

Mini Review

Political Science International

Harmonizing the Circle: Returning American Indian Governments and Organizations to Efficient Right Relations

Stephen M Sachs^{1*} and Lanalle Smith^{2*}

¹Professor Emeritus of Political Science, Indiana University-Indianapolis, USA

²Founder of Blacksheep Insight Consulting and Coaching, LLC, Rio Rancho, NM, USA

*Corresponding Authors

Stephen M Sachs, Professor Emeritus of Political Science, Indiana University-Indianapolis, USA.

Lanalle Smith, Founder of Blacksheep Insight Consulting and Coaching, LLC, Rio Rancho, NM, USA.

Submitted: 2026, Jul 06; Accepted: 2026, Aug 03; Published: 2026, Sep 28

Citation: Sachs, S. M., Smith, L. (2026). Harmonizing the Circle: Returning American Indian Governments and Organizations to Efficient Right Relations. *Politi Sci Int*, 4(2), 01-22.

Abstract

Traditionally, American Indian nations emphasized relating with respectful right relations in all their affairs to retain interpersonal and community harmony.¹ When relationships became out of balance, procedures and ceremonies were undertaken to return to harmony. In many instances today, loss of traditional cultural, abusive behavior learned in boarding school, passed on multigenerational trauma, and living and working in culturally alien governments and bureaucracies have resulted in unharmonious relations. Where American Indian deliberative bodies, agencies, organizations or businesses are experiencing less than harmonious collaborative relations and/or inefficiencies they may find it useful appropriately to adapt a relevant form of mainstream participatory management, which is an application of traditional Indigenous inclusive participatory values. This has been undertaken in various forms, with various names with the most advanced often referred to as team process. It has been shown that flat, non-hierarchical organizations - including in government - function far better by every measure including employee job satisfaction, than do conventional top-down hierarchical organizations.

Keywords: Citizen Participation, Team Process, Team Building, Participatory Management, Employee Involvement, Employee Ownership, Worker Ownership, Workplace Democracy, Debureaucratization, Organization Development, American Indian Studies, American Indian Government, Indigenous Studies, Indigenous Government, Total Quality Management, Reinventing Government, History of Organizations, Indigenous Governance, American Indian Government, Organizational Development, Participatory Management, Team Development, Indigenous Leadership, Historical Trauma, Organizational Culture, and Right Relations.

1. Traditional Indigenous Collaborative Interrelations and Decision Making

Traditionally, Indian nations, in different ways and to different degrees, reached decisions extremely democratically through a variety of consensual processes.² The basis of this was the principle of respect, for all people, and indeed for all that is. In ceremony, and in making decisions, often all sat in a circle. Each place in the circle had a different quality and a different way of seeing to contribute to the whole, so that each person or group needed to be heard. By making decisions including the seeing and interests of all concerned, they achieved better results than deciding by compromise alone, which often combines just enough not fully compatible bits and pieces together to gain an acceptance.

For Native people, the principle of the uniqueness of place was essential. There is no circle without each of the individual places, but the places have no meaning without the context of the circle as a whole, which frames the interconnections that constitute the proper flowing of the circle - of right relations.³ The Comanche state the fundamental principles as relationships, responsibility, reciprocity, redistribution.⁴ Thus out of the nature of relationship, and the relationships everyone is in, flows a set of mutual responsibilities, which involve a reciprocity – not just of things, but of actions and concerns – which brings the redistribution necessary to continually recreate balance and harmony. In terms of decision-making, everyone affected by a decision had a right to be heard, and no decision could be made until everyone agreed,

or at least acquiesced. The Dine or Navajo call right relations in all things K'e,⁵ so that all relations should work toward achieving, maintaining and restoring Hozo, "beauty" - harmony and balance.

Leaders, who were chosen for their good character and fine qualities appropriate to their function, acted primarily as facilitators helping the group or community reach consensus.⁶ As highly respected people, they had influence, but could not make decisions. They could only act administratively with the support of the community. But they did have considerable influence and remained leaders so long as they had the support of the community.

Thus, with their emphasis on finding consensus, Native American tribes and bands functioned with a politics somewhat different in character than has been accepted by the mainstream of Western political theory as seen in Machiavelli and Hobbes. Central to traditional western political theory is power for control. Power, for Indigenous Americans, was an important resource for doing this, but it was not the central element for determining "the authoritative allocation of values"⁷ (or for determining "who gets what, when, where, how"⁶). Moreover, power in traditional American Indian tribal and band societies was only partly a vehicle for control. It was also a source of empowerment. Tribal and band politics have very important cooperative elements along with competitive aspects. At the heart of this politics is a set of communal relationships based upon mutual respect, emphasizing both the community and the individual, so that in a very important sense the whole is equal to the part. While nothing human is perfect, this generally equalitarian inclusive participative way of living in most instances resulted in relatively internally peaceful, well balanced societies that worked well for virtually all of their members.

2. The Negative Impacts of Colonialism on Indigenous Relations

U.S. (and also in Canada) government initiated physical and cultural genocide of Indigenous peoples including attempts to disrupt traditional leadership and culture to achieve cultural assimilation compounded by abusive treatment at boarding school created intergenerational trauma and related abusive behaviors for many Native Americans.⁸ This has created disharmony in many Indian communities,⁹ compounded by the imposition of culturally inappropriate forms of government on many Native nations.¹⁰ Further, not only have many Indian nations been forced to move from equalitarian, inclusive, participatory non-hierarchical governments and agencies to hierarchical bureaucracies, but numerous Indian organizations and Indian owned businesses have also taken on mainstream bureaucratic forms of operation. When finding themselves in alien, hierarchical, governmental institutions and organizations, people whose values come from participation in one of the varieties of inclusive participatory decision-making - some form of consensus building - often function badly.

A key point is that historical trauma does not impact only individuals and families. It also influences the functioning of organizations and institutions. In Indigenous communities, unresolved historical and intergenerational trauma may appear in organizational

settings through distrust, conflict avoidance, scarcity thinking, lateral violence, leadership instability, burnout, communication challenges, and resistance to change. These dynamics are often misunderstood as individual performance issues when they may reflect deeper historical and system experiences. Efforts to improve organizational effectiveness therefore require attention not only to structures and processes, but also to relationships, healing, trust, and the restoration of cultural values that support collective wellbeing.

Many Indian nations have in various ways and to various degrees suffered from disruptions of community harmony. At Comanche Nation in 1990, the community had for some time been troubled with infighting and the inability of its governing body, the business committee, to make decisions because of the impossibility of developing consensus on most issues.¹¹ In February of that year, with the facilitation of tribal member LaDonna Harris, the Comanches began using a contemporary inclusive participatory decision making process modified to be appropriate for Native American use with specific adaptations to be compatible with Comanche culture and values, the Indigenous Leadership Management System (ILIS). ILIS was used to develop community consensus on proposals for consideration by the Business Committee, and in simplified form was applied for decision making by each of the four local Comanche community. The process began by reminding the participants of their relationships with each other and building stronger relationships and trust as it unfolded. The result was that as long as the process was used the nation and the local communities returned to harmony. Proposals on which ILIS was used to develop citizen consensus were enacted by the business committee, the local communities developed and approved a number of projects and participation greatly increased at annual tribal membership meetings. Experience with ILIS demonstrated that contemporary vehicles that function according traditional values that have been adapted to be cultural appropriate for their specific application can be used to return Indian relations to harmony and decision making to representative efficiency.

Navajo Nation, being the largest American Indian Nation with a particularly complex government and administrative agencies has experienced examples of the disruptive impacts of colonialism in public meetings and in the functioning of bureaucracy. For many years there have been complaints by Navajo citizens of bureaucratic slowness, errors and inefficiency in meeting the needs of Dine citizens. In the 2025-2026 discussion of the proposed new constitution, two of the few who commented on the proposal questioned whether, if enacted, the new constitution would fix the problem.¹² One of the problems of Navajo bureaucracy was discussed in a hearing of the Navajo Nation Council Resource and Development Committee of the law governing how chapters operate and exercise authority, Chapter 26 of the Navajo Nation Code, with public input.¹³ The Title 26 hearing included testimony of "widespread bullying and intimidation" in chapter relations with divisions and departments.

A specific example of this problem was reported in the Navajo Times reporting of the difficulties and delays in completing the Shonto Hotel project.¹⁴ The Shonto Chapter, the first certified, had an excellent record on economic development, indeed the best of any chapter. It contracted under its Title 26 authority with Medallion Hospitality of Scottsdale, AZ to build an 83 room hotel within its jurisdiction on U.S. 160. Having the proper experience capability and available personnel, the chapter wished to operate the hotel on its completion. This was in a major tourist corridor that the Navajo Division of Economic Development (DED) wanted to develop. DED pushed to have Medallion operate the hotel, and without consulting with the chapter made oral promises to Medallion, with whom it continued to negotiate. With the \$16 million construction completed and the facility furnished and ready to begin operating, Shonto, unaware of DED's interactions with Medallion, asked the hospitality firm to sign a lease agreement. For a time, Medallion management did not reply, but then said that leasing had been arranged by DED. Shonto officials then tried to negotiate leasing terms with DED, leading to a protracted "political, legal and administrative" dispute that caused Years of delay. Former Navajo Nation President Johnathan Nez, feeling the frustration felt by the Shonto community over the situation, commented that "shifting priorities, frequent turnover of directors and political conflicts in Window Rock contributed to the stagnation."¹⁵ With arrangements finally completed, the hotel was scheduled to open in the spring of 2026.

A raft of problems with Navajo bureaucratic operations were reported to the 25th Navajo Nation Council in April 2025.¹⁶ The controller stated that across administrative agencies for many months there were unpaid invoices, frequently not forwarded to the controller's office; unauthorized transfers of money; and "promises to pay," not authorized in regulations or policy, issued by top agency officials to illegally contract vendors' services. McCabe stated that the problems were caused primarily by the continuance of an unwieldy paper-based system. He asserted that they would be fixed by a new computer-based enterprise resource planning system with changes in operational procedures to go into operation October 1, 2025 along with some simplifications in the financial reporting system. Some of the delegates questioned whether that would be sufficient: whether "financial integrity [is] even enforceable under the current leadership."¹⁷

While the switch to the new computer-based system provided a means for greatly alleviating many bureaucratic problems, the reports of division officials bullying chapter officers indicate that interagency and interpersonal problems also need to be overcome. This is supported by several people working in Navajo schools telling me of infighting among staff. There is also evidence that improper behavior sometimes lowers the quality of some public meetings. I know of one chapter official who planned to leave office early because of raucous and unfriendly chapter meetings. It may be that problems with the quality of interpersonal interactions have been a factor in the large and growing number of vacancies among chapter officials and local school board members on the Navajo Nation.¹⁸ Navajo Nation's extensive administrative

agencies may also be suffering from the woes of mainstream top-down bureaucracy.

3. The Inherent Problems of Mainstream Hierarchical Organization

European, and later European American, organizations after the Middle Ages, functioned largely hierarchically on the basis of control. They functioned with differential status and rewards based largely on position in the hierarchy, as well as on the basis of loyalty and service to the hierarchy and the standards it passed down the organization.¹⁹ In Western tradition hierarchy also functioned with short-run reductionist thinking, in contrast to Indigenous holistic long-term seeing.²⁰

Hierarchical organizations do have a great deal of power. When operating properly they have the ability to make quick, unified decisions to coordinate action, as was discussed by Alexander Hamilton in *Federalist* 81. There, Hamilton stressed the need for a unitary, hierarchical executive branch for the U.S. government to administer policy and command the armed forces. But there are also shortcomings of hierarchical organizations, which, first in business, step by step led to movements to modify hierarchical structures. This eventually developed into a currently ongoing movement to transform them into participatory organizations.

In the mid-Nineteenth Century, businesses in the West were generally rather small, hierarchically organized and managed by their owners. Production took place in what were essentially workshops. The employee was motivated largely by pleasing the employer to keep her or his employment, and to receive either a wage or piece work payment for work done. There was little relation of the employee to market forces of supply and demand. In that circumstance, however, the separation of the employee from the market was fairly small and not essential, and the dysfunctional aspects of hierarchy were minimal.²¹

By the early twentieth century, the leading capitalist enterprises had become quite large and technologically more complex, with production taking place in factories. Generally, these "corporate" firms were hierarchically managed by non-owners. Generally, the stockholder owners elected the board of directors who chose the management. At this stage two major problems began to have obvious effects. First, hierarchical organizations suffer from inefficiencies that are compounded by the fact that employees who are paid fixed wages or salaries have no direct connection to the market and thus are only very slightly and indirectly motivated by it.²² Second, developments in the production process presented new questions of how work could best be organized and undertaken. This gave rise to the scientific management movement and business consulting in this period. In general, consultants like Frederick Taylor²³ developed important reforms, many of which are still useful if they are properly applied in their proper, and limited context. As applied in the early 20th Century, scientific management tended to reinforce the main principles of the dominant form of organization: a system of hierarchical control in a structure of many levels based upon differential status and reward and utilizing top-down decision making.²⁴

While there is considerable power in this kind of organization if controls are sufficiently exercised from the top, it suffers problems of reductionism of several kinds. First is a problem of communication and information. Communication generally only flows down the organization with information only flowing up when requested or permitted, with upward flow often slowed and distorted through the chain of command. Thus, decisions by superiors are often made on poor information or interpretation of good information, as the higher one goes in the organization the more isolated the decision maker is from the situation s/he is directing. Second, orders from above are often misinterpreted by those receiving them. Sometimes this is intentional, either because employees feel - usually correctly - that the order has flaws or out of resentment that the employees have no say in the matter which may have negative consequences for them. At the same time, the proliferation of parallel specialized units and subunits in the organization means there is poor communication, understanding and coordination across the organization. This leads to omissions, conflicts and duplications in actions among units, and often with outside people and entities who have no clear direct communication channels. Often, a result is that units and their staffs develop unit egos leading to negative feelings and actions regarding external others.

