

# ALASKA

NORTH TO OPPORTUNITY

## State of Alaska Tourism Training Programs

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, COMMUNITY, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
DIVISION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## TODAY'S AGENDA – 3:30 P.M. TO 5:30 P.M.

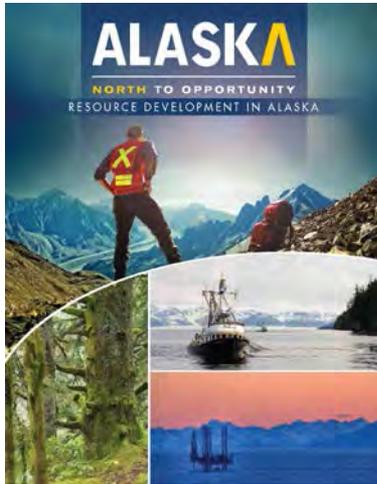
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- Welcome (Ethan Tyler, Development Manager, DED)
- Session Overview (Caryl McConkie, DED)
- AlaskaHost (Jasmin Smith, Business Boutique)
- CulturalHost (Ann Lawrence, Cook Inlet Tribal Council)
- Alaska Tour Guide Training (Linda Nicklin, Gastineau Guiding)
- Panel and Audience Discussion (Dr. Tony Nakazawa, UAF Cooperative Extension Services)
- Wrap-up/Next Steps

## ALASKA DIVISION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Core Functions

- Finance
- Development
- Promotion



### Revolving Loan Programs

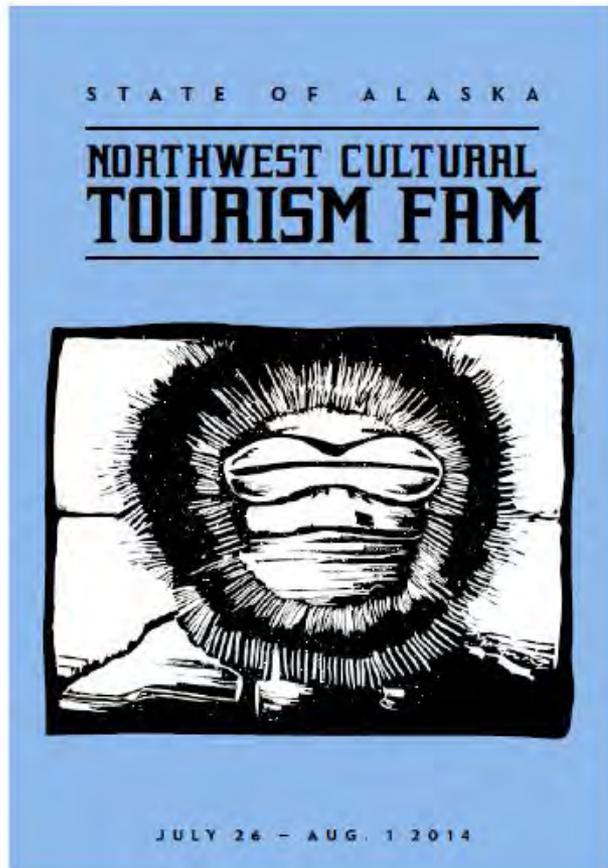
- 4 Fishing-related
- 1 Bulk Fuel
- 1 Alternative Energy
- 3 Small Business
- 1 Capstone Avionics
- 1 Mariculture

### Promotion

- North to Opportunity Campaign showcases Alaska's economic opportunity (natural resources, human capital, and emerging industries).
- Tourism marketing program promotes Alaska as a visitor destination.

