Developing Leadership In The Wild! – *Unleashing Leadership in Natural Environments*

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Breaking Keynote Rules – a warning

- There will be more than 3 key ideas

- The kea-note is designed to stimulate ideas and divergence – not provide answers

- We are in a partnership to see where these ideas may take us – I am not the expert, together we can see if these ideas have value

- This is more of a conversation rather than a presentation

The Challenge

- The number of challenges facing us now and in the future requires a vast amount of leadership
- All of our current leadership classes, majors, minors, community leadership courses, and fellowships can't generate enough leadership to match the challenges

A shift in assumptions – unpacking the hidden background assumptions in leadership

- Leadership is scarce
- Leadership is best developed in "constructed environments
- You can't be a leader unless you have been "trained"
- It is important to have a common definition of leadership

- Leadership talent is abundant and essential to any community
- Authentic leadership is best developed in natural environments
- Many cultures and communities have effective leadership without formal training
- New definitions of leadership continue to emerge

Sufficient, but not enough!

- Ice cream story

- The alternative – to develop ways to unleash leadership capacity in "natural environments" in addition to "constructed environments"

Leadership as Wild Rice – Unpacking the Metaphor

- Mahnomin – the native word for wild rice
- It grows under the harsh conditions – in the wild
- It is a sacred food – seen as a staple of the community
- Without Mahnomin there is no community
- It nourishes the "whole" – body, spirit, and culture.

Leadership as Wild Rice – Unpacking the Metaphor

- It is not cultivated, it is grown in natural environments – genetically modified wild rice destabilizes wild rice and it is no longer considered sacred

  - Does formal leadership programs ever have a negative impact on unleashing leadership in the wild?

Leadership as Wild Rice – Unpacking the Metaphor

- The community respects and protects the natural environment from which wild rice grows
  - Land Recovery project – Winona LaDuke and the White Earth Reservation
- It is extraordinary because it is a gift and a staple
- The gathering and harvesting of wild rice are embedded with rituals that sustain the culture and community – what are the rituals of harvesting leadership in our communities?

Leadership and Community

- Dependent co-arising – a Buddhist concept that states that nothing exists in itself – it arises only in the relationship

- mahnomin and the native community have this relationship with wild rice

- I believe that leadership and community are also dependent co-arising phenomena

- This assumption invites us to look at leadership development from another perspective

Provocative questions

- What if we thought of leadership as an abundant commodity – an asset found in everyone?

- What would we do differently if we assumed everyone had it?

- What would it take to unleash leadership in out communities and organizations?

- What if the quality of our communities reflect the quality of our leadership?

Posing Different Leadership Questions

- What do I need to control?

- Who can do this / make this work?

- How do I avoid or overcome resistance?

- What can I unleash? What are the possibilities here?

- What interactions will make this work?

- How do I welcome resistance?

Posing Different Leadership Questions

- How do I influence individual actions?
- How do I transform the energy that is already present?

- How do I influence the field? (think magnetic field, fields of gravity etc.)
- How can I create change?

Ingredients for developing leadership in the wild

- A shift in the person's leadership paradigm – if you think leadership is rare and found primarily in positions, than you can't be a leader without being special and in a position
- The belief that each person has unique gifts to bring to a community and the combination of these gifts create a sum more than its parts

Ingredients for developing leadership in the wild?

- The development of an internal locus of control
- Others expect individuals to demonstrate leadership (others believed in them before they did)

Ingredients for developing leadership in the wild?

- Opportunity rich environment to practice leadership

- Having real responsibility and accountability

- Rich feedback and learning focus

- Modeling – they can see examples in their local environment

What are some necessary ingredients for developing leadership in the wild?

