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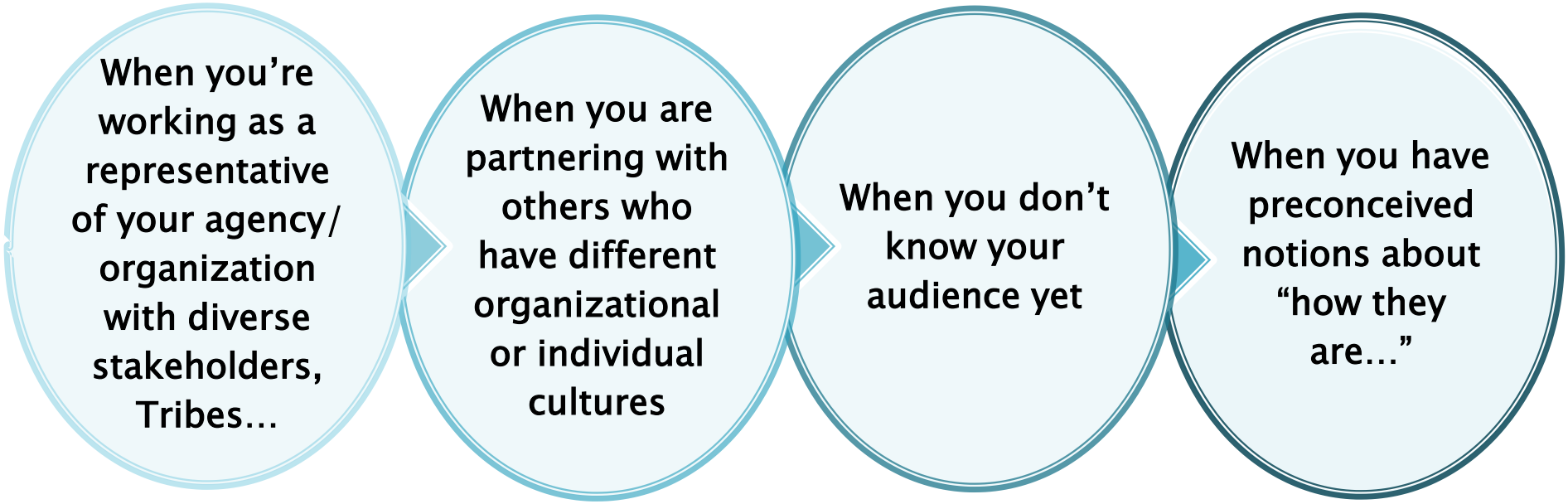
What is cultural competency?

When is cultural competency useful?

