



**Land Knowledge Circles**

## TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE & TEACHINGS TOOLKIT

# SEEING LEADERSHIP THROUGH MANY EYES

Inclusive leadership according to selected Indigenous and cross-cultural teachings, perspectives, and worldviews



**Lauren Roberts**

*September 2017- April 2018*

Supervised by Stephen Hill  
Trent University

Environmental Studies Department

**U-Links Centre for Community-Based Research**

(705) 286-2411 93 Bobcaygeon Rd, P.O. BOX 655, Minden, ON, K0M 2K0

<https://www.ulinks.ca>



**The Land Between**

Cottage Country's Conservation Organization

For **The Land Between**

705-457-4838, P.O. Box 1368, Haliburton, ON K0M 1S0

[tlb@thelandbetween.ca](mailto:tlb@thelandbetween.ca)

Layout design by Kendra Chalmers



## 0.0 TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1.0 Positionality, Process, and Preamble .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2.0 Harvested Themes Sorted into Ten Categories .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3.0 Institute On Governance.....</b>	<b>6</b>
3.1 The Case of Presenting Other Leadership Models; Indigenous and Cross-Cultural teachings .....	6
3.2 The Case Five Proposed Traditional Aboriginal Principles .....	6
<b>4.0 Mi'kmaw Elders and Leadership Principles derived from Integrative Science Approaches .....</b>	<b>9</b>
4.1 Beyond the Social .....	9
4.2 Two-Eyed Seeing in Medicine .....	10
<b>5.0 Living Indigenous Leadership: Native Narratives on Building Strong Communities .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>6.0 An Interview with Skahendowaneh Swamp .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>7.0 Centre for First Nations Governance .....</b>	<b>16</b>
7.1 The People .....	16
7.2 The Land .....	17
7.3 Institutions .....	18
<b>8.0 Elders' Teachings on Indigenous Leadership:.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>9.0 Dancing on Our Turtle's Back .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>10.0 Aboriginal Healing Foundation .....</b>	<b>22</b>
10.1 Examples of Indigenous Policies.....	22
<b>11.0 Cultural Case Study: Ubuntu.....</b>	<b>25</b>
11.1 In African Philosophy, Leadership should: .....	25
11.2 Ubuntu's ethical principles have been applied in South Africa in the following areas: .....	26
11.3 Ubuntu as a framework for social theory, political ideals and public policy: .....	26
<b>12.0 Cultural Case Study: Kautilya's Arthashastra; Indian Idea of Good Governance .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>13.0 Cultural Case Study: Gross National Happiness; Bhutan .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>14.0 Cultural Case Study: Zapatism.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>15.0 Cultural Case Study: Stateless Leadership in Kurdistan .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>16.0 Conclusion.....</b>	<b>34</b>



## 1.0 POSITIONALITY, PROCESS, AND PREAMBLE

I, the researcher, am a non-Indigenous undergraduate student in the Indigenous-Environmental Studies Program at Trent University. In completing this community-based research project I encountered many roadblocks when attempting to present my findings. These obstacles actualized in response to recognizing my Euro-Canadian positionality in relationship to this research focusing on Indigenous and multi-cultured ways of knowing.

The initial task was to incorporate Indigenous Inclusive Leadership through looking at models of principles, policies, and practices. I interviewed Skahendowaneh Swamp, Traditional Knowledge Keeper at Trent U, about traditional forms of leadership in regards to these three models and he looked at me blankly and said, “You know those words... those words are real foreign to us...”

Indigenous and other cultural forms of leadership are not easily translated into these Western ways of knowing. Leadership models originating from other places have their own languages that have organically developed from peoples relating to the land they are from and then to each other.

I was nervous to tamper with knowledge that was not mine and to attempt to categorize important teachings in these three areas. Thus, this part of the Inclusive Leadership Toolkit is presented in a way that simply catches aspects of non-Western leadership in a sea of research and information and relays main themes that stood out to me, the researcher. I invite you to engage with these findings in a way that creates space for your own interpretations of these themes. Through my studies at Trent, I have learned that Indigenous ways of knowing are expansive, multifaceted, grounded in tradition. Western models are often linear, concise, categorized. Both are important to consider.

This portion of the toolkit first begins with the Institute on Governance’s research comparing Indigenous leadership to Western models, and then presents tenets of leadership extracted from a diverse range of sources. The tenets are kept within the confines of each source so that the relationships between them, according to the authors, can be honoured. Most of the perspectives presented originate from Turtle Island, as it’s the home of the Land Between. Some cultural case studies from Bhutan, Africa, and India are also presented to first honour the four directions of the medicine wheel (White; Western models, Red; First Nations models, Yellow; Bhutan and India, and

Black; Africa). The governing principles of Zapatism are also presented as the Zapatistas represent an undeniably strong form of inclusive leadership and true democracy. Lastly, the revolution of centralized leadership to grassroots democracy and female empowerment in Kurdistan is examined.

While conducting this research, I had the idea that there were many repeated to principles/tenets arising. As I extracted these principles/tenets from each source, I noticed that they were actually all quite different, but consistent in terms of over-arching themes. I categorized each theme/tenet into a chart (page 4) to highlight the main themes of Indigenous/cross-cultural leadership.

It is also important to note that these are merely a handful of examples of Indigenous and cultural lenses from which to consider inclusive leadership. There is a much larger spectrum of guiding tenets of leadership that could have been included, but one might consider it impossible to conduct a fully involved manuscript of all cultural frameworks, yet, it is important to at least honour them and keep this in mind when using this toolkit.



## 2.0 HARVESTED THEMES SORTED INTO TEN CATEGORIES

### Inclusive Leadership

- Equality/Equal voice, Participation in Decision-making, Consensus Decision-making, Listening with our full bodies (Gdzi-nweninaa), Youth Representative, Aboriginal Inclusivity, Community Inclusivity, Gender equality, Diversity and social contracts, Selflessness/Servant leadership, Decentralized grassroots structures, Democratic confederalism

### Vision

- Two-eyed seeing/Walking between the worlds, Collaboration, 7 Generation, Strategic vision

### Co-Existence

- Relationship, Reciprocity, We Help Ourselves

### Sense of Self

- Identity, Returning to ourselves (Biskaabiiyang), Ancestors, Clan systems, Elders, Culture

### Responsibility

- Leading by obeying, Responsibility/ Responsiveness

### Practices/Rituals

- Stories, Ceremony, Talking Circle, Elder's Prayer

### Heart Medicine

- Truth ((O)debwewin), Transparency/fairness, Gentleness and kindness (Nengajdoodimoowin), Morality Interdependence, Human Spirit, Totality, Sustained happiness

### Wisdom

- Attunement, Respect for land, Harmon, Coherence, Atmosphere

### Earth

- Land, Territorial integrity, Respect for the spirit of the land, Economic realization

### Humility

- Self-criticism, Self-reflection/examination, Careful of judgement and criticism (Aanjigone)



## 3.0 INSTITUTE ON GOVERNANCE

*Reconciling Western and First Nations Principles/In Search of Common Ground: Reconciling Western-based Governance Principles and First Nations Traditions*

Jodi Bruhn

<https://knowledgecircles.ca/files.wordpress.com/2017/05/reconc1.pdf>

### 3.1 The Case of Presenting Other Leadership Models; Indigenous and Cross-Cultural teachings

The Institute on Governance (IOG) is a non-profit think tank providing an independent source of knowledge, research, and advice on governance issues in Canada and Internationally. Inspired by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the IOG sought to examine its government principles in accordance to Indigenous traditions as guiding foundations.

