

INDIGENOUS VALUES AND CONTEMPORARY MANAGEMENT APPROACHES

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INTRODUCTION

The challenges and opportunities of globalization, environmental issues such as climate change, corporate scandals, the legacy of the counter-culture of the sixties, society's ever-evolving commitment to both respect and honour diversity — these are but a few examples of the astonishing convergence of phenomena that are calling into question the role of business in society. As such, and as never before, the value schemes businesses use to make decisions are being dissected, debated and evaluated.

It is a dialogue that raises some interesting issues from an Indigenous perspective. What values play a role in Indigenous businesses? Are there any challenges in the context of Indigenous wisdom that would make a general discussion of these values difficult? How do those values translate into Indigenous participation in the general economy? Is there any symmetry between the evolving discussion of values in the wider business community and traditional Indigenous values? If so, what promise does this hold for a new era of partnership and prosperity between Indigenous communities, peoples, business and the general economy?

The following sections will examine Indigenous values and consider how these concepts can relate to business management. Two case studies of Manitoba-based Indigenous women's business enterprises demonstrate these values in action. The success in practice within two distinct industries is inspiring with Pat Turner in the trucking and construction industry and Lisa Meeches in communications. Finally, a brief analysis of 'corporate social responsibility' (CSR), a focal point for so much of the discussion of 'values' in modern day business, draws out the synchronicity between this issue and traditional Indigenous values.

INDIGENOUS CULTURAL VALUES

Historically, traditional Indigenous values were passed on to individuals beginning from a young age. These values were embodied in all aspects of their lives. They learned by observing and listening to the elders, their parents, aunts and uncles and members of the community. It was a large interconnected network of community life. Stories were passed down in the oral tradition.

Indigenous historical tradition honours stories, legends and explanations handed

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down from grandmothers and grandfathers. All of Creation including 'those who have gone before' figure in the oral tradition. Cultural values are shared with the listeners, community issues are clarified, place of a family in the community settled and the broad requirements of a vibrant society are met through these stories. (RCAP, 1996, 1, p. 33)

Individuals in the story-telling circle have their own understanding of the story meaning that reflects the community, the circumstances and the interpretation being passed on. Oral accounts are not simply a detached recounting of factual events, but rather are "facts enmeshed in the stories of a lifetime" (RCAP, 1996, 1, p. 33) leaving room for "many histories" with variations reflecting unique relationships within and among communities and with the environment. (Lendsey & Wuttunec, 1997, p. 2)

Layers of meaning are exposed depending on the way a story is told, how it is told, who tells it and by listening to the whole story. This results in respect for the interrelatedness of word, thought, belief and action and thus its holistic meaning (Alfred, 1999, p. xvii).

Teachings are presented at a level that reflects the student's skills, maturity and readiness and do not have the same meaning for each student. Knowledge and insight are shared between teacher and student in a two-way learning situation but lacks tidy summaries and conclusions as is more common using a written format.

Truly understanding Indigenous values and perspectives requires a lifetime of commitment and dedication to an Indigenous worldview. Values are misunderstood because of a complexity that can only be studied and their true meanings identified in the original languages. Indeed, one elder has gone so far as to say there are no Indigenous organizations that practice Indigenous values in their work today. A group of language speakers have yet to meet and examine these important matters (Munroe, 2006).

It is hard to completely grasp the significance of this requirement for personal interaction in a mainstream culture devoted to the written word. In the western tradition great weight is often given to words once they are

published, according more truth than might be deserved. Many traditional teachings will never be published because of the belief that to do so means to give away something that is too valuable and ultimately, is an act of disrespect.

Knowing the limitations of 'writing' about core values does not mean that all meaning is stripped by using this approach. It does set the stage and begins a dialogue on the written page that draws on the experience of Indigenous scholars, provides some illumination and may encourage the search for greater understanding.

