

Traditional Governance: A Case Study of the Osoyoos Indian Band and Application of Okanagan Leadership Principles

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Abstract

There are traditional Okanagan governance and leadership principles and guidelines that have been informed through language terms and traditional stories. These have been interpreted and taught to us by our elders of the Okanagan Nation. Five principles of traditional Okanagan leadership will be discussed; will of the people, leadership training, protection of the land, leading by example and continuously validated authority. These are the principles that will be applied to the leadership of today. The focus of such analysis will be on the application of these traditional principles to current governance systems, including accountability, transparency, consultation, communication and decision making. The Osoyoos Indian Band (OIB) will be the case study used to contextualize this analysis. There are several Western leadership principles that have been accepted and adopted by our leadership, at OIB and other bands and Nations. These are the Western principles that need to be Indigenized so they will benefit our communities. However, I will not stop there, as it is easy to criticize without proposing any real changes. So, following each criticism I will add my own propositions or beginning proposals to change that is needed to re-vitalize our systems of governance in order to rightly incorporate traditional values.



Introduction

It is very difficult to go into any in-depth analysis of traditional Okanagan leadership, given the sensitivity issues involved with traditional knowledge. I have been guided, from my elders, in order to be safe and not offend anyone; I should only share our knowledge that has already been published. I must also note that, the correct interpretations of such published information available on Okanagan history has been shared by my elders. This paper will begin by introducing a short survey of Okanagan leadership principles and standards and background will be provided on the Osoyoos Indian Band (OIB). This will be followed by discussions on five traditional Okanagan leadership principles; will of the people, leadership training, protection of the land, leading by example and continuously validated authority. These principles will be applied to OIB and their leadership and governance structures. It will be shown that the leadership today have strayed away from the traditional values and standards our societies upheld for a millennium. Furthermore, it is these traditional values and standards that our leadership need to move toward if they hope to truly benefit our people.

Traditional Okanagan Leadership

In terms of setting the framework for traditional Okanagan leadership the first place to start is the traditional *Four Foods Chief's* story. The Four Food Chief's, Bear, Bitterroot, King Salmon and Saskatoon Berry, met to decide what is to be done about the people coming. The other chiefs had asked Bear what he felt they should do, they had named him head chief because of his age and wisdom. All the chiefs had decided to give their bodies for the people. The story is about the "willingness of a chief to sacrifice for the survival of the people. Bear was willing to give up everything he had but all he had was his body, he was the first to sacrifice for the people" (Armstrong, 2006, January 24). The chiefs had put the people before themselves, and even their own lives.

There are several reoccurring themes which provide an excellent indication of the requirements of an Okanagan chief. The chief "represented the will of the people in carrying out the rights of being Syilx (Okanagan) and protected the land and the natural law. It was their responsibility to balance human needs with the natural laws ... the chief is the center of people's strength and was always in emotional, physical, spiritual and mental balance and most important of all, the chief was a good role model for the youth and all the people" (Armstrong, 1994, p. 9). Thomson (1986) outlines the training needed to become a chief as being, "the chief assumed leadership in mid-life when his managerial abilities and moral behaviour were well known to the group, and was the man who best expressed the value system of that group" (p. 68).

It is clear that the chief didn't think of himself above the people in any way, but someone who was the pinnacle of what a true Okanagan individual should be. "Leadership was chosen through spiritual testing and speaking clearly of our inherent right to the land, and to the people. Based on how you approach things, how we pray and how we keep peace, and not for ourselves or for glory, but for our entire people. In times of plenty, the chief is wealthy; in times of scarcity the chief was the poorest" (Gateway Project, 2007).

Thomson (1986) believed the chiefs had "no means of exerting their authority other than exhibiting a record of good management, morality, prudence, fairness and consistency in expressing the people's will ... the moral authority had to be continually validated. Chiefs maintained their prestige as long as they expressed the will of the people or were responsive to their needs" (p. 69).

The chief's authority was so effective that it baffled the cognition of any outsiders. Alexander Ross had commented that "the government or ruling power among the Oakenackens is simple yet effective, and is little more than an ideal system of control ... it is wonderful how well the government works for the general good, and without any coercive power to back the will of the



chief, he is seldom disobeyed; the people submit without a murmur" (As cited in Dolby, 1973, p. 138).

To summarize the traditional chief's office was one that required a different leadership style than that of today. Traditionally, the chief put the people before himself, represented their will, protected the land and natural law, was well trained, led by example and continuously validated their authority. These are traditional principles I will be holding today's leadership to.

Osoyoos Indian Band¹

OIB is seen by many as one of the most successful Indian bands in all of Canada. The Band is mostly known for its aggressive economic development strategies and as Chief Operating Officer Chris Scott says "we were prepared to act on business opportunities, to seek successful businesses that were strategic to the vision. We knew what we were looking for and when we saw it we were quick to act. We now have businesses with an annual budget exceeding \$10 million (McBride, 2001, p. 10).

