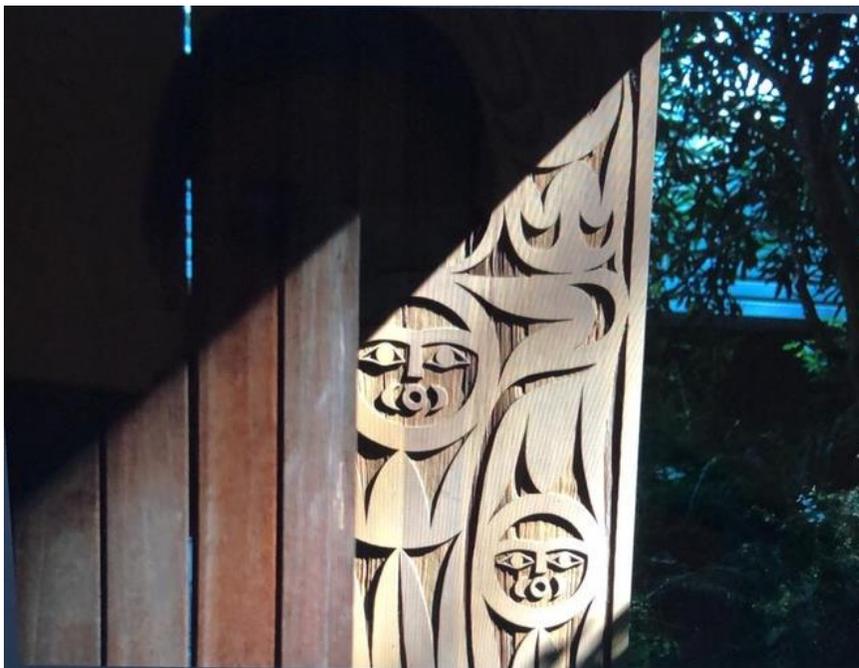


ESÉM'KWU'

Using an Indigenous Perspective to Foster Creativity in a Union and Non-Union Workplace



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ESÉM'KWU'

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The main idea of this project is how to foster creativity into a workplace and how to better understand a corporate culture to create an environment that encourages diversity with union and non-union employees. Through the paper, we will be discussing the ways to change corporate culture and what challenges come through that, while teaching you about some of the ways of learning that has come from the story of Sk'ad'a. The author, Sara Davidson goes through her own story of learning from her father renowned Haida artist, Robert Davidson, that shows how different perspectives can help teach people. We wanted to also introduce the Coast Salish tradition of

Esém'kwu into corporate culture where we believe that it can help encourage this creativity and overall build a stronger culture in the workplace. Chen kw'enman-túmiyap (thanking you for your kind attention).

ESÉM'KWU'

In the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action number 92, Business and Reconciliation it states:

“ We call upon the corporate sector in Canada to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a reconciliation framework and to apply its principles, norms, and standards to corporate policy and core operational activities involving Indigenous peoples and their lands and resources.”

This paper looks to indigenous knowledge, culture and traditions that can be used to foster creativity in a workplace with union and non-union employees. One book that has helped guide us on this journey is Potlatch as Pedagogy Learning Through Ceremony by Sara Davidson and Robert Davidson. By exploring and implementing these ideas in the workplace an organization can look at creating reconciliation in a beneficial form and create connections with the indigenous communities from that area. In our recommendations we will explore how this can be done. In Skwxú7mesh culture and tradition, when we want to honor, support and place 'protection' on a person, we

esémk̓wu' them. What does esémk̓wu' mean? Esémk̓wu is Skwxú7mesh for 'be wrapped in a blanket'. Our elders would say 'they are being wrapped in the loving arms of their family (or community if it is an organization)'. It is from this tradition that we want to apply this teaching to an organization and their employees. When you visualize this, all of the employees fall under the same organization, like being wrapped in a blanket. By honoring employees for their talents and to encourage their creativity for the benefit of the entire organization creates a sense of community, respect and strengthening connections between each other.

WORKING TOGETHER

In many organizations, there is a culture that is built from the relationships that are made in the workplace. These relationships build a corporate culture that can take place within a company and can affect the company's future in the long run. We want to introduce an idea of esémk̓wu' for an organization's vision, where a company will be able to create a workplace that protects and supports the employees in a way that can promote creativity and diversity. For our idea to be able to take place within an organization, we will have to explain how to get to that point before making any direct changes. By focusing on changing a corporate culture that will eventually reach the overall goal

in mind. This part of the paper will be focusing on the culture of the workplace and how it can influence change that encourages creativity.

