



Rooted in Culture, Connected to Care:

A Tribal Approach to Care Coordination

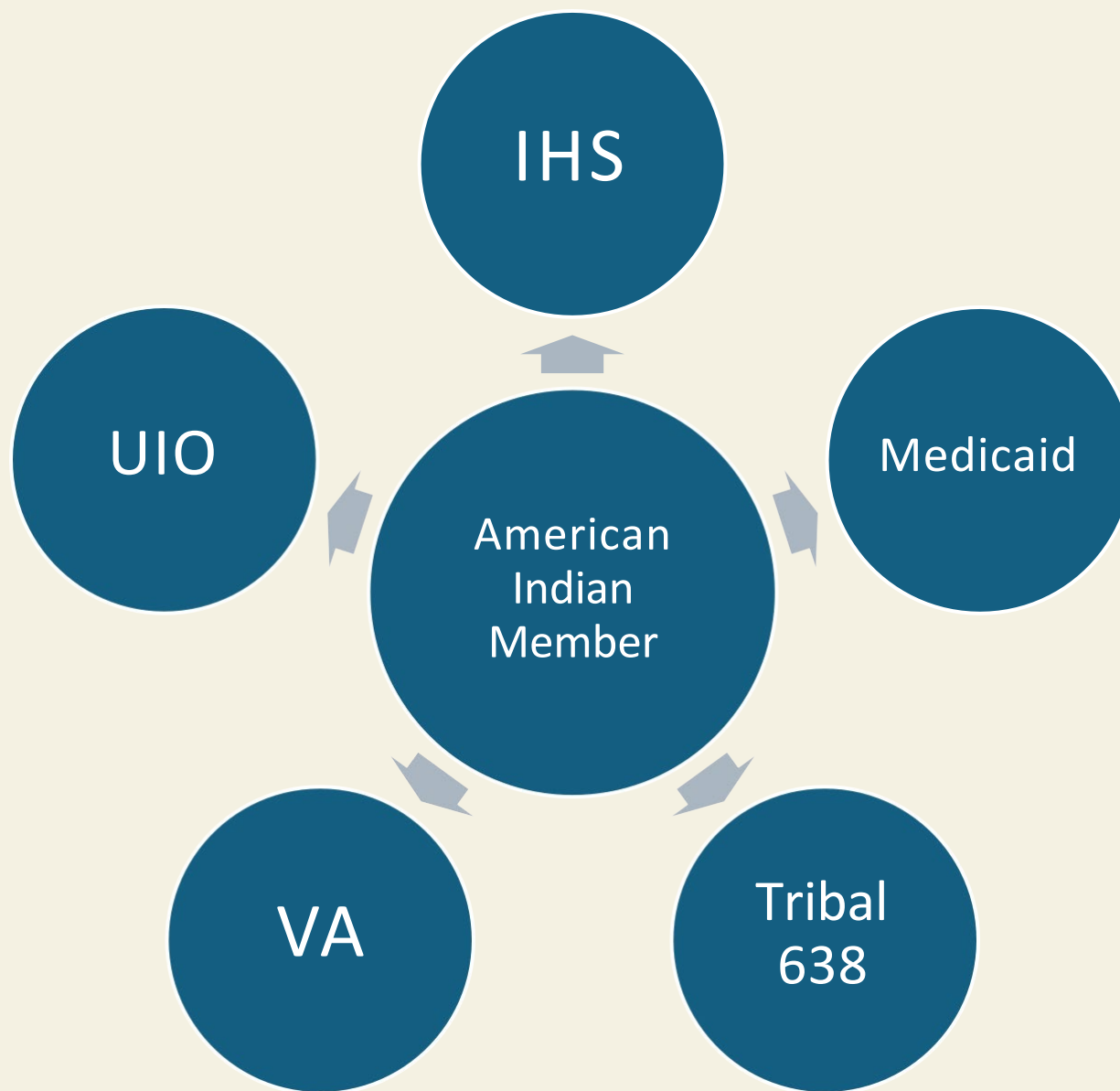
CMS ITU Training – September 2026

Holly Figueroa,
White Mountain Apache Behavioral Health Services,
Tribal Relations Project Manager



Objective

- Provide an overview of care coordination for Tribal members within Medicaid
 - Highlight the complexities of navigating multiple systems of care
 - Strengthen understanding of partnerships across Tribal, state, and federal systems
 - Promote culturally responsive approaches that center Tribal communities
- 





Systems of Care

- Indian Health Services
 - Tribal 638
 - Urban Indian Health Programs
 - Medicaid
 - Veterans Affairs
- 



Indian Health System (I/T/U)

This system provides health services to American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN). It ensures access to care through federal, tribally managed, and nonprofit facilities, including specialized services like Medicaid/Medicare billing and veteran care.

