



Interpretation What is it  
Anyway?

# NAI Definition of Interpretation

- ◆ Interpretation is a communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the inherent meanings in the resource.



## Spectrum of Interpretive Opportunity

- ◊ Analyze our audience,
- ◊ Interest level,
- ◊ Mission

# Interpretive Audiences

- ◆ Captive

- Have to be there



- ◆ Non-captive

- Want to be there



## OUR MISSION:

It is the mission of the San Antonio Zoological Gardens and Aquarium to foster appreciation and concern for all living things. We are dedicated to providing:

- the highest standard of care for our animal and plant collection,
- a diverse educational and high quality recreational experience for all people,
- and all resources at our disposal for the conservation of the Earth's flora and fauna.



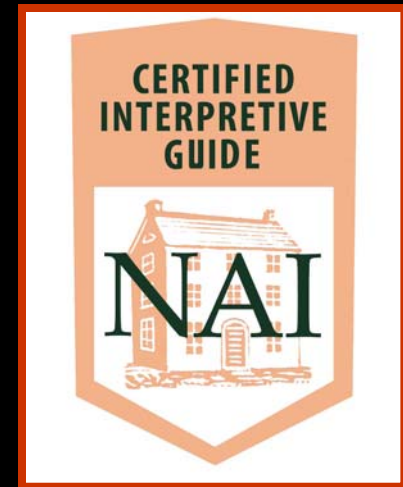
EDUCATION

CONSERVATION

RECREATION

# NAI's Certification Program

- ◆ Began in 1998
- ◆ Five categories
  - CIG, CHI, CIM, CIT, CIP
- ◆ Lasts four years
- ◆ Re-certification based on continuing education



# Five Essential Qualities of Interpretation

- ◆ Purpose
- ◆ Enjoyable
- ◆ Relevant
- ◆ Organized
- ◆ Thematic



# 7 Steps to the Presentation

**1. Select  
Topic**

**2. Do  
Research**

**3. Select  
Theme in  
3 Steps**

**4. Outline  
Talk**

**5. Select  
Media**

**6. Practice**

**7. Give  
Talk**

# What is the purpose of my talk?

- ◆ Does it align with my institutions mission?
- ◆ Mission Statement



To foster appreciation and concern for all living things. We are dedicated to providing: the highest standard of care for our animal and plant collection; a diverse educational and high quality recreational experience for all visitors; and all the resources at our disposal for the conservation of the Earth's flora and fauna.

# AZA Conservation Messages

- ◆ Responsible zoos and aquariums strive to conserve ecosystems and promote care and positive action for the natural world by...
- ◆ Sharing knowledge, ideas and projects that empower people to take conservation action.
- ◆ Provide animal and nature experiences that engender a sense of wonder.
- ◆ Disseminate valuable information about animals and the ecosystems they inhabit.
- ◆ Model caring by being leaders in animal care.

# Interpretation is Enjoyable

- ◆ Entertainment isn't the main goal
- ◆ All good communication is entertaining
- ◆ Don't lecture. Interact with the audience.
- ◆ Use action verbs.
- ◆ Humor can make a program more enjoyable
- ◆ Smile!

# Interpretation is Relevant

- ◆ Personal - Connects with something the person cares about
- ◆ Meaningful - Has context within the person - something she or he knows about



# Make it Meaningful using Metaphors

- ◆ “Arctic seas are refrigerators of the north, cold and full of food.”



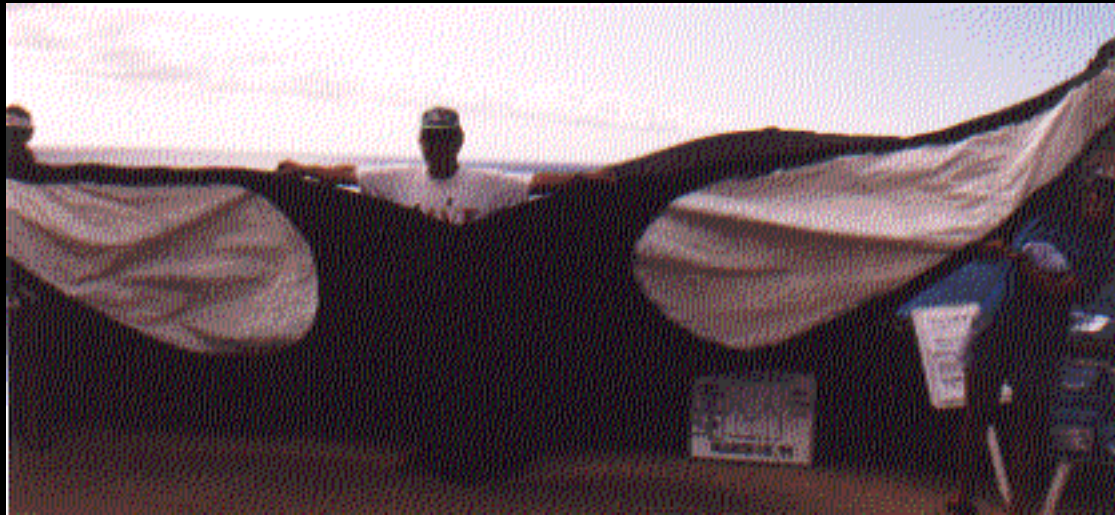
# Make it Meaningful using Analogy

- ◆ Baleen is a strainer for harvesting krill in arctic waters.



# Make it Meaningful using Comparison

- ◆ A humpback's tail is wider than four men standing side by side with arms spread apart.



# Make it Meaningful using Similes

- ◆ Jellyfish are like a cactus, beautiful when left alone but prickly to the touch.



# Messages should be Personal

- ◆ Use universals - family, home, love, etc.
- ◆ Compare the animals life to the persons life...

How are they the same and how are they different.

# Themes Are Messages

- ◆ Is a short, simple, complete sentence
- ◆ Expresses one idea
- ◆ Answers the “So what?” question
- ◆ Connects tangibles to intangibles
- ◆ Specific and interesting

# Themes, Goals and Objectives

- ◆ Goal(s) - What do you want to accomplish
- ◆ Objectives - What “results” do you expect
- ◆ Theme and Sub-themes - “So what?” “Why does it matter?”

# For example

- ◆ Goal - Encourage an understanding of fire ecology and management among park visitors.
- ◆ Objective - Decrease the number of accidental human-induced fires in the park within one year.



# The Process

- **Select a topic**
- **Write theme and objectives**
- **Review and research resource knowledge**
- **Seek knowledge of the audience**
- **Select appropriate techniques**



# Presentation Outline

- ◆ Goal:  
Objectives:

- ◆ Theme:

- ◆ Outline:

Introduction

Body

Conclusion



# GUEST BILL OF RIGHTS

- ◆ To have their privacy & independence respected
- ◆ To retain and express their own values
- ◆ To be treated with courtesy and consideration
- ◆ To receive accurate and balanced information

# Informal Interpretation Is Very Personal

- ◆ Emotional connections are easier to make because answers can be made more personal.
- ◆ Intellectual connections are easy to make because you have the opportunity to provide specific, meaningful answers to guests.