Best Practices in Aboriginal Community Development: A Literature Review and Wise Practices Approach

By Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux and Brian Calliou

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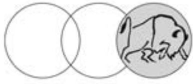


The Challenges of Aboriginal Leaders

The most effective contemporary Aboriginal leaders are visionaries, with big dreams for their nations and organizations.(Calliou, 2005-2006) They are a new breed of leaders who are thinkers and doers, committed to life-long learning, and have the best interests of their community at heart. They are risk-takers, entrepreneurial in spirit, and strategic thinkers. They do not fear change, but rather embrace the challenges they face, and turn threats into opportunities. However, there still are many Aboriginal communities whose leaders are elected or appointed to positions of leadership who do not have any formal training in management, administration, or governance. They are at a disadvantage without such knowledge and skills.

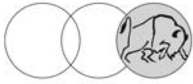
Furthermore, Aboriginal leaders are experiencing increasing authority and responsibilities as both federal and provincial governments make jurisdictional space for Aboriginal self-government and embrace the delegation of community services to local control. Today we see Aboriginal leaders meeting more frequently with senior government leaders and industry CEO's, negotiating agreements on behalf of their communities. Aboriginal leaders are working in a rapidly changing world that is globally inter-related, market-driven, and highly technological. All leaders are dealing with very complex issues in this new world order, and Aboriginal leaders need to keep pace. Leadership development is a necessity during these complex times. (Calliou and Voyageur, 2007)

Aboriginal leadership development and capacity building is important for true self-government and for communities to take advantage of economic opportunities. (Calliou, 2007; 2008) Manley Begay, a Navajo scholar, argues that Indigenous leaders are dealing with the effects of colonialism and "have become responsible for the tasks of rebuilding, reuniting, reshaping, and revitalizing these nations."(Begay, 1997) A study exploring First Nations leadership and leadership development in Saskatchewan within the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations organizational context was carried out by Ottmann (2005). The First Nations leaders that participated in this study shared personal and professional leadership and leadership development experiences and philosophy. The leaders indicated that being a First Nations leader was challenging because it continuously contended with two fundamentally different cultures – Western and First Nations. In addition, First Nations poverty, lack of funding, residential school effects, addictions, among other things, make leadership difficult. Because First Nations leadership is physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually taxing, many of the Chiefs cited internal rather than material satisfaction as a primary motivator. Moreover, these leaders were often motivated by a cause and the desire for collective well-being and positive change. Family, community members, other leaders, Elders, and the 'Creator' were acknowledged as sources of strength and inspiration.

Developing Aboriginal Leaders

The First Nations leaders who participated in the Ottmann study perceived leadership development as a life-long process of formal and informal learning experiences. Consequently, many of the leaders indicated that leadership development began in childhood with individual and family development.(Ottmann, 2005) The leaders described the need for a First Nations leadership development program that was flexible (able to work in community, tribal, and provincial settings), cognizant of First Nations culture, needs, and issues, and aware of current and innovative leadership practices. They also felt that a First Nations leadership development program should also incorporate Western knowledge, skills, and education. Indigenous leaders indicated in a competency study that they need western knowledge on leadership and management, but that these had to be adapted to meet their specific community and cultural needs. (Calliou, 2005)

Studies that focus on Indigenous leadership development ultimately have significant implications for theory, research, fundamental, and practical applications for learning organizations.(Ottmann, 2005; Begay, 1991, 1997; Calliou, 2005, 2007, 2008; Cowan, 2008) These studies also confirm that successful communities first need to build a culture of positive practice, a "habit of doing things" to realize their visions. Aboriginal peoples also need to create (with a sense of ownership and consequent responsibilities for the ownership) their own unique community development plan. Such a plan needs to fit in the intersection of the strengths the community has (the "what"), the core values the community holds (the "why"), and a deep understanding of the available resources that can be used (the "how"). Out of changing perspectives on how Aboriginal peoples do business, grow and influence their leadership, and create a changing vision for their communities have come a number of initiatives that have produced templates of success and comparative examples of ways of doing things that are fully Indigenous and sustainable "wise practice" development practices.



Wise Practices in Aboriginal Leadership

Aboriginal leaders and managers need the same leadership development training as others. However, Aboriginal cultures have unique issues that are very different from non-Aboriginal leaders. For example, they are dealing with the effects of colonization, dispossession from lands and resources, and residential schools. (Wesley-Esquimaux, 2009; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004) They also deal with problems that others may not face such as poverty, the enduring legacy of loss of culture, responsibility for overseeing community development, and little employment or economic development within their communities.

In spite of multiple obstacles, First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples have been moving rapidly on the path to reclaim and invigorate their leadership, languages, cultures, teachings, and community practices. The dialogue that is now taking place in Aboriginal communities is rooted in their unique body of knowledge, manifested through oral histories and lived experiences. There is a recognized need to return to and invigorate ancestral "wise practices" and engage community members, from youth to Elders, in a reassertion of fundamental belief structures, values and ceremonial practices.(Little Bear, 1998, 2004; Calliou, 2005; Cowan, 2008; Warner and Grint, 2006; Redpath and Neilsen, 1997) Taking back and revitalizing "our own ways" will ensure that Aboriginal peoples will continue to re-connect their traditions and practices and strengthen the sacred circle of life.

Over several centuries, First Nation and Aboriginal communities across Canada experienced several "crisis events" in the form of various epidemics, imposition of law, dislocation and residential schooling that caused historical trauma. Some communities appear to have succumbed to the aftermath of multiple traumatic incidents, and this has all too frequently resulted in negative media attention (Bussidor & Bilgen-Reinart, 1997, Shkilnyk, 1985).

This kind of negative media coverage paints a picture of dysfunctional Aboriginal communities. Many authors have written on the trajectory of loss and promoted a broad discourse about the continuing conditions of poor health, impermanence, and negative socio/cultural impacts (Brave Heart, 2004 A, 2004 B, Wesley-Esquimaux, 2004, Miller, 2004, Churchill, 1995). This has also been referred to as the "deficit paradigm" where social pathologies are often the focus of research and media stories of Aboriginal peoples. (Ponting and Voyageur, 2001)

Advancing the Wise Practices Approach to Aboriginal Leadership Development

The research that The Banff Centre is undertaking is looking at the Aboriginal community of Alberta specifically, and Canada generally, from the other side of the ledger of lived experience. Looking past the label of "crisis event" and the seemingly hopeless legacy of long-term interference and

disabling government policy, this research focuses on what has been manifesting in a multitude of achievements and success stories of Aboriginal communities. The projects will examine, highlight and map the intiatives taken and how they achieved success.

