

Land and Peoples Relationship Model

The Land and Peoples Relationship Model is a collaborative knowledge-building process that respects both Yukon First Nations' Long-Ago Peoples Way and Western knowledge. Collaborative knowledge-building is a process by which participants reach favorable conclusions through the sharing and exchange of knowledge. Participants are asked to show the greatest respect possible during the planning and decision-making stages. The model uses three key laws (Respect, Care, and Share) combined with two decision-making tools (No Voice and Knowledge Stream Tree) that include affected parties' viewpoints and long-ago knowledge. The model is the guideline that directs and balances the collaborative planning process. The crux of the model is how respect is shown among participants within the planning and decision-making processes. The roundtable experts function as a neutral body focused solely on resolving issues, based on relevancy and usefulness. The Model also describe a sacred space.

Respect, Care and Share

Yukon First Nations' Long-Ago Peoples have always defined themselves as being part of nature, and were sent here by the Creator to care for Mother Earth. Their key laws centered around the principles of Respect, Care and Share which were treated equally, and used in combination with other natural laws. Respect is the law applied to all other natural laws. Long-Ago Peoples laws are applied internally first, then to others moving outwards into the broader worldview. For instance, long ago people's laws apply to self, immediate family members, Clan, community, Nation, pets, dwellers, plants, land, water, air, and universe. Respect is the greatest consideration given to life and everything created by the Creator. Care is taking care of the land and each other, which is the responsibility of all peoples. Share is the passing down and sharing of knowledge openly, and in a respectful manner. The model attempts to rebuild equal respect between the land and people, knowing that reconciliation cannot happen if people continue to view themselves as superior to nature and life. The model also aims to rebuild respect between people, where no knowledge system, gender, or group is superior to another.

No Voice Perspective

Long ago people's approach to land relationship and care include the perspective of all affected parties such as future generations, non-human relations, land and waters in planning and decision-making. The model includes "those with no voice" in all discussions and decisions made at the roundtable, and their presence is represented with a sign or symbol. Participants are asked to contribute what they feel represent the No Voice reaction to the issue at-hand. The No Voice reactions are part of the information that is assessed in decision-making. In the event of a stand-off on a particular issue, the "no voice" contribution become a critical factor in the final decision.

Knowledge Stream Tree

The parable of the Knowledge Stream Tree is a story of how two knowledge systems and worldviews could function collaboratively side-by-side, without one trying to dominate the other. The watershed framework of the stream tree consists of tributaries (branches) that allow life-giving water (knowledge)

to flow into the main waterway (trunk). As water is life knowledge is sacred, and should be shared with care and respect. The area between the waterway banks, above the water, is the sacred space needed for meaningful dialogue to take place. A mountain stream with long ago people's knowledge on one side, and Western knowledge on the other side, respect each other's system. As one travels upstream, there will be certain places where crossing is possible. At these narrows, collaborative knowledge could be shared. When Western Science speaks of "sustainable development," Long-Ago People say "Take care of the land; the land takes care of you; and take only what you need." As these two systems support sustainable development, "sustainability" could become a fundamental collaborative law.

The story emphasizes the importance of how the two knowledge systems respect each other's differences and collaborate on common principles. By sharing their strengths and weaknesses on each point of interest, experts could decide which knowledge system would be best utilized when dealing with that particular issue. The Model allows for the rediscovery and rebuilding of cultures rather than merging concepts. The Model encourages participants to look for commonality within different knowledge systems, then use the strength of interconnection to resolve issues.

Rules of Engagement

Purpose of the model is to allow issues to be resolved through collaborative planning and consensus building. Participants of the roundtable are responsible for developing their rules of engagement that include the following requirements:

- Show respect for each other, affected parties and the land;
- Feel as much as you think;
- Listen to understand what is being said;
- Clarify what you say and hear; and
- Have patience.

Long Ago Peoples Way state that knowledge and land should not be damaged because both belong to the grandchildren and future generations. Indigenous Ways of life say Indigenous traditional knowledge requires the knowledge holder to have experienced the knowledge through indigenous traditional lifestyle to be fully understood. It is important to recognize and respect that some people communicate thorough storytelling and animation, while others verbalize and record. Participation may be non-verbal. Participants using the model should always be aware of culture shock when delving deep into the multiple knowledge systems.

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