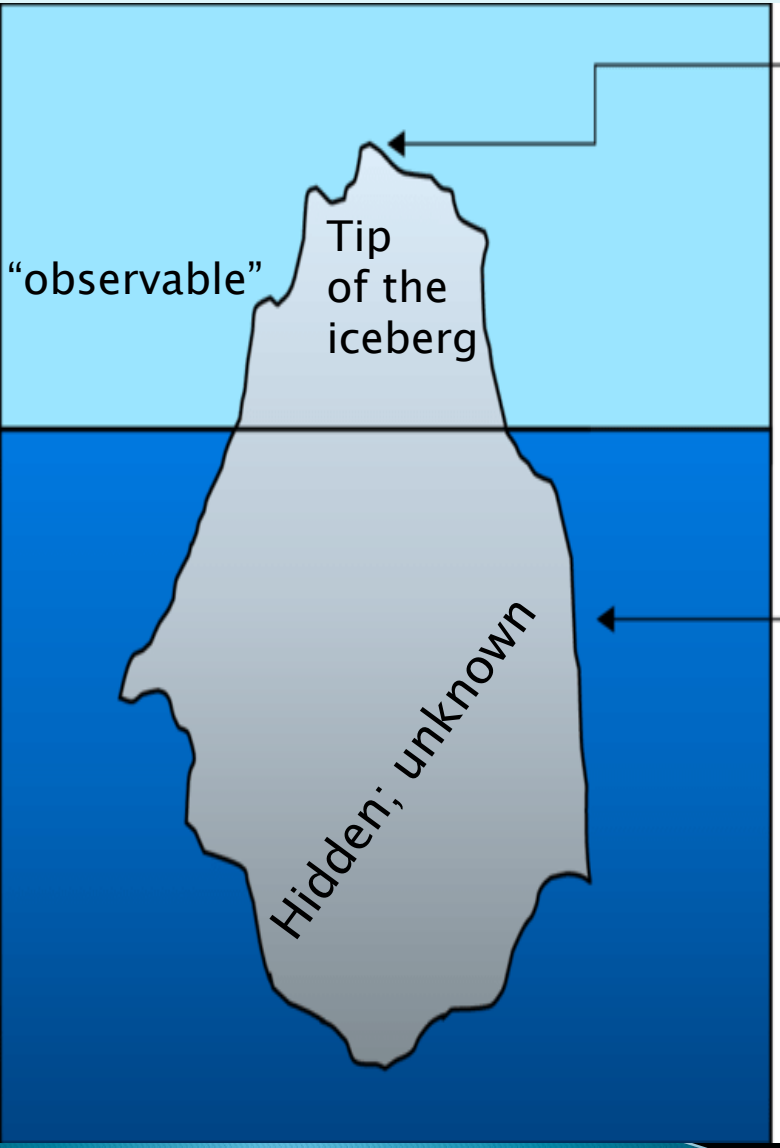


Start with yourself…

Developing cultural competence

Working with Cultural Differences in our work:

Think about culture in two ways: Culture as communication; and culture as context -- the deep structure that is often hidden to



Observable behaviours, practices and discourse: 'the way we do things around here'

Waterline

Underlying beliefs, attitudes, values, philosophies and taken-for-granted aspects of workplace life: '*why* we do the things we do around here'

Customs (behavior);

Norms (what one usually does);

Dress; Symbols/Images of organizational identity

World views, views on gender, power, etc., that are not clearly observable in the customs and norms above.

Reflection and Discussion:

How would you describe your agency / organization's culture?

What are some ways of identifying and communicating your agency / organization's culture?

Chat in 3-5 word answers.

Hint: language, symbols, material artifacts, social norms, rituals, narratives & myths. e.g. "social norm = x or y type of decision making"

Refresher – Partner Cultural Awareness Agency/Organizational Lens

- Know their **Mission**
- **Practices** – What do they do
- **People** – Who are you working with
- **Governance** – Decision Making/Chain of Command
  - Powers, authorities, limitations…
- **Financial Capacity** – Sources of funding, scale of financials

- **Traditions** – ask about events; gatherings etc.)
- **Institutional History** (What are they proud of, what are they known for past and present, i.e. the Corps of Engineers…)

How might identifying and understanding our own and others' identities and cultures help in our partnership work? We can learn about:

