



# MINIWAKAN NEWS



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*“Among the Dakotas lying and stealing from other tribal members was a capital offense. A person who was capable of lying was believed to be capable of committing other cowardly crimes against the tribe and was put to death to prevent the evil from doing more harm. If a person stole from another tribal member, he was forever after called Wamanon (thief) and this distinction followed him for the rest of his life.”*

*Charles Eastman, Dakota  
1858 - 1939*

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## **SPECIAL PROGRESS REPORT ON THE TRIBAL LEADERS INSTITUTE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

**By Dr. Erich Longie**

I am pleased and proud to report the Tribal Leaders Institute project has completed its first year. Writing the courses are always interesting and rewarding, however, at times it does become monotonous. During this past year, I wrote literally hundreds of pages on the subject of what is right and what is wrong and there are days when it takes

all my will power to sit in front of the computer and write.

While most tribal members welcome my work, there is also struggle involved in trying to bring the subject of ethics to the forefront when some tribal members in key positions are against it. For example, at our School Board retreat in July, I broached the subject of adopting a “Code of Conduct” for board members. I received such stiff resistance from fellow board members that I postponed my plans to present a draft to them. Two reasons they gave for not wanting to adopt a Code of Conduct was, “We do not like to be treated like children,” and, “I am familiar with code of ethics through my job; therefore, I don’t need to learn anymore.”

This reminded me of an opening statement I make at the beginning of each of my courses: *“Every single one of us, including myself, could benefit from an ethics course. Ethics in the work place is an on-going issue. Every day we are involved in circumstances that test our ethics. I have*

### **SPECIAL REPORT**

***Tribal Leaders Institute***

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*presented this course many times, and never fail to learn more about ethical behavior each time I present it."*

Despite any difficulties or resistance I've experienced to this project, overall, I am pleased with the results. The feedback we have received about content of the courses from people who have participated was overwhelmingly positive. Here are two examples:

◆ At the end of the Sioux Falls presentation, one participant came up to me and said: *"Wow! I will say it again, wow!"* He went on to say how glad he was that someone was finally addressing the issue of work ethics on Indian reservations. He told me that when he was hired as a director of a tribal program, he soon became exasperated with the work ethics of his workers. One day, he informed them he was going to reduce their work hours to 20 hours per week. Apparently, that was all the time they spent actually working, anyway.

***"Every single one of us, including myself, could benefit from an ethics course. Ethics in the work place is an on-going issue. Every day we are involved in circumstances that test our ethics. I have presented this course many times, and never fail to learn more about ethical behavior each time I present it."***

***Dr. Erich Longie***

◆ Another participant, who took the on-line version of one course, emailed me his comments regarding the course: *"Hey, Dr. Longie, ... finished your ethics course. I enjoyed it. I read a little here and there throughout the week when I could, and I think it took me about six hours to finish. I made sure and read all the 'homework' so I think that's why it took me a little longer than [usual]. That was one of the things I enjoyed most about the course was the 'supplemental literature' that you*

*provided links to, including your own thoughts and writing, pretty cool. I enjoyed the whole course, but I particularly liked the part on self-awareness/self-honesty with the literature from Daniel Goleman and his view on 'emotional intelligence.' This section of the course made me want to read more literature written by the author."* Δ

## OVERVIEW OF YEAR ONE

By Dr. AnnMaria DeMars

The Tribal Leaders Institute (TLI) has two goals:

1. Provide character education that will decrease funds lost by tribal programs through ethical violations, and
2. Galvanize tribal members to demand ethical behavior from their leaders and themselves.

What makes the TLI's ethics workshops unique? Our training is based on

traditional Native American values of honesty, courage, perseverance, and generosity. We focus not on theory, but on leading by example.

