. American Indian and Alaskan Native Deaf language patterns  
   1. Use of tribal languages and Indian Sign Language (ISL)  
   2. Use of ASL and English  
   3. Use of specific ISL vocabulary  
   4. Connotation and denotation of specific ASL signs and English vocabulary

X. **American Indian/Alaskan Native Educational Values and Trends**

A. Traditional cultural knowledge and educational teaching approaches  
B. Tribally governed programs, schools and colleges  
C. United States government controlled policies on mainstream education  
D. Educational experiences of American Indian and Alaskan Native Deaf children

XI. **Contemporary Indian Reality and Issues in the United States**

A. American Indian issues of “Walking in Two Worlds: Traditional Way and Mainstream Lifestyles”  
B. Contemporary experiences of American Indian/Alaskan Native Deaf persons  
C. Modern reservation realities  
D. American Indian health issues  
E. Vocational and employment patterns on and off reservation
1. American Indian and Alaskan Native Political Trends

A. Current issues
   1. Enforcement of treaties and treaty rights
   2. Sovereignty of American Indian Nations and Alaskan Villages
   3. Self government - tribal government and offices
B. Federal agencies and programs
C. American Indian organizations and movements
D. American Indian Deaf Organizations
Lecture Notes and Materials

Handout Materials - Quotes - See attached.

Suggested Learning Activities

1. Invite knowledgeable American Indian and Alaskan Native, both Deaf and/or Hearing guest lecturers to discuss specific topics from the outline.

2. Show videotapes of American Indian Deaf from NMIP and other sources and have a moderated discussion.

3. Invite a panel of Native and/or Native Deaf speakers to discuss their life experiences and perspectives on current issues.

4. Have a field trip to a local or regional pueblo, reservation, cultural center or event.

5. Attend a powwow, or other public American Indian/Alaskan Native cultural activity.

6. Teach a unit on American Indian Sign Language (AISL); or conduct a research project on AISL.

7. Establish a cultural mentorship with a Native American student or community organization, either Deaf or Hearing, attend community events, and try to gain access to cultural informants and/or team interpreters.

8. Create a connection to the Intertribal Deaf Council; research their web site; read their newsletter; and attend local chapter, or board meetings, regional and/or national conferences. Contact IDC to check if any IDC members are living near your area.

9. Read books and articles related to the selected topics. Keep a “reflection diary” or journal recording your cultural insights of the attitudes, values, and behaviors expressed, and noting any new vocabulary or concepts.

10. Critique a “Hollywood” movie to identify stereotypes and cultural inaccuracies; compare that movie to a film or documentary that was produced by American Indians or Alaskan Natives.

11. Write a reflection essay or paper focusing on American Indian and/or Alaskan Native Culture. Compare and contrast American Deaf Culture to Indian Deaf Culture. For example, compare and contrast the concept of “tribal” affiliations and loyalty to “Deaf Community” connections and loyalty.

12. Research and create a resource guide of organizations, cultural centers, newsletters, web sites of American Indian and Alaskan Native groups in your community, state or region.

Instructor/Student Resources

Student Readings, Text and Materials


**American Indian Sign Language Resources:**


Russell Publications American Indian Data Resources 9027 N. Cobre Drive, Phoenix, AZ 85028-5317. 1 800-835-7220; FAX 602-493-4691, www.indiandata.com


**NMIP Videotapes:**


**Supplemental Instructional Resources**


**Instructional Videotapes and Films**

**Documentary Videotapes**

500 Nations - Book and Videotape Series
How the West was Lost
The Native Americans - Contemporary and Historical Perspectives on:

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The Tribes of the Southwest
The Tribal People of the Northwest
The Nations of the Northeast
The People of the Great Plains (Part One)
The People of the Great Plains (Part Two)
The Tribes of the Southwest

**Commercial and Historical Films**

- Pow Wow Highway
- Incident at Oglala
- Lakota Woman
- Grand Avenue
- Smoke Signals
- Crazy Horse (Turner Network Television TNT)
- Tecumseh (TNT)
- Geronimo (TNT)