Releasing the boundaries of personal worldviews in order to understand other worldviews requires patience, time, and inner reflection. The written word hints at the possibilities of this journey. It draws people into the process who might never have contemplated such information but it has its limitations. It is important that the reader take the information and reflect on its significance from the reader's own experience, drawing personal conclusions as part of an experiential process of understanding Indigenous worldviews. Letting the reader take responsibility for interpreting lessons mirrors one of the ways lessons or teachings are presented in the Indigenous community.

It is also important to note that the ensuing discussion of Indigenous values draws on the teachings and words of several elders and authors, some of whom wish to remain anonymous and some who allow their names to be noted. These values have been handed down from elders to share with the community and come from the Creator so they may be recorded by authors but they may not be attributed to one source (See Campbell, 1997; Newhouse, 1993, pp. 94-95; Alfred, 1999, p. 134; Salway Black, 1994). Dockstater deals with this issue in his work. He notes that it is not appropriate to attribute information like this to any one person or source nor to present ceremonial knowledge out of a cultural context (1993, p. 9).

Finally, while there are common values across Indigenous communities, any written recounting of those themes must be in a context that also acknowledges a considerable diversity of practice and experience. T. Alfred, Mohawk scholar, sums up this delicate balance as follows:

Working within a traditional framework,
we must acknowledge the fact that cul-

tures change, and that any particular notion of what constitutes 'tradition' will be contested. Nevertheless, we can identify certain common beliefs, values and principles that form the persistent core of a community's culture. (Alfred 1999:xvii)

With these qualifications in place, in it is now appropriate to consider examples of traditional Aboriginal values. The words of Elder Campbell provide a useful starting point:

Creator said that it was time to bring people to the Earth Mother. The first to arrive was the Black Nation. They were given the gift of sound and were told that they must share their gift with the people of the world. The next to arrive was the Red Nation. They were given the gift of the teachings of the Earth Mother and were told they must share their gift with the people of the world.

Then came the Yellow Nation. They were given the gift of teachings of the mind and body and were told they must share their gift with the people of the world.

Finally came the White Nation. Our youngest brothers and sisters and they were given the gift of communication and were told that they must share their gift with the people of the world. (M.L. Campbell, Ojibway elder, 1997)

Elder Campbell's words are particularly appropriate for two reasons. Firstly, they confirm a duty to share Aboriginal values with the world. While understanding the historical place of oral tradition and traditional values is important in understanding current issues facing Indigenous peoples, the questions surrounding the place that these traditional values have in today's society must be considered. Secondly, Elder Campbell's words also underline the value of co-operation, acknowledging gifts and interdependence of all living things—ideas that form the core by which many Indigenous peoples make sense of their place in the world and their perspectives on life. Similarly, Richard Atleo suggests the unity of existence or heshook-ish tsawalk (everything is one) lies at the heart of life and the way it is lived (Atleo, 2004, p. 117).

Principles honouring this connectivity are more fully outlined as follows:

Honoring all creation by showing respect...

Love of Creator and for all living things that come from the Creator is demonstrated by showing respect from the moment one rises in the morning to when one retires in the evening.

Treasuring knowledge as wisdom ...

Reflection, acknowledgment, seeking guidance and respecting the quality of knowing and the gift of vision in ourselves and in others demonstrates wisdom. Wisdom encompasses the holistic view, possesses spiritual quality and is expressed in the experiential breadth and depth of life.

Knowing love is to know peace ...

Caring, kindness, hope, harmony and cooperation are fundamental values. Caring and sharing are shown to one another with an ethic of generosity, collective/comunal consciousness and co-operation, while recognizing the interdependence and interrelatedness of life. Recognizing the valuable gifts of the individual, the community and all nations leads to harmony and cooperation. Honoring the individual and the collective by thinking for yourself and acting for others.

Courage and bravery is demonstrated in facing challenges with honesty and integrity ...

The goal is to protect the quality of life and inherent autonomy of oneself and others. Life may then be lived in an atmosphere of security, peace, dignity and freedom.

Cherishing yourself as a sacred part of creation is humility ...

Honor all of life which is endowed with the same inherent autonomy, dignity, freedom and equality. Listen and learn from others and do so with a sense of modesty and sensitivity.