- Indian Health Services (IHS)
 - Tribal Health Programs
 - Urban Indian Health Programs
- 



Indian Health Service (IHS)

An agency within the Department of Health and Human Services, is responsible for providing federal health services to American Indians and Alaska Natives.





Tribal 638 (Public Law 93-638)

"Tribal 638" refers to **Public Law 93-638**, the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975, which empowers federally recognized tribes to manage federal programs (health, education, roads) directly, fostering sovereignty. These "638 contracts" or "638-ing it" means tribes take over administration and funding from agencies like the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) or Indian Health Service (IHS), replacing federal oversight with tribal self-governance



Urban Indian Organizations

Nonprofit corporate body situated in an urban center governed by a board of directors of whom at least 51 percent are AI/ANs, for establishing and administering an urban Indian health program and related activities as described in Title V of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act.

- A map of I/T/U locations and services
 - [CMS](#)
- Participating I/T/U facilities for veterans
 - [I/T/U healthcare facilities and clinics contact list - Community Care](#)



U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs

Tribal Veteran Services provide Native American veterans with access to VA benefits—including disability compensation, healthcare, pensions, and home loans—often through specialized, culturally competent partnerships and tribal offices.

[Tribal_Veteran_Services_Directory](#)

- Official Website: VHA Office of Tribal Health
 - Email Support: VHAOfficeofTribalHealth@va.gov
 - General VA Inquiries: 800-698-2411
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Tribal Member Care Coordination

WHERE
DO I
START





How Does Culture Impact Care/Service?

Health is a ***cultural construct*** based on cultural issues and beliefs about the nature of disease/illness and the human body. Therefore, culture should be considered in the delivery of care and/or services.



Cultural Competence and Cultural Humility: What's the Difference?



Cultural Competence

Mastery/Expert

End Point

Rigid

Technical

Hierarchy

Linear

Status quo



Cultural Humility

Learner/student

Fluid

Flexible, dynamic

Personal, authentic

Partnership

Evolving

Pathy to Equity

Four Pillars of Cultural Humility

A lifelong process of critical self-reflection and self critique

Redressing the power imbalances in the patient-provider dynamic

Developing mutually beneficial partnerships with communities on behalf of individuals and defined populations

Advocating and maintaining institutional accountability that parallels the three principles above

Challenges & Barriers



Impact of Colonization



Geography



Federal Policy



Historical & Intergenerational Trauma



Lack of Understanding

Tribal Member Care Coordination

- **Section Overview**

- Understanding the unique landscape of Tribal healthcare systems
- Navigating Medicaid, IHS, Tribal, Urban Indian, and VA systems of care
- Identifying barriers and opportunities in coordinating services

- **Key Focus Areas**

- Building strong cross-system partnerships
- Improving communication and collaboration
- Addressing access, authorization, and billing challenges
- Supporting culturally responsive and community-centered care

