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## **Keynote Address: Culture as the Cornerstone of Family Strength**

**Nancy Koroloff:** I know we have a lot of first-time attendees at this conference and many people from outside of the Northwest. So I thought we would start off by teaching you a few phrases of the local language so when you go outside the hotel you won't be embarrassed. So if you could repeat after me, "Oregon." Not Ory-gone, but Oregon. "Willamette." When you see it written you will be tempted to say "Wil-a-met," but it is Willamette. Here is a useful phrase. Repeat after me, "Where is the nearest coffee shop?" I have it on good authority that there are 12 in a one-block radius of this hotel, including two Starbucks on the same block right across the street. I guess if you didn't want to walk the block to get there, you have the option. You can walk half a block. Seriously, we are ready to get started with the conference and we are very excited that you are all here.

This is a conference that has been going on for a number of years now. The focus is to bring together family members, providers, and researchers and evaluators who are studying issues related to families and their task of caregiving for children who have mental and emotional disorders. We expect to have a very exciting time, lots of dialogue, lots of interesting research that is going to be presented, some very nice, interesting, exciting and innovative programs that people are going to be talking about. So we are all looking forward to the next 2 ½ days. My name is Nancy Koroloff. I am not Barbara Friesen. Barbara Friesen, who is the director of the Research and Training Center, is on sabbatical this year. She is actually sitting among you, but I am not going to identify her. You have to figure that out. I will be happy when she comes back to take back over this Training Center in the fall. I want to start first by introducing Elaine Slaton, who is here from the Federation of

Families for Children's Mental Health. She is going to give you a welcome from that organization.

**Elaine Slaton:** I think those pronunciations were for my benefit, because I always slaughter them. I want to welcome you on behalf of the Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health.

How many of you, if you would just raise your hand, are first-timers here?

Look at that, Nancy. That is incredible and that is very exciting.

I want to tell you that the Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, the national office, is located in Alexandria, Virginia. We are a national, grass-roots advocacy organization of diverse families dedicated to advocating for children's mental health, for the kids and for the families. All of us on staff are family members that either are raising or have raised our kids with mental health issues. We have about 120 chapters and state organizations around the country, one near you, I hope. Up until about a year ago we always said that we were the only national family-run organization that was primarily there to advocate for children's mental health. We are really excited now that we have a sister organization, although I have been told to call it a brother organization. It is Inter-Tribal Voices of Children and Families, which is families from across, I think, 22 tribal nations right now. I wanted to ask if board members from Federation of Families and from Inter-Tribal Voices would stand up so that you can know who they are, if you want to speak to them during the conference. Some of them are board members on both. Those are the folks.

One of the exciting things about being at this conference for the Federation of Families and for Inter-Tribal Voice is that both organizations have some of our very beginning roots at this conference. This is my favorite national conference next to the Federation's national conference. It is a conference that is respectful and exciting. There are wonderful connections here between families, researchers, providers and a lot of other people that have dedicated their lives to children's mental health. It is a very

exciting and great conference, a great place to be. Plenty of coffee, obviously. The Federation of Families and Intertribal Voice have roots here. So I would say to you, from my experience that over the next few days you should expect great things to happen. This is a wonderful conference and look for great things to happen. I hope that I will see all of you then in November at the Federation's conference in Washington, DC. Thank you for being here.

**Nancy Koroloff:** Next I would like to introduce Dean James Ward, who is the Dean of the Graduate School of Social Work at Portland State, and has been our supporter and encourager, cheer leader. Many good things have come from our relationship over the years. So if you see him in the halls, please tell him thank you on our behalf.

**James Ward:** Thank you, Nancy. To all in attendance here today I extend to you a very hearty welcome to the year 2002 Building on Family Strengths conference here in Portland, Oregon. As many of you may know, this is the 9th annual conference, Building on Family Strengths, that we have held here in Portland. We are always pleased to have you come to the City of Roses. I was surprised as you were introduced and learned that many of you are here for the first time. That is really a treat for us. You are coming to a wonderful city. A city with gorgeous weather, with plenty of opportunity to meet some wonderful people, and certainly you are among wonderful people in attendance today. We view it as a very valuable conference for all of us. We all leave it feeling that we have been enriched by having participated together. As I understand it, we have some 400 people registered, and we believe are in attendance here at this conference. They are from all over the United States. We have eight from Alaska, as I understand it, which I think is a monumental treat. We have members from six nations, six Native American tribes, in attendance today. Is that correct? Can I just see hands from people from the tribes? We have that number registered and we certainly welcome you here. As I understand it, we have people registered from Cameroon, Ghana, Mongolia, Canada, and America Samoa. We also are pleased as always to acknowledge

the youth and young adults in attendance at this conference. We believe that we can learn from you and we hope you can learn something from the conference that would be beneficial to you when you leave. We certainly want to welcome you here as well.

This year's conference goal, as I understand it, is to showcase culturally competent, family-centered research and innovative programs and practices. We believe that you will find the conference to be rich, diverse, and featuring interesting papers and panel presentations, focusing on ways of improving services for families and children who are affected by emotional, behavior, and mental disorders. The conference, as in the past, provides an extraordinary opportunity for each and every person in attendance to exchange substantive information about family-centered research and program strategies, including family and youth involvement in all aspects of research and service delivery. Again, I want to welcome you to Portland, and particularly to this interesting conference. I wish for you, each of you, a very productive and enjoyable experience here in Portland.