CHANGING A CORPORATE CULTURE

The corporate culture of a business is determined by the values and beliefs of the employees working in a company. These values and beliefs contribute to the overall organizational culture which creates the internal environment of a business. It can take time for an organizational culture to develop because the employees will have different relationships that are formed between each other.

Management can try to enforce some core principles onto the employees that the employees can adapt too, but it can be difficult trying to enforce change. Changing a corporate culture is the first step in creating a workplace that can encourage creativity. Now changing the culture within a business is not easy, there are many challenges that can arise from trying to change too much. There can even be employee backlash if some of the changes are too drastic and forced.

The focus of creating a better corporate culture is too improve the performance of a business by encouraging good business practices that work on diversifying the workforce. That in itself can improve a company's image and promote to new employees that they will be treated well. When a corporate culture is built by its diversity and

creativity the workforce has shown potential for growth that will help any company in the long run.

In this part of the paper, we will be focusing on how to change corporate cultures and determining the best course of action when it comes to dealing with potential challenges. When trying to change a corporate culture we need to understand what important components are of a great corporate culture. A very important component of creating a great culture is the vision of the company. Determining a company's values provides the employees with a vision to follow and shows that purpose whenever an employee decides. Make a vision statement that is true to you which provides purpose to your company, and the employees will follow. "When they are deeply authentic and prominently displayed, good vision statements can even help orient customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders" (Coleman, 2013). Creating a good vision statement is the first step in creating a culture that will be able to grow over time and help the customer base understand what you are trying to do with the company.

CHALLENGES

Changing corporate culture can have many challenges when trying to encourage diversity and creativity in the workplace. It can be especially hard to change a culture when it's hard to even see or

describe the corporate culture that needs to be changed. Since it is hard to see the corporate culture-changing, we would recommend making small changes in the workplace to reach the overall change. As mentioned before it takes time to change a culture and depending on the organizational it can be faster or slower. "Culture Change is one of the most important challenges in businesses today" (Smith, 2019), so we don't expect that the changes will work out all the time. Corporate culture is not a consistent variable; it changes and varies between the different functions of the culture. When trying to change the culture, the business models that they follow can affect the overall culture that has been created. These models can limit the capacity for change and discourage creativity when introduced. The thing that requires change is the "mental models" (Smith, 2019), that we have for the organization. Mental Models are the most challenging as mental models are the individual's mindset when viewing the world. Everyone has different values and beliefs from how they were brought up, and it can be a challenge in the workplace when some values clash over ways to get things done. For the management side, developing a plan to work with all of the different employees and work towards their strengths will help promote the innovation and creativity within your business culture. We would suggest to work with the leadership within the company to facilitate the growth of the culture. Many of the

leadership positions of a company have knowledge, experience and methods that can help control the environment and to get things done. What we are suggesting is to remove the number of known methods that management would use to control the corporate culture, as a step towards this growth. By removing some of the known methods used, the managers will have to become more creative in the way they handle working relationships. As some methods will work for some employees and others might not; the challenge is learning a new mindset on the working culture of your business. When the mindset is focused on the production and improving the machine of the business, many leaders fall into this mental trap. Business leaders will need to let go of the machine metaphor and focus on developing new models for the organization. Culture is a complex model of relationships between employees and its stakeholders; it is a challenge to change it. There are some recommendations that we could suggest to a leader to help promote these changes with their employees.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHALLENGES

There are some ways to enable culture change just by having the leader change some of their views of the organization. One way is to have an outside view of the culture to better understand the stakeholders and the employees. Collecting data by using customer surveys can better understand some of the boundaries when viewing

the organization. Being a leader with a clear purpose, for example providing a future vision of the company and what opportunities there are to grow. While looking at potential risks to the company and use those risks to become opportunities. Leaders should be fully aware of the history of the organization and understand what it took to get to the place that the company is to now. Be fully open with your employees about the challenges and be willing to have them help come up with solutions. This can help promote innovation and creativity when someone of a higher position shows vulnerability. It also will show the employees that you trust and value their opinions enough to consider their solutions to the challenges. This will help build trust and have employees going to you as they become more aware of who you are. Don't be afraid to share your experiences and what your goals are; it will become easier when you start to know them better and understand some of their views. Build and reward positive actions that will help encourage innovative thinking and will demonstrate to other employees that their views matter. The main thing as a leader, that will be hard to do, is to change yourself and others. "If you do not change the leadership team's pattern of behavior, then you will not see others change," (Smith, 2019). Make it a challenge to work on these things together as a group and build from

them. Many methods might work and others might not but that is a part of the process of creating change.

