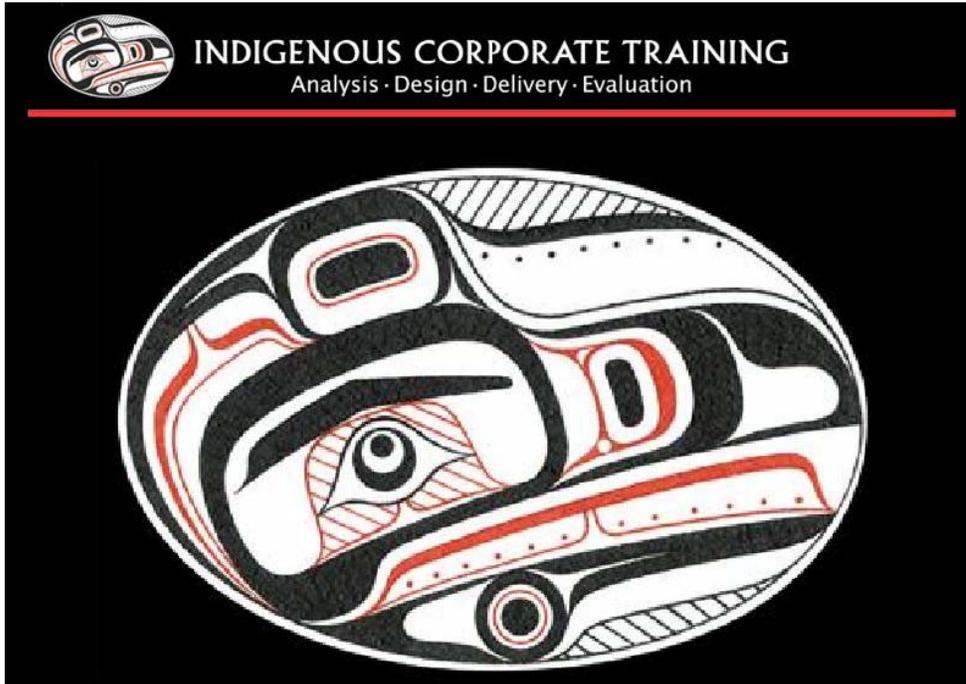


Working Effectively With Aboriginal People



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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This condensed guide has been adapted from our workbook and training course called “Working Effectively With Aboriginal People.” It is intended to provide readers with some hints, tips and suggestions that they may find helpful when working with Aboriginal People. For a fuller understanding of the material provided additional reading, training and personal exploration will be required. The experiences have been shared with audiences from a wide variety of individuals and organizations who are working with Aboriginal People and organizations today. We do not speak for Aboriginal People, although many voices are heard throughout the presentation.

This guide has been designed to provide background information and is best used in combination with Indigenous Corporate Training courses. This area of discussion is subject to continued growth and change in legal and political arenas. With these challenges in mind, every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, currency and reliability of the content but Indigenous Corporate Training cannot guarantee its continued accuracy.

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About Indigenous Corporate Training

Mission

To be a provider of performance improvement consulting and training services that enables individuals, organizations, and Indigenous or Aboriginal People to work more effectively within an organization or between respective organizations.

What we do

Indigenous Corporate Training (ICT) is a global consulting and training services company committed to working collaboratively with regional, national and international clients to provide a broad range of performance improvement consulting services; including, training to individuals and organizations interested in working more effectively within an organization or between respective organizations.

ICT recognizes that organizations and their stakeholders are interested in demonstrated results of how performance improvement consulting expenditures contribute to the effectiveness of an organization. We go to great lengths to ensure there is a demonstrated link between performance improvement consulting measures and increased organizational effectiveness. ICT knows that funds spent on performance improvement consulting and training are at the expense of other initiatives and we understand that the performance improvement consultant must be a business partner in the organization to be effective.

Performance Improvement Consulting Services

ICT is a full service collaborative performance improvement consulting organization. We have the credentials, ability and experience to engage clients, identify needs, determine causes, implement solutions and measure results.

Performance Improvement Consulting services include:

- Needs analysis

We work with clients to design a needs analysis system; including questionnaires and surveys, to begin the process of analyzing performance and determining causes.

- Instructional Design

We utilize a tried, proven and easy to understand design cycle that includes a project planning phase, allowing you maximum input into the design process to create materials that meet participant and organizational needs.