As the Institute on Governance suggests, speaking of *universal principles of governance*, can inadvertently use ideas and practices that are “Western” in tradition. This has been the case involving governance research both in Canada and internationally. The Institute provides that two possible principles of Aboriginal governance are: *responsive leadership*, where final decision-making power rests at the community level, and there is an emphasis on inclusiveness; and, *balance and harmony*, founded on a respect for others and nature. Of course, there are common tenets between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal conceptions of good governance, but other values, such as efficiency, are more problematic when applied to Aboriginal communities. (GG6)

Inspired by the Anishinabemowin Creation story, the Institute extracted five hypothetical principles. It is important to note that this is derived from just one of hundreds of Indigenous Creation stories. As the Institute is careful to mention, a complete study of Aboriginal governance traditions prior to contact would have to examine many more, and I, the researcher, suggest it is also pertinent to work alongside Elders before coming to any published conclusions. These principles are suggested in only a hypothetical or exploratory way.

### 3.2 The Case Five Proposed Traditional Aboriginal Principles

**Attunement:** This principle requires a human community to focus on fit within the whole, discerning the broader dynamic and holding its place within it. It states that reality is a complex of dynamic, interrelated forces governed by laws endowed by the Creator. The laws are well conceived, but there

is also flux among the forces. Attunement includes helping perpetuate the cosmic rhythms through such rituals as **ceremonies**, feasts and dances.

**Responsive, Responsible Leadership:** Responsive leadership means responsiveness both to the community and to the space it inhabits. Whether leadership is earned, learned or inherited, the leader is crucial to the survival of the group. In the words of one Aboriginal author, “leadership meant assuming enormous responsibility. A high code of moral conduct is essential to real leadership; otherwise the tribe may “go out of tune with the cosmos’ and this might bring spiritual and potential material ruin to the tribe.”

**Harmony:** This principle implies both **consensus-based decision-making** and the maintenance of a **web of reciprocal obligations** and gestures through acts that include both hospitality and humour. **Good relationships** are imperative to living well and to surviving, beginning with the kin group and extending to include neighbors and other tribes. Human laws and institutions should strive to maintain good relations among diverse members as well as with neighboring groups.

**“We Help Ourselves”:** Drawing from the Mohawk word tewatatowie, this term refers to a broader principle of the people taking care of themselves and the **land** on which they live. The principle entails cohesion within the group and competent performance of individual roles, where “they all practiced severe self-discipline to stand alone against an uncertain world.” It also involves an irrevocable bond with the land, both a partner and a teacher.

**Respect:** This principle shuns “carelessness about things” and entails sanctions against acts of disrespect or inattention. Respect is especially necessary for leaders, who need it to exercise their authority. Yet it also obtains universally—a need for respect within and among human communities, for the Creator and for plants, rocks and animals. It is impossible to dissociate the human community from its partners on, in and of the **land**.

The chart below is useful in comparing Traditional Aboriginal Governance Principles to the IOG Principles mentioned in the first half of this report:

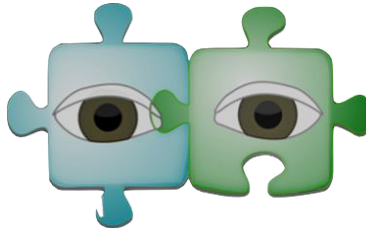
### Comparing Traditional Aboriginal Governance Principles to the IOG Principles

Proposed Traditional Aboriginal Principles	Shared Emphases	IOG Governance Principles
<p><b>Attunement:</b> Gaining and maintaining a clear sense of the community's place and orientation within the Whole—including spirits, land and animals.</p> <p><b>Responsive, Responsible Leadership:</b> Acting on the needs of the community; foreseeing both threats and opportunities outside it. Crucial to the survival of the group.</p> <p><b>Harmony:</b> Maintaining balanced relations within and among kinship groups. Emphasizes consensus building and reciprocal obligations, including to the Creator and to earth, plants and animals.</p> <p><b>Respect:</b> Treat others, including natural objects and animals, with care, respect and attention. Sanctions follow for those who fail to respect the land and its resources. Critical to survival of the tribe.</p> <p><b>We Help Ourselves:</b> Maintaining self-reliance of the community based on group cohesion and individual performance of roles. Care for one's own and the land one lives on.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prudent, responsible leadership</li> <li>• Premium on service to community</li> <li>• Respectful, reciprocal relationships</li> <li>• Strategic thinking about place and role</li> <li>• Community involvement in decisions</li> </ul> <p><b>Distinctions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Context: oral, usually very small societies vs. large, formalized</li> <li>• Sphere: involves humans, land, animals, Creator vs. human only</li> <li>• Scope: "our life" vs. government limited to socio-political sphere</li> <li>• Direction: attunement vs. progress</li> <li>• Unit: clan, kin, group vs. individual locus of rights</li> </ul>	<p><b>Direction:</b> Establishing a strategic perspective for collective action; knowing where the community has been, where it is now, and where it wants to go.</p> <p><b>Performance:</b> Effectively and efficiently serving the needs of stakeholders. Quality of service and responsiveness to needs also a factor.</p> <p><b>Fairness:</b> Upholding equal opportunity, rule of law, sound legal and regulatory frameworks. Requires an independent judiciary and adequate dispute resolution mechanisms.</p> <p><b>Accountability:</b> Ensure that officials answer to citizens on how they discharge duties; requires transparency, proper documentation, regular review of leadership, other checks and balances.</p> <p><b>Legitimacy and Voice:</b> Both internal and external actors acknowledge the authority of the government when it acts. Emphasizes popular support of the government. Cultural fit is a key factor here.</p>





## 4.0 MI'KMAW ELDERS AND LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES DERIVED FROM INTEGRATIVE SCIENCE APPROACHES



Derived from the website for the *Institute for Integrative Science*, an organization dedicated in bringing together Indigenous and Western scientific knowledges and ways of knowing, Albert Marshall is described as “a highly respected and much-loved Elder of the Mi'kmaw Nation.” Elder Marshall lives in Eskasoni First Nation in Unama'ki (Cape Breton), Nova Scotia, and is “a passionate advocate of cross-cultural understandings and healing and of our human responsibilities to care for all creatures and our Earth Mother.” When environmental issues are concerned, he is the “designated voice” for the Mi'kmaw Elders of Unama'ki and he is affiliated with various committees of collaborative initiatives and understandings in natural resource management or that serve First Nations' governance issues, or that otherwise work towards ethical environmental, social and economic practices.

