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*Leadership* 2006; 2; 225

DOI: 10.1177/1742715006062936

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## American Indian Ways of Leading and Knowing

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**Abstract** *Having drawn some brief historical lines for our research, we suggest that significant differences exist between American Indian and western approaches to, and perspectives on, leadership, and we illustrate some of these differences drawing particularly upon Indian educational leadership. American Indian leadership was often interpreted by non-indigenous observers as an inability to lead rather than a different ability to lead. Western models are often rooted in positional approaches, despite their assertions to the contrary, whereas Indian models are more concerned with persuasive techniques, and while western approaches are almost always individual in form, American Indian models are more concerned with how different forms of leadership in different circumstances can serve the community rather than enhance the reward and reputation of their individual embodiment. We illustrate this with a model of American Indian leadership that exposes the differences by concentrating upon the methods through which persuasion works, especially the different deployment of the written or spoken word.*

**Keywords** *American Indian; community; culture; leadership; persuasion*

### Introduction

It is richly ironic that while many of the leading western student texts on leadership today are American (for example, Hughes et al., 1999; Northouse, 1997; Yukl, 1998), and many of these rightly highlight the problems of assuming that American approaches to leadership are not culturally specific, the assumption that culture can be reduced to national culture remains problematic. Indeed, the assumption that countries have unique cultures that were universally appropriate internally if not externally may well have prevented the US government from recognizing the contending approaches to leadership in its own backyard.

At present there are over 500 federally recognized American Indian tribes in the United States and we propose to discuss American Indian traditions and practice of leadership behaviours in several contexts and in contrast to western traditions and assumptions. In Bass's *Handbook of Leadership* (1990), for example, there is less than one page (out of 914) devoted to Native Americans. Bass's summary described

American Indians as 'this country's most impoverished minority, whose members are undereducated and live mainly under tribal councils that discourage participatory democracy . . . The leadership of their many famous chiefs of the past is only a memory' (p. 755).

Our own approach to this article derived from the mutual incomprehension that initially faced us when we began to consider how we might write together: the first author's Comanche heritage provided a language, content and context that often undermined, rather than underpinned, the second author's more traditional western approach. At the same time the first author's research data, gathered over two decades of formal interviews and informal conversations with American Indians, generated leadership patterns that did not fit with the existing academic models known to the second author. The consequence was for us both to go back to the beginning and reconsider what we thought leadership was, and how it might manifest itself in American Indian societies. As we worked through the article it also became clear that we were not talking about two different forms of leadership (western and American Indian) because American Indian leadership was itself composed of a myriad of different elements in space and time. It is in this sense of 'leadership refrain' that we have used Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) *ritournelle* – that is, as a 'catalytic function', a temporary architecture, which enables new things to emerge from existing ingredients – to develop the article. In effect, we have used the initial mutual confusion as the stimulus to engage with each other's approaches.

Our claim is that a review of American Indian leadership, using educational institutions as an illustration, can both displace the imperialist foundations of the American way of leadership and open up the study of leadership to alternative models and understandings. We are not suggesting that all cross-cultural research on leadership must actively engage those cultural representatives in the research process itself, but rather that the process of active engagement generates conceptual space for reconsidering the nature of leadership.

Despite claims to the contrary, a central thrust of much western leadership theory and debate surrounds the positional view on leadership: leaders are those who hold leadership *positions* (Hughes et al., 1999). Even those who try to break free from such orthodoxies often end up delineating their alternative processual approach by examining how those in formal positions of authority operate (Grint, 2005). In contrast, we suggest here that for many traditional American Indian communities, leadership is open to anyone who has the skill to *persuade* others to do something they would not have otherwise done. This different form of leadership rests in different forms of persuasion, not in different formal positions more commonly associated with western models of leadership, as manifest particularly in the military and in many businesses run on similarly hierarchical lines.

In what follows we begin with a brief historical glimpse on American Indians to set the context for the rest of the article (readers interested in a much longer review of the history are referred to Josephy, 1961, 1995). This starts with a review of research on leadership in Indian Country<sup>1</sup> which tends to use variables found in mainstream leadership research. We then follow this by considering the methodological implications of indigenous researchers considering leadership in their own communities before constructing an alternative leadership model. This is not designed to represent *all* American Indian models of leadership but is a heuristic device to

illustrate the gap between western models and one particular approach. In other words, we are not trying to replace one orthodoxy with another but to challenge all leadership orthodoxies that take culture as either irrelevant or as essentially a *national* variable, rather than a variable that can represent communities (as in this case), social classes, ethnic groups, genders, ages, religions or anything else.

## American Indian leadership: different traditions

Much of the early work on leadership within American Indians, such as it was, explored the issues through a western cultural lens that may have been distinctly unhelpful and incapable of understanding that, what counted as leadership was, in essence, different between the western and American Indian traditions. In traditional western approaches leadership is identified with an individual leader whose traits propel him (and sometimes her) to positions of authority over an organization or community. Such models tend to rest in hierarchies of authority where power and responsibility increase with movement up the hierarchy. American Indian traditions, on the other hand, tend to be more related to the requirements of the community, to be much more dispersed throughout that community, and to be rooted in situations rather than individuals. Thus one could argue that American Indian traditions of leadership are more akin to heterarchies than a hierarchies: flexible and changing patterns of authority rather than rigidly embedded in a fixed and formal bureaucracy. Moreover, the plural term *heterarchies*, is deliberate here because the level of diversity among and within American Indian nations is such that all talk of 'the American Indian way' should be treated with great caution and scepticism. In practical terms these two alternative approaches have both inhibited mutual understanding and compounded the difficulties faced by American Indian leaders, whose different approach to leadership has often been interpreted as an inability to lead rather than a different ability to lead.