- **Delivery**

ICT trainers have the credentials and experience to deliver programs that are designed in the business context and are delivered in a professional and non-confrontational manner. Participants can expect delivery that appeals to a variety of learning styles and includes time for participants to ask questions, complete individual and group exercises, and practice what they have learned.

- **Evaluation**

Decision makers want to know if performance improvement enhancements are working. ICT provides services to measure current or future program impact at the participant and organizational level.

- **Facilitation**

ICT can help your organization by providing facilitation services that can help keep the lines of communication flowing. We use an approach designed to identify the issues, understand the causes, and generate solutions that everyone can readily accept.

“Ready To Go” Training

ICT has courses that are “Ready To Go” at a client’s request. These courses can also be tailored, following a formal needs analysis process, to meet specific organizational needs. This provides clients with a quick and economical way to implement initiatives thereby achieving economies of scale and lower costs.

Working Effectively with Aboriginal People

This classic cross cultural training program is available in full or half day formats. It is designed to help individuals and organizations to work more effectively with Aboriginal People.

Working Effectively with Aboriginal People: Community Immersion

This workshop is designed to help individuals and organizations to work even more effectively with Aboriginal People by combining the lessons of the workshop with community site tours and community speakers. It includes a cultural sharing event (singing and dancing in a traditional venue) that has been seen by few non-aboriginal people.

Working Effectively with Aboriginal People: During Consultation

This workshop has been designed to help beginners, novices and experts to consult more effectively with Aboriginal People about their constitutionally protected rights.

Leadership Development

Learn leadership development with ICT in an adventure training format. Facilitated by ICT and based on the book by Anne Bruce and the American Society for Training and Development, this course will help develop leaders for the future.

Aboriginal People Today

Linguistic Diversity

At the time of contact BC was inhabited by a very diverse group of Aboriginal People or as many now refer to themselves as, First Nations. Geography plays an important role in the development of the diversity of Aboriginal British Columbia. Clearly defined geographic boundaries and the abundance of natural resources like fish would allow for the different cultures to become unique and distinct. Each First Nation had its own language, culture, social structure, legal system, political system, educational system and lands and resources.

An example of the differences between each First Nation can be seen in the number of Aboriginal language families throughout the country. Linguists today talk about language families that are broad categories or languages of common origin. Canada is home to eleven Aboriginal language families. British Columbia today is home to seven of Canada's eleven distinctive First Nations language families. Sixty four percent of the country's unique Aboriginal languages exist only in British Columbia making British Columbia the most diverse Aboriginal population in Canada!

Each of the language families is completely different from one another. If someone from the Athapascan tried to speak to someone from the Wakashan there would be little ability to understand each other. In fact, it would be similar to speaking English to someone who speaks Russian. It is important to recognize that there is no such thing as a single "Aboriginal" group in the province. BC First Nation communities are made up of people from many different cultures.

A look at BC in the map below of First Nations Linguistic Groups shows that in BC there are seven major language families broken up into over 30 different dialects. Each dialect within a language family shares a main structure but varies in some parts of its grammar and vocabulary. In addition to these language families there was also a language that existed on the Northwest Coast called Chinook trade jargon. Chinook trade jargon allowed for communication to occur among a diverse group of Indigenous Nations for the purpose of trade and travel.

