



National American Indian & Alaska Native

ATTC Addiction Technology Transfer Center Network
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Finding and Working with Self Through Cultural Ways of Crafting

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In cultural ways everyone has a craft. Through crafting the individual, family or group is to stay grounded in a good way. They find themselves and develop their relationship with themselves and become more at peace with their place in the world around them. The lessons they learn about themselves and tools they develop becomes one of their strongholds.

Points of Notice:

- What is a cultural craft.
- How to help an individual or group find their craft through MI style.
- How one can learn their craft if no one is teaching it.
- Working with individual or groups to learn to recognize where their thoughts go.
- How to reground self through practice while crafting.
- How to apply in other life aspects lessons from their craft.
- Recognizing the things that keeps reoccurring they may need addressed.
- Healing as they learn to apply the lessons from their craft and the counsel shared with them.



What is Cultural Craft: Any skill that not everyone has a calling to or knack for.

Just some of the crafts could be:

- Hunting, fishing, trapping, tool making.
- Gardening, harvesting, processing, preserving, cooking, tool or container making.
- Games, runner, story keeper, tool maker.
- Story-teller, historian, teacher, counselor, mentor in various aspects of one's scope of calling.
- Quill work, bead maker, beading, hide tanning, clothes making, bag making, mittens, moccasin or boot making, hats.
- Medicines, herbs learning and using, harvesting, preserving.
- Family or clan keeper, laws of ways counsel, warrior training.
- Dreamer, spiritual, artist, music.

How to find one's craft:

1. What is it you wonder about?

How they did it, what it looked like, sounded, felt, smelled. What it'd be like to be a part of or see self learning or being good at it.

2. If anything from your culture that you'd be excited for or look forward to if you knew you would be doing this in your free time, after school, work, on the weekends; what would that be?

3. What parts of your culture would you like to see your home or room having within it?

Ideas such as: Lacrosse stick and gear, basket making materials, traditional foods in your cupboards, stories that filled the air of your home, the arts of your tribes' clans and symbols on your furniture or anything else they can think of.

4. Are you good with your hands, like to be outdoors, like more hunting, fishing, trapping or more baskets, mats and quills, like gardening or cooking, or more the stories?

• **MI and how the elders would get you to find your own hearts truth helps with:**

Hearing one's heart again. Dreaming again. Hope and will. Abilities to. Reconnection with self.



The World of One's Craft



- Many Indigenous ways the people learned first the story of their craft. They knew its name in their language, the crafts creation story and sought other stories their craft was in or a part of. They knew the song of the craft or songs.
- They learned its birth and death or birth and rebirth cycles. When it is at its prime or its development and what it has during those cycles to give or not to give yet.
- They learned how to care throughout the process for their craft. In all these stages of birth through development of one's crafts cycles, the lessons were interchangeable with self, family and the world in general.

When one's cultural craft is lost – how to find:

1. We start off in what some call prayer. Put offerings down.
2. Taking self out to the places it would occur i.e., the lake, woods, field, river, marsh. Give offerings, envision, connect and be with even if nothing comes to them, just be open to daydream.
3. Look to see what tribal historical preservation may have i.e., Stories on, photos of, museum containing a piece or element to, elders that may know or remember any aspect of the story on or how to do.
4. Draw or write on thoughts about.
5. Online: YouTube, google search. Seek historical accuracy to find real inspiration.
6. List the basics needed: Best time it is to be, time one can learn, gather, make and time for taking in the lessons.
7. Throughout learning and doing, visit the places often this would have been, could be again. If in the city, visit in your daydreams or online photos of.
8. Continue to feast or put out offerings.

All of this is teaching things like:

- Reconnecting with self, when it seems all is lost it can be, focus, dreaming and planning, the fruits in doing actions, reconnection with culture and ancestors.

Learning to hear and catch self while crafting:

Culturally we did all only in the times guided by spirit. All things began with ceremony and ended in. The energy through where our hearts are, minds thoughts and spirit carried was seen and felt in the craft. Some would see as good or bad medicine. This did not mean the individual or group had or was of bad medicine, just meant they were carrying something with them that led the way in the steps. These things must be addressed. IF COULD NOT BE, TO LEARN TO PUT ASIDE WHILE AND TEND TO AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

The elders and one's family or loved ones was always in observation of the world around them. Crafting will show as one will find themselves having a hard time with, struggling, things breaking, being woven too tightly and so forth. Can observe where their eyes are going off into or how they move about if at peace or in a heavy place.

Be your own elder – catch yourself. *(Learning empowerment through making self accountable where they can now catch self and change the direction and therefore outcome.)*

Things to notice and have the individual or group notice in self:

Learning their physical and mental signs of losing control or self and their moments:

- Clenched jaw, tensing up, holding breaths, rapid breathing, leg shaking, curled toes, becoming short fused or angry, frustrated, negative self talk, negative talk, feeling an overwhelming sadness, sexual talk or joking, thoughts of using drugs, alcohol or eating comfort foods or junk foods, getting very tired out of the blue, thoughts others are judging them or talking about them, worries about their appearance and other such tales.