- People willing to mentor and teach
- A strength / wholeness perspective
- Facing one's own fears (and being in "good company" to help you face your fears)
- Facing our collective fears
- Nurturing the circle of engagement
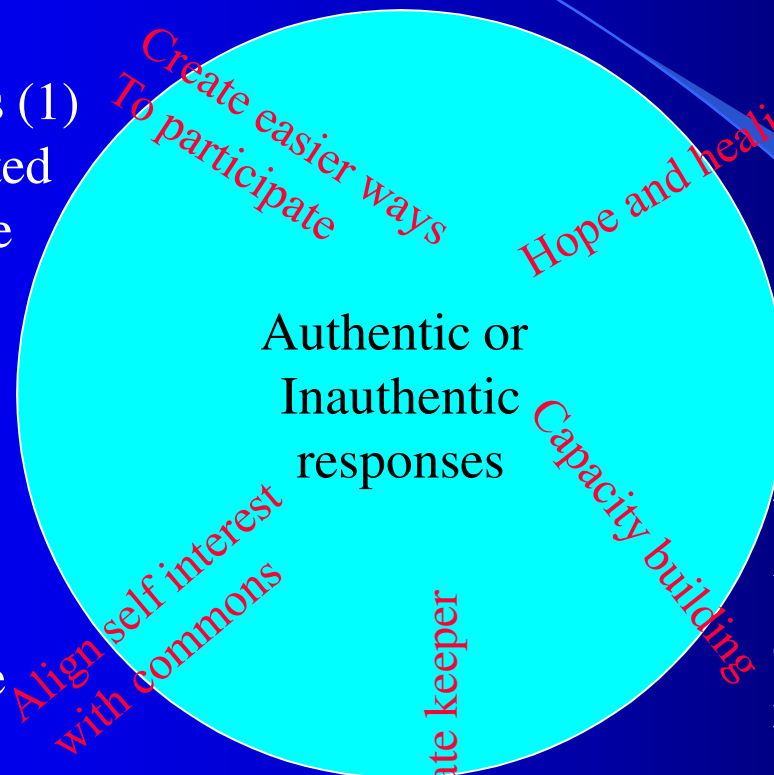
The difference a systems perspective makes

- Think RAs role as programmers vs. RAs role as facilitating strong community development
- The Circle of Engagement and seeing leadership as an emergent property of a human community / system

The Circle of Engagement

Authentic or inauthentic invitations for engagement

Episodic participants (1)
Those who are talented
But don't engage due
To time constraints

Episodic participants
(2) –
Those who have
skills but only engage
when their self
interest is activated

Create easier ways
To participate

Hope and healing

Authentic or
Inauthentic
responses

Align self interest
with commons

Gate keeper

Capacity building

Withdrawn – people
with passion who have
Withdrawn from the
Circle due to past
hurts

Un-empowered – people
who don't have the skills
or believe they can act /
influence

Disenfranchised – people who are not
invited to the table

Every time we add more authentic participants to the circle the
quality and quantity of leadership increases!

The power of design

- How we structure opportunities in our organizations impacts the development of leadership in natural environments
- Examples:
    - the Metropolitan Alliance of Community Centers (directing power / advancing strengths)
    - Indigenous cultures / Benedictine Communities (discernment process)
    - Self-organizing in New Orleans
    - Learning circles

The power of design

- More Examples:
  - TEAMS from San Francisco – connecting people to advance community
  - "People who care about things that matter"
  - College of St. Benedict / St. John's University – leadership initiative
  - The "Loop"

Organizational Blocks to Unleashing Leadership

- Fear – individual and organizational variations

- The culture of work – task / activity focus over rides development and process

- Politics that fragment or are grounded in self-interest

- Wanting to please / worry about being judged

Organizational Blocks to Unleashing Leadership

- Focus and enforcement of positional power

- No capacity to act / no responsibility given

- Positional posturing / ego

- Coddling or over nurturing (knowing when nurturing becomes coddling)

- Minimizing the ability to take risks and make mistakes

Deep Collaborations

- If we want to unleash leadership in our environments, we need to move to a deeper level of collaboration between all aspects of our university communities

- To face the adaptive challenges today we need to redefine our relationships

- Deep collaborations are build on trust, relationship build and sustained over time, and the ability to tell the truth to each other (this can't be done if you are too busy!)

The good news!

- We have many of the pieces needed to nurture leadership in natural environments - however they just aren't connected in a way that leverages the larger agenda!

What is the role of classes in the development of authenticity?

- Develop reflection rich environments
- Reflection helps to
  - Deepen understanding necessary for the journey
  - Makes connections
  - Helps generate insights and the ability to know one's self better
  - Lifts experiences up and helps to create meaning

The development of authentic leadership is well suited to natural environments

- Authenticity is more than being true to self / expressing or revealing self
- There are less visible dimensions that are clustered with the word authenticity – but not always named
  - Spirituality
  - Moral

Authentic leadership development -–link to natural environments

- Authenticity is a journey, not a 16 week course
- It is learnable but not teachable
- Feedback for one's progress on the journey toward authenticity is found in natural settings