This is not to say that American Indian traditions are ethically superior to traditional western models, or indeed that there is one American Indian model of leadership which should replace the one western model. There are enough examples of atrocities organized by hierarchic non-indigenous leaders and heterarchic Indian leaders to negate any claim that the latter were *essentially* ethically superior to the former. Indeed as Fehrenbach (2005: 177) suggests about the Apache in the early 18th century in New Mexico: 'They caught Spaniards and Puebloans and *mestizos*<sup>2</sup> and tortured them over slow fires, or staked them out naked for the ants and buzzards, or buried them to face a burning sun with peeled eyelids'. In fact the behaviour of indigenous tribes varied both between the tribes and with regards to the captives, for instance, Tate (1994) suggests that males captured by Comanches in the 18th and early 19th centuries were usually tortured and/or killed but females and children were treated with respect, with women seldom raped and children often adopted to replenish their own declining population.<sup>3</sup>

In purely pragmatic terms the failure of the Indian nations to unite under one leader or even one group of leaders in the face of non-indigenous incursions condemned them to defeat in the long term. For example, after the treaty of 1783 which terminated the war between the British and the Americans, the British tried to facilitate an Indian confederacy, less to help the American Indians than to construct

a block on American ambitions north of the Ohio River. Nevertheless, a confederacy would have strengthened the American Indian position against incursion if it had not foundered on their eventual betrayal by the British and the desire of the tribes to remain independent of each other, despite the best efforts of the Shawnee and Miami tribes (Josephy, 1995: 286–97). Fifty years later, in the 1830s, the Cherokee nation sought the protection of the Supreme Court from attempts by the State of Georgia to deport them from their traditional lands but, despite a ruling in favour of the Cherokees in 1832, by 1833 the state of Georgia announced a public lottery of Cherokee land and property.<sup>4</sup> By 1834 the once unified Cherokee nation split into two camps with Ridge leading the smaller acquiescent group who signed away the Cherokee land at New Echota and promptly left. This left Ross leading the larger group of resisters who ignored the treaty and stayed put. By 1838, after the US Senate had ratified the New Echota Treaty, the US Army deployed 7000 troops to move the 18,000 Cherokee resisters out. By the end of their six-month forced march over 4000 Cherokees had died on the infamous Trail of Tears (pp. 328–31).

Long before the Trail of Tears, scholars now believe that prior to contact with Europeans, American Indian people had had complex, dynamic and diverse methods for developing, assigning or asserting leadership within tribal cultures (Ashley & Jarratt-Ziemski, 1999: 49; Miheuah, 1996: 15; Stiffarm & Lane, 1992: 23). Accurate historical evidence is difficult to determine and may have been initially confused by the tendency of the recorders to equate and conflate governance with leadership.

On the one hand, governance was often reduced to the institutions that the non-indigenous settlers developed in response to their new situation, in particular the US Constitution and the separation of powers between the judicial, executive and legislature. The assumption that governance means the same thing to different people also encouraged the US government to insist that American Indian governance structures replicated their normative ideal of constitutional, elected republics: since 1934 American Indian tribes have been required to base their governmental structure on that of the US Congress, yet while the formal structures mirror what the government required, other governance and leadership structures (indigenous ones) were often maintained at the reservation level. Indeed, one such misunderstanding was that the governance of the United States was itself derived and conceived from American Indian influence. In fact, the people of the Six Nations (also known as by the French term, *Iroquois Confederacy*) called themselves the Haudenosaunee,<sup>5</sup> meaning ‘people building a long house’, and did have a system of governance that included the separation of power. However, it is not clear to what extent the framers of the US Constitution used this as a blueprint. On the contrary, the US government tried to enforce this model upon the American Indians and in some cases – for instance the Cherokee in 1828 – succeeded (Josephy, 1995: 322; cf. Lyons, 1992: 34). Similarly, although the Navajo tribe (like the Iroquois Confederacy) was matriarchal, after 1934 the Indian Reorganization Act required the tribes to create proto-congressional councils, and from that point men dominated the seats, at least until the late 1980s. Indeed, many tribes (such as the Hopi) operated on this basis, with men taking the public leadership roles but owing their appointment to their matrilineal line (Miller, 2004: 139–40).

On the other hand, leadership was often reduced to the assumption that each organization and institution could only have one individual leader. For instance, in

1851 conflict between American Indians and the US government over opening up the Oregon Trail was, in part, rooted in the false assumption made by the latter that the American Indian nation could be bound by the word of a single leader – chosen by the Superintendent of Indian Affairs – when the American Indians themselves insisted that no single person could take such a decision (Josephy, 1993: 268–9). In contrast to many western assumptions about leadership, Freisen and Lyon's early work (1970) on leadership in southern Alberta's native communities, suggested a high regard for individual rights, underlying regard for cooperation, family cohesiveness, and tolerance. The study focused on Indian culture and education and compared variables from Indian and non-Indian communities. The article reported that each Indian tribe operated under the leadership of a chief and council, with membership on the councils based on some success in the community. Some Siouan bands represented their systems of governments with peace chiefs, war chiefs and ceremonial leaders.

In a later study, the Yaqui world view of leadership was contextualized rather differently, with time playing a far more critical role than in the Siouan bands described earlier. In particular, the Yaqui existed within two realities of time, that is, a circular, primeval, timeline and a linear time development in the historical European time conception (Chilocott, 1985). This study was an ethnography designed to determine examples of cultural dissonance which affected decision making in the Yaqui community. The multiple realities created by the two realities of time still impact upon the leadership within this community. As an example, linear time development regulates formal leadership appointment, as in the election of tribal council members to specific four-year terms. In a circular, indigenous timeline, leadership would rely on effectiveness and performance. It would start and end with an event, not a specific calendar date. For example, leadership would transfer upon the death of the current leader.