[\(http://www.integrativescience.ca/People/Elders/\)](http://www.integrativescience.ca/People/Elders/)

### 4.1 Beyond the Social

*Albert Marshall*  
*Two-Eyed Seeing: Knowledge for Environmental Decisions*  
*Lecture at SMU School of the Environment*  
*Published July 28th, 2015*

**Two-Eyed Seeing:** No one person possesses all the knowledge necessary. All knowledge holders have to be brought together. We need to embark on a co-learning journey of two-eyes seeing in which our two paradigms will be put on the table to be scrutinized. We need to honestly be able to say that the essence of the spirit of our two ways, has been respected as we work to balance the energies of those ways. We need to put the two together, such that we have something so profound that we can sustain ourselves and at the same time be very cognizant that our actions of today do not jeopardize the ecological integrity of the area. All people must learn two-eyed seeing so that knowledge of the physical is not separated from wisdom of the spiritual.

**Collaboration:** Imperative to embrace the spirit of collaboration. Consciousness of knowing: co-existence, interconnectedness, community of spirit... with each other and with mother earth. If it was meant for me to know everything that I need to know, then I'd be all alone in this world. Each one of us has been given certain gifts and we depend on one another for those gifts.

**Seven Generations:** Our objectives are always long term everything we do is made with the 7 generations in mind.

**Equality:** What we truly believe is that no one being is greater than the next, that we are part and parcel of the whole, we are equal, and that each one of us has a responsibility to the balance on the system.

**Elders:** Sometimes, it's like a heavy sled that we are trying to move- this sled represents our passions for ensuring the ecological integrity of mother earth. We, the elders, are dragging that sled with all our might and we need others to help us by pushing as hard as you can on the rear. But, it is we, the Elders, who will determine where it goes.

## 4.2 Two-Eyed Seeing in Medicine

*Elder Murdena Marshall, Med, HonDLitt and Elder Albert Marshall, HonDLitt  
(Eskasoni First Nation, Nova Scotia), Mi'kmaw Nation*

*For the book: Determinants of Indigenous People's Health in Canada edited by M. Greenwood, C Reading, S. de Leeuw  
Canadian Scholars Press, 2013*

**Reciprocity:** Where do understandings that nourish our traditional teachings, our Traditional Knowledge, come from? Well... Mother Earth provides for us, shelters us, feeds us, nourishes us. So, we must look to her good example for guidance. Our actions toward her must be actions of gratitude. We, too, must be humble, and provide for other living things. We must provide shelter for the vulnerable, medicine for the sick, and nourishment for the hungry. We must always look to Mother Nature to inform us how to live, we do not inform her... Our seasons are adjusted to the cycles of the earth and her species, so that our children may always be reminded of the integrity and beauty of creation, and of our dependence upon her. We watch and we learn.

**Clan Systems:** As further illustration of strengths in traditional ways, we offer the example of how the Mi'kmaw worldview and its traditional social structure nurture a healthy spirit of connectivity and

interconnectedness. The clan system within the Mi'kmaw Nation has existed since time immemorial. Clans are named after animals that lived, year-round, within our traditional territory of the Mi'kma'ki. Thus, a person might belong to the Bear Clan, another to the Moose Clan, a third to the Muskrat Clan, someone else to the Lobster Clan, and another to the Squirrel Clan (to name a few examples). The clan line is passed down via the mother so a child is a member of the same clan as the mother. Each clan has a matriarch whose role is as overall Grandmother to those in her clan. Some clans have annual gatherings to weave the circles of interconnectiveness even more richly; it is a time to celebrate belonging to a clan, learning culture, and feeling collective identity, and also a time to reconfirm interconnectiveness with the natural world. Moreover, clan helps reinforce a person's connections to members of his or her family in a dynamic circle that continues to grow. This expanding sense of wholeness and connectivity provides understandings about kin and all of one's relations.

**The Land;** Our relations extend to all on our Earth Mother and in our stories, in our language, it is also okay to talk to birds. It is okay to talk to trees. So, you see, it is okay to talk to all beings in our language and sometimes the trees and birds or others even answer you. If you are downhearted or depressed, go into the forest and listen to the trees. You will hear them whisper, hear the sap running. Just try to interrupt the gentle breezes blowing through the boughs. You can actually make yourself feel better through meditation and intensify your traditional beliefs. We believe our Mother Earth is a living example of wise principles, a life-giving Mother, and a healing bounty. This is the consciousness of our Elders.



## 5.0 LIVING INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP: NATIVE NARRATIVES ON BUILDING STRONG COMMUNITIES

*Edited by Carolyn Kenny and Tina Ngaroimata Fraser, UBC Press, 2012, (Pages 1-5)*

Over hundreds of years, the practice of leadership in Native communities has taken on different forms based on changing historical tides- autonomy, imperialism, colonization, resistance, and renaissance. As Native people, we live on shifting sands. For thousands of years prior to colonization, leadership in Indigenous communities was based on the character of the land and the needs of the people in their traditional territories. Today, Native nations strive for solidarity and the right to govern themselves once again. This solidarity, the state of being in which we govern our own lives in

our own chosen places, is becoming a reality. Aboriginal women are at the forefront of change- politically, academically, educationally, and in every other way.

**Land:** A sense of place brings coherence to Aboriginal people and suggests an aesthetic engagement with the land- an intimate spiritual commitment to relationships with all living things. As we create more virtual spaces, this intimate relationship with the land becomes even more important because we have to work harder to accomplish it. To maintain this sense of coherence, we can accept the earth as our first embodied concept of leadership. We follow Earth. We respond to the guidance of the processes expressed in our home place. Many say we listen and respond to our Mother. Everything begins here. We mirror the patterns, textures, colours, sounds, and processes of the earth as embodied beings.... This is an idea, a feeling, and a concept to embed in our leadership theories and practices.

**Ancestors:** Ancestors often guide us with deep respect for what they themselves have left behind. They communicate with us through dreams, through the teachings that have come down through the generations, through spirit. Our constant guides in our life journeys of spiritual discovery, our sense of wonder with the animation of the world, often arrive through the presence of our ancestors and Elders, who carry the knowledge that we need for continuity and integration. Traditional knowledge weaves its way into the contemporary context for our present and future endeavours.

**Stories:** Stories presented in the oral tradition provide an opportunity for immediacy- a direct and immediate relationship with listeners. The story-teller can make immediate adjustments in the elements of the story based on relational needs and contexts.

**Walking Between the Worlds:** Contemporary leadership demands that Aboriginal leaders make bridges between many worlds. The dilemmas involved in this bridge-building are often referred to as “living between two worlds: There is plenty of leadership work to do in order to walk between Indian country and the mainstream societies in which we find ourselves today. Each context is different. In addition to walking between two worlds, we must now walk between many worlds. The global context and virtual contexts offer even more complexities... Aboriginal activists and cultural workers in education, health, government, and a host of other contexts often find themselves caught between

what they often call Western values and Indigenous values. In these dialogues and debates, one can observe that colonization still exists in the layers beneath the surface of things.