<https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/ded/Home.aspx>

## ALASKA DIVISION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT— DEVELOPMENT



### Northwest Cultural Tourism and Native Arts

- Increase consumer awareness of Northwest Alaska region tourism opportunities and Alaska Native arts
- Promote cultural tourism and Alaska Native arts through press trips for journalists and product assessment tours for tour operators
- Conducted FAM Trip 7/26-8/1/2014
- Follow-up plans to build capacity in communities
- Coordinated with Tourism Marketing program

## OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

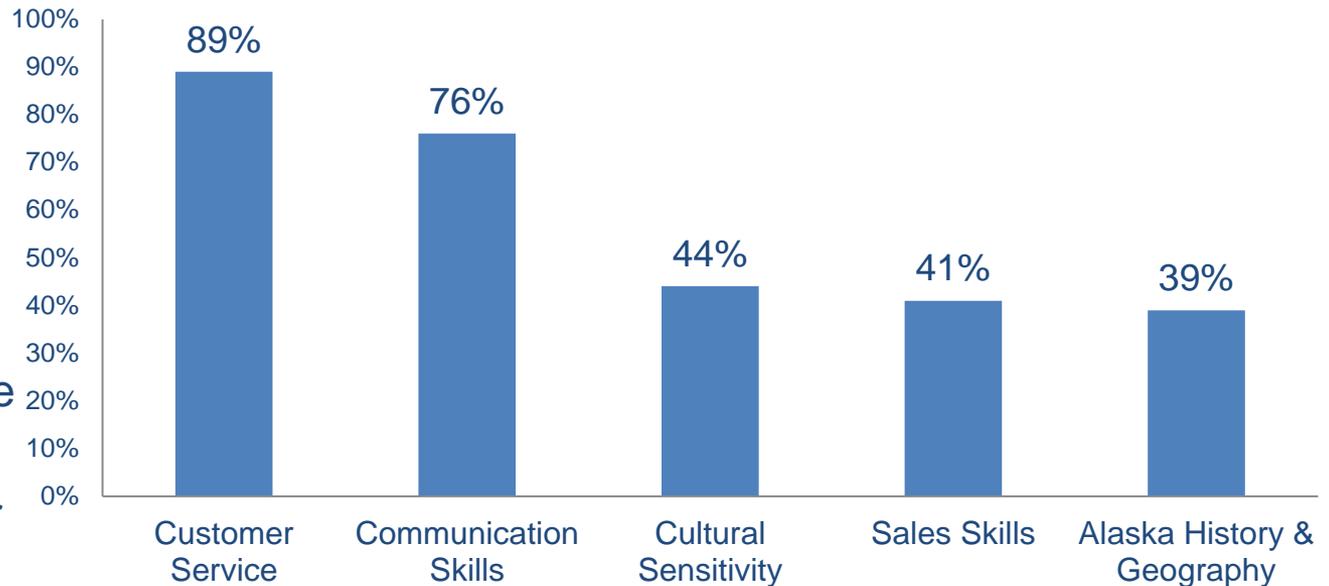
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- **Introduce** or re-introduce you to the major benefits that the state's tourism training programs offer employers and employees.
- **Gather information** from the audience that will help DED and partners improve the programs. [*Please consider these questions during the presentation.*]
  - Is it important to be able to promote that staff is trained through these programs?
  - What can training programs address that is not covered?
  - What are the best ways to promote that the training exists?
- **Prioritize** next steps to prepare for 2016 visitor season.

## ALASKA FORWARD VISITOR INDUSTRY SURVEY

- 2012 survey of 151 Alaska tourism businesses statewide (questions about employees and workforce issues)
- 80% of surveyed businesses said inadequate skills were a significant or moderate problem for frontline employees

### Top Five Training Needs for Frontline Employees



Source: Alaska Division of Economic Development, *Alaska Forward Visitor Industry Survey: Hiring and Training Needs*. Juneau: Prepared for Alaska Forward Partnership, 2012.



## ALASKAHOST, CULTURALHOST, ALASKA TOUR GUIDE TRAINING

- AlaskaHost (since 1992)
- CulturalHost (since 2007)
- Alaska Tour Guide Training (since 2010)
- Created to address training needs of tourism industry employers and employees and to provide employment and business opportunities in rural Alaska.
- Developed with input and participation of business, industry, education, and government partners.
- Administered by Alaska Division of Economic Development.