A major shortcoming of pure hierarchical organizations is that they reduce people below to factors of production (hence, "factories"). This produces alienation which can operate in a number of ways, including not caring about the organization so one just does what one is told to the extent one must. In extreme cases, or certain situations, it can cause employees to sabotage operations. To counter this, shop and office floorwork was often highly regimented by supervisors, requiring a significant portion of organization energy.

I experienced a good example of the problems with top-down management working in a mail order greeting card manufacturing plant in Westchester County, NY in the summer of 1956. The plant manager, the only higher management or staff we saw, greeted the new employees when we arrived. She was a kindly, knowledgeable, well-educated and otherwise likely typical manager of that era. As was usual, we never saw her on the plant floor during the weeks I worked there. She likely assumed that all proceeded according to plan, never observing what actually occurred in day-to-day operations. The permanent operational workers were, hardworking, working-class Puerto Ricans with little formal education. They were good people, and intelligent. But they were trained in the workplace just to follow orders. The foreman was one of them, who after many years was selected to be "middle" management. He was thoughtful, but knew, as supervisor, his job was just to see we were all following orders, with discretion only to make minor decisions to keep production moving. The overriding directive was for quantity of production. In the summer, young people, mostly students, were hired for the year's largest production of boxes of assorted sample cards.²⁵

I began my employment on an ever-moving assembly line sealing boxes of sample cards to be mailed to young people who would work to acquire orders for cards, likely largely from family and neighbors. The boxes were filled at the beginning of the line by young women collators, each adding one card of a single kind from a supply brought to them. One afternoon the women began to sing as they collated. The foreman shouted at them to "shut up." (In a team process facility, the facilitator might briefly stop them, encouraging them to sing as long as it did not get in the way of their work. He would know from similar experience, that the singing would likely speed production).

One morning, one young man was pulled off the production line. He was told by the foreman to break down empty cartons that had piled up from supplying the collators and sort them into three piles according to size. Just as he was finishing, someone came and told him to place the boxes on a cart in one pile and take them across the plant. When he arrived there, that foreman told him to put the boxes into piles by size against the wall. Soon, someone came and told him to put the boxes in one pile on another cart and take them to the loading dock. Again, the foreman there told him to stack the boxes according to size. In the middle of doing that, a truck driver came by, telling him to put the boxes in one pile on the back of his truck to go to another plant. The young man quit the next day.

One day, the foreman relieved me from the monotony of the repetitive job of sealing boxes to bring cartons of sample cards from the supply room to the collators. He emphasized that I was only to take them from one particular section of the supply room. After a while, the cards in that section were running out except for some marked damaged, do not use. On inspection, I saw they were all badly damaged - smeared printing, stained, badly torn.... Not wanting to foul up the plant's inventory, I went to the foreman, told him the only cards in the permitted section were badly damaged, and asked if I could take the cards from the next section. He said no, to use the damaged cards. When I pointed out that as they were in terrible condition, he said the collators would avoid the damaged cards. When I pointed out that they did not have time to do that, as he would not even let the collators sing, he said the inspection would remove the boxes with bad cards. At that point I knew to say nothing more. When the boxes of spoiled cards reached the inspection, the one out of ten inspected was pulled aside. The other nine, all with terrible samples, were let go to be sealed in mailing boxes and sent out. Someone in higher company management understood the need for quality control. But it was not integrated into the quantity prioritizing system, and only needlessly used resources.

4. Modification of the Hierarchical System

As there were basic problems with this top-down administrative model that accelerated as organizations grew in size and technology became more complex, as early as the 1920s some experiments began with forms which were based upon different principles. These innovations were grafted on to the hierarchical model.²⁶ This included some generally limited use of participation and introduction of some economic incentives, primarily individual

piecework bonuses for production workers, commissions for sales personnel and stock options for some managers. By the 1930s, with the development of the human relations movement,²⁷ it began to be recognized that there was a human side of management that needed to be taken into account. At a minimum superiors needed to make subordinates feel valued. Some thought that subordinates might have useful suggestions and information to pass up the organization. During the late '40s, this blended with the emergent cybernetics approach to organization, stressing the need for feedback as part of improved organization communications.²⁸ By the 1960s, organizations in the mainstream of business began to modify the hierarchical model, grafting onto it a variety of arrangements. These included quality circles and other group suggestion processes,²⁹ quality of work life programs that included at least some labor-management decision making, autonomous work teams on the shop floor and in the office,³⁰ and, in some places in Europe, limited Co-determination with some employees or their union representative on the top management board - equivalent of the board of directors.³¹

5. Adapting Indigenous Principles to Improve Organization Performance

Traditional Indigenous institutions, based on principles of mutual respect, involving balanced and harmonious right relations, are largely very flat, equalitarian people-based structures, with basically equal status of participants. As following the principle of place, each person (and multi person entity) is seen as unique, having an important contribution to make based on their individual skills and virtues along with their specific perceptions from their experience in their unique context in the discussion. Further each person and entity has interests that need to be harmonized, taking into account the short, medium and long run. Hence decision making is inclusive and holistic.

Traditional Native institutions have largely equalitarian rewards in concrete terms, but with a limited hierarchy of reward in terms of honor, according to one's achievements in contributing to the wellbeing of the community or group. These organizations are based on trust. But the trust did not automatically arise. It had to be built, maintained, and renewed, partly in the court of public opinion, but also through ceremony, such as mutual gifting, or holding a Pipe or other spiritual ritual.³² In some situations, Native societies did function with limited hierarchy, such as in battle where the war leader had a limited authority to command largely autonomous warriors,³³ because it was critical to act quickly in a coordinated manner, and there was not time for lengthy discussion. The U.S. army has mirrored this aspect of Indigenous practice in continuing to operate using its traditional chain of command during operations, and training for operations, but in using participatory teams for planning and evaluation.³⁴

By the 1950s, Outside of the mainstream, some examples of a different model of organization applying Indigenous relational values began to appear. These were based upon employee participation, that were forerunners of a new model for organizing and rewarding work. Often, they produced some spectacular

successes. However, as precursors, they often suffered from defects in structure and/or culture, or were pressured by the differently functioning environment, to take on such imperfections. The most notable of these were the cooperatives at Mondragon, in the Basque country of Spain,³⁵ and the self-managed enterprises that became the backbone of the Yugoslav economy after 1950.³⁶ The Mondragon cooperatives, influenced by remaining Indigenous aspects of Basque culture, grew from a single workshop employing 5 people in 1956 to a federation of well over 100 primary producer cooperatives by the 1980s employing more than 20,000 people. The primary cooperatives were supported by secondary cooperatives, including an investment bank, educational cooperatives, a research and development unit and housing and consumer cooperatives. In all, by 2020, the federation, having been reorganized as the Mondragon Cooperative Corporation (MCC), consisted of 257 businesses of which 110 were cooperatives and 147 were subsidiaries. MCC employed 74,060 people. As a whole they were consistently far more productive than conventional businesses in Spain and were quite successful in the international market. In 70 years, they have weathered several recessions, suffering only one business failure in all that time. More will be said about them below. Yugoslavia, using self-managed enterprises which were essentially cooperatives operating on the basis of one employee one vote, enjoyed the second highest rate of growth of GNP per capita in the world from 1954 to almost 1970.³⁷ When in the early 1970's some problems were perceived with the structure of self-managed firms, they were decentralized so that in effect each firm became a federation of semi-autonomous work units.³⁸

By the late 1980s it began to be seen in the mainstream that participation made for greater effectiveness in virtually every aspect of an organization's behavior, precisely because it was a more human basis for an organization.³⁹ If participation was the proper basis for running an organization, then it should no longer be grafted on to the old model. Rather, a new organization model compatible with Indigenous values, centered on participation needed to be utilized. The emerging participatory organizational model is very flat, with either few layers, or in its more developed form, no hierarchy at all.⁴⁰ It is the team organization composed of a collaborative circle of teams all on the same level. It is based upon commitment, equality of status and reward, joint decision making (with delegation to whomever is directly affected by a decision) and democratic communication directly among all with a need to communicate. It is a decentralized, networking organization that is really a federation, rather than a monolithic structure.⁴¹ In order to support participation, the system of reward is changed so that it connects the employee directly to the market and the performance of the firm. This is being done for both the short and long term, with such gainsharing devices as group productivity bonuses, profit sharing and worker ownership or its equivalent (in the U.S. often through Employee Stock Ownership Plans, or ESOPS).⁴² In addition, individual piecework payments are largely replaced by team rewards providing a share of money saved or earned for the enterprise to the team. In addition, individuals and teams are often honored for outstanding work in the organization or community, just as Indian communities continue to honor outstanding members.

Perhaps the best-known example of a firm that embodies most of the new model is W.L. Gore, an almost totally employee-owned high tech fiber company. In a few years Gore expanded from start up to a fortune 500 multinational corporation employing over 5000 employees worldwide.⁴³ Everyone at Gore has the same status. All are called associates. Gore is an organization composed of autonomous, interrelated teams. To work at Gore, one negotiates a job with a team. Each team makes its decisions by consensus. Whenever an issue involves more than the members of a team, whomever is concerned participates in the decision. As team organizations develop, they tend to lose their organizational egos, making decisions on their merits and not just because one of the parties is a member of the larger organization. For example, a team at the Indianapolis Ford plant concerned with obtaining high quality steel was told by the Ford foundry that they could not supply steel to the specifications required until expensive improvements could be made at the foundry. Hearing this, the team at the Indianapolis Ford plant fired the Ford Foundry as a supplier.⁴⁴ Indeed, there are now numerous examples of firms that have sufficiently devolved into federations, whose units act very autonomously, almost as separate enterprises, that are semi-independent profit centers, buying and selling where they choose either/or both inside and outside the organization.⁴⁵ But all these unit teams coordinate and collaborate with each other, sometimes forming a joint team to coordinate their interaction and solve mutual problems. Similarly, in Japan, in the 1980s and 1990s, independent enterprises have come together as federations (*Kaizens*, which at this stage operated with a combination of top-down direction and collaborative participation, while externally acting as aggressive competitors),⁴⁶ while collaborative joint ventures among firms worldwide are becoming increasingly more common.

More recently, large companies buying out smaller, and large enterprises merging have brought about oligopolies somewhat immune to market forces headed by those seeking the illusion of control. This has limited the expansion in business of more productive participatory organization, which remains superior for its personnel, enterprise productivity and competitiveness, and the wellbeing of the wider community.

6. The Spread of Democratization to All Kinds of Organizations in All Sectors

The organizational transformation has not been limited to business, but has emerged in organizations of all kinds, including non-profit enterprise, and within government. For example, as early as 1981, Wake County, NC ran a pilot program of 39 quality circles in its agencies. After 15 months, employee morale was up, services to the public had improved with management accepting most suggestions from employee circles, and the county had saved \$151,000 in the first year in improved efficiency.⁴⁷ Osborne and Gaebler *Reinventing Government*, provides numerous examples of the full range of employee participation processes from quality circles to team process in government agencies at every level across the United States.⁴⁸ This includes examples of services becoming more responsive to the people they serve by treating them as customers and communicating with them about their

needs and how, and how well, they are served.

In an age of large nations, providing a variety of services to many people, while regulating many areas of life, making the bureaucracy participatory and representative for the people it serves and regulates is a critical matter. In the case of a relatively small Indian Nation, the Southern Utes have developed a good system for doing this, which is discussed below. For a larger nation, some additional communication channels may need to be put in place, as those who make and apply policy may be geographically and socially distant from those they serve and regulate. Ideas about this are discussed below.

One field in which much has been accomplished to bridge the distance between government and people, after many years is in Indian affairs.⁴⁹ There, with persistent facilitation by LaDonna Harris, other Native leaders and Indian organizations, first were established Indian desks in each agency that dealt significantly with Indian tribes or people. These positions were only effective if those who held them were sufficiently free from other duties and had the interest in Indian concerns to play their essential role. People in those positions, and others involved in Indian affairs, also needed sufficient knowledge of the people and situations they were dealing with. Therefore, it was often necessary to teach liaison staff "Indian 101." In addition, American Indian advisory groups were established in several agencies to provide increased communications between the agency and Indian nations and organizations. Then to provide coordination, avoiding conflict and duplication of effort, several federal departments, including Health and Human Services (originally HEW) and agriculture put into place department wide councils on Indian affairs headed by a high enough ranked officer to have leverage in the hierarchical department organization. In a participatory organization coordination would be carried out by a coordinating team. Since coordination has been needed across departments, a number of presidents have created administration wide Indian coordinating bodies.