**Suggested Non-Fiction Books**

- Time Life Series: The American Indians
- Black Elk Speaks by John G. Neihardt
- Indians R Us
- In the Spirit of Crazy Horse: the Story of Leonard Peltier by Peter Matthiessen
- Lies My Teacher Told Me by James W. Loewen
- Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee by Dee Brown
- Killing Custer by James Welsh and Paul Stekler
- Half-breed by Evelyn Sibley Lampman
- House Made of Dawn by Scott N. Momaday
- Fool's Crow by Thomas E. Mails
- Native American Testimony by Vine Deloria
- Indian Givers by Jack Weatherford
- 500 Nations by Alvin M. Josephy
- Medicine of the Cherokees by J. T. Garrett
- Strong Hearts Wounded Souls by Tom Holm
- Selu -Seeking the Corn-Mother’s Wisdom by Marilou Awiakta
- Custer Died For Your Sins - Vine Deloria

**Non-Fiction - Books on Indian Women**

- Mankiller: A Chief and her People by Wilma P. Mankiller and Michael Wallis
- Daughter’s of the Earth by
- Women in American Indian Society
- The Ways of My Grandmothers
- Pretty Shield - Medicine of the Crows
- The Sacred Hoop
- Grandmother’s of the Light
- Lakota Woman
- Ohitilea Woman
- Native American Women
- Iskwewak
- I Am Woman: A Native Perspective on Sociology and Feminism
American Indian and Alaskan Native Writers

- Vine (Victor) Deloria
- John Powell
- Angie Debo
- Dee Alexander Brown
- Ward Churchill
- Hugh Scott
- Robert Lowie
- Marcia Campbell
- J. T. Garrett
- Michael Garrett
- Gloria Jahoda
- Mary Bravebird
- Maria Campbell
- Beverly Hungrywolf
- Janice Acoose
- Velma Wallis

American Indian and Alaskan Native Writers

- Linda Hogan
- Robert J. Conley
- N. Scott Momaday
- Vine Deloria
- Sara Winnechua
- Leslie Marmon Silko
- Anna Lee Walters
- Sherman Alexis
- Joseph Buchar
- Thomas King
- William Sanders
- Duane H. King
- Michael Doris
- Nancy Glancy
- Louise Erdrich

Organizational Resources

Web sites:
- American Indian Cultural Support (A.I.C.S.) www.aics.org
- American Indian Movement (AIM) http://members.aol.com/Nowacunig/aim
- American Indian Program Council http://www.aipc.osmre.gov
- Charley’s Powwow Rules email: WHITECOYOTE@JPLNASA.GOV
- First Nations Issues of Consequence http://www/dickshovel.com
- Gathering of Nations http://www.gatheringofnations.com/
- Intertribal Deaf Council at www.deafnative.com or Email at IDCofNA@aol.com
- National Congress of American Indians at www.ncai.org
- Native American Resources http://www.cowboy.net/native

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American Indian Research and Rehabilitation Training Center (AIRRTC)
Institute for Human Development - University Affiliated Program
University of Northern
Post Office Box 5630
Flagstaff, Arizona 86011-5630
Telephone: 520-523-1340
520-523-1695 (TTY)

The University of Arizona
College of Medicine
Native American Research and Training Center
Newsletter - Perspectives in Health and Rehabilitation
1642 East Helen Street
Tucson, Arizona 85719

National Museum of the American Indian
Office of Public Affairs
4701 Enfant Plaza, S. W. Suite 7103, MRC 934
Washington, D. C. 20560
www.ic.si.edu/nmai

The National American Indian Disability Technical Assistance Center - AIDTAC
Rural Institute on Disabilities
52 Corbin, The University of Montana
Missoula, MT 598 12
866-4-AIDTAC - 866-424-3822 Toll Free
406-243-2349
www.aidtac.org

Native Wellness and Healing Institute
Billy Rogers, Director
3908 60th NE
Norman, Oklahoma 73026
405-325-1790
405-329-5020
Email: nativewell@onebox.com

Health Promotions Programs
College of Continuing Education
The University of Oklahoma
Norman, Oklahoma
website: hpp.ou.edu

Native Peoples Magazine with free study guides designed by Charmaine Chutiva, Ph. D
www.nativepeoples.com

Tribal Colleges

Resource for New Mexico Indian Pueblos:

For confirmation of Pueblo events:
Indian Pueblo Cultural Center - 505-843-7270

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