## Mainstream leadership research in Indian Country

The consequences of contending assumptions about leadership that faced the American Indian nations in 1851 hardly seem to have changed over the last 150 years, because the assumptions themselves have remained deeply rooted in the writings and practices of US leadership systems. For example, Foster and Boloz's 1980 study, based on Stogdill's (1974) work, began with an overview of Navajo education. However, it provided more of a general framework than any actual research on leadership. At the time, it would have been unlikely that the leadership in education on the Navajo reservation was Indian, or more specifically that it was Navajo. It was designed to stimulate interest in Bureau of Indian Affairs school leadership styles, as those styles changed from management tasks to instructional leadership as a result of Public Law 95–561.<sup>6</sup> Foster and Boloz's study outlined current leadership thinking and summarized briefly follower-ship research. Scholarship in this period typically reflected non-Indian variables and assessments.

However, the shift from non-indigenous to Indian leadership became more obvious with Pavlik's (1988) leadership examination, which used the literature of 'effective schools' to explore a behavioural approach by examining such variables as: (a) assertiveness, achievement-oriented leadership; (b) orderly, purposeful and peaceful school climates; (c) high expectations for staff and students; and

(d) well-designed objectives and evaluation systems. This review of literature focused on school principals, particularly American Indian principals. Among the findings associated with American Indian leadership, Pavlik observed that the turnover rate of administrators on the Navajo reservation was double that of districts bordering the reservation. This finding was attributed to the inability of administrators to cope with the unique challenges found on reservations, for example, their *lack of appropriate leadership skills*. Pavlik, following Barnhardt's (1977) study of effective Alaska Native leaders, suggested that administrators were trained to be managers of bureaucracies. These bureaucracies, however, were overlaid with an indigenous governance system that was seen as entangled by kin relationships, bilingualism, and physical isolation among other things. Factors such as these were seen as threatening to western, traditionally prepared non-native administrators. Barnhardt's model for a flexible, sensitive and adaptive administrator in Indian Country represented a radical departure from preparation and licensing programme expectations for the 1980s.

Relying on Scott's (1981) model of a rational organization, Badwound and Tierney (1988) compared leadership styles in tribal colleges. Scott defined the elements of all organizations in the following terms: goals, participants, technology, environment and social structure. Badwound and Tierney, however, noted that since the rational model adhered to western emphasis on order, reason and logic in the study of leadership, its use was limited in the study of indigenous leadership. However, the divergent leadership goals in tribal colleges, that is, goals that are neither competitive nor meritocratic, provided formal and informal means for sharing and for understanding the holistic nature of leadership. They concluded that the leader in a tribal college was a facilitator and a promoter of group values and interests. This article also provided a governance table, which contrasted and compared governance and decision making in both a rational model and the tribal college model for leadership.

Lynch and Charleston (1990) contextualized the leadership discussion and declared that a new wave of American Indian leadership was emerging, one oriented to economic development and self-determination. These authors portrayed leadership in cycles of approximately 50 years each through to 1990. They noted that the Merriam Report (Merriam et al., 1928) had identified the lack of Indian professionals in formal leadership positions as a major problem in the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). Seventy-five years later the fundamental problem highlighted by this statement had not changed. This historical analysis of policy provides an insightful understanding of the difficult and complex challenges in Indian schools. Charleston would later become the primary author of a series of reports entitled *Indian Nations at Risk* (1991) where leadership was again cited as a critical need in Indian Country.

Recently, the contrast/comparison practice of leadership skills was explored by Laurence Wise-Erickson (2003) in a study which correlated traditional American Indian leadership characteristics, attributes and traits with Team Based Leadership. Wise-Erickson interviewed 14 American Indians and established that Team Based Leadership characteristics were present. He determined that the sample viewed leadership as a synthesis of emergent and (American Indian) traditional values, traits and behaviours of the community. He concluded that a holistic model of leadership mirrored characteristics found in mainstream research on community-based leadership.

## From mainstream research to indigenous understanding

Despite the historical dearth of research into American Indian leadership there has been a growing body of work, particularly related to Indian educational establishments. Nonetheless, much of that research still suffers from an ahistorical bias that explores the leadership issues affecting Indian communities as if they are Indian problems rather than the consequences of historical displacement and cultural destruction. Indigenous leadership definitions found in the scholarship of Indians and non-Indians, then, require an understanding of the impact of assimilation policies and practices in a historical context. Traditional leadership models, a more radical native scholar might argue, can only be viewed with a cultural lens that is, perhaps, not available to us in the present, or is available but only by virtue of being translated into English, thereby losing some of the cultural context needed to fully understand the concept. In effect, is it ever possible to understand the other without being the other? Perhaps not, but we can at least make some inroads into this problem by understanding how others perceive their own approaches to leadership and, by comprehending the differences, we can begin to assess the extent to which leadership is culturally constructed.

This work is grounded in the belief that all cultures adapt and incorporate, and that it is important today for indigenous scholars to articulate indigenous leadership from the culture and traditions they have blended. This articulation is important, as 'leadership' in the multi-cultured context of a global environment would allow scholars who are, for example, American Indian, with the training, knowledge and tools (that is, the access in research universities) to add to the scholarship of leadership claiming a uniquely indigenous voice.

