

Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC) Adult Reentry Services

PATHWAYS TO HEALING



CITC Reentry Program Purpose

To empower individuals transitioning from incarceration by rooting their reentry journey in Alaska Native values, fostering holistic wellness and long-term community integration.

Culture-First Approach

Recognizing that connections to heritage is a powerful protective factor, our program links participants with CITC's culturally responsive services to assist them on their path to wellness.

Partnership

No one should have to navigate reentry alone. CITC partners with a diverse range of community providers to ensure our participants have the holistic support they need to thrive.



In-Reach Services



Early Engagement



Facility in-reach



Collaborative Care

Cultural Values Infused into Healing

Restorative Justice: Shifting the lens from punishment to "renewed relationships and forgiveness," modeled after traditional village structures.

Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT)—identifies thinking errors that led to offending and addresses them by:

- ✓ Confronting existing beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors
- ✓ Assessing current relationships
- ✓ Reinforcing positive habits and behaviors
- ✓ Developing a positive identity
- ✓ Enhancing self-concept
- ✓ Decreasing hedonism and building frustration tolerance
- ✓ Developing higher stages of moral reasoning



Culture Is Our Medicine





Thank You

Chin'an
Taikuu
Tsiin'aen
Quyanaqpak
Qağaasakuq
Haw'aa
Quyana
Gunalchéesh





Youth Reentry

Culture in Correctional Facilities

CITC Youth Reentry

Provides cultural programming to incarcerated youth and reentry case management

Take Away

Sustained engagement was a product of both the relationships formed between youth and staff as well as the relevance of the programming.

Between 2023-25, CITC's Youth Reentry facilitated over 180 cultural groups and recorded more than 2,000 sign-ins at McLaughlin Youth Center.

The Implementation Gap

“Culturally responsive” is widely pointed to and sought after as a solution, yet it is rarely defined, which hinders its implementation in correctional facilities.

Challenges:

- Culture is living—it varies across communities and individuals—making it challenging to capture in a rigid curriculum. Without clear guidance, however, programming becomes ad hoc and often ineffective.
- Inexperienced and short-term staff can undermine the work—culture can become a teaching topic rather than a foundation for teaching.
- Correctional settings often require clearly defined programming.
- Some cultural practices are rooted in oral traditions and are not readily available to a wider community, while the teaching of others is considered a sacred rite not appropriate for outsiders.

Bridging the Gap:

- Uplift existing community knowledge
- Allow time for quality programming to develop
- Support the longevity of skilled staff
- Recognize culture as a living practice, not a fixed commodity
- Ground the work in cultural values, not just cultural practices

The power of culturally responsive work is not just in teaching cultural content—it lies in its ability to build community grounded in cultural values and its adaptive ability to respond to the needs, dynamics, and realities of the environment it's in.

Creating flexible lesson plans that are responsive to the population, environment, and recent events

Adapting to different learning styles

Embracing Indigenous methods of teaching

Positioning as fellow learner and role model

Facilitation Tactics

Tactics in Practice: Orange Shirt Day



We Remember

A Narrative Exercise on Indian Residential Schools

Purpose: To commemorate the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (“Orange Shirt Day”) by creating an experience that fosters empathy and understanding of the intergenerational effects of Residential Schools on individuals, families, and communities. The activity seeks to highlight the theme of Orange Shirt Day: Every Child Matters.

