

How to Lead Indigenously: Tiwahe Foundation Re-envisions the Oyate Leadership Network with Native Communities

2023 Minnesota Council of Nonprofits
Leadership Conference
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TIWAHE
FOUNDATION

Introductions



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Goals & Objectives for today



- Understand how the process of program development and evaluation is different when done with and for Native peoples
- Learn more about the value of Indigenous-based leadership programming and how these skills can be developed in all individuals and communities
- Open minds and hearts to ideas about how we can work in ways that are more effective for the communities we serve

What is Tiwahe Foundation?



Tiwahe means having a relative wherever you go

As a Native organization, we serve as a connector – of people, organizations, resources, knowledge, and opportunity. Tiwahe challenges systemic barriers for American Indians to reach their goals, on their own terms. In this critical moment for Native cultures, languages, and ways of being we invest in our community and the coming generations.

- Programs:
 - American Indian Family Empowerment Program (AIFEP)
 - Linking Leaders
 - Oyate Leadership Network

What is the Oyate Leadership Network?



- Originated over 10 years ago as an outgrowth of the AIFEP
- Purpose: to support our community to reach their next stages of Indigenous leadership development through a cohort-style learning community
- An opportunity to network with other Native leaders to learn from each other's strengths, unique experiences, and leadership practices

Oyate Leadership Network



Indigenous Leadership Change Theory

The Oyate Leadership Network will provide culturally centered leadership development opportunities to Native people of diverse ages and skills from around Minnesota, recognizing they bring a range of experiences and gifts into this network. We will work in a complementary way with the existing array of leadership programs serving our community. The interdependence of culture and professional experiences will be valued. Through this program, participants will draw upon leadership concepts and teachings reflective of Indigenous traditional knowledge, including the ability to plan for an abundant future. Participants will be empowered to make long-lasting cultural and professional connections within and beyond the American Indian community in Minnesota, influencing others to also lead with Indigenous values. This evolving and ever-growing network of Native leaders centered in these values will contribute to a more vibrant, equitable, and healthy community.

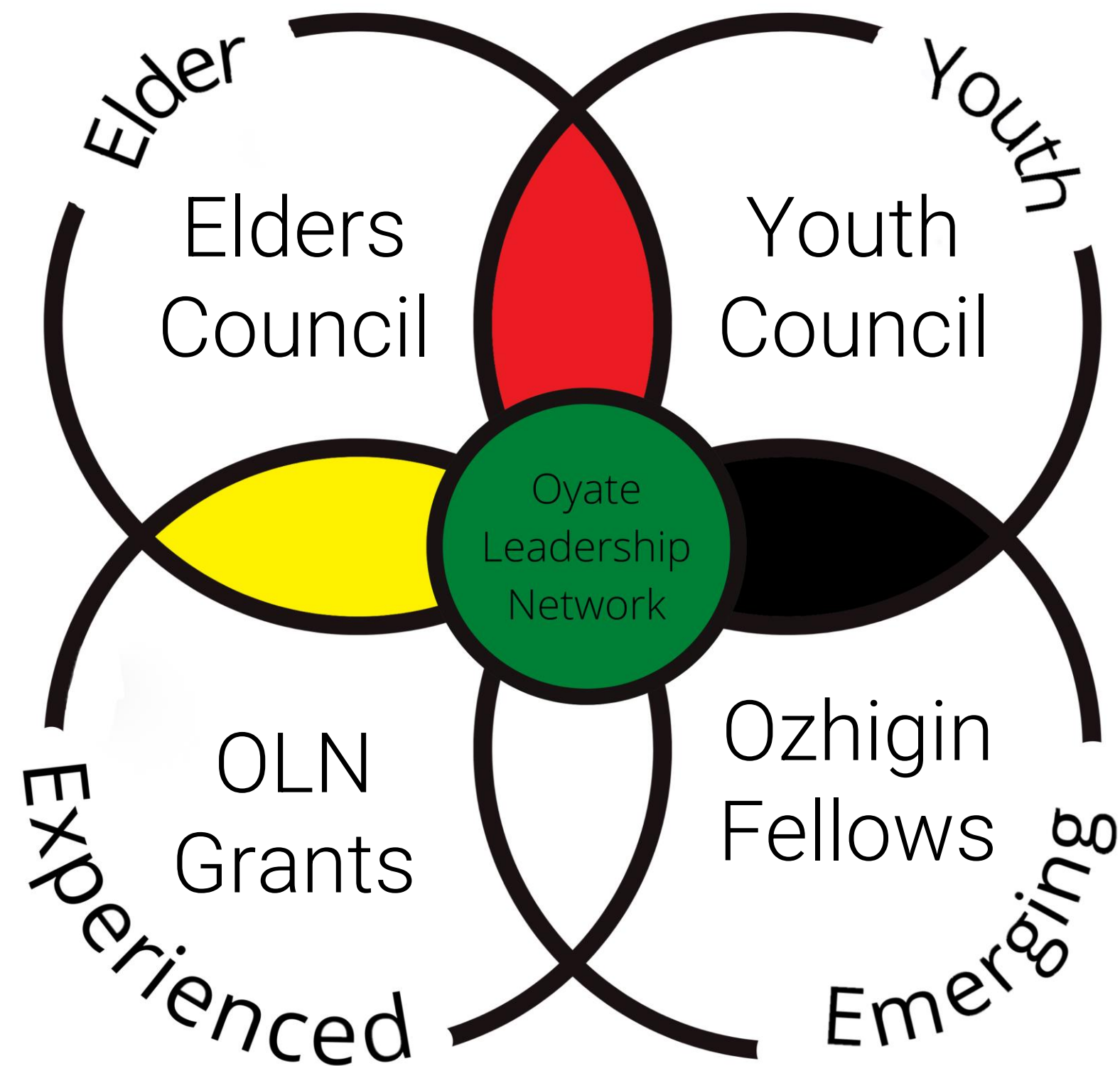
Oyate Leadership Network Redesign Process