Currently, the band is said to enjoy revenues of 13 million (Pulfer, 2007, February 26) Also, it is widely believed that the major key to the bands success has been their devotion to business principles and leadership style:

Effective leadership with strong vision and good knowledge of business has allowed the First Nation to form consensus around an objective of economic success. Another part of OIB's success is the rigorous application of business principles. We follow fundamental business practice – it's simple – revenues must exceed expenses. Succeeding means learning about business, and dedicating band time, money and energy to business development, in addition to the resources given to social programs and treaty rights. It means hiring managers on the basis of merit and training, and not being shy about bringing in expert help (Graham and Heather, 2007, p. 27).

OIB is seen as one of the most progressive bands in Canada. Also, it has been heralded as the model for all other bands as the correct way to run a band and correctly develop an economy.

To begin this discussion I will first need to frame my analysis. Consider the following account:

"I had gone to the United Nations (UN) in New York for meetings and after attending a presentation at the UN, I stood outside the UN and observed what was going on. I had seen all kinds of people with no food or homes. There were big buildings that were built to house cars, big buildings that were built to house visitors and even buildings that were built to house books and paper, so much paper and books. All these buildings and still there were people without homes, they don't look after their own people. What we see in a country is a direct relation to the wisdom that guides that country and is a direct indication of leadership. Their leaders are not groomed or taught well enough as Western education can not prepare leaders effectively" Comments from an Indigenous Chief from Africa after visiting the United Nations (The Leech and the Earthworm, 2003).

This is the lens through which we all need to start evaluating our communities, as the effectiveness of leadership is indicated by the well-being of the individual members of the community.

Will of the People

The *Will of the People* is a traditional leadership principle that instructs leadership, in a sense to follow and not lead, because the direction taken will be set by the People. In terms of OIB their philosophy has been expressed by Chief Clarence Louie, "trying to involve everyone on reserve in business decisions is a failure. I like the corporate motto of the Norway House Cree: 'If every objection must be overcome, nothing will ever be accomplished'. Leadership means developing a



critical mass of support, not total agreement" (McBride, 2001, p. 13). This philosophy is great, if the leadership is mainly concerned with time and efficiency, however, there is risk of alienating band members, if strictly followed. The critical mass needed could, in practice, mean only 26% of eligible voters.² The last OIB referendum, where the membership was asked to vote on a FotisBC power line, passed with only a 28% overall majority.³

To me that does not constitute a valid process. I know there is the argument that we can not allow apathy or a minority to continuously turn down referendums.⁴ However, this argument is based on the presumption that all membership essentially welcomes Capitalism and desires development. The assumption and decision has already been made that the development is what the people desire. Under this reasoning, it is up to leadership to focus on validating the referendum and proposal. It seems we have reversed who really guides the community direction as leadership establishes that direction, and sustains it with a small minority of supporters. It appears we have adopted a new *Will of the Leadership* principle.

I believe the greatest problem to implementing the *Will of the People* has been our leadership's inability to distinguish the true meaning of Indigenous consensus, and unknowingly replace this concept with a Western definition. Within the Western definition of consensus, consensus can only be realized if everyone votes 'yes'. Of course this is impossible and such a limitation is recognized by Indigenous elders. The main difference in Indigenous consensus is the requirement of an understanding of all community members on what direction needs to be taken. Armstrong (1999) explains it best in her description of the traditional Okanagan process of En'owkin:

Your responsibility is to see the views of others, their concerns and their reasons, which will help you to choose willingly and intelligently the steps that will create a solution — because it is in your own best interest that all needs are addressed in the community. While the process does not mean that everyone agrees—for that is never possible—it does result in everyone being fully informed and agreeing fully on what must take place and what each will concede or contribute (p. 6)

Adhering to the minimum requirement of the second referendum, effectively an attendance majority, should be avoided whenever possible. Although there is external validation, often it creates internal alienation and continued marginalization. We should not be so quick to only comply with the limitations set forth by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). As a People, there is nothing that limits us from setting the requirements beyond the low threshold imposed on us. We need to Indigenize our processes and re-define the regulations we are willing to accept. We can not leave these decisions up bureaucrats who do not, or care to, understand our way of life and worldview.

