

Tribal VR: Serving our Relatives with Disabilities

Presenter:

Lee Gaseoma (Hopi Tribe), Ed.D.
AIVRTTAC Traditional Cultural Liaison

Disclaimer. The contents of this PPT were developed under a grant from the Department of Education (PR/Award #H250Z210001). However, the contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. (Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1221e-3 and 3474) AIVRTTAC will make updates and corrections to the material in order to ensure legal sufficiency, accuracy of information, and accessibility.



NORTHWEST
INDIAN COLLEGE

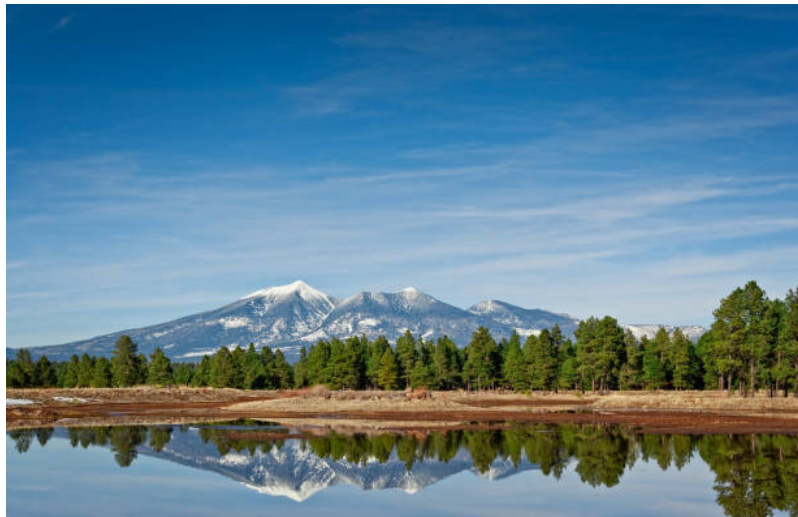


NAU
Institute for Human
Development

Learning Outcomes

- 1) Attendees will learn about AIVRTTAC's definition of culturally appropriate and responsive services and guiding principles.
- 2) Attendees will learn about the differences between the State VR Programs and the AIVRS Projects.
- 3) Attendees will identify holistic and culturally based VR services for tribal participants to address barriers to employment and achieve gainful employment.

Northern Arizona University Land Acknowledgement Statement



**Northern Arizona University
sits at the base of the San
Francisco Peaks, on
homelands sacred to Native
Americans throughout the
region. We honor their past,
present, and future
generations, who have lived
here for millennia and will
forever call this place home.**



The purpose of the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Training and Technical Assistance Center (AIVRTTAC) and the Northwest Indian College Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR) Institute is to serve AIVRS projects through culturally appropriate and responsive support in:

- **academic professional development,**
- **grant management,**
- **daily project operations, and**
- **VR service provision to help eligible tribal participants with disabilities achieve gainful employment.**

American Indians & Alaska Natives



As of January 12, 2023, there were **574** ethnically, culturally, and linguistically distinct Indian tribes recognized by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and established as sovereign tribal governments.

These tribes have a government-to-government relationship with the United States, with the responsibilities, powers, limitations, and obligations attached to that designation, and are eligible for funding and services from the BIA.

American Indian & Alaska Native Unemployment



In 2019, the American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) unemployment rate was **8%** - **twice as high as that of the general population** (American Community Survey, 2019). The situation on tribal reservations is even more dire, with unemployment rates historically ranging from **20-80%** (Miller, 2012).

AI/AN Unemployment



A 2016-2018 study indicated that **only 23%** of AI/AN with disabilities were employed or looking for employment in that time period (Allard & Brundage, 2019).

The incidence of disabilities for AI/AN is significantly higher than the general population.

AI/AN Unemployment



In 2019, there were at least **477,954** AI/AN living with disabilities – a disability incidence rate of **17.2%**, compared with **12%** for the general population (American Community Survey, 2019). These data indicate a substantial need to support AI/AN individuals with disabilities in obtaining employment.

