



Intergenerational Transmission of Traditional Practices and Foodways

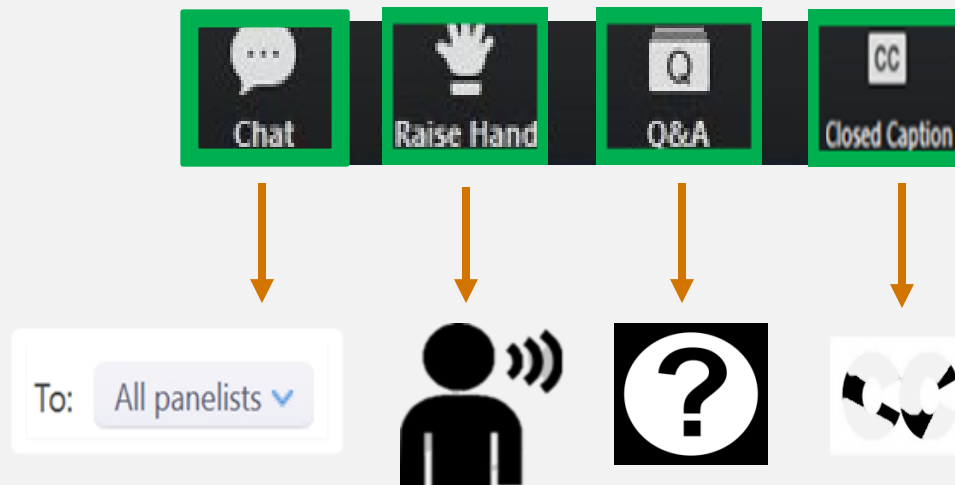
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Today's Presenters



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Webinar Objectives

- Discuss the impacts of intergenerational transmission of culture
- Highlight the importance of healing spaces in remembering and reclaiming knowledge
- Identify decolonizing strategies for working in partnership with communities



Mentoring Elders

The Elders Mentoring Elders cultural camp is a celebration of our community's rich heritage and a place where we share, learn, and celebrate the traditions, skills, and values that define our culture.

Uplifting Elders' Voices

Respected elders prioritized the need to mentor emerging elders to:

- Step into their elder roles
- Learn and share their cultural knowledge with younger generations, furthering the intergenerational transmission of knowledge into the future



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Core Beliefs

Alaska Native cultural practices must continue to exist for another 10,000+ years

Cultural practices serve as a guide for wellness and healing in our communities, organizations, and systems

Alaska Native people and communities have the strength, resilience, and capacity to confront the challenges they are faced with

Alaska Native communities should be at the helm of all research, programming, and activities that involve them



Community-Led Research

- Athabascan (Dena) scholars
- Grounded in a relational lens
- Uplifting the voice of the elders
- Being together on the land
- Values discussion
- Storytelling
- Healing in community
- Partnerships
- Safety to be our whole selves
- Talking circle/sharing circle



Elders Mentoring Elders Camp

- Learning about moose hide tanning
- Drumming and singing
- Beading and tufting
- Engaging in traditional values discussions
- Cutting fish
- Gathering plants for and making salves
- Gathering spruce roots for basket making
- Making snowshoes
- Knitting and mending fishing nets
- Repairing canoes
- Storytelling
- Making fish ice cream
- Making drums
- Playing language games



Decolonizing and Indigenizing

Preservation and preparation: To remember, learn, practice, and pass down the traditional practices, values, and knowledge of the Dena culture to future generations.

Mentorship: Facilitating the transfer of wisdom from respected elders to emerging elders, ensuring the continuity of cultural practices. Uplifting the voices of the elders. Guided by elders.

Grounding in a relationship: Creating a community of care and a community of practice. Fostering a sense of togetherness, support, and shared cultural identity. Honoring our relationship to land, culture, spirit, food, and each other.

Skill development and confidence: Equipping participants with practical skills such as hide processing, fish cutting, beading, net making, and basketry.



Decolonizing and Indigenizing

Values dialogue: Providing a platform for discussions and stories about the core values of the Dena culture, allowing for deeper understanding and appreciation.

