



# Indigenous Leaders

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Adapted from the  
We R Native - Youth  
Leadership Handbook



[www.healthynativeyouth.org](http://www.healthynativeyouth.org)



Text HEALTHY to 97779



# Indigenous Leaders Overview

## Activity Purpose

To explore the core values of Indigenous leaderships styles, skills, and attributes. Youth will identify which styles and skills they currently possess and what skills they would like to further develop.

## Age Groups: Middle & High School Youth

Time: 35 minutes

## Youth Will:

- **identify** which Indigenous leadership style they are drawn to, as well as what leaderships skills and attributes they already possess
- **classify** their skills into the four ways that leaders are motivated to approach tasks
- **imagine** who they see themselves becoming as a catalyst for positive change in their community

Activity Outline	Core Content Components	Instructional Method	Timing
Welcome and Icebreaker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Welcome participants</li><li>• Icebreaker</li></ul>	Minilecture Group Activity	5 minutes Time Varies
Introducing Activity Concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Indigenous Leadership Styles, Skills, Attributes</li><li>• <i>Handout: Leadership Styles Examples</i></li><li>• <i>Handout: Leadership Skills &amp; Attributes Examples</i></li></ul>	Minilecture  Individual Activity	10 minutes
<i>My Respected Leader</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Handout: My Respected Leader</i></li></ul>	Individual Activity	5 minutes
<i>What Type of Leader Am I?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Indigenous Leadership Skills &amp; Attributes</li><li>• <i>Handout: What Type of Leader Am I?</i></li></ul>	Minilecture  Individual Activity	5 minutes  5 minutes
Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reflection on learning<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Journal – Who do I see myself becoming?</i></li></ul></li><li>• Cultural Teaching (if time allows)</li></ul>	Individual Reflection	5 minutes

## Materials

- Whiteboard/flipchart + marker(s)
- Timer or phone for keeping track of activity times
- Copies of Handouts
- Pencils/ pens
- Materials for opening/ closing cultural activity (poem, prayer, quote, ritual or ceremony description) - if time allows

## Preparation

- Preview Lesson plan
- Preview the Handouts for this lesson to determine what is most appropriate for your youths' levels and your goals. Print enough copies of the lesson handouts for each youth
- Identify a culturally appropriate and relevant quote, poem, and prayer or short ritual to open or close the session with



# Welcome & Icebreaker

5 minutes  
Large Group

## Welcome Youth 2 minutes

Welcome participants, introduce yourself, and direct them where to sit.

## Icebreaker

Time Varies

use the “Icebreaker” activity guide to find an icebreaker appropriate for your group (i.e. small or large group, new or established group, etc.)



# Intro Activity Concepts

10 minutes  
Minilecture

## Indigenous Leadership Styles & Skills/ Attributes

Say, "Welcome, welcome, welcome! Thanks for being here for today's session! Today we are going to take some time to explore the core values of culture and what it means to be an Indigenous Leader. What does being an Indigenous leader mean to you? What does it mean to be a leader and a member of your community?"

*Allow time for responses. Write responses.*

Say, "We will spend some time talking about the different types of Indigenous leaderships styles, skills, and attributes. Then, you will then think this through by doing a couple activities to help you identify which leadership styles and skills you currently possess (this will change throughout your lives) and what skills you would like to further develop."

Say, "Let's start by taking a moment to talk about Indigenous Leadership. Like a lot of things, we can think about leadership as a continuum, like a straight line; one extreme is on one side, while the opposite extreme is on the other."



# Indigenous Leadership Styles & Skills/ Attributes Continued

## Minilecture

**Colonial leadership.** On one side of the extreme there is colonial leadership. Colonial leadership comes from the top down, where a group of people decide what is best for everyone, then try to get others to follow their rules. This is called authoritative leadership. When I think of colonial leadership, I think of dead presidents; small groups of white men wearing white wigs, making decisions for everyone else. In the case of colonialism – some of these decisions where to get rid of Indigenous people or try to assimilate them into their culture. This extreme example is on one side of the continuum.

**Laissez-Faire leadership.** Now, an example of the opposite extreme would be a free-for-all style of leadership, called laissez-faire. This type of leadership, like its name suggests is pretty much a free for all. There is no one in charge and there is very little guidance on how things are done. I imagine this type of leadership to be a pure chaos and mayhem with people walking around like, 'what do we do?'.