At the same time, federal government agencies are required to hold consultation meetings with federally recognized Indian tribes on developing or changing major policies and programs. This is in addition to announcing proposed new rules or rule amendments with opportunity for public comment, which may include public meetings.

There are also examples of statewide coordinating bodies in a number of states. In Washington, for instance, the concerned tribes formed the American Indian Health Commission for Washington State to provide policy advice and collective communication with the state on health matters. The Commission communicates regularly with a variety of state and local health agencies, while each Washington tribe appoints its own representative to the Indian Policy Advisory Committee in the Washington Department of Social and Health Services.⁵⁰ Indian policy as a whole is coordinated from the top of the executive branch, by the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs (GOIA). Meanwhile, a large number of

federal programs have been decentralized downward allowing qualified tribes to run their own programs with federal funding within federal guidelines. The decentralization of some functions down to qualified chapters at Navajo Nation is somewhat similar, but is more like a state empowering municipalities to carry out certain governmental functions than a decentralization of specific administrative programs, such as housing programs.

7. The Indigenization of Relations in Participatory Organizations

One of the most important aspects of democratizing organizations is that it transforms relationships in the organization, humanizing them. The key to well working teams is to develop trust and solidarity within them. Team members quickly come to see they need each other and support each other. They come to care for each other, essentially as relatives, on the job and often beyond it.

My experience in the late 1980s at a newly established electronics plant of a large corporation, launched as a team process organization, is a good example. Building collaborative teams and relations takes time. Coming into the facility over time I could feel the energy of friendship building, more and more it was alive in the air. Teams and teammates did what they could to help each other. In one case, when a team member had difficulties at home that required him to be there after the workday had started, the team arranged its operations so that he could come in late and then stay late to do some things that he could do individually.

Another important attitudinal development with team process at the electronics factory was coming to see life as learning. On one occasion a number of aircraft radios that the workers had made were returned because they had "minor defects." They worked, but soldering of some connections was not strong enough to stand up over time and use. When first confronted with the returns at a meeting, many employees were annoyed, because in doing the work they had carefully followed the provided guidelines. But after a few moments thought, they all realized that they had learned the guidelines were insufficient, and they needed to develop their own to do the job right. This was a typical case of higher management and distant engineers needing the input of employees on the scene to attain a desired outcome.

Further, it has been shown that participatory organizations tend to be far more concerned about the welfare of the community in which they operate than hierarchical organizations, especially when owners or top managers are geographically distant.⁵¹ Decisions made by teams in collaborative organizations often directly impact their families, friends, neighbors and the local population, making those impacts important to consider in making decisions. In addition, as the participatory experience is educational, it has been shown that people who participate in the workplace are more likely to participate in the community, both in volunteer work and politically.⁵²

A good example of the community mindedness of democratic organizations occurred in a paprika factory in Macedonia in

which I was researching in 1973. That year there was such a large crop of peppers used to make paprika that the price of paprika fell drastically, causing a financial crisis for the company. A key question for the workers council was whether to cancel contracts with farmers for peppers and cut back production. Most of the workers came from farm families, which would be hurt if they did that. Noting peppers are perishable while the dried paprika is not, they were unanimous in preserving the contracts. The excess paprika could be sold the next year with the firm then reducing production, giving farmers sufficient notice to switch to other crops the next season.

8. Developing Workplace Democracy

Developing well working team process requires learning practical operational values and skills.⁵³ These include respectful, careful, empathetic, supportive listening to each person to understand their concerns and reinforce their participation in the dialogue. Too often today, people do not listen to or understand each other and engage in attacking each other on the points they agree on, instead of finding common ground while illuminating the points on which they disagree. Supportive listening is necessary to include everyone's concerns, so far as possible, in any decision, making it a better course of action. Further, it is important to speak supportively to one another to build and maintain trust in each other and in the process. Also, too often people jump directly from identifying an issue to asserting a solution without analyzing what is actually involved. It is necessary for participants to take a problem-solving approach to issues, carefully examining the nature of problems, comparing alternative courses of action, enroute to finding a good solution. It also helps if participants have or acquire the traditional Indigenous idea that life is learning from experience to be open for change and new information. Finally, good facilitating is necessary to guide the discussion, keeping it focused and participants acting respectfully and supportively. This usually means having a fine facilitator, but once participants are skilled in the process anyone can assist in facilitating if discussion becomes bogged down or off track.

Building team process takes time and often some effort to get people to accept that this is a better, and for most people, more enjoyable and rewarding way to work. In a sizable organization or work unit it is often advisable to begin finding one group of people willing to try out teamwork, perhaps with some incentive for doing so. Once others see this is a better way, they become eager to participate until eventually team process spreads to the whole workplace. Team building is an educational process, varying with the background and personalities of the team members. Usually, teams begin with a trained facilitator-trainer as team leader who shifts to just being a facilitator as the members gain competence while they increasingly engage in higher degrees of joint decision making.

9. Applying Team Process to Indigenous Organizations

Properly developed, including making appropriate adaptations for the culture of the people involved, team process is likely to fit very well in Indian organizations, whether they be tribally or Indian

private people owned businesses, Indian non-profit organizations or Indian nation administrative units. To date, I have located one Indian owned business that has moved strongly in the direction of team process, Iron Woman Construction & Environmental Services.⁵⁴

Founded in 1999 by Shaun Eagan (Blackfeet) and his mother, who named the company in honor of his great-great-great-grandmother's Blackfeet name, the firm has expanded from trucking into civil construction, environmental services, mining infrastructure, utilities, and more. Its success is based upon the company's traditional Native values. It is a people-oriented organization stressing good relationships internally and externally, with its employees its greatest asset, doing high quality work for its customers, and acting with responsibility for the wider community. Iron Woman offers a wide range of benefits to its employees including employee ownership, a variety of education, health, finance, insurance and employee assistance programs aimed at supporting organization members.⁵⁵ As part of its social responsibility, the firm gives employees time off for participation in community projects.

10. The Iron Woman web site states.

Building Today For A Sustainable Tomorrow

At Iron Woman, we pride ourselves on building communities, not just infrastructure. Our work, with attention to safety and quality, makes it possible for families to travel safely to and from work every day and to have open spaces and beautiful communities to enjoy.

Who We Are

Iron Woman embraces complexity. Our value comes from the complex problem-solving power of combining each of our divisions and services to provide whole solutions. From our trucking roots, we've diversified into builders with a focus on water infrastructure, environmental, mining, and logistics. Our sustainable infrastructure solutions solve increasingly complex problems.

Iron Woman builds relationships. We are client centric. We select business partners who match our ethical profile. We build meaningful long-term relationships when engaging clients, subcontractors, and fellow employees. The relationship is more important than the next deal.

- **Iron Woman stands out as a values-driven company.** We're building communities for the future of Colorado and the western United States. All our efforts – from project selection to hiring to working together as a team – are guided by our six core values.
- *Safety*
- Our highest priority
- *People*
- Our greatest asset
- *Respect*
- The foundation for trust

- *Integrity*
- The cornerstone of every relationship
- *Quality*
- Our standard of excellence in all we do
- *Profitability*
- Stability for our employees & customers

We are here to serve and strive to be a force for good in the community. This is most evident in the support and enrichment we provide to our employees, the larger community, and the local environment. We've been recognized for our positive impact through a growing list of awards.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Iron Woman's very foundation was built on a culture of giving. Co-founder Phyllis Pendergrass Egan set an example of service and paying it forward that has become the pillar of Iron Woman's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program.

We offer employees paid time off for volunteering and donation matching programs. Recipients of corporate giving have included Habitat for Humanity, The Greenway Foundation, and Colorado Education Foundation. Employee support programs such as Women of Iron Woman and educational assistance programs ensure we are supporting our people as well as the community. Iron Woman partners with Mile High United Way to develop, execute, and continuously improve our CSR program.

Evidence that Iron Woman functions according to its stated values is in its winning a number of awards for safety, quality of work and community service. These are:

Iron Woman Construction and Environmental Services Celebrates Founder and CEO Shaun Eagan was recognized as a Construction Pioneer by the Colorado Construction Association (CCA).

Iron Woman won 2nd place Nationally in the Over 400,000 Hours Utility Infrastructure Division of the AGC Construction Safety Excellence Awards, also known as the Willis Towers Watson National CSEA Awards.

Iron Woman received two recognitions at the first annual Colorado Contractor Association (CCA) Infrastructure Construction Excellence Awards. Iron Woman received Honorable Mention for National Western Center's Wet Well project and for Sterling Ranch. The awards were presented on April 14, 2023.

Iron Woman's 27th Street Storm Interceptor project received the American Public Works Association's Public Works Project of the Year in the Environment, \$5 million to \$25 million category for 2023!

Three drivers on the Iron Woman team were recognized in the annual Colorado Motor Carriers Association Safety Awards.

The Iron Woman Mining team won the AGC ACE Silver award, category Meeting the Challenges of a Difficult Project- Specialty Contractor.

Iron Woman received the Bronze award in the Contribution to the Community category at the annual AGC ACE awards, in recognition of the Heron Pond Open Space and Caprio-Sanguinette Park Improvements Project.

Iron Woman, in 2018, became the first company to win two awards in one year from the American Indiana Chamber of Commerce, The Company of the Year and the Dee St Cyr/Collen Honomichl Legacy of Service Award.

Iron Woman may not be a full team process organization as Gore Associates is, but it appears to so fully follow traditional Indigenous values applied in contemporary context. It establishes traditional internal and external well working relationships that make virtually all organizations function better. An aspect of that is that offers worker ownership to its employees. In the United States today employee ownership is most often in the form of either employee stock ownership plans (ESOPs) or cooperatives. These are both flexible structures that only lead to employee participation or good internal and external relations if steps are taken to develop them.

ESOPs are retirement plans that place a portion of a firm's profits in employee retirement accounts. They can be offered to just an elect few or all full-time employees who have been with the organization for a sufficient time. An ESOP can be anything from a small benefit to employees to a method for providing 100 percent employee ownership.

Pamela Standing (Cherokee), executive director of Minnesota Indigenous Business Alliance commented that "Cooperatives are a logical fit with tribal communities. There are shared, common values within the memberships of both tribal and cooperative communities."⁵⁶ That is true if cooperatives are structured and run correctly. There are several kinds of cooperatives. Producer cooperatives are great for collaboration among the producers, but unless organized to do so do not work particularly well or effectively for their employees, or responsibly for customers or the community. Dairy Farmers of America is a great coop for its small dairy members, giving it economy of scale.⁵⁷ But at least in the past, internally it functioned as a hierarchical corporation. In contrast, I knew a group of artists who ran their own coop, taking turns dealing with the public and as a team handling their organizational functions, which worked very well. There are many consumer coops, that are excellent for their customer owners, but generally they function internally with standard mainstream top-down management. Worker cooperatives if operated on a participatory basis often do very well. This was case of the worker owned plywood companies of the Pacific Northwest.⁵⁸ They provided good, satisfactory employment with good income and benefits for their worker owners who as local owners were concerned about their communities. When they collectively wanted to retire, they did very well selling out to larger lumber companies. If they had also had ESOPs, they could have still done very well while the

companies continued with new workers.

Employee ownership alone, even at 100 percent employee ownership does not improve organization performance or quality of work life. That was demonstrated by South Bend Lathe.⁵⁹ When the conglomerate that owned the firm, Amsted Industries decided to liquidate the company in 1974, South Bend Lathe managers suggested to employees that they could save their jobs by forming 100 percent employee-owned ESOP. The ESOP was structured with full managerial control by its board of directors on which the nonmanagerial employees were represented by only the local union president and vice president, a small minority of the board. With no change in operations or management, employees soon became upset with the way company was run, leading to a long hard-fought strike over minor issues. Where before the ESOP, employees thought it was the owners company and hence operational problems were theirs. With the ESOP, it became our company and these issues became essential. The worker-management disgruntlement did not get settled, and while the firm remained profitable, it was downsized a number of times with parts of its operation spun off with the ESOP terminated and the firm sold 12 years after the 1980 strike.

For employee ownership to be successful, employees need to feel they are owners. That involves significant say in management and sufficient financial reward for their contribution. The dollar reward can be for team cost savings or income increase and/or in some form of profit sharing, in bonuses and/or retirement plan contributions. In firms without employee ownership, the same factors are involved, sufficient participation in decision-making and team reward for a work team saving money or adding to firm income. Government and non-profit organizations can provide the decision making participation, but are limited in providing financial rewards. Still, teams and their members making contributions to the organizations achievements can be given recognition, and as the organization makes no profit, employees do not feel they haven't been given their fair share of the organization's financial gain for their contribution. As in the case of Iron Woman, providing of other benefits can do much to make employees feel they matter to the organization, encouraging them to care about the organization and their work. The best results in terms of both quality of working life and organizational performance are usually found in organizations that function with full team process.

