



DEPARTMENT OF
COMMERCE
COMMUNITY AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Office of Economic Development

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NEWS RELEASE

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Cultural Awareness Program Begins for Visitor Industry

(Juneau) – The Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development Office of Economic Development (OED) is offering a new training class to promote cultural awareness within Alaska. In furthering the state's commitment to support and promote Alaska's visitor and hospitality industry, the CulturalHost component of the statewide AlaskaHost Customer Service Program is to be launched in November.

CulturalHost is based on the curriculum developed by the Cook Inlet Tribal Council's Center for Hospitality and Tourism, in partnership with the Alaska Native Heritage Center. The four-hour CulturalHost class aims to educate and inform both Native and non-Native Alaskans about the diverse cultural groups in Alaska. When visitors come to Alaska and interact with people in the visitor industry, many are interested in learning about the local Native culture. The CulturalHost curriculum provides employers and employees with factual and relevant information and will provide a broad overview of Alaskan Native culture to enhance the overall visitor experience.

Next month, OED will introduce its new CulturalHost curriculum for those interested in becoming trainers. The two-day Train the Trainer class will provide trainers with the knowledge and resources to teach the class in their respective areas across the state. The class will be held at the Anchorage Convention and Visitor's Bureau on November 9-10, 2006. Ann Lawrence, from the Cook Inlet Tribal Council, will conduct the training, which will be available to interested participants free of charge. The class will be an exciting first step towards encouraging greater understanding of Alaska's rich cultural heritage.

The Office of Economic Development currently works with local governments, regional economic development organizations (ARDOR's), regional Native organizations (regional, village, tribal), and the visitor industry to provide direct technical assistance to selected individuals who actively pursue ways to develop a local visitor industry. The OED has been involved with other projects, including Developing Alaska Rural Tourism (DART), AlaskaHost, and most recently, the Rural Tourism Mentorship Program.

For additional information regarding the CulturalHost program, please contact Dru Garson, AlaskaHost Program Manager, at (907) 465-2162. Dru_garson@commerce.state.ak.us

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