The truth is to know all of these things ...

To know all of these values is to have balance in one's life. Balance is articulated for many Indigenous peoples through the concepts embodied in the medicine wheel or circle of life.

Originally of significance to the Plains people, many find that the medicine wheel is a teaching tool of relevance in many contemporary areas of life (RCAP, 1996, 1, p. 646). It represents the whole circle of all life and all that is known or knowable. It is linked together with no

beginning and no end, and it is often divided by lines that at the centre signify order and balance. It is a teaching, a mirror, a window, a way of life and a healing (RCAP, 1996, 1, p. 646). For example, balance may be discussed regarding the individual and the community in terms of physical, emotional, mental and spiritual aspects of life with each element of equal significance. Many Indigenous peoples recognize the interconnectedness of human beings with all of life and acknowledge the aspects of the medicine wheel that could be inherent in solutions to social problems they face.

INDIGENOUS VALUES AND BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Often the relationship between Indigenous cultural values and business management has ranged between ambivalence and antagonism. A business education at college or university emphasizes aspects of management strategies, skills and competition that spring solidly from the foundation of capitalism. Little attention if any is paid to the role of Indigenous cultural values and perspectives in economic development and successful business unless it is an Indigenous educational institution. These important bundles of philosophies are left to the individual to use as they see fit in the world of business. With many Indigenous communities trying to preserve critical aspects of their way of life, business often raises the spectre of destruction of the things that give 'a good life' meaning while offering lifelines to a better collective economic livelihood (Newhouse, 1999). Historically it was believed that for individuals who migrate to urban centres the pull is even stronger to assimilate into the capitalist perspective and lay down their bundle of Indigenous values before entering the business world.

That said, there are growing examples of not only harmony, but mutual fulfillment between Indigenous values and business management. Accessing educational opportunities and a broad range of opportunities offered by Canadian companies to young Indigenous people is affecting the way business is conducted and the future of the contribution of Indigenous peoples to the Canadian economy. In a recent study by the Conference Board of Canada and in

other supporting research (Loizedes & Anderson, 2006), there are examples across Canada where the value of business skills is recognized in the boardrooms of Indigenous business enterprises, but where the bottom line must fit with the visions of their community shareholders. There are examples of competitive bids by individual-owned Indigenous businesses won by collaborative teams made up of those businesses that failed in independent bids competing against one another. The term that has been coined is "community capitalism." Young leaders embrace their heritage and the best of the business world to be competitive and successful. Oftentimes they receive guidance from elders and other leaders who are well-versed in Indigenous and business realities.

Adopting business values works well for many Indigenous employers and employees. Where Indigenous individuals are able they make their way in the business world following their personal values they do so often in Indigenous organizations, business organizations with complementary values and in their own enterprises. The following case studies build insight into several ways of approaching business in keeping with personally held Indigenous values that have resulted in successful businesses contributing to the Indigenous community and the Canadian economy.

CASE STUDY: PATRICIA TURNER, ABORIGINAL ENTREPRENEUR

Patricia Turner is an Aboriginal woman who chose entrepreneurship after retiring from a career in government. Not content to simply retire, Turner contemplated her future and one day an opportunity presented itself in a conversation she initiated with a frustrated trucker passing through her northern Manitoba First Nation, Grand Rapids. This opportunity turned out to be quite the challenge for Turner as she entered into the world of trucking and construction, setting up shop in Grand Rapids. The trucking company originated some 21 years ago with Turner convincing the local bank to help her finance the purchase of her first two trucks. For this investment and Pat Turner's vision E.T. Development was born and now does road building, small salvage operations and com-

munity infrastructure construction. As Turner describes, over the years she evolved from being the "kid" playing with the big boys, to a player negotiating contracts to support infrastructure development for communities in the North.