11. Debureaucratizing Indian Nation Administration

The Southern Utes, who have established a variety of vehicles for everyone impacted by a decision to have a say in it, have accomplished a great deal of what a relatively small Indian Nation might do to return administrative relations to functioning very well according to traditional values.⁶⁰ Some of the Southern means for doing this are part of giving everyone a voice in decisions that affect them. In moving to develop an improved tribal healthcare system, for example, in Spring 2013, the tribe undertook a survey of tribal members, as well as interviewing healthcare staff, and discussing the matter in general tribal meetings.⁶¹ Building on member input, the tribe put its new health benefits program into

effect on October 1, 2013.⁶²

In the spirit of community policing, in October 2016, members of the Southern Ute Community Police Department and Tribal Rangers met informally with community members in a "neutral space to discuss community issues, build relationships and drink coffee."⁶³ This meeting has been continued. To insure that all concerned would have a say in decisions that effected them, the Utes, in planning the development of a new skate park, invited elders to a meeting of the skatepark planning and development team to comment on the planning, and by insuring that youth - who would be the prime users of the park - were involved in the development.⁶⁴

Meanwhile, the Tribe and its agencies have continued to regularly seek member input into proposed changes in tribal code, as exemplified by the Tribe asking for member input into the Proposed Amendments to Southern Ute Indian Tribe Severance Tax Code and the Southern Ute Indian Tribe Environmental Programs Department's (EPD) Air Quality (AQD) Annual Air Monitoring Annual Network Plan in fall 2025.⁶⁵ In seeking tribal input on a proposed amendment to the Protective Custody Code, the March 26 2026 "Notice of Proposed Amendment to Title 8 - Protective Custody Code & Request for Public Comments," in the *Drum*, the council listed the website page for reviewing the code, along with listing various methods by which members could comment. These were E-mail, mail, hand delivery, phone and participation on two town hall meetings on the topic.

These invitations for input often include opportunities to come to public discussion of the issues at meetings providing food, which helps increase attendance, as seen in "Notice of Proposed Amendment to Title 17 - Employment Rights Code," and "Notice of Proposed Amendment to Title 13 - Wildlife Conservation Code," in the *Southern Ute Drum* issue of January 23, 2026.⁶⁶ Some agency meetings include time for open discussion of the unit's operation and policy as well as for updates on current programs and proposed rule or operation changes. This included the May 13, 2026 joint meeting at Southern Ute of the Southern Ute Tribe Tribal Air Quality Division and the State of Colorado Environmental Commission.⁶⁷

Both the Council and individual Southern Ute departments have used surveys to gain member input on operations or specific issues. If there is an insufficient response, a second request for member participation is announced. For example, the Southern Ute Shared Services Digital Equity Program requested feedback on the program in a "Technology and Internet Survey" in May 2026. Tribal members who participated were entered into a drawing for an Apple iPad.⁶⁸

As already indicated, the tribal council regularly helps keep agencies working properly and the council relies on them when needed. This is not only true of council-initiated projects, but in the council's response to voiced member need. A good example is a fall 2023 development showing how council response to

tribal member concerns and collaboration among Southern Ute entities can lead to resolution of member issues. In early 2023, the Southern Ute Tribal Council had become aware of instances where propane fuel suppliers had failed to make timely deliveries, leaving Southern Ute tribal members without reliable and consistent heat during the winter months, in some cases for extended periods of time. Tribal Council requested the Fund's assistance to evaluate and propose options for improved reliability of propane delivery to tribal members. To assess tribal members' experiences, the Growth Fund partnered with Tribal Information Services to conduct a survey, which was released in July 2023 on the Tribal Member Portal and paper surveys were mailed to tribal elders for inclusion of all voices.⁶⁹

At the same time, the Growth Fund completed a survey of alternative suppliers and undertook an analysis of all the information collected about them, even considering the possibility of the tribe initiating its own propane supply company. The fund then narrowed the choice to the best group of suppliers taking in the full range of concerns. Further consultation led to one of these firms offering a favorable deal. This firm was recommended to tribal members, but left them the choice of which firm to select for themselves. To assist tribal members in their choice, and make the whole Growth Fund process transparent, the survey and analysis were placed on the tribal member on-line portal along with relevant contact information to the firms and knowledgeable staff at the Growth fund.

In the area of tribal finances, the Southern Growth Fund, responsible to the Council, and regularly holding general meetings with the tribal membership, increased its representativeness of the membership by appointing a Member-A-Large to its Management Committee (GFMC). The committee invites volunteers from among the tribal membership to apply for the at large position, choosing, on the basis of their qualification, one of the volunteers to serve as Member-A-Large, providing a membership voice to the committee and Growth Fund information to the membership. In order to fulfill that function, the Member-A-Large is required to attend the regular meetings of the GFMC and various Growth Fund/Tribal Council sessions.⁷⁰ Similarly, the Southern Ute Economic Development Committee (SUEDC) appoints a Tribal Member at Large.⁷¹

Meanwhile, The Southern Utes have taken a number of steps to improve the operation of their departments and programs. In the late 1990's, the tribal council instituted monthly sessions for members with concerns or complaints about tribal government and services, to meet individually with the Tribal Council.⁷² That was only continued for a couple of years.

Then, in 1999-2000, the Southern Utes became the first Indian nation to participate in a project, funded by the U.S. Children's Bureau, to build coordination among social services that effected children, with ongoing community input.⁷³ At the request of the tribal chair and council, a consulting team from the Social Research Institute at the University of Utah was brought in to help

facilitate a Design Team. The team included administrators from a wide range of tribal services, since, at least indirectly, all services and the community members they interact with have an impact on children. Community consultants, including former social service recipients and elders, collaborated in building teamwork among social services, with responsiveness to community needs and input. The goal was to provide culturally relevant, supportive and integrated services to ensure that all Southern Ute children are successful in school and in life. In February 2006, the Southern Ute Indian Tribal Information Services Department, building upon inter-agency cooperation and coordination begun under the Design Program called a meeting of Southern Ute and La Plata County, CO social service agencies to renew and expand a 2003 memorandum of understanding, which included bringing in the Mental Health Center as a collaborator.

The meeting focused on working together as a consistent policy, the need to create a service directory, and the desire of non-tribal entities to increase tribal awareness of efforts to create a La Plata County Health District. Thus, inclusiveness and cooperation among tribal agencies continued to foster collaboration with outside entities for more appropriate and effective delivery of services to Southern Utes. The tribe's combining member participation with collaboration with neighboring entities has continued. This is exemplified by the tribe and the Ignacio Public School Board jointly inviting Southern Ute parents to attend an Ignacio school policies and procedures meeting on October 16, 2023.⁷⁴ The town of Ignacio and its schools are within the boundaries of the reservation. This is a collaboration that has gone on for well over a decade. It is part of a yet broader collaboration with area entities encompassing such areas as law enforcement, including cross-deputation of police officers and cooperation with the City of Durango, CO in building a new hospital and undertaking economic development of the area around it.⁷⁵ As has been the case with numerous other Indian nations, most of the Southern Ute collaboration with non-Indian entities has unfolded with the tribe becoming an important economic power in the area and the increase in education and professional competence of its personnel.

In December 2025, the Southern Ute Tribe joined a program to improve the capacity of its administrative staffs to function collaboratively.⁷⁶ Project Rural Upskill Network (RUN), a collaboration between Fort Lewis College and the LaPlata Economic Development Alliance, provides six weeks of training to help participants clarify their leadership style, communicate with intention, support team accountability and navigate workplace dynamics. Among other things, the training helps participants facilitate conflict, increase emotional intelligence, improve communication self-awareness, and understanding of how to improve team performance. While short of full team process management training, a modern application of traditional Indigenous collaborative interacting, RUN does much to enhance workplace collaboration.

One contemporary example of Indigenous approaches to organizational strengthening can be found in the work of Lanalle

Smith (Diné/Navajo), founder of Blacksheep Insight Consulting and Coaching, LLC.⁷⁷ Drawing upon nearly three decades of experience in Native housing, community development, financial capability, coaching, and organizational leadership, Smith works with tribal governments, Native CDFIs, housing organizations, nonprofits, and community-based programs throughout Indian Country.

Her work is grounded in Indigenous values of relationship, reciprocity, accountability, and community wellbeing. Rather than focusing solely on organizational structures and procedures, Smith helps organizations examine the quality of relationships that exist within teams, leadership systems, and community-serving institutions.

A central premise of her work is that many organizational challenges commonly viewed as performance problems are symptoms rather than root causes. Through organizational assessments and diagnostic processes, Smith helps leaders and teams identify underlying issues related to trust, communication, organizational culture, role clarity, leadership practices, accountability, unresolved conflict, historical trauma, financial trauma, and system design.

Her approach recognizes that organizational effectiveness is influenced not only by policies and structures, but also by the ways people experience and navigate relationships, power, responsibility, and decision-making within organizations. Through facilitation, coaching, leadership development, and experiential learning processes, she supports organizations in rebuilding healthy relationships while strengthening accountability, effectiveness, and long-term sustainability.

Areas of focus include:

- Building trust and restoring working relationships
- Strengthening communication and collaborative decision-making
- Developing trauma-aware leadership practices
- Creating psychologically safe and accountable workplace cultures
- Conducting organizational assessments and diagnostics to identify root causes of organizational challenges
- Addressing the impacts of historical, intergenerational, and financial trauma on organizational functioning
- Supporting leadership development, succession planning, and team effectiveness
- Integrating Indigenous values and cultural strengths into contemporary organizational systems
- Strengthening organizational culture and alignment between systems, values, and practice

Smith's approach emphasizes that organizational effectiveness and human wellbeing are not separate goals. When organizations intentionally cultivate trust, belonging, accountability, and right relationship, they often experience stronger performance, healthier workplace cultures, and improved outcomes for the communities they serve.

An important aspect of this work involves helping organizations distinguish between symptoms and root causes. Challenges such as turnover, conflict, poor communication, resistance to change, low morale, ineffective decision making, or lack of accountability are often viewed as isolated personnel or management issues. However, organizational assessments frequently reveal deeper concerns related to trust leadership practices, organizational culture, role clarity, historical, intergeneration, and financial trauma, or misalignment between organizational systems and Indigenous values. Identifying these root causes creates opportunities for organizations to strengthen relationships, improve performance, and restore healthier patterns of interaction consistent with Indigenous principles of right relations.

Consistent with Diné concepts of K'é and similar relational teachings found across many Indigenous nations, the objective is not merely organizational efficiency, but the restoration of balance, responsibility, harmony, and healthy relationships within organizations and the communities they serve.

12. Applying Team Process to Larger Indian Nations

Larger Indian tribes with more extensive organization would likely build on what the Southern Ute have done as fits their specific circumstances. This might well begin with decentralizing at least some operations or programs to local Communities. A medium size nation, like that of the Comanche with its population concentrated in four communities, might empower them to carry out certain administrative functions in their own way within guidelines, and subject to review by the tribal government or its appropriate department.

The very large Navajo Nation has undertaken decentralization to some degree with limited empowerment to those of its 110 chapters that achieve certification.⁷⁸ The nation created a sales tax to provide revenue for chapter operations. To assist the chapters in attaining certification and in properly handling finances, four regional support centers were established. Certification has been slow and numerous chapters have been cited for financial irregularities, perhaps because bureaucratic systems and accounting are often quite alien to even well-educated people not familiar with them and the support centers may not have had sufficient funding to provide the necessary education. Such education usually needs to be provided in a traditional friendly way of helping relatives understand an alien way of proceeding. Yet some of the chapters have functioned quite well, including making progress on economic development. The Shonto Chapter, discussed above, is a good example.

Also likely in expanding on what the Southern Utes have done in debureaucratizing for a large Indian nation is creating sufficient communication channels between each department or agency with the people, as well as with other agencies and departments. For example, Navajo Nation might have one or more people with time, orientation and authority in each of the nation's administrative units to communicate with chapters and/or regional support centers that might have dedicated people to communicate with nation's

administrative units. Also, inter-department/agency teams might be established to coordinate in areas of mutual concern. Some oversight might be needed to see that the system works properly. For the Navajo, currently that would be the responsibility of the Navajo Nation Council. But with the council reduced from 88 to 24 members, its members and committees might have difficulty in undertaking proper overview themselves. They might need some specially created commission to do that and report to the council, or might add that function to the Office of Navajo Government Development, or some other existing entity. If the constructional proposal being prepared for a referendum, in November 2026 passes, the administrative oversight function might go to the new accountability fourth branch of government, or to an entity reporting to it.⁷⁹

13. Expanding on the Mondragon Cooperatives Model for Indian Economic Development

The success of the Mondragon Cooperatives can be attributed primarily to several factors. First, Mondragon adheres to ten principles: (1) open admission, there is no discrimination in hiring for anyone who accepts the cooperative principles; (2) democratic control, one worker one vote; (3) sovereignty of labor, workers are the highest authority in the firms through the power of the general assembly of the federation; (4) participation in management, providing the means of insuring systems of participation, transparency, consultation and negotiation that includes the voice of rank and file workers. It recognizes that workers are essential to the profitability of the firms. In turn the cooperative should provide opportunities to all its members; (5) instrumental and subordinate nature of capital; (6) wage solidarity, with a ratio of no more than 1:6 times between the lowest and highest paid workers; (7) inter-co-operation, each cooperative works cooperatively with other co-ops; (8) universality, referring to the value of working with all who are working to promote economic democracy; (9) social transformation, which to 2020 has been the promotion and preservation of Basque language and culture and the revitalization of the Basque language as a national language; community development; the promotion of a cooperative system of solidarity and responsibility; and the advancement of the Basque working class and (10) education, reflecting a commitment to transmit the cooperative experience and its values to its members, especially those in elected positions; and, professional education especially for those in the boards of directors to insure that they understand their responsibility for and accountability to the workers. The education principle also reflects a commitment to provide education for new generations of cooperators starting with social formation of the children. There is clearly an influence and overlap with the cooperative principles as articulated by the International Cooperative Alliance.⁸⁰ These principles translate easily into American Indian terms, including by replacing "worker" with "tribal citizen" and replacing preserving still considerably Indigenous Basque language, values and culture with Indian nation language, values and culture.