UNION AND NON-UNION FACTORS

There can be challenges when working with non-unions and unions when trying to change a corporate culture. Some of these factors can make it hard to implement some of the earlier recommendations to promote change. Unions can help all workers in a company because they have a “substantial impact on the compensation and work lives of both unionized and non-unionized workers” (Walters & Mishel, 2003). It can be tricky trying to change a culture if the union is not aware of changes that are being made. The union has a role in creating or changing an organization’s culture since it can provide the workforce with information that can be designed to help decisions being made. As well as providing the rules, practices, and preferred behaviors and attitudes that make up the organization's values. The management will have to play a big role in changing the culture because they will have to communicate the new decisions or new policies’ that will impact the changes. This will be a challenge for managers in a unionized workplace as they will have to manage within the legal contractual barriers of the union. Managers will have to count on the union’s approval for many decisions and be able to work within the labor agreement before making any changes. All employees make

up an organization's culture but having to go through unions to make decisions as a manager can be very difficult. In non-union workplaces, it can also be hard to enforce new changes to the company culture as employees have fewer incentives to try to make those changes. Unions can help bring the organizational culture together but, in some cases, having no union can also greatly affect the changes to culture. The workforce of those companies without unions have little to no reason to encourage diversity and creativity if those companies are already doing well. Usually when a company has no union and wants to change the organization's culture, it can be done relatively quickly. Since they can make drastic changes very fast without having to go through agreements but in most cases, there is usually a reason to why the company wants to make a change. The decision to make that change usually comes from something negative that has happened to the employee culture and are looking for fixes. Those fixes would only be temporary depending on how bad the situation is and it will take time to rebuild. Having a union or not can affect how fast changes are being done in the company but either way if changes need to be done for an organization to grow. Then it's the responsibility of management to be able to facilitate this change and help employees grow within the company.

DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Introducing diversity into a corporate culture has many benefits that will help improve the workplace. Many companies should be open to hiring employees with different backgrounds because it can promote a culture that can respect and learn from each other. When there is a diverse pool of workers that have different backgrounds, it can have different benefits to a company. The benefits of hiring employees of different backgrounds will help improve the corporate culture by creating a workplace that will foster creativity and innovation.

Diversity is one of the important factors of a workplace and is recommended to most businesses to improve productivity. Productivity can only improve when the culture has reached its point where creativity and innovation are welcomed, and rewarded by the company. It can also improve a company's reputation since workers would view the company as having good employers. Having multiple perspectives on situations in the workplace can help foster creativity. As employees will have different ways of finding solutions to problems that can be supported by their experiences. Now trying to introduce the idea of having traditional values from aboriginal origins could be hard for a workplace to adapt too but once diversity is accepted into the companies' culture, the idea of esémkwu can be adopted.

Protecting each other and promoting creative thinking will happen

once a business culture is ready to accept those ideas. A company that can start to hire employees with aboriginal descent can help introduce this idea further. Since they learned these traditions growing up, they would know what these traditions mean to the company and how the company culture can reach that point of esém'kwu.

THE STORY OF SK'AD'A

The author Sara Davidson from Haida indigenous ancestry. She is an educator in the public education system and was looking from different perspectives and aspects to approach and teach her indigenous students. She wants to deliver the best teaching experience to her students. Therefore, she decided to talk to her father Robert Davidson who is renowned artist and delivers his stories through art. Her father Robert shared the Haida word Sk'ad'a which reflects the work of teaching and learning. There are nine principles of Sk'ad'a and some of them will be illustrated in this paper and how it can be applied to foster creativity of indigenous union and non-union workplace.

LEARNING EMERGES FROM STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

Building a strong relationship with colleagues and employees encourages creativity. In a workplace where there is a mixture of union and non-union employees, there will often be a gap between them. To create strong relationship is about understanding each-

others and give a space for people to explain their views, thoughts and ideas where the other side has to listen respectfully and encourage. In her book *Potlatch as Pedagogy*, Sara Davidson shares how both her and her father, Robert needed to build strong relationships in their respective areas. Robert as an artist and a community member who initiated a pole raising in his community needed to rely on his strong relationships with his uncles and his naanii who in turn guided him in finding and establishing allies. Sara who is an educator realized that her first priority was to build a strong and respectful relationship with her students to help with their learning and to be there when they are struggling (Davidson, 2018).

