Creating the Future Through Relationships:
A Native-American View of Modern Administration

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Abstract

This paper examines public administration from the perspective of the traditional Native-American culture. The context of modern public administration is defined in terms of the pervasiveness of control. Common themes found in Native-American culture are then juxtaposed against public administration practice to illustrate the possibility that bureaucratic control over people and events is artificial. This reflection seems to show other dimensions of administration where new possibilities emerge for change through relationships. A re-thinking of public administration as a concluding integration of both Western and Native-American worldviews attempts to re-conceptualize public administration and challenges the reader to think of new pathways for creative thought and action. Implications are that consensus and informal relationships achieve the best results in actual practice and when administration is viewed as a multi-dimensional human enterprise based on interdependence.

Introduction

How can a "traditional Native-American" worldview help to inform public administration theory? This article suggests that from a Native-American perspective administration may be a subjective practice based on relationships, and that perceived administrative control over people and events is artificial. The traditional Native-American philosophy sees a multi-dimensional, interdependent and constantly changing universe based on relationships. Their sacred

traditions and knowledge define the moral and ethical boundaries within which individuals and communities maintain harmony and balance in the world. At a quick glance, there seems little relationship between this view and the efficient, reality oriented and pragmatic operation of a modern bureaucracy. With a deeper look into the mirror, however, patterns begin to emerge which clearly illuminate the pervasiveness of control and a seeming artificiality of the bureaucratic "world" and its machinations. A traditional Native way of thinking provides some opportunities to look at administration in a different manner and perhaps stimulate some thought and new ideas for administrative practice in modern public bureaucracies.

Two premises underlie the conclusions reached in this article. First, an assumption was made that those similarities found among the fragments of oral histories retained by nearly 545 diverse indigenous "tribes" today in North America (Wilson, 1998) can be generalized as a shared worldview. There are a number of risks associated with attempting to generalize about a "traditional," "pre-colonial" or "Old Indian" (Deloria, 1999) philosophy. Some have a tendency toward sentimentalism when talking about Native Americans because the popular media has romanticized their vision as the "noble savage." (Marshall, 1995) The dominant culture presents them in such a way as to disguise their individuality and human characteristics. (Wilson, 1998) In a sense the media has "re-created" them and made them invisible, except for how we want to see them. To develop general statements about their worldview one must encounter the remnants of traditions and recognize that 500 years of cultural genocide has shattered a reasonable picture of them. Writers and scholars such as Dee Brown (1970), James Wilson (1998) and Peter Nabokov (1999) documented this historic event and ignoring it would be foolish. Of what survives, however, there are common themes of traditional thought, which contemporary scholars and writers such as Vine DeLoria, John Marshall III, James Wilson and A.C. Ross agree have a "family resemblance" among these indigenous groups.

Second, a premise offered here is that public administration is still predominantly exercised through a traditional top-down hierarchy of command and control. Even with the advent of new techniques associated with downsizing, decentralizing and empowering employees, this traditional structure, originally adapted from the military in both the U.S. and U.K. (Townley, 1994), remains the predominant organizational structure for public administration. Small information

technology firms in the private sector may be exceptions. As organizations grow in size, however, their complexity brings increased rationalization, specialization and departmentalization for the purposes of control. Empowered employees and small self-directed groups or teams, often associated with "high performance," remain subject to hierarchical control. In many organizations, managers still resort to more comfortable command and control methods even if they consider their employees as "empowered" (Argyris, 1999).

One additional concern is choosing the appropriate terms or phrases when referring to this population. This may seem trivial but researchers have always labeled these indigenous people from the outside with little regard for their preferences. Michael Yellow Bird (1999) explains that the politically correct *Native American* is not a preferred term for members of these groups. The majority prefers *American Indian* when given the choice between the two. However, both of these terms, along with *Indian*, are associated with "colonized identities" imposed by Europeans and Euro-Americans. Most indigenous groups call themselves, in their own languages "the first peoples" and identify themselves by tribal name (Wilson, 1998; Beck et al, 1977; Yellow Bird, 1999). The more radical fringe prefer the term "American Indian" as they believe it is a translation of the Italian "in dios" or, "in God" -- "Americans in God" (Means, 1995) rather than a case of mistaken identity. However, even among this group the preferred designation is by "tribal" affiliation -- Lakota, Dakota (English: Sioux), Dine (English: Navajo) and so on. (Marshall, 1995; Means, 1995) This difficulty may appear insignificant, however, because many of the names commonly associated by Euro-Americans with "Indian Tribes" are misnomers, given to them by their colonizers, often with negative connotations. For example, the term "Sioux" is believed to have derived from a French corruption of an Ojibway word meaning snake (Means, 1995).