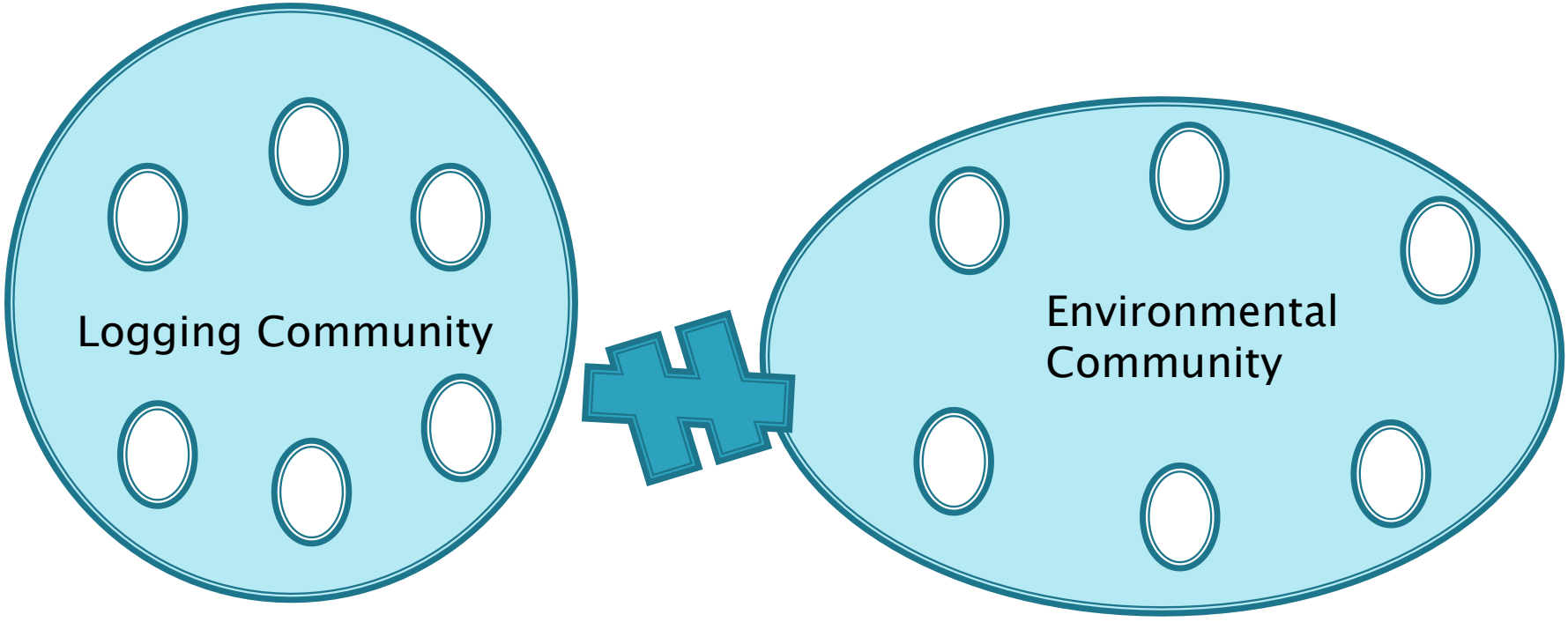
- How people ***define*** the environment, the "resources" you work with in your projects.
- How people ***value*** water, land, the environment, etc.
- What people ***know*** about the local context in a project/study area
- How people ***explain & attach meaning to*** phenomena
- What people ***believe*** about your agency or the federal government

WORKING WITH IDENTITY, CULTURE and POWER DYNAMICS

in our Collaboratives and Partnerships

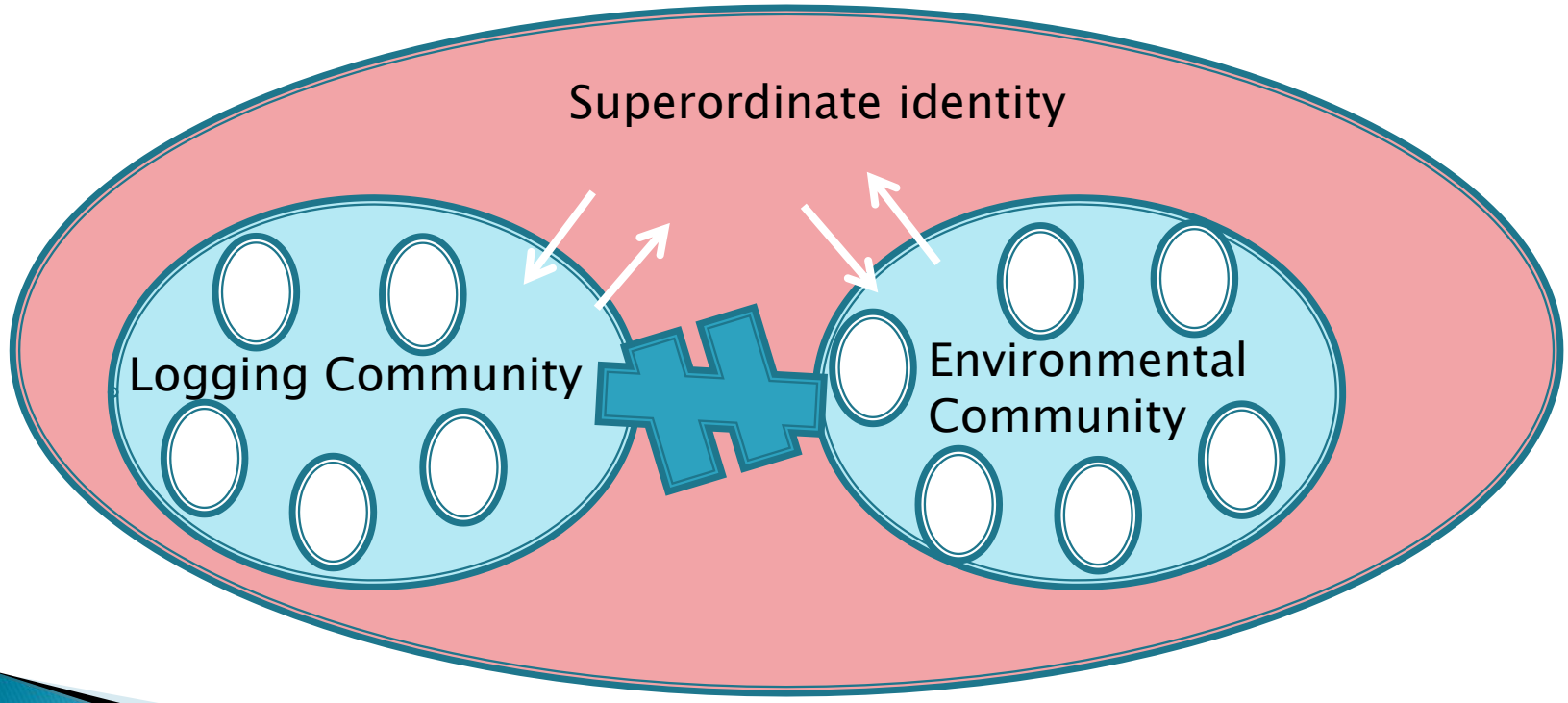
"It's not enough that we succeed. Cats must also fail."

