



Encouraging healthy families

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Rural Alaska Community Action Program

Family Systems Training was developed so that participants could evaluate and recreate personal family dynamics. Family Systems brings to consciousness the concept of a healthy family.

All families have wonderful strengths, and all families have certain unhealthy interactions. These unhealthy interactions can retard personal and family growth. This excellent training system enables participants to look at the "whole picture" and not just a fragment.

From this perspective we can increase our awareness of all the possible choices we can make in our lives. As a creative indigenous people we begin to see a variety of ways to interact within our families rather than a few limiting and self-defeating ways.

Specific content includes these points:

- Learn about the healing process by examining family dynamics.
- Learn about the impacts of personal, family and community history and understand the cultural legacy.
- Learn a process and a way to heal families and nurture community growth toward wellness, improving the quality of village life.
- Explore characteristics of healthy and unhealthy families.
- Identify and gain a better understanding of family relationships and impacts of those relationships.
- Explore the role of our past history as Native people.
- Explore traditional roles of healthy Native families.
- Learn processes for win-win adaptation into the 1990s.

Family systems coordinators of RurAL CAP are Laura Castaneda and Cookie Guinn.

Certain activities are exceptionally good for developing family concepts such as mapping a genogram. This gives participants a visual idea of their families. The genogram symbols include male, female, pregnancies, deaths, miscarriages, divorces, fusions, conflicts, separation, those within the same household and more.

The genogram also brings to light certain family themes such as spiritual strengths arising from adversity, ancestral influences, family feuds and humorous connections.

Once participants see the various family themes, they can then "reposition" themselves to avoid becoming emotionally trapped in self-defeating situations. This allows for positive family growth.

Call RurAL CAP's toll-free number if you are interested in more specific information — 800-478-7227.