When discussing leadership with American Indians whose second language is English, the first author sought to have them give their own tribal word for 'leader'. Uniformly, this began a discussion of the context of leadership: leader as hereditary chief, leader of a hunting party, leader of a war party, for example. It is noteworthy to mention that the sheer number of words developed in a language is often used as an alleged measure for the culture's ability to invent tools and machines.<sup>7</sup> Current native languages, even with Herculean efforts at preservation, may however represent only a fraction of that group's language development. Unquestionably, American Indian languages, even those indigenous languages still in use today such as Navajo or Cherokee, lack the sheer number of words found in majority languages such as English. This fact, combined with the multiple numbers of words that connote leader behaviour, may be the result of a tribe's philosophy or understanding that leader behaviour was context driven, and further, that it *may* be attributable to an individual based in some contexts, and that such an individual may be male or female in different circumstances. In other words, American Indians tend to define leadership less as a position and more as a sphere of influence that must be contextualized to be understood.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, as Irwin (2004) has insisted with regards to native religions:

Context is more crucial than text . . . A text isolated from its performative, social, and religious context is apt to be seen as a radical diminishment (and distortion) of the religious event. The emotional, symbolic and spiritual context communicated through spoken, sung and enacted words often registers a communal understanding that is not reducible to a representational text. (p. 104)

Early researchers like Lindquist often portrayed indigenous leadership as role-specific, but this representation lacks a fundamental understanding of indigenous communities and is superficial at best because spheres of influence relate more to the process of influencing than the influence of position. Furthermore, the role-specific leadership model seeks to describe an alternative holistic model to the traditional approaches but our approach is to insist that no holistic model is viable because of the degree of diversity between and within Indian communities. Hence, rather than displace the non-indigenous holistic (imperialist) model – or the anthropologists' role-specific model – with an Indian equivalent, we suggest that *difference* is as crucial as *similarity* and is the key to understanding American Indian models of leadership. In other words, indigenous leadership styles encompassed a continuum of styles that defy any simple reduction.

Lindquist (1923: 77) described leadership among a 'primitive race' as imbued in the function of 'priest' or 'medicine man,' the function of 'warrior' or 'hunter' and, of course, the function of 'chief'. He represented these functions as being evident throughout Indian Country and suggested further that the functions acted as a check and balance for the power within indigenous societies. Lindquist relied heavily on the work of Charles Eastman<sup>9</sup> (1902) and studies from the Bureau of American Ethnology. The assumptions and conclusions in works from the early 1900s were similar. Scholars at this time mirrored Euro-centric values and assumptions in their work and this type of scholarship on American Indians remained predominant throughout most of the 20th century. In the 1970s education researchers focused on leadership among American Indian students (Gemberling, 1970), and the leadership indicators that were identified (aspiration, academic performance, character traits and future planning) were drawn directly from western models. Studies such as these continued through the close of the century, using indicators found in leadership studies in other educational settings.

In the latter part of the century, American Indian scholars began to describe their own traditions and cultures using their insider status. This parallel, less available, scholarship continues. With the critical understanding that not all American Indians are alike, the scholarship by American Indians on American Indian traditions and culture continued to explore and expand such concepts as indigenous leadership. Alvin M. Josephy's book *The Patriot Chiefs: A Chronicle of American Indian Resistance* (1961) provided an original, indigenous perspective through biography on nine Indian leaders. The theme of his leadership biographies is resistance to non-indigenous culture and this text was one of the most frequently adopted texts for courses in Indian History or Native Studies.

In the 1970s indigenous perspectives were recognized in such scholarship as J. Smith's (1979) work on leadership among Northern Woodlands American Indians.<sup>10</sup> Work such as this acknowledged an outsider status and formed the framework for the acceptance of indigenous research in academia. In the 1980s non-Indian scholars examined and reflected on historical Indian leadership studies, and began to contextualize the findings and writings of the previous centuries by acknowledging that non-indigenous authors 'assumed that Native American political institutions reflected a similar pattern of centralized power', and therefore lacked the ability to record vastly divergent political structure (Edmunds, 1980). Hoxie (1986), for example, pointed out the dynamic nature of American Indian politics and suggested

that leadership and tribal sovereignty needed a re-examination. This acknowledgement provided the opportunity for American Indian scholars to redirect research. Further, by this decade, there was evidence that more American Indian scholars were available to review, interpret, and conduct research as academia began to acknowledge indigenous research methods. So not only were the *objects* of research under criticism; so too were the *methods*.

In the next section, we explore American Indian leadership based on native ways of knowing, including those theoretical perspectives found in scholarship on American Indian, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians, contextualized in a research design which attempts to merge two traditional practices to establish a common dialogue. Explicit in the process of indigenous leadership study is the understanding that there remains an obligation to question methods and to reflect on the processes of research.

## Indigenous research and native ways of knowing

Research using an indigenous paradigm can be found in approximately the same time period as the research previously reviewed. Venues for research findings on American Indians have been limited to a narrow academic field whose scholars are typically anthropologists or educators. The 1990s saw a wider scope of dissemination of research findings and a more sustained discussion of native ways of knowing, particularly in the field of education, as native scholars attempted to define research methods.

A good illustration of this approach is the work of Ojibwa scholar Rosemary Christensen (1991) who focused on cultural dissimilarities in understanding traditional leadership that resulted from a different sense of time and space. Christensen, an indigenous language scholar, relied on indigenous research methods that included taking time for discussion, consensus, and asking elders and spiritual advisors for consultation. For Christensen, it was important to assess tribal members' thinking in order to establish parameters when seeking a common definition for a tribal characteristic that was often mislabelled by non-Indian scholars. Her example was that of 'gifted and talented', a federal designation of children which produces additional per capita funding in most school districts. The legal definition of gifted and talented eliminated a cultural definition: persuasion, for example, is highly valued in American Indian tribal communities; however, it is not viewed explicitly as a criterion for 'gifted and talented' designation in non-indigenous America, and some non-indigenous researchers suggest that it may not even be a valid criterion for assessing children.<sup>11</sup> Christensen asserted that a tribal community had a responsibility to review parameters by canvassing all concerned before establishment of a tribally sanctioned definition to be applied to concepts in governance and education. Further, Christensen believed that traditional leadership could only be understood by asking for guidance from tribal spiritual advisors. For her, it was important to understand that the act of asking was critical to the process of acquiring the traditional skills of leadership. These skills were understood and kept by traditionalists in her tribe. Such methods remain extremely controversial in non-indigenous academic culture but this is precisely the point: it is not just the form of leadership that differs, it is also how we go about establishing what leadership means to different communities.