Finally, I would like to touch on members of our community that are often forgotten, the youth. Unfortunately, through democracy the youth are alienated first. Stelkia (2005) expressed concern that "it is my strong belief that the youth of the community should be allowed to vote in all referendums regarding the development of our economy. My reasoning is that we are the one's that will have to live with the foolish decisions of today (2005, April 20). This is understandable, because within Western, representative democracy there is often no motivation to seek out the opinion of those who can not cast a deciding vote. This is contrary to traditional Okanagan thought that actively engages youth in decision making because it is the youth who bring creative energy and innovation (Armstrong, 1999, p. 5). Indigenous decision making requires the participation of all members of the community, not just those who are of voting age. The simplest way to include youth is to lower the voting age, but that would be just re-defining an INAC regulation. I believe at the very least, we should be allowing our youth to present to the community their beliefs on issues. This can be done either through written interventions or community presentations; however, the youth feel comfortable. Ideally, the youth would be consulted at the earliest point possible for their input, so that they are not just reacting to band proposals but are helping shape them.⁵



Leadership Training

As Thompson (1986) outlined above, there was training of potential chiefs and that training needed to be concluded before any position was taken. Today, there are no training requirements, only age restrictions and criminal records check.⁶ I believe this is one of the greatest barriers to Indigenizing leadership. Currently, at OIB we do not have one elected representative that holds a university degree, although, I am sure this is not uncommon in other Bands. However, that is not the main problem, as a university degree comes with its own drawbacks. It forces Indigenous People to adopt foreign Eurocentric beliefs and thought, often with no incorporation of the Indigenous knowledge that is ultimately needed to benefit Indigenous communities.⁷

With no formal training in traditional leadership, business management or governance in general, leadership is forced to gain the bulk of their education through mentorship of non-native business experts or, simply, trial and error. This is fine, in the *real world*⁸, but can be detrimental to Aboriginal communities. First, the validation of such expert's knowledge is never questioned, a skill gained through formal education. Second, non-native experts are limited to only one Eurocentric mechanistic world view and theories, such as capitalism, individuality, and exponential growth. These have been instilled through a Western education system, which they themselves never question and often uphold and defend. Third, leaders begin to accept that Indigenous knowledge is backward and primitive and that progress can only be achieved through Western frameworks. Eventually, leadership becomes susceptible to any outside expert projecting such Eurocentric ideals or equally complex analysis. Especially, if that analysis is coupled with complicated graphs, projections, statistics and equally frightening dialogue. All present to instill apprehension in leadership to not want to appear backward or primitive.

Regrettably, the right answer will never be found in the analysis of non-native lawyers and consultants. Simply because they do not possess the appropriate knowledge or tools needed for the job. For example, when you ask a lawyer or consultant who owns communal lands, they simply point to the band council because, to them, the leadership has been elected and therefore can only decide on property the band owns. However, to Indigenous People communal lands are held by everyone in the community, from elders to children. This is a concept that many lawyers and consultants can not grasp. Although the real problem begins when Indigenous leaders adopt that same lawyer and consultant analysis and begin welcoming outside opinions as validation to their position and authority.

Smith (1999) comments on writing, that "it can be dangerous because, by building on previous texts written about Indigenous Peoples, we continue to legitimate views about ourselves which are hostile to us" (p. 36). This can be applied to not only writing but to governance as a whole and the hostile views that we continually adopt. It must be remembered that there is nothing new or innovative in a lawyer or consultants comprehensions or viewpoints, as they are only interpreting in a way that thousands of other similarly trained experts would. I must pause and admit that there are some non-native lawyers and consultants that are doing good work within our communities, a rare occurrence, but present nevertheless. However, this only occurs if the non-native lawyer or consultant is willing to learn from Indigenous People and accept and adapt to the Indigenous principle of humility. This allows the Indigenous People and experts to grow together. This process is seen in traditional story telling. As my elders have informed me, during a traditional story telling both the story teller and listener are engaged in a reciprocal teaching and learning experience. Both become the teacher and learner. I will leave it up to you to determine who the story teller is and who the listener is. From my own observations, humility is rarely found in experts and is the main reason this Indigenous learning process is seldom experienced. Too often, humility is either abandoned or unlearned during an undergraduate degree.

This kind of leadership is fine for the *real world* but Indigenous communities require Indigenous leadership with Indigenous values. Therefore, if there is no formal university training available to leadership they should at least seek out knowledgeable elders. These elders can train them on their own People's traditional values and beliefs. Furthermore, leadership should make it a priority to attend cultural events, ceremonies, practice traditional activities on the land and hold regular council with elders. At least then, it will allow them to incorporate and scrutinize outside advice



through a traditional mindset. Thus, ensuring that at the very least, our core values will continue and we will not forget who we are. Lawyers and consultant analysis is needed, but it is not the correct answer, if left unquestioned and unaltered. Leadership needs to adapt expert analysis through traditional knowledge filters, to Indigenize it and make it truly appropriate. This is the type of analysis that will benefit our People.