Second, the cooperatives experienced early on that too large a firm can not perform well with good internal relations. Thus, the

maximum size for any worker cooperative was set at 200 employees. If the business was in need of, or open to, expansion, then another cooperative doing the same work would be established as part of the federation. This combined the virtues of small units with economies of scale in the large federation.

Third, the federation was centered on its bank. The bank acted as an economic development organ for the cooperatives. Worker coop members received a share of their enterprise's profits in an ESOP like retirement account at the bank. If, as rarely happened, their coop lost money, funds were taken from their accounts to support the enterprise. In the early days, when few workers were retiring, leaving the federation, or experiencing financial emergencies, a great deal of money was coming into the bank through these funds, and little paid out, providing a huge capital fund. The bank carefully considered proposals for new cooperatives, incubating new launches with a committee of experts until it was clear the enterprise was functioning successfully. When a recession came, if an enterprise needed fewer employees, the excess were sent back to school - usually to the federation's worker's university - to learn new skills and approaches, until their own or another enterprise needed more workers. If a recession hit an enterprise particularly badly, the bank could loan money to a coop to get it through in good shape. In a couple of rare cases the bank forgave loans to keep viable enterprises going.

The Mondragon cooperatives as of 2020 were short of the ideal in one respect. Aside from some application of quality circles, they did not use employee participation within the cooperatives. This was offset by the small size of each enterprise and the usually very good equalitarian relations in the culture that included workers of all kinds, from janitors to top managers interacting on an equal basis in Basque clubs outside of work. There was a social organizations in each of the coops with some of the functions of a union. But perhaps because of the friendly equalitarian relations and the common interest all had as profit sharing owners, these were not very active.

Fourth, the federation acted holistically not only among its worker cooperatives which collaborated with each other with the support of their bank, university and research cooperative, but also in providing needed services with housing, consumer and other cooperatives that were open to anyone in the wider community. The federation also contributed to the needs and enhancement of the wider community. This is pretty much the way an American Indian Nations attempts to act.

Appropriately adapted, the Mondragon Cooperatives may be a good general model for tribal development. A tribal economic development agency of an Indian nation or federation of nations can support the development of tribal businesses, which can cooperate with each other as appropriate. The businesses will provide employment and learning opportunities for tribal members. As the businesses become successful, some of their profits can be used to increase tribal services. The caution here, is that tribal governments need to take an appropriate business regulating and

taxing role,⁸¹ but allow businesses to operate independently of the tribal government and politics. Without separation, there is the danger of government arbitrarily interfering in business because someone in government personally favors or disfavors a person. Where separation has not occurred, there have been cases of people in power forcing the firing of competent people without cause, or the hiring of incompetent people, to the detriment of the enterprise, and loss of income to the nation. Similarly, short term political concerns have caused directly controlled tribal businesses to make decisions economically damaging for the long term. In other cases, tribal governments have taken too much capital from a tribal business, causing it to fail. But properly organized and managed, tribal business development can be extremely successful, as has occurred at Southern Ute.⁸² The Utes were able to take great advantage of the natural gas beneath their reservation by taking over leases with oil and gas companies drilling on tribal land when they expired. Later, they hired a successful mainstream investment expert to guide the diversification of their investments, until their own people could take over heading their growth fund. Similarly, when they built their casino, they put into the contract that the external management firm would train Southern Utes to run it and the tribe could buyout management of the casino before the contract expired, which the tribe did.

Similarly, the Mondragon experience may offer insights for Indian owned business development around an Indian economic development organization of which there are currently several. Properly organized and carried out, there is great power in coming together in collaborative federation. The key to successful operations, not only of Indian businesses but of nonprofit organizations and tribal government administration is in bringing Indian organizations to function according to traditional values. Appropriately applying team process is an excellent vehicle for that purpose, insuring quality collaboration within each entity and in its relations with others [79].

Notes

¹LaDonna Harris, Stephen M. Sachs, and Barbara Morris, *Re-Creating the Circle: The Renewal of American Indian Self-Determination*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2011), Ch. 1; Stephen M. Sachs, Bruce E. Johansen, Ain Haas, Betty Booth Donohue, Donald A. Grinde Jr., and Jonathon York, *Honoring the Circle: Ongoing Learning from American Indians on Politics and Society Volume I: The Impact of American Indians on Western Politics and Society to 1800* (Cardiff, CA: Waterside Productions, 2020), Ch.1. Both chapters further develop the workings of American Indian societies and have many references to the ways of individual Indian Nations.

²Sharon O'Brien, *American Indian Tribal Governments* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), chap. 2; Stephen M. Sachs, "Remembering the Circle: The Relevance of Traditional American Indian and Other Indigenous Governance for the Twenty-First Century" (paper, Western Social Science Association Meeting, Reno, NV, 2001).

³Harris, Sachs, and Morris, *Re-Creating the Circle*, pp. 34–35.

⁴Discussed with Author Stephen Sachs by LaDonna Harris, Comanche, President of Americans for Indian Opportunity (AIO) for which these “four R’s” are living traditional principles applied to guide contemporary life, particularly in AIO’s Ambassadors Program. This is discussed in Stephen M. Sachs, “The AIO Ambassadors Program: Nurturing Leadership, Building a Network for Indian Country and the Indigenous World,” in *Proceedings of the 2009 American Indian Studies Section of Western Social Science Association Meeting in Indigenous Policy* 20, no. 2 (2009). For more information on its Ambassadors program, contact AIO, 1001 Marquette, NW, Albuquerque NM 87102 (505) 842–8677, aio@aio.org, www.aio.org.

⁵See *The Navajo Common Law Project*, https://ongd.navajonnsn.gov/Portals/0/Final-Revised_Navajo%20Common%20Law%20Project.pdf?ver=TeM9sstrQb9r1-ss2D--Ag%3d%3d and discussions of Navajo basic principles in Robert S. McPherson and Perry J. Robinson, *Traditional Navajo Teachings: A Trilogy* ((c) Robert S. McPherson 2020, available on Amazon) and Robert S. McPherson and John Holiday, *A Navajo Legacy: The Life and Teachings of John Holiday* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011).

⁶The concept of politics as the “authoritative allocation of values (when sanctions are available)” was introduced by David Easton, *The Political System* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), 131–32.

⁷Harold Laswell, *Who Gets What, When, How* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1936).

⁸Harris, Sachs, and Morris, *Re-Creating the Circle*, Ch. 2; Stephen M. Sachs, “Defending the Circle: Countering the Attack on the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA),” *Political Science International*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2025, pp. 1–25, <https://www.opastpublishers.com/open-access-articles/defending-the-circle-countering-the-attack-on-the-indian-child-welfare-act-icwa.pdf>, and Rupert Ross, *Dancing with A Ghost: Exploring Indian Reality* (Markham, ON: Reed Books Canada, 1992), especially Ch. 3; *Returning to the Teachings: Exploring Aboriginal Justice* (Penguin Books, 1996); and *Indigenous Healing: Exploring Traditional Paths* (Penguin Canada, 2014).

⁹Harris, Sachs, and Morris, *Re-Creating the Circle*, Ch. 2.

¹⁰Stephen M. Sachs, “Restoring Democracy: Implications of American Indian Efforts to Return Tribal Governance to Participatory Values,” *Political Science International*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2025, pp. 1–25, pp. 1–46, <https://www.opastpublishers.com/open-access-articles/restoring-democracy-implications-of-american-indian-efforts-to-return-tribal-governance-to-participatory-values.pdf>; and Harris, Sachs, and Morris, *Re-Creating the Circle*, Ch. 4.

¹¹The slightly updated report on the Comanche work to overcome community disharmony and make tribal governance representative and efficient is in Sachs, “Restoring Democracy.” It

was previously reported in several publications including, Harris, Sachs, and Morris, *Re-Creating the Circle*, Ch.4 and Stephen M. Sachs, LaDonna Harris and Benjamin J. Broome, “Wisdom of the People: Potentials and Pitfalls in Efforts by Comanches to Recreate Traditional Ways of Building Consensus”, *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 1, Winter 2001. Harris, founder and President of Americans for Indians Opportunity (AIO), worked with a group of participatory decision making experts at George Masson University, including Benjamin J. Broome, to adapt a participatory planning process appropriately for American Indian use, which would then be modified to fit the culture and needs of specific Indian nations and organizations, the Indigenous Leadership Management System (ILIS). As Indigenous thinking is holistic, the process chosen was one that could work well with complex issues. AIO has applied the process in collaborating with some other Native nations, organizations and in its Ambassadors Program, a two-year Indigenous leader training program equivalent to a master’s degree. Harris, who facilitated the Comanche application of ILIS, provided the documents for writing the article, which she also mentored. Benjamin J. Broome participated in the application of ILIS at Comanche and on other occasions. He reviewed the article, making corrections and providing its tables.

¹²Letter to the editor of Joey Tsosie, Vice President of the Tse Dáa K’áán Chapter in the October 30, 2025 issue of the *Navajo Times* and Letter to the editor of Nigel Secatero, Vice President of the satellite chapter of Alamo in the October 30, 2025 issue of the *Navajo Times*. Further, see also, reports in the *Navajo Times* on Navajo Nation bureaucratic problems, including but extending beyond fiscal issues, Nicholas House, “Justin Jones: Navajo Nation, pay your bills!” April 17, 2025; Robert Bettis, “Elders protest ousting of DALTCS director amid allegations of unfair treatment,” April 17, 2025; and Donovan Quintero, “Controller urges reform in procurement, invoice management,” April 24, 2025.

¹³Council panel to hold public hearing on local governance law,” *Navajo Times*, December 26, 2025, announcing a January 13, 2026 hearing by the committee to gather community input, and the report of that meeting, Quintero, “Title 26 hearing exposes rift over chapter power,” *Navajo Times*, January 25, 2026.

¹⁴Donovan Quintero, “Shonto hotel dispute exposes deep rift over Navajo local governance, economic control,” *Navajo Times*, December 11, 2025.

¹⁵Quintero, “Shonto hotel dispute.”

¹⁶“Who’s watching the money? Council Exposes Deep financial disarray,” *Navajo Times*, May 1, 2025, https://navajotimes.com/reznews/whos-watching-the-money-council-exposes-deep-financial-disarray/#google_vignette.

¹⁷“Who’s watching the money?”

¹⁸Donovan Quintero, “Election officials move to fill vacant Council seat as chapter and school board vacancies grow,” *Navajo Times*,

February 26, 2026.

¹⁹Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution* (www.digireads.com: Digireads.com Publishing, 2010); John Simmons, and William Mares, *Working Together*. New York: Knopf, 1983); Paul Bernstein, *Workplace Democratization: Its Internal Dynamics* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1980); and Stephen M. Sachs, "The Interaction of Forces for and Against Political and Social Transformation," *Proceedings of the 1997 American Political Science Association Meeting* (Washington, DC: American Political Science Association, 1997).

²⁰On the comparative advantages and disadvantages of reductionist and holistic thinking see Sachs, "Restoring Democracy" and Stephen M. Sachs, *Restoring Democracy: Implications of American Indian Efforts to Return Tribal Governance to Participatory Values*, *Political Science International*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2025.

²¹The dysfunctional aspects of hierarchy in organizations are discussed in Chris Argyris, "The Individual and the Organization, A Problem of Mutual Adjustment," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 2, 1957. For more detailed analysis of some of the aspects of the psychological and other problems encouraged by hierarchy see L. Coch and J.R.P. French, "Overcoming Resistance to Change," in D. Cartwright and Z. Zander, (Eds.), *Group Dynamics* (Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson, 1953); Robert Blauner, *Alienation and Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964); Charles Walker, "The problem with the Repetitive Job," *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 28, May 1950; Nancy C. Morse, *Satisfaction in the White Collar Job* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. 1953); and Seymour Melman, *Decision making and Productivity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958).