The Centre will do this recording in a variety of ways; through the assembling of a cohort of young Aboriginal people from across Alberta involved in data gathering (including interviewing community members, elders and community leaders) and journaling; through multi-media methods that utilize video, radio, and photography to record sessions and community visits; and through writing. In addition, the Banff Centre will oversee the work of four research teams who will record narrative histories and events that trace how these successful ventures developed from inception to concluding institutions and cultural cerebrations such as Metis Crossing in Smokey Lake, Alberta.

This particular review will examine a range of concepts related to Aboriginal leadership recognizing that, as in any other social system of knowledge and practice, Aboriginal leadership development is being constantly refined to identify the most productive and effective ways for Aboriginal leaders and leaders-in-training to respond to the needs of their communities. Hence, efforts have been made in the preparation of this report to go beyond a typical literature review to capture community voices and actions relevant to the concept of Aboriginal leadership.

The Nexen Chair in Aboriginal Research, in conjunction with the Banff Centre, has been given responsibility to document this movement and demonstrate the experiences and successes in Aboriginal communities across Alberta, and in some instances the rest of Canada. (Bishop Bowes, 2009-2010) Furthermore, the authors of this report fully expect that the definition and conceptualization of wise practices will continually evolve and be subject to refinement, as experience and knowledge expands within the Aboriginal community and through the applied research projects.

The authors of this review welcome the fact that “the concepts of participatory research and community involvement, the incorporation of traditional knowledge, culturally-appropriate, and community- based research methods have gained momentum in recent years within First Nations and Inuit settings” (Schnarch (2004:82). This review of Aboriginal leadership and First Nation socio-economic success through a wise practices lens, as part of the bigger project, is based on recognition of local systems of knowledge and practice, in which the concept of Aboriginal leadership is perceived as both complex and holistic. We recognize that Aboriginal leadership and community success include traditional elements (such as spiritual meanings, cultural imagery, and indirect modes of communication), contemporary culturally appropriate models (as determined by Aboriginal leaders), as well as aspects that have actively responded to ever-

changing relations between Aboriginal and "mainstream" cultures. In addition, we recognize that there are Western features of leadership that are being purposefully adopted by Aboriginal leaders to fit and benefit their knowledge and practice. As previously stated, there is great need for leadership development and training programs for Aboriginal leaders. One tool for leadership development is the best practice case study.

Best Practices Approach

Leadership development programs use a variety of methods and approaches to learn about leading and managing.(McGonagill and Pruyn, 2010; Leskiw and Singh, 2007) Besides formal lectures in post-secondary institutions, many also rely on the case study approach. Leaders and managers within a variety of organizations use best practice case studies to look for ways to improve.

In recent years, it has been popularized by organizational gurus as an incessant buzzword, often overused in community and leadership development models that are looking for absolute formulae in what is inherently a relative and ever-changing environment: human socio-cultural/socio-economic conditions.

- A best practice is a proven method, technique, or process for achieving a specific outcome under a specific circumstance and in an effective way.
- It is a concept based on lessons learned by one group, which can be passed on to another group, facing a similar set of circumstances or tasks.
- The experiences learned by one community or organization that can be shared with another.

Utilizing best practices can save both time and money and assist in improvement in organizations and in individual leadership and management practices.

Another definition states that best practices are the "methodologies, strategies, procedures, practices and/or processes that consistently produce successful results." (Plate, Foy and Krehbiel, 2009, p.i) A best management practices definition states, "Best management practices refer to the processes, practices, and systems identified in public and private organizations

that performed exceptionally well and are widely recognized as improving an organization's performance and efficiency in specific areas." (GOA/NSIAD, 1995, p. 6)

Thus, best practices case studies carefully document innovative and outstanding case histories in a specific practice area. They serve as models and provide guidelines for others to learn from because of the detailed analysis of the practice under study. There is an assumption that calling practices "best practices" means that they can be replicated, that ideas and inspiration are generated from them, and can contribute to development practices in the student. Adoption of such practices may also cause a change in the way that existing organizations carry out their work and lead to improvement, effectiveness, and efficiency. The idea is that these documented stories can make a difference to others who study them and transfer the knowledge into action by using as a guide for their own project. Another use of best practices case studies is to use as a benchmark against which to compare one's own community or organization process. Through this comparison of how a known successful organization does a certain practice, one's own community or organization uses this information to improve or change its processes and practices.

All best practices case studies are not of the same character and quality. Factors affecting the length and depth of descriptions of each case include the character of the practice under study, the researcher/author, local context, and amount of information available. Thus, in one sense, each best practices case study speaks for itself.

Until very recently - and following a trend in mainstream western models of leadership, organization, and community development - the term "best practices" has been used by many Aboriginal social/cultural researchers, community developers, activists, and leaders to try and pinpoint what works in Aboriginal communities as well, with the intention of sharing the potential lessons with other communities, so they do not have to re-discover what has already been established as a proven method. Some good examples of highly regarded best practice models can be found through the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, Winners of the Aboriginal Relations-Best Practice Awards of Distinction. Other examples include the community development and language preservation work that is regularly portrayed by the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, the Performance Art Network of Native Earth Performing Arts, Wawatay Radio and Television in Northern Ontario, and the Aboriginal Multi-Media Society in Alberta.

We acknowledge that across this country and over time, there have been countless successful and flourishing (however localized) Aboriginal projects, designed to support communities and develop their leadership potential. The best practices and lessons learned have been generously shared with the Aboriginal community at large via various media.

Review of Literature of Best Practices in Aboriginal Community Development

Leadership in Aboriginal communities generally involves leading and organizing community development initiatives, provision of community services, and economic development. Much of the research and available studies of Aboriginal best practices are of economic development or community development. We will now review some of this literature and studies of best practices in Aboriginal community and economic development. We chose the following 13 studies because they gave empirical data for their conclusions and provide practical knowledge. They also represent a good sampling and variety of studies of Aboriginal best practices. These studies have generally identified certain key success factors that provide a basis for understanding how or why some Aboriginal communities achieve results.

1. Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development

One of the best known studies of successful Indigenous economic development is the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development (HPAIED). The HPAIED began in the mid-1980s at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University when Joseph Kalt, a political economist, and Stephen Cornell, a sociologist, explored why some Native American tribes were defying the odds and achieving economic success and strong community growth. Some tribes stood out from others in achieving success, while the majority was struggling with poverty and dependence. They originally focused narrowly on tribal economics, especially employment and businesses. However, they discovered that tribal economic development was much broader and was affected as much by social and political factors as economic factors alone. One could not understand tribal economic development without considering the entire community structure, systems and institutions. In other words, the study of tribal economic development required a holistic approach where a broader set of success factors could be identified and explored. (Cornell and Kalt, 1988, 1990, 2000; Cornell and Gil-Swedberg, 1995; Kalt, 1993; Jorgensen, 2007)

What the HPAIED study found was in order to achieve successful tribal economic development, there had to be a strong self-governing community that had a stable environment into which investors were willing to risk investment dollars. Only after these factors were in place, could they achieve success in their economic development ventures. The HPAIED study identified four main key success factors: (i) de facto sovereignty; (ii) effective institutions that match the culture; (iii) strategic direction; (iv) strong, action-oriented leadership. They termed this the nation-building approach to Indigenous community economic development. They also contrast the nation-building model with the traditional Bureau of Indian Affairs approach to tribal economic development which they described as short-term results oriented initiatives that meet external needs and policies, rather than the needs of the tribal community.

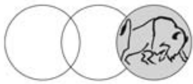
Sovereignty. The first factor of tribal success in the nation-building model was to actually practice local sovereignty, that is, to practice genuine self-rule and local control with a “sovereignty attitude.” Tribal leaders who took control, were better able to meet community needs and able to learn from their experiences or any mistakes.
Institutions Match Culture. The second success factor was to build effective institutions that match their culture. Institutions are the rules of how people relate and interact in a community. There are both formal and informal institutions. Formal institutions include , the rule of law including tribal constitutions, laws, and courts. Informal institutions include traditional protocols, norms and mores that are learned throughout one’s life. Good governing institutions must be effective and culturally appropriate. To be effective, institutions must achieve stability, security and certainty for the community in how members are expected to behave in all their relationships. These institutions must also feel legitimate to the community, so they buy-in and respect them. Thus, institutions that reflect or coincide with traditional and cultural ways of being and doing will be more successful. Indigenous peoples do not easily accept institutions or structures that are imposed on them from external sources.

Setting a Strategic Direction. The third factor of success was to set a strategic direction, so that long-term planning could be mapped out in order to set a vision to build the kind of society they desired. Through this long-term planning the communities set priorities to focus scarce resources on, monitored progress and actually felt the consequences of their decisions and actions. They became proactive instead of reactive.

Action-oriented Leadership. The fourth success factor identified by the HPAIED study was strong leaders who took action. These leaders did not just think of ideas, they ensured their ideas were turned into action. They actually carry out plans, ensure strategies are implemented, and see the results of the effort. These were strong leaders who led drastic changes in their communities, who were willing to break with the status quo so there would be improved conditions in their communities.

2. National Centre for First Nations Governance

With respect to the First Nations in Canada, the National Centre for First Nations Governance, an independent, non-profit, Aboriginal run institution, has developed a variety of programs to assist in leadership development and governance. To support these efforts they undertook research to develop their model for successful First Nations governance which includes a set of key components that include: the people (citizens); the land (territory and community lands); laws and jurisdiction; institutions; and resources. Through the governance of these key components, they also identified the following governance principles necessary to lead and govern First Nations successfully: strategic vision; meaningful information sharing; participation



in decision-making; territorial integrity; economic realization; respect for the spirit of the land; expansion of jurisdiction; rule of law; transparency and fairness; results-based organizations; cultural alignment of institutions; effective inter-governmental relations; human resource capacity; financial management capacity; performance evaluation; accountability and reporting; diversity of revenue sources. (NCFNG, 2009)

The Governance Best Practices Report profiles best practices for each of the Governance Centre's seventeen principles of effective governance. The practices are drawn from the experience of First Nations, tribes and aboriginal organizations across Canada and in the United States. There are specific reports that profile actual practices being followed and provide a brief snapshot of strategies, techniques, procedures or processes that produce efficiencies in governance. They are intended to make concrete the universal principles of effective governance by profiling their implementation in specific First Nations contexts. While the reports are intended to serve as models, each community determines for itself how the principles are brought to life in their specific contexts. The purpose of these reports is to educate First Nations and identify ways to connect with others to improve their understanding on these matters. The Centre encourages their widespread use and gives permission for them to be shared and replicated from their on-line website.

3. Institute on Governance

The Institute on Governance is an independent, non-profit public interest agency located in Ottawa, Ontario with a mission to advance better governance in the public interest. They also carry out a number of reports including on Aboriginal governance. In some of their reports they have set out a model with five principles of good governance that include: legitimacy and voice; direction; performance; accountability; fairness. (Graham, Amos and Plumptre, 2003; Graham and Bruhn, 2009; Bruhn, 2009)

4. UN Development Program

The United Nations' Development Program (UNDP) has identified nine principles of good governance for assistance to developing countries that include: participation; consensus orientation; strategic vision; responsiveness; effectiveness and efficiency; accountability; transparency; equity; rule of law. (Graham, Amos and Plumptre, 2003)

5. DIAND Governance Action Plan

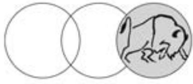
The federal government of Canada's Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development created a governance action plan to guide its work with First Nations building their capacity for self-government. In their governance action plan they identified seven "key drivers or levers of capacity development for good governance" that include: a vision or sense of self as self-governing; stable and effective leadership; effective governing institutions; culture match; strategic orientation; citizen engagement; effective and stable intergovernmental relations. (INAC, 2000)

6. Friendship Centre Movement Best Practices in Governance and Management

The Friendship Centre movement in Canada has done great work to bring culturally appropriate services and programs to urban Aboriginals and off reserve Indians. The National Association of Friendship Centres partnered with the Institute on Governance to document various Friendship Centres' best practices. The key factors of successful practices include: board governance; executive leadership; staffing; volunteers; strategic planning; evaluation; adaptive capacity; external relations; sustainability; fundraising; and human resource management. They documented one best practice case study on each of these practice areas to illustrate that specific Friendship Centre's approach to achievement.(Graham and Kinmond, 2008; Graham and Mitchell, 2009)

7. Conference Board of Canada

The Conference Board of Canada produced a report that examined 10 Aboriginal communities and identified six key factors to success in creating wealth and employment as part of Aboriginal economic development efforts: strong leadership and vision; strategic community economic development plan; access to capital, markets and management expertise; good governance



and management; transparency and accountability; and the positive interplay of business and politics.(Loizides and Wuttunee, 2005) In another report on best practices for Aboriginal businesses they set out the following keys to success: purpose; clear corporate vision; winning attitude; using creativity to overcome obstacles; good location; experience and expertise; hiring people from outside community; recruitment and retention; and developing partnerships.(Sisco and Nelson, 2008) In yet another report on successful Aboriginal businesses, they explored 10 case studies and determined that there were three main keys to success: leadership; sound business practices; and strong relationships and partnerships. (Sisco and Stewart, 2009)

8. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

RCAP's report identified five critical factors of success in community economic development in the following manner: restoration of power and control over lands and resources; development of a positive and encouraging social/political/cultural climate for Aboriginal economic development; development of enabling instruments for use in surmounting the problems facing Aboriginal economic development; development of a skilled and positive forward looking labour force; acceptance and willingness to engage in economic activity by the mainstream in collaboration with Aboriginal people. (Wein, 1999; Newhouse, 2009)

9. Human Resources Development Canada

The federal government's Human Resources Development Canada department produced a report on Aboriginal social and economic development that set out lessons learned that they feel are important as factors for successful Aboriginal development: governance; planning and policy development; control over resources and funding arrangements; program delivery and management; accountability; capacity-building; and other requirements such as, coordination across programs, combining human resource and economic development, linking education and training to employment. (HRDC, 1999)

10. Comprehensive Community Planning Workshop

The Okanagan Indian Band in B.C. hosted a workshop on comprehensive community planning and INAC wrote a report on it setting out the lessons learned, that include: community-based and community-driven; build a planning team and process; financial resources mobilization; capacity building, planning tools and resources; intergovernmental relations; linkages, networking and sharing of best practices. (INAC, 2005)

11. Public Works Management in First Nations Communities

The department of Public Works and Government Services Canada and the department of Indian Affairs Canada developed a report on good public works management in First Nations communities that explored the experiences of six communities to identify the following keys to

success: vision; leadership; policies; management and administration; self-sufficiency; human resources; asset protection and management; accountability; and fiscal accountability. (INAC and PWGSC, 2002)

12. Canadian First Nation Community Economic Development Planning

This research project intended to provide First Nations and INAC with a self-assessment tool known as the Community Capacity Index to measure socio-economic development. The composite indicators came from the Harvard Study on Indian Economic Development and other studies, which provides consistent evidence that top rated indicators that have been effective in developing capacities in Aboriginal communities are stable and similar across Aboriginal communities: informal and formal leadership; self-determination; respecting community values; partnerships; planning for the future.

As Manuel (2007:74) says, "not all tools and approaches will work in every community. Success will depend on the community capacity levels, resources (financial and human), as well a cultural match". Manuel (2007) worked with key leaders of successful First Nations communities who had won the CANDO Economic Developer of the Year Award and notes that each community had its own approach to community development – "each First Nation must find their 'made at home' approach. Although recommendations and studies are put forward for consideration by all, it must be realized that each community will have to find their unique approach to development planning. There is no cookie cutter approach that can work for all communities, but instead the approaches will be as diverse as the First Nations that exist in Canada (Manuel, 2007:76).

13. Indigenous Research and Education, Charles Darwin University

Aborigine scholar Darryl Cronin of the Indigenous Research and Education faculty, Charles Darwin University in Australia, developed a paper exploring what Aboriginal people think about governance and community development. He identified key elements of a governance and development approach that include the following: Aboriginal authority; jurisdictional authority; cultural appropriateness; research, education and training; leadership; strengthening families; direct and adequate funding; private and non-profit sector partnerships; and capacity of government agencies. (Cronin, 2003)

From this literature review, we see some similarities and some uniqueness in the keys to success that each study identified. Drawing on these studies, we have identified what we feel are the seven key success factors to successful Indigenous community development that we term "wise practices" and will form the basis of our wise practices model: identity and culture; leadership; strategic vision and planning; good governance and management; accountability and stewardship; performance evaluation; collaborations, partnerships and external relationships.

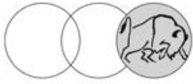
Before going on to discuss this wise practices model, we want to consider the critique of best practices research, as well as, the critique of research into Indigenous communities.

Critique of "Best Practices"

One problem with the notion of best practices is there are different conceptions of what criteria are to be used in defining a practice as a "best practice". The term is sometimes criticized as being narrowly responsive to one or another ideological lens. Thus, what is identified as a key criterion for a best practice may differ, for example, between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Stephen Cornell argues that the middle class dream of success in the U.S. is not necessarily the definition of success that most Native Americans hold(Cornell, 1987) Furthermore, some argue that best practices in adult education runs the risk of eroding its traditional grounding in an ethic of social justice and the common good.(Bartlette, 2008) We cannot assume that what works in one situation, context or culture will not necessarily work in another.(Krajewski and Silver, 2008)

Leadership and management education of indigenous leaders is seen as a key to success in their governance and economic development.(Calliou, 2005, 2008; Callaghan and Christmas, 2005) Western-based theories and practices are generally held out to be useful for indigenous leaders to acquire. Theories from the mid-1900s onward tended to prescribe indigenous peoples to discard their culture and traditional practices and learn "modern" knowledge and skills related to business management. However, this has rarely led to success. Geert Hofstede argues that the failure of much of the international development initiatives of the 60s and 70s was at least partly due to this lack of cultural sensitivity in the transfer of management ideas.(Hofstede, 1980, 1983, 1993)

There is a growing skepticism about the universality of best practices and the extent to which those standards can be judged and utilized according to universal levels (Dahlberg et al., 1999). For example, and directly in line with Aboriginal perspectives on best practices, these authors asked, "How could [quality] take into account context and values, subjectivity and plurality?



How could it accommodate multiple perspectives, with different groups in different places having different views of what quality was or different interpretations of criteria?". As Aboriginal leadership has articulated time and again the authors also pointed out that, "This problem became more acute as people began to talk about the importance of the process of defining quality and best practices and how this should include a wide range of stakeholders, not only academic experts but children, parents and practitioners."(Dahlberg, et al, 1999:4) There is a growing tendency to recognize the fact that there is no practice that is best for everyone or in every situation, and no best practice remains best for very long as people keep on finding better ways of doing things.

Some commentators have argued that indigenous peoples must build from a cultural basis, rather than discarding culture and traditions.(Wuttunee, 2004; D.H. Smith, 2000; Alfred, 1999; Calliou; 2005) Others have argued that while it is important to learn this modern management and organizational development knowledge, it ought to be reconciled with traditional cultural values, practices or processes.(Redpath and Neilsen, 1997; Calliou, 2005) Thus, culture matters.