AIVRTTAC Definition of Cultural and Responsive Training, Technical Assistance, and Capacity Building Services

In the provision of education, guidance, technical assistance, and capacity building to address the essential needs of the AIVRS Projects the AIVRTTAC will recognize and respect each tribe's unique history, sovereignty, oral traditional knowledge, spirituality, languages, beliefs, values, livelihood, ceremonies, and perspectives about tribal members with disabilities.

AIVRTTAC Definition of Cultural and Responsive Training, Technical Assistance, and Capacity Building Services

The AIVRTTAC's culturally appropriate and responsive services will ensure its relevance to the cultural background, needs, priorities, experiences, interests, and capabilities of AIVRS participants to make informed decisions to become gainfully employed, achieve improved quality of life, become financially self-sufficient, and live independently.

AIVRTTAC Guiding Principles

- Acknowledge the unique social and historical contexts of tribal VR settings
- Conducted in culturally respectful, relevant, and meaningful ways
- Talking Circles in safe and trusting learning environments
- Respect for participants' lived experiences, beliefs, values, and traditional indigenous knowledge
- Capacity building to bridge federal VR practices and tribal VR holistic practices
- Culturally responsive teaching to strengthen participants' identity, beliefs, and traditions

AIVRTTAC Guiding Principles

- Reciprocity with participants to achieve shared common goals, feel valued, and empowered
- Knowledge translation complement tribal VR emerging and promising practices
- Academic courses and coaching to build capacity of tribal VR personnel knowledge and skill
- Accessible and user-friendly project website with relevant cultural information and resources
- Activities, materials, products, and practices culturally responsive to participants

AIVRTTAC Guiding Principles

- Integration of cultural knowledge and practices within project activities
- Incorporate Native adult-learning essential to self-direct learning, relevance, and experiences
- Honoring and celebrating tribal VR programs' achievements
- Efforts focus on tribal VR goals to benefit program consumers and sustain VR services

AIVRS Purpose

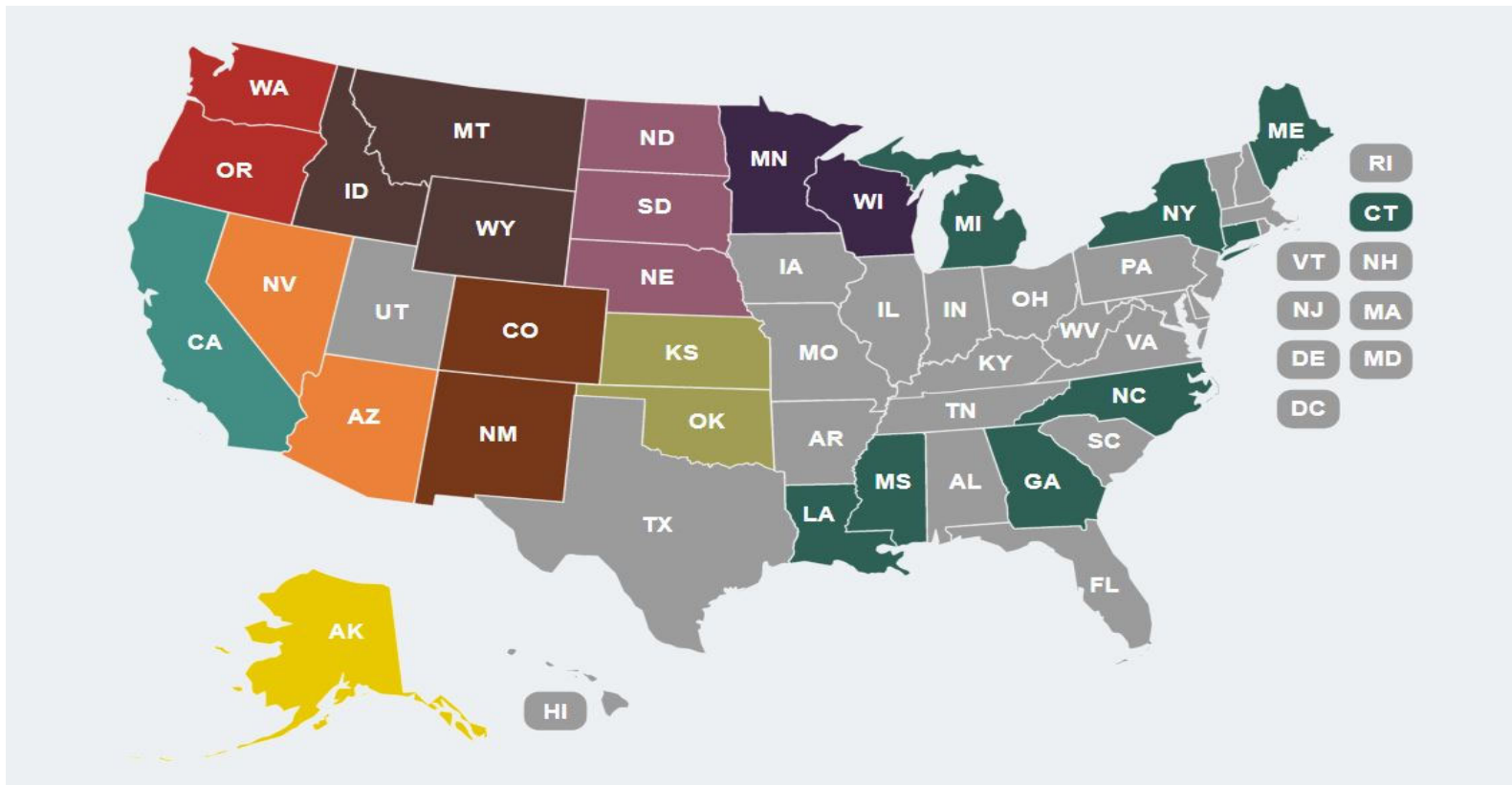
This program is designed to provide vocational rehabilitation services, including culturally appropriate services, to American Indians with disabilities who reside on or near Federal or State reservations, consistent with such eligible individual's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice, so that such individual may prepare for, and engage in, high-quality employment that will increase opportunities for economic self-sufficiency.