Celebration and ceremony: Celebrating the community's rich heritage and recognizing the invaluable role of elders in preserving culture. Laughter, recognition, gratitude, and food.

Legacy and responsibility: Inspiring a sense of responsibility among participants to carry forward the cultural legacy to future generations. Intergenerational spaces.

Healing and resilience: Safety to be our whole selves. Strengthening the resilience of the community's cultural identity, making sure it remains vibrant and adaptive to the modern world. Using talking circles and sharing circles. Healing in community.



Evaluation Process

Overarching evaluation questions

1. To what extent has the intervention contributed to **transmission of knowledge** of cultural practices and traditional food practices?
2. To what extent has the intervention increased the **relationship to and consumption** of traditional foods?
3. To what extent has the project **increased access** to learning about traditional practices among the Indigenous community?
4. To what extent has this project increased the **use of traditional practices** among the Indigenous community?

Also, looking at facilitators and barriers to implementation of intervention, and what support and resources we have available to us to implement the intervention

Data Collection

- Coded pre- and post-surveys for themes (30 participants in 2022; 35 participants in 2023)
- Held focus group after 2023 camp
- Organized Facebook messages by outcomes
- Transcribed discussions from 2022 talking circle and 2023 sharing circle, then coded for themes
- Coded two mid-year surveys (March 2023 and March 2024) for themes
- Coded four mini-workshop evaluations for themes (tufting, sourdough bread, fish ice cream, kuspuk making)
- Shared anecdotal evidence during team meetings

Initial Findings

- Emerging elders are more confident and empowered to talk about and share Athabascan knowledge and practices, specifically related to traditional food practices
- Elders helped to promote a safe space to learn
- Participants felt safe sharing that they have never done something before and were glad to have opportunities to learn without criticism and judgment
- Many emerging elders were able to remember a lot of their teachings throughout the camp and added their own knowledge and practices to the camp, which was so empowering to them and enhanced the camp as a whole



Initial Findings

- Grounding participants in discussions of Athabascan values is an essential foundation for cultural camps
- Elders shared that values are rules for living and are meant to be practiced daily
 - The Athabascan values poster is not meant to just be put on the wall
 - Values highlight how to live in a good way and within our respective contexts: land, nature, spirit, and community



Initial Findings

- Camp promoted healing, connection, and hope
 - Participants were excited to share what they learned with family and community
- Boarding schools disconnected people from the culture and language
 - For many people, this has led to feelings of loss and grief, shame, and judgment, as well as guilt, fear, and anxiety over not knowing the language or culture
 - We are faced with challenges that we must help each other through and work together to find solutions



“Today was the first day I got to cut fish.” (from closing talking circle) –Emerging elder

“I appreciate learning all this stuff because I want to hand it down to my kids and grandkids.” (from closing talking circle) –Emerging elder

A participant shared that he hasn’t done beading in 35 years, and that he is getting back into it to teach his grandchildren that live outside of Alaska. (from informal discussions at camp)

“When you listen, sometimes it will bring back good memories to you.” –Emerging elder

“Thank you for making this happen! It’s so awesome to wake up each morning (smoke & all) & know you are going to be learning & sharing great things from the elder professionals of our region!!! Thank you to these 5 entities that have our wellbeing as one of their top priorities.” –Emerging elder



“I learned so much this past week! I’m still willing to learn! When I smelled the moose skin that Tom worked on, I had tears in my eyes as I smelled my mom! It’s been a long time!” –Emerging elder

“Every night I went to bed, and I was excited for the next day. These three days was a celebration of what we do have. I feel like I went to potlatch, I ended up with so many gifts.” –Emerging elder

“If we don’t practice it, we forget it. We lose what we are.” –Emerging elder

***“Elders teach us to walk in the footsteps of our ancestors, as we leave our own footprints for generations to come.”
–Emerging elder***



Elders Mentoring Elders Video



Dogidinh! Mahsi' Choo! Tsin-ji! (Thank You!)

Elders Mentoring Elders Team

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Questions?