**Coherence:** Sometimes, charismatic tendencies are revealed through the power and beauty of oration. Charismatic leaders inspire people to act collectively when change is needed. Sometimes, being the best leader means stepping down, but it often means stepping up into a role that one may not be so happy to play for a time. Indigenous leadership is aesthetic in nature because it has its source in coherence. With the flow and flux of changing circumstances, Native leaders must constantly monitor the pulse of the interconnectedness of all things and gauge how these connections challenge our communities.

**Seven Generations:** In the indigenous worlds, there is a principle called the seven generations. It instructs us to reflect on our actions and to be aware of the consequences of these actions seven generations hence.



## 6.0 AN INTERVIEW WITH SKAHENDOWANEH SWAMP

*An oral interview with the Trent University Chair of Indigenous Knowledge and Haudenosaunee Wolf Clan Faithkeeper*

“We have this mind where we’ve become really colonized in our way of thinking and we can’t see it. We have our belief systems but we don’t necessarily see the impact these things have had on us. The law is being recited in this old, oral way, but we are no longer able to decipher it. We no longer have that mental ability to be able to listen to a story and hear the laws being told in it. There’s a small handful that can. Our people have to go through an un-learning.”

**Equal Voice:** “One of the biggest things about Haudenosaunee people is ensuring that everyone has a voice.” Skahendowaneh commented that in today’s society your voice isn’t recognized until you’re 18. A Turtle clan member by the name of Shirley Hill shared with him a teaching about equal voice: “She was talking about her mother, and her grandmother, and other older women when she was growing up, and she was talking about the importance of everyone having an equal voice in all matters. Because all things that may happen, they don’t just happen to those who are 18 and older. They happen to children, they happen to older people, they happen to the young adults, teenagers, whatever age group... All voices must be heard. And so, one of the teachings that she shared with me is that even that small child, when they have something to say, a leader is supposed to both physically and symbolically get on one knee and be eye to eye with a child to let them know that their voice is

just as important as a grown-ups'. It's a teaching that I carry with me all the time now. I've been immersed in this type of heredity traditional system all my life."

**Clan Systems:** "From my perspective, I feel like our leadership has gone off track a bit as a whole and the voices of the people [are not really] there anymore. In our past, we had the clan system. The clan system is what held our society together. It's what holds it together." Skahendowaneh explained how the Indian Act was a patriarchal system that dismantled the traditional matrilineal one and that suddenly after its imposition women and their voices didn't matter anymore; they had become property. "With the Indian Act, they forcefully removed our traditional hereditary governmental systems of our communities. It saw the erosion of our society and how that came to be was they set out to weaken the clan system and how it functioned." He further explained that this resulted in residential schools and the 60s Scoop; completely dismantling family structure and therefore the clan system as well.

"So symbolically, the rafters collapse. Like one of those big barns you see collapsing in old farmers' fields, that's what our longhouse looks like."

**Identity:** Not truly knowing one's identity has impacted leadership because traditional roles have become unclear. The clan system was built in accordance with governing structure and allocated responsibilities that reflected the needs of the communities. Skahendowaneh continued by explaining that "many people have abandoned the clan system today and there are many people who are confused about what their actual identity is. Like the status card, it has an expiry date... We don't expire! We're here. It tells you if you're native or not, it tells you what kind of native you are. My children's status card say that they are lower Cayuga. They don't have any Cayuga blood in them at all. I'm Mohawk, my wife is Oneida, her mother and gran and great gran are all Oneida bear. Where this other status came from was from an imposed patriarchal system." He said that now there are many people coming to traditional hereditary council because they are not being heard in the imposed systems.

In traditional hereditary council, the Clan tells the Chief what their needs are and the Chief brings word to the rest of the Clan and council. "But many people are holding on to their cards and asking where they go. Now they're confused."

“People are realizing we have the structure within our societies and need to restore them again. Chiefs aren’t doing things properly, so they say let’s discuss things. And then they show up and there are only 5 people there. Consensus takes a lot of time and energy and there’s a new economy out there. People have to support their families. Chiefs and grandmothers have to have a job and support their families, too.”

**Stories:** Laws are embedded within stories. Skahendowaneh says that when his people listen to the Great Law, they eventually ask, “when are they actually going to start talking about the law?” But the laws are intrinsically woven into the stories. Haudenosaunee people learn to extract the lessons, principles, laws from the experiences portrayed in complex tales. However, colonialism has played its toll on traditional ways; loss of language, displacement, separation from families, forced assimilation have all contributed to a colonized way of thinking in which it is now difficult for people to grasp the underlying messages of these important oral teachings.





## 7.0 CENTRE FOR FIRST NATIONS GOVERNANCE



*The People, the Land, Laws and Jurisdiction, Institutions, Resources; The five pillars of effective governance*  
[http://fngovernance.org/publication\\_docs/Five\\_Pillars\\_CFNG.pdf](http://fngovernance.org/publication_docs/Five_Pillars_CFNG.pdf)

Three of the five important pillars that model effective leadership according to the Centre of First Nations Governance that are worth noting in this report are the People, the Land, and the Institution, along with their according principles. They blend the traditional values of respective Nations with the modern realities of self-governance.

### 7.1 The People

The People are the foundation of our Nations. The People are the citizens of Nations that share language, creation stories, community history and family relationship. They form self-defined and self-governed communities and together they hold collective memories. When individuals gather themselves as communities, they are making intentional, political statements about their past, present and the possibilities of the future.

#### THREE PRINCIPLES THAT RELATE TO THE PEOPLE

These three principles exist when the People are engaged. Through living these principles First Nations ensure their government rests on a solid foundation.

**Strategic Vision** is the shared, long term dream of the People- the future state that the People hope to achieve collectively. Vision charts the course from where the People are to where they want to be and is relevant to those in the present time and to those in the future seven generations. Strategic vision is the necessary starting point, but it is not sufficient to ensure the complete, proper and effective involvement of the People.



**Meaningful Information** Sharing is critical for the People to realize their vision. Information truly is power and information sharing works to ensure power is also shared. Meaningful information sharing occurs when the exchange of information occurs frequently, openly and in all directions.

**Participation in Decision Making:** First Nations engage their People in decision making in many different ways. The form of that decision making is not important. What is important is that Nations determine the best way(s) for their communities to contribute to important decisions. What matters is that the process of decision making be open, inclusive, appropriate to the community, and understood and endorsed by all members of the community.

When these principles are applied, the outcome is a First Nations government supported by the People, clear in its mandate and held as legitimate. When these principles are not in place, the outcomes maybe lack of trust, lack of respect and efforts to undermine government and its leaders. Trust, respect and transparency are essential to effective governance.

