

Traditional native government kept communities: balance and harmony

Prior to contact with Europeans, Native Government in Turtle Island worked for the people and the leaders in the communities assumed roles they were born to fulfil. It was a natural flow that kept the communities in balance and harmony.

While very young (sometimes from the moment of birth) leaders were recognized by members of the family or clan. Children, who were recognized for special talents or gifts or who appeared to have some strong positive trait, were often acknowledged by the community as a "future leader." Those children would be nurtured and taught in ways that would strengthen their leadership qualities. Teachings about the importance of Creator and the spiritual path were considered the most important instructions for all potential leaders.

Potential leaders could come from any part of the community, any family member or clan member, and usually the process took place naturally with no need for the community to decide who the next leader should be. In the instances when a leader needed to be chosen in the community, the responsibility fell on the women of the community. The grandmothers, the clan mothers, the Lifegivers - they did the choosing. At that time, our people knew that the women, by virtue of their special powers as the Lifegivers, knew and understood the community members and the needs of the community best. That is why they could be counted upon to make the decisions about leadership that would best

benefit the whole community.

At that time, before contact, we were taught the value of the spiritual life. Material and manmade things were of little value except in helping us in our day-to-day tasks. We were taught that Creator put us on this earthwalk for two reasons: to grow and develop from our experiences, and to be of service to others.

We were taught that all of life is a ceremony, a ceremony of thankfulness and thanksgiving for life - all life - and for the many gifts that Creator provides to us during our brief earthwalk. Under these kinds of spiritual laws, it was quite natural to nurture those who already demonstrated characteristics of leadership in their communities. Those who felt the call to lead in any particular area did so without question. They assumed the role for which they were needed in the community and when it was time for another to take their place or for them to move on to some other area, they did so with the knowledge they were fulfilling the purpose and responsibilities for their life that had been given through the original instructions of Creator.

There was no need to convince family members, clan members, or any community member that a particular person, whether they be female or male, should be leader. Leaders

had a path to follow, a vision, and a commitment to the people. They were quite willingly accountable to the community and to themselves. That accountability extended to even the Ancestors and the Seventh Generation yet unborn. Decisions had to take all these things into consideration. It was never about self-gratification or self-interest nor with the accumulation of material wealth. And there was no such thing as campaigning! The most important consideration for any leader was the community as a whole. What was good for the community as a whole?

We see so little of this today in our communities. No wonder our communities are experiencing so many problems. We have leaders "elected" through a corrupt system so far removed from those original

instructions given to us by Creator that they cannot be effective. There are few reminders of the true leaders in our communities. Those who emerge for a short time or for specific issues and offer strong accountable, traditional leadership, are soon consumed by their own people. Instead, people with the small, petty minds who rule with self-interest use the democratic election system - the Indian Act system. The driving force behind this system of selecting leaders is money, lies, corruption and power. The consideration is not what will benefit the community as a whole, but rather, what will benefit me and my supporters. It has no resemblance to the original instructions.

Leadership today is predominantly male. We forget the Lifegivers. There is no

acknowledgment of the teachings of the Ancestors. There is no thought about how decisions will affect the Seventh Generation. What is the legacy for our young people, our future leaders? There is a great price to pay for changing those original instructions that were given by Creator and by adopting a corrupt system that cares little about the people it is supposed to serve. That price is taking a toll on our communities.

If we are to survive as a people, if we want to be truly accountable to our children and the generations yet to come, we must return to the traditional teachings of our Ancestors. If we do not, we will continue to experience all the social, family, community and individual unrest, violence, disorder, and finally, extinction, that comes from this system our eurocanadian brothers brought and shared with our people.

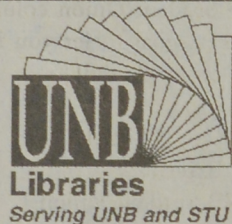
Our Earth Mother will never be able to heal until things change. Once we return to the traditional teachings and ways of doing things, once we allow those leaders who are called for the good of our communities to lead us, and once we return to those original instructions carried by our Ancestors for thousands of years, then things will change. We will find harmony and balance. We will find peace and unity. We will once again be that strong, spiritual, sovereign people who thrived for thousands of years prior to contact. Then we will be able to pass on those original instructions so our future generations will survive also.

These are the teachings we need to pass on to our future leaders.

• All My Relation,
Dan Ennis
February, 2001



Sharing our
Wabanaki
Perspective
By Dan Ennis



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Plagiarism: to be or not to be?

Dear Editor:

I am writing to you to raise a concern about a student showcase of graphic design currently on display in the Eaton Multi-media Center hallway. There is one piece of this design that is clearly not a student's original artwork.

The design in question contains a photograph from the inserts of the Dire Straits' *Brothers In Arms* (1985) C.D. You can see a similar image at <http://dacota.rriai.org.ru/MusicArchive/DireStraits/BrothersInArms/front.jpeg>.

Surely it is the professional responsibility of the Multi-media Professors to question the authenticity of students' submissions by requesting to see sketches - or in this case negatives - relating to the creation of any artworks by the students in that department. Plagiarism is a criminal act, it breaks the copyright laws enforced by the Canadian legal system.

Failure to comply to these outlines could have serious ramifications for the students when they leave university and enter the sphere of commercial work - not to mention the unfairness to students who take the time to create original artworks.

I would recommend that in future, plagiarism be rejected from student showings and exhibitions.

Yours sincerely,
Lawrence G. Mitten

Editor's note: Due to space restrictions some very good letters and the weekly Ivory Towers comic had to be left out this week.

However, next week the comic and the omitted letters to the editor will be included.

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