

*Guidelines for*

# Respecting Cultural Knowledge



# Guidelines for Respecting Cultural Knowledge

adopted by the

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# Preface

The following guidelines address issues of concern in the documentation, representation and utilization of traditional cultural knowledge as they relate to the role of various participants, including Elders, authors, curriculum developers, classroom teachers, publishers, and researchers. Special attention is given to the educational implications for the integration of Indigenous knowledge and practices in schools throughout Alaska. The guidance offered in the following pages is intended to encourage the incorporation of traditional knowledge and teaching practices in schools by minimizing the potential for misuse and misunderstanding in the process. It is hoped that these guidelines will facilitate the coming together of the many cultural traditions that coexist in Alaska in constructive, respectful and mutually beneficial ways.

Native educators from throughout the state contributed to the development of these guidelines through a series of workshops and meetings associated with the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative. Representatives of the Native educator organizations listed on the cover participated in the meetings and ratified the final document. The purpose of these guidelines is to offer assistance to educational personnel and others who are seeking to incorporate the *Alaska Standards for Culturally-Responsive Schools* in their work. Using these

guidelines will help expand the base of knowledge and expertise that culturally-responsive teachers (including Elders, aides, bilingual instructors, etc.) are able to draw upon to enliven their work as educators.

Throughout this document, Elders are accorded a central role as the primary source of cultural knowledge. It should be understood that the identification of “Elders” as culture-bearers is not simply a matter of chronological age, but a function of the respect accorded to individuals in each community who exemplify the values and lifeways of the local culture and who possess the wisdom and willingness to pass their knowledge on to future generations. Respected Elders serve as the philosophers, professors and visionaries of a cultural community. In addition, many aspects of cultural knowledge can be learned from other members of a community who have not yet been recognized as Elders, but seek to practice and teach local lifeways in culturally-appropriate ways.

Along with these guidelines are a set of general recommendations aimed at stipulating the kind of steps that need to be taken to achieve the goals for which they are intended. State and federal agencies, universities, school districts, textbook publishers, and Native communities are all encouraged to review their policies, programs and practices and to adopt these guidelines and recommendations wherever appropriate. In so doing, the educational experiences of students throughout Alaska will be enriched and the future well-being of the communities being served will be enhanced.

Further information on issues related to the implementation of these guidelines, as well as additional copies, may be obtained from the Alaska Native Knowledge Network, University of Alaska Fairbanks, PO Box 756730, Fairbanks, AK 99775-6730 (<http://ankn.uaf.edu>).

## Guidelines for

# Native Elders

As one of the primary sources of traditional cultural knowledge, Native Elders bear the responsibility to share and pass on that knowledge in ways that are compatible with traditional teachings and practices.

Native Elders may increase their cultural responsiveness through the following actions:

- a. Participate in local and regional Elders' councils as a way to help formulate, document and pass on traditional cultural knowledge for future generations.
- b. Help make explicit and incorporate locally-appropriate cultural values in all aspects of life in the community, while recognizing the diversity of opinion that may exist.
- c. Make a point to utilize traditional ways of knowing, teaching, listening and learning in passing on cultural knowledge to others in the community.
- d. Seek out information on ways to protect intellectual property rights and retain copyright authority over all local knowledge that is being shared with others for documentation purposes.

- e. Carefully review contracts and release forms to determine who controls the distribution of any publications and associated royalties.
- f. Review all transcripts of cultural information that has been written down to ensure accuracy.
- g. Follow appropriate traditional protocols as much as possible in the interpretation and utilization of cultural knowledge.
- h. Assist willing members of the community to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to assume the role of Elder for future generations.

## Guidelines for

# Authors and Illustrators

Authors and illustrators should take all steps necessary to ensure that any representation of cultural content is accurate, contextually appropriate and explicitly acknowledged.

Authors and illustrators may increase their cultural responsiveness through the following actions:

- a. Make it a practice to ensure that all cultural content has been acquired under informed consent and has been reviewed for accuracy and appropriateness by knowledgeable local people representative of the culture in question.
- b. Arrange for copyright authority and royalties to be retained or shared by the person or community from which the cultural information originated, and follow local protocols for its approval and distribution.
- c. Ensure controlled access for sensitive cultural information that has not been explicitly authorized for general distribution.