## WHO ARE OUR 2015 TRAINERS?

### State of Alaska Training Programs – 2015 Trainers Alaska Division of Economic Development

**Alaska Travel Industry Association** ★ **Anchorage School District** ★  
**You Should Be Here!**  
**UAF Cooperative Extension Services** **Gastineau Guiding**  
**Alaska Department of Labor Job Centers**  
**Prince William Sound Community College**  
**Cook Inlet Tribal Council** **Sitka Visitors Bureau**  
**CulturalHost** **Bristol Bay Native Corp.**  
**Unalaska School District** **The Business Boutique**  
**Northern Safety Operations** **Alaska Job Corps**  
**North Slope Borough** **Nature Alaska Tours**  
**King Career Center** **Ketchikan Indian Tribe**  
**Alaska Geotourism** **SAVEC** **AlaskaHost**  
**YAAKOOSGE DAAKAHIDI** **Dimond Center Hotel**  
**Wrangell Institute for Science & Environment** **Visit Ketchikan**  
**Alaska Tour Guide Training** **Alaska Marine Highway**  
**Allen Marine Tours**

*Kayak Adventures Worldwide*  
**Visit Anchorage**  
*Anchorage Hilton*  
*Grassroutes Associates*  
**UAA Continuing Education**  
**Explore Fairbanks**  
*U.S. Forest Service*

<https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/ded/DEV/TourismDevelopment.aspx>



## ALASKAHOST PRESENTER—JASMIN SMITH

- **Master Trainer** for Alaska Host and Instructor for Cultural Host and Alaska Tour Guide Training
- **Instructor of Business Management** at Alaska Career College
- **Employment Specialist** at Brother Francis Shelter
- **Small Business Development Trainer** for Small Business Development Center
- **Independent Contractor** for Nine Star Education and Employment Services and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation: Business Enterprises Program
- **Owner of The Business Boutique:** a full service business development consulting and training firm
- **11 years of experience** in the tourism and hospitality field



## WHAT IS ALASKAHOST?

- Statewide customer service training program designed for employees of the hospitality and visitor services industry.
- The core program trains participants in how to provide quality customer service for both residents and visitors to Alaska.
- Provides a foundation of communication skills and problem solving skills for all service-oriented businesses.



Artwork by Rie Muñoz

## HOW DID ALASKAHOST GET STARTED?

- Developed in 1992, based on Tourism B.C.'s SuperHost Program.
- 2005 strategic planning with program partners resulted in program changes:
  - Alaska ownership (lease agreement ended),
  - Shortened course (basic course = 4 hours),
  - Curriculum updates and new modules (CulturalHost, Visitors w/Disabilities, Telephone Skills, Alaska in Your Backyard).



Artwork by Rie Muñoz

## WHAT SKILLS WILL ALASKAHOST TEACH YOU?

- Understand what customer service is and why is it important.
- Recognize and anticipate customer needs and expectations.
- Understand the power of positive first impressions and the different types of communication styles.
- Learn how to handle angry or dissatisfied customers in a helpful, professional manner.
- Understand and communicate the economic benefits of tourism to the state of Alaska.



Artwork by Rie Muñoz

## HOW ARE ALASKAHOST WORKSHOPS STRUCTURED?

- AlaskaHost workshops are designed to stimulate various types of learners: hands on, visual, and audio, combining small group activities, PowerPoint presentation, videos, and handouts.
- Alaska host classes range from one hour to eight hours and can be customized to the needs of the organization requesting the workshop.



Artwork by Rie Muñoz

## WHAT ARE THE ALASKAHOST WORKSHOPS?

- **Customer Service Essentials**
- Telephone Customer Services
- Servicing Customers with Disabilities
- Hosting International Visitors
- Alaska In Your Backyard: Learn about the Last Frontier



Artwork by Rie Muñoz

## CUSTOMER SERVICE ESSENTIALS

### Section One

- Introduction to Customer Service
- What do Customers Expect?
- What is Customer Service?
- Why is Customer Service Important?