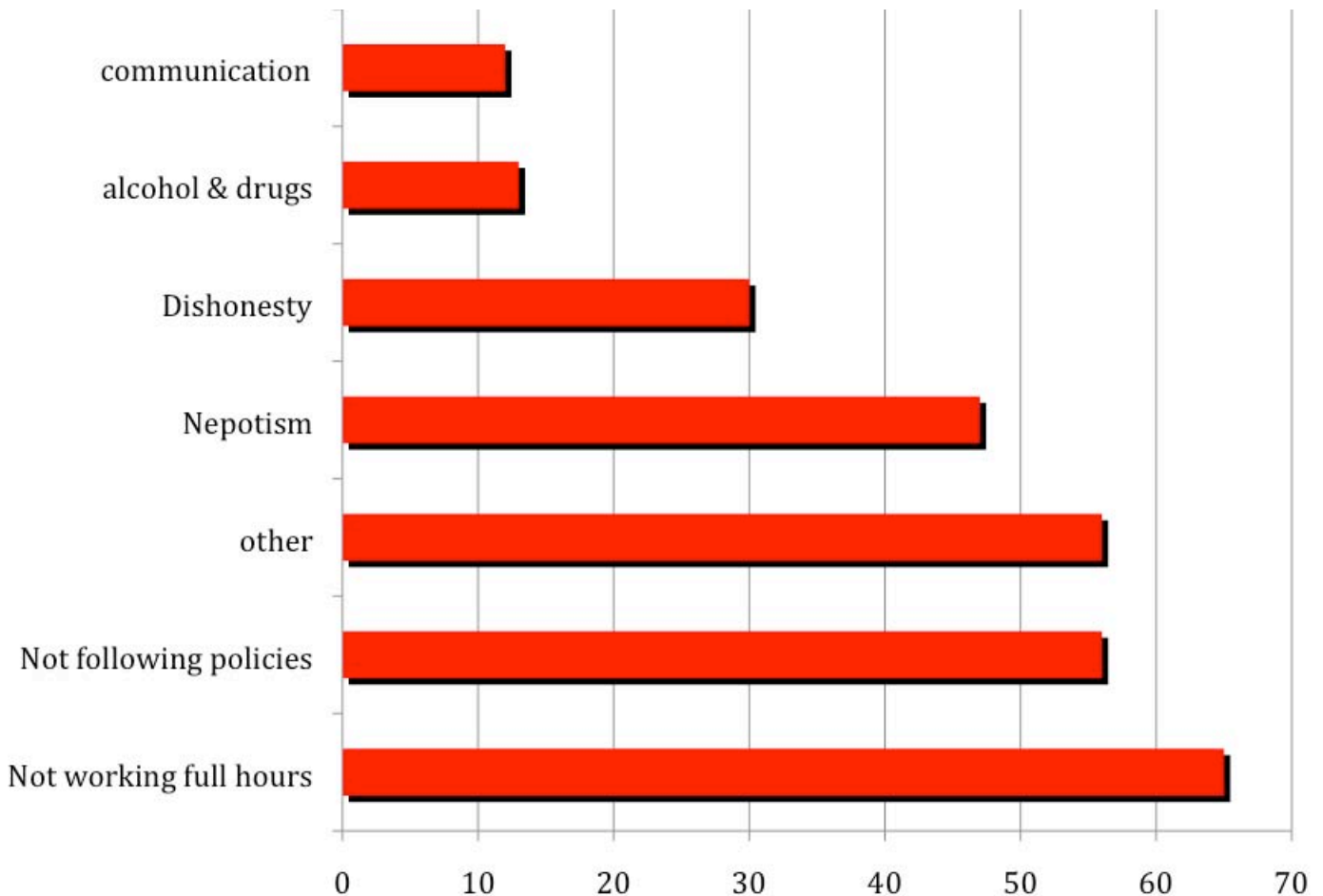
Thus far, two on-line courses, *Introduction to Ethical Issues on Indian Reservations* and *Managers and Traditional Native American Values*, have been designed, developed, and pilot tested. Numerous training materials have been developed including course assignments, Powerpoint presentations, a tribal leaders wiki, and podcasts. A community

bulletin board has been developed. A listserv receives monthly newsletters (began in January of this year). A project twitter account was opened in July, and weekly updates began this August. Two blogs are updated on at least a weekly basis.

While these types of social media are not new innovations off the reservation, for many of the course participants, this has been their first use of Twitter, the first podcast they have heard, and the first wiki they have used. It has become apparent that the “digital divide” between people living on the reservations and those living off the reservations, when it comes to accessing the

reservation people are looking at. By being one of the early content providers, Spirit Lake Consulting expects to become a major corporate player within this niche of the market.

During the past year, while taking the course, *Introduction to Ethical Issues on Indian Reservations*, 107 participants completed an assignment that asked them, “Name the biggest ethical issues on the reservation today.” Respondents, provided a total of 229 responses. Only two of the participants did not answer this question.



Internet (especially in terms of hardware), is declining on the reservation, but there is still a major lack of content in the information

The responses are graphed in Figure 1. It can be seen that “not following policies” was identified as the second major problem, second only to the related issue of “not working full hours” an employee was required to work. While one must be cautious in drawing conclusions of causality from correlational data, the fact remains that this problem was denied for many years, and following dissemination of these results, the reservation has just instituted an Elders Committee on Ethics.

These are but two of many examples in the qualitative data identifying the impact of the project to date on reservation ethics on both an individual and community level.



Website designer, Dr. AnnMaria DeMars, made website design improvements based on user feedback from the pilot studies and research on a review of the literature. Templates were created for each online course, and each major area of a course to facilitate the

updating process. Headers were added to break up content into smaller information blocks.