**Nancy Koroloff:** Thank you, Dean Ward. Now I would like to introduce Liz Sweet, who is our project officer from SAMHSA [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration], from the Center for Mental Health Services. We are really pleased that she is here with us again this year. We feel special that she keeps coming back. We would like to give her a few minutes to speak and then she will introduce our Keynote Speaker, Terry Cross.

**Liz Sweet:** Good morning. It is with great pleasure that I am here to say good morning and welcome to all of you as one of the funders to the Research and Training Center here in Portland. It is a real pleasure for me to be able to come and attend this conference. It is one of the pieces of my job that I find most rewarding. Thank you very much. I would also like to welcome, alone with me from the branch, from the Child, Adolescent, and Family Branch, two of my colleagues who are also here. I think I saw both of them come into the room; if the two of you would like to stand? Lisa [Rubenstein] is our most recent

colleague to the branch and Hardy Stone is going to be here doing a presentation. He may be out getting a cup of coffee. But I encourage you to stop and say hello—there is Hardy right there—to say hello to both Lisa and Hardy. It is with great pleasure that I bring greetings from Mike English, who was our Division Director, and from Charlie Curry who is our agency director. Both of them said to please bring warm regards to all of the participants and attendees at the conference. Both of them had duties in Washington, D.C. that kept them from being able to attend, but both send their warm regards. We in the Child, Adolescent and Family Branch are a part of SAMHSA and it is our pleasure to be able to administer and have responsibilities for administering programs specifically around children and family involvement. For me personally, my experience as a family member brought me to those particular duties at the branch. It has been a wonderful experience over the last five years to see how families continue to influence the work that we do at the Center for Mental Health Services. I once again say a warm welcome from the Center for Mental Health Services and the Child, Adolescent and Family Branch along with SAMHSA.

My greatest pleasure this morning is to be able to introduce Terry Cross to all of you. Terry is an enrolled member of the Seneca Nation of Indians and is the current director and developer of the National Indian Child Welfare Association, more commonly and warmly known as NICWA, to people who had had any pleasure of serving with Terry. He is the author of several Indian Child Welfare curricula and publications in cultural competency in the realm of social services. His life and his 29 years of social service work in both Indian and non-Native American settings and his academic background give him very unique skills and experiences in the field of Indian child welfare, cultural competence, and training. I've had the pleasure of knowing Terry for almost ten years. And I really say this with the most sincere knowledge, that every time I have the pleasure of meeting with Terry and being in a meeting with him that I am going to learn something new. I always walk away from that experience saying, "Today was a good day to learn a

new piece of information.” It is with great pleasure that I introduce to you Terry Cross.

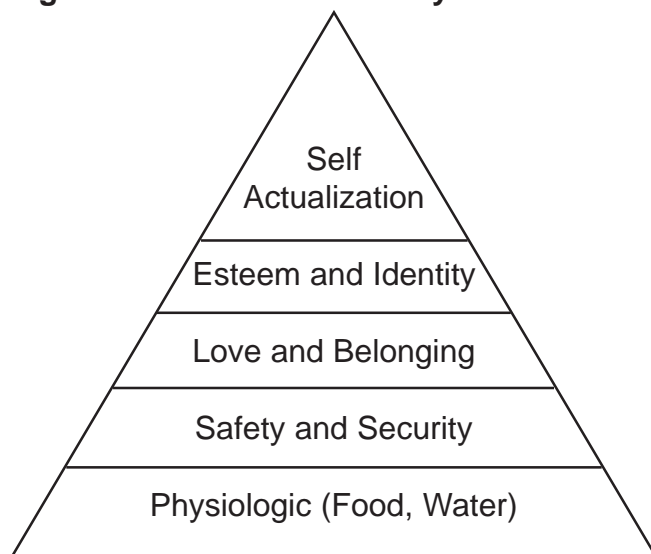
**Terry Cross:** I am not really leaving. I am going to go down there and talk. Those of you who know me know I like to wander around when I am talking, so I will try to do it in this space here. Also as I am talking today, please feel free to put up your hand. Even though this is a big group, I want to involve you in the conversation and discussion. My topic this morning is about culture, and culture as a resource for family strength. You have probably heard a lot in this children’s mental health and systems of care movement about cultural competence. When people think of cultural competence, they primarily think that it is for this group or that group, some ethnic population. I want to go in a bit of a different direction this morning, because I want to talk with you about the importance of culture in all of our lives, about the role that culture plays in shaping who we are, how we make decisions, how we solve problems, how we conceive of the world around us, how we feel, how we have fun, how we join together as families. One of the reasons I want to do this is that the more people can understand the role that culture plays in their own lives, the more you can understand how culture supports you, the more you can understand how culture supports people who are different than you are, who have a different culture. So that is where I want to go today. I’d like to have your help in getting there. So as we move this forward, I want to have you brainstorm and we will come up with some lists. Please feel free to ask questions. Let’s start with just a list. What comes to mind when I say culture? What are the elements? What are the things that make up culture? [Terry recorded audience responses.] Language. Traditions. Values. Spirituality. Behavior. Environment. Ritual. Music. Food. Clothing. Smells. Economics. History. Class. Celebration. Beliefs. Country. Place. Art. Family. Age. The whole notion of kin. Health. Perspective. Lifestyles. Stigma. Education. That brings to mind the whole notion of institutions. That is a real challenge for me to spell this fast. I’m sure we could go on.

