



# Facilitators' Guide for Leadership Development Workshops using *First Leaders*

## Context

First Nations people have been refining leadership for millennia. By comparison, the discipline of workplace leadership emerged only about 100 years ago – just a few generations back. Over the long timeframe of their experience, First Nation societies have figured out what works and what doesn't. Their timeless wisdom can help workplace leaders solve their major leadership challenges.

## Learning Objectives

In using the book *First Leaders* to explore workplace leadership, the objectives are to:

1. Help individual leaders at each level of the organisation enhance their own leadership.
2. Assist senior executives reflect on their personal leadership style and impact.
3. Assist HR teams review and improve the key leadership practices in their organisation.
4. Increase the respect we have for First Nation societies by appreciating the depth of their leadership wisdom.

This document supports Objective 1. Separate guides are available to support Objectives 2, 3 and 4.

## This Guide

This guide assists in facilitating group discussions on the leadership principles of First Nation societies outlined in *First Leaders*. The focus of the workshop is to help individual leaders determine how their own leadership can be improved based on First Nations wisdom.

## Introductory Comments by Facilitator

At the end of this guide, we provide a draft script of what the facilitator might say in opening a workshop on this subject of First Nations leadership. Use or amend the draft as you wish.

## Prior to the Workshop

Before the workshop, the leaders participating in the workshop should have been provided with a copy of *First Leaders* and given a reasonable time to read it. The discussion questions should also have been provided beforehand allowing time for the leaders to reflect on the questions. The set of questions for this purpose is the document titled: Discussion Questions for Leadership Development.

## PDF or Word

The Discussion Questions for Leadership Development on our website is provided as a PDF. You are welcome to amend the questions to suit your objectives for the workshop you are planning (and the time you have for the session(s)). And if you'd like a Word version of the document to make amending easier, please contact us ([wisdom@firstleadersbook.com](mailto:wisdom@firstleadersbook.com)).

## Structure and Timing

Given the depth of leadership thinking of First Nation societies, the content of *First Leaders* is extensive. Potentially, the subject could be a whole leadership program. Most likely you'll be incorporating the subject in a wider leadership program or perhaps running several short sessions of an hour to two each. Some of the options available to a facilitator include:

1. Spread the discussion in, say, one-hour segments throughout a wider leadership program. Because of the breadth of the leadership principles of First Nations, the subject matter for each segment will most likely align to the content of the leadership program you are conducting.
2. Hold the discussion as a single event, over say two hours, in which case the number of questions will be reduced.

3. Dedicate a series of meetings – in person or on-line – to this topic (for example as lunch-and-learn sessions). This option provides time for participants to learn, reflect and apply from one session to another. Second and subsequent sessions can include a discussion on the experience leaders have had in applying the learnings since last discussion.
4. Senior leaders could incorporate the discussion of First Nations leadership in meetings of their leadership team. The topics of First Leadership could be taken in short segments, with these short segments spread out over a few months or a year. For example, ‘At our next meeting we will talk about the subject of Group Cohesion covered in *First Leaders*.’

## Group Activities

If you are using the book to provide a discussion in workshops spread over some hours, then you will want to use a variety of activities – to maintain the group’s interest and energy. Here are some suggestions:

**Plenary group.** Having the whole group involved in a discussion is okay if used sparingly. A large group – beyond about eight people – means it’s hard for everyone to have their say (and there are long gaps between any one person’s contribution). A discussion of the whole group might be suitable as a first segment – to get the discussion going and for some of the ‘Overall’ questions to be covered. So each person remains tuned into the activity, an option in the group discussion is for the facilitator to let people know at the outset for any topic, ‘We will hear from everyone on this point’.

**Breakout groups.** Organise the participants in small groups. The best sized group for everyone to be heard is a group of up to four people, with five at a stretch. Beyond that size, it’s hard for everyone to have their say and some people will tend to ‘leave it to others’ to talk. The breakout groups should be given only one or a small number of questions to discuss and a timeframe for the discussion. At the end of the allotted time, groups should be asked to share the key points of their discussion or what they concluded on the assigned questions. The groups can then continue with another assigned question.

**Breakout groups considering different questions.** One way to add variety to the breakout group method is for groups to consider different questions (for example, if six breakout groups then six topics are being considered). This allows for a more extensive breadth of topics and means the reporting-back stage is more engaging as participants learn from what other groups considered. The trade-off, though, is that individuals are not actively engaged in reflecting on the range of topics. Depending on the number of breakout groups, the assigned topics could be:

- Time, Generosity and Favouritism
- Group Cohesion
- Culture
- Coaching and Mentoring.

**Use of flip charts and paper.** Where the discussion is aimed at specific actions, asking groups to use flip charts and paper is beneficial. Asking people to write their ideas or recommendations on paper gives focus to the discussion; it’s demonstrative that groups are being asked to report concrete ideas or actions.

## Success for Participants

It’s an obviously important part of facilitation to set the participants up for success back in the workplace – to help them succeed as leaders (and help them enjoy their leadership role perhaps more than they do right now).

As a facilitator, you probably have your preferred way of achieving this outcome. Here is an activity and a couple of questions that might help.

Let the group know that, ‘We are now going to allow you to reflect on what you have taken from this session and what specific actions you will take to improve your leadership effectiveness. There are two questions I’d like you to reflect on and then we will discuss:

1. What is the most important learning or fresh idea you have taken from this session?
2. What specific action are you going to take as a consequence of what we have covered?

When people have had an opportunity to reflect on the two questions, you could ask them to discuss their reflections with the person next to them (or paired-up in some way). Alternatively, especially if the group is small (fewer than about 12 people) you could run the debrief as a plenary session and ask each person to share their reflections on both questions or just the second question.

## Introductory Comments by Facilitator

The following text is provided as a draft script for the facilitator – amend as suits your purpose and style.

Up until the book *First Leaders* was published, the leadership thinking and practice of First Nations societies has been ignored. While First Nations across every continent have been refining leadership for millennia, the professional practice of workplace leadership only began in the early 1900s. That was when the occupation of ‘manager’ began. Along with the emergence of the role of workplace leaders, scholars commenced studying the subject to develop good practice. Back then, the social conditions of the time meant First Nations thinking was disregarded, and scholars and business leaders thought they were beginning with a clean slate. The leadership practices we use in workplaces have been built on the foundation thinking of just 100 years ago. We’re in a different place now and we can listen to the wisdom of First Nations.

We believe that there is a lot we can learn from First Nations wisdom. They’ve had since the dawn of human history to figure out what works and what doesn’t. This can greatly benefit us as workplace leaders – to save us reinventing the wheel.

Some of the elements of First Nations leadership is similar to conventional workplace leadership – which points to the fundamentals of good leadership. Some of the elements of First Nations leadership are different to conventional workplace practices, which gives us a fresh opportunity to review what we are doing and decide if there is a better way.

The better way can help us as individual leaders as well as the leadership practices across the organisation. It can help us solve our major leadership challenges. And if we know what works and why, then we can enjoy our leadership roles more than what we might do right now.

The structure of this discussion is ... (outline the approach you are using).

