

TRIBAL WISDOM FOR BUSINESS ETHICS

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BY

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*I dedicate this book to my husband David M. Boje,
who brought love and adventure to my life,
and helped me find my voice as a writer.*

Preface and Map to the Territory

I am Grace Ann Rosile, Ph.D., Professor of Management at New Mexico State University. My family is from the Western Pennsylvania area around Pittsburgh. I am of Italian-American heritage, or, as I sometime say, half Italian and half Sicilian. Those distinctions used to be important to some people, like those who wanted to know from what village in Sicily my maternal grandfather came (San Filippo). During my many years in graduate school, that same grandfather was highly skeptical. I must not be working like I should, to take so long, and then not even be a “real” doctor!

Overview: This book is an outgrowth of several years of filmmaking, plus a two-day conference, on Tribal Wisdom for Business Ethics. Beginning in 2010, I headed up a project which two years later produced a 28-minute educational film called *Tribal Wisdom for Business Ethics*. Released in 2012, the focus in the film was on the eight Aspects:

Eight Aspects of Tribal Wisdom

1. **Relationships are an end in themselves**
2. **Gifting is valued more highly**
3. **Egalitarianism is preferred**

4. Non-acquisitiveness is valued not greed
5. Usefulness or access to use is valued
6. Barter for what is needed
7. Trust and Buyer Trust are valued
8. Disclosure is full and voluntary

Films: Then in 2013, I and my group of collaborators produced six shorter films:

1. Tribal Wisdom and Marketing Strategy;
2. Tribal Wisdom and Indigenous Ways of Knowing;
3. Indigenous Trading, Disclosure, and Barter;
4. Tribal Wisdom and Storytelling;
5. Tribal Wisdom and Entrepreneurship; and
6. Tribal Wisdom for Life-Enhancing Relationships.

In the process of interviewing the experts featured in the film, all expressed an interest in participating in a future conference on Tribal Wisdom.

Conference: Everyone was invited to New Mexico State University (NMSU) in Las Cruces, NM to share ideas. From those beginnings, we have this collaborative written work. This book allows us to go into more depth on particular topics. Also, we offer some frameworks to put these ideas into a coherent integrated approach for framing a mutually beneficial conversation between “Tribal Wisdom” and business ethics.

Tribal Relevance: Why should tribal people be interested in this book? First, we expect it will be reassuring for tribal people to see that the Euro-western business world shows indications of moving in directions more compatible with their traditional values and beliefs. This book might offer hope to some who think they will

have to give up traditional values, perhaps their very identity, to succeed in the non-tribal business world. We see the initial stages of development of a business community where tribal people would feel at home.

Second, as these values and practices are gathered from a variety of sources, this book offers a rare collection of traditional tribal wisdoms that have huge potential relevance for a business context. Finally, both tribal and non-tribal peoples will gain a greater understanding and appreciation of how business has been able to contribute to stronger communities with stronger relationships.

Co-Created Benefits: Each chapter in this book contributes to co-creating our collective vision. In this vision, businesses gain a better understanding of how tribal values and practices already have been introduced into the Euro-western business world. These values and practices can be developed further and used more widely for an increasingly ethical kind of success. At the same time, tribal peoples can be encouraged by the heightened awareness of how doing business “their way” may be compatible with, and may even be a key to their own success in the non-indigenous world.

It is my hope that we come to see ourselves not as “sides,” as indigenous or non-indigenous. Rather, we are travelers on the same road, each seeking socially, spiritually, and economically sustainable paths through the world, paths which will nourish our unique cultures while fostering mutual benefit for all.