What does the length of this list, and the quickness and the diversity of this list, tell you about culture? It is very diverse. It is different for everybody. It is hard to define. It touches everything. It is all around us. There is a teacher in the Bay Area who talks about culture, a guy by the name of Wade Nobles, and he says culture is to people as water is to fish. It is just so much around us that it is very difficult for us to see it. We just take it for granted. We are breathing it in and out all of the time, because that is what our world is about. But when we get outside of that culture, you take the saltwater fish out of saltwater and put them in fresh water, they know it. You know your culture most when you get put into another culture. Where the language is different, where the values are different, where the economic system is different or where the institutions are different. That’s when you begin to bump up against, “Ah, this is different than what I know”. Here in the US, we have the luxury, I believe, of having so many diverse cultures.

Given this list, what else does it say about culture? Is there anybody who doesn’t have one? There is not. Anybody who doesn’t have multiple cultures? There is work culture. There may be one language at your place of work that you don’t use in your neighborhood gatherings or your family gatherings. You may have a culture with your spiritual community. You may have a culture that is in your educational community. You have a culture that is all your family’s way of expressing. You have culture that comes from ethnicity, things that are handed down from generation to generation. Sometimes when we say culture and we talk about cultural competence, people go first to ethnicity. When you say, “What is your culture?” people will say, “I don’t really know. My grandmother, I think, came from. . .” That is really about ethnic culture. We all have culture. We all experience this thing around us of all of these values, all of these life ways and lifestyles and economy. That is all culture. The more we think of it as a set of cultural influences on our behavior, the more we can begin to understand how that shapes us and how it influences how we do things. Then we can make the leap to understand how other people begin to do it.

Can you think of anything on that list that ties all of that list together? Family? Any other things you think about tying it together? Perspective? Beliefs and identity? It helps shape who we are. One of the things that I think ties this list together is that the way these things on the list that we just generated respond to something called basic human needs. If you think about the list we just generated, this is Maslow's, this is for easy reference, Maslow's Hierarchy of Need.

**Figure 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**



Food is certainly there, the physiological needs. Safety and security. Love and belonging. For convenience sake, I've taken some of the things that we have generated and put up here. Look at the way that our culture organizes our responses to basic human needs. I think that is one of the most important things for us to know about culture. It tends to organize the responses to basic human needs. Certainly our cultural and ethnic culture and even our modern culture creates an institutional response, or a family response, to the basic human need of food. I might prefer to meet my food needs with corn soup and fried bread and somebody else with meat and potatoes and somebody else with beans and rice. And each in isolation will think that is the way to eat. It is not until we cross our cultural boundary that we learn another group's food. We may like it or we may not. Some people embrace the diversity because it enriches their experience or

their diet or they just like those different tastes, and other people shun it. Give me my meat and potatoes. That is all I want. Safety and security. Different cultures tend to organize the responses to this basic human need in different ways. Let's look at the institutions that we have. In the United States, safety and security, we depends on the courts. We depend on law enforcement. We depend on a lot of people in prison. And laws that are three strikes and you are out. Those are cultural, institutional responses to this safety and security. They don't do it that way in Japan. They don't do it that way in other parts of the world. Some places in the world it is much more punitive. In some places it is less punitive. But the culture organizes basic responses.

Let's look at love and belonging. Our culture, our culture teachings will organize our ideas of kinship, even who is related to who and who we think about as family. In my Seneca culture, my Seneca background, there are words in our Seneca language for relatives that you can't even translate into English. In English I can say my first cousin's grandchildren. But in my Seneca language, there is a word that is sort of like nephew, but it means just that relationship, but it also implies the obligation that I have as that relative to that child. In the Yakama language, you can tell by the word whether the word is on your mother's side or on your father's side and whether they are male and female and how distant is that relationship. It is all wrapped up in that language, because that culture defines who we are related to and how we are related to them. Our culture tends to organize the basic human need of being in a group. We also define that through our rituals and our ceremonies and our beliefs.

Esteem and identity is always an interesting one to me. When I get introduced to a group like this, I am Terry Cross, MSW, Director of the National Indian Child Welfare Association, doer of this, writer of that. My identity comes from what I've done, what I do. But do you suppose when I am back home in Western New York, where I grew up, in the Seneca Territory that I am Terry Cross, MSW, Director of this? No, I'm Isabel's boy. And Isabel is here, my family strength

is with me. So our different cultures have a way of organizing these basic human needs. We can see that. Some of those we can see outwardly. Some of these things we can see outwardly. Art, music, dance, the food we can see outwardly. And we see and appreciate those differences. But some of them are very, very internal. It is very difficult to see.

Let me take the next step here. I can't leave Maslow without giving you the perspective that Maslow was looking through one cultural lens. He was looking through a lens that values the individual. American and European society tend to organize basic human needs and the thinking about human growth and development around individual change and growth and development. It is important how we grow and interact with the world as individuals. Our whole field of psychology is primarily around what happens with the self. Other cultures, more tribally oriented cultures, tend to not think so much about the self. It is not the first thing that comes to mind. So what I've done is I've taken Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and reordered it from a more tribal point of view, from an American Indian point of view, I think.