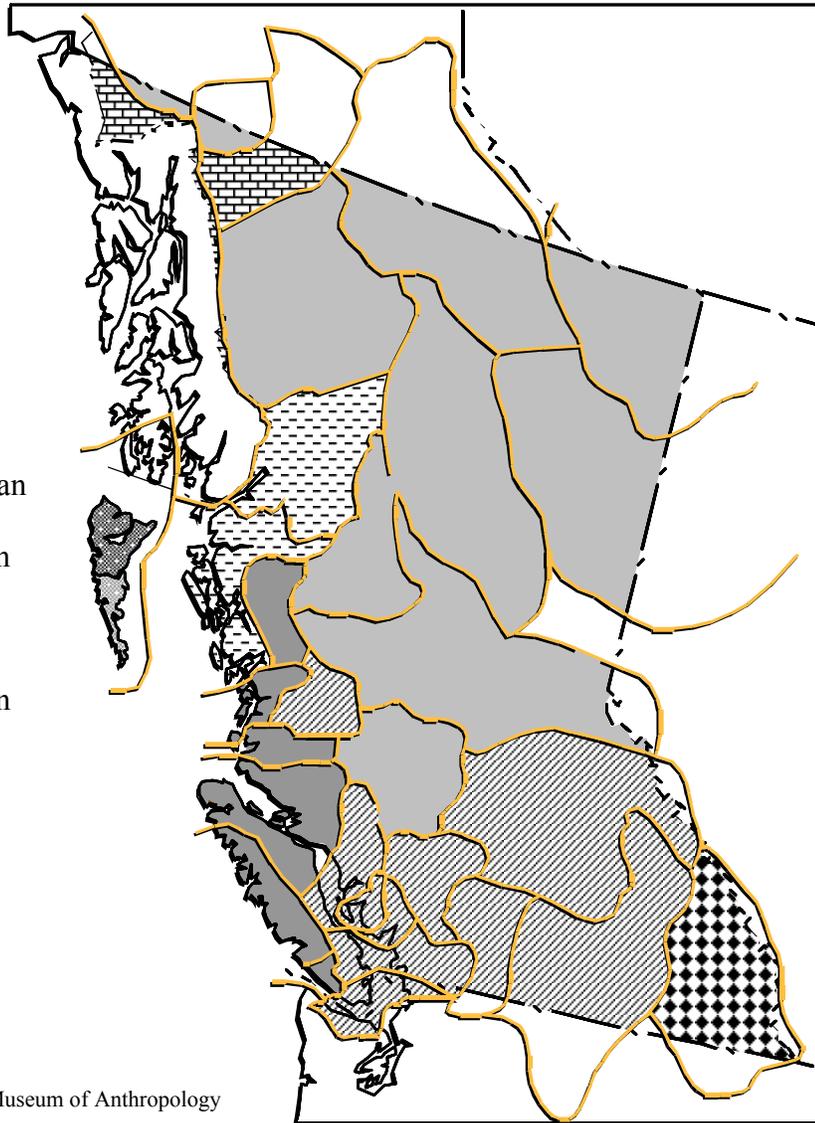
Is there such thing as one homogenous group of people called Indians or more correctly Aboriginal People?

As the language map illustrates there is no such thing as a single homogenous group of Aboriginal People. Similarly it would be like referring to all people from Europe as Europeans. When I ask you "Where did your ancestors come from?" and you reply, "Scotland", I say, "Oh, you're European". This statement may offend the one who replied Scotland. This is no different in Aboriginal communities. For example, if I reply that "I am Haida" and you respond, "Oh, you are an Indian."

First Nations Languages of British Columbia

Language Family:

	Athapascan
	Wakashan
	Salishan
	Tsimshian
	Haida
	Ktunaxa
	Tlingit



Reproduced courtesy of UBC Museum of Anthropology

Hereditary Chiefs & Governing Structures

There were many different governing institutions in pre-contact British Columbia. Scholars describe matrilineal, patrilineal, and band equalitarian governments. In matrilineal communities women hold the balance of power and in patrilineal communities men hold the balance of power. It is important to understand that pre-contact structures often included hereditary chiefs. A hereditary chief has power passed down from one generation to the next along blood lines or other cultural protocols. The hereditary chief system can be similar to royalty in European societies.

While some First Nations have formal clan structures, others organize around elaborate "house" structures. Still others have completely different forms of social organization.

What do they want?

People often ask the question, “What is it that Aboriginal People want?” The answer will be as varied as the language families themselves. It is important to know when working with Aboriginal People that they will not all want the same things. Therefore, your approach will need to be varied even in places that seem close together like Port Alberni and the Cowichan Valley. What is important to one community may not be important to the next.

Working Effectively Tip:

It can be very hard to achieve blanket solutions or approaches, so try not to expect them to work and consider diversifying your approach in different places.

Statistics

Please be advised that there are always issues when working with Statistics. Bring up the subject of statistics and two main issues quickly emerge. The first is how statistics are and can be interpreted. The second issue revolves around the accuracy of the numbers. This can be very true when trying to work effectively with Aboriginal People.

Working Effectively Tip

Be prepared to hear and address issues about the use of statistics should you require the use of statistics for your work.

Working Effectively With Aboriginal People

DEFINITIONS

Aboriginal People includes Status Indians, Non Status Indians, Métis and Inuit people.