In what follows, we attempt to demonstrate this quintessential difference by using a model developed to understand what we take to be (primarily) Comanche leadership by one of the authors (Warner) over two decades of research interviewing and working with hundreds of American Indians. This is not intended as an objective test of a new leadership model but a heuristic construct to help others rethink their approach to leadership.

While each of the citations above has contributed to an overall set of understandings in the definition of American Indian leadership, the proposed *Tahdooahnippah*/Warner model is an attempt to provide a framework for talking about the differences between western and indigenous leadership. We are not claiming, then, that this model can replace the universal (non-indigenous) traditional model, but that the model illustrates just how different the models are. The model was developed using the language of research by western social scientists to stimulate interest in indigenous leadership study. Obviously, further research on different American Indian communities will be needed to underscore the extent to which they differ from or complement this (primarily) Comanche model of leadership research.

### **American Indian leadership: *Tahdooahnippah*/Warner model**

Assessing leadership is patently a difficult and culturally defined problem. In this case leadership behaviours were assessed by those individuals participating in formal leadership development programmes, such as those sponsored by The Bureau of Indian Affairs or The Department of Education's Office of Indian Education Programs. These programmes, distant from traditional communities, allowed American Indian participants the opportunity to adopt and/or model behaviours of successful non-Indian administrators. Quite clearly such leadership behaviours are themselves simultaneously decontextualized and individualized. Nevertheless, the consequence of the programmes was often to build up a cadre of American Indian leaders; in effect, to initiate a community of (common) leadership practices across different tribes, nations and groups.

One such programme at the Pennsylvania State University was arguably the most successful of these models, to the extent that alumni often referred to graduates as members of an elite fraternity of Indian educators, sometimes playfully termed the Penn State Mafia.<sup>12</sup> These programmes provided an opportunity for leadership in education practice to advance, because Penn State-trained researchers were allowed to focus on American Indian issues. This produced a nucleus of highly qualified American Indian researchers, and these individuals were able to document personal histories using the same tools as non-Indians. However, the research lens tended to be focused on leadership in schools rather than traditional roles within tribes and this is clearly a limitation on the possible utility of the model.

In research with indigenous groups, the researcher is always cognizant of his/her status as an insider (or outsider), and the ability to collect accurate data is often dependent on the researcher's ability to use past experiences to define his/her own status. For example, while working at Haskell Indian Junior College in the mid-1980s, a Comanche colleague was visited by her grandmother, an elder, whose first language was Comanche. A doctoral linguistics student at The University of Kansas requested permission to record the elder. Being assured that the student was studying

linguistics for her own personal benefit and not some over-budget grant, the grandmother participated at no cost. After the interview, the colleague asked her grandmother if she had told the student/interviewer the truth. The grandmother's response was 'sometimes' and she laughed.<sup>13</sup> The research design proposed here is informed by insider status to limit, but never totally transcend, just this kind of problem. One indication is the use of *Nvmv* (Comanche) descriptors found in Figure 1 and subsequently described in Table 1.

The model proposed is aligned philosophically with L. T. Smith's (1999: 125) argument that indigenous peoples must become active participants in the research act if the goals of indigenous self-determination are to be realized. It mirrors other indigenous scholars' efforts to consider a culturally appropriate research method in order to encourage the development of indigenous peoples as researchers (LaFromboise & Plake, 1983: 50; Sefa Dei, 2000: 125; Swisher, 1996: 83). Again, however, we are not claiming that this is a universally appropriate and applicable model; rather, that it demonstrates through one case just how different the traditional non-indigenous American models are from those that may represent the Native American models.

Some qualitative research methods allow researchers to use 'a research strategy that privileges Indigenous experiences' so that these experiences are legitimized in academia (Rigney, 1996: 6). The design of this leadership model was conceived as a circular, interconnecting model (see Figure 1). As Black Elk and Niehardt (1961) suggested:

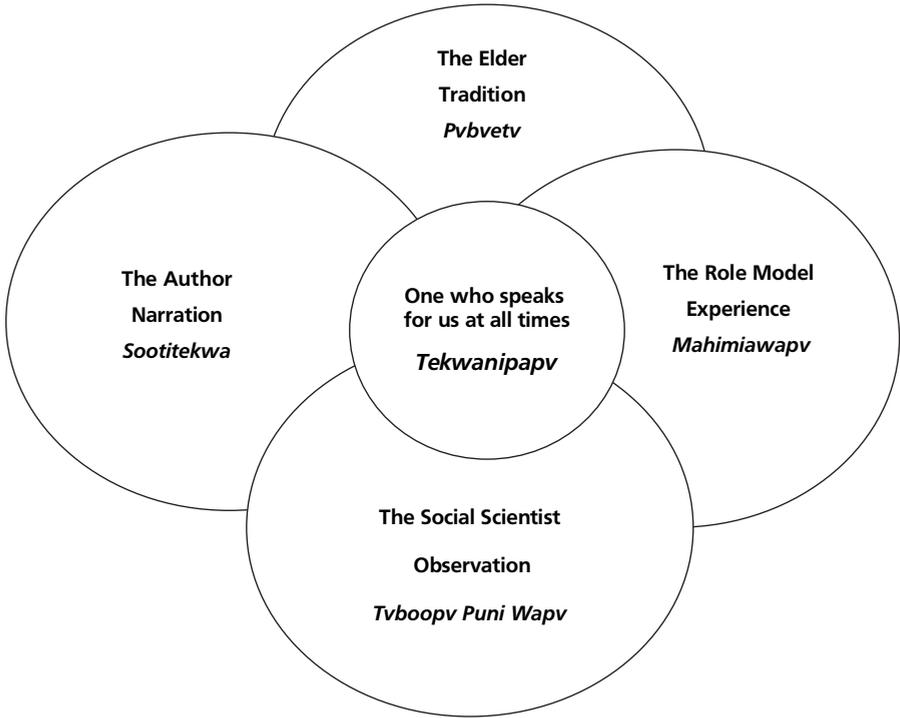
Everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the power of the world always works in circles, and everything tries to be found. In the old days, when we were strong and happy people, all our power came to us from the sacred hoop of the nation, and so long as the hoop was unbroken the people flourished.

