Engaging the 7th Generational Model in Honoring Traditional Leadership Knowledge

Norman Cooeyate
Abstract: “Don ko’hol lewuna:wediyahnan, wan don i:tsε’manna” (All of you will think before acting and consider the consequences.) is a humble Shiwi (Zuni) saying uttered to Shiwi individuals selected as the elected leaders of the Pueblo for a four-year time span. Traditional knowledge of values, beliefs, and ethics have been and are used by Indigenous communities to guide, counsel, evaluate, and discipline traditional leaders as they develop strategies to confront the loss of language, culture, and traditions, while at the same time tending to economic viability, community building, social disparities, and social ills among a plethora of issues. This traditional knowledge (teachings) have carried Indigenous People through multiple challenges, trials, and tribulations as they journeyed from their places of emergence to their current places of occupancy. Traditional Indigenous teachings place a core value on cooperation and interdependency instead of competition and materialism, which is in contrast to Western leadership principles of individualism and materialism. Indigenous People have the passion, knowledge, tradition, and commitment to take the first and most powerful steps toward the revitalization of traditional leadership based on traditional values, beliefs, and ethics to assist in the governance of their people. This presentation compares Zuni and Western leadership characteristics based on literature review and my personal experiences as a former Governor of the Zuni Pueblo. Additionally, I will incorporate aspects of the “7th Generational Model” as a valuable tool to integrate traditional knowledge in informing scientific approaches to planning, designing, conservation, and sustainable of Indigenous communities, resources, and environment. Traditional knowledge and science are complementary and should be used in conjunction with community-building projects in Indigenous communities. The incorporation of traditional knowledge can also contribute to building strong and successful Indigenous traditional communities while assisting to revitalize, sustain, and enhance Indigenous languages, culture, and traditions.