- d. Be explicit in describing how all cultural knowledge and material has been acquired, authenticated and utilized, and present any significant differing points of view that may exist.
- e. Make explicit the audience(s) for which a cultural document is intended, as well as the point of view of the person(s) preparing the document.
- f. Make every effort to utilize traditional names for people, places, items, etc., adhering to local conventions for spelling and pronunciation.
- g. Identify all primary contributors and secondary sources for a particular document, and share the authorship whenever possible.
- h. Acquire extensive first-hand experience in a new cultural context before writing about it.
- i. Carefully explain the intent and use when obtaining permission to take photographs or videos, and make it clear in publication whether they have been staged as a re-enactment or represent actual events.
- j. When documenting oral history, recognize and consider the power of the written word and the implications of putting oral tradition with all its non-verbal connotations down on paper, always striving to convey the original meaning and context as much as possible.



Guidelines for

# Curriculum Developers and Administrators

Curriculum developers and administrators should provide multiple avenues for the incorporation of locally-recognized expertise in all actions related to the use and interpretation of local cultural knowledge and practices.

Curriculum developers and administrators may increase their cultural responsiveness through the following actions:

- a. Establish an easily accessible repository of culturally-appropriate resource materials and knowledgeable expertise from the community.
- b. Include the voices of representatives from the local culture in the curriculum materials used in the school.
- c. Utilize the natural environment of the community to move educational activities beyond the classroom as a way of fostering place-based education and deepening the learning experiences of students.

- d. Support the implementation of an Elders-in-Residence program in each school and classroom.
- e. Provide an in-depth cultural orientation program for all new teachers and administrators.
- f. Promote the incorporation of the *Alaska Standards for Culturally-Responsive Schools* in all aspects of the school curriculum, while demonstrating their applicability in providing multiple avenues to meet the State Content Standards.
- g. Utilize Elders and Native teachers from the local community to acquire a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the local, regional and statewide context in which the students live, particularly as it relates to the well-being and survival of the local culture.
- h. Make use of locally-produced resource materials (reports, videos, maps, books, tribal documents, etc.) in all subject areas and work in close collaboration with local agencies to enrich the curriculum beyond the scope of commercially-produced texts.
- i. Establish a review committee of locally-knowledgeable people to review all textbooks and other curriculum materials for accuracy and appropriateness in relation to the local cultural context, as well as to examine the overall cultural responsiveness of the educational system.

# Guidelines for

# Educators

Classroom teachers are responsible for drawing upon Elders and other cultural experts in the surrounding community to make sure all resource materials and learning activities are culturally accurate and appropriate.

Teachers may increase their cultural responsiveness through the following actions:

- a. Learn how to use local ways of knowing and teaching to link the knowledge base of the school to that of the community.
- b. Make effective use of local expertise, especially Elders, as co-teachers whenever local cultural knowledge is being addressed in the curriculum.
- c. Take steps to recognize and validate all aspects of the knowledge students bring with them, and assist them in their on-going quest for personal and cultural affirmation.
- d. Develop the observation and listening skills necessary to acquire an in-depth understanding of the knowledge system indigenous to the local community and apply that understanding in teaching practice.
- e. Carefully review all curriculum resource materials to ensure cultural accuracy and appropriateness.

- f. Make every effort to utilize locally-relevant curriculum materials with which students can readily identify, including materials prepared by Native authors.
- g. Provide sufficient flexibility in scheduling Elder participation so they are able to fully share what they know with minimal interference by the clock, and provide enough advance notice for them to make the necessary preparations.
- h. Align all subject matter with the *Alaska Standards for Culturally-Responsive Schools* and develop curriculum models that are based on the local cultural and environmental experiences of the students.
- i. Recognize the importance of cultural and intellectual property rights in teaching practice and honor such rights in all aspects of the selection and utilization of curriculum resources (see page 29 for details.)