When asked about her business and her success, Turner downplays the challenges she faced as an Aboriginal woman in this competitive, male dominated field. She asserts that the company she built is just like the others in mainstream society, but that they employ 97 per cent Aboriginal and serve as a training ground for developing Aboriginal workers. As well, Turner notes, "In our company we recognize our people. In a small community of First Nations we recognize the fact that we are so intertwined together and that we have to understand the relationships we have with our close people and our close friends."

In Turner's world, people and community come first in her value system and she considers this a key to her company's success. Turner considers herself demanding, yet fair. She asserts that the job has to be done right and she makes this her priority. In her company, there is no exception to excellence. She focuses on timelines, worker commitment, training, expertise, coordination and an accident free environment. The goal is to make sure the client is happy. The job well done reflects on her as an entrepreneur as well as on each of her workers. As Turner notes "Without the employees I wouldn't be where I am today. It is a combination win-win for everybody. You are providing work for your employees. They tell me that they feel good and they get paid and look after their family. At the end of the day that is what we want anyway. To provide the best for your family." Taking care of family is an important value to Turner. Her children are adults, with children of their own and Turner makes it a priority to spend time with her grandchildren.

While Turner owns the business and deals with the office, paperwork, bankers and lawyers; her husband plays a key role. He works with the staff planning the jobs and getting the work done. As Turner puts it "We have a very good working relationship". Turner's sons are also involved with the business, learning the ropes as they go along. While family support has been fantastic and has allowed Turner to focus on the 'business' end of the business and take on lead-

ership roles in the Aboriginal community, it hasn't prevented Turner from rolling up her sleeves and getting into the field. She still dazzles a few non-believers with her knowledge about the equipment and the industry. She personally interviews workers who come to her looking for a job. She wants to ensure they know the equipment from A to Z "We always say, you have to make that machine dance for you." Despite her experience and reputation, she notes "A lot of men stand and look at me with question, because it is still a man's world out there in construction. They think 'what the heck does she know'. But I want to make sure they know what they are doing. If that equipment goes down, it is down time for the company and for workers."

Turner values the staff and makes it her business to ensure that they are well-trained, that their work environment is safe and supporting. In this line of work, it is often 24/7 with long hours and often staff work in remote locations away from home and family. To compensate for this, Turner ensures that the workers are comfortable, with good rest and food and she makes sure that they get the breaks that they need to spend time with family and community.

Over the years Turner has worked tirelessly for the benefit of the community. Not satisfied with watching things from the outside, Turner served as Band Chief. Hoping to stimulate commitment to education and create an environment that nurtured youth to careers, Turner facilitated the career fairs in the local school. She produced t-shirts with the slogan 'Youth with Potential' to turn the negative idea of 'youth at risk' around. While in business, Turner could have sat back and enjoyed the successes of her work, she has chosen the path of making success an option for others. Turner believes that her community service is what makes her company truly Aboriginal. "The difference I see in my company is the way that I have aligned myself in working relationships with Aboriginal people. I try and promote Aboriginal communities." Following through with action, Turner was instrumental in the creation of the Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce, the first of its kind in Canada, and she served as the President of the Chamber for its first two years of operation. As Turner states "I see the Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce making a big, huge impact on the economy of Manitoba and I have

the feeling deep in my heart that we will go right across Canada. Let's all work together and make a better world, a better place for our people to come along." Working together is a key value that Turner lives. Her vision for the Chamber has become a reality as the Aboriginal Chamber announced a national presence in the fall of 2006. Turner notes that the Aboriginal Chamber is important to celebrating the contribution that Aboriginal businesses make to the Canadian economy. She feels that the public at large is unaware of the number of Aboriginal business and entrepreneurs. Turner states "It is time for people like myself to step forward and say I am Aboriginal and I am an entrepreneur and I am proud of it."

Turner is proud of her business and stresses that the most important thing is the contribution it makes to the First Nation communities. Turner makes it her business to ensure that when she does work in the community she is leaving behind the skills necessary to sustain the projects she works on. She noted that over the years, infrastructure would be developed in First Nations communities but then the companies doing the work would leave, as would the workers. There was no reflection on whether the project had invested in developing the community to maintain or sustain the infrastructure. This is a number one goal of Turner's company when it works in the community. "Why should I go back. It is going to cost an arm and a leg to move equipment back there. If I can teach somebody and leave at least two people behind, I think leaving a bit of yourself behind where ever you go, then you know you have been a success and you have contributed to the people and their own economy."