### Section Two

- Economic Impacts of Tourism

### Section Three

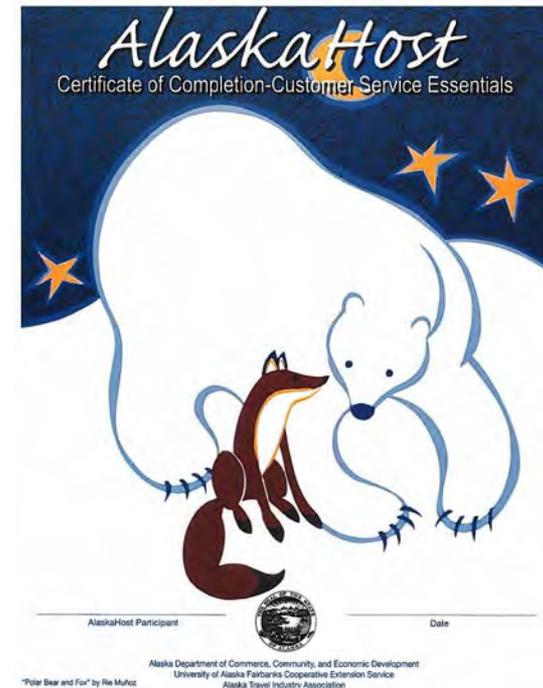
- The Importance of First Impressions
- Dealing with Dissatisfied Customers
- The Importance of Handling Complaints Effectively
- Types of Dissatisfied Customers



Artwork by Rie Muñoz

# COURSE COMPLETION AND CREDENTIALS

- ★ Upon completion of the Customer Service Essentials course, participants receive a course certificate and lapel pin, featuring the artwork of, Alaskan artist, [Rie Muñoz](#).
- ★ Job Seekers can add AlaskaHost and CulturalHost credentials to their online resume in the State of Alaska's **ALEXsys** website that connects job seekers and employers.  
<https://alexsys.dol.alaska.gov/Default.aspx?C=1>



Artwork by Rie Muñoz

## CULTURALHOST PRESENTER—ANN LAWRENCE

- **CulturalHost Master Trainer and AlaskaHost Instructor**
- **Family & Community Outreach Coordinator and Cultural Case Manager** - Cook Inlet Tribal Council, (CITC) providing direct services to Alaska Natives/American Indians
- **Cultural Activity Coordinator** with activities geared toward literacy and reading and also for families of participants who are receiving services from CITC
- **Instructor of Paths to Success Classes** which include Alaska Host and Cultural Host
- **Guest Instructor** for Anchorage School District helping students becomes aware and learning more about their Alaska Native cultural backgrounds
- **Inupiaq born** in Point Hope, Alaska



## WHAT IS CULTURALHOST?

- A 4-hour training program designed to provide increased awareness and knowledge of indigenous people of Alaska.
  - Athabascan
  - Aleut/Alutiiq
  - Yup'ik/Cup'ik
  - Inupiaq/Siberian Yupik
  - Tlingit/Haida/Eyak/Tsimshian
- Developed by Alaska Native Heritage Center in collaboration with Cook Inlet Tribal Council.



## WHY IS CULTURALHOST IMPORTANT FOR TOURISM BUSINESSES?

- Enables them to share this important part of Alaska's living heritage with visitors.
- Informed communication with visitors about Native culture fosters an increased understanding and appreciation for Alaska Native culture.
- Employees well-versed in various aspects of Alaskan culture are able to provide a quality experience for visitors.



## SAMPLE QUESTIONS VISITORS MAY ASK FRONTLINE EMPLOYEES

- “Can you tell me a bit about the indigenous peoples of this area?”
- “Aren’t all the Natives here Eskimos?”
- “How do the Alaska Natives survive the cold?”
- “Are traditional subsistence practices still being practiced today?”
- You are speaking with a visitor who wants to learn about Alaska Native cultures and visiting rural areas. They ask about the best way to introduce themselves. What do you say?