The remainder of this article uses tribal identity references where possible and *First Nations Peoples, First Peoples, The People* and *American Indian* are used interchangeably when generalizing about all groups. Occasionally, this article uses the terms *Native* and *Indigenous* within the context of the original pre-colonial inhabitants of North America. As a marginal population, unrecognized for the most part as the "First Peoples" of "Turtle Island" (North America), and still "colonized" in some views, this is a sensitive subject. Further, the various names indicate correctly the fragmentation of their traditional

cultures -- a result of colonization and attempts to destroy their way of life, to "…kill the Indian in order to save the man." "Merciless Indian savages" is the phrase contained in the U.S. Declaration of Independence to describe the First Nations People.

The Context

Yes, you are a people of reasons, you always have reasons for
this, reasons for that. Yaqui-Arizona (Nabokov, 1999: p. xxi)
I see and admire your manner of living, your good warm houses; your
extensive fields of corn, your gardens, your cows, oxen, workhouses,
wagons, and a thousand machines, that I know not the use of. I see that
you are able to clothe yourselves, even from weeds and grass. In short
you can do almost what you choose. You whites possess the power of
subduing almost every animal to your use. You are surrounded by
slaves.
Every thing about you is in chains and you are slaves yourselves. I fear
if I should exchange my pursuits for yours, I too should become a slave.
Big Soldier, Osage, to an Indian Agent, 1820 (in Deloria, 1999: p. 4)

The Way Things Appear to Work

Those of us conditioned by many years of public administration practice come to accept the boundaries and rational processes of our world of work. Our training is to be problem solvers. We develop action plans with solutions (means) to achieve usually pre-defined ends (goals and objectives) in the most *efficient* manner (a moral imperative). Our work organizations and places in the hierarchy represent our reality. We come to believe we are in control of outcomes and can measure progress. We control resources and in turn we are controlled as a resource. Authority and control emanate from above and depending on our hierarchical positions, we in turn dispense to those below us. This can become a comfortable and seemingly predictable world. However, all may not be as it appears.

Controlling the Uncontrollable

All forms of administration appear to focus on determining outcomes. All seem to spring from efforts to improve techniques

designed to control people and predict, through rational means, what the future holds. Can we really control people and events, or is it an illusion? If the controls work, why are we constantly faced with the "unanticipated" consequences of our actions and decisions?   Is information really so complex that considering all decision options is impossible, or is there something "out there" we don't "see?" Have we lost our connection, or do we just choose not to see other dimensions of this human activity of administration?

Control mechanisms are pervasive in all organizations. Budgets attempt to control and predict the future.   Performance evaluations attempt to control people. Training and development programs attempt to control attitudes and behavior.   Even applied theories of human relations meant to focus on the needs of the individual seem to yield to the subtle, yet powerful pressure of organizational control.   Their application ultimately becomes one of the subjects "adapting" to the organization. The appearance of "fads" in the management literature and their adoption by public organizations at all levels indicates the need for something new and different is recognized. "New" theories (Total Quality Management, Seven Habits etc.) seem to continue to deal with ways for individuals to adjust to organizations.

Frederick Thayer (1981) described Planning-Programming-Budgeting-Systems (PPBS) and Zero Based Budgeting (ZBB) in the government 20 years ago as "fads" and methods for achieving greater efficiency or "more for the money." These attempted linear approaches to management systematically tried to create the future, by controlling the present. Each participant or "planner" was a separate piece of the organizational machine.   Theoretically at some "high" level, a leader pulled the plans together to see the "big picture."   Policy makers required annual updates or adjustments to plans/budgets that leaders normally failed to communicate to key parties. These approaches were indicative of "scientific management." They appeared to be attempts to exercise control over the uncontrollable.   They have now faded from prominence, yet their remnants remain in the tool kits of practitioners.

Why this near obsession with control?   Traditional Western thought places human beings on top of the pyramid separate from other creatures and nature. This superior hierarchical arrangement justifies the human control and use of all resources in order to achieve progress. The view in Western religions is that the world is either not "good" or humans are superior to nature. We commonly accept this thinking.

Oppositions that value mind over body, culture over nature, reason over emotion and order over chaos contribute to the attitude that humans can exploit nature to fulfill human needs (Hoffman, 1997). Over time, the rationalized "machine" evolving from this line of thought has achieved remarkable technological progress and material wealth. We can also measure the true worth of this progress, however, in terms of "costs," human and otherwise, rather than material gains.

Vine Deloria, Jr. (1999) a prominent Native scholar, sees Western thought as being devoid of political, spiritual or social dimensions. The focus is on control, if necessary, through brute force. He suggests the result is slavery. We attempt to subdue all things to our control and ultimately become controlled. Our worldview becomes incomplete. We seem to exclude what does not "fit" our preconceived notion of "reality." Our panorama of administrative activity becomes exclusionary and one-dimensional -- "one, two, three, solution!" (Means, 1995). Might there be a wider landscape of relationships beyond our control, which influence events? There is evidence that our commonly accepted landscape may be too limiting and the workings within, artificial.