## 7.2 The Land

The deep connection to the Land is vital to First Nations. The relationship between the People and the Land is an integral component of First Nations governance. The authority and identity of the Nations come from and are tied to the Land. It is the Land that gives us our deep sense of place and our sense of self. For some Nations, the very social structure of the community is embedded in the Land.

### THREE PRINCIPLES THAT RELATE TO THE LAND

**Territorial Integrity.** Given the irrevocable link between title and governance it is imperative that First Nations organize to illustrate both their historic and present-day connections to the Land. There exist significant challenges to this work resulting from land alienation and destruction but it is vital to extend our connection across the historic areas our Nations utilized. Territorial integrity begins with assertion and must be supported by land use mapping and stewardship planning that permit the reclamation of responsibility for decision making.

**Economic Realization.** Effective governments possess the right and the tools to develop their Land into sustainable economies. They realize wealth through participation in resource development and

through leveraging those resources to access additional sources of revenue beyond their communities. Aboriginal title includes an inescapable economic component. This is a legal right that First Nations must realize to benefit their citizens and finance their governments. This realization will come through consultation and accommodation that minimize infringement and maximize economic benefits.

**Respect for the Spirit of the Land.** First Nations Peoples are positioned to take back our legitimate place on the Land. This will be accomplished by asserting our inherent rights to protect and preserve the Land and its resources, and by optimizing the economic opportunities the Land provides. These rights are ours through our ancestral role as stewards of the Land. It is through connecting with and honouring the spirit of the Land that our governance strategies remain effective and appropriate.

## 7.3 Institutions

Institutions exist to serve the delivery of programs and services that move the People toward the vision. Cultural alignment of institutions helps to ensure that the ways in which that result is achieved respects the social and spiritual values of the People. Equally important as the design and legitimacy of single institutions, are the mechanisms in place to support inter-institutional activity.

### FOUR PRINCIPLES THAT RELATE TO INSTITUTIONS

**Transparency and Fairness** make certain that First Nations institutions and the ways they operate are understood by the People they are designed to serve. Consolidating and then openly sharing processes and procedures assures citizens that decisions are made fairly. Fairness does not mean that all decisions will be the same, but that set criteria will be applied consistently in making all decisions. It is in the implementation of a policy that its fairness is revealed. Transparency minimizes the opportunity for preferential treatment and the advancement of private interests over public good.

**Results-Based Organizations** are imperative for any governing body to measure the effectiveness of its governance. In measuring the effectiveness of First Nations governance, a key result would be the extent to which the structures have moved the People toward their strategic vision. However, for decades First Nations communities have functioned within organizational structures driven not by their vision, but by federal government funding opportunities. Our institutions have been developed

to serve the needs and interests of that government and not our own. The effect is that the People have no authentic connection to the resulting systems and structures of governance. They become frustrated, disengaged and angry.

**Cultural Alignment of Institutions** are where the organizations are infused with practices and beliefs consistent with the values of the People being represented. It is with cultural alignment that effective governance in First Nations communities will exist.

**Effective Inter-Governmental Relations** maximize the opportunities for communication and effective decision-making while minimizing the opportunities for conflict. Effective inter-governmental relations result in productive and satisfying working relationships where the goal is a “win-win”; the collaborative advancement of the interests of all governments whenever possible



## 8.0 ELDERS' TEACHINGS ON INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP:

*Leadership is a Gift*  
*Master Thesis of UBC Graduate Studies, 2006*  
*Allannah Earl Young*

In a qualitative study, Allannah Earl Young examined the Longhouse Leadership Program at the First Nations House of Learning at the University of British Columbia. Through the telling of oral histories, nine Elders and cultural educators who work with FNHL shared their views on Indigenous leadership. Many important themes for organizations to consider can be pulled from these traditional teachings on leadership within Indigenous communities. Here are some examples:

**Culture:** The storytellers agreed that culture in Indigenous leadership is based on the understanding of components such as local intergenerational knowledge of genealogy and language and ceremonial practices that are self-determined and informed through millennia of experience. These aspects of culture and Indigenous Knowledge (IK) praxis play important roles in the development of positive communities and are seen as foundational to developing relevant leadership skills.

Young explains that storytellers believe an ongoing embodiment of the cultural teachings is required for activism and making positive changes within a community. These teachings enhance self-determined identity both within the individual and the within collective. They urge that engagement

with cultural teachings be consistently revisited, recommitted and revised to reflect the unique gifts given to individuals and to consider how their gifts can be utilized in coalitions for local self-determined strategic change. They acknowledge these movements towards change must reflect local concerns, land ethics and values consistent with 1K frameworks.

**Relationship:** Elder Lee Brown explains that “a real leader leads in such a way that the potentiality of all people comes forward.” (p. 47) In other words, leadership is about relationship and creating space for others to be a part of the leadership process. A poor leader focuses on individuation and leads in such a way that only *their* potentiality is manifested and possibly even oppress the group and try to limit the potentiality of others so that theirs is greater. Brown noted that when current mainstream political styles of leadership are associated with power and riches, as Sitting Bull noticed when he observed leadership in Washington DC. Brown commented,

“The role of leadership should not separate you from the people; it should make you a part of the people. Anything that separates you from the people is not good; it’s because our primary value is relationship, that we are related, anything that stops relationship is not good. I think this is directly opposed to the leadership in dominant society...”

**Self-Reflection/Examination:** “The other hard work that relates to leadership and is very relevant is the work on purifying yourself... because as human beings we have the capacity to get off balance pretty easy. We need to be constantly focusing and examining our intent, especially in positions of leadership. And examining what it is we are doing in the community and if we are in a leadership position why are [we] doing it, who are we doing it for, who’s benefiting from it?” (48)

**Ceremony:** Brown also commented on the importance of ceremony and how it’s an important process for self-reflection/examination as it brings forth individual gifts;

“Eventually all the ceremonial processes we have always led people towards their gift, ultimately towards finding themselves and accepting, finding the balance and finding the gift and using it. Every tribe has a way of doing this and could look very different from one tribe to another but the process of what’s happening from tribe to tribe is very similar” (55)



## 9.0 DANCING ON OUR TURTLE'S BACK

*Stories of Anishinabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence*

*Leanne Betasamosake Simpson*

*Chapter 3: GDI-NWENINAA: OUR SOUND, OUR VOICE*

Indigenous languages carry rich meanings, theory and philosophies within their structures. These languages house teachings and bring the practice of those teachings to life in daily existence. The process of speaking Nishnaabemowin, then, inherently communicates certain values and philosophies that are important to Anishinabeg being. Learning through the language reveals deeper conceptual meanings and complexities of Anishinabeg ways of life.

**Biskaabiiyang:** to look back/returning to ourselves. Within Anishinabeg theoretical foundations, Biskaabiiyang does not literally mean returning to the past, but rather re-creating the cultural and political flourishing of the past to support the well-being of contemporary citizens. It means reclaiming the fluidity around traditions, not the rigidity of colonialism; it means encouraging the self-determination of individuals within national and community-based contexts; and it means re-creating an artistic and intellectual renaissance within a larger political and cultural resurgence.