Band means a body of Indians

- (a) for whose use and benefit in common, lands, the legal title to which is vested in Her Majesty, have been set apart before, on or after September 4, 1951,
- (b) for whose use and benefit in common, moneys are held by Her Majesty, or
- (c) declared by the Governor in Council to be a band for the purposes of this Act (meaning the *Indian Act*)

Band Chief is someone who is elected by band members to govern for a specified term.

First Nation has no generally agreed on definition. This can refer to a single individual, single Band or many Bands.

Hereditary Chief is a leader, given the power to lead by cultural protocol.

Indian as defined in the *Indian Act*, means a person who pursuant to this Act is registered as an Indian or is entitled to be registered as an Indian.

Métis are Aboriginal People of mixed ancestry who define themselves as Métis, can show ancestral connection (Powley) and are accepted as Métis by the Métis Nation.

Non-Status Indian is an individual whose has lost status and is not registered pursuant to Canada's Indian Act.

Reserve as defined by the *Indian Act*,

- (a) means a tract of land, the legal title to which is vested in Her Majesty, that has been set apart by Her Majesty for the use and benefit of a band, and
- (b) except in subsection 18(2), sections 20 to 25, 28, 36 to 38, 42, 44, 46, 48 to 51, 58 to 60 and the regulations made under any of those provisions, includes designated lands.

Status Indian means a person whose names appear on a band list or is registered as Indian.

Tribal Councils is not defined under the *Indian Act*. Tribal Councils are mainly political organizations but some also administer community programs and services.

Some Bands choose to affiliate with Tribal Councils while others do not. Each Tribal Council decides its own political priorities and these priorities vary from area to area and from time to time. Each First Nation determines its own political priorities and organizational structures to address them.

A SUGGESTED COMMUNITY APPROACH

Reaching Out To Communities

Research should always be done before you begin your work or shortly after you have started work in a community or communities. The following is a quick checklist to help you identify the some of the things you should be looking for and doing. This learning about cultures can help you prepare work more effectively in communities.

Cultural Background Information

- Community cultural centres
- Provincial museums
- Books on communities
- Books by community authors
- Traditional use studies

People You Should Consider Talking To

- Government representatives
- Consultants
- Lawyers
- Economic development officers

Information to Look For

- Community profiles and statistics
- Fishing, hunting, and gathering activities
- Spiritual practices
- Custom elected or majority elected
- Tribal council affiliations
- Other political affiliations
- Decision making structures
- Community priorities
- Date of the next band election
- Questions they will ask you
- Media stories outlining main issues
- Past agreements - written or verbal
- Role of hereditary leaders and elders
- Indian Act legislation that pertains to your work

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Timing Is Everything

Timing can be everything for the person who is looking to build relationships with a neighboring community. Consider tribes who have a culture that is reliant on fish and fishing. They have a very limited window (dictated by nature and regulated by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans) in which to catch enough fish to feed the community through the winter. This need to fish can extend to everyone including the chief and council. In this environment it can be almost impossible to get a meeting with anyone in the community during the fishing season.

Working Effectively Tip:

Be aware of significant events that can affect your ability to effectively engage people or communities in relationship building.

On another note, you may be attempting to talk to a community about an activity such as pesticide management plans or tree thinning. You could get some resistance and with some good questioning may be able to determine that they wanted to pick berries in an area at a certain time of year; the time of year that you were planning your activity. Would you consider changing your plans to make way for a particular aboriginal right like berry picking? It could mean the difference between resistance or consensus.

Working Effectively Tip:

Try to look for the interests and not get locked into positions when working with communities.

Consider also a death in a community. Life is precious in any community but even more so in communities where the people are struggling to grow their aboriginal nations. In this context it is not uncommon for things, including the band office, to shut down completely following the death in a community. Try not to be disappointed if this happens to you.

You Know What They Say About Assume

Fred was tasked by his organization to consult with First Nations on a particular permit application. He took a look at the map and noticed a reserve in the approximate permit application area. He then went online and attempted to contact the band to engage them in consultation. After repeated attempts to contact the band he was finally able to reach someone in

the band office. He was a little annoyed when he did get through and it was apparent in his discussion with the band representative. “I wanted to consult with you but you didn’t return my call?” The reply was that this was not the traditional territory of the band he had contacted and he needed to contact another band.

Working Effectively Tip:

Don’t assume that a band is necessarily in its own traditional territory. In BC and Canada some bands have been relocated from their traditional territory for different reasons.

