

Note to the teacher: the following may be used to supplement the information in Lesson One and/or as an enrichment opportunity.

## **Sahrawi Culture: Concepts of Privacy and Individualism**

**Background:** “Sahrawi” is Arabic for “Sahara”. The Sahrawi inhabit the Western Sahara.

### **A. Hospitality**

1. “Karum” or “hospitality” in the Sahrawi culture involves a long, elaborate tea making process. It consists of three rounds of tea, which can take up to two hours or more. It is intended to show respect for the guest.
2. A visitor was welcome to stay as long as they pleased. People welcomed visitors. This tradition came from the Arabian Peninsula and predates Islam.

### **B. Privacy**

1. The concept of individual privacy is different than it is in the West. To be alone is considered abnormal. It is important to be in the company of others.  
  
*“ To be alone is to be like a dog” . Moroccan proverb.*
2. To be alone in the desert meant certain death, this was especially true for a woman. To be welcomed into another tribe or into the tent of a family was greatly valued.
3. In the desert the individual was nothing without a tribe. Individual freedom was an alien concept.
4. An aspect of this concept was that married couples have little time for themselves. Personal moments come later in the evening.
5. Individuality is equated with egoism. Hence, there is a great deal of pressure to conform.

Note: the preceding information was provided by Dr. Tara Deubel.

### **Enrichment Opportunity**

Compare the Sahrawi concept of privacy and individual freedom with similar concepts in the United States. In what ways do differences in history and culture explain the differing concepts?