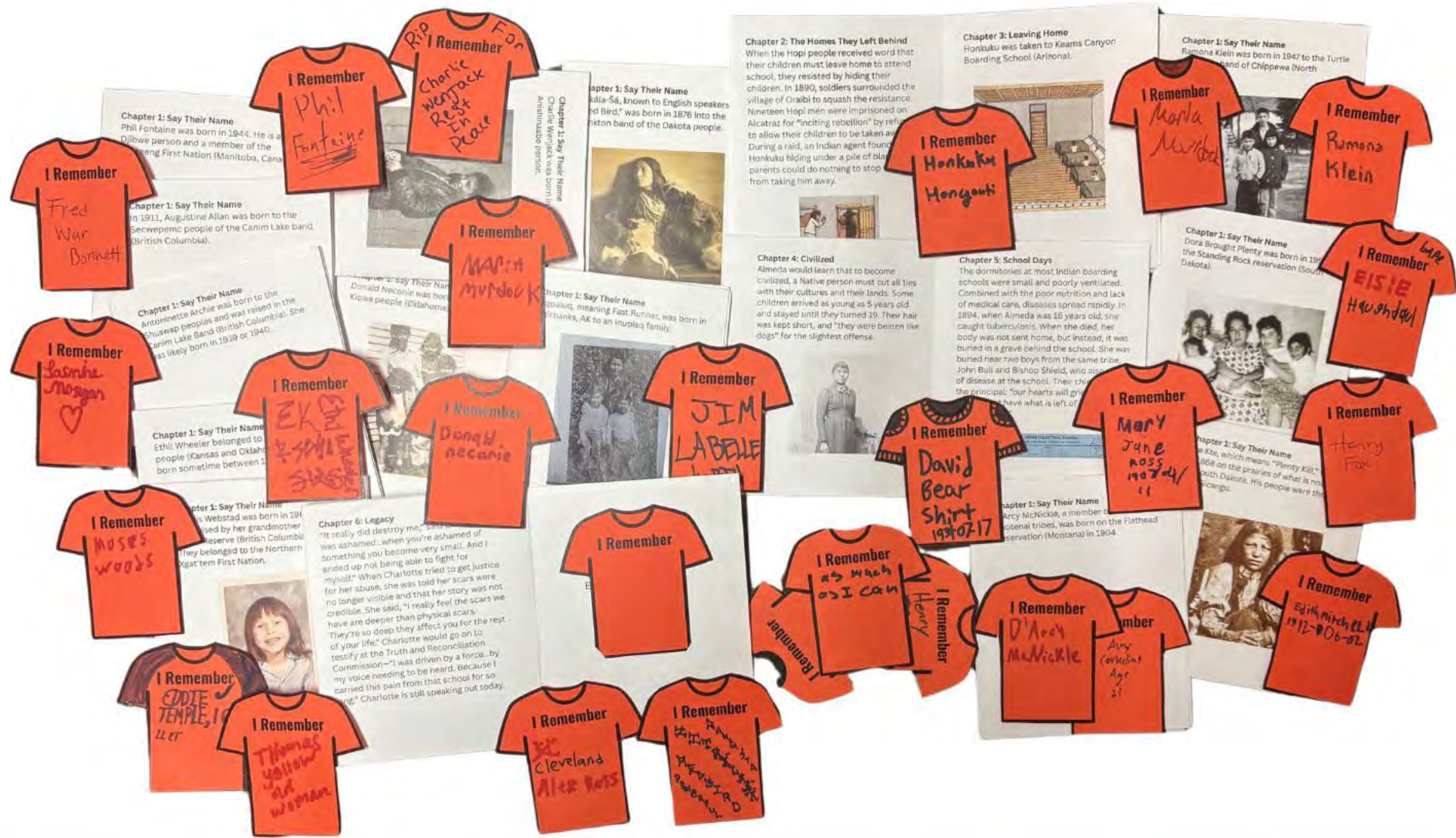
Teaching hard histories, even when painful, gives young people the tools to develop empathy, confront injustice, and understand the resilience of those who came before them. While challenging, the intent is to create conversations that honor that past and work toward a more just and compassionate future.

Content Notice: This activity addresses the history of Indian Residential Schools. While the stories have been adapted for a younger audience, they still include real experiences of abuse, trauma, and loss. These may be upsetting or triggering.

Format:

This narrative activity is modeled after the The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s identity cards and facilitated in a manner similar to the Alaska Blanket Exercise. The following materials are needed: identity booklets, facilitator narration guide, and a marker.