²²Bernstein, *Workplace Democratization*; Alan S. Blinder, ed., *Paying for Productivity: A Look at the Evidence*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1990); Edward E. Lawler III, Susan Albers Mohrman and Gerald E. Ledford, Jr., *Employee Involvement and Total Quality Management: Practices and Results in Fortune 1000 Companies* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1992); and Haig R. Nalbantian, ed., *Incentives, Cooperation, and Risk Sharing: Economic and Psychological Perspectives on Employment Contracts* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1987).

²³Frederick Taylor, (1916), "The Principles of Scientific Management," in J. Stephen Ott, *Classics of Organization Theory*, Third Edition (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co., 1992); and Frederick Taylor, *Scientific Management*. New York: Harper and Row, 1947).

²⁴Stephen M. Sachs, "Workplace Revolution, Education and Political Transformation," *Proceedings of the 1991 American Political Science Association Meeting* (Washington, DC: American Political Science Association, 1991).

²⁵Similar examples of misfunction in hierarchical organizations are set forth in some of the volumes mentioned above critiquing

them. Some, including what was done to improve them are found in, Frederick G. Lesieur, *The Scanlan Plan* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1964).

²⁶Lesieur, *The Scanlan Plan*.

²⁷For example, see, Roethlisberger, Fritz J.; Dickson, William J. (1976). *Management and the worker: an account of a research program conducted by the Western Electric Company, Hawthorne Works, Chicago* (17th printing ed.). Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard Univ.Press. C. W. M. Hart, *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science / Revue canadienne d'Economie et de Science politique*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (May, 1943).

²⁸For an example of the cybernetics or communication approach to organizations see, Galbraith, 1973, "Information Processing Model", in Galbraith, *Designing Complex Organizations*, Ch. 2, reprinted in Shafritz and Ott, 1992, pp. 308-315.

²⁹Curt Tausky, *Work Organizations: Major Theoretical Perspectives*, Second Edition (Ithaca, IL: F. E. Peacock Publishers, 1978); William Ouchi, *Theory Z Corporations: How American Business Can Meet the Japanese Challenge* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1981); Simmons and Mares, *Working Together*; and Stephen M. Sachs, "Uncertain Verdict: In the Auto Industry the Participation and Quality of Worklife Programs Have Mixed Results," *Workplace Democracy*, Vol. 11, No. 2, Fall, 1984.

³⁰F.E. Emery and Einar Torsrud, *Form and Content in Industrial Democracy* (London: Tavistock Institute, 1969), pp. 51-67.

³¹"Co-Determination in the Federal Republic of Germany" and Helmut Schaur, "Critique of Co-Determination," in Gerry Hunius, G. David Garson and John Case, *Workers' Control: A Reader on Labor and Social Change* (New York: Random House, 1973).

³²Harris, Sachs and Morris, *Recreating the Circle*, Ch. 4, Section 1.

³³Harris, Sachs and Morris, *Recreating the Circle*, Ch. 1.

³⁴University of Foreign Military And Cultural Studies, *Red Team Handbook*, April 2012 Distribution, http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/UFMCS/repository/RT_Handbook_v6.pdf; and Caroline E. Zsombok, *Advanced Team Decision Making: A Model and Training Implications*, ARI Research Note 95-02, (Klein Associates, Inc., January 19, 1995, for the United States Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, October 1994, www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA289855).

³⁵Discussed in Henk Thomas and Chris Logan, *Mondragon: An Economic analysis* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982); Alastair Campbell, et al *Worker Ownership: The Mondragon Achievement* (London: Anglo-German Foundation for the Study of Society, 1977); Terry Mollner, *Mondragon: A Third Way* (Shutesbury, MA: Trustee Institute, Inc., 1984); A. Gutierrez-Johnson and William Foote Whyte, "The Mondragon System

of Worker Production Cooperatives," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 31: 1, October 1977, pp. 18-30; A. Gutierrez-Johnson, "Compensation, Equity and Industrial Democracy in the Mondragon Cooperatives," *Economic Analysis and Workers' Self-Management*, Vol. 12, 1977, pp. 267-289; Robert Oakeshott, "Mondragon: Spain's Oasis of Democracy," in Jaroslav Vanek, ed, *Self-Management: The Economic Liberation of Man* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc., 1975), pp. 290-296; Germal Medanie, "Mondragon: Your Add Is About to Run Out," *Grassroots Economic Organizing Newsletter*, No. 10, September/October, 1983; Chritine Clamp, "The Example of The Mondragon Cooperatives," in Sachs, et al, *Honoring the Circle*, Vol. 4, Ch. 6. Section II. Chris Clamp's work is the most important for the details presented here about Mondragon and the information about the federation since 1984, when Stephen Sachs visited Mondragon.

³⁶Josip Obradovic and William Dunn *Workers' Self-Management and Organizational Power in Yugoslavia* (Pittsburgh: University Center for International Studies, University of Pittsburgh, 1978); and Ichak Adizes, *Industrial Democracy: Yugoslav Style, The Effect of Decentralization on Organizational Behavior* (New York: The Free Press, 1971).

³⁷Jaroslav Vanek, *The Participatory Economy: An Evolutionary Hypothesis and a Strategy for Development* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), Ch. 4. Additional information is available from the World Bank Country Economic Report by Schrenk, Ardalan and Tatawy, Yugoslavia.

³⁸Stephen M. Sachs, "Some Reflections Upon Workers' Self-Management in Yugoslavia," *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora: Critical Thought on Greek and World Issues*, 4, No.1, March 1977. Reprinted as *Workplace Democracy Paper #4* (Washington, D.C.: Association for Workplace Democracy, 1981).

³⁹Simmons and Mares, *Working Together*; and Douglas McGregor, "The Human Side of Management," *Management Review*, 1967, reprinted in Ott, *Classic Readings in Organizational Behavior*, pp. 66-73.

⁴⁰Stephen M. Sachs, "Some Reflections Upon Workers' Self-Management in Yugoslavia."

⁴¹Sachs, "Workplace Revolution, Education and Political Transformation;" and Gifford Pinchot and Elizabeth Pinchot, *The End of Bureaucracy and the Rise of the Intelligent Organization* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1993), particularly Parts I and II, and Ch. 11, 13 and 16.

⁴²Bernstein, *Workplace Democratization*, Especially Ch. 5; Blinder, *Paying for Productivity*; and Lawler III, Mohrman and Ledford, Jr., *Employee Involvement and Total Quality Management*.

⁴³Doug Raynor, "W.L. Gore: Creating a Business Without Bosses," *Workplace Democracy*, Vol. 12: No. 2, Fall, 1985.

⁴⁴Unpublished research in the 1980s by Stephen Sachs.

⁴⁵Pinchot and Pinchot, *The End of Bureaucracy and the Rise of the Intelligent Organization*, Ch. 4 and Part II.

⁴⁶Hedrick Smith, *Rethinking America* (New York: Random House, 1995).

⁴⁷"Pilot Program Saves County \$151,000," *Workplace Democracy*, Vol. 9, No. 3, Spring 1982.

⁴⁸David Osborne and Ted Gaebler *Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit Is Transforming the Public Sector* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1992; New York: Penguin, 1993).

⁴⁹Harris, Sachs and Morris, *Recreating the Circle*, Ch. 3, section 1 and Sachs, et al, *Honoring the Circle*, Vol. 3, Ch. 5.

⁵⁰Harris, Sachs and Morris, *Recreating the Circle*, Ch. 3, Section 2.

⁵¹Stephen M. Sachs, "Self-Management as a Means for Increasing the Public Spiritedness and Social Responsibility of Business Organizations," Vol. VI, No. 4, Summer 1979, Republished as a Workplace Democracy Paper (Washington, D.C.: Association for Workplace Democracy, 1981) and Sachs, "Workplace Revolution, Education and Political Transformation."

⁵²Carole Pateman, in her classic work, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (Doncaster, United Kingdom: Bailgate Books, Ltd., 1970) first shows that theorists such as John Stuart Mill have long considered everyday participation in workplaces an excellent education for citizenship in a democratic polity (Ch. 2, particularly, pp. 28-35). She supports these theoretical predictions with pragmatic evidence, concluding (p. 105):

Yet we have seen that the evidence supports the arguments of Rousseau, Mill and Cole that we do learn to participate by participating and that feelings of political efficacy [necessary to make people believe that participating is worth while, and thus essential to motivating them to participate] are more likely to be developed in a participatory environment. Furthermore, the evidence indicates that the experience of a participatory authority might also be effective in diminishing tendencies toward non-democratic attitudes in the individual.

Pateman's findings continue to be supported and reinforced by recent research. For example, Richard S. Beth, "How Transformationalists Think About Transformation: Themes and Implications," *Proceedings of the 1995 American Political Science Association Meeting*, p. 63, having indicated that active participation (such as occurs on teams in participatory workplaces) tends to develop "a mindful engagement with experience in the participants that tends to make them reflective upon their relations with others, and self-reflective about their own development and action," Beth goes on to report:

Fourth, mindful engagement with experience in the context

of political practice would also foster transformation into less authoritarian or domineering forms of people's sense of, and relation to, leadership. As respondent (el) pointed out, the process of transformation is inherently political in that it involves the transformation of power relations. When leaders proceed in mindful engagement with other participants, it will tend to transform their awareness of, and relation to, those participants toward more facilitative and collaborative styles of leadership...

Nor is it only leadership that would be transformed by the practice of responsive engagement with members. The development of group members' own sense of empowerment, or understanding of themselves as capable of participation, would also tend to transform their responses to all these kinds of leaders toward more participatory and less authoritarian forms, which in turn would require leaders to engage in less domineering styles of action.

Further empirical support is given by Jane Junn, "Participation in Liberal Democracy: What Citizens Learn from Political Activity," *Proceedings of the 1995 American Political Science Association Meeting* (Washington, DC: The American Political Science Association, 1995), pp. 28-29:

The objective of this analysis was to demonstrate empirically a particularly important hypothesis of democratic theory, that citizen participation has an educative or transformative effect on individual citizens. The results from the estimation of simultaneous equation models hypothesizing reciprocal causality reveal that citizens who are active in politics and social life are in fact more knowledgeable about politics as a result of their participation.... The findings provide support for the hypothesis that taking part in political and social life makes a difference; citizens learn about politics by being part of it. In this sense, political knowledge is not only important for democracy in its *role for* making good decisions, but instead, knowledge is also the *result of* democracy.

⁵³For example, see Stephen M. Sachs, "Building Trust in Democratic Organizations," *Psychology*, Vol. 31, No. 2, 1994, pp. 35-44 and Sachs, et al, *Honoring the Circle*, Vol. 4, Ch. 4.

⁵⁴Iron Woman Construction & Environmental Services was located through the website of the Rocky Mountain Employee Ownership Center's online list of success stories: <https://www.rmeoc.org/employee-ownership/success-stories/iron-woman-construction/>, which stated, For nearly 25 years, Iron Woman Construction has worked in the areas of trucking, civil construction, environmental services, mining infrastructure, utilities, and more.

And while their status as an employee owned company didn't become official until 2019, employee wellbeing has been baked into their culture from the beginning.

Shaun Egan founded Iron Woman in 1999 as a Native American-owned company with his mother and named the company in honor of his great-great-great-grandmother's Blackfeet name. From the beginning, their generosity and concern for their workers' well-

being created a "family-first" culture at the company.

That desire to see workers benefit led to conversations about employee ownership — a way for all employees to become owners and have a financial stake in the success of the company.

The information in the text about Iron Woman came from its website: <https://ironwomancon.com/>. Contact information is,

Iron Woman Construction & Environmental Services,
303.399.5534, info@ironwomancon.com, Main Office: 5680 Emerson St
Denver, CO 80216.

⁵⁵Iron Woman listed its full list of employee benefits on its website as of May 21, 2026, as:

"Total Benefits Packages to Cover all the Bases,"

Health:

At Iron Woman, physical and mental wellness are just as much a part of the safety culture as routine equipment inspections. Employees receive health and wellness benefits, including mental health and other resources.

- Medical Benefits
 - o Comprehensive and preventive healthcare coverage is vital in protecting you and your family. Iron Woman offers employees two medical plans, a high deductible health plan (HDHP) HSA-qualified plan, or a PPO plan.
- Health Savings Account
 - o The most important aspect of a High Deductible Health Plan (HDHP) is the opportunity to contribute to an HSA with employer matching.
- Teladoc
 - o Teladoc provides 24/7 access to a doctor, 365 days a year, by phone or online. Members can consult with a U.S. Board Certified physician and get a prescription written.
- DispatchHealth
 - o DispatchHealth provides on-demand healthcare in the convenience of your home and helps you avoid unnecessary ER trips. The DispatchHealth team provides care from 8 am to 10 pm, 365 days a year, including holidays.
- Dental Plan Benefits
 - o Iron Woman offers the choice of two dental plans through Guardian. The Managed Dental Plan provides savings on commonly performed dental procedures in the network. The PPO plan allows you and your family to visit any licensed dentist but offers the most out-of-pocket savings through an in-network provider.
- Vision Plan Benefits
 - o We offer you and your family a vision plan through United Healthcare using the VSP Choice Network. The benefits you receive depend on whether you use a provider within the VSP Choice Network. When you use a Guardian VSP provider, you'll receive a higher level of benefit than if you use an out-of-network provider.

