



## Differences between traditional Aboriginal cultures and mainstream Western culture

### TRADITIONAL CULTURE

Community is the foremost of all values  
Knowledge transmitted orally; storytelling traditions  
The present is the dominant tense  
The world is understood mythically  
Goals are met with patience  
Ownership is often communal  
Gifts are regarded as social glue  
Work is often motivated by group need  
Aging is a source of wisdom  
Eye contact is thought over-assertive  
Silences are acceptable anywhere  
Assertiveness is non-communal  
Listening skills are prized  
Soft spoken words carry farthest  
Nodding signifies understanding  
Handshake is soft, signaling no threat  
Collective decisions are consensual  
A faith in harmony with nature  
Family is extended family  
Responds to praise of the group

### MAINSTREAM/WESTERN CULTURE

Individualism is the foremost value  
Tradition of printing and literacy  
The future tense is dominant  
The world is understood scientifically  
Goals are met with aggressive effort  
Ownership is reward for hard work  
Gifts are regarded as holiday issues  
Work is motivated by ambition  
Aging is decay and loss  
Eye contact is part of conversation  
Silences are a waste of time  
Assertiveness is a basic social skill  
Communication skills are prized  
Emphasis carries the day  
Nodding signifies agreement  
Handshake is firm, assertive  
Collective decisions are put to a vote  
A faith in scientific control of nature  
Family is nuclear family  
Responds to praise of the individual

## Comparisons between traditional and scientific knowledge styles

Indigenous Knowledge	Scientific Knowledge
assumed to be the truth	assumed to be a best approximation
sacred and secular together	secular only
teaching through storytelling	didactic
learning by doing and experiencing	learning by formal education
oral or visual	written
integrated, based on a whole system	analytical, based on subsets of the whole
intuitive	model- or hypothesis-based
holistic	reductionist
subjective	objective
experiential	positivist

Comparisons between traditional and scientific knowledge <i>in use</i> Indigenous Knowledge	Scientific Knowledge
lengthy acquisition	rapid acquisition
long-term wisdom	short-term prediction
powerful prediction in local areas	powerful predictability in natural principles
weak in predictive principles in distant areas	weak in local areas of knowledge
models based on cycles	linear modeling as first approximation
explanations based on examples, anecdotes, parables	explanations based on hypothesis, theories, laws
Classification: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a mix of ecological and use</li> <li>• non-hierarchical differentiation</li> <li>• includes everything natural and supernatural</li> </ul>	Classification: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• based on phylogenetic relationships</li> <li>• hierarchical differentiation</li> <li>• excludes the supernatural</li> </ul>