

Discussion Paper: Evaluating Different Options for a Cultural Awareness Training

January 2021¹

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1 Introduction

The Community Engagement Committee (CEC) recommended the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (hereafter Council) and its staff participate in a cultural awareness training at its June 2019 meeting.² Pursuing cultural awareness training is in line with long-standing Council policy priorities focusing on improving relationships and communication with tribes and other rural stakeholders, and Council leadership determined that this training was one of the CEC's recommendations that could be explored and potentially implemented prior to the final committee report.

Council staff have actively pursued and evaluated different options for a cultural awareness training while considering the time and budget constraints of the Council.³ For example, one proposal from a consulting entity recommended by resource development companies operating in rural Alaska met the Council's constraints and the entity was contracted to provide a training in fall 2019. Unfortunately, the company was unable to meet the contract requirements and the contract was cancelled. Throughout 2020, some Council staff members have also voluntarily participated in different sections of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Alaska Native Relations training.

This paper is meant to assist the Council in determining its objectives for participating in a cultural awareness training. **More specifically, it provides the CEC an opportunity to make recommendations to the Council on its preferred purpose for a cultural awareness training, prioritize different elements of a training's design, and provide input to staff on how to move forward.** This is a transparent approach that helps to ensure the Council is involved from the beginning in setting the objectives and scope of the training so it can best achieve the Council's goals.

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² CEC report, June 2019: <http://meetings.npfmc.org/CommentReview/DownloadFile?p=d6b7bcac-28bc-48bd-8b7f-db84c2444e6e.pdf&fileName=D8%20Community%20Engagement%20Committee%20Minutes%20June%202019.pdf>

³ Council staff were aware of [Executive Order 13950](#), Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping when preparing this discussion paper.

2 Determining the objective for a cultural awareness training

This paper presents two high-level objectives for what a cultural awareness training could achieve, namely that it would be educational or process-informing in its nature.

- **An educational training would provide an opportunity for knowledge accumulation where its purpose is to increase participant’s understanding of a range of topics including Alaska Native societies, tribes, and rural communities more broadly, as well as best practices for engaging these stakeholders.**
- **A process-informing training would provide an opportunity for participants to reflect on and evaluate the Council’s decision-making process with an eye towards engaging Alaska Native societies, tribes, and other rural stakeholders.**

These objectives are not mutually exclusive and could be achieved under the same training. Additionally, determining a high-level objective does not preclude the Council from pursuing particular learning or skillset outcomes. It is, however, the starting point for considering providers. Section 4 provides a non-exhaustive set of discussion questions to help the reader evaluate the different training objectives and potential providers.

3 Potential provider options for a cultural awareness training

This section describes four different provider options for a cultural awareness training: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s (USFWS) Alaska Native Relations course, Alaska Native Heritage Center’s (ANHC) Cultural Awareness Workshop, First Alaskans Institute’s (FAI) Alaska Native Governance Protocols or Dialogue on Racial Equity, and an open Request for Proposals (RFP). These four options are not exhaustive, and the Council could direct staff to pursue other providers. However, they do provide a range of different opportunities for Council, staff, and agency partners. Keeping in mind the two potential objectives for a training, this section helps the reader to weigh the pros and cons of different providers including the duration of a training, the cost of a training when it is known, the training’s content, the ability of the Council and staff to rely on a provider’s expertise or relationships with Alaska Native Elders, and the Council’s ability to co-create an agenda.

Table 1 Comparison of potential providers against different design considerations

	USFWS	ANHC	FAI		RFP
			Alaska Native Governance Protocols	Dialogue on Racial Equity	
Educational (Objective 1)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Process-informing (Objective 2)	Does not have a direct pathway for evaluating Council process, but participants can draw connections from pre-selected course content	Does not have a direct pathway for evaluating Council process, but participants can draw connections from pre-selected course content	✓	✓	✓
The Council can set the agenda	✗	Council can create agenda from a pre-determined range of topics	✓	✓	✓
Includes Alaska Native Elders or guest speakers	✓	Available option, dependent upon Council preference	Available option, dependent upon Council preference	Available option, dependent upon Council preference	Available option, dependent upon Council preference
Flexible timing	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓

3.1 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

Alaska Native Relations is primarily **an educational training** provided by USFWS and facilitated by the region’s Alaska Native Affairs Specialist. This course provides participants a better understanding of Alaska Native history and societies, the relationship between Federal laws and Alaska Natives, Traditional Knowledge, and subsistence ways of living from an Alaska Native perspective. Throughout the training, participants have an opportunity to learn from Alaska Native Elders and other expert guest speakers participating on issue-specific panels.

Alaska Native Relations is typically offered twice annually (November/December and February/March timeframe) and is a 32-hour in-person training. The duration reflects its immersive nature. While the Council has previously specified it was seeking a one-day training for staff and agency partners and a three to four hour training for Council members, this provider and others indicated a four hour period would be insufficient to deal with the complexity of issues incorporated into a cultural awareness training.