**Figure 2. Rethinking Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs from an American Indian Viewpoint**

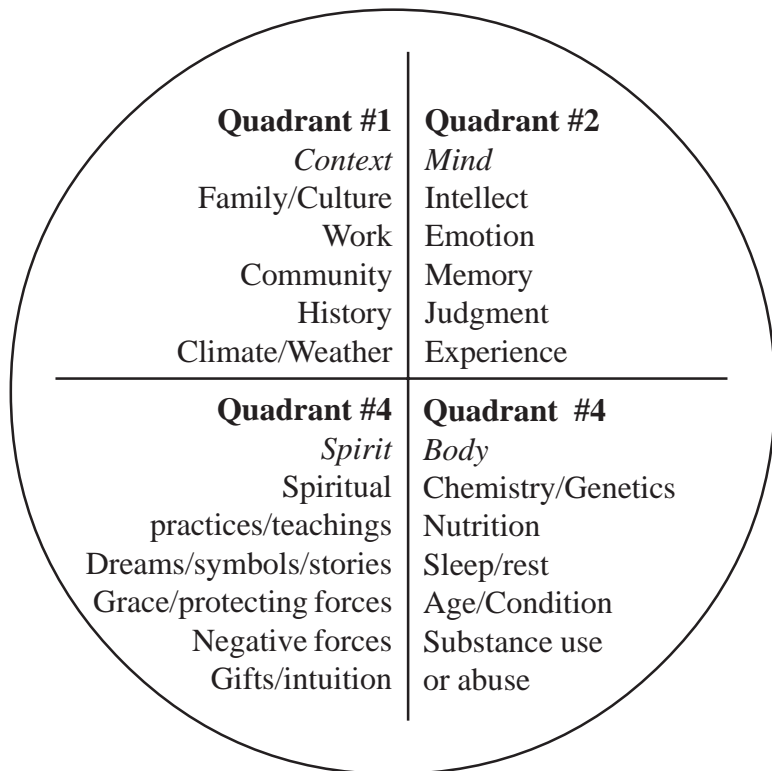


Where Maslow says the individual has to survive, if you get your food, you are going to be fine. That is the first thing and you have to have safety and security and then love and belonging. You have this hierarchy of needs. You notice that in the center of my circle is spirituality. Later in Maslow's life after he wrote the material on the hierarchy of needs, he said there is actually a need that is higher, and he called it transcendence. It was about spirituality. From this perspective, I've drawn this in the form of concentric circles rather than a hierarchy. It has to do with building on. I grew up with the teachings that if I took care of my relationship with the creator, I would eat. You give thanks for what you have, you ask for what you need, "Give me this day my daily bread," and that's going to be there. That is just the way it is. So first in this way of organizing this concept is spirituality. The second is love, and not love and belonging, but love and relationship, relating to other people. If I take care of my relationship with my family, I will eat. If I take care of my relationships with Mother Earth, I will eat. If I take care of my relationships with the world around me, a lot of my needs will be taken care of. Then come the food and the water and the safety and the esteem and identity. And here, as I said, identity not from what I do, but from who my people are and where my relationships are. And then to self-actualization and in self-actualization, the role of service. The role of being a contributor to my environment. Developmentally in this kind of culture, we move from dependency to providership. That is the important transition. It isn't necessarily a transition of separation and individuation. It is a transition of dependency to providership. You can stay really closely linked. You can live in the same household with your family all your life and not have to make that physical separation. But you do have to make the transition from dependency to providership and the culture allows for that to happen.

Given our definition, the big long list we have made, culture really is the integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thought and speech and action. This is important to us when we think about family strengths. I want to share another piece with you and

we can do some conversation. This is something that I refer to as the relational world view. I don't think this is in your package. A simple four quadrant circle.

**Figure 3. Relational World View**



One of the things that I do to draw on my cultural strengths is try to draw on the teachings that I have heard through my upbringing and through the work that I've done in my adult life with elders and teachers, and to put that into the work that I do to figure out how does this fit with the work that I do. There is a teaching amongst many of our tribal peoples, and you will hear it expressed different ways in different places, you will see these circles drawn in Indian country a lot of different ways and different times. But I think of it as the circle of life. Some people refer to it as the medicine wheel. Some people have different ways of referring to it, but this is a concept of wellness and well being that describes how we as human individuals, as spiritual beings on this human journey that we are on, how we relate to the world and how we stay healthy. This is a circle in which there is a continual change

process. Part of our experience is change. So if I am said to be healthy from this perspective of balance and harmony in this relational world-view model, my life has to come into some kind of balance. I have to balance mind, body, spirit and context.

By context I mean the world around us. Now, context includes lots of things—family, culture, community, work, all kind of things around us. The weather, the environment we live in, the challenges of that environment, the politics, all of it that is in our world that we respond to.

The mind includes our intellectual process, our thinking process, our emotional process, those feelings, things like memory, and memory that is both conscious and unconscious, and the processing that we do, our judgment, our ability to weigh things, even our dreams and the influences of whether we are basically optimistic or basically pessimistic. They are all in this area of the mind.

Body includes our health, our nutrition, our sleep, genetics, gender, physical stature, weight. The time of day will influence what is going on with our body. We are not the same person at 7:00 in the morning as we are at 4:00 in the afternoon. There are going to be periods of the day where we are sleepier or where we are energized or where we have a good thinking time.

And spiritually, the spiritual quadrant. Now the spiritual quadrant I talk about as being made up of the learned positive, the spiritual teachings that we get that tell us how to evoke positive spiritual outcomes. Prayer, ritual, ceremony, service, whatever those teachings are that we learn are going to fill us up spiritually and put us on the right track. Those are learned positives. The learned negatives are those spiritual behaviors or elements of our life that bring about negative spiritual consequences. They usually show up in religions as the “thou shalt nots.” Because what happens when we do the “thou shalt nots?” It messes us up, right? They are basically just good teachings, do this, don't do this, because the things we learn to do, the jealousy, the covetousness, those kinds of things will mess us up spiritually. Another element of this quadrant is what I call the innate

positive, those spiritual forces and the spiritual elements of our being that help us no matter what we believe or what we do, and all of us have different labels for that. Some people would refer to the innate positive as having good karma, good luck, good fortune. Others will refer to it as ancestral intervention, spirit guides, guardian angels. Others would refer to it as grace or the Christ light, or whatever their belief system is as to where that positive spiritual force comes that just comes out of nowhere and puts you on the right road at the right time, whether it is luck to one person or grace to another. And the innate negative—those spiritual forces that come out of nowhere and bad things happen to good people. Some people will understand that as bad luck, misfortune, negative karma. Others will understand it as mischievous spirits, earth-bound spirits. Others may understand it as the work of Satan. So it is understood differently in different cultures, but these are forces that are there.