Finance:

We believe that our employees are the cornerstone of success, so we invest in each of our employees' financial success. We offer the following benefits to help support a prosperous household behind each employee

- Home Buyer Down Payment Assistance Program
 - o We at Iron Woman believe in the American Dream and the equality of opportunity it brings. If homeownership is a part of your aspirations and goals, Iron Woman's Home Buyer Down Payment Assistance Program can help. Our program provides a matching down payment of up to \$5,000 as a "Payroll Advance" to purchase a new home as a primary residence and is available to qualified employees.
- Student Loan Assistance
 - o We recognize that student loans are a significant financial burden affecting many of our employees, and we want to help ease that burden. Eligible employees may receive a student loan repayment assistance benefit, tax-free, up to \$5,250/year toward student loan debt.
- 401k Matching
 - o Prepare for retirement at any age through matched contributions to a tax-advantaged retirement account.
- Employee Ownership
 - o As an employee-owner or Iron Woman Partner, suitable candidates have an opportunity for career and financial growth through advanced management education opportunities, certification programs, and employee ownership.

Life

We want our employees to be cared for no matter what comes their way. Continuous growth and career development are encouraged for every Iron Woman employee through our tuition reimbursement program. We also offer benefits to cover life's milestones and the unexpected.

- Tuition Reimbursement
 - o Continuous growth and career development are encouraged for every Iron Woman employee. We offer a Tuition Reimbursement Program for continuing education for accredited programs that either offer growth in their current position or preparation for a promotion. The program includes college credit courses, continuing education unit courses, seminars, and certification tests.
- Life Insurance and AD&D Benefits
 - o Iron Woman provides employees with Basic Life and Accidental Death & Dismemberment plan at no cost.
 - o Accidental Death & Dismemberment (AD&D) Insurance provides specified benefits for a covered accidental bodily injury that directly causes dismemberment (i.e., the loss of a hand, foot, or eye). In the event of death from an accident, the life and the AD&D benefit would be payable. The Life Insurance benefit is payable to the designated beneficiary upon the insured's death. Employees may also purchase additional Supplemental Life (voluntary).
- Short- and Long-Term Disability
 - o United Healthcare Services disability insurance can provide employees with the peace of mind that a protected paycheck

brings if they cannot work because of an illness or injury that occurs on the job. Iron Woman provides employees with Short-Term disability insurance at no cost. Long-Term insurance options are available for an additional cost.

- Paid Time Off
 - o We help our employees achieve work-life balance with competitive annual paid time off allotments.
- Employee Assistance Program
 - o The EAP offers employees and their families confidential, personal, and web-based support, including stress management, dependent care, nutrition & fitness, and legal and financial issues.

⁵⁶"For Native American communities, a 'new' business model builds on a culture of cooperation," *The Circle News*, National Cooperative Business Association, February 12, 2019, <https://ncbaclusa.coop/blog/for-native-american-communities-a-new-business-model-builds-on-a-culture-of-cooperation/>.

⁵⁷Dairy Farmers of America, <https://www.dfamilk.com>.

⁵⁸Carl J. Bellas, *Industrial Democracy and the Worker Owned Firm: A Study of Twenty-One Plywood Companies in the Pacific Northwest* (New York: Praeger Publishers, NY, 1972); and Ben Craig and John H. Pencavel, "Worker Owned Plywood Companies of the Pacific Northwest" Issue 11 of *Research Report* (Davis: Center for Cooperatives, University of California, 1993), digitized, University of Minnesota, 2015.

⁵⁹Norman G. Kurland, "South Bend Lathe: What Can We Learn from an ESOP 'Failure'?" Center for Economic and Social Justice (CESJ), 2026, <https://www.cesj.org/resources/articles-index/south-bend-lathe-what-can-we-learn-from-an-esop-failure-by-norman-g-kurland/>.

⁶⁰"Restoring Democracy: Implications of American Indian Efforts to Return Tribal Governance to Participatory Values," *Political Science International*, Vol. 3, No. 2, <https://www.opastpublishers.com/open-access-articles/restoring-democracy-implications-of-american-indian-efforts-to-return-tribal-governance-to-participatory-values.pdf>. As this article is part of a continually updated study, a more recent version prepared for the World Social Sciences Association 2036 meeting, "'Current Efforts of Navajo Nation to Return its Governance to Traditional Values In Broader Context and Implications' in 'Completing the Circle: Indian Efforts to Return Tribal Governance to Participatory Values And their Implications'" is available at, <https://ssachs.academia.edu>.

The overall efforts of the Southern Utes to return governance to operating according to traditional inclusive participatory values and to debureaucratize administration are discussed in Sachs, "Completing the Circle," and the earlier, less complete version, in Sachs, "Restoring Democracy."

⁶¹Beth Santistevan, "Consultants offer first report of tribal healthcare assessment," *Southern Ute Drum*, April 5, 2013.

⁶²Ace Stryker, "New health plan goes live," *Southern Ute Drum*, October 4, 2013.

⁶³"Coffee with a Cop on Oct. 7," *Southern Ute Drum*, September 30, 2016, p. 5. Similarly, though with building relationships among Ute entrepreneurs as well as with the agency, Southern Ute Economic Development holds regular "Coffee and Connections," one on September 4, 2025 for "a small business conversation" for small business owners and community supporters to connect to "share ideas and build relationships," "Southern Ute Economic Development Invites You to Coffee and Connections," *Southern Ute Drum*, August 22, 2025, <https://www.sudrum.com/eEditions/DrumPDF/2025/SUDrum-20250822.pdf>. This has become a regular monthly meeting as seen in announcements in the *Southern Ute Drum*.

⁶⁴McKayla Lee, "Skatepark raises concerns for elders," *Southern Ute Drum*, November 21, 2018, <https://www.suima.org>.

⁶⁵Concerning fall 2025 tribal member input on changes in tribal code, see "Public Comment Period Proposed Amendments to Southern Ute Indian Tribe Severance Tax Code;" and "Notice: of Draft Air Monitoring Annual Network Plan And Request for Comment," *Southern Ute Drum*, September 19 and October 3, 2025, and <https://www.sudrum.com/eEditions/DrumPDF/2025/SUDrum-20250919.pdf> <https://www.sudrum.com/eEditions/DrumPDF/2025/SUDrum-20251003.pdf>. That this is standard practice when issues are not seen as important enough to have even more opportunity for member input, see "Notice of Proposed Amendment to Title 17 - Employment Rights Code & Request for Tribal Member Comment" and "Notice of Proposed Amendment to Title 8 - Protective Custody Code & Request for Tribal Member Comment," *Southern Ute Drum*, October 31, 2025, <https://www.sudrum.com/eEditions/DrumPDF/2025/SUDrum-20251031.pdf>.

⁶⁶But these invitations for input often include opportunities to come to public discussion of the issues at meetings providing food, as seen in "Notice of Proposed Amendment to Title 17 - Employment Rights Code," and "Notice of Proposed Amendment to Title 13 - Wildlife Conservation Code," *Southern Ute Drum*, January 23, 2026, <https://www.sudrum.com/eEditions/DrumPDF/2026/SUDrum-20260123.pdf>. Invitation to Johnson-O'Malley Meetings is in the *Southern Ute Drum*, September 5, 2025, <https://www.sudrum.com/eEditions/DrumPDF/2025/SUDrum-20250919.pdf>.

⁶⁷The May 13, 2026 joint meeting at Southern Ute of the Southern Ute Tribe Tribal Air Quality Division and the State of Colorado Environmental Commission is in, "Public Notice, Southern Ute Tribe/State of Colorado Environmental Council Meeting," *Southern Ute Drum*, April 17, 2026, <https://www.sudrum.com/eEditions/DrumPDF/2026/SUDrum-20260417.pdf>.

⁶⁸"Southern Ute Shared Services Digital Equity Program Technology and Internet Survey," *Southern Ute Drum*, May 1, 2026, <https://www.sudrum.com/eEditions/DrumPDF/2026/SUDrum-20260501.pdf>.

⁶⁹"Growth Fund announces Arrowhead Propane as strategic supplier," *Southern Ute Drum*, October 20, 2023.

⁷⁰"Cloud appointed as new Tribal Member-at-Large and Committee Member," *Southern Ute Drum*, October 3, 2025, <https://www.sudrum.com/top-stories/2025/10/03/cloud-appointed-as-new-tribal-member-at-large-and-committee-member/>.

On the Growth Fund holding an annual meeting with the tribal membership, with those unable to attend in person being able to do so on the internet via Webex, with the agenda available there prior to the meeting see, "You're Invited: 2025 Southern Ute Indian Tribe Growth Fund General Meeting," and "Growth Fund to hold annual General Meeting in September" *Southern Ute Drum*, August 8, 2025, <https://www.sudrum.com/eEditions/DrumPDF/2025/SUDrum-20250808.pdf.M>

⁷¹"Southern Ute Economic Development Committee (SUEDC) Seeking Tribal Member a Large," *Southern Ute Drum*, March 20, 2026, <https://www.sudrum.com/eEditions/DrumPDF/2026/SUDrum-20260320.pdf>.

⁷²*The Southern Ute Drum*, June 4, 1999, p. 2.

⁷³The facilitators reflected that, the Design Team has helped the community to redefine and embrace a vision of healing. Given all that has been said about post-colonial dynamics of disharmony, the commitment, courage, honesty and energy witnessed by the facilitators has been truly inspirational. According to one facilitator, "setbacks, disappointment and criticism are balanced by a passion for creating a better future for the tribe's children." D.E. Hunt, M. Gooden, & C. Barkdull, "Walking in moccasins: Indian child welfare in the 21st century," in K. Briar Lawson, H. Lawson, & A. Sallee, Eds., *New Century Practices with Vulnerable Children and Families* (Dubuque, IA, Eddie Bauer Publishing, 2000). The three authors, two of whom are Indian, but not Ute, have been the primary facilitating team at Southern Ute. Stephen Sachs, who has a long association with Southern Ute, was a participant at several meetings in 2000. On the 2003 and 2006 follow up of the collaboration begun with the Design team, see Dave Brown, "A Meeting of Minds Over Social Services," *Southern Ute Drum*, March 3, 2006, p. 1.

⁷⁴On the joint tribe-schoolboard invitation to Southern Ute Parents to attend a policies and procedures meeting, see, "Ignacio School District Policies and Procedures Meeting Scheduled for October 16," *Southern Ute Drum*, October 6, 2023. Other Southern Ute collaboration with area entities can be found in back issues of the *Southern Ute Drum*, a number of which were noted by the author in discussions at Southern Ute. The cross-deputation of police officers was pointed out to the author by Majel Boxer, Chair & Associate Professor of Native American & Indigenous Studies at Fort Lewis College in Durango, CO. More on Indian nations collaborating with neighboring entities can be found in Harris, Sachs, Morris, et al, *Recreating the Circle*, Ch. 5, Section 1 on economic development, and the discussion of tribal government –

state and local government cooperation in Ch. 2.

⁷⁵A discussion of the Southern Ute Tribes efforts, often successful, to collaborate with the City of Durango on issues of mutual interest, and the tribe's objections to attempts by the city to act unilaterally on such issues is, "Durango's secret efforts to annex Reservation lands," *Southern Ute Drum*, May 17, 2024.

⁷⁶Jeremy Wade Schockley, "Project RUN hones leadership skills for tribal employees," *Southern Ute Drum*, December 24, 2025, <https://www.sudrum.com/eEditions/DrumPDF/2025/SUDrum-20251224.pdf>. More on Project RUN can be found at, Projectrunco.work.

⁷⁷Lanalla Smith, Blacksheep Insight Consulting and Coaching, LLC, is at 505-879-1852. Lanalle@blacksheepinsight.com. She has produced the podcast, "Strengthening Native Teams The Power of Teambuilding & Development in Tribal Nations," The Native Learning Center (NLC), Youtube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NMbQV2hHPJk>. The NLC is a model activity program of the Seminole Tribe of Florida (STOF).

⁷⁸Information on Navajo Nation decentralization along with specific references can be found in Sachs, "Restoring Democracy;" and Stephen M. Sachs, "Excerpt on the Current Navajo Nation Effort at Constitutional Reform, From: Current Efforts of Navajo Nation to Return its Governance to Traditional Values In Broader Context and Implications, in Completing the Circle: Indian Efforts to Return Tribal Governance to Participatory Values And their Implications," 2026 World Social Science Association Meeting. The entire Paper is on the web at: <https://ssachs.academia.edu>.

⁷⁹The proposed constitution is posted on the website of the Commission of Navajo Government Development, <https://ongd.navajo-nsn.gov/About-Us/Commission>, which has a number of relevant links including to the Office of Navajo Government Development. Discussion of the proposed constitution and the process presenting it is in, Sachs, "Restoring Democracy" and Sachs,

⁸⁰The principles that overlap with the International Cooperative Alliance are open membership; democratic control; intercooperation; education, and a concern for community which is embedded in the social transformation principle ("Co-operative Identity, Values and Principles," International Cooperative Alliance, <http://ica.coop/en/whats-co-op/co-operative-identity-values-principles>).