Map to the Territory: This book contains 19 chapters, many of which have embedded case examples and activities. There are also stand-alone case examples, questions, and activities. At the end of each chapter, you will see some “Search for Wisdom” questions, accompanied by a feather icon:



Search for Wisdom

You will see “Grace Ann’s Note” in a shadowed box to indicate that I am speaking, as follows:

Grace Ann’s Note

The chapters are divided into four parts. Part I is “Wisdom of the Elders.” This section provides an orientation to Tribal Wisdom, indigenous ways-of-knowing, indigenous perspectives on the natural environment in relationship to humans and the business world, and a general orientation to business ethics.

In Chapter 1, I begin our journey by introducing the “eight aspects” of Tribal Wisdom. These concepts were identified in the previous work on Tribal Wisdom (described above) which was the impetus for the present volume. In addition to these eight core concepts, this chapter offers three reasons why Tribal Wisdom concepts might be insightfully applied to contemporary businesses.

In Chapter 2, Dr. Donald Pepion lets us inside some of his own personal journey to his position as a respected elder in his tribe. He describes how he sought wisdom from his elders. Currently, he passes on that wisdom both in the tribal community and through his extensive history of many important roles in university settings. In Chapter 3, Dr. Lisa Grayshield provides us with some enlightening quotes about indigenous ways-of-knowing and Euro-Western science. She discusses the sustainability implications for businesses.

In Chapter 4, Dr. Gregory Cajete contributes aspects of his long stream of environmentally oriented research. He discusses why ethics in business must address environmental issues. He explains how nature, in the principle of mutual reciprocal behavior, can guide us in understanding how we can live lives that are more ethical and sustainable. The Acoma Case concludes this chapter.

I end this first part of the book by placing Tribal Wisdom within a context of the recent trends in business ethics literature in Chapter 5. It is apparent that this literature is moving towards more relational and group-oriented concepts of ethics. Thus, the field is heading in the direction already visible in tribal values. Part I concludes with the case of the NOVA Corporation written by Mabel Sanchez. You are invited to “Search for Wisdom” by considering the questions at the end of the case.

Part II is entitled “Storytelling and Indigenous Pedagogies for Business Ethics.” Here, we explore storytelling as a preferred indigenous way of conveying cultural information. Chapter 6 begins the section with a transcription of “A Coyote Story” as told by Dr. Gregory Cajete to Tribal Wisdom filmmakers in 2011.

In Chapter 7, Dr. David M. Boje explains the important differences between indigenous storytelling, traditional Euro-western storytelling, and what his theory calls “Living Story.” He uses the concept of “antenarrative” to demonstrate the differences in these storytelling methodologies. In Chapter 8, I reappear to explain some of the particular ways tribes use storytelling to convey ethical principles. We conclude this section with a “Search for Wisdom” with several short example questions.

Now that we have set the stage with indigenous ways-of-knowing, eight Aspects of Tribal Wisdom, business ethics in general, and how these concepts are conveyed through story, Part III digs into more specific business practices, case examples, and ethical teachings. Part III begins with the case example of Dardan Enterprises, written by one of the co-founders of the company, Dr. Daniel Stewart. Next, Chapter 10 discusses “Native American Values Applied to Leadership and Business Ethics Education.” Here, Amy Klemm Verbos, Deanna M. Kennedy, and Carma M. Claw, three American Indian professors teaching

in colleges of business, offer their views on how ethical values and principles were taught to them, from their various tribal traditions.

In Chapter 11, Dr. Calvin M. Boardman explains the different cultural roots and assumptions that led to different styles of trade among early tribes, even before contact with Euro-Westerners during colonization. He finds reasons for misunderstandings and conflicts in these different trading practices. He also sees hope for greater understanding as we move forward in finding more mutually beneficial ways of conducting business between the indigenous world and the Euro-Western one.

In Chapter 12, I return to discuss the need for equal power relationships, viewed from a storytelling perspective. "Power Stories and Mutually Beneficial Negotiations: Fostering Ensemble Leadership" demonstrates the disempowering potential of even desires to be helpful, when the situation is perceived as one of unequal power. The chapter concludes with a new theory of "Ensemble Leadership" whose roots go back to ancient Mesoamerican cultures.