As one area of importance that Indigenous leaders and managers of programs reliant upon external funding face, evaluation processes and tools reflect western European values and knowledge. As one commentator noted, "The 'dance' between western assumptions of evaluation superiority and Aboriginal assumptions of uniqueness are at the root of the question of how to satisfy the evaluation needs of funders without trampling on, or otherwise marginalizing, the Aboriginal ways of knowing and communicating." (Johnston, 2010, 2) O.L. Davis Jr. (1997:3) notes, "success stories seem easily converted into best practices, from accounts of direct teaching to implementation of Outcome Based Education (OBE) Programs, from self-concept enhancement strategies to implications for teaching from brain research findings. With rare exception however, such accounts are not case studies; most are de-contextualized …their purpose is in fact more about advocacy, and not necessarily a process of illumination".

Still, in spite of the acknowledged diversity of First Nations, Métis and Inuit populations across Canada in many models of the leadership and community development, there is an implicit expectation that the best practices developed by one community (regardless of its cultural background and socio-cultural practices, regardless of its unique colonial experiences, and regardless of its unique visions, goals, and priorities) can be easily generalized into other contexts.

Consequently, more and more people, including researchers, community members, and social activists, note that something is missing in how we approach best practices in the Aboriginal community and in leadership development (Wesley-Esquimaux & Snowball, 2009; Thoms, 2007). It is not so much about rejecting the idea that we all ultimately benefit from sharing

knowledge, experiences, and practice, but rather about an explicit recognition that, when it comes to Aboriginal communities, as Thoms (2007: 8) notes, a "best practice" in one situation should not automatically be regarded as replicable in similar situations given, "the variety of unique cultural and situational environments that characterize Native peoples lived experiences".

Hylton (2002) also notes that "there is considerable variation in Aboriginal beliefs and traditions from one Aboriginal community to another. … Therefore, there is no unified set of best practices but, rather, many such practices that emerge from diverse cultures and community experiences". Thoms (2007:8) adds that "the term 'best' is a hierarchical, non-Aboriginal construct" and is concerned that "the emphasis on 'best' studies tends to create a reliance on the lessons learned in large, well-funded, academically directed studies and marginalizes Aboriginal knowledge learned on the frontlines through socio-cultural insight, ingenuity, intuition, long experience, and trial and error".

With this critique of best practices and the western knowledge basis, Indigenous and other scholars and commentators have argued that western knowledges and practices must adapt to meet the needs of Indigenous peoples and their cultural differences.

Bringing Culture Back In

In light of the foregoing critique and in order to resonate with Indigenous leaders, we argue that culture matters and that we need to find processes to bring culture back in. Political scientist Taiaiake Alred, a Mohawk scholar, identified the characteristics of strong Indigenous communities: wholeness with diversity; shared culture; communication; respect and trust; group maintenance; participatory and consensus-based government; youth empowerment; and strong links to the outside world.(Alfred, 1999) Using an Indigenist research framework, the research must focus on "the lived, historical experiences, ideas, traditions, dreams, interests, aspirations, and struggles of Indigenous [peoples].(Rigney, 1999)

An Aboriginal model of leadership can be defined in terms of skills, abilities, and traditional gifts underlying an individual's traditional-spiritual name, clan, life experience, or what are commonly referred to as Aboriginal identity and cultural ties (King, 2008; see also, Warner and Grint, 2006; Cowan, 2008; Little Bear, 2000; Couture, 2000). King (2008) uses the term "Aboriginal Intellectual Capital" to recognize and define cultural competences of Aboriginal leaders:

> "An Aboriginal leader's development comes from the mentoring of peers, staff, and faculty; and from the community's traditional teachers, healers and Elders. Aboriginal students are equally effective role models accountable to their communities and bearing their own leadership responsibilities to support and develop leadership characteristics in others."

King (2008) also recognizes that Aboriginal people have philosophies that encompass a holistic approach to learning that are imperative to Aboriginal leadership growth and development. Alfred, in citing Leroy Little Bear, captured the essence of required patterns of traditional leadership or the ideal personality for leaders as follows:

> Given the opportunity, a culture attempts to mold its members into ideal personalities. The ideal personality in Native American cultures is a person who shows kindness to all, who puts the group ahead of individual wants and desires, who is a generalist, who is steeped in spiritual and ritual knowledge—a person who goes about daily life and approaches "all his or her relations" in a sea of friendship, easygoing-ness, humour, and good feelings. She or he is a person who attempts to suppress inner feelings, anger, and disagreements with the group. She or he is a person who is expected to display bravery, hardiness, and strength against enemies and outsiders. She or he is a person who is adaptable and takes the world as it comes without complaint. That is the way it used to be! That is the way it should be! (Alfred:10)

Irwin (992:10) says that traditionally, First Nations leaders were not elected but “emerged from natural order and laws of nature.” As Ottmann (2005) adds, the leadership development process would begin with childhood encouragement and directions from Aboriginal Elders, and with inspiration and support from other Aboriginal leaders. Hence, in a very real sense, the shared positive values and beliefs of the community would create a future leader.

Today, just as in the past, Aboriginal leadership is complex, intricate, and multifaceted, as it holistically encompasses many social domains and spheres of knowledge and practice: community economic development, social environments that are supportive of the actualization of self-governance aspirations, business and employment opportunities, an active involvement of Aboriginal youth in the decisions that impact their lives, a full recognition of traditional knowledge systems and their role in creating collective futures, and the removal of barriers to social, educational, political, and economic opportunities in both on and off reserve contexts (Foley, 2008; Calliou, 2005; Warner & Grint, 2006).

Mainstream leadership theories can be divided into two types: transactional, with an emphasis on contingent rewards for performing and punishments for non-performance, and transformational, with an emphasis on developing a vision and communicating that vision in a charismatic, inspirational fashion (Bass, 1990). In the rich context of Aboriginal traditions, this dichotomy seems far too superficial. According to Julien, Zinni and Wright (2009), Aboriginal leaders, regardless of gender, are driven by spirituality and a long-term egalitarian perspective with a focus on the good of the community.

> “Aboriginal leaders are mindful of the long-term perspective and see the world in a very different fashion than many non-Aboriginal leaders. One is struck in speaking with these leaders about the lack of ego, the lack of hierarchy in how they view their subordinates and how decisions need to be made based on the impact on the whole community and not just a narrow individualistic perspective. Aboriginal leaders talked extensively about the seven generations approach to leadership: about an absolute sense of making the right decisions today with a sense of obligation to how these decisions would influence the next seven generations in the community. Most leaders spoke passionately about the long-term view and the need to focus their decision making on the community as a whole” (Julien, Zinni and Wright, 2009: 4).