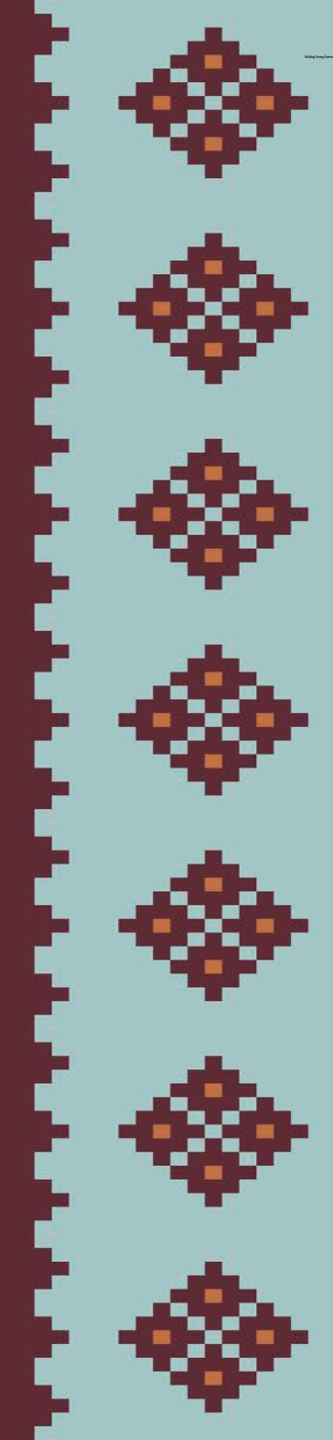
- **Guiding Approach**

- Center Tribal member voice, choice, and lived experience
- Practice cultural humility and respect for sovereignty
- Work collaboratively to achieve seamless, coordinated care across systems

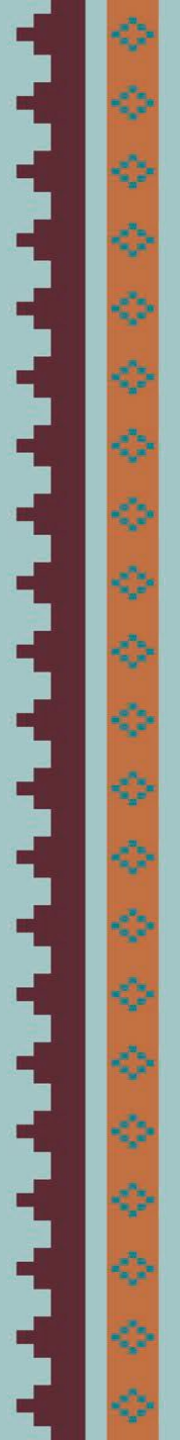


Understanding System Complexity

Navigate	Navigate multiple access points: Medicaid (FFS), IHS, Tribal Urban Indian Organizations, VA, etc.
Recognize	Recognize challenges in accessing care: referrals, transportation, eligibility, and service availability
Understand	Understand billing process, prior authorizations, and coverages



Building Strong Partnerships

- Collaborate with
 - Medicaid
 - Urban Indian Organizations
 - Veterans Affairs (VA)
 - Tribal 638
 - Indian Health Service
 - Others
- 

Effective Communication



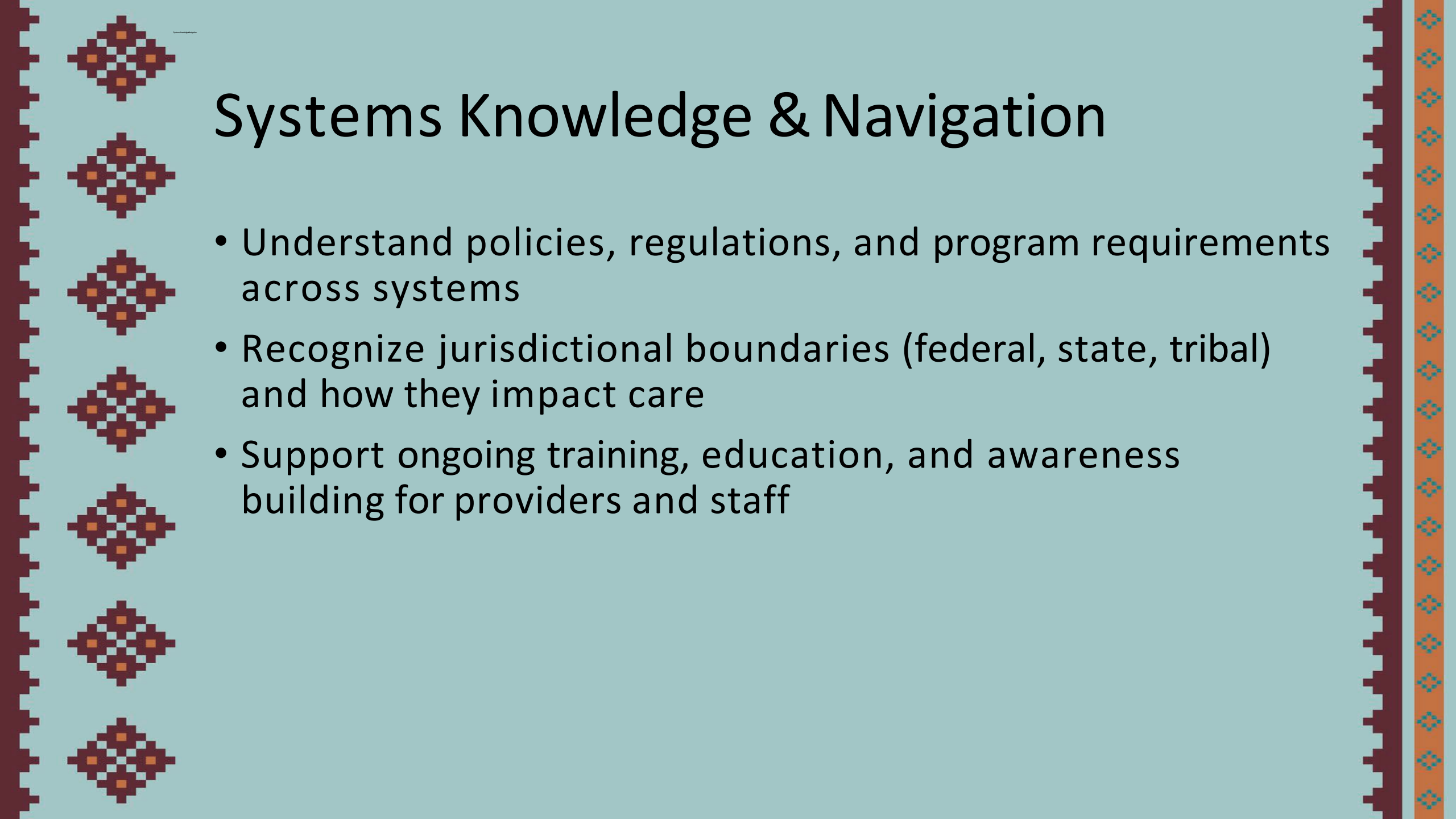
Practice clear, respectful, and culturally responsive communication (verbal & written)