During the global pandemic, sections of Alaska Native Relations have been hosted online but it is uncertain whether an entire second course will be provided in a virtual setting in 2021. Therefore, it is uncertain when the Council could expect to participate in this course. When Alaska Native Relations is held in-person, the typical cost is \$1,000 per person for non-Department of Interior employees. Although non-USFWS employees may enroll in the course, the target audience is USFWS, and more broadly, Department of Interior employees. The targeted audience of Alaska Native Relations is important because the content will not be tailored to the Council's context of marine management.

3.2 Alaska Native Heritage Center (ANHC)

ANHC provides a Cultural Awareness Workshop. The Workshop is **an educational training** that offers an opportunity for participants to learn more about Alaska Native peoples and cultures including Alaska Native history, best practices for inter-cultural communication, and alternative medias like film and dance. There is some flexibility for the Council to co-create an agenda as the Council could select topics from a range of pre-determined options. The Workshop has a flexible duration ranging from a half day to two full days depending on the topics selected by the client. However, the content is not specific to the Council's jurisdiction or process, similar to Alaska Native Relations. Cultural Awareness Workshops are typically hosted in-person at the ANHC in Anchorage, AK. During the global pandemic, the Workshop is provided on a virtual platform. The cost for this option is dependent upon the Workshop's content, duration, and the number of participants. The dates for this training are not pre-determined and would be available based on the availability of the client and provider. The Council could expect to participate in a virtual training offered by ANHC in 2021.

3.3 First Alaskans Institute (FAI)

FAI offers two different workshops related to cultural awareness—Alaska Native Governance Protocols and a Dialogue on Racial Equity. Alaska Native Governance Protocols blends **an educational component with an extended dialogue** on the different governance structures and policies that influence Alaska Natives as well as protocols or best practices for engaging tribes and rural communities. A topical example that could be covered is how staff might approach visiting a rural village or tribe. Dialogue on Racial Equity is **a facilitated, extended conversation** between the provider, the participants, and special guests like Alaska Native Elders on Indigenous rights, racial status, and personal experiences of racial inequality. These two workshops are distinct. If a client wants to participate in both workshops, FAI's recommendation is that Alaska Native Governance Protocols occur first.

Both workshops include an educational component, but FAI focuses on building a partnership with the partner client to co-create an agenda and experience that is useful for achieving their objectives. FAI also indicated to staff they have some expertise related to the Council's jurisdiction in marine management. Recognizing the need for sensitivity, FAI utilizes tools that allow questions to be asked anonymously regardless of whether the workshop is hosted in-person or a virtual setting. In terms of timing, Alaska Native Governance Protocols is approximately nine hours long and occurs over three staggered sessions spread out over two weeks. The cost of a workshop provided by FAI depends on the workshop's design, specifically the number of hosts and its duration. The dates for this training are not pre-determined and would be available based on the availability of the client and provider. The Council could expect to participate in a virtual training offered by ANHC in 2021.

3.4 Open request for proposals (RFP)

The Council could choose to solicit a Request for Proposals (RFP) for cultural awareness training providers. This option could potentially allow the Council the most flexibility for determining the objective(s) and the content for a cultural awareness training. For example, by including this information in the RFP, potential providers can assess whether they have the tools and ability to achieve them.

Writing an RFP and evaluating submissions is likely a more time consuming process than the other three provider options. The cost of a cultural awareness training under an RFP approach is uncertain, and would depend on the Council's objectives, the training's duration, whether it would include guest speakers, and the venue (i.e., a virtual setting, the Council staff office, etc.). This option could be useful if the Council would like to have long-term ownership of a training where the vision is to have new members or staff participate in the future. The Council could expect to participate in a training co-created through an RFP in 2022. This estimate is based on staff's assumption that Council would take action to specify its preferences at the February 2021 meeting, which would give staff direction to solicit the RFP in spring 2021 and receive submissions from potential providers by fall 2021.

4 Next steps

The purpose of this discussion paper is to assist the Council in determining its objective(s) for participating in a cultural awareness training. The Council could choose to not pursue a training moving forward. However, if the Council wants to move this CEC recommendation forward, it would need to provide staff with its preferred objective(s) for a cultural awareness training. Related, the Council could specify particular priorities or design features. With this information Council staff could move forward with coordinating a training.

Potential committee discussion questions:

1. What are the committee's and/or Council's potential objectives for participating in a cultural awareness training?
2. What are the committee's priorities for elements to include in a cultural awareness training?
3. What are the specific outcomes that should be achieved by having the Council, Council staff, and/or agency partners participate in a cultural awareness training?
4. What is the prioritization of topics that should be included a training or workshop? A non-exhaustive list of topics includes:
 - Village and tribal protocols – best practices for engagement
 - Understanding Alaska Native societies, history, and spirituality
 - Subsistence and Alaska Native ways of life
 - Traditional Knowledge
 - U.S. laws and Alaska Natives
 - Alaska Native Organizations
 - Tribal Consultation
 - Co-Management and co-production
5. The following are a series of logistical questions for committee and Council consideration:
 - Who, or which Council bodies, should participate in a cultural awareness training?
 - Would participation in a training be voluntary, and if so, for whom?
 - What are the time constraints for the Council or Council staff participating in a training?
 - What are the committee and/or Council's goals for the frequency of a cultural awareness training (e.g., a one-time event or ongoing available option)?