



Questions for Personal Reflection by Senior Executives 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. There's much we can learn from the wisdom of First Nation societies developed over the long timeframe of their experience.

Leadership roles in some First Nation societies were big roles. In abundant environments, First Nations tend to be (or were) organised at a high level; senior leaders in these societies led divisions or nations of up to about 25,000 people. And the quality of those leaders is impressive.

Learning Objectives

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

1. Assist senior executives reflect on their personal leadership style and impact.
2. Help individual leaders at each level of the organisation enhance their own leadership.
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.

The focus of this document is to assist reflection about a senior executive's personal style and impact. The questions go to the most important aspects about the personal style of a senior leader – hence we have kept the questions to a minimum. For reflection and discussion about broader leadership topics, about leaders at other levels of the organisation and about leadership systems in the organisation, please use a separate guide provided for those objectives.

Reflection Questions

The questions below are designed to prompt self-reflection by senior executives based on the wisdom of First Nation societies doing similar sized roles. The questions relate to the content of *First Leaders*.

1. In reading about the leadership wisdom of First Nations, **what major insight** do I have about my own leadership?
2. What **most surprised me** in the leadership approach of First Nations?
3. Were any of the principles outlined in *First Leaders* challenging to me – that I disagreed with? **Why were those principles challenging** – what is it about my life and work experience that caused me to be challenged by those principles?
4. Given the way I lead, would I be **appointed to a senior leadership** role in a First Nations society?
5. The stand-out attribute of First Nation leaders is that they **respect other people**. Overwhelmingly, their people love and admire them, and willingly follow them. To what extent do I generate those feelings in my followers? What more can I do, and what current behaviours should I moderate?
6. 'Respect' includes **being generous** in my thinking about other people and their potential. In the way I think about or treat other people, are there individuals whose potential I limit? What would happen for them if my view of them changed?

7. In First Nation societies senior leaders have **a calm temperament**. What are the implications for followership and decision making if a leader has, even rarely, angry outbursts? How do I rate on this attribute?
8. First Nation societies and their leaders invest time, effort and resources in **building group unity**. To what extent do I model this aspect of good leadership? Conversely, are there things I do that actually work against group bonding and harmony?
9. First Nation societies find a balance between individual autonomy with group interests – this forms **the culture of the group**. Are my values and standards of behaviour clear to people in the organisation – so they know what's required for them to fit in? The old hands will tend to see themselves as protectors of the culture. Do I engage with the 'aunties and uncles' as a way of keeping in touch with what's happening across the organisation – to hear about the good things that I can affirm and also about the poor things that allows me to take remedial action.
10. In First Nation societies, **leaders are educators and mentors** to prepare the next generation. How much time do I devote mentoring the next generation of leaders? Is it clear to others, from the time I spend and the quality of those interactions, that developing the next generation is one of my priorities?
11. In *First Leaders* it's revealed that a feature of ancestral life was **inequity against women**. In workplaces, we can overcome that historic bias through our mindset and actions. What is my mindset on this subject, based on my own life and work experiences? What actions have I initiated, or could take, to provide an equitable working environment?
12. In First Nation societies, leaders have an obligation to have their society or unit in a good shape when they pass the leadership role to the next generation. This drives a strong sense of **legacy**. What is my legacy to the organisation – what will people identify as the key contribution I made in the time I filled the senior leadership role?