George was asked by his organization to go out and deliver a presentation on an upcoming pipeline project. In his research he identified a band with a hyphenated name whose band office was located in the area that the pipeline went through. Upon his arrival and subsequent meetings with the band George began to get some consensus on preferred route and accommodation. Upon review with others in his organization George learned that there was a problem and that the consensus may be short-lived. The main reason was that the band council was made up of representatives from the second part of the hyphenated name and that they had been amalgamated with the tribe in the first part of the name. The territory that the pipeline was going to pass through was customarily the territory of the band in the first part of the name.

Working Effectively Tip:

In a case of amalgamation like the one described above, don’t assume that the band chief and council are able to make decisions on land use of a territory that customarily belongs to someone else.

Wendy a new person with the city was called into a meeting to discuss an incident that happened in town. Some in the media branded it as racism while others thought it just an unfortunate set of circumstances. The incident was still fresh in the minds of the community and the city thought it should address it. Wendy suggested that a good approach to resolve the issue was to involve the local friendship centre. The city moved forward with the idea and Wendy contacted the friendship centre to seek their involvement. Much to her surprise the centre was very co-operative. They moved forward on the joint initiative even agreeing to sign an accord to address the issue and make things better in the future at a public event. An incident broke out on the day of the signing with a local band coming forward and protesting because it was one of their members that was involved in the original incident. In this example, the main issue is who is most affected by the event? If the incident involved a friendship centre patron then it would

have made sense to work the friendship centre to resolve it. In this situation the resolution of the incident should have been resolved with the local band.

Working Effectively Tip:

There are many dynamics at play when working with Aboriginal People and organizations. Try to learn all you can about an issue before moving to solution.

Men and Women

Aboriginal communities across the land are different when it comes to their traditional social structures. In British Columbia there are a number of different traditional leadership models some still in existence and being reinforced by modern day treaties. In some communities men occupy centre stage and are the traditional leaders. In other communities women occupy centre stage and are the traditional leaders. It is important to determine if such structures are still in place and whether it's the men or the women who are the real decision makers. In such cases matching your work team to the cultural norms can help improve working relationships and not matching can hurt or hinder your progress.

Working Effectively Tip:

Try to match the community decision making structure with your team. If women are the decision makers, then send women if possible and visa versa. Or as my mother in law would say, " if your gonna send a man at least send a sexy one."

Individual Nations and their autonomy

Aboriginal People, as a customary rule of protocol, cannot speak for other aboriginal people. One First Nation cannot speak for another or other First Nation. Those that do can end up in a confrontation with the other First Nation. They are willing to do this from time to time so try to avoid setting up processes where this can be an issue.

Sacred Lands

Bathing pools, whaling shrines, transformation rocks, first ancestor sites, petroglyphs, spirit dancing or ceremony sites and birthing spots on the land are just some examples of sacred sites to the many different cultures that can be found in Canada and British Columbia. If a proposed activity begins to come close to such an area you may encounter resistance from the local First

Nations. The main challenge for people to overcome is to get the First Nations to even talk about such sites. You could experience everything from the cold shoulder to blockades and legal action depending on the significance to the community. Patience will likely be required in order to build the trust that will be needed to get such discussion underway.

Working Effectively Tip:

If you encounter resistance such as the cold shoulder consider asking the question, “Is there something here that you cannot discuss because it is sacred to the community?” “If so, I would be happy to agree to not disclose it to the public.”

Acronyms

I have attended many meetings in communities along with other representatives and witnessed first hand the use of acronyms that make great sense to the people who are using them. Remember though that not everyone works in your organization or industry and is familiar with those acronyms that are designed to speed up communication. In fact, they might not even want to learn your acronyms. In such circumstances acronyms can actually break down communication by forcing people to consider asking potentially embarrassing questions about the meaning of the acronyms. Avoid using them and opt for readily identifiable terms.

Colloquialisms

When trying to work effectively, including consultation, with Aboriginal People and communities it is important to avoid using colloquialisms. There are many very common colloquialisms in popular communication. Each has connotations that may be offensive to some the people that meet and work with. The intent here is to help you avoid using the expressions that may offend some people.

Low man on the Totem Pole

Totem poles are very sacred items to the people who have them carved and displayed.