LEARNING EMERGES FROM AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCE

Creativity emerges from experiences that have been passed through generations. An authentic experience that leaves a positive impact on people's lives will generate creativity where these people will share it with others. In Indigenous traditions, families are tied to each other, they share their experiences and thoughts with everyone. Respecting elders is important as these people have gone through a lot of life experiences that taught them at some point how to approach people in a creative way without arising any conflicts. Robert Davidson shared:

"I don't speak Haida, but hosting the feasts and the potlatches, it was a learning exercise for me. I wouldn't have gained the insights if I'd just intellectualized about it. So actually, going through the process. Sure, I may have wrinkled a few people along the way, but that is the learning curve for me, to rectify it." (Davidson, 2018)

Sara shared that in hosting a potlatch or feast, her father was able to demonstrate his learning and receive immediate feedback for that learning. As a teacher Sara teaches skills that students can use outside of the classroom in their everyday lives. Students realize the importance of what they are learning and how it will affect their lives (Davidson, 2018).

LEARNING OCCURS THROUGH OBSERVATION AND CONTRIBUTION

Observing people's behaviour and attributes is the key to identify how to structure a workplace that is suitable for everyone. For example, if someone is having difficulties to integrate themselves within the work structure, this is where the surrounding people need to coordinate to foster creative solutions to help the person feel more engaged and integrated. In addition, contributing creative ideas to engage union and non-union employees at the workplace is an important step to ensure that the organization is being managed successfully.

LEARNING OCCURS THROUGH RECOGNIZING AND ENCOURAGING STRENGTHS

In indigenous culture and as shared in our book, elders in the community recognize the talents of the younger people and would encourage them to start learning and practicing those talents. It would be done subtly as well by parents with the youth being unaware. To encourage creativity with all employees, managers and supervisors become aware of what each employee's talents are in the workplace. As a former manager Rose would observe and learn what employees' strengths were and how to encourage them to continue using those skills and to develop them further. Rose would also encourage them to mentor new employees and to share their knowledge and skills with them. Other employees would notice this and share with Rose about what a great job they were doing.

LEARNING HONOURS THE POWER OF THE MIND

The power of visualization that each organization needs to create a creative conceptual to foster a healthy and well-being working environment. Sharing and using the power of mind among employees will ensure that the organization is achieving their goals in terms of integrating their employees together. Examples of power of the mind are when groups come together to brainstorm ideas. Having a leader who will nurture these ideas and creativity is valuable. In her book,

Sara Davidson explains that her father, Robert had the idea of creating a totem pole for his home village and from that commitment of that idea and the visualization of it, it came to fruition. She also shares that as a teacher it is her job to encourage her student's strengths and to encourage them to visualize themselves as successful (Davidson, 2018).

LEARNING HONOURS HISTORY AND STORY

Employees who have been with the organization can share what they have done in the past to help those in the present to find and develop themselves and their creativity. By sharing experiences and stories helps new coworkers understand the culture and some of the history of the workplace that can help for present day issues. By building on what was previously successful encourages older workers. In our interviews with David Kirk and elder Ernie George, they share that by having a safe place for sharing they are and were able to share their story and history. In the student centre they offer events for everyone to join and it is there that history and stories are shared with not only students, but with staff, faculty and even with family members who are visiting.

CELEBRATING ONE MORE TIME IN A WAY THEY KNEW HOW AND LEARNING HONOURS ASPECTS OF PROTOCOL

Indigenous rituals and celebrations are ceremonies that are an integral part of culture and what has formed me into the person I am today.

Growing up indigenous, we are taught to sit there and observe the work being done through rituals. It is to learn the proper way of doing things correctly. It's important to understand that these processes are done in the correct order during rituals.

Indigenous culture and language are so intertwined as it connects the indigenous way of life to our history. Like a place of work, the Coast Salish people are divided into a class system. Wealth was represented through material possessions that included: knowledge, a variety of food resources, dentalium (used as currency or decorative pieces such as jewelry) and handwoven items (blankets, clothes and headbands). Families with high social status were well liked and respected within their community. Compared to those of the lower class and could often be hired help or in most cases slaves to a high-ranking family.

Indigenous history came word of mouth as history was never written down and this is how it came to be passed on from one generation to the next through tradition oral storytelling. Oral history is often used as a tool to teach or give advice. Often a parent would step back and let another family member to teach their children.

The company culture is the chance for both non-union and union employees to come together and work toward a common goal. The challenge for managers is to find that balance to come up with strategies that work for all their employees. It is a challenge when one group is so set in their old habits and don't want to make any changes for an organization to progress.