How Things May Really Work

This article suggests that the primary purpose of administrative functions is to control people and events. While these control features may discourage creativity, informal systems of relationships and "natural leaders" emerge within any workforce as there appears to be a tendency for human beings to subvert and evade control (Townley, 1994). These informal systems often seem to operate in spite of, rather than in support of, organizationally defined methodologies. Is this the dimension of an organization where the real work is accomplished? Is it possible these accomplishments are then "translated" in order to fit the organization's paradigm of how the work is "supposed" to be done?

Karl Weick (1995) used studies of juries as examples that may suggest a retroactive "sensemaking" process is at work in decision-making. Once a verdict is decided, the jury looks back to construct a plausible account of how they got to the verdict. Perhaps there is a similar process at work in organizations beyond bounded rationality. We may take actions and make decisions, then develop our "facts" to

support our already foregone conclusion in order to make them "fit" the "accepted" decision paradigm.

Organizational theorist Nils Brunsson (Hatch, 1997) calls the concept of decision rationality into question altogether. He claims that through his observations of decision-makers, we use a process of decision irrationality in actual practice. We consider few alternatives. We ignore the negative consequences of the favored alternative. We define criteria for the selection of our favored course of action in terms of our positive expectations of motivation and commitment for carrying out the decision.

The possibility seems clear that we use a subjective dimension in organizations freely, even when we put in place controls to legitimate the established order. If so, the controls begin to appear artificial. Perhaps our concerns about separating the objective from subjective, facts from values, parts from the whole serve to disguise "how things really work?"

Can we open our minds and gain a broader perspective of knowledge about the practice of public administration? Farmer (1995) points out there are contraries, or blind spots, associated with the assumptions of modern public administration. This article suggests that through a "momentary lapse of reason" we can perhaps gain some insight about our assumptions and suspend our "taken for granted" rules that guide our practice. A traditional American Indian worldview offers a very different landscape for us to consider. However, if we think about their views carefully, opportunities for seeing new pathways to creative thought and action may present themselves.

The People's Worldview

Grandmother, and great Mother Earth,
upon You the people will walk;
may they follow the sacred path with Light,
not with the darkness of ignorance.
may they always remember their relatives at the four quarters,
and may they know that they are related
to all that moves upon the universe...
(Black Elk in Gustafson, 1997)

This they tell, and whether it happened so or not, I do not know; but if you think about it, you can see that it is true. (Black Elk; in Deloria, 1999).

[The Indian] must be imbued with the exalting egotism of American civilization so that he will say "I" instead of "We," and "This is mine" instead of "This is ours." (Commissioner of Indian Affairs 1886 in Nabokov, 1999: p. 233).

The common field is the seat of barbarism…the separate farm [is] the door to civilization. (Indian Agent 1886 in Nabokov, 1999: p. 233).

Sacred Knowledge

One defining characteristic of the First People's shared worldview is that human beings placed on this earth in relation to the "whole," have a moral and "sacred" responsibility to ensure that humans maintain the natural balance of all things. The creation stories where the *Great Mystery* provides instruction through human/animal forms reflects this sacred duty. Visions and dreams, as in Western religions, often revealed these instructional stories, which generation after generation passed down orally. In the stories, human beings were integral parts of a natural order, embracing the whole of creation (Wilson, 1999) and through which they received instructions for respecting the natural environment and rules for social interaction. The universe was alive with everything (human beings, animals, birds, insects, plants and rocks) in dynamic relationship with one another. As everything was interdependent, all had a responsibility to maintain harmony and balance (Deloria, 1999; Hoffman, 1997; Marshall, 1995). Instructions for when to plant crops, which animals and in what seasons they offered themselves for food, how they were to raise children and the former generations' accepted and non-accepted social behaviors, defined the People's sacred responsibilities. They saw a human being's ability to reason as a special survival skill, much like a wolf's sense of smell and an eagle's eyesight. However, they did not consider reason a superior trait (Marshall, 1995; Deloria, 1999; Irwin, 1994) nor did they recognize or approve of the domination of one species over animate or inanimate objects, as it would result in imbalance. They viewed disease or ill health in terms of balance/imbalance in their totally inclusive worldview. All events, dreams, visions, the past, the

present and future represented the People's reality. Although they believed *reason* had its place in the field of human experience, it was not the most significant means for attaining knowledge. They gave aesthetic, symbolic and visionary capabilities equal attention as sources of knowledge (Irwin, 1994).

What teachings or body of knowledge guides the moral and ethical practice of public administration today? There is an emphasis on understanding and valuing diversity, however, what are the guiding principles? Are inclusiveness and a genuine appreciation of differences behind this philosophy or is there strong pressure for conformity? Are women still expected to act like men and minorities like whites in order to succeed? Are programs and services offered to the public based on principles of equity or efficiency at the expense of equity?