Now given that, I would say life is a constantly changing process of balancing and rebalancing around this circle. When I am at work, my intellect is going flat out. People say we are only using ten percent of our brains. That is not true for me. I am going flat out. Anything that goes in, something else falls off. And when I am in that going flat out mode, and I am working, I can get out of balance. But I am lucky. I get to go home to my family. I have an 11-year-old boy at home, and when he meets me at the door, and he is right at this stage where this isn't going to happen very often, but sometimes he just leaps up in my arms and his legs just about drag on the ground now. And I tell you, that is going to shift my circle, because all of that intellectual processing I've been doing melts away when that little boy says, "Dad, I'm so glad to see you. Come and see the thing I have been working on." Or, "Come help me with this." That begins to balance me as a person. I balance and rebalance through the day. I may come and be hungry and pick up something and put it in my mouth and munch on it. That helps rebalance. I may have a difficult time in my life. I may encounter a bump along the road, but I have my spirituality to turn to, the teachings that I have about people, about interacting. So what I am

saying here is that for me, one of the ways that I rely on my culture for strength is by looking at the teachings and then beginning to understand from these teachings what life is about, how to face the difficult times.

I had a conversation with my 11-year-old about a month ago. He is concerned about girls. We sat down and we started to go around the circle. I have a 26-year-old daughter, and she has seen this circle hundreds of times. Now she thinks it. But as we went around this circle and talked about relationships and talked about all of the things that a dad and a son should talk about at 11 years old and the things that are out there in the world that you really don't want to emulate. And the things that are out there in the world that are just glorious and wonderful and you really want to prepare yourself for in a good way.

And being able to talk about that, I thought how fortunate to have this as a teaching from my cultural background that I could bring forward, facilitating a conversation with my 11 year old about a really tough topic. What a great thing. Well, I happen to think that I get as much of those cultural resources from my non-Indian father's side of the family as I do from my Indian mother's side of the family. I have what I think of as a wonderful opportunity to be bi-cultural, because I grew up with a non-Indian dad and an Indian mom. Now for some that can be a problem, and I've certainly encountered a lot of problems along the way related to those identity struggles. But where I came out on the other end is that I discovered that I could be a bridge. What is the most important thing about a bridge? What holds the bridge up? It is the foundation that you have on either side. I have to have just as strong a foundation in my non-Indian upbringing and mainstream cultural values, teachings, life ways, cultural patterns as I have in my Indian ways. Otherwise, my bridge isn't going to stand up. So, keeping that strong foundation in both cultures.

Let me for a moment, and you can help me, think about your own families. Let's use this circle as a tool with you as I used it with my son, to talk about your family strengths and how you build family strengths

that emanate out of the culture that you are part of. I'll start off. One of the quadrants here is mind. One of the most important aspects of culture is storytelling, whether it is done in literature or whether it is done as formal myth and legend that is passed on from generation to generation, or whether it is done around the dinner table or riding in the car. Tell me some. Does anybody have a family story that you pass on to your kids that helps shape who your family is, that bring strength to your family? Can you bring that to mind?

**Audience Member:** We have a story that we tell over and over again. It was when my third daughter was born, [inaudible] shows up at birth [inaudible] very concretely that having a home birth was much easier than finding child care [inaudible]. But it is because [inaudible] we had a wonderful, a really wonderful [inaudible] and to have that really [inaudible] being able to hold his baby sister. [Inaudible] she has a [inaudible]

**Terry Cross:** That is a great example, thank you. Any other stories? Yes.

**Audience Member:** I have a story about my father who is deceased. When I was a little girl, my father was [inaudible] and we went to the park, and he literally tried to [inaudible] who could have died. But it was [inaudible] animals, which we have to this day [inaudible] in our pets and some people [inaudible] back to the concept of valuing human life.

**Terry Cross:** What I hear in your story is how you have communicated through that example to your circle or family, this is who we are, translated a value, transferred a value. That is tapping your own cultural resources to build family strengths. Anybody else? I saw a hand up over in this direction.

**Audience Member:** I am a Navajo [inaudible] and I grew up [inaudible] tradition. It is just passed on, it is not written. I am also a weaver [inaudible]. A lot of Native American parents don't know the basis [inaudible] positive. It begins with the [inaudible] on and on. I could just go on, teach and teach. The biggest story [inaudible] world, the beginning [inaudible]. And

animals [inaudible] and now we understand better, a lot of us do. [Inaudible] share.

**Terry Cross:** Thank you. One of the important aspects of tapping into this kind of strength is that you as a family have to structure your world so that you can tap into these strengths. Sometimes that means turning off the TV and having dinner together or having that time or taking advantages of the captured audience of riding in the car together. Taking advantages of the opportunities when your kids want to talk to you. Let's go to another part of this quadrant. How many of you have what you would think are cultural teachings that came perhaps from your ethnic heritage, or from some sub-culture that you are a part of, around the role of dreams in your life and behavior. Anybody? Can you share how teachings about dreams help shape your family or bring family strengths?