Traditional American Indian leadership is based on a core of spirituality. Each of the leadership styles in this model is derived from a spiritual core that connects this style to an indigenous community; in other words, while American Indian communities are spiritual communities, they are not all alike. The characteristics of this particular model describe a time and place of leadership using four primary leadership skills, derived from the use of language, or specifically the concept of 'persuasion.' In short, leadership is distributed within a community based on the skills and experience an individual accumulates.

Figure 1 embodies a graphic representation of the four primary modes of persuasion that facilitate leadership, with a fifth central mode that embodies all the others. We have avoided representing this in a conventional two by two format because this would be to misunderstand the difference we are trying to illustrate between American Indian and non-indigenous models of leadership. Thus there are no numerical scores associated with each because none of them are objectively measurable; instead they are themselves merely heuristics to facilitate understanding.

American Indian leadership has an oral tradition that has been well documented (Becker, 2002), and reinforces the power of performance as critical to cultural identity (Moses, 2004: 193). The context of the spoken word is widely recognized as the method of defining traditional leaders (see Christensen, 1991). In Table 1,

**Figure 1** American Indian leadership: the Tahdooahnippah/Warner model



Warner categorizes four leadership styles and lists the variables which characterize each. Table 2 represents an approximation of Table 1 in English. In this model, the key aspect of leadership is not what particular characteristics the leader has, nor what position the leader holds or even what that leader achieves; rather, the most important element is the degree to which the form of persuasion changes with the context. In sum, persuasion forms the framework for determining four variables (Observation, Narration, Experience, Tradition). Persuasion is linked to the use of words (written and spoken) and the use of actions. The tables list each of the four variables for each leadership style. The order of the variable represents the strength of that variable for each characteristic. For example, for the Social Scientist, persuasive rendition of Observation is the primary means of leadership enactment, followed by Narration, Experience and, least of all, Tradition. This is the opposite of an Elder, for

**Table 1** Tahdooahnippah leadership variables

	<i>Tvboopv Puni Wapv</i>	<i>Sootitekwa</i>	<i>Pvbvetv</i>	<i>Mahimiawapv</i>
1	Puniti	Tekwari	Supana?itii	Hannitii
2	Tekwari	Puniti	Hannitii	Supana?itii
3	Hannitii	Supana?itii	Tekwarii	Puniti
4	Supana?itii	Hannitii	Puniti	Tekwarii

**Table 2** Warner leadership variables

	Social Scientist	Author	Elder	Role Model
1	Observation	Narration	Tradition	Experience
2	Narration	Observation	Experience	Tradition
3	Experience	Tradition	Narration	Observation
4	Tradition	Experience	Observation	Narration

whom leadership is enacted mainly in the persuasive facilities of Tradition, followed by Experience, Narration and, least of all, Observation.

### **The Social Scientist/*Tvboopv Puni Wapv***

Observation and discussion of ceremonies, activities and processes are critical in the definition of this type of leadership. *Tvboopv Puni Wapv* or Social Scientists acquire knowledge of traditions and culture, and as such are able to teach appropriate methods of dissemination. These tribal members lead in community efforts to preserve traditions or in efforts to re-establish indigenous governance practices in health care, education or entrepreneurship. The Social Scientist primarily relies on the written word in the representation of knowledge and traditions.<sup>14</sup> The *Tvboopv Puni Wapv* or Social Scientist also uses research to inform practice and provide intervention strategies at the individual and tribal level. For example, as an informed insider, the Social Scientist/*Tvboopv Puni Wapv* can provide leadership to a tribal community in language preservation, and also has the skills to design and disseminate research to a non-tribal audience. Like Authors, the Social Scientist writes. The Social Scientist relies on observation to discover new or hidden meaning in order to connect contemporary research to traditional research understandings. Further, the Social Scientist revises contemporary research methods to include native ways of knowing. Native ways of knowing involve a rethinking of research methods used by tribal peoples to explain their understanding of their world. They rely on reflection and allow the Social Scientist to connect traditional understandings to current problems. American Indian Social Scientists have voice as insiders, and as such have a responsibility to disseminate research findings to native and to non-native people. Implicitly this means that they need to have the tools to format and evaluate research using native ways of knowing and western social science. The Social Scientist understands tradition and is informed by experience.

### **The Elder/*Pvbvetv***

American Indian leaders who are elders rely less on the written word and more on the spoken word and the traditions of the culture. Such individuals have lived these traditions and their experiences have informed their leadership style. Elder is a designation that is often tribally specific. An example of Elder leadership in the Comanche tribe would be Wallace Coffey.<sup>15</sup> Wallace is a native speaker and provides formal and informal leadership for tribal members. As an Elder, he can speak for, and is respected by, all ages. For *Nvmv*, individuals are considered an Elder at an age when

they have grandchildren. The designation of Elder status implies a responsibility to lead tribal youth and this leadership is actualized as teaching. But the Elder designation is not necessarily one correlated with age. For instance, Alaska Natives believe that an Elder is any individual who holds knowledge and is respected by the community for that knowledge, rather than someone who has attained a specific age or formal status. A teenager could be considered an Elder using this Alaska Native definition.