A Hul'q'umi'num term "Na'tsa'maht" means unity of working together as one. It is through the community's ability to work together with one heart and one mind to be able to make their community prosper. In a place of work, it is important for everyone to work together towards a common goal within the organization.

Pedagogy (is an approach to traditional indigenous teachings) and that Davidson refers to, is an important factor as indigenous people have their own unique way to learn. Indigenous people are taught to watch and learn until an elder feels you are ready to do a certain task. An organization with diverse employees needs to keep an open mind and be willing to listen to the different perspectives that each employee can bring. An organization needs to be flexible and to value the contribution made by everyone.

Indigenous cultural diversity is what makes an indigenous group unique, Marshall states that "the Cowichan people were known as philosophers that had the ability to view questions two or three

different ways.” They also were generous people that were willing to share their stories and ideas with others.

INTERVIEWS

Interview with David Kirk Wednesday November 6, 2019 9am

Name: David Kirk

Job title: Indigenous Faculty Advisor and instructor

Organization: Capilano University

Highest Degree: Masters in Education

Q: How long have you been in this position?

A: 13 years

Q:What brought you here?

A: My passion for education and indigenous students in their educational journey

Q: Do you belong to a union?

A: Yes, CFA

Q: Do you have interactions with non-union co-workers? If yes, how are they?

A: Yes ~ administration at the university is non-union = senior management and the elders who come in are non-union

Q: Are you able (or do you) to collaborate with non-union co-workers to complete tasks?

A: Yes, I am able to collaborate with them regarding indigenous issues with senior administration; I am in a unique position as reconciliation is of importance as the university has a duty to consult; human resource departments need to work on recruiting indigenous people

Q: Do you collaborate with them?

A: Being very strategic, building this centre, having a guest spot on the senate; being the voice of indigenous people at the university, ensuring that there is a culturally safe place for everyone, especially indigenous people and especially indigenous women

Q: From an indigenous perspective, how is creativity fostered?

A: Creating a space for dialogue, everyone is safe and equal, hosting a talking circle, over food, all views are important, there is no right or wrong

Q: Do you find that you use these same skills in the workplace?

A: Yes

Interview with elder Ernie George, Tuesday November 19, 2019 11:30 am

Name: Ernie George

Job Title: Assistant Superintendent

Organization: Seymour Golf & Country Club

Highest level of education: Grade 10, started grade 11 but didn't complete.

Q: How long were you in that position?

A: 24 years

Q: Why did you decide to work there?

A: Worked at the location the summer of '56 and went back there in 1957. Parents separated and made the choice to work.

Q: Did you belong to a union

A: Yes

Q: Did you work with non-union co-workers?

A: No. No really. Inside workers were not unionized.

Q:How was it working with non-union employees?

A: Didn't work with non-union employees.

Q: From an indigenous perspective, how was creativity fostered in a workplace?

A: We just worked it in. It was easy to do as there were a lot of unionized indigenous employees that I was related to. I was fortunate to have family work together.

RECOMMENDATION

Ideally the organization would have local indigenous people employed in their organization to seek assistance and guidance on teachings. If there are no employees who are indigenous it would be beneficial to have a local indigenous elder come in and be an advisor. We see this in some schools where there is an 'elder in residence' that come in and share knowledge and teachings. This can also be witnessed in the *kexusem-ayak̓in* (Gathering Room) for indigenous students at Capilano University. There are three elders from local indigenous communities that come and offer teachings and advice to the students who attend the centre. As shared by David Kirk, this is a place of safety and equality where open dialogue is encouraged.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the book is a great example that teaches us how to foster creativity in the workplace because is being taught by an elder

indigenous father that he is teaching his daughter on how to foster creativity in her classroom. Which his examples of learning through observations, building a strong relationship, listening etc., are all can be used in the workplace to integrate union and non-union employees especially when there are indigenous people who are working in the same environment. In addition, the Capilano University indigenous community is another example of how they are integrating students and employees within their culture and traditions by creating various events such as the Truth and Reconciliation, discussion and conversation circle, space of dialogue, etc. This will encourage fostering creativity and positivity in the working environment. However, there will be challenges along the way when trying to implement these tools in the workplace because some employees will not easily adapt to these creative changes. Therefore, working closely with each other will increase proactivity and participation that will create an enjoyable environment where everyone is open to share their input to foster creativity in the workplace. That is why applying *esémkwu'* in the workplace is one great step where organization "wrap" their employees with a blanket which will give them a sense of belonging.

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