We conclude Part III with another case from Drs. Daniel Stewart and Vincent J. Pascal. This concluding case is a hypothetical example based on some real-life dynamics of doing business to benefit a company's home community. The case, "Native American Entrepreneurship: Locating Your Business," asks you where you would locate a business: closer to its potential market, or closer to its potential employees, when those two groups are considerable distances apart.

Part IV focuses on Tribal Wisdom insights into businesses in partnership with the natural environment. I introduce this section with a short case example of the experience of our cover artist Virginia Maria Romero. In "Remember to Remember: The Alameda Transit Station," I recall the words of Dr. Gregory Cajete about the importance of remembering our connection to the natural world, as we are nature ourselves.

Dr. David M. Boje provides a penetrating critique of how the "Triple Bottom Line" of people, profit, and planet may not live up to its promise, in Chapter 15. In Chapter 16, Dr. Gerri Elise

McCulloh gives a personal account of growing up on the fringes of Bighorn Medicine Wheel, and experiencing firsthand the dilemma of protecting a natural environmental treasure and sacred site, while allowing appropriate access and appreciation of it.

Bringing these lessons home to our own relationships, Kaylynn Sullivan TwoTrees and Matthew Kolan offer the insightful Chapter 17, “The Trees Are Breathing Us: An Indigenous View of Relationship in Nature and Business.” After reading this chapter, you will understand relationships in a whole new way.

Concluding the volume, Dr. Maria Humphries draws parallels between this book and her extensive experience with the Maori indigenous peoples of New Zealand. She fearlessly addresses the topic of what a non-indigenous female can contribute to this discussion. As an outsider living and studying indigenous cultures from both a critical theory perspective and an environmental perspective, she offers her personal views on bridging the indigenous/non-indigenous divide, in mutually beneficial ways.

Finally, we follow Dr. Gregory Cajete’s advice in earlier chapters, about giving more “hints” as to the meaning of our morality tales than was traditionally done in tribes. So if you read this whole book, I promise not to leave you wondering. I offer suggested answers to some puzzling questions raised (mostly in Chapter 8), in the “Epilogue”.

Free Materials: The Tribal Wisdom films that are part of the genesis of this book are complementary to, but not a replacement for, this volume. There are many points of connection between this book and the films, but very little repetition. All films, plus supporting teaching materials, were created through a grant from the NMSU Daniels Fund Ethics Initiative, and are available for free on the internet at:

<http://business.nmsu.edu/research/programs/daniels-ethics/tribal-ethics/>.

Thanks: We offer heartfelt thanks to the New Mexico State University Daniels Fund Ethics Initiative, which funded the early work on developing Tribal Wisdom ethics education materials

beginning in 2010. They funded the educational filmmaking through 2013, and then in September of 2013 funded the Tribal Wisdom Conference. We are grateful for the many talented and articulate people who participated in the Tribal Wisdom project over the years.

Scholarships: To show appreciation for the all the indigenous scholars and business persons who participated, and to the Daniels Fund Ethics Initiative at NMSU, proceeds from this book will go to a fund for scholarships for American Indian students at NMSU. To contribute, contact the NMSU Foundation office by calling (800) 342-6678 or (575) 646-6126 during business hours. You can also search the web page at <https://advancing.nmsu.edu/givenow> or e-mail the office at giftacct@nmsu.edu.

Intention: My intention with this work is to encourage mutually respectful relationships. This intention finds expression in the words attributed to Lilla Watson, Gangulu woman, and Murri visual artist:

“If you have come here to help me, you are wasting our time. But if you have come because your liberation is tied up with mine, then let us work together”.

Watson herself prefers that the quote be attributed to “Aboriginal activists group, Queensland, 1970s.” It is my hope that this book helps readers to understand and appreciate themselves as well as others more fully so that we may all enjoy more harmonious relationships.

Grace Ann Rosile
Editor