**Indigenous leadership.** Now, somewhere in the middle of this line is Indigenous leadership. This is where everyone works together to achieve a common goal. This is called horizontal or traditional leadership. This type of leadership often brings about equity for the group and not just those who are at the top because those who are in the middle are a part of the decision making. When I think of Indigenous leadership, I think about someone like Crazy Horse. He came up with the concept of the Seventh Generation, which means that with any decision we make today, we have to think about how it will impact our future generations. The idea is that my decisions will not just benefit me today but will benefit our children's children."



# Indigenous Leadership Styles & Skills/ Attributes Continued

## Minilecture

Say, "As always, I want to encourage you to think critically about what I've just said. As I was talking, you may have had thoughts, or images, or an emotional response pop up. That's good. If you didn't, that's okay, we'll work into it. If you have thoughts, observe what those are because this is how we start to build our awareness.

When we think about continuums – having a line with one extreme to the other, it's good to think about finding the 'sweet spot' on that line, which is always different for each person. Or, if you're thinking in a more traditional sense, you may not be thinking in one straight line at all, but rather circles that contain these examples, that meet up at certain points as they rotate."

Say, "Now let's talk about Leadership Styles within this continuum. Because we don't have a lot of time we'll only cover three, but there are as many as 10 different types of leadership styles. We will cover: Autocratic, Horizontal, and Laissez-Faire (or Free-Rein). You can follow along on the *Leadership Style Example handout*.



# Indigenous Leadership Styles & Skills/ Attributes Continued

## Minilecture

**Autocratic Leadership** relies heavily on getting others to do what you want them to do, by commanding others to follow their policies without consulting them. The upside of autocratic leadership is the speed at which decisions are made. The downside is that decisions made by one person or a small group of people do not take into account the needs of all, which can hurt the group.

**Laissez-Faire (or Free-Rein) Leadership** allows people to make their own decisions, putting responsibility on the individual. The upside is the freedom to make your own decisions. The downside is that some people need help and resources to figure out how to move forward. If everyone is helping themselves, there's usually no thought about the future or building sustainable practices, which can be harmful to individuals and the group in the short-term and long-term.

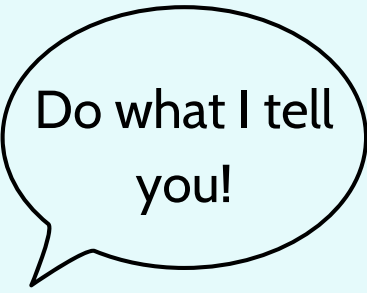
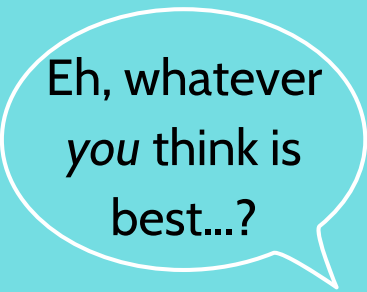

**Horizontal or Traditional Leadership** consults with all members of the group and hears what is and is not important to them. The group works together to put policies in place, and they talk regularly about those policies and how they are working, or not. The upside to traditional leadership is that the groups and most individual needs are being met. The downside is slow decision and policy making, which can be harmful when decisions need to be made now."

Say, "Take a moment to draw, doodle, or write what image comes to your mind when you think of Indigenous Leadership Styles. You can do this on the second page of your *Leadership Style Example handout*."



Leadership  
Styles  
Handout  
Page 1

Think about which leadership style you are drawn to and how that might work in your community. Consider times when it might be good to use another leadership style(s).