**Aanjigone:** the idea that one needs to be very, very careful with making judgements and with the act of criticism. Aanjigone is a concept that promotes the framing of Anishinabeg values and ethics in the positive. It means that if one criticizes something, their spiritual being may take on the very things they are criticizing. It promotes non-interference by bringing forth the idea that if someone else does wrong, the “implicate order” will come back on that person and correct the imbalance in some other way; ...there is no need to criticize or be angry with the perpetrators because they will pay the price for destructive action, one way or another, and this is mediated by the Spiritual world. It is responsibility is to live lives according to the teachings and values that were given with great love by Gzhwe Mnidoo.

**Nengaajdoodimoowin:** the art of being gentle or of doing something gentle to someone.

Anishinabeg Elder Peter O'Chiese relayed that one of the first things given to the Anishinabeg by Gzhwe Mnidoo was to be kind and have a gentle heart. This idea permeates Anishinabeg culture and is expressed through countless words, stories and teachings.

**(O)debwewin:** the sound of the heart; truth. Debwewin is best understood when an 'o' is placed in front, as 'ode' means heart. It is exercising the highest degree of accuracy possible given what he or she [or they] know, conveying the philosophic notion that there is no such thing as absolute truth. Diversity and difference are seen as necessary parts of the larger whole.

**Gdi-nweninaa:** Listening with our full bodies; hearts, minds, physicality. With a full presence of being, it requires an understanding of the culturally embedded concepts and teachings that bring meaning to, and illuminate, Anishinabeg practices and ways of life. In regenerating languages, an enormous task in and of itself, it is also important to also ask our Elders and fluent speakers to teach us through the language, using specific words as windows into a deeper, layered understanding. We must listen and take with us those sounds that hold the greatest meaning in our own lives and in our resurgence.



## 10.0 ABORIGINAL HEALING FOUNDATION

*A Legacy of Excellence: Best practices board study: Aboriginal Healing Foundation  
Institute on Governance*

*John Graham and Laura Mitchell*

<https://knowledgecircles.ca/files.wordpress.com/2017/05/best-practises-for-aboriginal-board-healing.pdf>



### 10.1 Examples of Indigenous Policies

In collaboration with the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF), the Institute On Governance (IOG) interviewed representatives of the AHF to identify key factors that have led the AHF Board to perform at its current high level. The report is meant to inform and inspire other boards, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, to improve their performance. Highlights from the article are the following:

**Talking Circle:** Suggested by an Elder, Board meetings begin with a sharing circle. With a Board consisting of 17 members, the sharing circle is a substantial investment in time but it has proven to be an extraordinarily successful tool for creating Board cohesion. The practice is, in a sense, a realization of the notion of harmony, an important value shared by all Aboriginal groups. In the sharing circle, every member of the Board is asked to talk about something from their personal life, whether positive or negative. Topics can be as diverse as the joy of greeting a new grandchild to the feeling of grief over the death of a close friend.

Over the years, the depth of sharing has increased and has helped each member of the Board to understand more clearly who the other people are at the table and what they are living through. More than one participant said that as a result the Board has “become a family.” (PBP3 p.15)

Such a practice can be understood as distinctly Aboriginal. In non-Aboriginal organizations, such a degree of personal sharing at something like a board meeting would likely be considered inappropriate, especially when it occurs in such a formalized way. However, in the context of the AHF, this practice has resonated with the Board members. Many referenced it as critical; promoting **deeper working relationships, greater cohesion** among the members of the Board and **increased respect** around the table. Most interviewees described the AHF as their best board experience bar none. The result is a greater capacity of the board to perform its many roles.

**Elder's Prayer:** All of the Board meetings are opened and closed by an Elder who leads a prayer.

**Youth Representative:** The Board has made it a point to have a youth representative sit on the Board to ensure that the youth perspective is also captured.

**Aboriginal Inclusivity:** The challenges facing a pan-Aboriginal organization in accommodating all of the cultural values of the people it serves came up in some interviews with the Board. One member felt that the practice of having Elders sit on the Board in an advisory capacity on behalf of Métis, Inuit and First Nations was an effective way to help address the diversity in Aboriginal cultures in Canada. And it is clear from interviews that this practice has had a dramatic impact on the Board.

**Community Inclusivity:** When staff visit communities, they are encouraged to understand the values and customs in that region. Staff and Board have also responded to requests from communities that healing projects contain more of an Aboriginal approach to healing. Interviewees spoke about the work of the Board to find a balance between cultural projects (which they are not specifically mandated to fund) and appropriate healing projects. The Board has also engaged community members whenever possible to ensure their values and cultural perspectives are included; community members are consulted at regional gatherings where the Board Chair and the Executive Director are present. At these meetings participants are encouraged to provide input on funding criteria for projects as well as for the Code of Conduct used at the Board and in the organization.

**Consensus:** Several participants also spoke about the consensus model used to make decisions. The idea behind this consensus model, as described by one interviewee, is that everyone has a voice and that voice should be respected and heard. If any Board member is uncomfortable with a discussion or decision happening at the Board table, the group does not move forward until everyone feels comfortable with the decision reached.

**Atmosphere:** participants spoke about the feeling created at the AHF offices themselves. In an interview with a stakeholder of the organization, she spoke about the warm feeling at the offices and how “it is a place where Aboriginal people feel comfortable.” Everything from the art that decorates the office to the regular communal meals helps create an atmosphere that appears to resonate with Aboriginal people.





## 11.0 CULTURAL CASE STUDY: UBUNTU

*Practicing Ubuntu and leadership for good governance*

*The South African and continental dialogue*

*T I Nzimakwe*

*School of Management and Governance*

*University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*

Ubuntu calls on us to believe and feel that:

Your pain is My pain,  
My wealth is Your wealth,  
Your salvation is My salvation.  
Nussbaum (2003:21)

Ubuntu is an old African term for “humanness”. In essence, Ubuntu is **inclusivity** at its most profound. It is a deep-rooted African worldview that pursues the primary values of intense humanness, caring, sharing and compassion, and associated values; ensuring a happy and qualitative human community life in a family atmosphere and spirit. Ubuntu empowers all to be valued to reach their full potential in accordance with all around them. A Ubuntu style of government means a “humane” style of government based on collective solidarity and communality rather than individualism and particularity. Principles of Ubuntu as leadership philosophy emphasizes collectivism and relationships over material things, including ownership of opportunities, responsibilities, and challenges. Ultimately, Ubuntu can be seen as a valuable guide in advancing leadership and promoting good governance.

Four cardinal principles guide many African communities following Ubuntu:

**Morality, Interdependence, Human Spirit and Totality.**

Public leaders should understand the meaning of these four principles in order to manage public institutions for the benefit of all communities.