Decision-making in multi-party collaborations can promote adversarial identities and cultural difference?



A highly collaborative process…

Provides the basis for common identity and cooperation



Don't fall into the trap that cross-cultural or organizational conflicts are just about cultural differences!

Culture is very rarely the cause of conflict.

Instead, culture provides a "lens" through which the causes of conflict are refracted; our cultures influence how we interpret other sources of conflict.

Root causes of conflict are often due to Economics and Limited Resources AND/OR

Structural/Power dynamics and Political control

Use “Integrative Power”

Shift From:

“**Power over**” –
the ability to compel
someone to do something…

To:

“**Power with**” – the effectiveness of joint or cooperative action. Sharing resources and/or decision-making to achieve a mutually beneficial outcome.

Be Aware of Your own Power!

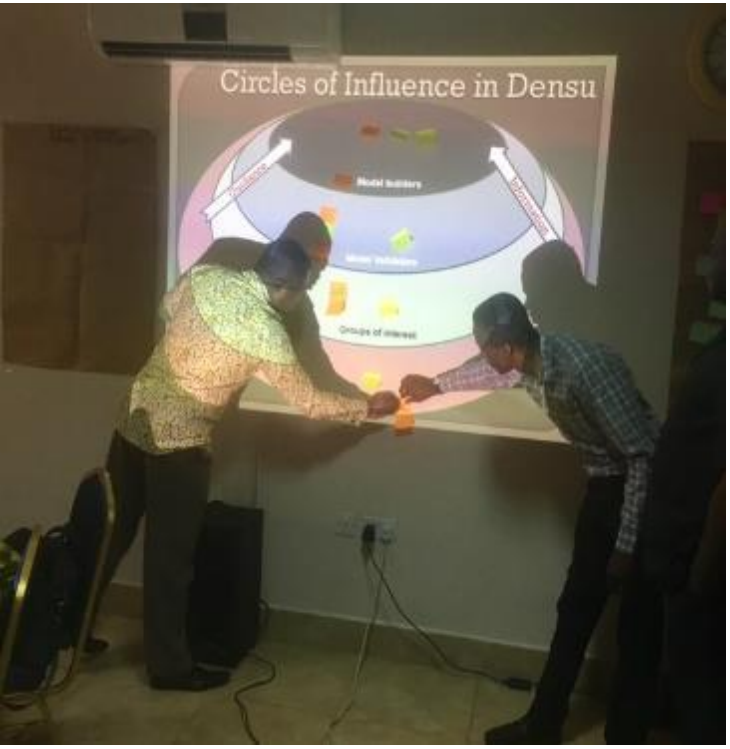
- Are you part of a "dominant society/culture/agency?
  - Realize that brings with it a perception of power
  - as perceived in your ethnicity, language skills, information, education, ability to influence decisions, and more.
- This power may or may not be "real" to you, but it is important for you to realize that it is real for others.