LEADERSHIP STYLE	WHAT IS IT?	THE UPSIDE	THE DOWNSIDE
<b>AUTOCRATIC</b> 	Relies heavily on getting others to do what you want them to do, by commanding others to follow their policies without consulting them	The upside of autocratic leadership is the speed at which decisions are made	The downside is that decisions made by one person or a small group of people do not take into account the needs of others, which can hurt the group
<b>LAISSE-FAIRE (OR FREE-REIN)</b> 	Allows people to make their own decisions, putting responsibility on the individual	The upside is the freedom to make your own decisions	The downside is that some people need help and resources to figure out what is best. If everyone is helping themselves, there's usually no thought about the future or building sustainable practices, which can be harmful to individuals and the group
<b>HORIZONTAL OR TRADITIONAL</b> 	Consults with all members of the group and hears what is and is not important to them. The group works together to put policies in place, and they talk regularly about those policies and how they are working, or not	The upside to traditional leadership is that the groups needs are being met	The downside is slow decision and policy making, which can be harmful to individuals when decisions need to be made now

## Visualize

Below is a visual of what each Leadership Style might look like.

### Leadership Styles

#### Autocratic



#### Laissez-Faire



#### Traditional



### What's Your Style?

Think about what Leadership Style your gravitate towards.  
Draw or write what image(s) come to mind.



# My Respected Leader

5 minutes

Say, "Now that we have talked about Leadership Styles, let's talk about what Leadership Skills and Attributes are. During this next activity, you will be asked to further think about what Leadership Style you lean towards and what your skills and attributes are. It's important to think about who you are as a leader currently, so that you can think realistically about the type of leader you want to grow into.

**Leadership Skills** are the gifts you have that will help you to organize and lead others to a shared goal. Examples of skills are; empathy, honesty, humility, and communication skills.

**Leadership Attributes** are similar to skills but are slightly different, though there can be some cross-over between the two. Attributes are your characteristics, something that makes up who you are. An example of an attributes is to be labeled as funny, intelligent, or charming.

You can read through your *Leadership Skill & Attributes Examples handout* to learn more and select those that stay with you."

## Distribute Leadership Skill & Attributes Examples Handouts

Say, "Turn to the *My Respected Leader* handout. Think about someone you admire and respect as a leader."

*Read the instructions and ask youth to complete the handout. Give a one-minute warning to complete.*

# Leadership Skills & Attributes Handout

Below are some examples of what types of leadership skills you may possess. Think about what skills describes you, or what skills you would like to work towards. 1) Read through, and 2) Circle those that apply to you.



## Honesty and Integrity

Honesty and integrity are two important ingredients which make a good leader. How can you expect others to be honest when you lack these qualities yourself? Leaders succeed when they stick to their values and core beliefs.



## Confidence

Having confidence means you are sure about your own decisions and qualities.



## Inspire Others

To inspire, you must set a good example. People notice what you do, younger kids look up to you and see how you react to the situation. If you handle it well, you can inspire others to do the same.



## Commitment and Passion

People look up to those who are committed and passionate about the work they do. They want to be a part of that energy.



## Good Communicator

A good communicator can be a good leader. Words have the power to motivate people and make them do the unthinkable. If you use them effectively, you can also achieve better results.



## Decision-Making Capabilities

A leader should think long and hard before making a decision but once the decision is taken, stand by it. Talk to others to make sure you have the full picture before making a decision that will affect others.

# More Leadership Skills



## Accountability

Hold yourself accountable for the decisions you make. Everything is a learning opportunity. If it doesn't work, think about why, and what you can do next time. To build trust, be upfront and honest about what you've learned.



## Delegation and Empowerment

You cannot do everything. Share tasks with others to accomplish goals. This can help build trust and a stronger sense of teamwork.



## Creativity and Innovation

Creative thinking and constant innovation is what makes you and your team stand out from the crowd. Think out of the box to come up with unique ideas and turn those ideas and goals into reality.



## Empathy

Understanding the problems of others and feeling their pain can help you be an empathetic leader.



## Resilience

No matter how difficult things may get, you stay positive and rally.



## Emotional Intelligence

The better aware you are of your feelings and emotions, the better you can control them, which prevents negative emotions from influencing your decision-making skills.



# More Leadership Skills



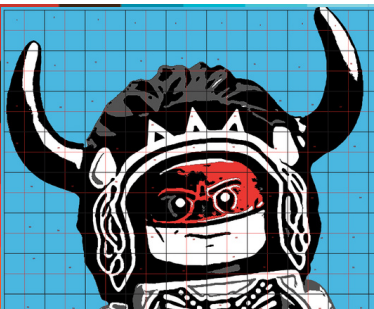
## Humility

A good leader is always selfless and always think about others.