It appears that all culturally-ideal Aboriginal leadership strategies include an emphasis on spirituality and a long-term perspective that focuses on the good of the community.(Ottmann, 2002) These translate into particular practices and activities, grounded in the Seven Sacred Teachings that make Aboriginal organizations excel in bringing together all the elements necessary to set

up culturally-appropriate ideal leadership structures.(Cyr, 2009) One teaching tool common to Ojibway and Cree peoples, contains bedrock principles for living. They also refer to this as "The Seven Grandfathers", and because it involves translating sophisticated Aboriginal concepts into English, it often shows up in different English formulations. One of the more widely-used forms is as follows:

- (Bravery/Courage) Aak-de-he-win – To face life with courage is to know bravery.
- (Respect) Ma-na-ji-win – To honour all of Creation is to have respect.
- (Humility) Dbaa-dem-diz-win – To accept yourself as a sacred part of Creation is to know humility.
- (Truth) De-bwe-win – to know these things is to know the truth.
- (Honesty) Gwe-ya-kwaad-zi-win – To walk through life with integrity is to know honesty.
- (Love) Zah-gi-di-win – To know love is to know peace.
- (Wisdom) Nbwaa-ka-win – To cherish knowledge is to know wisdom.

The Seven Sacred Teachings present orderly steps to living in a good "state of mind" and represent both a pathway and the interconnected nature of the human growth process. The wise practices journey through these Teachings begins with understanding and embracing the significance of the following values. We can effectively tie these teachings to leadership development and community engagement, and share a traditional pathway to wise practices in any community that expresses an interest in learning about and activating these principles. (Borrows, 2008)

These prinicples illustrate that a community-centered, strength-based approach, deeply rooted in traditional practice works as it aims to strengthen leadership and social organization among community members who interact regularly and share institutions of social life. Strengthened social organization is, in turn, a means to enhance the ability of community members to engage in collective problem solving, to improve self-sufficiency and efficacy, bolster internal control, and to make the community a desirable place to live. Such changes benefit individual and family functioning.

A community-centered approach to developing leadership and fostering success means embracing asset-based and capacity-focused approaches as opposed to needs-based and barrier-focused approaches thereby enlivening concepts that have wide ranging utility in the promotion of new/old forms of leadership development and community engagement. Today, we are looking back to go forward in reconstituting our social and governance strengths and informing the practices of our leaders to always be wise.

The Wise Practices Approach

Taking the critique above into account and the need for Aboriginal case studies, we adopt the notion of wise practices as a basis for our community based research model. Wise practices can be defined as … With the understanding that a “best practice” in one situation should not automatically be regarded as replicable in other similar situations and describing this as an ill-founded “cookie cutter” presumption, Thoms (2007) proposes the term “wise practices” as one that better reflects the fact that the Aboriginal world is culturally heterogeneous, socially diverse, and communally “traditional” while at the same time ever-changing.

The term “wise practices” has been actively propagated by UNESCO (2000) with an understanding that the definition, conceptualization, and implementation of wise practices will continually evolve and be subject to refinement, as individual and community experience and knowledge expands. **Wise practices are best being defined as locally-appropriate actions, tools, principles or decisions that contribute significantly to the development of sustainable and equitable social conditions.**

According to Davis (1997:4), “wise practice, by its very nature, is idiosyncratic, contextual, textured, and probably inconsistent. It is not standardized, not off-the-shelf, and not a one-size-fits-all concept”. Wise practices reflect the richness of relationships, respect for uniqueness, and the contextual nature of community and leadership development where nothing is static, as people bring in and send out different experiences, views, and energies.

Best practices tend not to be contextualized, and individuals portrayed as best-practice practitioners are always considered exemplary individuals (Davis, 1997). On the other hand, “wise practices always are situated thoroughly in their context, and recognizable, commonly ordinary individuals use them in real, specific life circumstances. Consequently, when other professionals take the time to learn about these wise practices, they can readily acknowledge

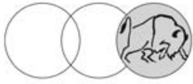
the reports' enhanced authenticity and credibility. The reports ring true" (2). Community efficacy, use of knowledge, and applied skill sets become real life barometers of leadership effectiveness and support.

Encompassing traditional values of inclusiveness, appreciation for local knowledge, and respect for all relations, this approach also closely resembles pre-contact social environments in North American native cultures that were both reflective, giving people time to internalize choices and reach consensus about what needs to be done; and integrative, giving voice to everybody, with social life happening within complex relationships and with nobody left behind. It allows Indigenous leaders to bring culture back in as a foundation for their community leadership.

Implicit in the concept of wise practices, as we use it in leadership development, is the imperative that a future leader must know his/her community so that he/she is able to work with the community to identify the locally-appropriate wise practices. In a sense, he/she has to be "wise" about the community to be able to recognize as well as define the wise practices in question. Calliou (2005) found this to be true when the Banff Centre surveyed Indigenous leaders who stated knowledge of community history and culture was an important competency for leadership.

When one explores the term "best", one question that arises is by whose standard. What does success mean? (Calliou, 2005 & Cornell, 1987) In a wise practices approach, one does not have to put numbers to communities' achievements so that community development can be judged and compared to generalized and widely adopted standards. Rather, this approach integrates communal experience to qualify, or describe, the community's sense of well-being, socio-economic and cultural efficacy. And, in effect, their sense of well-being and success will very likely differ from another community, even when they are closely situated. Thus, and according to Meacham (in Sternberg, 1990:187) the use of ancestral based "wise practices" and the concept of "wisdom" as a marker of community based skills sets, are not just content-based, but associated with "the manner in which knowledge is held (and) how that knowledge is put to use". It also speaks volumes as to how it is extended, interpreted, and put into practice.

The Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (CAAN) has already successfully adopted an understanding that wise practices begin from a position of internally generated and culturally appropriate knowledge and must be tailored to the capacity building and cohesion needs of each individual community based on their common understandings and historic practices (2-Spirited People, 2008). Healing Our Spirit Worldwid – The Sixth Gathering held in September 2010 in Honolulu was focused on successes, wise practices and common issues in health, healing and addictions within Indigenous communities.



With regards to what is "wise practice" and the wisdom it is based upon, Joy Goodfellow (2001) lists the following characteristics of wisdom: sound reasoning ability, an expression of concern for others, an ability to learn from ideas and environment, an ability to make sound judgments (moral issues), the expeditious use of experience, and the use of intuition. All of which foster an ability to see through things, read between the lines and interpret his/her environment.