We Are All Related In A Living Universe

The People's concept of "relations" was the notion of the universe as a relational whole, a single interactive organism in which all things, all beings, were active and essential parts. No one could understand the whole without a knowledge of the function and meaning of each of the parts, while no one could understand the parts other than in the context of the whole (Underwood, 1990). The American Indian scholar Vine DeLoria, Jr. in his book *Spirit & Reason* (1999) explains the Lakota *circle of knowledge*: "They arranged their knowledge in a circular format -- which is to say, there were no ultimate terms or constituents of their universe, only sets of relationships…"

They perceived the universe as *alive*, although not in the sense of applying human characteristics to everything in the universe. The did not view human beings as the "crown of creation." Rather, the evidence for The People that the universe was alive appeared in the observable fact that the earth nurtures smaller forms of life - people, animals, rivers, valleys. They felt that to attempt to apply human characteristics to these forms of life was unwarranted -- because it would restrict knowledge of the earth in terms of lesser beings, and disallow discovering its true essence. They considered human beings "younger brothers" of other life forms who had to learn everything from these creatures. "Because the universe is alive, there is choice for all things and the future is always indeterminate. Consequently,

predictions are based on the knowledge of the 'character' of an entity" (Deloria, 1999: p. 50).

Knowledge was an understanding of natural processes learned through sacred teachings and personal experience. An ability to participate in an emerging event based on this knowledge marked the wise and gifted individual. This process is most easily seen in the knowledge associated with plants, insects, birds and animals and recognition of their interrelationships. The People believed that as everything was related, the responsibility for maintaining the harmony of life fell equally on all creatures. To them humans gained knowledge through observation of the world where human interests were not the primary concern. Observed relationships between plants, insects and animals provided knowledge useful for maintaining all life, with careful consideration given to how and when people could harvest plants or kill animals without upsetting the natural balance of the world. Their sacred teachings told them which animals to kill and which to spare. Knowledge gained from observing plant behavior interact with soil avoided over-planting and soil erosion, practices preceding the "discovery" by Western science of chemical compositions and interactions in the soil, and their incompatibility with certain types of crops. A lack of understanding from whites contributed to their improper farming techniques and later, the realized need to introduce chemicals to correct imbalances. Artificial corrections then created other imbalances. Interference without regard for the natural order of relationships required continual intrusive corrections as imbalances multiplied. The People's knowledge and respect for relationships maintained the natural balance without artificially imposed corrections. Vine Deloria, Jr. (1999: p. 12) illustrates:

> Many centuries ago, the Senecas had a revelation. Three sisters appeared and informed them that they wished to establish a relationship with the people, the "two-leggeds." In return the performance of certain ceremonies that helped the sisters thrive, they would become plants and feed people…beans, corn and squash…had to be planted together and harvested together…The Senecas complied with their wishes. The lands of the Senecas were never exhausted, because these plants …were also a sophisticated natural nitrogen cycle that kept the lands fertile and productive. The white men came and planted only corn and wheat and very shortly exhausted the soil…the white man's scientists "discovered" the nitrogen cycle and

produced…chemical fertilizer to replace natural nitrogen…we have discovered that there are unpleasant by-products of commercial fertilizer that may have an even worse effect on us than they do on the soil.

This white man behavior in the eyes of the People must have seemed irrational. When plants or animals would change their locations, the People would look at the relationships for explanation. The behavior of birds, plants and insects "diagnosed" buffalo herd migrations. These examples show us the significance of the People's reverence for *relationships*, *harmony* and maintaining *balance* in the universe. *Change was in the relationship, not in the management or control of the relationship.*

The People's attitudes of mutual respect among the members of a living universe contain strong beliefs of moral and ethical behavior. The willingness to allow individual entities to fulfill themselves without intruding on one another leads to the high value Indians placed on self-knowledge and self-discipline. "Only by allowing innovation by every entity can the universe move forward and create the future."(Deloria, 1999: p. 51). DeLoria leaves some nagging questions behind in his analysis. One is how a society defines "equality." Do we value "sameness" or diversity? Sitting Bull (Hunkpapa) offered an observation about the Western style of education that "It is not necessary that eagles be crows" (Deloria, 1999: p. 51) seemingly reflecting on intrusion and inequality. How does this intrusion impede "self-discipline" and expectations that people act responsibly? Russell Means (1995), a Lakota activist says, "Freedom means you are free to be responsible. No one has any rules or regulations for you to follow because you are a responsible individual: responsible for your own behavior, responsible for your generations, responsible for your Mother the Earth, responsible for every living being, and responsible for the universe. That's what freedom means."

While The People expected to gain benefits from the physical world, to do so at the expense of others (to include the natural environment) would disrupt the natural balance. Individual and communal responsibility that valued mutual respect of the world around them apparently defined moral behavior. This view seems in stark contrast to a Judeo-Christian belief in a kind of "communal sin," or inherited curse which isolates people in opposition to a hostile world (Wilson, 1998).