## Guidelines for

# Editors and Publishers

Editors and publishers should utilize culturally-knowledgeable authors and establish multiple levels of review to ensure that all publications are culturally accurate and appropriate.

Editors and publishers may increase their cultural responsiveness through the following actions:

- a. Encourage and support Native-authors and provide appropriate biographical information and photographs of the author(s) of culturally-oriented material.
- b. Return a significant proportion of publication proceeds and royalties to the person or community from which it originated.
- c. Submit all manuscripts with cultural content to locally-knowledgeable personnel for review, making effective use of local and regional entities set up for this purpose.
- d. Ensure appropriate review, approval and access for all digital and Internet-based materials.
- e. Resolve all disagreements on cultural content or distribution before final publication.

- f. Always return to the original source for re-authorization of subsequent printings.
- g. All content of textbooks for general curricular use should be examined to make sure it is widely accepted and recognized, and not just an individual author's opinion.
- h. Honor all local conventions for recognizing cultural and intellectual property rights.

## Guidelines for

# Document Reviewers

Reviewers should give informed consideration to the cultural perspectives of all groups represented in documents subjected to review.

Document reviewers may increase their cultural responsiveness through the following actions:

- a. Always be as explicit as possible in identifying the background experience and personal reference points on which the interpretation of cultural meaning is based.
- b. Whenever possible and appropriate, reviews of cultural materials should be provided from multiple perspectives and interpretations.
- c. When critical decisions about a publication are to be made, a panel of reviewers should be established in such a way as to provide a cross-check from several cultural perspectives.
- d. Publications that misrepresent or omit cultural content should be identified as such, regardless of their remaining literary merit.
- e. Reviews of movies involving cultural themes should utilize the same guidelines as those outlined for published documents.

# Guidelines for

# Researchers

Researchers are ethically responsible for obtaining informed consent, accurately representing the cultural perspective and protecting the cultural integrity and rights of all participants in a research endeavor.

Researchers may increase their cultural responsiveness through the following actions:

- a. Effectively identify and utilize the expertise in participating communities to enhance the quality of data gathering as well as the data itself, and use caution in applying external frames of reference in its analysis and interpretation.
- b. Ensure controlled access for sensitive cultural information that has not been explicitly authorized for general distribution, as determined by members of the local community.
- c. Submit research plans as well as results for review by a locally-knowledgeable group and abide by its recommendations to the maximum extent possible.
- d. Provide full disclosure of funding sources, sponsors, institutional affiliations and reviewers.



- e. Include explicit recognition of all research contributors in the final report.
- f. Abide by the research principles and guidelines established by the Alaska Federation of Natives and other state, national and international organizations representing Indigenous peoples.

## Guidelines for

# Native Language Specialists

Native language specialists are responsible for taking all steps possible to accurately convey the meaning associated with cultural knowledge that has been shared in a traditional language.

Native language specialists may increase their cultural responsiveness through the following actions:

- a. Whenever possible, utilize a panel of local experts rather than a single source to corroborate translation and interpretation of language materials, as well as to construct words for new terms.
- b. Encourage the use and teaching of the local language in ways that provide appropriate context for conveying accurate meaning and interpretation, including an appreciation for the subtleties of story construction, use of metaphor and oratorical skills.
- c. Provide Elders with opportunities and support to share what they know in the local language.

- d. Whenever possible, utilize simultaneous translation equipment at meetings to facilitate the use of the local language.
- e. Prepare curriculum resource materials that utilize the local language, so as to make it as easy as possible for teachers to draw upon the local language in their teaching.

## Guidelines for

# Native Community Organizations

Native community organizations should establish a process for review and authorization of activities involving the gathering, documentation and use of local cultural knowledge.

Native community organizations may increase their cultural responsiveness through the following actions:

- a. The Native educator associations should establish regional clearinghouses to provide an on-going process for the review and certification of cultural resource materials, including utilizing the available expertise of retired Native educators.
- b. Native educators should engage in critical self-assessment and participatory research to ascertain the extent to which their teaching practices are effectively grounded in the traditional ways of transmitting the culture of the surrounding community.