[Authority: Section 121(a) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; 29 U.S.C. 741(a)]

Differences Between State VR and Tribal VR Agencies

Tribal VR Program	State VR Agency
5-year Discretionary Grant (90% Federal – 10 % tribal match). Current and new tribes compete for RSA funds every five years.	Statutory formula funded that take into account population and per capita income to determine amount of funds for each state grantee
93 AIVRS projects in 26 states funded by RSA (consortia of tribes serving other eligible tribes) serving around 170 different tribes	Each state offer VR services for eligible individuals with disabilities
Six eligibility criteria for applicants	4 eligibility criteria for applicants
Eligible applicants include Federally recognized and State recognized tribes and historical tribal lands determine service areas as being on or near reservations	Serve eligible individuals with disabilities residing within the state
Provide traditional healing services and services that reflect the tribal cultural background of the participant	Not permitted to provide traditional healing services
Isolated and rural communities, inadequate infrastructure, minimal economic development opportunities, and lack of access to quality health care	Readily accessible resources to assist individuals with disabilities prepare for gainful employment

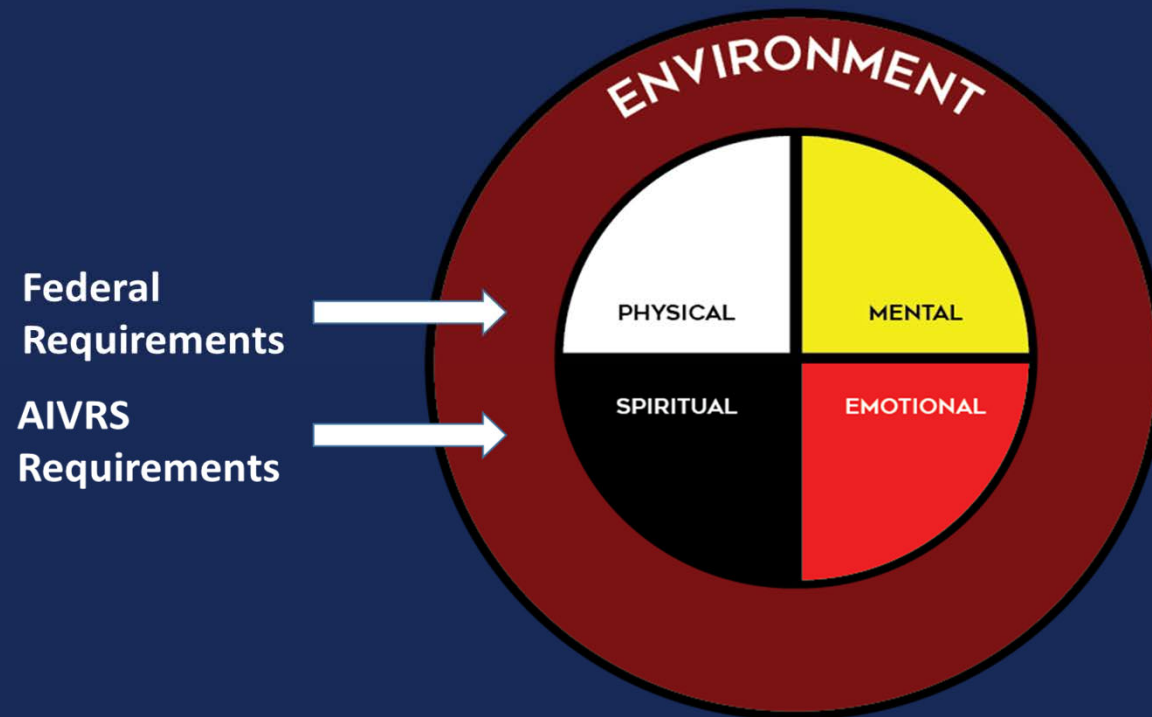
MAP OF 93 AIVRS PROJECTS



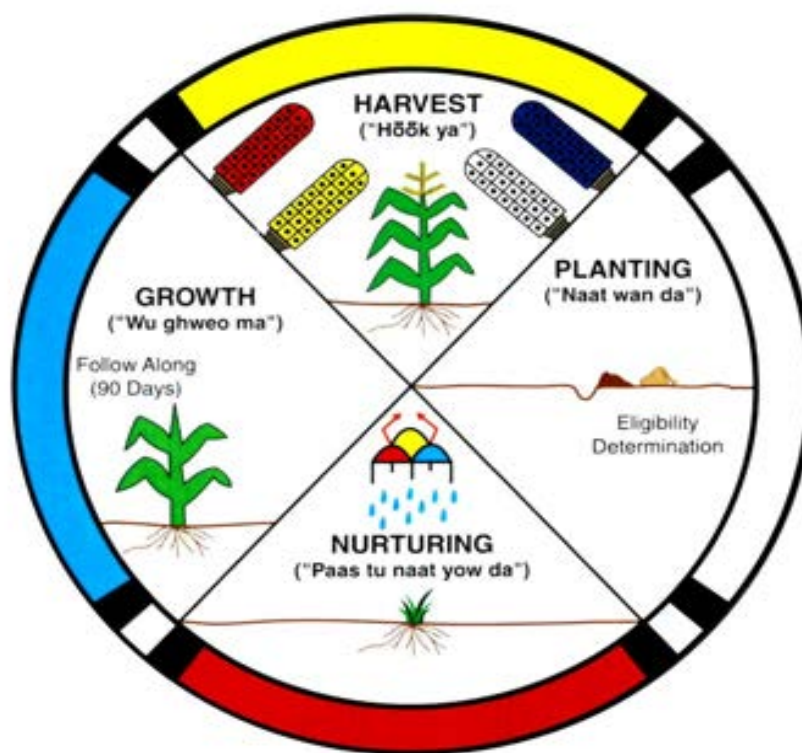
American Indian/Alaska Native Perspectives on Disability