## WHAT WILL CULTURALHOST TEACH YOU?

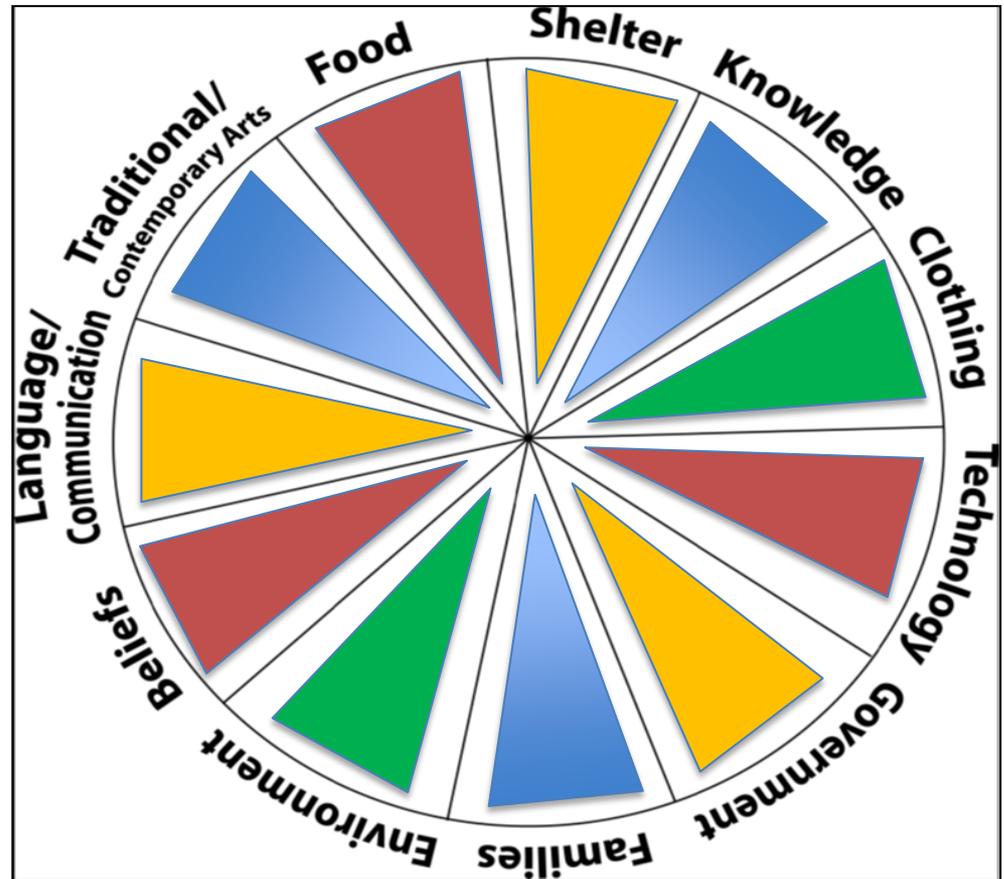
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- Greater cultural awareness and respect for diverse Alaska Native Culture groups.
- Geographical locations and characteristics of the five main Alaska Native Groups.
- Understand differences and unique aspects of each culture.
- Appreciation of cultural ties that bind Alaska Native cultures together.
- Help Alaska Natives better understand how to share their culture with visitors.



## HOW IS THE CULTURALHOST WORKSHOP STRUCTURED?

- Introduction to Alaska Native Groups
- Cultural Universals Wheel Research and Presentations
- Role Play Activity
- Cross-cultural Communication and Etiquette



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Photos: Alaska Tourism Marketing Program and Alaska State Museum



