

**Exemplary Leadership**  
**How Dispute Resolution Professionals Change Cultures**

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on Dispute Resolution in Special Education*  
**Showcasing Exemplary Practices**

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## ***Facilitative Leadership in Dispute Resolution Practice: “Who” Meets “How”***

Leadership is an inside-out process; we are only as effective as the limits of our self-awareness and range of choices about perceptions, interpretations and ways of relating to others.

Practices for facilitative leadership help dispute resolution professionals develop congruence—alignment between deeply-held values and behaviors. This alignment contributes to credibility, authenticity and presence. It is useful to remember that these practices are part of a larger group of factors relating to credibility.

### **Selected Quotations on Leaders**

*A leader is a person who has an unusual degree of power to project on other people his or her shadow or his or her light. A leader is a person who has an unusual degree of power to create the conditions under which other people must live and move, and who can make those conditions as illuminating as heaven, or as shadowy as hell. A leader is a person who must take special responsibility for what’s going on inside himself or herself, inside his or her consciousness, lest the act of leadership create more harm than good.*

*The problem is that people rise to leadership in our society by a tendency toward extroversion, which means a tendency to ignore what is going on inside themselves. Leaders rise to power in our society by operating very competently and effectively in the external world, sometimes at the cost of internal awareness.*

Parker Palmer, author, educator and activist.

*The elders say that the biggest journey you can take in life is from your head to your heart. The elders also say that if you seek to lead the people, you must make the return journey from your heart to your head.*

Phil Land, Ojibwe leader

*The wicked leader is s/he who the people despise.*

*The good leader is s/he who the people revere.*

*The great leader is s/he who the people say, “We did it ourselves.”*

Lao Tsu

*My leadership, as well as the leadership of other native women, is measured by the value it has for others in our communities, its relevance for whom it works. So words like “community” and concepts like “kinship,” “grandma” and “aunt” are not antithetical to words like “leadership” and “power.” In fact, in our communities, I believe these words are the equivalent of it. Power belongs to those who give. Power belongs to those who give it away.*

Rayna Green, Cherokee Nation cultural historian and activist

*Above all, the Rosa Parks and the Vaclav Havel and the Nelson Mandelas and the Dorothy Days of this world are authentic. These are people who have come to understand that no punishment that anybody could lay on us could possibly be worse than the punishment we lay on ourselves by conspiring in our own diminishment, by living a divided life, by failing to make the fundamental decision to act and speak on the outside in ways consonant with what we know to be true on the inside.*

Parker Palmer, author, educator and activist

## Credibility

Dr. George Renwick, a founder of the intercultural communication field, suggests there are five sources of credibility: inherent, conferred, expert, congruent, and contribution.<sup>1</sup> While these sources of credibility are understood and assessed differently across cultural contexts, it is important for dispute resolution professionals to consider all of them. The sources of credibility are interconnected—it is not enough to have one or two of them and ignore the others. What would it mean to magnify all five of these sources of credibility as dispute resolution professionals?

- *Inherent* credibility speaks to attributes like gender, generation, and nationality. These are out of our control, yet relevant to others' perceptions of our acceptability as practitioners. We ignore them at our peril. In cultural contexts where men, elders, or members of particular ethnic groups are preferred intervenors, others (like women, younger people, and members of different ethnic groups) need to collaboratively engage the issue of inherent credibility with those involved. To assume that your values about equity or other forms of credibility take precedence is to potentially escalate a conflict between you and those involved in a conflict.
- *Conferred* credibility includes educational credentials, association with respected mentors or people of high status, and recognition by respected bodies. The value attributed to these sources of conferred credibility varies across cultural groups. In high context settings, more emphasis tends to be put on introductions by high status people and relationship-building than professional accomplishments and task achievement.
- *Expert* credibility includes credentials, process design and management skills, and cultural fluency. It means to have a broad repertoire of tools and a set of practices that support effectiveness at the personal, interpersonal, and intergroup levels. Many practitioners concentrate on expert credibility, but apply process design and management tools without considering their applicability across cultural boundaries. It is important for practitioners to develop cultural fluency as integral parts of their expertise.
- *Congruent* credibility is achieved when practitioners' professed philosophy and behaviors match. It is very important, as the phrase 'actions speak louder than words' conveys. Self-reflective practices help us cultivate awareness of our inner values and habits of attention, and make choices that enhance congruence and authenticity.
- *Contribution* credibility relates to actual results. Does the leader make a difference to the groups or individuals with whom she is working? Does the dispute resolution process build their capacity to work together effectively in the future? Evaluation, collaborative reflection, and follow-up over time are important to assess contribution.