What possibilities does this view suggest for public administration? Imagine inverting the "top-down" hierarchy and putting the people for whom the organization exists in the center of a circle given equal relationship with other elements. The direction of the organized entity would emerge from the interactions between all people, within the bureaucracy and served by it, involved. "Administrators" would become integral parts of the process and attempt to influence "change" or "progress" as it emerged, not control it from above. There would be no need to separate functions, as these "functionaries" are also part of the relationship. Only the dynamics or energy, created by these relationships, is important. Rather than goals being prescribed, they would emerge from the relationships. They would see cause and effect as existing together. To them, the interconnectedness of everything leading up to an effect makes the implied ability to move backward in a straight line to find the "cause" as fruitless. There would be too many "forks in the road" and other pathways which would make the isolation of a cause impossible. The ultimate challenge for those "administering" the organization or program is a continually influencing process that keeps in balance and all parts operating in harmony. This way of thinking is obviously open to charges of anarchy and chaos -- an organization and world without order. On closer inspection, however, there is an order in this way of thinking. A kind of natural order based on the faith in human beings to work together in relationships toward mutually developed goals. In a way, this is almost a therapeutic approach based on relationships, free-association, and a holistic view of human beings.

Far fetched? It may be. However, it resembles Total Quality Management, but eliminates the hierarchical structure as opposed to coexisting with it. Consensus as the preferred decision making process in this hypothetical construction, when actually practiced, results in giving greater clarity to organization goals (Townley, 1994).

Perceptions of the Whole and the Specific

"When hunting, Hawk sees mouse…and dives directly for it. When hunting, Eagle sees the whole pattern…sees movement in the general pattern…and dives for the movement, learning only later that it is a mouse." (Underwood, 1990). Western science operates as a Hawk; the First People's worldview is more like the Eagle. An exclusionary technique, used by the Hawk, reduces considerations to a

linear approach. This, on the surface, seems to be the most efficient course of action. The panorama becomes limited and only focused on moving from point A to point B. The peripheral landscape becomes invisible although the movement from point A to point B may affect the whole. The relationships beyond the straight line from points A to B, although affected, are ignored. The First People consider the "whole," the peripheral landscape, before reaching any *tentative* conclusions about the "specific." It is a view where the micro and macro reflect one another (Gustafson, 1997).

For example, poor billiard players who focus on each individual shot ignore the changes occurring in the peripheral landscape. Good billiard players look at the layout of all balls on the table and recognize that any move of any ball changes every other relationship among each ball on the table. Each individual relationship presents an opportunity. They calculate each move on these changing relationships. This macro-view reveals the importance of the spatial universe and diminishes the importance of the isolated and linear relationship between each shot.

For Public Administration, this analogy may uncover a possible fallacy in our way of thinking, often borne out by experience. Each "efficient" decision (individual shot) made in this linear fashion causes change in an "opportunity landscape" we often choose not to see or acknowledge. Many of the relationships and changes are beyond our control once we take the shot. The fallacy is that we can control what happens, although our linear decision process purports total control, and the most "efficient" action. We explain the "fallout" (changes in the peripheral landscape) as "unanticipated consequences" or "unforeseen developments." Perhaps our control, which is certainly a pervasive value in public bureaucracies, is artificial? It could be that our view of spatial relationships would lead to a different approach. Maybe the most effective move, yet least efficient action, would be to not take a shot?   Others might characterize this approach as "wishy-washy" or "indecisive," a death knoll for a public administrator.   A Lakota approach even today is to hesitate, or "…think twice before you say something or do something." (Ross, 1991). The "symptoms" or problems (parts) are set aside, considered and dealt with when the appropriate response presents itself in consideration of the larger landscape (whole).

Specificity   and   wholeness   are   distinct,   yet   inter-related (Underwood, 1990).   The Hawk and Eagle have a lot to say to one another.   Both views are needed.   The universe is seen as space

containing energy, which is constantly in motion. Its movement creates change. Paula Underwood of the Iroquois People (1990) points out in her tradition, particle (specific) coexists with wave (wholeness). Particle represents the binary view of yes/no choices a person makes, or a "path" chosen in the forest. The forest represents the whole, or wave. One enters between the wave and the particle at critical times along the path of life toward *becoming*.   We need knowledge of the forest (whole) in order to choose the "right" paths. The sacred teachings of the People provide the map, or moral choices for choosing the path. The Lakota have a similar view where the sacred teachings provide choices of living one's life in balance and harmony with everything (choosing the Red Road) or living for the self (choosing the Black Road) (Ross, 1991).

Time, Space and Relationships

        In the People's worldview, time and space are inseparable (Ross, 1991).   The prevailing concept today for attempting to explain their philosophy is "relationships." Vine Deloria, Jr. (1999) says that *space* determined the nature of relationships and *time* determined the meaning of relationships.   In contrast to a Western historical line, the People seemed to think of time as a repeating cycle of change, containing past, present and future at once (Wilson, 1998). They break human patterns down into steps: pre-birth, babies, children, youths, adults, mature adults and elders. If a family lived a responsible life it's members would be granted old age and they would live long enough to see and know their great-grandparents and great-grandchildren (Deloria, 1999). At each stage of life, they measured each individual's identity in terms of his or her living up to the sacred teachings. In the Lakota tradition, elders named each person before reaching these stages to establish for him or her value to live up to (Means, 1995). When reaching old age, the elder may have a number of names. They intended the naming to keep track of changes in the individual's personality as one progressed through life.   Each individual was continually *becoming,* striving for wisdom; there was no ending. They viewed death as another beginning in a continuing cycle of life and death.