Utilize regular meetings, case reviews, and cross-system coordination to address barriers

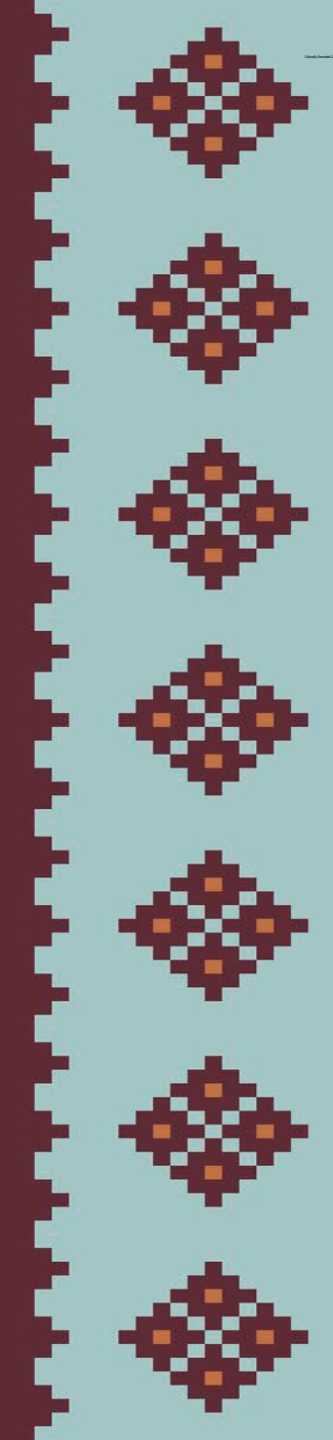


Foster trust through relationship building and follow through

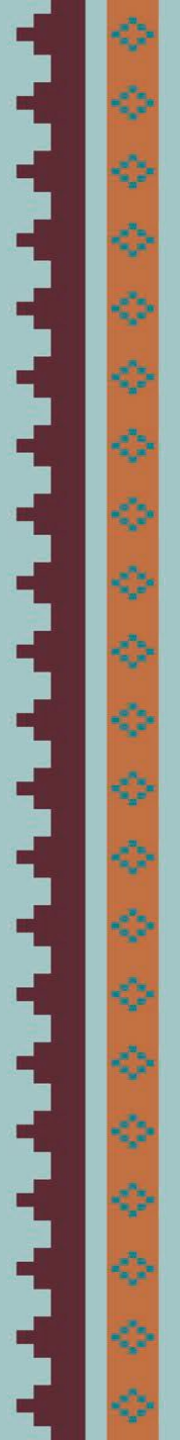


Systems Knowledge & Navigation

- Understand policies, regulations, and program requirements across systems
- Recognize jurisdictional boundaries (federal, state, tribal) and how they impact care
- Support ongoing training, education, and awareness building for providers and staff

