

Leadership in American Indian Communities: Winter Lessons
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Leadership studies in mainstream American research have become a major focus in business, psychology, philosophy, education and economics. The research literature most often examines leadership independent of cultural context. In this analysis, the author contends that Native ways of leading have much to contribute to the study and practice of leadership in both Native and non-Native communities. This paper considers leadership in American Indian communities as reflected in the leadership literature published from 2003-2008. While there is a paucity of research that focuses on American Indian leadership, there are three leadership models that emerge from the analysis. Woven throughout each model is the significance and power of the proper relationship between the leader and the community. The traditional model stresses the importance of shared responsibility dependent on the changing needs of the community. The studies of Native women as leaders emphasize their collaborative role as co-creators within their communities. The third model considers the development of Native leaders within educational institutions, most notably the tribal colleges. Examination of the three models reveals a re-iteration of Native values which include spirituality, respect, sharing, reverence for the spoken word, silence, leading by example and recognition of accountability based on relationality.

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