Protection of the Land

Indigenous People have a strong, well known connection to the land, which must be maintained. Our elders have always taught us that if we lose our land we will lose our language, culture and knowledge, which is tied to our land and then cease to be Okanagan. However, OIB is beginning to adopt Eurocentric beliefs that the land is dead and inert, malleable from the outside and exploitable for profits. As OIB's website proclaims "some of the most desirable industrial commercial land in the South Okanagan is conveniently located just off of highway 97 on the edge of the reserve. We have a vision of this area becoming an attractive well planned industrial park. This beautiful scenery will enhance the appearance of any well designed commercial development" (OIB Holdings, June, 2005). As for myself, and I'm sure many other Indigenous People would agree, it is hard to see how an industrial park could be attractive scenery.

I understand the argument that we need to have an economic base that is independent of any Federal money. However, that does not mean we should tear up any and all land in our haste to become independent. If we are going to abuse our beloved land, development needs to entail long-term benefit to the community and people. The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development defined two strategies: the *jobs and income* and the *nation-building* approaches. The jobs and income approach is short-sighted where Indigenous leadership simply try to invent a business with the goal of creating more jobs and income. Conversely, the nation-building approach is more proactive in nature and the solution is to build a nation in which both business and human beings flourish, one which raises the quality of life in the community (As cited in Helin, 2006, p. 199)⁹.

Unfortunately, I believe OIB has been following a jobs and income approach. This can be seen in the recent FortisBC power line deal. The FortisBC deal only created twelve short term jobs. These jobs were centered on the ground preparations needed to construct the power lines and lasted around two months. Furthermore, in the last five economic development initiatives only 12% of the jobs created were filled by OIB members ('Number of People Working', November 2005).¹⁰ There is danger in entering developments that are mainly focused on initial employment. By that, I mean developments where the bulk of the workforce is needed in the initial construction. This would create a continuous cycle in which land turnover is high. More land is needed to create short term jobs and when those are done; more is torn up and developed to fill that void.

At the core of the issue is our cultural integrity that must be maintained. We need an economic base, however, as Alfred (2005) comments, "economic power is the foundation of independence. But I (am) more keenly aware that maintaining our connection to our cultural roots is the only thing that ensures we remain Onkwehonwe (original people); we need to possess both economic power and cultural authenticity" (p. 222). If the end result is self-sufficiency, self-determination or, simply, independence, Indigenous People need to be conscious of the process taken. However, outside experts are not trained to view the whole situation; this situation has been discussed above, but I will reiterate a few points for further clarity. The analysis of how Indigenous People, or their communities, are transformed through our revitalization strategies is not even considered. However, even if they were aware of the importance, they are, again, not equipped to develop that analysis. Experts do not even know or understand what Indigenous principles and beliefs make up the root of our existence, and what needs to be conserved. So, out of fears of appearing to *not know everything*, experts will stick to what they know, finance or western definitions of transformations. So, if a Band's revenues are rising, then their lives must be improving.

Indigenous People need to develop a holistic understanding of the path they are on. To me, if we do achieve full independence in the end, it is worthless if we lose who we are. That is, if our governments become mere shells of our former existence, reducing them to brown skinned



extensions of the Canadian economy and, worse, our lands to municipal plots within Provincial government boundaries. To start, we need to relearn what our traditional societies used to be. This understanding will ground our future analysis. As my elders have taught me, by understanding who we were, only then can we see where we are going. Furthermore, we need our own definitions of well-being so we can fully determine what it means to improve life as an Indigenous person. I'm sure money and jobs will be a factor. However, I know there will be other indicators, such as language loss, drug and alcohol levels, feelings of safety, access to traditional foods, etc. They will be different for all communities but need to be defined, so that we can appropriately assess the paths we follow will improve what we have defined needs improving.

Led by Example

As Armstrong expressed above, the chief was a good role model for the youth and the people. Chief Clarence Louie is famous for his belief that "if your life sucks, it is because you suck" (Findlay, 2006). This is easy to proclaim but it must be understood that we can not explain individual problems through such a simple, limited and restricted analysis. As Chrisjohn states:

it is a form of reductionism, one which says that complex, orderly phenomena (like economies, institutions, wars, etc), are built up from orderly phenomena that involves individuals, and what individuals are capable of doing. Thus, there is an implicated causal order, in that the variability of the more complex phenomena (wars; depression) are ultimately the result of what individual people think and do (2006, p. 108)¹¹.

This oversimplification can not take into account the broader social, political, economic and cultural factors and, really, anything outside the individual. For example, stripping Indigenous People of their sovereignty and cultural ties to the land would not factor into the analysis because these features can not be found within individuals nor can they be statistically analyzed or graphed.

