

Company Culture Gardening

Native Americans as Culture Gardeners

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Imagine an American garden without corn, squash, beans, potatoes, and tomatoes. These native American crops were the staples for early European settlers of North America, who were taught how to grow them by the indigenous people.

Native American behavior gardeners were remarkably advanced in the context of what are promoted today as best practices for contemporary workplace cultures.

Mindfulness and Meditation

When you are in doubt, be still, and wait; When doubt no longer exists for you, then go forward with courage. So long as mists envelop you, be still; Be still until the sunlight pours through and dispels the mists, as it surely will. Then act with courage. - Chief White Eagle, Ponca.

The Native American culture has a great love and respect for silence. Silence inhibits recklessness and impulsiveness. It permits time for personal reflection, analysis and intentional living. In addition, silence promotes learning through listening and observation, while allowing the inner intuition to speak and be heard.

Silence is critical for survival, whether in the primal sense of not alerting hungry forest predators to one's presence or in the modern sense of not saying something rash that can limit our opportunities in life or damage our most treasured relationships.

Teams, Collaboration

And while I stood there I saw more than I can tell, And I understood more than I saw; For I was seeing in a sacred manner. The shapes of things in the spirit, And the shape of all shapes as they must Live together like one being -- Black Elk, Black Elk Speaks.

Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect- Chief Seattle.

We are one, like a large organism. And in the same way that organs, tissue, veins, nerves, and the other parts that make up our body can sometimes seem separate, but are always very much an inseparable part of the same one greater system, we too are intrinsically connected and should live in a way that we become more and more aware of this interconnected nature and seek to express it in our daily lives.

Kindness

Like the grasses showing tender faces to each other, Thus should we do. For this was the wish of the Grandfathers of the World - Black Elk, Oglala Lakota (Sioux).

To truly understand just how intricately we're woven together can seem almost impossible, but the idea is simple: what we do to others, we do to ourselves.

This includes not only our actions towards others but also the thoughts and feelings we express in our mind towards others.

Giving, Gratitude, Recognition, Celebrations

We return thanks to our mother, the earth, which sustains us. We return thanks to the rivers and streams, which supply us with water. We return thanks to all herbs, which furnish medicines for the cure of our diseases. We return thanks to the corn, and to her sisters, the beans and squash, which give us life. We return thanks to the bushes and trees, which provide us with fruit. We return thanks to the wind, which, moving the air, has banished diseases. We return thanks to the moon and the stars, which have given us their light when the sun was gone. We return thanks to our grandfather He-no, who has given to us his rain. We return thanks to the sun, that he has looked upon the earth with a beneficent eye. Lastly, we return thanks to the Great Spirit, in whom is embodied all goodness, and who directs all things for the good of his children – An Iroquois Prayer.

Native Americans have long practiced gratitude in their daily lives. There were festivals for every part of the growing season and daily rituals of offering and thanks. Indeed, as the land blessed their lives, they returned the blessing. It was the Native Americans who first taught immigrants to share wealth knowing that it was meant for all, that indeed it belonged to everyone and no one person or group.

Native Americans are motivated by the joy of taking care of one another and the trust that when they are in need, their community will take care of them in return. They do not give to gain leverage over others or to add philanthropy to their resumes. To Native Americans, the act of giving brings them closer together and is a loving commitment to their community.

To more completely understand Native American philanthropy, it is useful to compare its underlying interests to those of European-American philanthropy. The latter is driven by beliefs of responsibility and power, affluence and wealth, and ownership (Center for the Study of Philanthropy 2001). In contrast, the underlying factors of Native American philanthropy are obligation and honor, generosity, and stewardship (ibid.).

Serve, Respect, and Live Without Fear

Respect others in their view, and demand that they respect yours. Love your life, perfect your life, beautify all things in your life.

Seek to make your life long and its purpose in the service of your people. Prepare a noble death song for the day when you go over the great divide. Always give a word or a sign of salute when meeting or passing a friend, Even a stranger, when in a lonely place. Show respect to all people and grovel to none.

When you arise in the morning give thanks for the food and for the joy of living. If you see no reason for giving thanks, the fault lies only in yourself.

Abuse no one and no thing, for abuse turns the wise ones to fools And robs the spirit of its vision - Chief Tecumseh, Shawnee Nation.

Forgiveness

The belief that forgiving frees one of hate and anger gives them the ability to move on and have peace of mind. This is an ability of the Native Americans. This idea has helped them cope with the discrimination they have faced throughout their lives.

"We need a great healing,
and we need a Great Forgiving.

But healing cannot begin without forgiveness.
We must forgive each other,
Forgive our loved ones,
Forgive our friends,
Forgive our enemies,
Forgive ourselves.
We need to pray even for a person who has done wrong!
In our Tiyospaye - our family, when two people fight they are made brothers or sisters.
Forgiveness itself is a powerful medicine.
We need forgiveness to create PEACE!
Mitakuye Oyasin! in the Great Circle of Life,
where there is no beginning and no end. - Cheif Arvol Looking Horse, Lakota

Servant Leadership

Qualities which all exceptional Native leaders possess:

- 1) They know what their source of power is and they do not abuse that power. Sharing power is one of their best attributes and they are very quick to raise others up who demonstrate their ability to take on leadership roles. They empower everyone around them and this permeates the entire Tribal government staff.
- 2) Native emotional intelligence is highly developed in these leaders. They are very self-aware and they have a very level of compassion for others. They have a gift for knowing when the people need something and if they are in a position to help them they do so. It may be offering a word of encouragement or something more significant like providing support for someone who is going through a difficult time. They understand people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.
- 3) Servant leadership is part of their DNA. These leaders are always putting others first. Traditionally our leaders would never ask others to do anything that they were not willing to do themselves. And because they always think about how their actions will impact the people they never do anything that is not in their best interests.
- 4) Native leaders are visionaries. They see the big picture and they help create the vision for the entire community.

In his book *Wisdom of the People*, Don Coyhis states: If you try to implement top- down management in an Indian organization, it doesn't work. Top down management directly conflicts with traditional Indian values. The Indian views the leader as a servant of the people, and in tribal organizations, all people are expected to act as leaders when their specialized knowledge or abilities are needed at a particular time. When we look at Native leadership, we see this as the core of their leadership concept time and again.

Change

The modern view of reality is based in straight lines and angles. When someone goes somewhere or gives directions, the method of orientation is based on 'straight ahead', 'turn left' and 'turn right'. But Nature doesn't work that way, and neither does the traditional person. Everything in Nature goes in curves and circles, and the same is true about our going about –Distant Eagle.

Native American culture has a very different concept of reality than dominant western culture as the Iroquois Elder explained in the above quote. Native Americans as a culture are comfortable with the idea that reality is inherently chaotic and believe that true health comes from “finding balance in chaos...truth is not a fixed point, but rather an ever-evolving point of balance, perpetually created and perpetually new.”

Thanks to these sources from which the above was taken.

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