- Original model: cohort-based programming + mini-grants
- Iterative, asset-based & using appreciative inquiry approaches:
 - 100+ community advisors – focus groups and interviews
 - Wisdom Council and LeMoine LaPointe, elder consultant
 - Youth at MN Indian Ed conference, and Youth Council TBD
 - Feedback from other leadership programs
 - Relationship-building with tribes and Greater MN communities
- Indigenous developmental evaluation

Oyate Leadership Network in 2023

- Training
- Mentorship
- Gathering
- Cultural knowledge
- Networking



What did we learn about program design in the Native community?



- Expected pace (slower) and resourcing (need more \$\$) for this work
- Is there ever, “Too much feedback? We can never be all things for all people, especially not all at once”
- Outcomes are not fully developed before we start iterating and they are open to change based on feedback
- Outcomes based in Indigenous values are often incongruent with traditional western metrics and evaluation approaches

Assumptions about Indigenous leadership



- Culture and language are critical
- Values > activities or hard skill sets
- Focus on individual AND community / organizational development
- Every person, in any position, can be a leader
- Leadership is not just in an organizational or professional setting but can also occur in family, community, and social / peer groups
- We need different types of leaders for different situations

Characteristics of Indigenous leaders



- Futuristic & innovative
- Complex & critical thinking
- Acquisition & application of traditional knowledge and teachings
- Positive agent for social change
- Clear understanding of their own identity & their role in the group/community
- Empathetic & inclusive
- Practical skills & competence
- Effective communicator
- Ability to navigate conflict
- Lifelong learners & teachers



Indigenous leadership networks

- Collectivist values → collectivist leadership
- Values-based interaction
- Sharing learning and collaborating around a topic, issue, or interest
- Creating succession plans; sharing the obligation to community
- Having a relative wherever you go



What's next?



- More listening sessions like this in 2023 – across Minnesota
- Assemble an Oyate Advisory Council that represents different geographies and experiences to co-develop the programmatic details for OLN
- Networking sessions and discussions on the intersection of our Native identity with Ozhigin Fellows and other emerging leaders
- Identifying and forming ongoing partnerships and resource connections
- Learning and sharing strategies and models for restorative and culturally centered work cultures and org structures – what can our workplaces of the future look like?

Discussion & Engagement

- Have you had any experiences that resonate with our approach?
- Are there parts of the process we described that could be useful in your work?
- What questions do you have about Indigenous leadership? What ideas did we spark for you today?

Stay connected

Your voice is important to us. If you would like to learn more, join a future learning session, or contribute to uplifting Indigenous leadership in Minnesota, please contact us at oyate@tiwahefoundation.org.

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Tiwahefoundation.org

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Chi Miigwech!

Wopida (wopila) tanka!

Thank you!



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