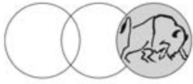
Practical wisdom that is implicit in the wise practices approach, combines practical knowledge with sound judgment and thoughtful action (Fish & Coles, 1998; Sternberg, 1990). What makes this approach truly well-fitted to Aboriginal frameworks of knowledge and practice is that many Aboriginal communities already understand what works in their homelands and territories. They are open and receptive to learning from their environments and from new ideas, in many instances all they really need is the tools to mobilize inherent knowledge and leave behind imposed restrictions. Through this research, the Banff Centre is seeking to re-mind them that they already possess wisdom of practice and this wisdom belongs where it is being practiced and being constantly (re)created by the whole community.

But, as Bandura (1994) reminds us, a resilient sense of efficacy requires experience in overcoming obstacles through perseverant effort -"some setbacks and difficulties in human pursuits serve a useful purpose in teaching that success usually requires sustained effort. After people become convinced they have what it takes to succeed, they persevere in the face of adversity and quickly rebound from setbacks. By sticking it out through tough times, they emerge stronger from adversity". In other words, we can also learn from our mistakes if we become a learning organization who reflects back upon decisions made and actions taken.

As this "Indigenous Knowledge" approach fits well within Aboriginal social frameworks, it can be utilized in community and leadership development as a valuable tool, but also as a reflection of deeply held and meaningfully practiced Aboriginal cultural and spiritual values such as the Seven Sacred Teachings.

The Banff Centre Wise Practices Model

Following research on developing wise practices, we can identify and develop models to ensure that communities will not just "develop leadership" in a conventional sense of this overarching concept. They will be re-building balanced communal practices, using what they already have: wise practices, implicit and explicit communal wisdom, a sense of cultural identity, an appreciation for time and deep practice, respect for togetherness and reciprocity, and deeply-seeded reverence for traditional teachings. The key for success for the communities faced with significant obstacles is the realization that these traditional communal "possessions" are powerful tools to restore harmony and balance.



From the literature review we identified **seven key factors** of successful Indigenous community development that must be taken into consideration when employing a wise practices model. The first key factor is **identity and culture**. Leaders of Indigenous communities have stated that they as leaders need to have a strong understanding and knowledge of their culture, community and their traditional territories.(Calliou, 2005; Ottmann, 2005) The second factor is **leadership**. Effective leadership is key to seeing a community project through to completion. Third, is **strategic vision**. A wise practice approach involves a leader or team of leaders to set out a strategic vision - a long-term pathway that the community or organization they lead can build a plan around, focus scarce resources on specific strategies, and mobilize the workers to carry these out. Fourth, is **good governance and management**. Governance is what leaders do. In carrying out their governance functions they are actually carrying out good leadership practices, that is, mobilizing people and resources around a meaningful, long-term, strategic vision. They set up effective systems, structures, and processes for the community or organization to function well. They delegate the detailed management tasks to skilled persons to carry out the strategies and specific tasks that move them along the pathway to their vision. The fifth key to success is **accountability**. Good leaders and managers are accountable for their decisions to allocate scarce resources. They act as stewards of the assets and resources they oversee. They are open and transparent in accounting for their decisions and their spending. Sixth, is **performance evaluation**. Good leaders and managers practice results-based leadership. They get feedback through a variety of systems to measure the performance of the workers and the progress on carrying out the strategies, that is, in seeing that results are being achieved. The seventh key factor is **good external relationships and partnerships**. Achievement and success of initiatives in Indigenous communities often require external support or financial support. Thus, the successful Indigenous communities and organizations build good working relationships with external funders, bankers, suppliers, etc.

Wise Practices Key Success Factors

- Identity and Culture
- Leadership
- Strategic Vision and Planning
- Governance and Management
- Accountability and Stewardship
- Performance Evaluation
- Collaborations, Partnerships and External Relationships

The Banff Centre wise practices model of leadership development for community development will be respectful of Indigenous communities and take into account the critique of Indigenous academics. We will not just go in to pick the brains of community leaders and leave with the knowledge. Rather it will be a partnership with the community playing an active learning role. They will gain research and leadership skills while following a process to learn to narrate their own stories of success. Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues that research into Indigenous communities requires navigating the "tricky ground" which is the middle ground where the research questions and research plan must traverse "the spaces between research methodologies, ethical principles, institutional regulations, and human subjects as individuals and as socially organized actors and communities."(L.T. Smith, 2005, 85) Native American scholar Jay T. Johnson argues that since the term "research" is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism that "a thoughtless use of standard research techniques would run the risk of perpetuating European imperialism in a study that hopes to further, rather than diminish, Indigenous self-determination. A respectful, partnership approach that meets the communities' needs will avoid such intellectual colonialism. (Johnson, 2008, 130)

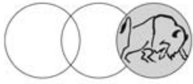
The wise practices model will use multi-disciplinary methods, using arts based research methods to visually capture the wise practice case study story, along with a textual narrative. The action learning process will help community leaders find their voice and narrate their own story of achievement.

Disciplines that have relevance for the "wise practices" research we will undertake include the following: participatory action research, problem-based learning, community based research, arts based research, case study, narrative inquiry, as well as drawing from the existing "best practices" research done to date on Indigenous community development.

Action Research

Our wise practices approach will utilize some elements of action research. Action research is a form of enquiry that enables practitioners to investigate and evaluate their work by creating new ideas about how to improve their practice and putting their ideas forward as their personal theories of practice. (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006) Participatory action research embraces principles of participation and reflection, and empowerment and emancipation of groups seeking to improve their social situation.(Walter, 1998)

According to Wadsworth (1998) " Participatory Action Research (PAR) is research which involves all relevant parties in actively examining together current action . . . in order to change and improve it. They do this by critically reflecting on the historical, political, cultural, economic, geographic and other contexts, which make sense of it. … Participatory action research is not



just research, which will be followed by action. It is action, which is researched, changed and re-researched, within the research process by fully engaged participants. Instead, it aims to be active co-research, by and for those to be helped. It tries to be a genuinely democratic or non-coercive process whereby those to be helped, engage and determine the purposes and outcomes of their own inquiry." Action research involves utilizing a systematic cyclical method of planning, taking action, observing, evaluating (including self-evaluation) and critical reflecting prior to planning the next cycle (O'Brien, 2001; McNiff, 2002).

The wise practices approach, just like PAR, uses reflection, planning, action and observation as the modes of operation that put its circles of learning and activity in motion. An excellent example of participatory action research in community leadership is the Leadership for a Changing World research project at New York University Wagner.(Ospina et.al., 2004, Ospin and Dodge, 2005) The decision to do participatory research grows out of a deep belief in the ability of people to challenge injustice and oppression and take increased control of their lives and communities through collective action, no matter how slow such change may seem to take. "What we do know based on best practice and leadership research is they will surely not become empowered, liberated or transformed on our schedules" (Maguire 1993:176).

