



Facilitators' Guide for Reconciliation Action Plans 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. First Nation societies have developed a deep and enlightened perspective on leadership and group harmony. Their timeless wisdom can help workplaces be positive and productive environments.

Learning Objectives

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

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

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 when using *First Leaders* as part of the organisation's Reconciliation Actions. The group discussions are likely to be short workshops such as a) incorporated into a wider leadership program or b) at lunch-and-learn sessions or other short sessions specifically organised for this purpose.

Resources that support longer workshops that focus on the details of the leadership practices of First Nations are available on www.firstleadersbook.com.

The focus of Reconciliation Action workshops is to increase the respect for the wisdom of First Nation societies, especially in this case their enlightened and comprehensive thinking about leadership and group cohesion.

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, participants 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 participants to reflect on the questions. The set of questions for this purpose is the document titled: Discussion Questions for Reconciliation Action Plans.

PDF or Word

The Discussion Questions for Reconciliation Action Plans 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).

Structure, Timing and Activities

The discussions questions provided for Reconciliation Action assumes that you will be facilitating a brief discussion of about one or two hours. If you are wanting to have participants go into greater detail about First Nations leadership, then you should use one of the other sets of resources.

In the document, Discussion Questions for Reconciliation Action Plans, there are more questions listed that you will have the time for if you are planning to allocate just one hour for the discussion. All that means is that you will choose the most relevant questions for your purpose.

Given the nature of the likely Reconciliation Action workshop, you will probably run the workshop as a mixture of plenary and syndicate discussions.

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 stage – to get the discussion going. 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 on with another assigned question.

Success for Participants

It's obviously an important part of facilitation to set the participants up for success back in the workplace.

For Reconciliation Action workshops, the key outcomes are that a) participants have greater respect for the wisdom of First Nation societies and b) that participants have gained insight into what action they might take in their own leadership based on the fresh insight they have gained. In a short workshop, there is not a lot of time available for participants to reflect on these two takeaways. You could, towards the end of the session, have participants in pairs discuss these two questions. There would be no need for pairs to share their discussion with the wider group.

Alternatively, you could ask participants to reflect on the two questions in their own time. This is less structured, but it becomes a trade-off of the time available – do you spend time on the discussion questions or trade that off by spending time on personal reflections? Only the facilitator can make that call.

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 Nation 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. First Nation societies have developed a comprehensive view about good leadership practice, and these practices are quite consistent across all First Nation societies. The wisdom of First Nations can greatly assist in making workplaces positive and productive environments.

Some of the elements of First Nations leadership and group harmony are similar to conventional workplace practices – which points to the fundamentals of good practice. Some of the elements of First Nations leadership and group harmony 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 structure of this discussion is ... (outline the approach you are using).