A second goal for Turner's company relates to her desire to provide meaningful work to Aboriginal people and to develop them to go on and work in other communities with mainstream organizations. Turner notes that while it is costly to train her workers, she thinks beyond the costs when a worker announces that they are leaving for another opportunity. Turner wishes them well as she shares "When they go on somewhere and speak highly of her training and E.T. Developments it results in increased reputation and goodwill for my company and this translates into partnerships and contracts."

Partnerships and contracts are good for business. Despite seemingly unique Aboriginal community values, Turner is not afraid of the challenge to compete with mainstream business, nor is she afraid of the idea that it is important for her company to be profitable. She recalls the challenges of starting her business and the lean years of making do with little to no profit. "But that was me" she recalls "I knew I could live within that \$10,000 a year because of the simple fact that I was working 24/7 and I knew that I could see there was lots of work in the infrastructure and the field of construction. As we got bigger and bigger and making money, it was good for me that I was earning at that power, but I always kept the money in my company. I would leave it behind for the company." Making a profit and investing in the company are values that Turner has translated into a strong a successful company in a tough industry, for the benefit of her community.

Turner further demonstrates her values in the views she has about running a successful business. She notes that "You are not clock wise and you don't answer to anyone, to me anyway, it is my company." However, she is quick to spell out the lessons to be learned "I have taken some of the issues I have learned from my previous jobs which is accountability for one thing. I have learned accountability, the timetable, the schedules and the commitments. I don't just mean with your bankers or creditors, I mean to yourself, to your family and to your clients and vendors. Try to be fair and honest with everyone. I think one of the biggest things is honesty." Honesty is a value that contributes to reputation. Over the 21 years in business, Turner has built a reputable Aboriginal company.

In reflecting on her success, Turner comments "I think it is easier working with an Aboriginal company because you know with our people there is always a common understanding. I put them at ease." With business in mind, Turner talks about the value of family and community and about the relationships that are developed along the way. Mostly, Patricia Turner is an inspiration to her community and to others who dream of owning their own business and making a difference in Aboriginal economic development. "Believe in yourself as a person. I am Pat Turner, I am a woman and I believe I can do this." With a spirited chuckle,

she continues on, "And, if I think I can't do it, then I think about it and I go back and I think what the heck, I will tell Mary Jane and together we can do it." Patricia Turner's company is truly Aboriginal, and its value is going well beyond the bottom-line!

The next case study examines the integration of spirituality into a business philosophy that drives several communication businesses.

CASE STUDY: LISA MEECHES, ABORIGINAL ENTREPRENEUR

Lisa Meeches is a modern day Aboriginal storyteller who has taken the communications industry to a new level with her dynamic approach to video production. As Executive Producer and the President of Eagle Vision Inc. and Meeches Video Productions, she has built a great reputation in the film-making community as a result of her work in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal productions. Her most recent productions include *Capote*, *Blue State* and *Elijah*. With partners invested in the newest company, Century Street Distributions, Meeches is taking her Aboriginal-based productions to the international forum, taking care to ensure that the packaging and presentation keeps sacred the spiritual base and intent of her work.

Meeches's passion for film and production is not rooted in a drive for fame in this highly glamorized industry, but from her sense that it is her spiritual job to be a storykeeper. She shares this, "At the end of each day, I ask myself, 'did I accomplish things, was I kind to people, can I look at my business another way, how do I make it better,' and then I write it down." Her approach to business is intriguing, rooted in Aboriginal spirituality, bringing ceremony to the heart of day to day business.