### 11.1 In African Philosophy, Leadership should:

- be an activity directed at the “theoretical analysis of leadership issues, matters and ideas of practical concern to community development”;
- deal with the issue of the imposition of Western values on African culture;

- delve into the roots of African traditional thought and its influence on educational issues;
- attempt to restore the true worth of the essential principles behind African ways of thinking;
- deal with African modes of thinking regarding Africans as lesser human beings;
- and Africans should start formulating a new history of themselves though encouraging critical thinking, investigate theoretical foundations of African moral thinking, and concern itself with critical reflection on education that arise in contemporary Africa.

## 11.2 Ubuntu's ethical principles have been applied in South Africa in the following areas:

**Politics** - the African Renaissance;

**Business** - through collective learning, teamwork, sustainability, a local community focus, and an alternative to extractive capitalism;

**Corporate governance** - through the attitudes of fairness, collectiveness, humility;

**Restorative justice** - through the use of dialogue, collective restitution, and healing; and

**Conflict resolution and reconciliation** - through the Ubuntu ethos of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

## 11.3 Ubuntu as a framework for social theory, political ideals and public policy:

- Leaders should use their popular mandate to utilize state resources more fully to bring the new order into being, investing in people and enhancing their power to exercise their right to govern;
- Leaders should develop a new institutional framework to destroy the old political culture and create a new one built on Ubuntu principles;
- Leaders should monitor recurring and new patterns of political behaviour and the operation of political institutions; and
- Leaders should plan political change to transform current patterns of life and of behavior.



## 12.0 CULTURAL CASE STUDY: KAUTILYA'S ARTHASHASTRA; INDIAN IDEA OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

*Dr. Sanjeev K. Sharma*

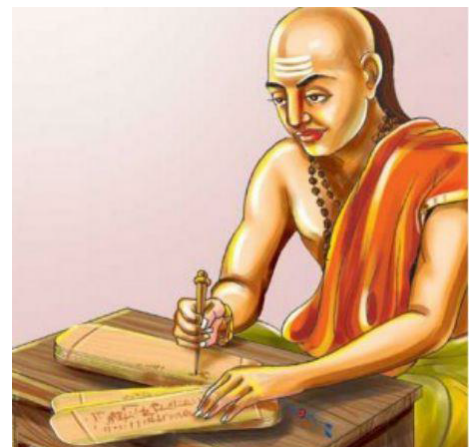
[https://www.academia.edu/766864/Indian\\_Idea\\_of\\_Good\\_Governance](https://www.academia.edu/766864/Indian_Idea_of_Good_Governance)

In Arthashastra of Kautilya, the fullest and the most systematic treatment of the ancient Indian theory of government can be found. The Arthashastra is essentially a handbook of ancient Indian theory for the guidance of the governing group; a manual for the practicing politician and a prescription of administrative procedures. These procedures have not lost their relevance in contemporary contexts. They focus on and prioritize **sustained happiness and well-being of citizens** in all considerations of policy.

Arthashastra also asserts that good governance demands for divorce of political power and economic consumerism.

The principles of the administration of the state proclaimed in Kautilya's Arthashastra about 2300 years ago resemble the modern-day concept of welfare state in respect of ideology, ideals, functions, tasks, duties, socio-administrative organizations, etc. The principles and policies of government and administration find a large place in the canvas of Kautilya's political thought.

**Selflessness/Servant Leadership:** The very first lesson on royal duties prescribes for the king to acquire conquest of his own self, to avoid caprice, deceit and greed, to display intelligence, skill and self-restraint, to act with deliberation and so forth. The king is advised to constantly adopt the behavior of a pregnant woman: as the mother disregards her own desires and seeks the good of the child in her womb, "so should the king behave towards his subjects; the righteous king should constantly behave so as to give up what is dear to him for the sake of what is beneficial to his people."



(Google images: Kautilya's Arthashastra)

The primary objective of the authority has been described as the happiness of the people. All other goals are complimentary and secondary. This not only shows the great concern of the philosopher for the well-being of people but also brings forward the 'Indian' model of good governance before the academic society of large.

## 13.0 CULTURAL CASE STUDY: GROSS NATIONAL HAPPINESS; BHUTAN

*Source 1 Good Governance and Gross-National Happiness.*

<http://www.grossnationalhappiness.com/9-domains/good-governance-and-gross-national-happiness/>

*Source 2 Democracy Good Governance and Happiness.*

<http://www.bhutanstudies.org.bt/publicationFiles/OccasionalPublications/DemocracyGoodGovernanceAndHappiness.pdf>

Whereas most countries determine their standards of living based on GDP and GNP, Bhutan uses their own model, that of Gross National Happiness (GNH) to determine the well-being of the people. Happiness has been the ultimate purpose of social and economic development plans and programs since the seventies and good governance is one of the nine domains of Gross National Happiness. (Source 1)

Despite Bhutan being characteristically authoritarian in monarchical rule, the system of governance in Bhutan is considered by many to be of high standard: The King is widely considered benevolent and wise, and policies and programs have consistently been made in the interest of the people. Article 9 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan states, "the State shall strive to promote those conditions that will enable the successful pursuit of Gross National Happiness". GNH is established through the provision of free healthcare and education, development of basic infrastructure, supply of clean drinking water, allotment of free timber to build houses, granting land and other *kidu* (forms of well-being). The pursuit of GNH is further continued by changing the political system from a monarchy to a parliamentary democracy. (Source 1)

If Bhutan has been so successful in its governing bodies, why, might one ask, is there interest in transitioning to parliamentary democracy? As Renata Lok Dessallien explores in her article *Democracy, Good Governance and Happiness: Some Views from the Kingdom of Bhutan*, citizens are not insisting on a democratic transition and no foreign power is exerting significant pressure to do so. Many Bhutanese are therefore wondering, “If the system doesn’t need fixing, why change it?” But it is the King, himself, who asserts that no governance system heavily dependent on the character and designs of a single person is good for the people in the long run. On his own accord, he set about realizing a grand plan to transition the country from an absolute to a constitutional monarchy, within a parliamentary democracy, but it is doing so in its own distinct way. Rather than simply adopting a Western model of liberal democracy, Bhutan has selected the elements of a democratic system that it feels will best contribute to its desired outcome - a state governed according to its philosophy of Gross National Happiness (Source 2).



Photo: <http://www.forastateofhappiness.com/how-is-gross-national-happiness-measured-in-bhutan/>



## 14.0 CULTURAL CASE STUDY: ZAPATISM

*Living at the Edges of Capitalism: Adventures in Exile and Mutual Aid*  
 Andrej Grubacic, Denis O'Hearn  
 University of California Press, Oakland California.  
 2016 by The Regents of the University of California  
 136-138

Principles widely associated with Zapatista direct democracy:

**Consensus Decision-Making:** The consensus process, which has been widely analyzed, appears to stem from the encounter between indigenous tradition and Maoist activists. A popular priest in the Zapatista region once complained to us that indigenous church meetings can take days instead of hours, because according to indigenous tradition all attendees must have their say and the meetings must end in consensus. *Asambleas chicas*, smaller assemblies created to confront centralism, reinvent this indigenous tradition in the spirit of Maoist cells. The general assembly meets every week and

then splits into ten smaller assemblies. Attendance is mandatory, and the promise of public shaming motivates regular attendance.