- Structured format supports clear behavior expectations
- Adapts to group size, engagement, and emotional needs
- Uses auditory, discussion-based learning
- Models talking circle format, practicing respect and listening
- Positions the facilitator as a fellow learner



Ending with action builds empowerment. Youth don't just learn—they practice. In this group, they practiced witnessing.

Objective:
To discuss healthy ways to manage disappointment.

*"Hold on to what is good, Even if it's a handful of earth.
Hold on to what you believe, Even if it's a tree that stands
by itself. Hold on to what you must do, Even if it's a long
way from here. Hold on to your life, Even if it's easier to
let go.
- Crowfoot, Blackfoot warrior and orator 1830 - 1890*

*Carve a tunnel of hope through the dark mountain of
disappointment.
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.,*

DISAPPOINTMENT
A TALKING CIRCLE

Discussion Questions

What is it like when someone lets you down? When someone fails to come through for you, fails to live up to their promises?

What can your response be when there are circumstances that are out of your control and disappoint you? What is in your control?

To make the situation right, is the person who was wronged owed something? What happens if the person who wronged you never attempts to right that wrong?

What does it take for a person to be steady, reliable, trustworthy? What can you do to be someone who is known for the integrity of their word?

Responsive Groups

- Responsive groups are more relevant—and relevance drives impact
- Address behavior in real time and build group accountability
- Create space for processing and validation
- Reinforce the work of DJJ treatment staff
- Offer an alternative to punitive responses

The lesson plan on the left was created to respond to youth feeling let down during a staff shortage.

Traditional Groups

Traditional cultural groups are often the default when cultural programming is discussed, yet they require a high level of care and ethical awareness.

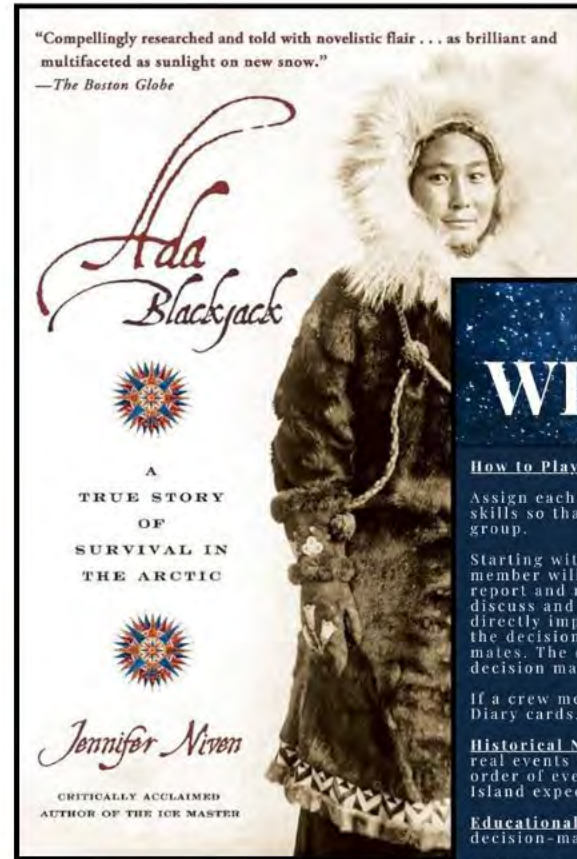
An Ethical Approach to Cultural Programming

- When possible, practices are learned from cultural practitioners
- Shared with respect, not representation (unless the facilitator is a cultural representative)
- Requires awareness of and adherence to cultural protocols
- Requires time, guidance, and ongoing learning to do responsibly





A competitive trivia game



A decision-making game

SURVIVAL ON WRANGEL ISLAND

How to Play:
Assign each player a crew card. Read aloud the character's background and skills so that the crew is familiar with what each can contribute to the group.

Starting with Commander Crawford and then moving to the right, each crew member will take turns picking up a Diary card, which will have the day's report and may present a situation that requires a decision. Players must discuss and decide the best course of action, knowing that every choice will directly impact survival, morale, and resources. While the person listed in the decision has the ultimate say, they may take advice from their crew mates. The crew will not always be together, and in those situations, the decision maker is only able to draw advice from those present.