So, if we can not easily determine what makes people *suck*, that it is not simply a need of work ethic that will solve the Band's problems, we need to re-evaluate our approach. We should not simply feed into racial stereotypes, however safe those positions appear. Of course, there are some people who would enjoy hearing such statements, mainly because it feeds and reinforces their own racist beliefs and shifts or masks their own responsibility. For one, I know the Canadian government welcomes such proclamations. As Alfred (2005) asserts, "self-government and economic development are being offered precisely *because* they are useless to us in the struggle to survive as peoples and so are no threat to the Settlers and, specifically, the interests of the people who control the Settler state" (p.37). Cornell adds "central governments (Canada) have been reluctant to engage with the issues that form the core of Indigenous concerns. They have preferred to focus on the socio-economics of integration and typically have interpreted self-government as an administrative project in which Indigenous populations are allowed to manage programs designed—usually by central governments—to address social problems and economic marginality" (2006, p. 15).

In terms of our communities, it is sending our youth the wrong message. It is teaching them to think individually and not as a community. The phrase *you suck* sounds a lot like the capitalist principle of *only the strong survive*. It creates an individualist mentality where people loose sight of a community. Thus, the Indigenous principle of looking after everyone within your community is replaced by the belief that some people are just meant to be poor or, at the extreme, *end poverty by killing the poor*. Eventually, if we are not careful, instead of helping those in need we would walk over them, even with feelings of resentment. Not realizing that within development, as an institution, wealth was never meant to trickle down to the poor. Aghion and Bolton (1997) argue that wealth can trickle down to the poor through borrowing and lending, as more funds will become available to the poor for their own investment (p. 151). However, in Mexico, which has an economy rated fifteenth in the world and the highest income per capita in all of Latin America¹², the Indigenous People still suffer from high rates of poverty (World Bank, 2005).



Therefore, in terms of our Bands, I believe some of our People will still continue to suffer regardless of the amount of revenue the Band brings in. However, that statement must be qualified to include individuals that can not adapt to Western ideals of capitalism. As a community we need to establish a plan to include those Indigenous People who just can't seem to adapt, or should we say assimilate. We still need to make room for those who want to remain Indigenous, as there will always be people that believe our lands are held communally, who do not want to simply borrow money for commercial enterprise, who believe the land is alive and worth saving, etc. We can not continue forward with the objective of *get the money, and then solve the problem*, as capitalism is not meant to end because it is based on infinite growth and resources. Also, there can be no real indication of how much money we really need in order to solve all of our social, political, cultural and economic problems.

To begin, we need to move away from treating an Indian Band like a business. I agree with Lyons (2005) that "you can't run a Nation like a corporation; a Nation is not a corporation. We never lost sight of what it was all about in terms of protecting the nation, the land, and so forth. Those other people, they got sidetracked. They wanted to become very wealthy, they did it for money, and that's the whole deal. The idea of casinos is, for our nations, probably the most problematic thing right now" (As cited in Alfred, p. 242). Lyons is referring to casinos, but to me, casinos are just an accelerated form of economic development that still need to adhere to the principles of traditional leadership. There is still the underlying motivation of money. Also, communities need to think more in terms of the collective, or long-term. Money now would be beneficial this month, but how about long-term benefits such as a youth center or elders residence. For OIB members, and I'm sure this has been the case on many other reserves, a youth center has been promised in the last four referendums, and we have yet to see one. There needs to be an evolution in our thinking as leadership. Internally racist positions should be abandoned and replaced with a determination to see our sovereignty realized or at the very least, fight any non-recognition or elimination policies and expose them for what they are.

Continuously Validated Authority

Traditional leadership required authority to be continuously validated every year. In addition, the chiefs exhibited a moral authority and that authority was unquestioned and didn't require any coercive measures. This is contrary to the leadership of today, as many have completely embraced the imposition of a set term of office and the security it brings and are, arguably, no longer mindful of their actions. From my own observations, the chiefs aren't mindful and some seem to do as they please, even though I believe the youth are still very attentive. It seems that the only time the chiefs are careful is two months before elections. There is an open joke in our communities that everyone gets jobs around election time. It seems there is privilege in only having to validate your authority every two or three years, but that is the nature of democracy.

We need to evolve our government structures to allow for direct democracy¹³, and not the typical Western representative democracy. This would mean consultation, transparency and accountability. Chief Clarence Louie exclaims:

you have to pay attention to the support you need to continue your work. The best way to do that is to be a good communicator: to let your members know what you are doing and why you are doing it. We talk about partnerships with outsiders, but we need to form a partnership with our members to go forward together and make economic development a success (McBride, 2001, p. 18).