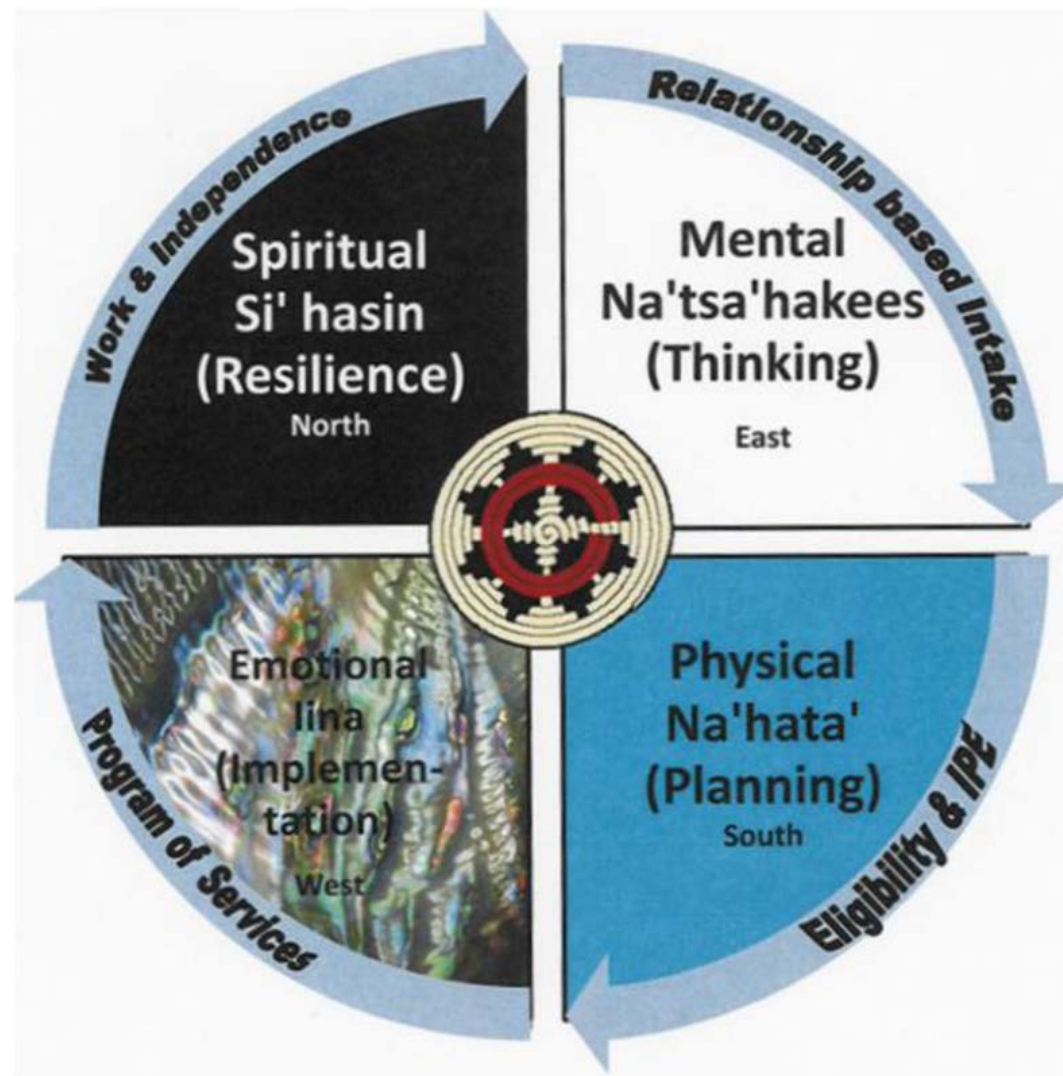
- Most AIs/ANs do not have one word to describe or define “disability” nor recognize them as individuals having a disability
- AIs/ANs with disabilities are helped to find their place in the tribal communities
- The human being is made up of the body, mind, soul, and spirit
- “Unwellness” or illness is disharmony in body, mind, soul and spirit
- Some tribal communities believe that illness is caused by violation of a taboo or sacred tribal custom
- If one of the four is out of harmony, the whole being is out of harmony
- Some tribes believe that each one of us is responsible for our own wellness and self-care; healing may come from our personal or traditional beliefs and the desire to achieve individual harmony; we must want to get well as no one can do this for us; and family support is very important.

AIVRS Holistic Traditional Service Delivery Model: Consumer/Participant/Relative Centered



Hopi VR Program Process Model





Federal Definition of Subsistence for AIVRS Programs

34 CFR Part 371.6: Subsistence means a form of self-employment in which individuals produce, using culturally relevant and traditional methods, goods or services that are predominantly consumed by their own household or used for noncommercial customary trade or barter and that constitute an important basis for the worker's livelihood.

(Authority: Section 12(c) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; 29 U.S.C. 709(c)).