**Self-criticism:** Another important Maoist contribution is *autocrítica*, which is widely practiced within the EZLN and base communities, constituting “the essential element of evaluating collective actions in the communities.” This device serves as an anti-hierarchical mechanism that allows lower ranked insurgents to criticize their superiors.

**Leading-by-Obeying:** this idea was introduced in the second declaration from the Lancandon jungle



Photo: <https://cronkite.asu.edu/buffett/chiapas/for-zapatistas-revolution-moves-at-a-snails-pace-while-global-appeal-endures/>

and has been one of the guiding principles of Zapatista politics ever since. This local concept is rooted in the Mayan tradition of considering public office as a *cargo* (charge) that is to be fulfilled on behalf of the community. Only those things that are asked of a leader by the community are to be undertaken. *Mandar*

*obedeciendo* is a complex notion built on seven

principles: “To obey, not to command; To represent, not supplant; To step down, not climb up; To serve, not to help oneself; To convince, not to defeat; To construct, not destroy; To propose, not impose.” The basic premise is that every individual administrative position needs to benefit the collective; at the same time, however, every individual administrative position needs to be supported by the collective. Elected delegates are obliged to check that all agreements made on the community level are being observed on the municipal level. The escape structure is governed by the reciprocal relationship between the respective *encargando* and the village population. Cargo holders are always recallable and at the first hint of impropriety they are to be removed from their positions and replaced. Again, cargo holders do not receive financial compensation, but are helped with their fields by the community. The non-remunerative character of positions, non-specialization of governing, and non-lucrative nature of corruption are designed “to ensure that in Zapatista rebel territory, whoever rules, rules by obeying.”



## 15.0 CULTURAL CASE STUDY: STATELESS LEADERSHIP IN KURDISTAN

*Building Democracy without the State*

*Dilar Dirik*

*Roar Magazine*

<https://roarmag.org/magazine/building-democracy-without-a-state/>

Today, around the world, people resort to alternative forms of autonomous organization to give their existence meaning again to reflect human creativity's desire to express itself as freedom. These collectives, communes, cooperatives and grassroots movements can be characterized as the people's self-defense mechanisms against the encroachment of capitalism, patriarchy and the state.

At the same time, many indigenous peoples, cultures and communities that faced exclusion and marginalization have protected their communalist ways of living until this day. It is striking that communities that protected their existence against the evolving world order around them are often described in negative terms, as "lacking" something- notably, a state. The positivist and deterministic tendencies that dominate today's historiography render such communities unusual, uncivilized, backward. Statehood is assumed to be an inevitable consequence of civilization and modernity; a natural step in history's linear progress.

Centuries, perhaps millennia of resistance against world order are in fact very radical acts of defiance. For such communities, relatively untouched by global currents due to their characteristic features, natural geography or active resistance, communal politics is simply a natural part of the world. That is why many people in Rojava, for instance, where a radical social transformation is currently underway, refer to their revolution "a return to our nature" or "the regaining of our social ethics."

Throughout history, the Kurds suffered all sorts of denial, oppression, destruction, genocide and assimilation. They were excluded from the statist order on two fronts: not only were they denied their own state, they were simultaneously excluded from the mechanisms of the state structures around them. Yet the experience of statelessness also helped protect many societal ethics and

values, as well as a sense of community—especially in the rural and mountainous villages far from the cities.

To this day, Alevi-Kurdish villages in particular are characterized by **processes of common solution-finding** and **reconciliation rituals** for social disputes based on ethics and forgiveness to the benefit of the community. But while this form of life is quite prevalent in Kurdistan, there is also a conscious new effort to establish a political system centered around communal values—the system of Democratic Confederalism, built through democratic autonomy with the commune at its heart.

Upon studying the history of Kurdistan and the Middle East, as well as the nature of power, the current economic system and ecological issues, Öcalan came to the conclusion that the reason for humanity's "freedom problem" was not statelessness but the emergence of the state. In an attempt to subvert the domination of the system that institutionalized itself across the globe over the span of 5,000 years as a synthesis of patriarchy, capitalism and the nation state, this alternative paradigm is based on the very opposite—**women's liberation, ecology and grassroots democracy**.

**Democratic Confederalism:** is a social, political, and economic model of self-administration of different peoples, pioneered by women and the youth. It attempts to practically express the people's will by viewing democracy as a method rather than an aim alone. It is democracy without the state.

**Decentralized grassroots organizational structures:** The communes work towards a "moral-political" society made up of conscious individuals who understand how to resolve social issues and who take care of everyday self-governance as a common responsibility, rather than submitting to bureaucratic elites. All of this relies on the voluntary and free participation of the people, as opposed to coercion and the rule of law.

**Gender equality:** Today, the Kurdish freedom movement splits power equally between one woman and one man. The idea behind the co-chair principle is both symbolic and practical—it decentralizes power and promotes consensus finding while symbolizing the harmony between women and men. Only women have the right to elect the female co-chair while the male co-chair is elected by everyone. Women organize their own, stronger, more ideologically conscious structures towards a women's confederation, starting with autonomous women's communes.



**Diversity and social contracts:** Another important principle articulated by Öcalan; the “democratic nation”. Unlike the nation state’s monist doctrine, which justifies itself through a chauvinistic myth, this concept envisions a society based on a common social contract and fundamental ethical principles. Thus, all individuals and groups, ethnic, religious, linguistic, gender, intellectual identities and tendencies can express themselves freely and add diversity to this expansive, ethics-based nation in order to secure its democratization. **The more diverse the nation, the stronger its democracy.**



Photo: <http://www.cam.ac.uk/research/discussion/can-the-revolution-in-kurdish-syria-succeed>



## 16.0 CONCLUSION

I hope that this toolkit has provided some greater insight on Indigenous and cross-cultural forms of leadership alongside the Western approaches. As Albert Marshall shares with us, 'Two-Eyed-Seeing' is acknowledging and respecting (not combining) differences between Indigenous perspectives and Western ones. He asserts that both paradigms are critical to create energetic balance in sustaining ourselves and the world around us.

After conducting this research, I argue that perhaps a 'Many-Eyed-Seeing' is a concept to be adopted in considering the multitude of knowledges on leadership coming from diverse backgrounds. The ten over-arching themes of; Inclusive Leadership, Vision, Co-existence, Sense of Self, Responsibility, Practices/Rituals, Heart Medicine, Wisdom, Earth, and Humility, teach us one very, very important lesson in terms respecting 'Many-Eyed-Seeing' and of adopting leadership practices within organized groups; that it is imperative to bring 'humanness' back into governing structures. By 'humanness', I mean recognizing ourselves within the cosmic world order and our capacities as well as shortcomings as human beings relating to one another as we put our best feet-forward in restoring ancient knowledges of leadership and moral conduct.