As Meeches speaks about her work, the powerful linkage between values and business is apparent. "Before we start any production," Meeches affirms, "we start off with a ceremony that specifically talks about natural law and honouring the gifts of everybody no matter what nation you come from." She refers to the ceremonies and offerings as 'spiritual insurance', explaining that they are offerings to ensure that people treat each other well and they are good

and kind to one another. Meeches invests in this insurance in the same way she does other forms of insurance such as errors and omissions or liability insurance. To Meeches it is all part of the business.

Meeches' perspective about the ideas that build into script and production is further demonstration of the linkage of her values in her work. "Before my writers even write the script, which is usually eight months before we start rolling, there's a ceremony just for the writers and then offerings are made. We take them all out to a sacred site because in this industry when an idea comes to an individual that idea comes from somewhere powerful. It doesn't belong to us and it is our job as storykeepers to ensure we nurture it and do not take advantage of it because it is seen as a little baby and we watch it grow and develop." In serving as a storykeeper, Meeches has become a conduit for educating her people and others about Aboriginal spirituality and values. In her day to day practices, the people she works with experience Aboriginal values in ways that cannot be learned through traditional forms of education. It is rather a powerful form of experiential learning that takes place in her companies.

Meeches makes it a priority to bring the Aboriginal people and community to the stage in her productions. Some of her major works such as *Capote*, about Truman Capote and *Elijah Harper*, are co-produced. As Meeches notes, the film side of things is very intricate and tricky. Co-production with companies experienced in this area allows Meeches to learn that side of film. In regard to the production of *Elijah*, Meeches asserts that it was critical for the Aboriginal community to be involved, therefore co-production was an essential to success. When working with other producers, Meeches is very careful to ensure that values are aligned. She checks out the people she works with so that she is confident that her community will be respected and treated well. For Meeches, the 'check out' doesn't mean getting reference checks or googling, it means that they go into ceremony. Before agreeing to work on *Elijah*, Meeches recalls "We had a ceremony in the studio here and I had gifts for them and his co-producer and Wayne and I, my business partner, smoked the pipe and talked about natural law and respect and my role."

Meeches cautions that ceremony is not a quick fix, but needs to be maintained in appreciation for everyday good things. "You have to find a way to give back so our ancestors can be acknowledged." On production there would be daily feasts and unique perhaps in the industry there is an 'elders trailer' taking the place of a 'producers trailer'. In reflecting on the Elijah production, Meeches went on to speak about the challenges of being a woman in the industry, but being Aboriginal too. She asserted that with the Elijah production, it wasn't up to them as producers as to whether the production works, but the Creator. In her view, "The script you wrote comes from a powerful place and as long as you respect and you treat people good it will take care of itself." With this spiritual value understood, Meeches entered into partnership on the Elijah production and rallied the support of her community. Four or five thousand people came out to audition, "grandmothers came, it was quite emotional for me and I was just overwhelmed. It was quite powerful to see and people were truly honouring their fits and that is all you can ask for."

As she thinks about how the community contributes to the success of her production work, Meeches reflects on the construction of a totem pole. She shares that in her company, no one is low on the totem pole and she personally helps at all levels to ensure that her crew sees that all jobs are valued and necessary to the quality of the completed production. Meeches understands the value of human gifts, "Crewing a show and crewing an office is looking at all the gifts of everybody and honouring the gifts and knowing when to step back because I don't know it all and being in this environment I am allowed to honour my gifts." She feels fortunate to be in an industry that honours her spirit and allows her to walk through life guided by her spirit.

In speaking with Meeches, it becomes clear that it is for her people that she invests her energy in her work. As a storyteller and educator she understands the need to build the capacity of her people. She notes "There is such a huge need and a gap when it comes to Aboriginal people having the opportunities to be embraced by the industry." One of her main goals for Eagle Vision is to find strategic ways of upgrading the skills of Aboriginal people in

the industry. Giving back, mentoring and celebrating with her people are values that Meeches incorporates into her work. As she notes "I learned to create strategies and tactics where everyone is included and that's through the mentorship program."