- c. Native communities should provide a support mechanism to assist Elders in understanding the processes of giving informed consent and filing for copyright protections, and publicize the availability of such assistance through public service announcements on the radio so all Elders are aware of their rights.
- d. Each community and region should establish a process for reviewing and approving research proposals that may impact their area.
- e. Each community should establish a process for determining what is considered public knowledge vs. private knowledge, as well as how and with whom such knowledge should be shared.
- f. Native communities should receive copies and maintain a repository of all documents that relate to the local area.
- g. Native communities/tribes should foster the incorporation of traditional knowledge, language and protocols in all aspects of community life and organizational practices.
- h. As regional tribal colleges are established, they should provide a support structure for the implementation of these guidelines in each of their respective regions.

## Guidelines for the

# General Public

As the users and audience for cultural knowledge, the general public has a responsibility to exercise informed critical judgement about the cultural authenticity and appropriateness of the materials they utilize.

Members of the general public may increase their cultural responsiveness through the following actions:

- a. Refrain from purchasing or using publications that do not represent traditional cultures in accurate and appropriate ways.
- b. Encourage and support Native peoples' efforts to apply their own criteria to the review and approval of documents representing their cultural traditions.
- c. Contribute to and participate respectfully in local cultural events to gain a better understanding of the range of cultural traditions that strive to coexist in Alaska.
- d. Make room in all community events for multiple cultural traditions to be represented.



# General Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered to support the effective implementation of the guidelines for documenting, representing and utilizing cultural knowledge outlined above.

1. The *Alaska Standards for Culturally-Responsive Schools* should be used as a general guide for any educational activity involving cultural documentation, representation or review.
2. A statewide Indigenous literary review board (Honoring Alaska's Indigenous Literature—HAIL) should be established with representation from each of the regional Native educator associations to oversee the implementation of the recommendations that follow.
3. A statewide "Alaska Indigenous Knowledge Multimedia Working Group" should be established to examine the applicability of the above guidelines to the production of electronic media and the publication and utilization of cultural knowledge via the Internet.

4. Criteria for “product certification” of materials with cultural content should be established and implemented by regional literary review committees formed through the regional Native educator associations. The “Raven” images from the ANKN logo could be used as a “stamp of approval” for each cultural region.
5. Each regional HAIL literary review committee should develop a list of authorized reviewers for publications reflecting cultural content related to the respective region.
6. An annotated bibliography of the best materials representing local cultures should be compiled by each regional HAIL literary review committee and published on the Alaska Native Knowledge Network web site for use by teachers and curriculum developers throughout the state.
7. HAIL and the regional literary review boards should establish prestigious annual awards to honor Native Elders, authors, illustrators and others who make a significant contribution to the documentation and representation of cultural knowledge.
8. Incentives, resources and opportunities should be provided to encourage and support Native authors, illustrators, storytellers, etc. who can bring a strong Native voice to the documentation and representation of Native cultural knowledge and traditions.
9. The guidelines outlined in this publication should be incorporated in university courses and made an integral part of all teacher preparation and cultural orientation programs.
10. An annotated bibliography of resource materials that address cultural and intellectual property issues associated with documenting, representing and utilizing cultural knowledge should be maintained on the Alaska Native Knowledge Network web site. Anyone with relevant reference material is invited to submit the necessary information to add it to the initial bibliography included with these guidelines.





# Glossary Of Terms

**F**ollowing is a list of terms and items referred to in the *Guidelines for Respecting Cultural Knowledge* that sometimes have specialized meanings that aren't commonly known. A brief definition or explanation of each item is provided to help users of these guidelines to accurately interpret their intent and use them appropriately. If further elaboration is needed, most of these items can also be found in the list of related reference materials that is included. For further assistance in interpreting the guidelines, please contact the Alaska Native Knowledge Network.

**Definition:** A description that shows how something is like others in that general category, but also shows how it is different or distinct from others in that group.