Regrettably, this is not the case. Chris Scott recently commented on a proposed developments on the North end of the OIB reserve "while information is still being assembled, Scott has high hopes of taking a full and detailed proposal to the Reservation community, in about six months" (Knelson, 2007, May 2). I believe there is no reason why OIB, or any Band, should wait six months until they share their plans with the membership. This is a basic consultation principle, where individuals and



People affected should be informed at the earliest possible stage. If government or industry implemented this level of consultation to the Band or Okanagan Nation, where the terms of reference, document drafting and framework had already been set, there would be enormous backlash. So why do we object, that many of the consultation policies of governments are inadequate, but then turn around, and subject our People to those same inadequate policies? Not even government guidelines advise to wait till the documents are drafted and then approach the People.¹⁴ Many view these guidelines as the minimum requirement, but still bands choose to not even adhere to that low threshold. Band membership needs to participate at the outset, in the initial discussions of the proposal. If not, we will continue the jobs-and-income cycle discussed above and, more importantly be maintaining a top-down development process. Having the membership vote at the end of a development proposal is inadequate, the document has already been drafted, the level of affects already determined and, at this point, all input is futile. Direct democracy seeks input of all the individuals represented and traditional leadership requires direction to come from the people. That does not mean a 'yes' or 'no' vote at the end of the process; it means real and adequate participation from the outset. It does not appear that OIB is willing to fix this problem anytime soon. I recently learned that the Band, based on a proposed land code, is developing an Official Community Plan that will determine the appropriate level of consultation membership will receive within land code discussions. However, that Plan is being worked on by an outside engineering firm (C. Scott, personal communication, May 24, 2007). Ironically, the study on the level of consultation deemed appropriate to membership has been contracted to outside consultants, with no input from the community members. It appears, the membership is unable to determine that level for themselves.

There are also communication matters. The usual Band referendum process involves a distribution of the proposal package, a few information meetings and the referendum vote. The problems begin with the information packages. The documents are written in technical language. Although they are based on the actual lease agreement, which requires legal terminology, it doesn't mean leadership needs to burden membership with the tedious task of sifting through and interpreting such jargon. Although, the Band is more than willing to interpret these documents for membership, their analysis is usually during information meetings and are one-sided and focused on jobs and income sections. This is the main problem to the process, a biased interpretation which often turns meetings into a sales pitch and not a forum for dialogue. To add to the problem, the band meetings are usually run by administration staff or lawyers. Administration staff and lawyers should not be presenting referendum proposals. It is not their position as it is the responsibility of leadership to be informed and speak to the issues involving the community. Additionally, when leadership delegates that responsibility to others it erases any accountability. Without taking a position publicly, there is no way for membership to gauge who is listening to the concerns of the community or how well their leadership is representing them. When voting day rolls around, there is confusion because leadership can not be traced back to a definite position.

However, it must be understood that I am not advocating for an all out public debate of chief and council on issues. There is a line between public bickering and constructive dialogue. Membership needs to know that their concerns have been addressed and these can be revealed, constructively, though the En'owkin process. To reiterate, the En'owkin process is one based on Indigenous consensus, where everyone comes to an agreement on what direction is needed. This can be the boundaries that direct the dialogue. Publicly, council can discuss their position on the issues and focus on the positives and negatives. The negatives are critical because they inform membership of the previous discussions that took place, and the concerns that were raised. Most importantly, membership will be able to directly relate to the negatives council members discuss and this will form their opinion on the leadership qualities individual council members possess. The level of dialogue and number and type of negatives raised will inform membership how diligently and effectively council represents their people. More will be known about how council came to an understanding, if decisions were made narrowly based on jobs and income or if a wide range of concerns were factored in. This could be introduced in the following way: "I didn't agree with this for the following reasons ... but, will accept that this is the direction we need to take, because"



Additionally, there are accountability issues related to financial accounting. By this, I do not mean the potential for *creative* accounting, which will always be present, but the problems in the actual financial accounting process. Titus (2007) observes that, what Osoyoos does to be accountable is; first, demonstrate transparency through showing financial statements, showing results (non financial), be visual and show future plans; and second, communicate, through annual reports, newsletters and community meetings (slide 12). OIB community meetings have been addressed above, but I will comment on the Band newsletters. The newsletters, even more than the community meetings, are very one-sided. I believe the newsletters are worse than the community meetings because of the censorship process involved in creating the newsletters. This media censorship has been directly learned from non-native government and business, and overall, is not new to Indigenous People. We see it everyday in the portrayal of our People and the images presented in mainstream media. The Band ensures that the *right* message is sent out every month and diligently screens the material that is, and isn't, allowed to be published. Personally, I have had some of my own material denied publication, and within OIB there are several other stories like mine. Obviously, media control is not good governance and should be avoided, but, as with the consultation issue above, we have discovered and learned ways to control our own People, which now include the management of information.

