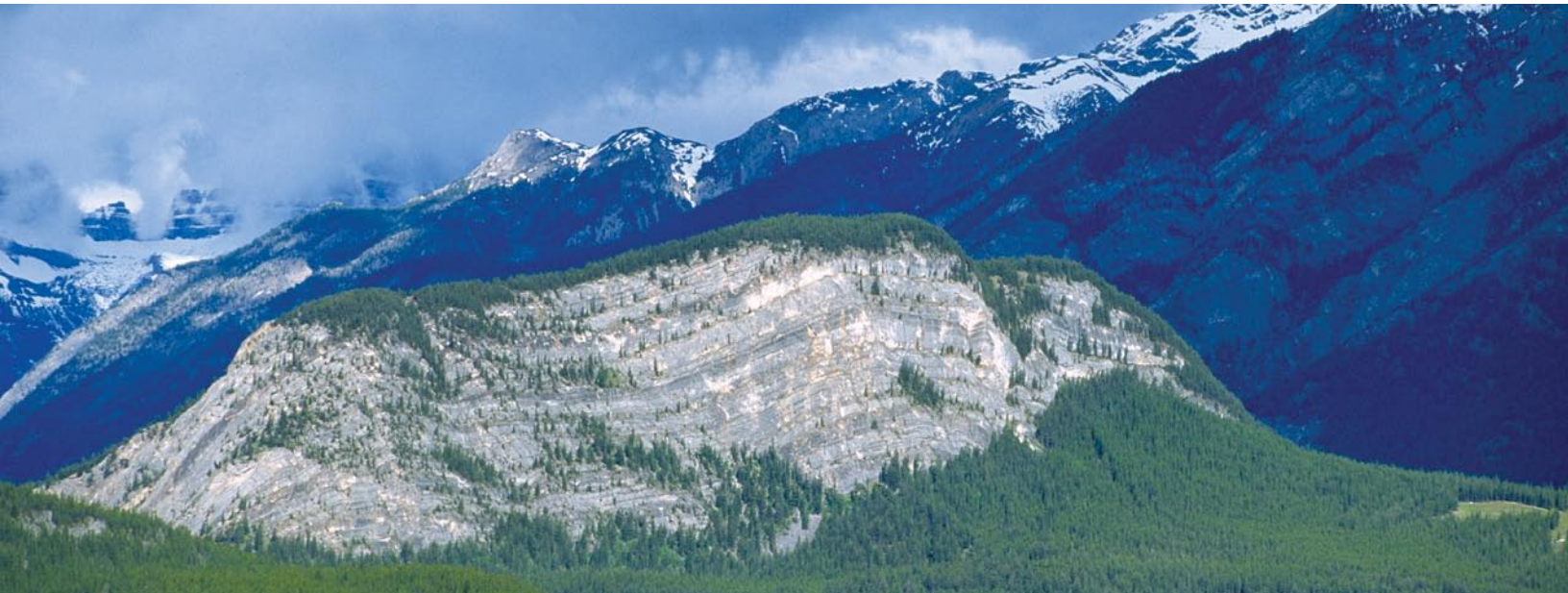
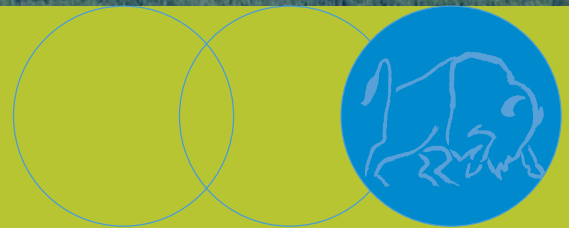


# Aboriginal Leadership and Management



## Community Leadership in the 21st Century: Leveraging Information as a Leadership Tool

by Murray Dion, 2006



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### Aboriginal Leadership and Management

Box 1020, Station 45, 107 Tunnel Mountain Drive, Banff, Alberta T1L 1H5  
Toll free: 1.888.255.6327 Fax: 403.762.6422 E-mail: [aboriginalleadership@banffcentre.ca](mailto:aboriginalleadership@banffcentre.ca)  
[www.banffleadership.com](http://www.banffleadership.com)



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# Community Leadership in the 21st Century: Leveraging Information as a Leadership Tool

by Murray Dion

Today's global leaders find themselves having to lead and manage in a world that is ever shrinking, evolving at a frantic pace, and increasingly technologically centered. Aboriginal leaders, more so than their non-Aboriginal counterparts, have a two-fold challenge of ensuring their communities and enterprises take full advantage of the exciting opportunities that information technology and the information economy have to offer; while at the same time protecting and strengthening their culture in the context of a vision that extends seven generations out.

Twenty-first century leaders are guiding their communities or organizations through a world of redefined relationships, constant change, globalization, the "information revolution," and all at "Internet speed." Staying abreast of – and making sense of – the evolving information-centric world is a major challenge affecting every leader.

Building on a proud history of strong leadership, Aboriginal leaders are well positioned to benefit and excel in the 21st century by complementing traditional leadership skills with information-age skills. Beyond the well-established management fundamentals of governance, planning, finance, and human resources, twenty-first century leaders are acquiring skills in emerging management disciplines that include logistics, risk management, change management, performance management, and information management. Specific to information management, today's Aboriginal leaders know they need to be skilled to lead in an age where information is the new high-value asset.

Up until the latter part of the 20th century, assets were primarily tangible in nature: buildings, machinery, raw-materials, and inventories of manufactured goods. That started to change as communication and information technology began shrinking the world and information became the most valued asset. Information in the form of ideas, concepts, culture, history, processes, archives, models, and methodologies are in fact an organization's "intellectual property." Today's leaders are adept at managing, protecting, and leveraging their intellectual property.

Beyond the value of information as an asset, today's leaders are mindful of the importance of information in two other significant ways. Firstly, they know that having the right information at the right time is vital to effective analysis, planning, and decision making. Secondly, they are focused on protecting their information assets at a community, organizational, and personal level. As a case in point, in the very near future all health information will be entirely digitally stored as we move into the world of the Electronic Health Record (EHR). Health care practitioners and patients alike will no doubt benefit from more accurate, accessible, and timely electronic health information. However, ensuring that a patient's confidential health information remains confidential is an issue that needs to be proactively managed. Understanding the value of information both from an opportunity and risk perspective is an essential skill of today's leaders. Acquiring the skills to maximize the value of your information assets is the opportunity.

This century, in fact the next few decades, will usher in unprecedented global change that will open up opportunities previously unforeseen or inaccessible to Aboriginal communities, particularly rural and remote communities – opportunities not to be missed. Effective leaders recognize that in order for them to lead and succeed today, they must understand what enables and impacts their community or organization. In the 21st century, this implies that leaders will need new information-age skills, tools, and knowledge to enable them to lead their communities or organizations through the convergence of culture, technology, a young and well-educated population, nation building, and globalization. Twenty-first century leaders will have a blend of traditional and new skills – tools and knowledge acquired through a commitment to life-long learning and a passion to succeed.

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Murray Dion, is a strategic consultant and President of Khiasma Health Transformation Inc. For the past ten years, he has worked extensively in the Aboriginal community at the strategic and tactical levels in a wide range of areas that include: economic development, policing, e-Health, and technology. He has been a member of the Aboriginal Leadership faculty since 1999.