⁸¹See Stephen Cornell, *The State of Native Nations: Conditions under U.S. Policies of Self-Determination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), Part II; Stephen Cornell and Joseph Kakt, Eds., *What Can Tribes Do?: Strategies and Institutions in American Indian Economic Development* (American Indian Manual & Handbook Series No 4, Los Angeles: American Indian Studies Center, UCLA, 1992); and Kenneth Grant and Jonathan Taylor, "Managing the Boundary Between Business and Politics:

Strategies for Improving the Chances for Success in Tribally Owned Enterprises, in Miriam Jorgensen, Ed, *Rebuilding Native Nations: Strategies for Governance and Development* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007) on these points. Also, Stephen Sachs July 2025 interview with Southern Ute Growth Fund Executive Director Shane Seibel made clear the need for separation of well-regulated business from direct tribal government control to the avoid political manipulations that can damage or destroy a business whose continued success is essential to the nation.

⁸²The Southern Utes of Colorado have been extremely successful in their business development. As former tribal council member and then the first women elected chairman of the Southern Ute shows in Pearl Casias, *Red Woman: My Southern Ute Journey from Poverty to Wall Street* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2026). Southern Ute Growth Fund Executive Director Shane Seibel has said much to Stephen Sachs about this, including his discussing with the members of the council early on that they needed to limit the amount of profit they took from tribal businesses if they wanted them to succeed and make significant long-term contributions to the tribal economy.

References

1. Oakeshott, R., Campbell, A., Norman, G., & Keen, C. (1977). Worker-Owners: the Mondragón Achievement: the Caja Laboral Popular and the Mondragón Co-operatives in the Basque Provinces of Spain. *London: Anglo-German Foundation for the Study of Industrial Society*.
2. Argyris, C. (1957). The individual and organization: Some problems of mutual adjustment. *Administrative science quarterly*, 1-24.
3. Bellas, C. J. (1972). Industrial democracy and the worker-owned firm: A study of twenty-one plywood companies in the Pacific Northwest. (*No Title*).
4. Bernstein, P. (1976). Workplace Democratization: Its Internal Dynamics.
5. Beth, Richard S. (1995) "How Transformationalists Think About Transformation: Themes and Implications," *Proceedings of the 1995 American Political Science Association Meeting*.
6. Blauner, R. (1964). *Alienation and Freedom*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
7. Blinder, A. S. (Ed.). (2011). *Paying for productivity: A look at the evidence*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.
8. Casias, P. E. (2026). *Red Woman: My Southern Ute Journey from Poverty to Wall Street*. University of Nebraska Press.
9. Clamp, Chritine, "The Example of The Mondragon Cooperatives," in Sachs, et al, *Honoring the Circle*, Vol. 4, Ch. 6. Section II.
10. Coch, L., & French Jr, J. R. (1948). Overcoming resistance to change. *Human relations*, 1(4), 512-532.
11. "Co-Determination in the Federal Republic of Germany" and Helmut Schaur. (1973). "Critique of Co-Determination," in Gerry Hunius, G. David Garson and John Case, *Workers' Control: A Reader on Labor and Social Change*. New York: Random House.

12. Commission of Navajo Government Development, <https://ongd.navajo-nsn.gov>.
13. Craig, B., & Pencavel, J. (1993). Worker-Owned Plywood Companies of the Pacific Northwest.
14. ICA (International Cooperative Alliance). (2018, February). Cooperative identity, values and principles. ICA.
15. Cornell, S. (2008). *The State of Native Nations: Conditions under U.S. Policies of Self-Determination*. New York: Oxford University Press.
16. Cornell, Stephen and Kakt, Joseph, Eds. (1992) *What Can Tribes Do?: Strategies and Institutions in American Indian Economic Development*. American Indian Manual & Handbook Series No 4, Los Angeles: American Indian Studies Center, UCLA
17. Dairy Farmers of America, <https://www.dfamilk.com>.
18. Easton, David. 1936 *Who Gets What, When, How*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1936.
19. Thorsrud, E., & Emery, F. E. (1969). Form and content in industrial democracy. *London: Tavistock*.
20. "For Native American communities, a 'new' business model builds on a culture of cooperation," The Circle News, National Cooperative Business Association, February 12, 2019, <https://ncbaclusa.coop/blog/for-native-american-communities-a-new-business-model-builds-on-a-culture-of-cooperation/>.
21. Grant, K., & Taylor, J. (2007). Managing the boundary between business and politics. *Rebuilding Native nations: strategies for governance and development*, 175.
22. Gutierrez-Johnson, A. (1978). Compensation, Equity, and Industrial Democracy in the Mondragon Cooperatives. *Economic Analysis*, 12(3-4), 267-289.
23. Johnson, A. G., & Whyte, W. F. (1977). The Mondragon system of worker production cooperatives. *Indus. & Lab. Rel. Rev.*, 31, 18.
24. Harris, L., Sachs, S. M., & Morris, B. (Eds.). (2011). *Re-creating the circle: the renewal of American Indian self-determination*. University of New Mexico Press.
25. Hart, C. W. M. (1943). The Hawthorne Experiments 1. *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science/Revue canadienne de economiques et science politique*, 9(2), 150-163.
26. Hunt, D.E., Gooden, M. & Barkdull, C. (2000) "Walking in moccasins: Indian child welfare in the 21st century," in Lawson, K. Briar, Lawson, H. & Sallee, A., Eds., *New Century Practices with Vulnerable Children and Families*. Dubuque, IA, Eddie Bauer Publishing.
27. Iron Woman Construction & Environmental Services, <https://ironwomancon.com>.
28. Junn, J. (1995). Participation in Liberal Democracy: What Citizens Learn from Political Activity. In *Proceedings of the 1995 American Political Science Association Meeting*. Washington, DC: The American Political Science Association.
29. Kurland, N. G. (2026). "South Bend Lathe: What Can We Learn from an ESOP 'Failure'?" Center for Economic and Social Justice (CESJ).
30. Kropotkin, P. (2010). *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution: A Factor of Evolution*. Digireads. com Publishing.
31. Lawler, III., Edward, E., Mohrman, Ledford, S. A. Jr., Gerald, E. (1992). *Employee Involvement and Total Quality Management: Practices and Results in Fortune 1000 Companies*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
32. Lesieur, Frederick, G. (1964). The Scanlan Plan. Cambridge: MIT Press.
33. McGregor, D. (1967). "The Human Side of Management," *Management Review*, reprinted in Ott, J. S. (1989). *Classic Readings in Organizational Behavior*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co/
34. Holiday, J., & McPherson, R. S. (2005). *A Navajo legacy: The life and teachings of John Holiday* (Vol. 251). University of Oklahoma Press.
35. McPherson, Robert, S., Perry, J., Robinson. (2020). *Traditional Navajo Teachings: A Trilogy*. (c) Robert S. McPherson.
36. Medanie, G. (1983). Mondragon: Your Add Is About to Run Out. *Grassroots Economic Organizing Newsletter*, 10.
37. Melman, S. (1958). *Decision-making and Productivity*. Blackwell.
38. Mollner, T. (1984). *Mondragon: A Third Way*. Shutesbury, MA: Trustee Institute, Inc.
39. Morse, N. C. (1953). Satisfactions in the White-collar Job.
40. Nalbantian, H. R. (1987). Incentives, cooperation, and risk sharing: Economic and psychological perspectives on employment contracts. (No Title).
41. *The Navajo Common Law Project*.
42. *Navajo Times*, various 2024 and 2025 issues.
43. O'brien, S. (1989). *American Indian Tribal Governments*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
44. Oakeshott, R. (1975). Mondragon: Spain's oasis of democracy. *Self-Management: The Economic Liberation of Man*. Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc.
45. Gaebler, T. (1993). *Reinventing government: How the entrepreneurial spirit is transforming the public sector*. Plume.
46. William, O. (1981). Theory Z: How American business can meet the Japanese challenge. *Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co*.
47. Pateman, C. (1970). *Participation and Democratic Theory*. Doncaster, United Kingdom: Bailgate Books, Ltd.
48. Pinchot, G., & Pinchot, E. (1993). *The End of Bureaucracy and the Rise of the Intelligent Organization*. Berrett.
49. "Pilot Program Saves County \$151,000," *Workplace Democracy*, Vol. 9, No. 3. (1982). Spring.
50. Raynor, D. (1985). WL Gore: Creating a Business Without Bosses. *Workplace Democracy*, 12, 2.
51. Rocky Mountain Employee Ownership Center's online list of success stories
52. Roethlisberger, Fritz, J., Dickson, William, J. (1976). *Management and the worker: an account of a research program conducted by the Western Electric Company, Hawthorne Works, Chicago* (17th printing ed.). Cambridge, Mass.
53. Ross, R. (1992). *Dancing with a ghost: Exploring Indian reality*. Markham, ON: Reed Books Canada..
54. Ross, R. (2014). *Indigenous healing: Exploring traditional*

- paths. Penguin Canada.
55. Ross, R. (1996). Returning to the teachings: Exploring Aboriginal justice.
56. Sachs, Stephen, M., (2009). "The AIO Ambassadors Program: Nurturing Leadership, Building a Network for Indian Country and the Indigenous World," in *Proceedings of the 2009 American Indian Studies Section of Western Social Science Association Meeting in Indigenous Policy* 20, no. 2.
57. Sachs, S. (1994). Building trust in democratic organizations. *Psychology: A Journal of Human Behavior*.
58. Sachs, S. M. (2025). "Defending the Circle: Countering the Attack on the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)," *Political Science International*, Vol. 3, No. 2.
59. Sachs, S. M., "Excerpt on the Current Navajo Nation Effort at Constitutional Reform, From: Current Efforts of Navajo Nation to Return its Governance to Traditional Values In Broader Context and Implications, in Completing the Circle: Indian Efforts to Return Tribal Governance to Participatory Values And their Implications,"
60. Sachs, S. M. (1997). The Interaction of Forces for and Against Political and Social Transformation," *Proceedings of the 1997 American Political Science Association Meeting* (Washington, DC: American Political Science Association).
61. Sachs, S. M. (2001). "Remembering the Circle: The Relevance of Traditional American Indian and Other Indigenous Governance for the Twenty-First Century." *Western Social Science Association Meeting, Reno, NV*.
62. Sachs, S. (2025). Restoring Democracy: Implications of American Indian Efforts to Return Tribal Governance to Participatory Values. *Political Science International*, 3, 2.
63. Sachs, S. M. (1979). "Self-Management as a Means for Increasing the Public Spiritedness and Social Responsibility of Business Organizations," Vol. VI, No. 4, Summer, Republished as a Workplace Democracy Paper (Washington, D.C.: Association for Workplace Democracy, 1981).
64. Sachs, S. M. (1977). Some Reflections Upon Workers' Self-Management in Yugoslavia. *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora: Critical Thought on Greek and World Issues*, 4, 1.
65. Sachs, S. M. (1984). "Uncertain Verdict: In the Auto Industry the Participation and Quality of Worklife Programs Have Mixed Results," *Workplace Democracy*, Vol. 11, No. 2, Fall.
66. Sachs, S. M. (1991). "Workplace Revolution, Education and Political Transformation," *Proceedings of the 1991 American Political Science Association Meeting* (Washington, DC: American Political Science Association).
67. Sachs, S. M., Johansen, B. E., Haas, Ain, Donohue, Betty B., Grinde Jr., Donald, A., York, Jonathon. (2020). *Honoring the Circle: Ongoing Learning from American Indians on Politics and Society Volume I: The Impact of American Indians on Western Politics and Society to 1800*. Cardiff, CA: Waterside Productions).
68. Sachs, S. M., LaDonna, H., Benjamin, J. B. (2001). "Wisdom of the People: Potentials and Pitfalls in Efforts by Comanches to Recreate Traditional Ways of Building Consensus", *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 1, Winter.
69. Simmons, J., William, M., William. (1983). *Working Together*. New York: Knopf.
70. Smith, H. (1995). *Rethinking America*. New York: Random House.
71. Smith, L. (1852). Blacksheep Insight Consulting and Coaching, LLC, is at 505-879. Lanalle@blacksheepinsight.com.
72. *Southern Ute Drum*. (1999). various issues beginning.
73. Tausky, C. (1978). Work organizations: Major theoretical perspectives, Second Edition. Ithaca, IL: F. E. Peacock Publishers.
74. Taylor, F. (1916). "The Principles of Scientific Management," in Ott, J. Stephen (1992) *Classics of Organization Theory, Third Edition*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co.
75. Taylor, F. (1947). *Scientific Management*. New York: Harper and Row.
76. Thomas, H., & Logan, C. (1982) *Mondragon: An Economic analysis*. London: George Allen and Unwin.
77. University of Foreign Military And Cultural Studies, *Red Team Handbook*, April 2012 Distribution, http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/UFMCS/repository/RT_Handbook_v6.pdf.
78. Walker, C. R. (1950). The problem of the repetitive job. *Harvard Business Review*.
79. Zsombok, C. E. (1994). Advanced Team Decision Making: A Model and Training Implications (No. KATR9005931Z).

Copyright: ©2026 The authors. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.