If a crew member is unwell or dies, they can continue their turns reading Diary cards, but they are not able to influence the decision maker.

Historical Note: The Diary cards are based on the crew's diaries, reflecting real events from the expedition. While players' choices may change the order of events, each outcome is rooted in the true history of the Wrangell Island expedition.

Educational Goals: This game is designed to teach participants about decision-making and teamwork.

Cultural Relevance: This game highlights the achievements of Ada Blackjack, the most famous Alaskan Native explorer. Despite her survival being an extraordinary feat, Ada's story was often overlooked, minimized, or dismissed because of her gender.

Modern Groups

Blending cultural history with modern interests can engage youth on a more personal level, giving them a way to connect with—and remember—the lessons taught.

Diverse Groups

As a tribal organization, CITC prioritizes teaching and celebrating Alaska Native and American Indian culture. McLaughlin Youth Center, however, serves a diverse group of youth, and Youth Reentry seeks to acknowledge that diversity.

What Youth Gain Through Diversity

- Builds perspective beyond personal experience
- Challenges assumptions and stereotypes
- Develops empathy and humanizes others
- Creates connection and reduces “us vs. them” thinking
- Builds respectful communication and social skills
- Strengthens sense of identity and self-awareness



Working with DJJ

- Clarity: Clear understanding of proposed materials and expected movement
- Competency: Confidence in facilitators who understand facility rules, processes, and behavior dynamics
- Consistency: Both youth and staff benefit from consistent facilitators and expectations
- Constraints: Structured environments require predictable, boundary-aligned facilitation

Lightning Ball The Jim Thorpe Game Instructions.pdf 784 KB

Lightning Ball The Jim Thorpe Game Lesson Plan.pdf 1 MB

To celebrate Winter Olympics and the upcoming Super Bowl, I have a game planned on the life of Jim Thorpe. A member of the Sac and Fox Nation, Jim Thorpe broke barriers and became one of the most accomplished athletes the world has ever known—hopefully, he can inspire the kids. I've attached the instructions if you'd like to see how I plan to have the kids set up as well as the lesson plan.

I plan to be on all units and bring the following materials:


- Paper game boards and cards
- 2 paper game figurines and clay stand per board
- 1 sand timer per board
- 2 coins per board

Let me know if you have any questions,

Kaitlyn Hickey

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The image above shows how materials and facilitation plans are communicated to DJJ leadership.



Purpose: Lightning Ball is a team-based educational game that introduces participants to the life and legacy of Jim Thorpe—one of the greatest athletes of all time and a member of the Sac and Fox Nation. The activity combines learning, movement, and collaboration in a structured, engaging format.

Participants practice and develop:

- Exposure to Indigenous history through Jim Thorpe's life and achievements
- Teamwork, cooperation, and turn-taking
- Reading comprehension and listening skills
- Quick decision-making in a low-stakes, supportive environment
- Respectful competition and sportsmanship

This activity requires:

- Lightning Ball Instructions
- Lightning Ball Game Boards
- Game Pieces (Play Cards, Paper Footballs, coins, game figurines)

Discussion Questions:

- What's one thing you learned or noticed about Jim Thorpe?
- How did Jim's identity as a Native American impact his career? Can someone be great at something and still not be treated fairly? What does that say about society?
- Jim Thorpe competed in multiple sports at the highest level. What kind of athletic skill or mindset do you think made that possible?
- What do you think Jim Thorpe had that set him apart from other athletes?

The image above shows a lesson plan outlining cultural significance, learning outcomes, materials, and adaptable prompts that guide the group as it unfolds.



We envision a future in which all Our People—especially our youth, the stewards of our future—have access to vast opportunities, and have the ability, confidence, and courage to advance and achieve their goals, infused with an unshakeable belief in



**our
endless
potential**