

5. A Synopsis of Cultural Differences

The following statements outline some of the major ways in which traditional Aboriginal oral cultures differ from Canada's mainstream organizational culture. These statements are meant as broad guides and not as universally true. There can be as many differences among Aboriginal cultures as there are between Canadian cultures; all of the items below should be taken as broad generalizations rather than fixed guides.

In many (not all) traditional cultures...

- Community is the foremost of all values
- Oral learning and recollection take precedence over written communication methods
- The present is the dominant tense
- The world is understood mythically
- Goals are met with patience
- Ownership is often communal
- Gifts are regarded as the means of keeping social bonds secure.
- Work is primarily motivated by group need
- Aging is often a source of wisdom
- Eye contact is thought over-assertive
- Silences are acceptable
- Assertiveness can be non-communal
- Listening skills are prized
- Soft spoken words carry farthest
- Nodding signifies understanding
- The handshake is soft, signaling no threat
- Collective decisions are consensual
- There is an abiding faith in harmony with nature
- Family is extended family
- People best respond to praise of the group