The other issues involved in Titus's description of finances are related. Financial statements, showing results, future plans and annual reports are great but that should not end the accountability process, because at this point, real accountability has not been achieved at OIB. First, we are again burdening the people with more technical documents, except this time we have replaced legal terminology with financial figures. It is good that some are simplified and graphed, but that can be dangerous as well. As the more simplified the reporting becomes the more general and vague the information needs to be. For example, within the *Band Revenue and Taxation Expenditures* section, there are several questions including; were the *professional fees* the fees paid to the lawyers who came to our meetings to tell us how to think, what is *miscellaneous*, where did *council travel* and why, etc (Titus, 2007, slide 18). I can continue on to the other slides but, by now I believe the point has been made. Also, it is nice that the Band is publishing their year end reports, but this is not real engagement with the community, other than a response of *well, that's nice*. By that, I mean there is no feedback mechanism or allowance for input to next year's expenditures. Therefore, I see it as courtesy and not accountability because it is simply reporting end results, and that's it. For example, after reading this presentation I had a question regarding post secondary education. If in the last 2005/2006 OIB fiscal year our "Sources of Revenue equaled 24.5 million" (Titus, 2007, slide 16) and our total "Band Revenue and Taxation Expenditures totaled 1.177 million", why are we spending only \$3,851 last year on post secondary education (Titus, 2007, slide 18). While we are in a finance mode, the total amount spent on education works out to 0.015% of Revenue and 0.32% of total Expenditures. Either way we look at it, there is very little money spent on post secondary education. Real accountability begins with real input. To use the definition Titus (2007) has given us:

Accountability is a concept in ethics with several meanings. It is often used synonymously with such concepts as answerability, responsibility, blameworthiness, liability, and other terms associated with expectations of account-giving. As an aspect of governance, it has been central to discussions related to problems in both the public and private (Corporate) worlds. (slide 9)

Which rounds out our discussion on accountability, as broad based and vague statements about what accountability is, mean nothing to the average band member. This term needs to be defined to have any purpose and teeth. Accountability not only needs to involve feedback and input but has to be defined by all the People affected, or the ones who are supposed to benefit from the principle.

In terms of transparency there are still problems within OIB. Just as the community hasn't been approached with the North end development proposal, as discussed above, this seems to be the norm with communications. The first time the membership heard of the OIB's Forest and Range



Agreement was from the Ministry of Forests website and membership first learned of the Bands agreement with Mt. Baldy when it was announced to Premier Campbell. Also, the CEO of FortisBC was appointed to co-chair the Nk'Mip Desert Endowment fund advisory committee, effectively giving an outside corporate entity a huge influence into our environmental protection, cultural education and environmental stewardship programs. This was learned through a FortisBC press release and the implications of such an appointment are still not known.

More transparency is required within the Band and Band operations. As an OIB youth indicated "What IS needed is one story that everyone hears and that is in the public records where anyone can access it if need arises. OIB may attract national attention but the things said to the entire country are more often than not things to distract from the political discontent and lack of democracy" (Stelkia, 2007, May 14). She also called for public records, something I would have to whole heartedly agree with.

Community members are entitled to know what decisions are being made on their behalf, ideally before hand so that they could provide input. If we are going to resolve these 100 year old disputes through economic arrangements, it only makes sense that everyone should have input. In keeping with Western governance, only a few made the decision to hand over traditional territory needed for a ski resort and our aboriginal rights to harvest trees. The biggest problem I see is the legitimacy of the assumed authority that these treaty-like agreements were signed. Economic Development Bards do not have the mandate to negotiate agreements on traditional territory that is held by the Okanagan Nation. Additionally, they do not have the authority to speak for the people and cede title of land or sell aboriginal rights to the government. I know there will always be the argument that; if we do nothing, then we will get no money from it. This is a defeatist attitude, one where they have come to believe that: All is lost and no solution will ever be found in the future. To this, I believe it should be required that these people resign from office. If they are unable to continue the struggle for our Title and Rights, than it is time to step aside before more of our children's inherent rights are signed away. At the very least, it is time to go back to their traditions and ceremonies and find strength to continue fighting, and remember what they were fighting for. As an Okanagan elder, Joey Pierre, once proclaimed at a gathering "This is our land, I believe that, and feel the need to say it now, because no one says if anymore." Not only do we require Indigenous values in our communities but we need authentic Indigenous leaders to make those values become a reality.

Conclusion

In recognizing that intellectuals were trained and acculturated in the West, Fanon identifies three levels through which 'native' intellectuals can progress in their journey 'back over the line'. First there is a phase of proving that intellectuals have been assimilated into the culture of the occupying power. Second comes a period of disturbance and the need for the intellectuals to remember who they actually are, a time for remembering the past. In the third phase the intellectuals seek to awaken the people, to realign themselves with the people and to produce a revolutionary and national literature" (As cited in Smith, 1999, p. 70)

This can be applied to governance as well. Unfortunately, at OIB, we are still struggling to realize the second phase. We are still coming to the realization that *maybe* non-natives do not hold all the answers in terms of what is best for us, as a People. This is the greatest hindrance to solving our problems. Because within OIB, as with all Indigenous communities, we still have drug and alcohol abuse, diabetes, youth deaths, violence against women, unemployment, etc. These problems will not be fixed by making more money or development alone. Poverty is one of many, many factors that reproduce the conditions we find our lives in. We need to turn back to our traditional knowledge for the answers to our problems. Only Indigenous solutions can help Indigenous communities. But this revitalization will not begin until we realize and respect the importance and power within our own knowledge. This must be realized before we loose who we are, as only Okanagans can cease to be Okanagans.