***Alaska Standards for Culturally-Responsive Schools:***

Guidelines developed by the Native Educator Associations of the State of Alaska, for schools and communities to evaluate what they are doing to promote the cultural well-being of the young people whom they are responsible for educating.

**Associated royalties:** The share paid to an author or composer from the profits derived from the sale or performance or use of the author's creation in collaboration with other individuals or groups. A share paid to the creator for the right to use their invention or services.

**Authenticated:** Established as being genuine; proven to be the real thing.

**Author:** A person who creates or originates an idea or work; not limited to written creations.

**Biographical information:** Important information that summarizes a person's life and work. Generally it includes information on birth, ethnic heritage, cultural experiences, education, research, community activities or any other matters that would be of importance to the readers.

**Clearinghouse:** A location or group through which information or materials regarding a cultural group or groups is collected and distributed to others.

**Consent form:** A signed form granting permission for a person or entity to do research or other activities and indicating how the work will be performed or published (see also Release form).

**Copyright:** A form of legal protection for both published and unpublished "original works of authorship" (including literary, dramatic, musical, artistic and certain other intellectual works), so they cannot be reproduced without the copyright holders consent. Under current law, copyright is usually held by an individual or an organization, though efforts are underway to address the issue of copyright protection for community-shared cultural property.

**Cultural accuracy:** Cultural information that is accepted by the members of a particular society as being an appropriate and accurate representation of that society.

**Cultural context:** The cultural setting or situation in which an idea, custom, skill or art was created and performed.

**Cultural experts:** Members of a particular society, with its own cultural tradition, who are recognized by the rest of the society as knowledgeable of the culture of that society, especially in the area of arts, beliefs, customs, organization and values.

**Cultural integrity:** In regards to research, the researcher is obliged to respect his or her informants and the information they provide so that it is presented to others in an accurate, sensitive and integrated manner.

**Cultural perspective:** The views generally accepted by Elders and knowledgeable practitioners of a culture.

**Cultural responsibilities:** The responsibilities that members of a particular society with its own cultural system have to carry out to understand, promote, protect and perpetuate cultural information and practices such as language, art, social rules, values and beliefs, and they must do so in an honest and sincere manner.

**Culture:** A system of ideas and beliefs that can be seen in peoples' creations and activities, which over time, comes to characterize the people who share in the system.

**Curriculum:** A course, or series of courses in an educational program. It may include stories, legends, textbooks, materials and other types of resources for instruction.

**Elders-in-residence:** A program that involves Elders in teaching and curriculum development in a formal educational setting (oftentimes a university), and is intended to impact the content of courses and the way the material is taught.

**Explicit recognition:** Contributors to materials or information provided by members of a cultural group must be openly and clearly indicated. This recognition should include their names, ethnic background, and contributions. A researcher should allow the contributors to review the information provided by them, prior to publication, to ensure that it accurately reflects what they said or intended.

**Guidelines:** A set of rules, regulations or suggestions that are set out for those who are going to carry out some activity such as preparing curriculum, writing, reviewing, or organizing materials.

**Indigenous knowledge system:** The unified knowledge that originates from and is characteristic of a particular society and its culture.

**Informed consent:** Consent that is granted only after one understands all that the consent permits or prohibits and the implications and possible effects of granting that consent. Appropriate translation services need to be provided for persons to be truly “informed” when more than one language is involved.

**Legal protection:** Protected by the laws of a government or society. Does not always have to be in written form (some Native laws are passed on through oral tradition and customary practice.)

**Manuscript:** A written document that may be presented to a publisher or others.

**Native:** A member of an Indigenous society, as distinguished from a stranger, immigrant, or others who are not considered full members of the Indigenous society.

**Native language specialist:** A speaker of a language who is recognized by other speakers of the language as being fluent in the language and has the ability to translate and interpret the language correctly.

**Password protected:** A method of protecting access to information; requiring a person to know a password to gain access to particular information.

**Placed-based education:** An educational program that is firmly grounded in a community’s unique physical, cultural and ecological system, including the language, knowledge, skills and stories that have been handed down through the generations.