Together, credibility and effectiveness comprise *relational adeptness*. When dispute resolution practitioners realize their part in a relational system, they attend to quality relationships and ongoing cultural fluency as a part of their work. When credible practitioners invite contributions with creativity, humility and authenticity, the resources

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<sup>1</sup> Renwick, George. 2003. "Theory Does Improve Training." In Bennett, Janet, Milton Bennett, and Dan Landis (Eds.) *Handbook of Intercultural Training*. (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

of groups are engaged to contribute to generative solutions. With relationships at the center, boundaries between us and them, intervenor and participant, become more fluid, letting more of our human gifts into the aperture through which shared pictures are viewed.

## **Cultural Fluency: What is it and Why it is Important for Dispute Resolution Leaders?**

Tatsushi Arai describes cultural fluency as having four key components: anticipatory capacity, embeddedness, expressive capacity, and navigational capacity. Anticipatory capacity entails becoming so familiar with cultural patterns and how they shape common sense that informed predictions of future behavioral trajectories become possible. Embeddedness involves acknowledgement of deep-seated unconscious assumptions. Expressive capacity relates to empathy—an ability to imagine the feelings and sensations experienced by others. Navigational capacity involves pragmatic joint action to create synergistic collaborations. A brief exploration of these four capacities follows.

- ***Anticipatory capacity*** comes naturally to us in our home contexts. When someone says “I can read and also . . .” we anticipate the word write. In unfamiliar cultural contexts, dispute resolution professionals are challenged to develop anticipatory capacity without stereotyping.
- ***Embeddedness*** refers to the default assumptions that each person carries with her. “All people strive for power” is an example. Unconscious assumptions carried by individuals and transmitted within collectives are always part of conflict narratives. Astute dispute resolution professionals therefore constantly examine their own embedded assumptions and cultivate curiosity about others’.
- ***Expressive capacity*** involves attunement; it is an ability to imagine the experiences of others and understand them in context. How much more revealing it is to learn about learners’ and educators’ experiences on site than to read about them in documents. When dispute resolution professionals are familiar with and can imagine the lived experiences of parties in special education settings, they are more effective leaders.
- ***Navigational capacity*** refers to the ability to work together with different others to generate synergistic ways forward. This capacity rests on the other three: self- and other-awareness is a prerequisite to finding ways to proceed that reflect key features of each culture. Deep familiarity with preferred forms of expression, key images, forbidden terrain, and identity-related symbols is essential to synergistic process design and intervention. Cultural fluency—in summary—involves approaches centered in self and other-awareness that shift old patterns and open multidirectional communication in conflict.

## Facilitative Leaders Befriend Intuition and Imagination

**Intuition** belongs...to the mind. It operates at the highest level of cognition – at the interface where perception meets...thought. –Daniel Cappon<sup>2</sup>

**Intuition** is an inner awareness and a sense of knowing that is outside the realm of logical thought. – Patricia Einstein<sup>3</sup>

**Intuition** is the direct knowing or learning of something without the conscious use of reasoning. – Kathryn Harwig<sup>4</sup>

Imagination is...the meeting ground of heart and spirit....[I]t is where the dance of probabilities takes place...it makes patterns out of particulars, and [is the medium through which ] we access our **intuitive** awareness. – Margo Adair<sup>5</sup>

**Intuitive** ways of knowing ask us to:

- Free ourselves from fixed ideas and “givens”
- Listen to our inner wisdom (and the inner wisdom of others)
- Name the ways we know without reason to know and invite others to do the same
- Sense convergences and opportunities for synergy
- Envision new approaches to conflict prevention and resolution responsive to specific groups and contexts
- Develop physical and felt awareness to discern the voice of intuition
- Cultivate practices that help evaluate when and how to follow our intuition
- Create intentional climates in our communities and workplaces that welcomes intuitive understanding

How can we cultivate **intuitive** awareness?

- Develop a climate the welcomes intuition, voiced and unvoiced
- Use language and ways of interaction that draw on multiple intelligences
- Refuse to fall into the trap identified by Jung: “It is a fashionable stupidity to regard everything one cannot explain as a fraud.”
- Recognize the role of the body as a instrument of intuitive awareness and discernment
- Model and apply a process for assessing when and when not to act on intuition
- Include silence and reflection as partners with action

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<sup>2</sup> Cappon, Daniel. 1989. Intuition, Harnessing the Hidden Power of the Mind. Toronto, ON: Bedford House Publishing, 46.

<sup>3</sup> Einstein, Patricia. 1997. Intuition. The Path to Inner Wisdom. Rockport, MA: Element Press, 1.

<sup>4</sup> Harwig, Kathryn. 2000. The Intuitive Advantage. Osseo, MN: Spring Press, 14.

<sup>5</sup> Adair, Margo. 2001. Meditations on Everything Under the Sun. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 5.