There are too many Chiefs not enough Indians

A very good friend of mine helped me with this expression. While in attendance at a meeting my friend made a comment that he made to describe the organization that he had been working with. The organization had many people from many different departments working on this relationship building initiative and there was not enough direction on who was actually leading the discussion for the organization. It was at this time that my friend said, “We have a problem, it seems we have too many chiefs and not enough

Indians.” He said it was perhaps the most embarrassing moment of his life. The silence went on for ever. If it were not for his good relationship in the community he may not have survived the event. As it was though it became a long running joke around the multi-party table with the First Nations representatives taking every opportunity to remind him of his expression. Needless to say, it no longer plays a role in his everyday vocabulary.

Indian Summer

The inference is that all Indians are late and an Indian Summer is a late summer.

Indian Time

Again the inference is that all Indians are late. This is an example of stereotyping.

Pow Wow

We need to get together and have a pow wow to discuss this. Again, a pow wow can be a significant community event and the everyday reference to it may make some in the community uncomfortable.

DO’S AND DON’TS

The following are some things to do and not to do when working with Aboriginal People:

Do:

- Research the community and governing parties before going to the community.
- Take training on “Working Effectively With Aboriginal People” before you start.
- Thank them for the invitation into their traditional territory. For example, *“I would like to thank the _____ First Nation(s) for agreeing to meet with us and inviting us into your traditional territory.”*
- Use caution when shaking hands. The typical North American elbow grab and double pump may not be needed or appreciated.
- Try to establish a relationship and meet when you don’t need something.
- Approach issues with a joint problem solving approach.
- Ask the First Nation how they want to be consulted. What are their expectations?

- Know the difference between a Band Chief and a Hereditary Chief before you go to a community.
- Be prepared to meet both Band Chiefs and Hereditary Chiefs on the same day and in the same meeting.
- Be prepared to say that you are having a problem and that you are there to get some thoughts from them on how to solve it.
- Consider dressing down for community meetings. Band offices in many cases have more casual dress policies than corporate Canada.
- Anticipate questions they may have of your organization and prepare answers to those questions.
- Honor all your agreements, especially your oral agreements. Traditionally these are oral societies and oral agreements are as important in Aboriginal communities as written agreements.
- Be flexible. Understand that it is not uncommon for the band office to close on very short notice for various reasons, for example, a death in the community.
- Call ahead to confirm your meeting time.

Don't:

- Tell them you are there to speak to them as a stakeholder.
- Tell them that you have a time line and that they have to meet it.
- Tell them what dates to meet, ask which dates would work best.
- Go to them with a completed draft plan for your project before consultation has started.
- Expect to consult with the same tribe in the same way on similar or different issues.
- Confuse potluck with potlatch.
- Confuse reservations with reserves.
- Refer to them as Indians or Natives. Instead use Aboriginal People or First Nations.
- Say some of my best friends are: Aboriginal People, Indian, or First Nations.

- Ask them if they know well known First Nations personalities, for example Chief Dan George.
- Tell them you prefer a municipal style of government
- Tell them, “We should all be equal.”
- Ask them if they are going to be Canadian when this is all over.
- Need or expect direct eye contact.
- Feel that you must answer or fill the silent periods during discussions. These silent periods can be longer than usual and may be needed to formulate more thoughts. Try to ensure that the speaker has finished before you contribute to the conversation.

Learn and stay up to date on issues

The best way to work effectively with Aboriginal People is to know what they want in advance. Learn and stay up to date on issues that can impact your ability to work effectively with Aboriginal People.

Oral Societies

Many of the Indigenous People in Canada and the United States lived in oral societies. That is to say that very few had written histories. That is not to say that they didn't record histories in other ways. One of the most important ways of keeping history was through the oral communication of that history. So important are oral histories to First Nations that tribes have argued a legal principle to ensure that oral testimony is admissible as evidence in a court of law in aboriginal rights and title cases in Canada.

Your word is more important than any piece of paper or government edict or promise. You must make sure in your dealings that you protect your word and integrity at all costs from internal changes in policy or direction. Nothing can do your reputation more harm than having to say things have changed at our organization and I will no longer be able to deliver what I said I would deliver.

Because the main mode of communication traditionally is verbal; issues like tone, tempo, volume and inflections can be important. Be aware and try to match with the community style if you can.

Working Effectively Tip:

In an oral society the spoken word can be more important than any binding contract. Guard your word from changes in organizational direction. Don't offer things if you don't intend to follow through.