## ALASKA TOUR GUIDE TRAINING PRESENTER—LINDA NICKLIN

- **Master Trainer and Curriculum Author** for Alaska Tour Guide Training
- **Interpretive Guide Trainer**, helping people improve communication skills and create meaningful connections between their audience and a subject or place
- **Expedition Leader and Naturalist** for private yachts, Lindblad Expeditions, Crystal Cruises, and EYOS
- **Director of Training and Tour Quality** for Gastineau Guiding Company
- **Research, Education and Development** for Whale Trust, a non-profit that studies humpback whales in Alaska and Hawaii
- **Co-author** of two nonfiction books published by National Geographic Children's Books: *Face to Face with Dolphins* and *Face to Face with Whales*



## WHAT IS ALASKA TOUR GUIDE TRAINING?

- **Basic, comprehensive, 2 ½ day tour guide training curriculum for guides or potential guides.**
- **Developed in 2010 to address training needs in rural Alaska.**
- **Increase number of trained Alaskan guides and improving visitor experiences in Alaskan communities.**
- **Encourages local hire for tour guide positions or help guides start their own businesses.**



## WHAT YOU WILL GET OUT OF THE WORKSHOP?



**Learn to Create Great Visitor Experiences!**

## GOAL 1: LEARN HOW TO MAKE TOURS SAFE AND COMPELLING

- Recognize essential elements of a successful tour and provide those elements to the guests.
- Learn to recognize and fulfill visitor needs, wants, and expectations.
- Explore principles and techniques for responding when tours don't go as planned; manage risk and keep guests safe.



Photo: Linda and Flip Nicklin

## GOAL 2: MAKE CONNECTIONS—BETWEEN GUIDE, GUEST & PLACE

- Gain insight and experience in effective communication and the principles of interpretation.
- Learn to make tours more relevant and enjoyable for their guests.
- Appeal to different learning styles.
- Gain perspective on successfully integrating tourism with the quality of life in a community.



Photo: Linda and Flip Nicklin

## GOAL 3: LEARN TO ORGANIZE TOURS; DEVELOP A THEME

- Learn to organize tours and develop themes.
- Make a plan for researching and organizing information.



Photo: Linda and Flip Nicklin

## HOW IS ALASKA TOUR GUIDE TRAINING STRUCTURED?

### 2 ½ Day Course

- Elements of Tour Experiences
- Motivations
- Know Your Audience
- Have a Theme
- Art and Principles of Interpretation
- Gathering Alaska's Facts
- Accounting for Differences
- Planning for Successful Tours
- When Things Go Wrong
- Working with Communities and Landowners
- The Field Excursion



Photo: Linda and Flip Nicklin

# VALUE



Photo: Linda and Flip Nicklin

# COURSE COMPLETION AND CREDENTIALS



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Job Seekers can add Alaska Tour Guide Training credentials to their online resume in the State of Alaska's **ALEXsys** website that connects job seekers and employers.

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## QUESTIONS FOR THE PANEL?

- AlaskaHost
- CulturalHost
- Alaska Tour Guide Training



Photo: Linda and Flip Nicklin

## QUESTIONS FOR THE AUDIENCE

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- Is it important to be able to promote that staff is trained through the AlaskaHost, CulturalHost and Alaska Tour Guide Training?
- What can training programs address that is not covered?
- What are the best ways to promote that the training exists?

## WRAP-UP: HOW DO I BECOME A TRAINER OR SCHEDULE A WORKSHOP?

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- Workshops are scheduled by each trainer.
- Course fees are set by each trainer and vary because the costs of delivering the training vary for each trainer.
- The Division of Economic Development lists trainers and scheduled classes at <https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/ded/DEV/TourismDevelopment/AlaskaHost.aspx>

## WRAP-UP: PLANNING FOR SUMMER 2016

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- Update curriculum and refresh training materials
- Increased support and training refresher course for existing trainers
- Training and trainer standards to assist trainers and improve quality
- Measure program effectiveness to make it more valuable to businesses and job seekers
- Program promotion to increase access to training
  - AlaskaHost Business Designation
  - Training opportunities associated with National Park Centennial
- Train-the-trainer classes to increase access to training
  - Private-sector training sponsors

### • Your Feedback Here



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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# Thank You For Coming!

<https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/ded/DEV/TourismDevelopment.aspx>