        For the People, every entity created the future by entering new relationships and events. The universe seemed to have movement in an undetermined direction and every individual had a part to play. Ceremonials and visions would reveal the appropriate time to act --

counseling whether to act urgently or wait. There seemed to be hesitancy or tentativeness built into their decisions about when and how to act. They recognized that not all information was available immediately; some things may simply come into being during the course of time.

Summary

For the Western mind, steeped in the tradition of seeing the human being as separate from Nature, some of these concepts may appear strange when applied to our "reality." The analysis contained in this paper may be over simplistic in a search for meaning, which we can appropriately apply to public administration. However, in thinking about this worldview, there are no illusions to maintain or justify. One senses a powerful understanding of moral and ethical behavior, the inclusiveness of relationships, individual and communal responsibility and what it means to be human. It at least provides the opportunity to hesitate and reflect on what implications there may be in the First People's worldview for public administration in a world seemingly dominated by technology and economic self-interest. It seems such an exploration may provide some insight for governance in the face of rapid globalization.

Re-thinking Administration

> *Their ancestors had developed cultures of their own, colourful languages, harmonious views of the relation between people, and between people and nature whose remnants are a living criticism of the tendencies of separation, analysis, self-centredness inherent in Western thought. These cultures…express ideals of life and possibilities of human existence. Paul Feyerabend (1975).*

> *I want a public administration not of Men of Reason but of the people--a public administration structured and operated so as to come as close as possible to gaining its direction from the processes of human relationship. O.C. McSwite (1996).*

> *The tendency is to make this system fit us rather than trying to find our place in it along with the responsible relationship this requires. Gustafson (1997).*

Being and Becoming

Public organizations are comprised, not of wiring diagrams and hierarchical arrangements, but of human beings acting in dynamic relationship with each other in a number of dimensions, which comprise their lives. They are diverse yet may share common characteristics. More than one dimension defines their identities.

Public Administration theorists called to open the field to more voices and achieve a higher level of understanding and analysis through *Discourse Theory* (McSwite, et.al. 2000). Farmer (2000) points to the desirability of achieving a level of discourse in PA on a macro level which takes into consideration the whole human being at the highest rung in his metaphor of a "ladder" of discourse, "Out of the Cave." While recognizing the value of lower or micro levels of discourse, this higher level brings to consciousness the meaning of being human with psychological, social, biological and spiritual dimensions. In addition, the recognition that a human has many dimensions, with numerous influences shaping his or her identity, is beginning to appear in the human resource management literature introducing a similar concept of "human becomings (Elliott, 2000)."

The People's tradition defined a person's life cycle as a continuing quest for wisdom. Their view that the human being was "part of" and in relation with all other things, rather than above and separate from them, implies they were always in a process of "becoming." "Being" implies having reached the pinnacle of creation and connotes finality, as if there are no higher levels to reach. Although a subtle distinction, it is possibly an inhibiting one. The term *becoming* has a more dynamic flavor implying motion and change. *Being* is static.

The People's view of how people learn may provide insight for training and development in public administration. Keeping in mind the Hawk and Eagle analogy used earlier implying a recognition of spatial and linear views, the first question asked was "how does this

person learn?" The Native, while predominantly "right brain" (spatial images), recognized there was an important relationship to "left brain" (linear logic), and they needed to bring the two together for clear understanding (Underwood, 1990; Ross, 1991; Gustafson, 1997; Irwin, 1994). Underwood (1990) explains, "In my tradition there is an ancient saying: 'If you want to be understood you must say what you have to say three times in three different ways -- once for each ear, and once for the heart.'" They intended one for a linear understanding, the second was for a spatial understanding, and the third was to integrate both. Listening followed a similar process. Their approach to learning was one that recognized differences in the learning pace among individuals. To them, education was experiential and part of the oral tradition (Marshall, 1995). The People believed education was more a process of self-discovery than something which was imposed from outside.

This view is somewhat more removed from formal training and development programs in Western schools and government where control is more of a feature of "educating" for conformity than learning, and where advancement is hierarchical in both schools (grade levels) and at work (evaluations/promotions).

Are there implications here for both formal and informal training and development?   Why, for the purposes of control, are people expected to learn and develop at the same rate? There is the occasional "fast tracker" normally with friends in high places, yet for the most part people are put into categories for control purposes. Can we learn to see people as *becoming* and learn when and how to intervene in relationships in a non-intrusive way? Can we learn to communicate and listen in three ways to enhance understanding? Can we give up our need for control and allow self-governance? Will we at least consider the possibility that our "controls," while artificial for their intended purpose, serve to intrude and stifle human development?