Notes

¹ I apologize for the excessive citations and referencing of sources in this section, but I felt it was the best way to effectively represent the situation of OIB, by illustrating what the current research has produced.

² Section 39 of the Indian Act outlines the requirements for a Second Referendum. Section 39 (2) allows for a Second Referendum to be called if the overall number of voters in the First Referendum did not exceed 50+1 percent of the overall eligible voters, but there was a majority in favor of the Referendum. Section 39 (3) requires a majority of eligible voters to cast a ballot (50+1), and of that voter turnout, requires a majority to pass the Referendum. In terms of numbers, if there are 100 eligible voters, and 51 participate in the second referendum, than it could pass with 26 voting in favor, allowing the referendum to pass with an overall majority of 26%.

³ These FotisBC Referendum results were provided by the Osoyoos Indian Band; 264 eligible voters, 137 voter turnout in Second Referendum, 75 For, 62 Against, 2 Spoiled. Overall eligible voters For: 28.4%.

⁴ This argument stems from the 1st Referendum process and overall voters needed (see Note 2). Membership could simply not show up to vote to halt the process and development proposal. Therefore, we need the 2nd Referendum if we want anything to pass.

⁵ I address the broader issue of consultation within the “Continuously Validated Authority” section.

⁶ For eligibility requirements see the Indian Act. (R.S., 1985, c. I-5)

⁷ See Smith, L T., *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (New York, NY: Zed Books Ltd, 1999); and Battiste, M., & Youngblood Henderson, J., *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage: A Global Challenge* (Saskatoon, SK: Purich Press, 2000).

⁸ The *real world* is a concept often referred to by Clarence Louie, (MacGregor, 2006, September 21) and has been adopted by others, such as Calvin Helin (2006). It implies that life on and Indian reservation isn't real and somehow not as tough as life off the reserve. This assumption is mainly focused on earning a living; where it is believed many Indigenous People wouldn't be able to handle life off the reserve where there is no job that allows *Indian Time* or readily available welfare. This theory is simply buying into racial stereotypes of the *lazy Indian* and is a gross oversimplification of the real problem. For a criticism of such a narrow analysis review the work done on Misrepresentation Theory, see Chrisjohn, et al., (Penticton, BC: Theytus Books, 2006) (pp. 262-315).

⁹ I will be using some work from Helin, although I do not agree with his conclusions or the arguments he has drawn and developed, I do believe he has done some excellent initial analysis that can be built on. This was discussed in a book review, on *Dances with Dependency*, I recently finished, it is not published but will share it with those interested.

¹⁰ The following calculations were drawn directly from an Osoyoos Indian Band Development Corporation PowerPoint slide titled “Number of People Working on Reserve” and were last updated November 2005. They included Sonora Dunes Golf Course 2/12 (band members employed/total jobs); Spirit Ridge Resort and Spa 3/12; Mission Hills Vineyard 4/34; Greyback Construction 6/88; and Nk'mip Desert and Heritage Center 4/6. I did not include the FotisBC numbers because the positions were only temporary, but were 12/12.

¹¹ For a broader analysis of Methodological Individualism and its application to problems and limitations, statistical issues, examples of and ideological foundations see, Chrisjohn, R. et al., (2006, pp. 106-24)

¹² For additional figures see “Economy of Mexico” *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy_of_Mexico>

¹³ For a further discussion on the history of democracy and the meaning of direct or pure democracy see Lowes, D. E., *The Anti-Capitalist Dictionary: Movements, Histories, and Motivations* (New York, NY: Zed Books, 2006).

¹⁴ It is unfortunate that many government and industry guidelines base consultation on ‘strength of claim’, as Chief Stewart Phillip pointed out it is a racist requirement because if they applied that same reasoning, it would invalidate their claims to most of the Arctic, where only Indigenous People live. However, this is not a factor in terms of the discussion here, as all Osoyoos Indian Band members communally own the land. For more guidelines see Ministry of Environment: Draft Guidelines for First Nations

<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/epd/epdpa/ipmp/first_nations_cons_guide/index_pg2.html>; or, Ministry of Forests: Consultation Guidelines

<http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/haa/Docs/MOF_Consultation_guidelines_final.pdf>;