**Audience Member:** Basically it is the way my family has always dealt with the issue of racism and discrimination. My parents were raised in South Carolina, [inaudible] and they basically went to school until they were sixth grade and if you went to the ninth grade you could teach. It was an era in which they farmed nine months out of the year, the opposite of how we do now. They went to school for three months out of the year, and they farmed nine months out of the year. It was the era in which blacks were essentially denied adequate education. My parents' response to that was to refuse to become a maid or any of the things, the menial jobs that they would have been relegated to in that era. So my mother became a washerwoman, essentially, she did laundry in her home. I am the 11th of 11 children. There was not a day that I grew up that my mother wasn't there when I left in the morning and there when I came back in the afternoon. The same for my father. Long before there was a nursery or a Home Depot or a Lowes, or any of the kinds of things that you have today to go and purchase plants and trees and that sort of thing, he decided to become self-employed as well. So I learned from my parents, that's the way I learned to cope, that you really don't have to succumb. Out of that, the legend in my family is that no man hinders me. It does not matter what you try to do,

that I will find a way around it. Therefore I have been a very high achiever in my family.

**Terry Cross:** Thank you. I think one of the things that that story illustrates is that human behavior is a complex interplay between the cultural forces around us and our response to it. Stephen Covey in his literature, *First Things First* and *The Seven Habits* literature say between stimulus and response there is a space. What we put in that space says a lot about our character. Culture around us is a stimulus. We get to choose what we put in the space between stimulus and response. Your family story is about that space between stimulus and response. That helps me also to illustrate that culture does not determine our lives. It simply sets up a context within which we have to interact. Now the more conscious we are of it, the more we can do. How many people here can tell me about food in strengthening your family. Anybody have a food story?

**Audience Member:** When I was a child, Christmas Eve we went over to an aunt's house, my great aunt's house, my entire family. All the women would get together and make tamales. We made sweet tamales which I can't stand. All the kids would play. The food brought everybody together and it was a big family thing, it was great.

**Terry Cross:** Food bringing people together. That is an important piece of building family strengths.

**Audience Member:** It wasn't so much what we ate, because we were pretty much meat and potatoes people, but it was the fact that we all sat down to dinner every night, including my father who was self-employed and worked long hours. But there was a family dinner. In our family it was not while we were watching TV or videotaped soaps from that afternoon, but we talked politics and world concerns.

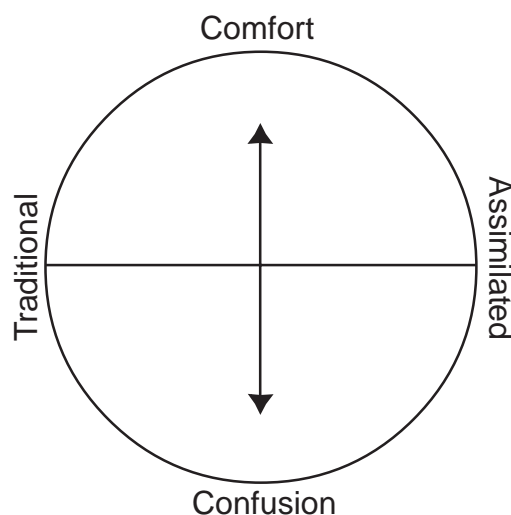
**Terry Cross:** Here is another good illustration about culture. Sometimes when we talk about culture, we talk about it as if it were all good. That's not so. Culture simply is, and what we do with it. You take a look at American culture right now, one of the cultural influences around us is not, I think, not positive for

families. The tendency to not eat together, the hectic pace, the television. If we take a look at storytelling, look how much storytelling we have turned over to the mass media, to the corporations. We let them tell the stories. Again, even though that is a cultural context out there, and there is some richness to it. It creates an environment where we can get information instantly and we can take advantage of that. We also don't need to let it take over our families and erode our family stories and our family strengths. Between stimulus and response, there is that space where we can make that choice. There is one more.

**Audience Member:** I was just going to say, it also leads to inaccurate information and misinformation about cultures. That everybody in this culture is this way because they see it on TV, instead of actually meeting someone in the community.

**Terry Cross:** One of the things, one of the handouts I gave you is about diversity and how we interact with the cultures around us. I gave you another circle that talks about cultural identity, that we can be either assimilated into the mainstream culture or toward the traditional end of the scale.

**Figure 4. Cultural Identity Experience**



You can't take for granted that a person is going to be a certain way because of the last name or because of the color of their skin or their ethnic heritage or even

their religion. We have to get to know the person deeper, because people do make that complex interaction between the cultural forces that shape the context that they live in and how they live that life, bumping against that culture. So my experiences of being an Indian person are going to be different than Shannon's or Manaje's or Frank's. They are going to be different experiences of being Indian. We will express that Indianness in different ways. That is an important lesson about culture. Can you think of something in your environment that you do or you encounter as a family that builds on family strengths?

**Audience Member:** . . . it also shows how all of that stuff comes together in this particular story. But in the environment that I live in, which is Northern Minnesota, the story is that our people, the Ojibwa people traveled after a flood from the east westward. The reason we were supposed to travel was that when we got to the land where the food grew upon the water, which was the wild rice, that that was the place that we were supposed to stay and continue our lives as a people together. So the [connection between] food and the environment was that we stay in that environment so that we can actually get our food. It is part of our family strength that every fall we go ricing. So our environment is involved in our storytelling and our food.

**Terry Cross:** Tying that all together, so the environment that you live in that has this natural resource, organizing a family gathering, a family approach to keep the cultural teaching, to pass down the story for food, all of that being tied together. Good example.