Decisions

Decisions in public organizations carry with them moral and ethical dimensions. However, public administration seems to address, more often than not, the material values related to efficiency, not moral values (Thayer, 1981). Although arguable, the possibility reveals the one-dimensional nature of administration. This article submits that considering the full dimension of human existence gives us an inclusive

and "moral" approach to administration.   If efficiency is a moral imperative in public administration, can or should we demote it? Considering this possibility seems strange, as most would not advocate for "inefficiency," however, in consideration of the analogy of the poor billiards player, unethical consequences of decisions could reside in the peripheral relational landscape. The Lakota tradition of bow making is an illustration of how efficiency can occur as a "secondary" versus "primary" imperative.

John Marshall III (1995) describes that in the Lakota tradition of bow making. He notes that the bow has two identities. One for what it is -- a weapon, and one for what it represents -- life. It is more than a functional instrument. "It is given substance, purpose, and spirit by different entities within the realm of physical existence: trees, four-leggeds and two leggeds. It is born of death and must cause death to provide life." In the making of the bow, an organism (tree) had to die. This reminds the maker that all things are connected in life and death. Death is never regarded as only an ending because it is also a beginning. When the craftsman makes the bow, the life of a deer or antelope ends but the craftsman changes their flesh (glue and sinew) into a new entity -- a bow, given ability by old identities.   A bow represents their lesson on existence: that which comes after birth and that which comes after death. Relationships are primary.

Notice that this description conspicuously does not address the efficiency of a bow. Arrow making and the act of hunting game have a similar emphasis on relationships and "closing the circle" of life and death. Upon killing game, the Lakota hunter would often leave an offering (tiny pieces of their own flesh, drops of their own blood, gifts) as expressions of indebtedness. The ability to efficiently and effectively kill more deer with a bow and arrow, although certainly recognized, did not seem to enter their traditional equation. It appears that emphasis on the efficiency value in this case gives way to a value of relationships, yet the benefits of technological efficiency were still enjoyed.

What does the Lakota tradition of bow and arrow making have to do with public administration?   It contrasts the Euro-centric view where we privilege efficiency, or as Russell Means (1995) says, it serves to remove "…the wonderful complexity and spirituality from the universe and replace it with a logical sequence: one, two, three. Answer!   This is what has come to be termed 'efficiency' in the

European mind." The efficient view (one - draw, two- aim, three - fire. kill!) contrasts starkly with the relational view of the Lakota.

Problem solving and decision making in public administration often use a micro-approach from identifying the "problem" to finding a "solution" and with a sense of urgency. One - identify the problem. Two - consider options. Three - recommend a solution. Answer! Practical experience tends to support a hesitant approach like the Lakota. In the U.S. Army, there are two sayings "...don't just do something, stand there" and "...the first information you receive is usually wrong." Ironically, George Armstrong Custer and the 7th Cavalry would have benefited from this advice. Why is it then, that when we intuitively know our decisions will not solve the problem we continue to make them as if they will? Is it possible that "inefficient" decisions may be "better" decisions in the long term? What seasoned bureaucrat has never experienced acting on incorrect information and having to retract a decision, or, not taking action on an issue and allowing it to play out and solve itself? These are very real experiences, so why is the practice of "urgent" action, being "proactive" and making decisions haphazardly often valued in bureaucracies?

An initial reaction to a "symptom" may ignore emerging relationships and events. To the People the cause of the problem may not be the source of solution. Events may have multiple meanings. For every phenomenon, the Iroquois tradition advises to develop at least six plausible explanations -- *The Rule of Six* (Underwood, 1990). This is a reminder to not react to the first thing that sounds "right." There may be in their view a multitude of factors influencing any given phenomena. What appears to be a problem now, may actually not be a problem later.

Morality and Ethics

The Native tradition uses the term "morality" to mean "sacred" as opposed to "religion," although the concepts are interwoven in Western thought. The languages of the People lacked a word for "religion" (Hoffman, 1997). "Sacred" for the People conveyed their reverence for all living things. As everything is related and interdependent, what we do is of immediate importance to all other elements within the universe. We are not separate and above all of creation, we are part of it. Nothing has incidental meaning and there

are no coincidences (Deloria, 1999). Our actions have consequences. In this sense, we have a "moral" responsibility to do "the right thing." The only way to know the "right" thing is to guide our actions based on a value system.   This immediately conjures up images of introducing "religion" into government. The Native did not see a higher deity as a specific personality which demanded worship and adoration (Deloria, 1999; Beck et.al., 1977; Ross, 1991). The People saw the universe as being energized by a pervading power. All creatures in the universe manifested this energy or force. Their sense of individual and communal responsibility guided actions to do the "right thing" beyond their own self-interests. They recognized their actions were not isolated and would affect their relations in the world in some way.   Therefore, they practiced a hesitancy or tentativeness before acting. This is far removed from the Western tradition where actions are nearly always linear, based on self-interest (individual, organization, community) and without regard for relationships. It seems our moral imperative in the Western tradition of administration has become efficiency.