Results of our pilot studies showed that some users, who were less computer proficient than others, were having difficulty navigating the courses. Dr. DeMars made numerous improvements to the site’s navigation. A menu was added on the left side of the screen, with the current page highlighted on the side



menu. Arrows were added at the bottom of each page to enable users to return to a previous page in an online course or go on to the next page in the course.

Homework forms were added using an alternate program called Survey Monkey. These automatically returned users to the next page in the course. As reservations have a disproportionately high rate of disability, the course was designed to maximize accessibility for those with disabilities, including facilitating use by text readers. Design considerations included:

- No use of image maps
- Minimal use of tables
- High contrast graphics

Both on-line training and computer-integrated training (live workshops) have been offered for the Introductory course. Computer-integrated training has been offered for the manager’s course as well. Across all sessions, retention has exceeded 95% for computer-integrated courses offered. Retention has not been as high for the on-line option, approximately 40%. This mirrors the experience of other organizations, which also show a higher attrition rate in on-line offerings. Increasing this retention will be a focus in year two of this project. One planned change is an increase in student interaction by posting, anonymously, student homework assignments on the forum.

Analysis of data from the first two courses has been used to inform the design for subsequent courses. There are actually two ways to measure whether the Tribal Leaders Institute (TLI) has had an impact, one is an analytical quantitative

**Figure 1. Five Biggest Ethical Problems on the Reservation**

method, and the other is through qualitative data; interviews, observations, and documents identifying changes in ethics. Both types of data are being collected. As is more typical in qualitative studies, analysis of qualitative data has been on-going throughout the project, while more quantitative data analysis will occur in the latter stages of the project as a summative evaluation.

## PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

By Dr. Erich Longie and  
Dr. AnnMaria DeMars



### *Discussion Board*

Limited use of the discussion board (Tribal Leaders Forum) was observed. Results are similar to those reported by other researchers in which less than 15% of users given access to a discussion board ever posted even one comment, despite several discussion questions posted by staff. No users initiated new questions or topics.

However, hundreds of responses were received as part of participants' homework assignments from online courses. Over 95% of respondents gave permission (a check off box on each form) to have their responses posted anonymously to the forum.

In the fourth quarter of this year, a research assistant, working for the project, began posting to the forum under several topic areas responses to online course homework assignments. In the second year of this grant, the impact of this modification will be assessed.

### *Fort Berthold Geography*

Services, tribal headquarters, and population centers on the Spirit Lake Nation and the Turtle

Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians' reservation are centrally located. Geographically, Fort Berthold is vastly different from Spirit Lake and Turtle Mountain. Population is spread out. Towns are small and located far from each other. This extreme rural situation makes it difficult to travel in a cost effective manner to Fort Berthold and then contact enough people to describe the Tribal Leaders Institute and its courses. Getting enough people together in one location to present a workshop is harder still. This contributes to the difficulty in conducting beta testing of the courses.



Spirit Lake and Turtle Mountain are smaller in size with centrally located populations more conducive to the type of participation this project requires. Therefore, testing at Spirit Lake and Turtle Mountain are conducted at their tribal colleges with people coming from all over the reservation to participate.

The Fort Berthold Indian Reservation is a huge reservation, which makes it difficult to centralize the training. Their tribal villages are 30-100 miles apart. Each community does not have the required population to make the training cost efficient. Dr. Longie has made several different trips to Fort Berthold to recruit a site coordinator. The first site coordinator recruited, although interested in the

project, did not work out. The second site coordinator recruited was too busy to carry out the required duties. As a result, Dr. Longie did not conduct extensive testing of ethics courses on the Fort Berthold Indian reservation during the first twelve months of this project. Δ

## SUCSESSES TO DATE

By Dr. Erich Longie



The success stories to date include commercial sales while the product is still in the pilot stage, and significant contracts and endorsements including a Bureau of Indian Affairs line officer, a Head Start program director, a tribal judge, and numerous individual cases where tribal members' work ethics were changed for the better.

### ***Bureau of Indian Affairs Recognition***

Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) line officer, Rose Marie Davis, supervises six BIA schools on two Indian Reservations: *Fort Berthold Indian Reservation* and the *Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians*. Ms. Davis volunteered to take the first course, *Introduction to Ethical Issues on Indian Reservations*, and was so impressed by the course, she contracted with me to do a presentation to her employees. I traveled to Fort Berthold where I did a brief presentation explaining, not only the content of the course, but all the features of my company's website that are used for the course: blogs, forums, library, filing cabinet, and wiki. Although the presentation was brief, it received very good comments from the majority of the participants, which included principals, administrators, board members, one tribal council member, and also Head Start employees. After the presentation, one Head Start

employee approached me and complimented me on my presentation. Ms. Davis has informed me that she plans to have me present my two courses, *Introduction to Ethical Issues on Indian Reservations* and *Managers and Traditional Native American Values*, at a fall retreat to be held in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Ms. Davis was particularly impressed by the course's solution to stemming office gossip. The solution presented came from our ancestors, the Dakotas.