How have you seen power imbalances play out with local, state, other partners?

Building Effective Partnerships: Lessons from Peacebuilders

Authentic Relationships/
Build trust-
Shared Vision?
Reciprocity/
Mutuality
Respect/
Acknowledge
Other
Balance Power/
Prioritize Local
knowledge
Bringing
Outside &
Local
Perspectives
Together
What makes for successful Partnerships?

Listen to Local Approaches



"What we have to work to do is get our partner to listen more. ***They have to accept that we have produced knowledge that is adjusted to our local context,*** *our political history, or social processes! Because* ***many times organizations arrive with the magic solution to the problems that we have****…When you are ignoring local processes -* ***people get hurt – And trust is lost****."*

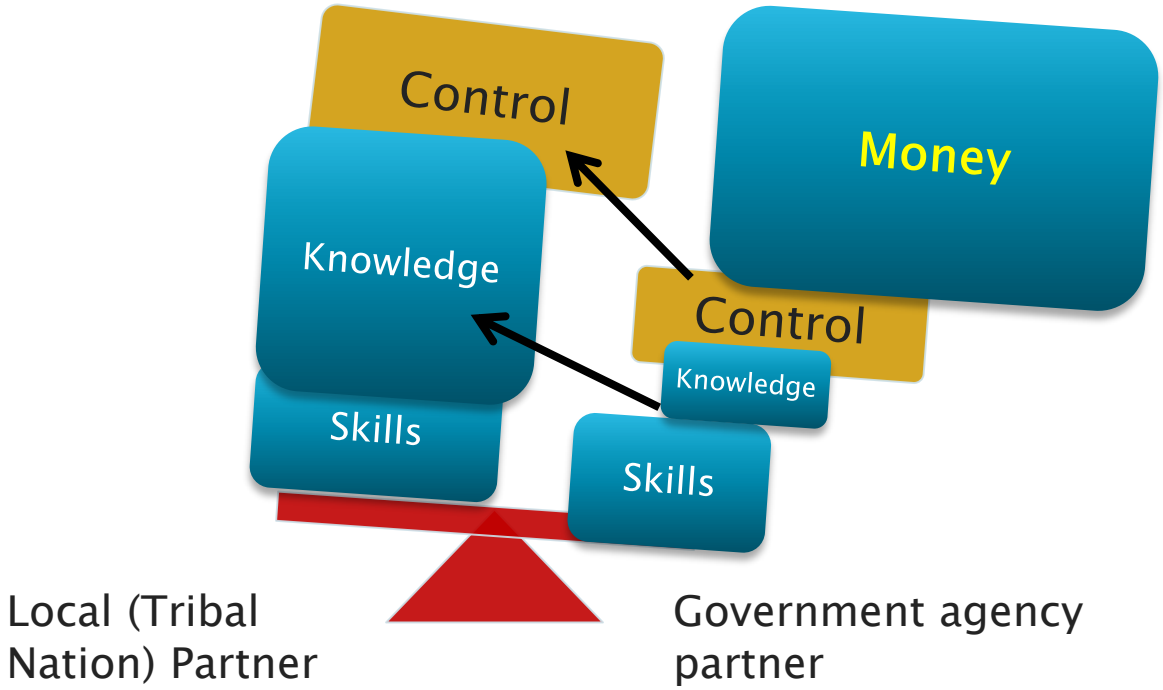
Be Mindful of Funding Dynamics

- Funding $$$ of a partnership = Control
- Locally based recipients may feel controlled by Federal Partner –

  "We have to dance to their tune…."

- Donor-Grantee relationship can be "the crux of power dynamics" in partnerships
  - Perpetuates dependency… how do you balance that?

Tip the Asymmetry Scale?



" Are you coming in…as the supplier of resources, whether it's funds, curriculum, or skills? What's the sort of model? Is your pitcher full and their pitcher empty and you're just going to pour some of your water into their pitcher? Or is it a collaborative relationship? "

Remember:

"Relationship" is at the heart of good partnerships, effective communication, and conflict prevention.

For Further Information contact…

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