**Audience Member:** I'm glad that you put environment, because I use a very similar type of wheel when I am doing presentations on cultural competence, and I do call it environment/social, making that balance, instead of a juggling act. It dawned on me several years ago, after attending the Million Man March, that one of the things that was out of balance and sync with myself was a political aspect of advocacy and those types of things. I think back on it now because even when I was a child and

would visit my grandfather from New York, and he lived in North Carolina, and had been very politically active, and in fact was one of the state directors of the Brotherhood of Sleeper Porters, which many people now know because of HBO and Showtime and the things that they have done. It was one of the first large, in fact the first organized black union that even financed the civil rights march of Dr. King. I grew up with stories as I would visit him from 9 to 14 years old, before we moved down South, about hearing about parts of his life and how politically active he was in things and getting things changed, being a change agent. And it was not until I attended the Million Man March that I began to look at my career of what was that unhappiness piece, because what I was doing was traveling and all those other things. And 90% of the time I loved my job, but it was the 10% that I began to tell my friends about. It was that piece of being community connected and giving back. That was an environmental/social aspect that I had always tried to juggle and throw off. Now I am part of the Federation of Families, which is, of course, advocacy. We don't use the word political, but. . .

**Terry Cross:** For the same reason the porters didn't.

**Audience Member:** So not it is more in balance, and I am seeing more of the balance of that factor.

**Terry Cross:** This is a wonderful illustration, thank you. Also a wonderful illustration of building family strengths in this environmental context through role modeling, through mentoring. It sounds like you got some mentoring from these relatives who did this. Also it sounds like in your family there is an opportunity that you are taking advantage of to engage your family in a common cause where you as a group of people are of service to others. What a strong message that is to our children, to the world around us, that this family, this group of people cares about the world around us, and engages that world in positive change, bringing family strengths, unity, identity. This is who we are as a group of people. This is what we care about. These are our values. All of that being communicated and again, going back to the story, the

family story that carries that on. Anybody else from an environmental point of view, political or otherwise?

**Audience Member:** This is pretty direct and simple but it seems a lot of us, the environment here in the Northwest, we raise our children to respect the environment and mentor and work toward the environment and [inaudible].

**Terry Cross:** Right, and I think one of the interesting aspects of regional culture in the United States, with different areas of the country focusing on various issues. Here in the Northwest, our environment creates an appreciation for this place that we are in and the movement, the coalescing of minds to protect something that people begin to very much value and then to gather that together in your family and how you translate that. I think one of the things we have to be cognizant of is that around us are opportunities for us. Those things that we engage in in our lives, how many of those things are shaped by the culture around us.

Let's look at this last quadrant, spirituality. Let's look at what I referred to as the learned positive, those things that we learn to do either ritual or ceremony that help us in bringing family strengths.

**Audience Member:** Service to others.

**Terry Cross:** Service to others. Any other examples that you have?

**Audience Member:** Like the 12-step programs, turning something over to a higher power [inaudible]. That is more successful than any other interventions [inaudible] and turning over your power to that higher power.

**Terry Cross:** I think that is a good example of a learned positive outside of the context of a religion, because that 12-step nature is organized in a spiritual framework. Anybody else?

**Audience Member:** One of the things that has been helpful to me is that when I was growing up we went to church as a family every week. I have continued that practice through my adulthood and I am raising a granddaughter and go with her. And prayers, that

brings comfort and can lead to the spiritual, spiritual beings, and there is strength in that.

**Audience Member:** When I was a child, one of the things that I see with [inaudible], I would say things that [inaudible]. One of the things that we do in our culture is go out in the hills and [inaudible]. Our children, we ask our children [inaudible]. In our culture you can actually [inaudible].

**Terry Cross:** I think your example is a good and strong one. One of the things that this conversation illustrates is that it really doesn't matter which culture that you come from. What matters is whether or not you reach into the strengths of that culture and draw on it as a resource. Whether you are taking advantage of the positive things that the cultural forces around you have to offer and using them to build strength in your family, whether it be spiritual teachings from a religion, or from everyday life ways and teachings. Or whether it is from the world around us in our environment. Or whether it is from the intellectual property that is out there to take advantage of. There is a library, practically, out here, a book display. What a rich environment it is to take advantage of. One of the things that we do in my family is that we read to each other. We not only read to our child, but we read to one another and we read as a family. When you read you get a chance to see how other people do things in the world. You get to see how characters in the book solve the problem and you get to talk about that. Those conversations build family strengths. That is using culture as a resource. We do things in our household around music that our kids find quite embarrassing. We have these little parades from the kitchen to the living room to the dining room with songs and noisemakers. Our kids have always participated in that, but they certainly wouldn't be telling their friends that they do. Mom and dad are pretty weird. But drawing on those songs, drawing on those teachings, drawing on that activity, those are all building family strengths. We can rely on our cultural teachings, our cultural songs.

I think that one of the most important things in the development of our work in children's mental health,

and you will see in the value statements, of the systems of care, is that cultural competence is one of those values. Cultural competence, I think as an individual worker, as a person who works with children and families, I think that that is the state of being capable of functioning effectively in the context of cultural differences. All of these things that we have talked about here this morning, if I am going to be a good helping professional, I have got to meet you where you meet your basic human needs. I've got to understand how you conceive of health and healing. I've got to understand if, spiritually, one of the things you want is for your children to have visions and what that means in your family. I've got to understand who you think is in your family. If you see your first cousin's grandchildren as immediate family, I'd better know that as a helping professional. If you use storytelling as a way of transferring values and creating community and family cohesiveness, I need to know that as a helper, because I am going to tap into that cultural strength just like you are tapping into that cultural strength.