Problem-Based Learning

The wise practices approach will also incorporate some elements of the problem-based learning method for educating and developing leaders and managers. Problem-based learning is the theory and practice of using real world work assignments on time limited projects to achieve performance objectives and to facilitate individual and collective learning. (Smith and Dods, 1997; Tan, 2005) Problem-based learning is based in the tradition of learning by doing, that is, learning through practice. This method provides clear and consequential feedback as to whether goals were achieved and why a project succeeded or failed by taking an after action review. It also provides the opportunity to learn to work in teams and in collaboration. Through a process of documenting the learning journey, such as journaling, group dialogue, after action review, they learn from studying their actions.

Deep Listening Research Method

Our wise practices approach will incorporate elements of the Deep Listening research model. Monash University and RMIT in Melbourne, Australia initiated an advanced degree program for Koori Aborigine students pursuing their masters and doctorate degrees in the Education Faculty. They used a method called Deep Listening, which is a method that allows alternative ways to do and disseminate research and allows Indigenous voices to emerge. Deep listening is an English translation of an Australian Aborigine concept. The Deep Listening method was used to carry out research into Indigenous organizations and communities in Australia so that they could deeply explore their traditional knowledge as a basis of developing their leaders, organizations and communities. The Koori cohort were able to research and preserve their history by recording it and in the process revitalising their culture and generating new stories. They were narrating their own cultural stories through a process of deep and respectful listening which in turn builds the community. The deep listening can occur with all the senses and can even take place in silence, such as listening to the land and the ancestors. As a methodology, “the practice of Deep Listening is an invitation into culturally congruent ways of learning and knowing. Epistemologically, it incorporates multiple ways of knowing and multi-vocal texts such as narrative, digital story-telling, poetic text, theatre and music.” (Brearley, Calliou and Tanton, 2009, 4-5)

Narrative Approach

The narrative approach allows for community subjects to express their voices. Gardner (1995:9) says that “leaders achieve their effectiveness chiefly through the stories they relate . . . in addition to communicating stories, leaders embody those stories”. And what is even more important for Aboriginal leadership – “the innovative leader takes a story that has been latent in the population, or among the members of his or her chosen domain, and brings new attention or a fresh twist to that story” (Gardner, 1995:10). Indigenous scholar Russell Bishop speaks of the importance of

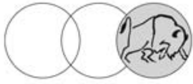
a variety of community members telling their own stories and states that “story telling is useful and culturally appropriate way of representing the ‘diversities of truth’ within which the story teller rather than the researcher retains control.” (Bishop, 1999, 24)

Hence, if we want to learn from wise practices, we do not have to replicate them to see if they work in a different context. Instead, we need to listen to wise stories of other leaders, at the same time looking for the stories that were once told in our communities. At the point where these two streams of stories intersect and where the old and the new meet, there is an impetus for revival that can be used by communities and their visionary leaders to create or revive their own stories of effective practice.

According to Gardner (1995:11), visionary leaders are different than the innovative ones in that they are “not content to relate a current story or to simply reactivate a story drawn from a remote or recent past”. They continuously create new stories and this is exactly how one learns from wise practices: by first listening and observing, then assessing the strength in one’s own community and how the lessons learned from wise practices can support and change how things are done, and finally by creating a new story within the traditional sphere of knowledge and practice. And, what needs to be stressed here is the fact that in Aboriginal communities, people are already sophisticated in the stories – “to put it simply, one is communicating with experts” (Gardner, 1995:11). Community members “come equipped with many stories that have already been told and retold” (Gardner, 1995:14).

The challenge for Aboriginal leadership is to reorient the communities to overcome any stagnation, sadness, or hopelessness. Aboriginal leaders must help the community in this community narrative. They need to help the community revive traditions, dialogue about the strength of their culture, their dreams, and to re-story their place in the world.

The lesson for the leader is that the story that he or she conveys “must fit” – “the story needs to make sense to audience members at this particular historical moment, in terms of where they have been and where they would like to go” (Gardner, 1995:14).
Each of these disciplines lend something to our wise practices approach to Indigenous community development research. It is rigorous, yet culturally attuned. It adheres to “a strict set of ethics devoted to self-determination of indigenous peoples.” (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 2008, 14)



Conclusion

The concept of wise practice is designed to engage communities in action research, facilitating a dialogue about their strengths and achievements, reflect on how and why they achieved success, and to narrate their own success stories. The process provides ways of developing their leadership. The stories that are narrated and documented become case studies that inspire and teach other Aboriginal leaders and community members. Our literature review of best practices case studies on Aboriginal community development formed the empirical basis for us to establish the seven key factors of success: identity and culture; leadership; strategic vision and planning; good governance and management; accountability and stewardship; performance evaluation; and collaborations, partnerships and external relationships.

Identity and Culture

Collaborations, Partnerships, and External Relationships

Leadership

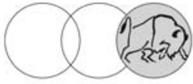
Wise Practices Key Success Factors

Performance Evaluation

Strategic Vision and Planning

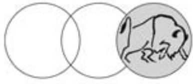
Accountability and Stewardship

Governance and Management



This concept of wise practice can also be explored by leadership theorists who seek to understand alternative ways that leadership is carried out in community development projects. It is practical and hands-on, and deeply rooted in culturally appropriate and relevant systems of knowledge and practice.

It is only appropriate that the last word belongs to an indigenous leader. Jackie Huggins is an Indigenous Australian author, historian, Aboriginal rights activist, and a respected leader in the Aboriginal community working for reconciliation in Australia, who speaks of the importance of the action oriented Indigenous leader, “To my mind, you cannot speak about the need for leadership within our communities without being prepared to take on responsibility yourself. It’s not enough to point the finger at those who have let us down and to expect others to come forward and fix our problems. Nor can anyone afford to call themselves a leader unless they truly have the interests of our community at heart”(Huggins, n.d.).



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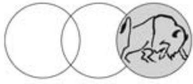

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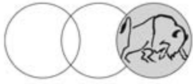

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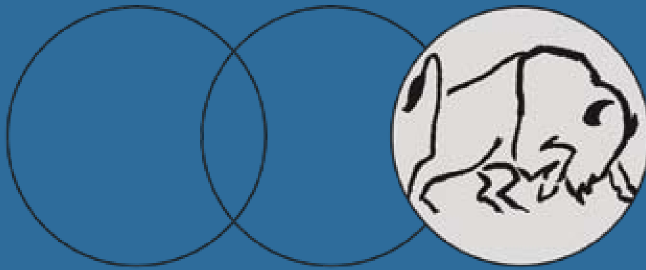

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