Communal thinking

Case study - John worked for a government agency that was actively involved in granting a permit to a Resource Company. It was his job as a government representative to consult with the band to avoid infringement of constitutionally protected rights. After several meetings John had ascertained that there would be minimal infringement of rights in the area and that the community would accept infringement for the benefits being provided. Based on this, he decided to recommend that a permit be issued to allow the resource company to go ahead, despite concerns from the band chief that he needed more time to bring the issue to the people. The issue had been put before the people but there were still a small number of representatives that had concerns. His main motivation was the fact that he had been put under a time line to get the job done by his manager. The permit was issued and months later the resource company had a road block on an important access road. What happened?

Read recent court decisions on Aboriginal Rights and Title now and you will find that they reference communally held rights.

Generally speaking Aboriginal Rights are collectively held. Therefore, any decision regarding the use of those lands must be done in accordance with the involvement of the whole community. One issue in the case study was the timeline. The community is planning on being in the area forever. They feel no pressure to make decisions that are contrary to the principles of being in the area forever. The larger the decision the more the community will be involved. It is important to note that decisions are not done via majority rule but rather by consensus. This means added time to the work that you want to do. What can you do to avoid getting into trouble? Allow more time in your project time line to accommodate a community decision making process.

Cultural Survival

The name of the game for Aboriginal People and communities everywhere is cultural survival. Every decision made reflects this value and it's for this reason that decisions can take longer in communities. Perhaps you have heard of the 7th Generation principle that says all decisions made must consider the people seven generations in the future. This principle captures the thinking of communities' country wide and around the globe. How might this effect your

interaction? First you have two different perspectives of time. In many companies the time frame is a fiscal year. Things are done within a fiscal year or very few fiscal years. In communities it's cultural survival and therefore a longer time frame is viewed. These are two very different perspectives of time.

Cultural survival makes Aboriginal People do things that do not make sense when it comes to working with the community. For example, a government or large resource company offers a trillion dollars to a community in exchange for their ancestral land. The community refuses outright and almost without thinking about it. The government or resource company is flabbergasted and states that it is just another example of unreasonable Aboriginal People. The decision makes sense in the context of cultural survival. Consider tribes that sold their lands for beads and bobbles in centuries gone by. In some cases those tribes are extinct. Tribes today will consider cultural survival very seriously when making decisions involving land.

Participating in cultural events

Sometimes when working in communities you may find yourself in more of a cultural situation. It could be an opening prayer, a smudge, or some other form cultural sharing or protocol. It can be very uncomfortable for someone who has not done a smudge to participate in one. Expect that it could be a possibility and that your participation will be required. When in doubt about how to do something ask the host or a friend of the community to explain the significance and participant process of a ceremony. If you do end up in a situation though where you have not had the coaching then you can always follow the lead of the people in front of you.

Eye contact

Eye contact may not be needed when working with Aboriginal People. Many people often believe that it is important to maintain eye contact when actively involved in communication. This need to stay focused and have continued eye contact may not be shared by other people. In one specific example, I asked an elder from a community for his thoughts on eye contact and this is what he had to say. "We never used to have much eye contact. When we did it was only in the start of the meeting. After that it was not considered important to maintain eye contact." For some Aboriginal People eye contact with school or church officials in Residential Schools led to physical punishment. If you ever have the opportunity to attend a community event have a look at where the eyes go. They are usually not on the speaker. This is not a sign of disrespect because they are more interested in what you say than looking at you. Eye contact may not be needed or essential.

Sense of humor

Do you have a good sense of humor? Can you laugh at yourself? Can you take it when people are laughing at you? I have seen many visitors welcomed with some kind of humor and it may not be intended to offend. Go with the flow, sometimes the humor can actually be a sign of acceptance and that they like you and want to work with you.

Gifts

People often ask if they should bring gifts to meeting and other events. In some cases it may be appropriate and even expected in others it can actually be offensive or come across as bribe. So how does one know when to bring a gift and what kind of gift is appropriate? The main answer in this instance is to ask. Ask the host politely and in a quiet side discussion.

Your timelines

Timelines are a thorny issue in communities. Just about everybody that goes to them to do business or to full legal and regulatory requirements has a timeline. Don't exacerbate the problem by going to them with yours. It will only create resistance and lengthen your project. Don't push for the sake of your timeline. It will affect your future opportunities.