

## Thoughts on Native American Customs for the Governor's Council Visit

1. The concept of time is slowed in the Native American community, therefore, a meeting may be scheduled for 9:00 a.m., but actually start later as the group convenes. This is not considered a waste of time nor is it a source of anxiety to the Native American culture. All events are spiritual in nature and have a spiritual flow that can not be measured by clocks. Clocks are imposed on the Native American by Anglos and can strip the meaning from an event. As the cultures meet, participants arrive on time with the foreknowledge there may be a delayed start to an event without concern...relax.
2. All persons have voice, therefore, out of respect, trust and patience, silence or poignant pauses in conversation are vital. Rapid response is taken as an interruption of the Native American communication pattern and cadence, which is much slower than Anglo conversation. Interruption will close down the flow of the conversational process and it is seen as dispossessing and disrespectful. At times a Native American will not speak with an interrupting individual again rather than criticize the behavior. Listening in patience and tolerance allows the speaker to state a closing statement such as "...and that is all I have to say" or express invitation for other opinions on the matter.
3. Disagreement is acceptable, but criticism is not constructive. Chief Joseph is credited as saying, "Criticism turns allies to enemies." Respectfully disagree.
4. Storytelling is a vital communication method in creating a protective barrier between the storyteller and the listeners, which ensures no criticism. The storyteller does not 'tell' others they are wrong or

need to rethink an issue. It is the responsibility of the hearer to self-reflect and apply the information as a form of self discovery or emotional growth.

5. Stories center on nature, the earth. The earth is viewed as the mother of all creatures and provides sustenance to her offspring. There is spirit in all creatures and through that spirit the Native American is related to the salmon, the coyote, the water, etc.
6. Gratitude for the gifts all creatures provide the Native American (i.e., the cousin salmon offers up itself to sustain the Native American) is central in religion and spiritual connection to the earth and her offspring.
7. Self-aggrandizement is seen as bragging and considered a loss of spirit, power and trust by the community. Humility in all roles is necessary to communicate spirit, trust, power and the Creator's hand in the creation of the talent/gift offered.
8. It is very important within the Native American community and all persons communicating with Native Americans to "walk" their "talk." Action must match words or the individual has not earned respect and honor. The Native American community may graciously forgive a dishonorable or foolish individual if they can prove a spiritual change that is reflected in actions that match words. But, banishment is an option for the trickster that refuses to change destructive behavior while speaking soothing words in traditional setting.

9. Humor is a valued gift and laughter is readily available throughout the average day for Native Americans. Joy is seen in the simple,<sup>1</sup> pure things of life and nature.

---

<sup>1</sup> Credited a partnership between Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) Tribal leadership and Tamástslíkt Cultural Institute