The Elder as leader is characterized as one who relies on oral evidence presented to a particular kind of audience. This oral evidence includes traditional storytelling, considered informal by non-Indian observers, as well as highly formalized oral traditions such as testimonies, often considered a monologue or a public performance. Elders also celebrate the survival of an identity by reinforcing that identity in stories that affirm strength and spirituality. This celebration is an act that links generations in the context of resistance to an understanding of the need for cultural and spiritual authenticity.

Elders use oral traditions to envision a collective future through seven generations.<sup>16</sup> This envisioning begins with the retelling of songs, stories, riddles, predictions, and proverbs. The active telling and retelling of these stories is shared throughout Indian Country. Envisioning is an important component of economic development, sovereign government, or language preservation and begins with Elders. In language preservation, naming, including using the original indigenous place name, allows Elders to connect contemporary activities and people to a historical continuum that recognizes indigenous peoples' right to self-determination. Elders also remain significant in the naming of children, a practice which literally allows an individual to create a history contextualized in the present but connected to the past.

### **The Role Model/*Mahimiawapv***

The Role Model predominantly uses experience. Role Models are community leaders: their experiences are informed by tradition and yet they have opportunities to observe other leadership styles and incorporate them as necessary. Role Models rely on actions more than the spoken word or the written word, though both the latter are used in support of and to perpetuate behaviour.<sup>17</sup>

The Role Model relies on action and relationships to maintain leadership. Actions and relationships are developed through experiences in a tribal community. The Role Model connects people through traditional practices. Role Model leadership is characterized by reframing actions within the political community, and often involves resistance to western governance or actions. Reframing by Role Models allows the leader to restore a community spiritually, emotionally, physically and economically.

Role Models also create formal and informal networks in indigenous communities. These networks often prioritize the protection of traditional customs, languages, or natural resources. Through strategic and critical negotiation, Role Models share knowledge for the collective benefit of tribal peoples. Community role models not only model behaviour for youth, but for the entire community. They maintain an ethical core of values that are evidenced within communities where these communities are essentially local or expand to a national indigenous community.

### **The Author/Sootitekwa**

We define an Author as a leader who predominantly uses the written word, relying on tradition and experience to inform an agenda.<sup>18</sup> These leaders often combine their narration with subjective, intuitive insights so that the perceived hierarchy within the tables merges.

Authors complement their written work with the spoken word through readings and public engagements and narrations of film or song. Authors portray the beliefs and values of a culture through the communities they describe. The descriptions connect the past and the future and portray a range of truths. Authors use dialogue, humour or familiar characters to allow readers to connect to tradition. Using indigenous literature, Authors can explore analogies, metaphors and themes in a culture that allows them to privilege indigenous voices. This form of leadership may also use art as a method of expressing a native world view or experience.

Authorship as leadership is based on the beliefs and traditions of native peoples that value oral traditions and storytelling, acknowledging the power of words in oral traditions of leadership. Indigenous governance and native spirituality have centuries of oral traditions. The contemporary nuances characterized by Native Authors align more closely to the persuasive facility of the oral word complemented by the written word.

### ***Tekwanipapy***

There is no best type of leader in this model, instead the skills for certain embodiments of leadership are different and dependent upon the situation. This model is neither hierarchical nor authoritative; decision making balances the welfare of the community and future generations with the welfare of an individual, employing consensus through informed inquiry. The four primary forms of leadership are: the Author, the Elder, the Role Model and the Social Scientist. However, where the four different forms of leadership intersect, at *Tekwanipapy*, there can be found examples where Author, Elder, Role Model, and Social Scientists' characteristics not only intersect but are inclusive. It is a rare intersection of leadership styles that literally translates into 'one who speaks for us at all times.'<sup>19</sup>

## **Conclusion**

We began this 'leadership refrain' with both mutual confusion and a desire to write our way through a 'temporary architecture', which would enable us to see new things emerging from our existing ingredients. We suggested that, although many authors have claimed that leadership is a culturally specific phenomenon, very often their writings portrayed the opposite. Moreover, when culture does surface into the analysis it is more often than not manifest as a *national* culture that bears little relationship to the diversity of forms found in most countries. In other words, to speak of American, or British or French or Japanese leadership is to reduce all the inhabitants of those countries to a standard that is as absurd as assuming that the average British family has 2.4 children, and then to be surprised when no one has ever had a 0.4 child. The same problem recurs within American Indian societies; they are

manifestly not all the same and embody radically different conceptions of language, social structure and leadership.

Having drawn some brief historical lines for the research we suggested that misunderstandings by non-indigenous Americans about leadership among the American Indian people were commonplace, sometimes with tragic results. That is not to say that American Indian leadership was either culturally, ethically or pragmatically superior to that of the non-indigenous settlers but rather that it was different, and that difference existed both between the non-indigenous and the American Indians, and within the American Indian communities themselves. Indeed, to suggest that persuasion forms a far more important role in the leadership of American Indian societies is not to suggest that the ability to persuade is either absent from western models or even ethically superior to leadership models rooted in position or election or anything else. We only need to recall Plato's and Aristotle's warning about the danger of persuasive rhetoric to note that persuasion is not inherently or essentially ethical as a method of leading others.

We then illustrated some of these differences, drawing particularly upon Indian educational leadership as an example of the issues, especially the idea that American Indian leadership was often interpreted as an inability to lead rather than a different ability to lead. Thus while a western cultural lens was deployed to examine the failings of Indian leadership, different Indian lenses would have generated quite different notions of leadership success and failure. Very often western models are rooted in *positional* approaches, despite their assertions to the contrary, whereas Indian models are more concerned with *persuasive techniques*, and while western approaches are almost always individual in form, American Indian models are much more concerned with how different forms of leadership – individual or collective – in different circumstances can serve the community rather than enhance the reward and reputation of their individual embodiment.