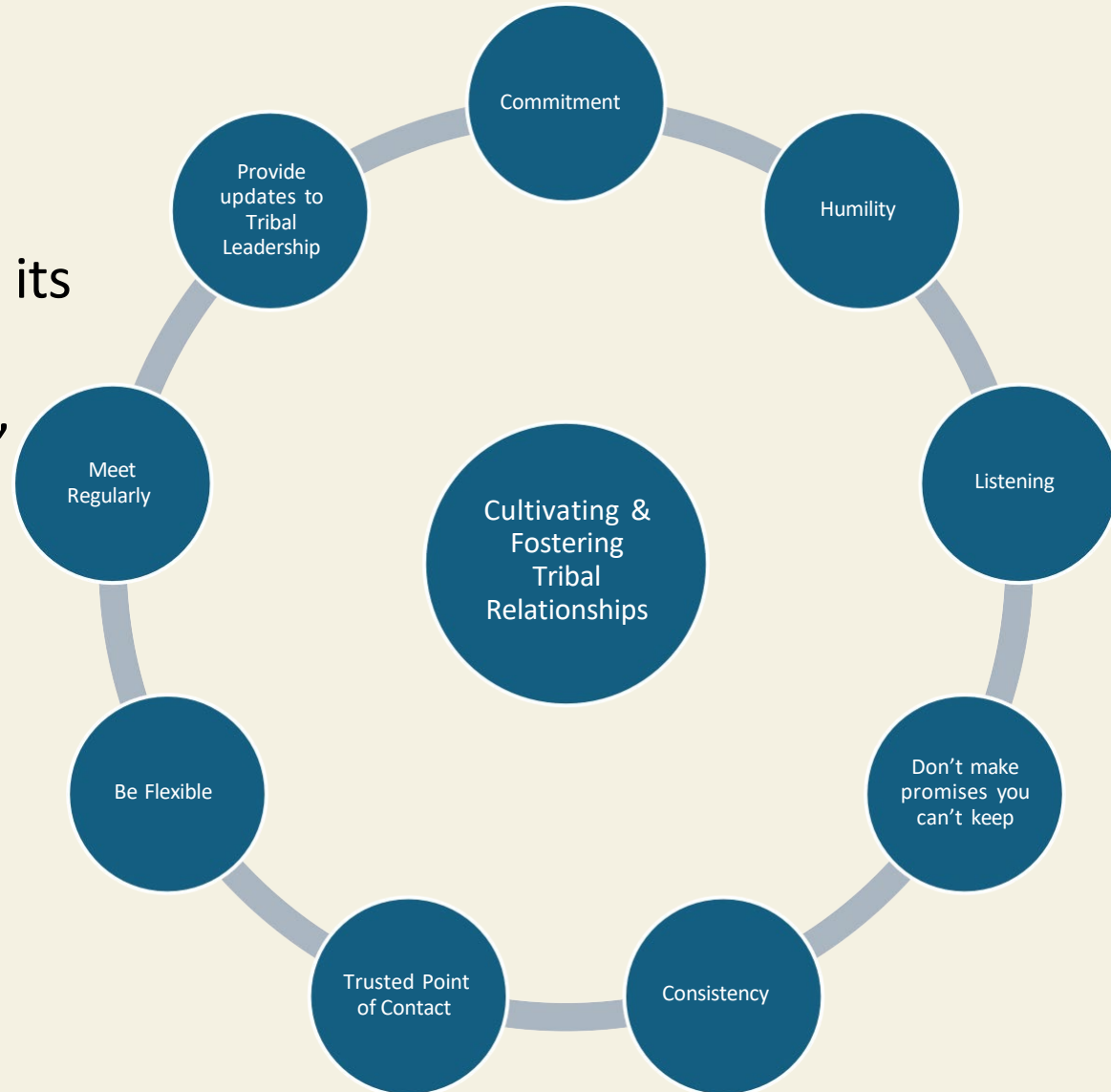


Culturally Grounded Care Coordination

- Honor cultural values, traditions, and community priorities
 - Promote cultural humility in all interactions
 - Center member choice, voice, and holistic well-being
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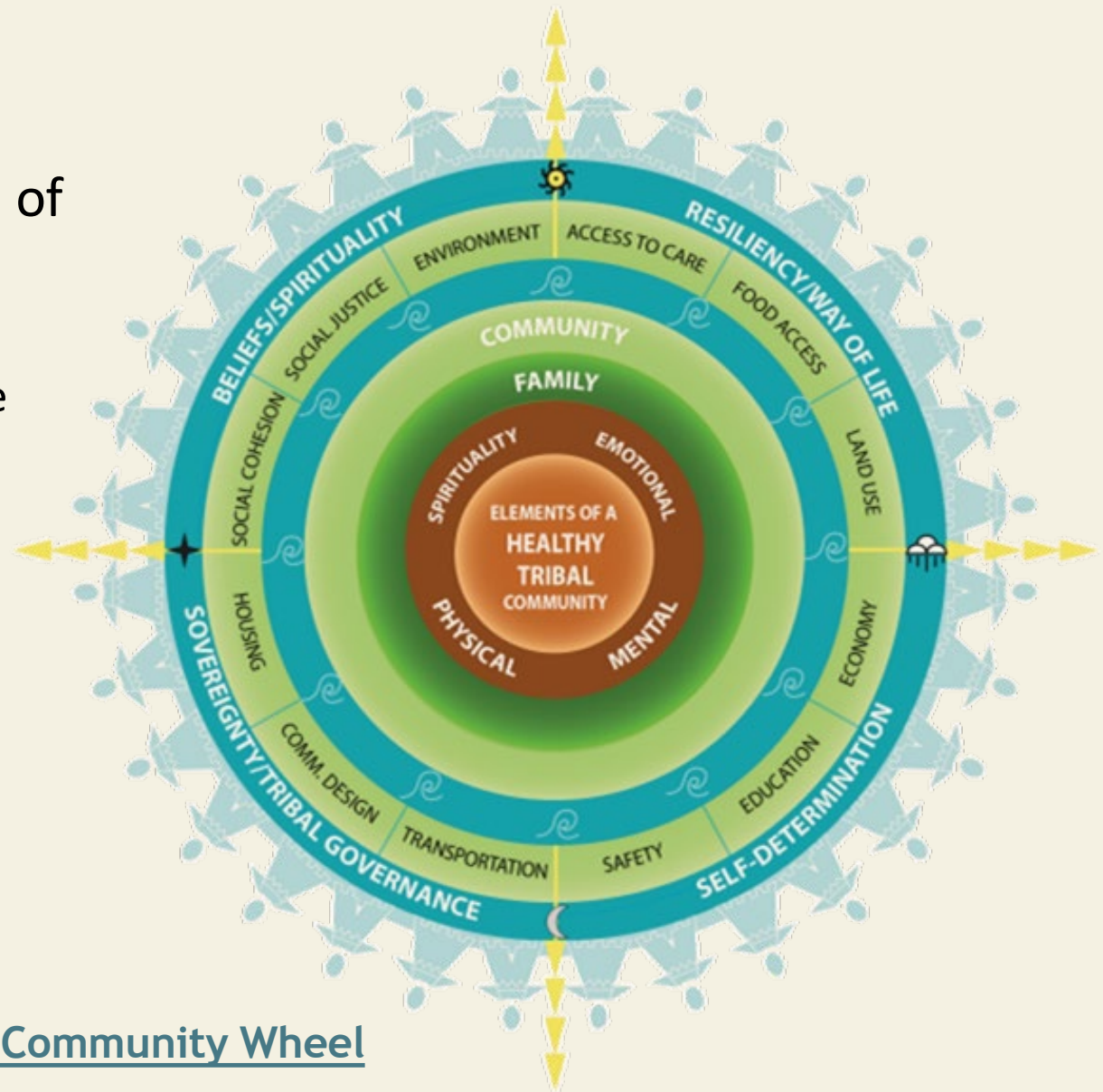
Cultivating & Fostering Relationships

Native American cultures are highly diverse, and each community will have its own set of expectations, beliefs, and practices



Elements of A Healthy Tribal Community

- Four Tribal Principles of Sustaining Health
 - Beliefs & Spirituality
 - Resiliency/Way of life
 - Self Determination
 - Sovereignty/Tribal Governance



Elements of a Healthy Tribal Community Wheel

Asquali



Holly.Figueroa@wmabhs.org

(928) 933-2984