I think that the organizations that we work in create an environment where it is either easier or less easy to be culturally competent. So the organization has to have a set of congruent practice skills and attitudes and policies and structures that come together in a system of care that allow us and enable us and empower us to work effectively across cultures. So the organization that I work for, or the agency that I am employed by, should make it their business to help me meet you at the level you meet your basic human needs. If my organization defines the family as mom and dad and kids, and you define family as your extended kinship network, and I want to do a family meeting and I just bring in mom and dad and kids, I've left all the decision makers at home. I haven't met you where you meet your basic human needs. And my organization, by creating a definition of family that doesn't fit your family, has gotten in the way of me being able to meet you where I need to meet you. So what I see as important in our discussion this morning about a culturally competent system of care and the cultural competence value that is in this system

of care notion, is that we are going to value diversity. We are going to value how people meet their basic human needs as being viable and functional patterns, that we have to carry that value through in our systems of care. So all of the things, all of the stories that you shared this morning become resources for help and change. That is why cultural competence language is in the values of the systems of care. I think too often it gets narrowly defined that that is only because of communities of color. It is extremely important in communities of color, because it is where it most often bumps up against people not getting the service that they need. But I don't want to diminish the fact that all of us have culture, and all of us have cultural resources to draw on for the strengths of our families. The more we pay attention to that, the better that we are going to get working cross-culturally, as well as working in our own culture.

I want just one more overhead to share with you. This is what I see as the elements of becoming culturally competent, and why we talk about cultural competence.

**Figure 5.  
Five Elements of Cultural Competence**

<b>Individual Awareness and Acceptance of Difference</b>	<b>Organizational Valuing Diversity</b>
<b>Awareness of Own Cultural Values</b>	<b>Cultural Self Assessment</b>
<b>Understanding Dynamics of Difference</b>	<b>Managing for the Dynamics of Difference</b>
<b>Development of Cultural Knowledge</b>	<b>Institutionalization of Cultural Knowledge</b>
<b>Ability to Adapt Practice to the Cultural Context of the Client</b>	<b>Adaptation to Diversity Policies Structure Values Services</b>

I want to put this in the framework of where we've been today. These elements come together to help us be able to work effectively across cultures. The awareness and acceptance of difference. You heard a lot of different family stories today. And they are going to be different and the belief systems are different. But if we can begin to value that the things that we heard are strengths for that person and for their family, and those are resources that they can draw on, we have taken the first step toward cultural competence. If we can understand our own cultural values, if we can understand how culture shapes our own life, if we can begin to understand, what are these things in the world around me that shape my decision making, the things that we usually take for granted. Sometimes it takes something like that fish, that saltwater fish that gets thrown in fresh water, sometimes that kind of cultural experience helps us understand what our own values are, what our own beliefs are, how we regard culture as a resource in our own family. That is the second step toward becoming effective working across cultures and understanding each other. For an organization, it means you have to go through a sorting process of understanding what are the cultures in our community, but also what is the culture of our organization.

The third step—and I don't mean to say these are one after another, I think they get all mixed up and we have to continually go back and redo them all of the time—the third step is understanding the dynamics of difference. By dynamics of difference I mean what happens when you and I get together in a helping relationship and you have one way of thinking about family and I have another way of thinking about family. Where are we going to miss each other if we don't pay attention to that. What do we do when part of your family story, part of your history is a history of oppression, and I come to the relationship thinking I am one of the good guys? How do we work together? How do we have the conversation? How do we understand? I worked for many years in a program with very seriously troubled kids, many of whose troubles were about having been seriously abused, physically and sexually. And one of the things that I

learned is that it didn't matter, it didn't matter how much I loved or cared for a child who had been damaged by someone else. Their ability to trust was shaped by their experience with the world. I could create an environment and a relationship in which they could explore and perhaps build some safety. But if I didn't respect, if I didn't meet them where they were, that adults were dangerous, just to start off with, I never got to the place of being therapeutic with them.

I know from working with and being part of the Native American community, I come from an abused people. If you don't meet me at that level of understanding that that history of oppression and abuse shapes how I am going to interact with you, you will miss the opportunity to get to the place where we can create a dialogue of change and growth. Respecting the pain of the histories of our peoples. We have the opportunity to change it if we move it forward in a respectful way. And it is natural. It is what is going to happen between people who are different, we are going to bump into each other. If any of you who are in long-term relationship where you have lived with a partner, know exactly what I mean when I say the dynamics of difference. We bring to those relationships political differences, religious difference, child-rearing differences, different concepts of family, different concepts of money. How do we work them out in those relationships? Through an awful lot of hard work. And usually we have the luxury of loving one another and it helps us get through the process. It is a lot harder when we don't even like each other. I want to emphasize to you that when we are going toward building family strengths based in our cultures, when we begin in relationships crossing cultural boundaries, be prepared for it to be a lot of work. But it is good work. It is good work, because it is rich.

The next element here, in becoming culturally competent, is the development of the cultural knowledge. The way to develop that cultural knowledge, you can read and learn, but to spend time with people, to hear and to see and observe, to be part of that person's world. That is one of the best ways to understand and develop cultural knowledge.

Finally, the last step is adapting our practice, adapting the way we do things to fit the cultural context of the people that we work with, so that we are meeting them where they meet their basic human needs.

I thank you. This has been a fun session this morning. I hope it gets you off to a good start to talk about culture and cultural competence and culture as a resource for building family strengths.

**Nancy Koroloff:** Thank you Terry. I've heard Terry speak many times, and every time I hear him speak I come away with new inspiration and a new piece of information. Today was the same experience.