If one looks at efficiency as *doing things right* and effectiveness as *doing the right things,* it seems that effectiveness may require a spatial view of interrelationships in order to see potential inequities or unethical consequences before decisions are made and actions taken. In the peripheral landscape, there may be a number of relationships providing opportunities for bringing about effective change and outcomes without exerting control over them and without sacrificing efficiency.   It may require patience and hesitation to allow events to unfold sufficiently in order to know how and when to intervene, if at all.

Accountability

We design accountability to control and reduce mistakes. It is a necessary tool to control the actions and outcomes of administration. It is also designed to overcome the evasion of responsibility, which could occur if something went wrong and no one was held accountable. It is a mechanism for assigning blame for individual actions if those actions turn out to be wrong or unacceptable.   It tries to overcome the "Eichmann" or "Calley" defense of "I was only following orders." Western culture accepts it and most organizations expect it. It may be necessary in modern organizations from a moral and ethical standpoint. On the other hand, it has an oppressive feature, which McSwite (2000) articulated.

Accountability can have an "unforgiving" aspect that results in people being afraid to act for fear of making mistakes. Modern organizations recognize this aspect of accountability. Today, encouragement to be creative and not afraid of making mistakes is heard, but "don't make the same mistake twice" often qualifies this position. The result can be a bureaucratic stance to "follow the book" or not move too far from the printed word. It can create a psychologically unhealthy atmosphere, particularly when espoused but not practiced.

From a traditional Indian perspective, all things have meaning. A mistake is not without meaning or significance. They view it also as an opportunity to interpret its possible meanings. It is similar to their view that correcting the perceived cause of a problem may not necessarily be a solution. In their view, a mistake is shared. All of us have a moral responsibility in the present to participate in creating the future and therefore share responsibility for it. To dwell in the past by exerting punishment and retribution contributes nothing to future events, does not change the situation and is counter productive. This is not to suggest the traditional Native belief excluded punishment as an appropriate act. It does perhaps hold less importance in their tradition than in ours. To illustrate, the Lakota custom of parents having their children disciplined by extended family through "talk" avoided damaging the parent-child relationship, put that relationship at a high level of importance and protected it (Ross, 1991; Means, 1995).

The Indian view of punishment provides an interesting perspective and may have some application to public administration. Obviously, we see accountability as needed and punishment for mistakes appropriate in certain circumstances. Even so, accountability is a tricky concept. Who is to be held accountable for what and to what degree consumes a lot of energy in an organization. Searching for blame creates negative energy. Does "accountability" need to have the debilitating effect it has on creativity in organizations or is there another way to ensure ethical, legal and moral standards are upheld in organizations? There are many examples of managers in the bowels of an organization allowing for mistakes and encouraging creativity. However, there may be just as many examples of intolerance for mistakes and accountability being used as a hammer to ensure people stay in line. Perhaps it's a matter of degree or personality dependent.

A traditional Indian approach may be to spend less time expending negative energy and more time on evaluating the effect of a mistake in the present, then recovering and expending positive energy to move forward. A mistake may include possibilities for creativity and change. In their view, they see a decision as having many dimensions that by the natural order of things must be considered, whether articulated or not. An efficiency decision includes a number of dimensions, to include a moral one. A leader should recognize this. To separate everything out as if applying a prescription for a decision is artificial and serves little purpose other than ignoring important things. This may be dangerous and ill advised in their view. If a decision process includes full consideration of its moral dimensions in the first place, as traditional Indian thought would have it, and something goes wrong in its practical application, how serious can it be? It would seem that a decision based on objective fact and in the service of efficiency, without consideration of its moral dimensions, poses more risk for damage. Does it follow that a traditional Indian approach of considering all dimensions of a decision in the moment and recognizing most things are beyond our full control, that accountability can take on a different meaning? How is it that with a strong sense of holding people accountable in bureaucracies, once a mistake is made, accountability is not always easy to pinpoint and a search sometimes begins for a "fall guy" who may or may not be punished? If it is clearly assigned, why search? Is accountability in the modern bureaucratic sense a process for assigning blame to satisfy the "public?" If it serves no other purpose and does not contribute to the future, why do we insist upon it?

Viewing accountability, mistake making and creativity through the eyes of the traditional People may contribute to an understanding of how to realize a balance, which may result in a healthier and less punitive organizational atmosphere.

Conclusion

Reflecting on the nature of public administration from the perspective of The People provides an opportunity to not only get a glimpse of the nature of control in modern bureaucracy, but also to think about new possibilities for governance in the future. The People's tradition provides a unique way to perhaps reconsider some of our basic assumptions about the human enterprise of administration and remind us that the quality our relationships are influential in the pursuit of a good and equitable society. Their insights may provide "new" ways to

interpret and administer our world of work, and provide a different perspective for how we live our lives. The People's tradition reminds us of our humble position in this universe and may offer different ways of thinking about our individual, community, international and environmental relations. It is by recognizing our interdependence and nurturing our relationships to encourage mutual respect, that we can create a future of inclusiveness where people are "free to be responsible."

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