## Transparency

To build trust, be open with others. It also makes your plans and goals clear.



## Vision and Purpose

Good leaders always have a vision and purpose. They visualize the future, share their vision, so that others can see where they are heading and share their plan for getting there.

# Attributes

Below are some examples of leadership attributes that you may possess. Think about what attributes best describe you. Circle and/or write in others that fit you.

generous  
competent  
ambitious  
charming  
responsible  
eager  
trust worthy  
determined  
productive  
humble  
funny  
flexible  
sincere  
focused  
positive



WERNATIVE

# My Respected Leader Handout

Think about a person you admire and respect as a leader. This may be an elder, relative, friend, community member, or someone from history.

What has this person done to show you they are a leader?

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What Indigenous leadership style do they possess?

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List three things that make them a good leader:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

You are the next generation of Indigenous Leaders!



In what ways are you like them?

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# Individual Activity

5 minutes

## What Type of Leader Am I?

*Distribute and discuss What Type of Leader Am I? handout.*

Say, "Think about yourself as leader: an Indigenous Leader. We all come to the table with different gifts; some that are obvious, some we are unsure of and some we can't yet see. You're here because you, or someone else, believed you were supposed to be here. Let's start to carve the path you were meant to follow."

Say, "All leaders approach tasks in four different ways, based on how they are motivated. They will either do things for others in positive or negative ways. Or, they will do things based on their wants, either in a positive or negative way:

- **You're Positive and WILL DO what OTHERS want.** You may still be working from a positive place, but this may be doing what others want you to do. Like if your family is wanting you to take music lessons, but you're not really into it. While you may enjoy it, it's more for them, than for you.
- **You're Negative and HAVE TO do what OTHERS want.** This might be when you despise taking music lessons, but your family is making you do it. And, if you don't continue, they may take away some privileges.





# Individual Activity

Continued

## What Type of Leader Am I?

- **You're Negative about what YOU MUST DO.** This might be when you despise taking music lessons, but your family would be really disappointed if you quit, so you do it anyway, but you're not happy about it.
- **You're Positive and GET TO do what YOU want.** This is where we want to get to. This is the money spot and it can take time to get to. This is when you are positively doing something that you want and are motivated to make it happen."

Say, "It's important to know what type of motivation is driving the things you do and whether you're doing things mostly for yourself or for others. The better aware you are of the way you approach things, the better able you are to shift that approach in the direction you want it to go."

Say, "Take a moment to fill in the *What Type of Leader Am I?* handout. Start to notice what you're mostly doing and who it's for.

*Read the instructions and ask youth to complete the handout. Give a one-minute warning to complete.*

# What Type of Leader Am I? Handout

Leaders approach tasks in four different ways, they:

1. Positively GET TO what They Want
2. Positively WILL DO what Others Want
3. Negatively HAVE TO do what Others Want
4. Negatively MUST DO what Others Want

Think about your wants, as well as what others want of you. Are you positively or negatively doing them? Write down examples for each box.

How do you  
GET TO  
positively do  
what you  
want?

## POSITIVE ATTITUDE

I'm Positive and WILL DO what others want

I'm Positive and GET TO what I want

YOUR WANTS

OTHERS WANTS

I'm Negative and HAVE TO do what others want

I'm Negative about what I MUST DO

## NEGATIVE ATTITUDE



# Closing

5 minutes  
Large Group

## Closing and Final Reflections

Say, "I want to give you all a big shout out for completing today's lesson. You all are such rockstars! As a final activity for today, I'd like to reflect on what we've learned. I want to remind you that leaders look many different ways and I'd like you to think about your path and what fits best for you."

*Distribute the handout - Who Do I see Myself Becoming? Encourage youth to reflect on what they've learned and how they can apply this to their vision of themselves as our next generation of Indigenous Leaders.*

*Mention the next meeting time, location and the topic that will be covered, if applicable.*

*If time allows, close with a poem, song, story or tradition that highlights the activity concept.*

## How did it go?

Let us know how your lesson went and if there's any edits or adjustments we can make. Thank you for all that you do for our youth!

[TA Feedback Form](#)



# Who do I see myself becoming?

Imagine. Then draw, doodle, write, or record a video.  
How do you want to show yourself to others?

Journal  
Space