In addition, Meeches uses her reputation in the industry to build bridges for others. She focuses on helping associations such as Manitoba Film and Sound and, Film Training Manitoba understand the curriculum work that needs to be done in order to strengthen Aboriginal involvement in the industry. As she notes "Our goal is to create a centre of excellence for Aboriginal people in the industry and working with National Screen Institute to develop curriculum which is a culturally based spiritual program which would allow our people to really take the message home on what it means to be storytellers."

In addition to her work in her business and within the Industry, Meeches also contributes to her community in roles such as the one she recently took on for the Manito Ahbee, Manitoba Aboriginal Festival. As chair of the Manitoba Music Host Committee, Meeches made a major contribution to the development of the four-day festival that celebrated Aboriginal music and culture. Providing leadership to this festival was a natural fit for Meeches as the name Manito Ahbee references a sacred site located in Manitoba's Whiteshell Provincial Park, where First Nations traditionally gathered to share teachings and wisdom. Manito Ahbee means "where the Creator sits." Meeches also serves on the board of the Manitoba Film and Sound, the United Way Aboriginal Relations Committee and the Canadian Independent Film and Video Fund.

How does she keep up the energy to do all this work? For Meeches, it is pretty simple "I pow wow so I sneak away for a few weekends and feed my spirit." It takes strength to do pow wow so on a regular basis Meeches trains and does yoga to keep her focus. In addition to this training, Meeches practices good medicine. Her family bloodline is in medicine. Her grandparents are both staunch herbalists and her late grandfather used to have a group of medicine people from across the country that he worked with. Recently, an elder reminded Meeches that "Everything you do is about making good medicine. Your camera is your pipe and respect it

like that and your tripod and all your equipment is your ceremony offerings and respect it like that." Meeches was blown away by this elder's sharing and the reflection on her work as vehicle for 'good medicine'.

Meeches is a prodigy of her upbringing, her values and views come from her experiences as a child on the reserve. "We were all athletes, had horses, long distance runners, I ran until I went to university. You need to be fit to dance pow wow. So life on the reserve was absolutely fantastic. We didn't have church on our reserve it was all ceremony. That's all we knew. How I conduct myself now and how I redeem myself now and how I try to give back, that's what makes you a successful person." Meeches returns home regularly to maintain her spirit and participate in the medicine work of her family.

One of her productions, *Tipi Tales* is actually modelled after her grandparent's backyard. As Meeches asserts "His backyard was like an Indian Disneyland where everybody was happy everyday and the little people had the most important part in all of it because if we were hungry they fed us and if we needed a hug they hugged us, if we needed to be tickled they would tickle us." In reflecting on youth today, Meeches expresses her concern that there is not enough emphasis on spiritual value. "We send our children to career symposiums and what we deem successful is based on western society mythology. There isn't one booth at a career symposium that asks 'what does your spirit want?'"

Indeed, Meeches is an example of a business woman who follows the lead of her spirit. Business decisions are made in consultation with the spirit world and the Creator. She reflects back to her very early days in the industry and a decision she had to make after being asked to produce the now acclaimed show *The Sharing Circle*. She recalls, "I went home to ask my grandfather if I should do it, and he said 'you should go out and fast.' In the old days that was how we did things, we would discuss things, and fast and pray, and he says that's when we would do a sharing circle and that is what you should call it." *The Sharing Circle* was born and to this day provides a critical forum for Aboriginal storytelling.

Of her success in business, Meeches shares her perspective that her work has only begun. "We're going to keep telling Aboriginal stories

until we are happy, and we are not all happy yet. We are not at a healthy place where we are happy." Lisa Meeches and her companies serve as modern day demonstration of the degree to which Aboriginal culture and ways of being achieve what so many companies are not able to under the tag 'corporate social responsibility'. Perhaps corporate social responsibility has to focus more on the spirit of the people. Meeches believes that people would be happier if they followed their spirit and had strong business ethics that are guided by the 'circular' teachings while working in the linear world. Meeches lives her talk "You can wear them together" she asserts "and you don't have to compromise one another because I have advisors that remind me of the linear teachings and those that remind me of the circular teachings." This is good medicine for those of us trying to understand the balance in life and work.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is an often-used, seldom-defined term that has become both a lightning rod for the growing debate about the role of business in society and a catch-all for the many ways that role may be fulfilled, including philanthropy or charity, environmental sustainability, the advancement of human rights, and community development.