**Public domain:** Something that is owned by the public and is free from any legal restriction, such as a copyright or patent.

**Public information:** Information, which no longer belongs to an individual or group, but has become public property and the general public is allowed to use it. Informants and/or members of a cultural group have a right to understand the use that will be made of their contributions before cultural knowledge is shared and allowed to become public information.

**Release form:** A signed form allowing the performance, sale, publication, use or circulation of information or a creation. The conditions and future use of the information or creation must be clearly expressed and explained to the contributor prior to signing any release. This information should include copyright and trademark or other ownership rights (see also Consent form).

**Repository:** A place where things are placed for safekeeping such as archives, libraries, museums.

**Sensitive cultural information:** Cultural information or details that are delicate in nature and not meant to be shared with the general public or those outside of that cultural group.

**Traditional names:** Names that have a history of being commonly used by Indigenous and/or local communities; Indigenous names are those derived from the language of the people who have inhabited the area for countless generations and are preserved in that language.

**Transcript:** A written copy of information that has been shared orally. Usually in printed form including typewritten copies, or copies stored in a computer, on disk or by any other electronic storage and retrieval system.

## Resources For

# Respecting Cultural Knowledge

## Research Guidelines

Alaska Federation of Natives Research Guidelines

<http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/afnguide.html>

Principles for the Conduct of Research in the Arctic

<http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/conduct.html>

## Websites

Guidelines for Respecting Cultural Knowledge

<http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/standards/CulturalDoc.html>

Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights, ANKN

<http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/rights.html>

Alaska Native Science Commission

<http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/ansc.html>

Protecting Knowledge Conference Proceedings, UBC (2000)

<http://www.ubcic.bc.ca/protect.htm>

Native American Books

<http://indy4.fdl.cc.mn.us/~isk/books/booksmenu.html>

International Decade of the World's Indigenous People

[http://www.inac.gc.ca/ch/dec/index\\_e.html](http://www.inac.gc.ca/ch/dec/index_e.html)

World Intellectual Property Organization

<http://www.wipo.int/traditionalknowledge/report>

## Websites, con't.

Native American Rights Fund  
<http://www.narf.org/cases/index.html>

Keepers of the Treasures  
<http://www.keepersofthetreasures.org>

## Declarations

Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples  
<http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/iachr.html>

Principles & Guidelines for the Protection of the Heritage  
of Indigenous Peoples  
<http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/protect.html>

The Mataatua Declaration on Cultural and Intellectual  
Property Rights of Indigenous Peoples  
<http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/mataatua.html>

Coolongatta Statement on Indigenous Rights in Education  
<http://www.wipcehawaii.org/coolongatta.htm>

## Books

Barsh, R. L. (2000). *Protecting Knowledge: Traditional Resource Rights in the New Millennium*. University of British Columbia: Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs,

Battiste, M. and J. Y. Henderson (2000). *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage: A Global Challenge*. Saskatoon, Purich Publishing Ltd.

Brush, S. B., & Stabinsky, D. (1996). *Valuing Local Knowledge: Indigenous People and Intellectual Property Rights*. Covelo, CA: Island Press.

Ellerby, J. H. (2001). *Working with Aboriginal Elders: An Introductory Handbook for Institution-Based and Health Care Professionals Based on the Teachings of Aboriginal Elders and Cultural Teachers*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Native Studies Press, University of Manitoba.

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- Royal, Te A. C. (1992). *Te Haurapa: An Introduction to Researching Tribal Histories and Traditions*. Wellington, New Zealand: Bridget Williams Books Ltd.
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- Slapin, B., Seale, D., & Gonzales, R. (1996). *How to Tell the Difference: A Guide to Evaluating Children's Books for Anti-Indian Bias*. Berkeley, CA: Oyate.
- Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. New York: Zed Books.
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[Information on obtaining these resources can be found on the Alaska Native Knowledge Network web site at [www.ankn.uaf.edu](http://www.ankn.uaf.edu). Additional resources will be posted as they become available. Please forward submissions to ANKN at [fyankn@uaf.edu](mailto:fyankn@uaf.edu)]



