National Indian Child Welfare Association

Dedicated to the Well-being of American Indian and Alaska Native Children and Families
Through Indigenous Eyes: Rethinking Theory and Practice

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What is “culture”?

- the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon our capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations
- the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group
- the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes a system, company or corporation
Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

- **Physiological**
  - Food
  - Housing

- **Safety**
  - Formal laws/rules

- **Love, Affection, Belonging**
  - Family & parenting

- **Esteem**
  - Social rules
  - Social activities
  - Religious institutions
  - Art, music, dance
  - Ceremonies

- **Self-actualization**
  - Spirituality
  - Stories

**Pyramid**

**Levels**
- Physiological
- Safety
- Love, Affection, Belonging
- Esteem
- Self-actualization
Maslow: Through Indigenous Eyes

- Self Actualization
  - Spirituality
    - Love
      - Belonging
        - Shelter
          - Security
            - Identity
              - Food
                - Relationships
                  - Safety
                    - Service
                      - Esteem
                        - Safety
                          - Food
                            - Relationships
                              - Love
                                - Belonging
                                  - Shelter
                                    - Security
                                      - Identity
                                        - Food
                                          - Relationships
                                            - Love
                                              - Belonging
                                                - Shelter
                                                  - Security
                                                    - Identity
• “Culture” is one group or people’s preferred way of meeting their basic human needs
THE INDIGENOUS EXPERIENCE

COMFORT

CONFUSION

TRADITIONAL

ASSIMilated
What is a “worldview”? 

• Collective thought process of a group or people
• “Linear Worldview”
• “Relational Worldview”
Linear Worldview
Western European/American thought

Cause → Effect → New Cause → New Effect
Linear Worldview
Social Work/Medical Model

Social History → Presenting Problem → Assessment → Treatment → Outcome

Cause → Effect → New Cause → New Effect
Theory of Change

- Contextual Issues
  - Assumptions
  - Resources

Intervention
  Principles/Strategies
  Activities

Intended Outputs/Products
- Projected Immediate Outcomes
- Intended Intermediate Outcomes
- Optimal Long Range Outcomes
- Desired Ultimate Outcome
Relational Worldview
Native and Tribal Thought

Context
Mind
Spirit
Body

BALANCE
Relational Worldview
Native and Tribal Thought

• Fluid, cyclical view of time
• Each aspect of life is related
• Services aim to restore balance
• Interventions may not be directed at “symptoms”
• Underlying question is “how?”
Relational Worldview
Individual and Family Level

- Social History
- Economics
- Work/School
- Family/Peers
- Community
- Culture
- Innate Positive
- Learned Positive
- Innate Negative
- Learned Negative

- Context
- Mind
- Spirit
- Body

- Knowledge/Judgment
- Thinking Process
- Self Esteem
- Memories
- Emotions
- Bio-Chemistry
- Genetics
- Health Status
- Sleep/Rest State
- Substance Use/Abuse
Relational World View
Theory of Change

• Change is a constant, inevitable, cyclical, and dynamic part of the human experience that occurs in natural, predictable patterns and can be facilitated to promote desired and measurable outcomes.
Change is:

• Constant: Complex interactions between the quadrants are going on all the time, influenced by experience and perceptions of experience and by the balance states that have come before.

• Inevitable: The human organism has a natural tendency to seek balance; to heal, adjust, or relieve stress, and reacts to stimuli by changing (e.g. flight-fight, etc.).
Change is:

• Cyclical: Changes in balance and harmony follow natural patterns of the cycles of days, months, seasons, and life spans.

• Dynamic: All change is multi-dimensional. Nothing in any quadrant can change without every aspect of the other quadrants being effected. Changes are a combination of linear and multi-causal, multi-effect relationships.
Desired Outcomes

• Balance = an adjustment pattern that represents the best, most basic attempt to incorporate stimuli and response

• Harmony = various aspects of life are in a complementary relationship and taken together produce wellness, beauty, growth, success, the capacity for joy, and the ability to thrive
RWV Based Practice

• A change agent joins with the natural forces, and with purposeful intent, impacts the quadrants to restore balance and promote harmony.

• Interventions do not necessarily target symptoms but rather impact balance and facilitate harmony, and are frequently designed to impact multiple quadrants.

• Change can be measured by observing key indicators of balance and harmony and by recording change across time in relationship to the intervention(s).
Applying the Relational Worldview as a Practice Tool

- Assessment tools
- The dream catcher planning
  - Prioritize brainstorming from “Big Picture”
  - Identify needs, goals, objectives, and tasks
- A living and dynamic document that applies the RWV model for personal, family, group, or organizational development
  - Assessment, planning, providing service
Community Defined Success: Youth

- Connecting with Resources
- Healthy Relationships
- Service
- Safety
- Balance
- Connections to Native Ancestry
- Spiritual Understanding & Practices
- Knowledge/Skills in Traditional Cultural Practices

Context

Mind

Body

Spirit

Coping Capacities - Emotional Health
Focus & Determination

Personal Capacities

Personal Qualities
Education Employment
Cultural Knowledge Identity

Healthy Lifestyle

Finances
Fitness
Health Care
Housing

Education
Employment
Cultural Knowledge
Identity

Health Care
Housing

Fitness

Finances

Healthy Lifestyle

Personal Capacities

Focus & Determination
Coping Capacities - Emotional Health

Mind

Context
Community Defined Success: Families

**Context**
- Community Support
- Extended Family Support
- Access to Tribal Resources
- Job Skills and Opportunity
- Subsistence Capacity

**Mind**
- Positive Self and Group Esteem
- Clear Value System, Traditions
- Positive Motivation
- Problem Solving Skills
- Decision Making Skills

**Spirit**
- Active Spiritual Practices
- Elder Access and Support

**Body**
- Alcohol and Drug Free
- Positive Health and Hygiene Practices

Community Defined Success: Families

Subsistence Capacity
“What a successful couple looks like”

- **Context**
  - Friendship with others
  - Positive extended family relationships
  - Positive job functioning
  - Service to community
  - Connecting to Community
  - Participating in recreation

- **Mind**
  - Supportive, understanding of each other
  - Encouraging each other to learn
  - Loving one another
  - Communication skills
  - Negotiation Skills
  - Emotional well-being

- **Spirit**
  - Balance, soul mates
  - Commitment, Respect
  - Faith in Each Other, Trust
  - Shared Spiritual Practice
  - Complementary virtues
  - Comforting family rituals

- **Body**
  - Sense of security
  - Healthy, energized
  - Relaxed, smile together
  - Clear, mutually agreed upon roles
  - Freedom from additions
  - Holistic intimacy: emotional, physical, intellectual
From Individual to Organization

• The model of balance can be applied to organizations and communities.
• Each element of the individual model has a parallel in an organization.
• This is the basis for NICWA’s approach to technical assistance.
Group Process

- Process
  - Ground rules
  - Agendas
  - Content-consistency

- Structure

- Membership

Harmony

- Context
- Mind
- Spirit
- Body

- Professionalism
- Turf Issues
- Politics
- Team Spirit
- Common Vision
POSITIVE
- Optimism
- Cause
- Vision
- Trust
- Faith
- Belief
- Purpose
- Autonomy
- Role

NEGATIVE
- Pride
- Ego
- Mistrust
- Blame
- Confusion
- Jealousy
- Apathy
- Doubt
- Guilt
Let us put our minds together and see what kind of life we can build for our children.

- Sitting Bull

www.nicwa.org

National Indian Child Welfare Association

Protecting our children • Preserving our culture