

Indigenous-based Management

Recognizing the good, not just in one's own personal circumstances, but in the world, makes anything possible. When I am asked about the important characteristics of leadership, being of good, positive mind is at the top of my list. If a leader can focus on the meritorious characteristics of other people and try to play to their strengths as well as find value in even the most difficult situation, she can inspire hope and faith in others and motivate them to move forward.

Wilma Mankiller, Cherokee

Strategic thinking



The Circle has become the closest representation of the Mystery of Mysteries, for its sacred form symbolizes oneness, wholeness and totality. It is the path that is without beginning and without end. It is eternal. It encompasses all things: beginnings and movement, closure and completeness, fulfillment and fruition.... When we become part of the Circle, a sense of connectedness and awareness is created.

(Horn, 2000)

In our leadership, we have the responsibility to carry forward the spirit of our ancestors. It is not enough to be a program on Tribal lands, operated by the Tribe or designed by Native people to ensure it carries our Tribal values and beliefs. We carry a history of assimilation and oppression that impacts each of us as Native people in different ways. We have been placed in a world where we have adapted many mainstream practices that may have obscured our abilities to see how we might create something from within the vision and teachings of our elders and our ancestors.

We have an opportunity to create projects that carry the vision passed on to us from a long history of strength and beauty. A history that holds women as sacred and children as gifts from the creator. A history that recognizes and honors our interconnected relationships.

Tribal programs developing domestic violence and sexual assault responses can benefit from engaging intentionally in examining the historical, cultural and political context for their work while sharing their beliefs, their values, their principles and their complete perspectives from within the Circle while also valuing the same of everyone sitting in the Circle.

Strategic thinkers consider an exploration with depth, digging deeper and deeper, seeking a larger or broader understanding.

Seeking the bigger picture is not always a neat process; it may be messy with some levels of discomfort as people challenge themselves and others to stretch to understand different perspectives and views. Engaged in the Circle, strategic thinkers enjoy the benefit of each other's authenticity and truthfulness. Programs are not always used to experiencing this authenticity and truthfulness and may find the process awkward, however, it requires practice to be able to stay present and fully participate in a Circle relationship with each other. The often chaotic and nonlinear process can lead to transformative learning, challenging people's frames of reference and thus, enable them to undergo a total change of individual perspectives and opinions.

Thinking strategically, sitting in the Circle in tribal programs can go far to aid in their design and work well to encompass tribal identities. (Sloan, 2006) identifies five critical attributes to thinking strategically as having (1) an imagination, (2) a broad perspective, (3) the ability to juggle competing, incomplete and inaccurate information, (4) the ability to deal with things over that which there is no control and (5) to have an adamant desire to win. (Sloan, 2006) While having an adamant desire to win does not fit within core tribal values, in its place, having the attribute of an adamant desire for success can fit.

To facilitate the development of each of these five attributes, helping tribal programs consider how to create an environment that fosters dialogue and institutionalizes a consistent time to reflect, can support strategic learning. As well, tribal advocate program managers can include a broader group of people to explore strategy. They can support the creation of opportunity for individuals to come together in the *Circle to name the world*.

Critical thinking is one valuable tool we can turn to. It is a powerful, liberating force. (Wilson & Yellow Bird, 2005) Critical thinking requires us to be carefully considering and analyzing all possibilities that may be presented, ignored, trivialized, or censored in any argument, opinion, or what are considered to be "the facts" (2005).

The process of critical thinking is to seek the answers to a series of questions. Digging deeper. *How did this come to be? Who benefits from this?*

Relative centered approach

Creating a relative-centered approach is meaningful to building responses that are centered within our indigenous values and belief systems.

We frequently think about making sure we are working with participants in ways that support them and show them respect. While this is true, we also want to carry this across all aspects of our work.

- With program participants;
- With our co-workers;
- With community partnerships; and
- With the community as a whole.

In our role as Program Coordinator or as Advocate, we can often decide how we are going to do this work. We get to determine whether we will build our people not see them or embrace our relatives.

Through the history of oppression that indigenous people experienced and are still impacted today, it can be Internalized in ourselves and work to harm the kind ourselves and the environment of empowerment and respect we are working so hard to build. For those reasons, we will want to take time to examine the impact of oppression. *Are we building people up or are we pulling them down? Are we truly living within our indigenous values or are we operating through micro and macro aggressions?*



Definition: **op·press** (e-près1) *verb, transitive* **op·pressed, op·press·ing, op·press·es**

1. **To keep down by severe and unjust use of force or authority: *a people who were oppressed by tyranny.***
2. **To weigh heavily on: *Poverty oppresses the spirit.***
3. ***Obsolete.* To overwhelm or crush.**

Paulo Freire talks about cultivating critical consciousness through the process of collective meaning to unveil the nature of the system that creates and maintains

inequitable societies. He proposes a rigorous process of dialogue, pedagogy, grounded in an examination of individual and collective daily life, experiences of power relationships and the beliefs and fears that motivate behaviors. (Meehan, 2018)

According to the book *The Genius of Sitting Bull*, he knew that the first step on the path to leadership is a private one, in which a leader solves the great paradox that lies at the heart of leadership success: self-fulfillment comes from service to others (Murphy, 1993). That step requires a heroic effort to confront and overcome selfishness, blind ambition, and a natural tendency to ignore the unpleasant realities of a situation.

The infusion of commitment requires seven distinct steps:

1. Establish the right context within which people can grasp;
2. Inspire hope;
3. Build collective understanding;
4. Develop a plan of action;
5. Assemble the team and prepare to carry out the plan;
6. Implement the plan; and
7. Evaluate team performance for continuous improvement. (Murphy, 1993)



Leaders must also build everyone's trust in each other and in themselves.

All leaders must instill trust in their people. Without trust, commitment will die and the community will lose the constancy of purpose that strengthens the group bond. (Murphy, 1993)

The bottom line here is that each person can decide what kind of leader they want to be. To be most helpful working within our indigenous communities, we will want to build on indigenous values, not creating environments that hold people over each other in power dominance practices but instead work to build our interconnected relationships centered around our indigenous teachings or respect, honor and integrity.

Summary of leadership and power
(Hagberg, 2002)

They lead by	They inspire	They require
Domination, force	Fear of being hurt	Blind obedience
Seduction, making deals	Dependence	Return of favor
Charisma, personal persuasion	A winning attitude	Loyalty, no matter what
Modeling integrity, generating trust	Hope for self and organization	Consistency, honesty
Empowering others, service to others	Love and Service	Self-acceptance, purpose
Wisdom, a way of being	Inner Peace	Anything/everything

RESOURCES

Living Indigenous Leadership --

<https://www.ubcpres.ca/asset/9360/1/9780774823463.pdf>

Free Management Library -- <https://managementhelp.org/#title8>