Whether one believes that CSR is a role for business over and above profitability, or a means by which business can help ensure long-term sustainable profits, there is no doubt that there is increased interest in expressing a corporations social investment. In 2005, 360 different CSR-related shareholder resolutions were filed, 64 per cent of the world's multi-national corporations published some form of CSR report, and there is a burgeoning industry of CSR ratings, consultants and associations (Porter & Kramer, 2006, pp. 80-81).

While there has been a change afoot it is important to remember that this is an evolution, not a revolution; for there has always been symmetry between a business' profitability and the well-being of the community in which it operates. Porter and Kramer recently described that fundamental connection as follows: "By providing jobs,

investing capital, purchasing goods, and doing business every day, corporations have a profound and positive influence on society. The most important thing a corporation can do for society, and for any community, is contribute to a prosperous economy" (2006: 91). It is a sentiment that echoes through capitalist proponents as far back as Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) and Bernard Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*. (Friedman, 2005, p. 40).

CSR is driving businesses to think more deeply about the extent of the relationship between business and social good. Companies are being warned that "Any business that pursues its ends at the expense of the society in which it operates will find its success to be illusory and ultimately temporary" (Porter & Kramer, 2006, p. 83). As a result of this view, analysis of management strategies are increasingly using terms like 'shared value' and 'the sustainability sweet spot' to both identify and build on those common interests, to the benefit of both the company and its community.

The following two examples are typical of the theorist promoting a more holistic approach to business strategy. Savitz urges companies to incorporate a 'triple bottom line' that judges a business against environmental measures such as air and air quality, energy usage and waste produced; and social measures such as labour practices, community impact, human rights and product responsibility; as well as economic measures sales, profits, return on investment, taxes paid, monetary flows and jobs created (2006, p. xii). Jackson and Nelson (2004) champion a 'profits with principles' approach that focuses on harnessing innovation for the public good, putting people at e-centre, spreading economic opportunity, engaging in new alliances, being performance-driven in everything, practising superior governance and pursuing purpose beyond profit.

The congruity between these trends and traditional Indigenous values bodes well for indigenous peoples and their businesses in a number of ways. Firstly, as a key part of society, any corporate strategy that compels a more holistic focus on society will undoubtedly involve both indigenous peoples and their businesses. Second, as companies pursue a CSR approach undoubtedly new business opportunities will arise that respect, embrace and utilize indigenous values

and capacities. Finally, given both its rich and diverse history of holistic, community thinking, indigenous leaders and businesses can offer mainstream businesses unique and valued perspectives that may increase understanding and success in implementing CSR.

CONCLUSION

As management practices are being driven to look at the role of business in relation to its people, its community, and the environment, it is only natural to consider Indigenous values as they are typically associated with such a holistic perspective. A review of Indigenous values reveals its own set of challenges. While common, such values are not completely uniform. History has played a role in stifling the emergence of Indigenous values in business management practices. As well, the complexity and nuance of those values does not lend itself to more traditional forms of business education, including the printed word.

And yet, in the face of these difficulties Indigenous values remain strong, passing from generation to generation. What's more, Indigenous values are being rewarded by the economy. In their own ways, Turner and Meeches reflect Indigenous values in their business practices leading to the ultimate success of their businesses. They each hold their businesses to values that underpin their personal philosophies.

This paper is simply a starting point in so many ways. Management practices have a long way to go to fully comprehend and implement the principles of CSR. Much work remains to be done to understand the complex fabric of Indigenous values. What is clear is that contemporary business management practices and Indigenous values are taking different paths to the same destination; a holistic way of thinking that fully connects business success with the well-being of the community in which it operates. This is a future ripe with potential; a truly common language united in common purpose, a future of mutual respect, opportunity and fulfillment.

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