To illustrate this we developed a model of American Indian leadership that exposed the differences through concentrating upon the methods through which persuasion works, especially the differential deployment of the written or spoken word. Occasionally all four types of leadership are co-present within one individual but this is a rare occurrence. Instead we suggest that American Indian communities are radically different from non-indigenous American communities and quite possibly from each other, and until we understand that difference – to any degree – we will be unable to understand what 'American' or 'western' leadership is.

That understanding is not likely to be advanced by relying upon attitude surveys or by observing the formal decision making within American Indian communities because these rely upon cultural similarities between ethnic and cultural groups that may not exist. Instead we are suggesting that we need more studies of leadership *by insiders* not simply *of insiders* if we are ever to get beyond a superficial comprehension of the 'other'.

We will conclude by reaffirming our purpose. It is not to develop *the* American Indian leadership model but *an* American Indian leadership model. There are some similarities across other American Indian tribes but there are also divergences; all we are trying to do here is challenge the orthodoxy of US leadership models, not replace one orthodoxy with yet another. In sum, it is the differences from the US orthodoxy that this model highlights that remain important rather than the similarities with other American Indian models that we are keen to adumbrate here. The latter is the next task.

## Notes

1. Indian Country is defined sociologically to include urban regions, border towns and checkerboard regions. It is not limited to the legal definition found in *Arizona v Blaze Construction Company* (1998) codified in 18 U.S.C. § 1151 as including federal reservations, whether created by statute or Executive Order; see *Donnelly v United States* (1913) 228 U.S. 243, including fee land.
2. Spanish Indians.
3. Some of the widely variant practices with which American Indians dealt with prisoners and with gender relations within the tribes can be accessed through <http://www.accessgenealogy.com/native/tribes/history/indianwomen.htm>.
4. The attempt to reclaim Indian land continues apace: in June 2005 the Shinnecock tribe filed a multi-billion dollar law suit in their battle to reclaim 3600 acres of ancestral land that currently houses some of the richest Americans, and the fairways of Shinnecock Hills, the scene of the 2004 US Open golf championship.
5. Pronounced 'ho dee noe sho nee'.
6. Public Law 95-561 moved the governance of Bureau of Indian Affairs schools to local Indian school boards. Prior to the passage of this law in 1975, schools were governed by Central Office in Washington, DC.
7. Compare, for example Whorf (1940) with Pullum (1991) on Peter Gordon's work on the Piraha tribe of Brazil; see <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/3582794.stm>.
8. For more comprehensive descriptions of current leadership in Alaska Native contexts, review the work of the Alaska Native Knowledge Network. Ray Barnhardt at the University of Alaska Fairbanks has fostered the considerable recent research. The website address is [www.ankn.uaf.edu](http://www.ankn.uaf.edu).
9. Eastman was a Dakota writer who advocated assimilation policies.
10. Northern Woodlands communities are those originally found in North East continental United States, irrespective of where they are now.
11. Thanks to one of our anonymous referees for suggesting this.
12. Note the appropriation of 'fraternity' and 'Mafia' by assimilated leader trainees in a programme designed to serve tribal communities by providing leadership within those communities and specifically targeted at reservations when the programmes were conceived.
13. See Brayboy (2000) for a more complete discussion of the problems of conducting research in Indian Country.
14. Examples of American Indian Social Scientists are John Tippeconnic (Comanche), Professor at the Pennsylvania State University, Karen Gayton Swisher (Hunkpapa), President at Haskell Indian Nations University, USA, Grayson Noley (Choctaw) Professor at the University of Oklahoma, and Cornell Pewewardy (Comanche), at the University of Kansas, USA.
15. Wallace Coffey is Chair of the Comanche Tribe. His great-great-grandfather was Ten Bears.
16. The concept of seven generations can be found throughout indigenous North America and refers to decision making that encompasses the past and the future. For further discussion, see Alfred (1999: xxii).
17. Examples of Role Models are educators, business and health professionals and the clergy. Role Models would include, Adam Bull (Choctaw), Gerald E. Gipp (Hunkpapa), S. Jo Lewis (Mono) and Michael D. Wilson (Oklahoma Choctaw).
18. Leaders who are American Indian Authors would include Joy Harjo (Muskogee), N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa), Luci Tapahonso (Diné) and Vine Deloria Jr (Standing Rock Sioux).
19. Phil Baird, Sicangu Lakota, is an example of a leader whose styles intersect. As a

member of the Urban Indian Education Research Board, Phil worked as *Tvboopv Puni Wapv* or Researcher/Social Scientist on a model of identity engagement by American Indian youth. As *Sootitekwa*, Baird has served as a tribal councilman. A leader in his community's practice of traditional ceremonies, Baird can be described as *Pvbvetv*. In his position as a counsellor and educator at United Tribes, he is *Mahimiawapv*. Rosemary Christensen, Objway, is another example of a leader whose styles intersect the four leadership styles. As a professor at the University of Wisconsin, Green Bay, Dr Christensen works closely with native language preservation throughout the United States. As *Tvboopv Puni Wapv* (Researcher) she has studied immersion language programmes, particularly Ashinabe. As *Sootiewka* (Author), Dr Christensen has developed curriculum materials for American Indian students, and as *Pvbvetv* (Elder), she participates in traditional Ashinabe ceremonies. As a director of one of the largest public school programmes for American Indians in Minneapolis and a member of the National Advisory Council on Indian Education, she would be considered *Mahimiawapv*. These examples of *Tekwaniwapv* highlight the interplay of leadership styles.

### Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Peter Case, David Collinson, Luther S. Williams, Michael D. Wilson, Martin Wood and our two anonymous referees for their careful and thought-provoking review of our earlier drafts of this article.

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