(After talking on this, ask the individual or group if they can share other tales or signs. If they notice later throughout their crafting stages tales or signs, ask if they would share those.)



Suggestions on re-grounding self and how to apply in other settings:

- Keep notebook nearby to log down where thoughts went to each time not on the project and the prayer of who or what for i.e., purpose or intent of craft. (*Good, bad or indifferent.*)
- Get up and walk away for a moment, fresh air, stretching where their body holds their tension or worry, get a good drink of water, other self care i.e., is dinner planned, use bathroom and any other task that would see to life being tended to so they can get back into craft without feeling self being pulled elsewhere. (*Refocusing.*)
- Smudging and prayers or releasing to spirit.
- If it is a family member or friend that is calling or texting that is not of great importance or could wait till after self care, life care and when craft time is over; share healthy boundaries and responses to their them time, how to work the individual in later and feel good about it.
- Have individual or group share privately with facilitator the issues that take thought or emotions away. If common threads in groups, work on having teaching point discussion while doing their craft. If private or unique, have private session with individual working on that issue.
- Once the individual or group notices where their thoughts, emotions or spirit is carried away to that does not serve their craft, ask them to notices this when it happens in other aspects of their life: Cooking, bathing, getting ready for the day, reading or watching tv, at school or work, in meetings and anywhere else they catch. How does it impact? Where is self being carried off to?
- Talk on ways individual or group can apply re-grounding self to other aspects in their life, what would make it hard for them to do this and then ways they can re-ground self in those settings.

Some of the things they are learning though this:

- Being able to be present in the moment, connection to their environment and world around them, making do with what they have, noticing changes and having a part in their changes, learning to go with the flow of natural life: When it is the season for their craft they learn to merge their life with, becoming a part of life that fits the true them, vision and acceptance of vision not always being how you wished, gratitude for how things turn out even when not as planned, becoming open to the unexpected and to work with self individually and together.

(Focus and attention span becomes a given.)

- They are beginning to see what is taking their ability to be present in their life and moments.

(Learning to recognize and deal with dysfunction and trauma.)

- How to take their moments back so that thought, emotion or spirit does not carry them away. Calm and steady breaths.

(Learning to recognize anxiety, frustration, depression, anger and how to take control and develop patients.)

- How to let go what is temporarily or completely out of their control and reconnect with spirit.
- How to do the self care, me time, healthy boundaries, healthy responses and still manage family and friends dance of life.
- Learning what they need help with and resources.
- Seeing that through practicing these things consistently through their craft and other of life's aspects, it becomes easier, and nothing is impossible with proper support and going about in good ways. In this they begin a space where one self's moments can be taken back, and healing can truly begin.

Sharing lessons:

- Ask the individual or group if they are comfortable to share their positive noticeable changes from the lessons they been receiving from their craft.

(From physical health, mental health, spiritual growth, confidence, relationship dynamics, work relations, quality of life and all other impacts.)

- Also ask for the individual or group if they'd share the unexpected bad responses they received when implementing the healthy boundaries and other lessons from those in their inner and outer most circles. Work with individual or group on developing how to handle and respond to the situations they share.





Teaching in Cultural Ways – Land Based:

How we learn best:

- Genetically most Indigenous people are wired to learn through oral tradition and based on the lands, outdoors or in talking circles either 1:1 or group settings and visual, then hands on. A teacher can be a counselor, a teacher of a craft, a storyteller and any other individual that one learns life skills or a craft from or with. In cultural ways the weather, seasons changes, how the river moves, the behavior of the animals and plants are also teachers. Our teachers are all around us.
- What has become many Indigenous people's teachers or should be some of their best teachers, have become lessons of dysfunction. Indigenous communities have the highest fail rates in every aspect and declining. To go back to cultural bases of learning the success rates have spoken for themselves. To heal, we must learn and learn how to apply that appropriately.

* *One Teacher from Manitoba and Saskatchewan shared this:*

- *There was a high percentage of students that were suicidal and gearing up for gang life. The land-based grade had improved attendance and had so many benefits on the kids. The following year I was afraid they would not be ready for high school math. But, get this, they all came back to school in the fall and wanted to be there. They wanted to succeed. That is different then having low attendance in high school and coaxing the kids to be there.*
- *This example was with grade 8/9 class out on the land. Only about 15% to 20% was in the building teaching core subjects.*

Working with your craft teaching about self and how to work through.