*The Dakotas believed all creatures are equal. Of all these creatures, the Creator gave the power of speech only to us humans. Therefore, we should not commit a sacrilege to this gift the Creator has*



*given us by gossiping about other people.*

In contrast, a Head Start employee recalled an earlier training she attended where the presenter told the audience to put a rubber band around their wrist and when they wanted to gossip about someone to use that rubber band to snap themselves. "As if ...," the employee said humorously, when she finished telling the story.

### **The Head Start Program**

The Spirit Lake Head Start Director hired me to present the course, *Introduction to Ethical Issues on Indian Reservations*, to Head Start employees. There were two on-site presentations to 25 employees each day, one on May 29, 2009 and one on May 30, 2009. Head Start has approximately 60 staff. The training was divided into two sessions to accommodate 25 employees each session.

### **Spirit Lake Tribal Court**

The Chief Judge of the Spirit Lake Tribal Court, who had taken the online version of the introductory

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***Dr. Erich Longie***

course, hired me to present the course to her staff. On July 17, 2009, I presented my introductory course to nine Spirit Lake Tribal Court staff. An interesting story occurred at this presentation...

*“As often happens at these trainings, I am approached by individuals who have good reasons for leaving early. Such was the case with this group. One individual wanted to leave around 10:30 AM to check on his livestock. He said he would be back at 1:00 PM. This was after I covered the section of the course where I talked about: if*

*you are not at work eight hours and you still claim eight hours of work, it’s stealing from the tribe. However, I informed him that it was up to him.... The person left at 10:30 AM and came back to the classroom at approximately 11:45 AM. I was surprised by his conscientiousness and conjectured that his early return was no doubt because he had heard the part of my presentation about ‘being at work when you are supposed to be at work’ right before he left.”*



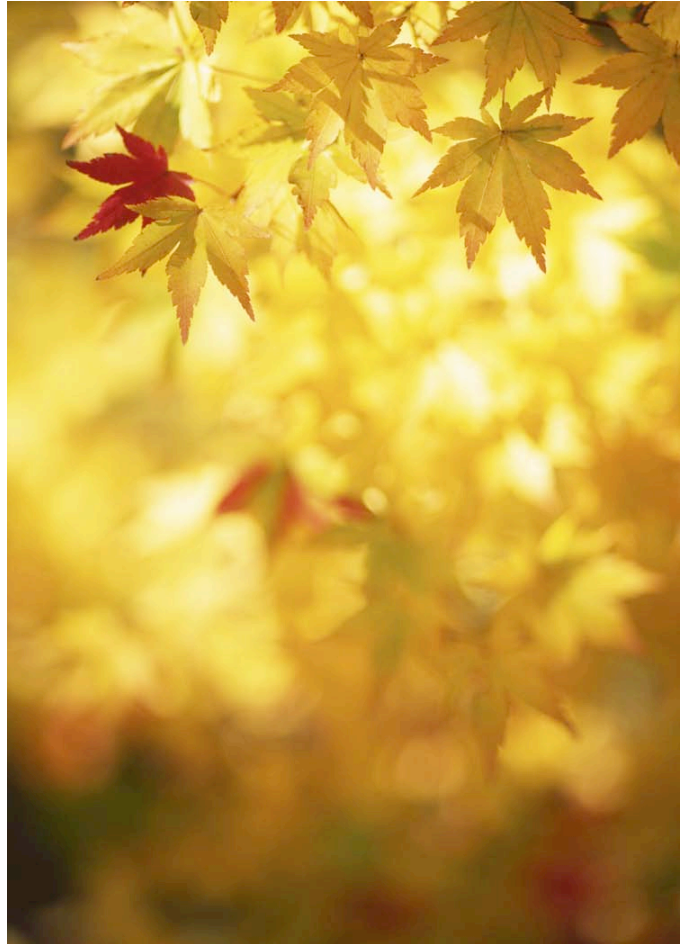
### **Spirit Lake Consulting Employees**

Dr. DeMars and I are part-time workers on this project. Dr. DeMars holds a teaching position at the University of Southern California. I am involved

in many areas of the reservation community including: work on committees, boards, as an elder, and as a person with years of experiences (I am often called upon for advice and support due to this project).

Working on this project has had a profound impact on Dr. DeMars and me. We have both become more outspoken in our communities on the issues of ethical workplace behavior. The evidence of this is in our blogs. Our blogs express our efforts, our feelings, and our concerns.

The reason why our personal and professional behavior is important is because a successful ethics-training program requires us to be above reproach. While we readily admit that we have a long ways to go to becoming 100% ethical workers, tribal people have noticed the change in our attitude regarding workplace ethics and they respect us for it. This newfound respect goes a long way in getting tribal members to attend our training and change their workplace behavior.

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