<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2017-title34-vol2/xml/CFR-2017-title34-vol2-part371.xml#seqnum371.6>



Eggs Gathered in Spring

Photo by Kendra Nichols-Takak

“Subsistence” in an Alaska Native Context

Subsistence includes the gathering, harvesting, processing, consumption, and use of wild resources – birds, mammals, fish, and plants - from the natural environments of Alaska.



For some Alaska Native people, the term “subsistence” is objectionable, as it means far more than the harvest of wild resources for bare necessities. They prefer the phrase “Our Way of Life”, as subsistence practices encompass the lifestyle of Alaska Natives, who have long relied upon the land to not only provide physical sustenance but also to continue rich and diverse cultural traditions.

Subsistence Living: The Connection With Spiritual and Cultural Values

Traditions and culture are interwoven into subsistence activities and serve similar purposes. In communities where it is not possible to purchase all necessary items, family needs are often met through hunting and gathering as part of subsistence living. In addition, objects used in ceremonies and Tribal practices are often made or honored through subsistence activities.



From the Wolf Dance
Art by Jimmy Tatayuna Carlisle
Photo by Sara Lizak

<https://www.blm.gov/programs/natural-resources/subsistence>

Subsistence is defined in ANILCA as “the customary and traditional uses by rural Alaska residents of wild, renewable resources for direct personal or family consumption as food, shelter, fuel, clothing, tools or transportation; for the making and selling of handicraft articles out of nonedible by-products of fish and wildlife resources taken for personal or family consumption; and for the customary trade, barter or sharing for personal or family consumption.”

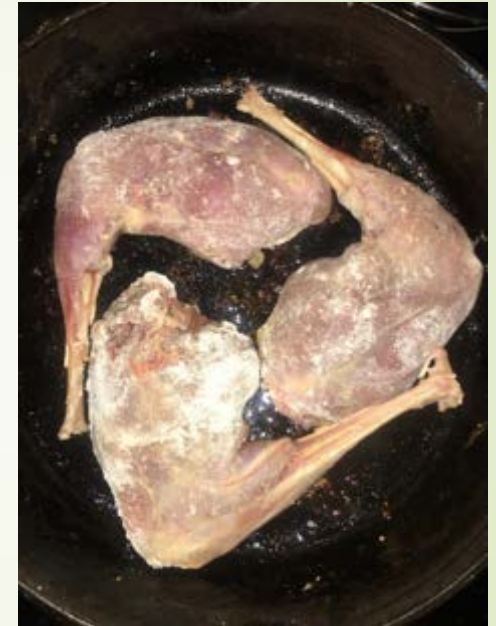


Fish Drying

From the Ashenfelter Family
Photos

The Economic Value of Subsistence

- Food – hunt, fish, harvest wild plants, and garden to help reduce grocery costs.
- Housing – build a house from natural resources.
- Clothing – make clothes using local materials and furs.
- Transportation – build canoes, kayaks, or skin boats from local material.
- Medicine – make traditional medicines from local wild plants.



Cooking Arctic Hare
Photo by Jovan Dull

Relevance of Revitalizing and Use of Traditional Native Practices in Tribal VR

- AIVRS project directors and staff lead and advocate for, with the input of the AIs/ANs with disabilities and the community, identifying and providing culturally based tribal VR services
- Enhance and recognize pride in project staff tribal identity and tribal ways of knowing
- Listen, learn, and include our ancestors' voices, wisdom, teachings, and guidance in tribal VR program practices
- Connecting the “many different minds” towards capacity “nation” building to improve employment opportunities for our relatives
- “Telling our stories” to improve engagement with key stakeholders (tribal leaders, community members, employers, RSA, State VR Agencies, etc.)
- Incorporate culturally appropriate and responsive VR services in AIVRS projects to complement State VR services
- Celebrate consumer/participant/relative in achieving successful employment outcome, independence, and enhanced quality of life

Contact Information

Lee Gaseoma, Ed.D., AIVRTTAC Traditional Cultural Liaison

Lee.Gaseoma@nau.edu

(928) 523-6829

AIVRTTAC website: www.aivrttac.com

Contact us at: aivrttac@nau.edu

Follow-us at: www.facebook.com/AIVRTTAC