Some Ways to Find Traditional Culture that is Lost:

Museum photos, archives, old stories are some examples. Look at dates, eras of impact that might have caused changes to true traditional vs. Think on what was used, could have been used, what promotes healing i.e., good for you as some could leach toxins like tannins. There is also so many resources online, in your tribal cultural or historical centers, in universities, museums and churches near reserves. By pieces together the creation stories along with other stories, teachings, uses of animal, plant, tree, rock etc. materials you can find if true or not culturally i.e., does it fit in the circles of its teachings or stories.

Craft Tools, Hats, Baskets, Arrows, Bows etc.:

<https://americanindian.si.edu/collections>

search/search?page=28&edan_q=%2A%3A%2A&edan_fq%5B0%5D=p.edanmdm.indexedstructured.nmaiculture_archeol_1%3A%22Anishinaabe%20%28Chippewa/Ojibwa%29%22&edan_fq%5B1%5D=p.edanmdm.indexedstructured.nmaiculture_archeol_2%3A%22Ontario%20Ojibwe%22

Medicines, Crafts, Foods etc.:

[BRIT - Native American Ethnobotany Database](#)

Tree Usages, Tools, Foods, Medicines etc.:

https://dc.uwm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1163&context=fieldstation_bulletins&fbclid=IwAR0ek52DDgT6U2OrTNo4ZPaApmTwHmHJyBGqc2nDhEsW-yMOffe1fd5mjfY

Art of the Woodland Floral Stories , Patterns, Rattles and Games or Sports:

Learning the stories of, the colors and why, how to draw, weave, quill, carve or paint. Here is one example:

[Ojibwe Art Study: Floral Designs – ANGELICSCALLIWAGS](#)

Rattles of one style is a start:

[Rattle Making, Kihew Asiniy – YouTube \[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jRe277VF_c4\]\(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jRe277VF_c4\)](#)

There were many sports and games tribes played. Taught teamwork, yet also independence as one practiced or trained to develop skill. There is the stories behind, the purposes for and of course the endorphins that are healing. Promotes sobriety, living a healthier lifestyle and better rest. If it is lost to their tribe, it can be found, learned, get others to join in and eventually teams formed. Uses traditional style tools or materials is the best form to reconnect with spirit and ancestors.

[<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-tA-1r-cdao>](#)

Land Based Resources:

Land based learning:

About

[Learning from The Land: Why Indigenous Land-Based Pedagogy Matters | Gabriel Dumont Institute \(gdins.org\)](#)

Ways to incorporate

[SaskCulture ~ Incorporating Land-based Learning into Programming](#)

Programming ideas

[Indigenous Land-based Learning Programs – Land-based Learning for ETEC 521 \(wordpress.com\)](#)

[Microsoft Word - Premier's Board of Education Award 09 30 2015.docx \(saskschoolboards.ca\)](#)

Based in the states side (California)

[Center for Land-Based Learning \(landbasedlearning.org\)](#)

Statistics and Articles on Culturally Based Healing Therapies:

“The inclusion of family and community in treatment plans, decreases the isolation often found in allopathic care. And, thinking about the lack of person-environment harmony and balance may important clues for the diagnostic process.”

[Indigenous Native American Healing Traditions \(nih.gov\)](#)

“UTILIZING THE ARTS FOR HEALING FROM A NATIVE AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE: IMPLICATIONS FOR CREATIVE ARTS THERAPIES”

[dufrene.pdf \(brandonu.ca\) http://www3.brandonu.ca/cjns/10.1/dufrene.pdf](#)

“It is also helpful for Native American people to have something to do with their hands, such as beading, clay, “journey stick,” crafts, or other projects while they listen or talk. (A journey stick, also referred to as a “story stick,” is decorated to reflect the individual’s journey through life. Life events are depicted by ribbons, beads and other items that show both positive and negative events in the individual’s life.) Doing something with the hands helps focus attention and gives clients a place to look other than at the speaker (D. S. BigFoot, personal communication, June 6, 2009).”

[jmcd_0412_vol40.pdf \(und.edu\) https://ruralhealth.und.edu/assets/2470-9128/jmcd_0412_vol40.pdf](#)

“Evidence from this scoping study suggests that the culture-based interventions used in addictions treatment for Indigenous people are beneficial to help improve client functioning in all areas of wellness.”

[Cultural interventions to treat addictions in Indigenous populations: findings from a scoping study | Substance Abuse Treatment, Prevention, and Policy | Full Text \(biomedcentral.com\)](#)

Some Funding and Other Resources:

[Native Arts and Cultures Foundation](#)

[Indigenous Healing Arts Alliance – Home](#)

[Native Resource Guide 040820 \(Federal Resources for Native Arts & Cultural Activities\)](#)

Resources:

Story of Cedar, Cedar Hat Weaving & Bark Pulling Cowichan Coast Salish

<https://youtu.be/95rPwCDHOCE>

[Traditional canoe build helps Saugeen youth connect with ancestral ways - Saugeen District Senior School \(bwdsb.on.ca\)](#)

If I can help in any way, feel free to contact me:

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