# Deep Democracy in Action:
## The Elder Role in Leadership Development

A final project submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Master's Degree in Conflict Facilitation and Organizational
Change

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# Abstract

The motivation behind this research is an assumption that the elder role, as described in process work, is a significant aspect of effective leadership. The purpose of the research is to explore the formation of the elder role in the context of leadership, and whether the elder role or process of transformation into the elder, can be taught or learned. The following questions focused the research:

- How is the elder role formed and can this role be learned or taught?

- What can we learn from process work to capture an understanding of and to deconstruct what is required in the formation of the elder?

- What can we learn from Indigenous communities that can elucidate this role further?

- How does this role or perspective relate to other theories on leadership and leadership training?


The topic is explored through a literature review and qualitative research using an heuristic methodological design. Fourteen subjects, identified as having elder-ful leadership qualities, were interviewed exploring their experience and understanding of the elder role. The literature review includes: a mainstream leadership overview; research on the elder role in Indigenous communities; and a review of the elder role in the process work literature.

The research identifies the elder role as an important part of humanity and our wholeness. A bridge is found between Indigenous wisdom and knowing, the process work paradigm and an

evolving Western attitude of seeking to understand the interconnectedness of nature, and our

place as humans in it. Eldership qualities can be learned and brought forward intentionally

with disciplined inner exploration. The role also has powerful transformative potential,

supporting the natural self-organization of a system and provides a way to work with

diversity, chaos and conflict when the elder role is present. Thus, it is a key quality in

leadership development. The qualities inherent in the elder role have a significant effect on

successful conflict transformation and create a deeper understanding of how we can co-create

within systems.

Key words: Leadership, leadership development, systems change, system-mind,

processmind, deep democracy, Indigenous leadership, elder role, eldership, process work

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"I believe each one of us is here for a reason, and when you find it, and embrace it, your heart will sing, and you will be carried along by life as you follow her desire for you"
Marianne Knuth quoted in Peter Senge, The Fifth Discipline

# 1. Overview

## Introduction

This thesis investigates the role of elder as a key aspect of deep democracy and leadership. The research is driven by the belief that an intentional focus on the importance of the elder role will help us identify the elder within us and around us. The elder role has significance in helping us see the instability in a system when the elder is missing. The role also has powerful transformative potential, supporting the natural self-organization of a system and provides a way to work with diversity, chaos and conflict when the elder role is present. I argue that we have something profound in process work that needs to be brought out into the world - in part to do with the depth of awareness required to develop the elder role, the fluidity of this role and our ability to access the processmind. Processmind is described as a field, having its own characteristics, whether it be in an individual, relationship, group or organization (Mindell, 2010, p. 26). It can alternately be called the system-mind. This research is predicated on the idea that the elder role, this deeply aware, compassionate, but detached wisdom and leadership, is needed to work through complex and systemic issues in the world today.

Deep democracy is the principal theory and set of methods underlying how group dynamics and social change are understood and facilitated in process work. In deep democracy, conflict is seen as a way for groups to come to know themselves. Deep democracy seeks ways to transform conflict to surface the group's wisdom. A group that values the diversity, including

the range of all human experiences, emotions, different states of consciousness and different communication styles, is more stable. It has the potential for transformation and greater sustainability. Accepting all voices, experiences, roles and positions means including both what we see and what we cannot, that which is not visible. Deep democracy accepts all levels of awareness, all voices, roles, and experiences, within the group and within ourselves. The different levels of awareness in deep democracy include consensus reality and the non-consensus reality levels: the dreaming and the essence level. Consensus reality is the collective and consensual understanding of the world, of facts and issues - the level of conscious awareness and agreed on social constructs. The dreaming level is the place of emotions, feelings, subjective viewpoints - those aspects that are felt, sensed in us, but not seen or 'concrete'. The essence level is akin to the place of oneness or unity, the level that is beyond polarization, and connects us all in our shared humanity.

The term elder in this paper is used both as a noun, to refer to the elder as a role, and as a verb: to be elder-ful, to have elder-fulness - to have the qualities inherent in the elder role. The elder, in this investigation, is not related to age and aging. The elder is described as a role in the field, and it can be filled by anyone who has the capacity and awareness in the moment to step into it (Richards, 2006). The elder role is a seed within all of us, it is naturally occurring, and it is also something forged, that we mature into through life experience. The intention of this research has been to elucidate the qualities of eldership and to identify those capacities that can be learned. A person in the elder role, in any moment, is able to hold a comprehensive viewpoint and a sense of something greater than his or herself,

is impartial and has a lack of attachment to an outcome. The elder displays special feeling

skills and attitudes, called metaskills, that include being highly inclusive, loving, an attitude

of support, compassion, seeing things from a long-term perspective, ability to work at

different levels of awareness, be in the present while keeping an eye on context, sense of

history, and the future.

Significant terms from process work or the literature are defined as they appear, within the

context of the paper.

## Contributions to the Field

This research contributes to the process work community by elucidating the elder role and

placing a spotlight on the qualities of the role. A contribution is made to the leadership field

by drawing out qualities, that are touched on by leading thinkers in the field, and benefit from

being named as key capacities and qualities needed to navigate complexity and to work

within a self-organizing systems perspective. Eldership is a key part of the systems view and

when present, helps move the system forward.

The research also identifies the elder role as a significant seed, a deep part of humanity and

our wholeness. Indigenous peoples have held this understanding in their conscious and

dreaming awareness, as part of their daily life, preserving language, culture, beliefs,

spirituality, and it is a significant aspect that has contributed to their resilience.  The research

respectfully attempts to bridge First People's knowing and an evolving Western attitude of

seeking to understand the interconnectedness of nature, and our place as humans in it. Dhyani Ywahoo states: "when we don't acknowledge that as a human family, that we have a bioresonant relationship with the earth environment, … the yoke we all carry gets heavier and heavier" (2014). Wisdom-keepers from around the world are ready to share, if we, from the Western or materialistic viewpoint, are ready to listen.

## Research Questions

The purpose of the research is to explore the formation of the elder role in the context of leadership, and whether the elder role or process of transformation into the elder, can be taught or learned. The following questions focused the research:

- How is the elder role formed and can this role be learned or taught?

- What can we learn from process work to capture an understanding of and/or to deconstruct what is required in the formation of the elder?

- What can we learn from Indigenous communities that can elucidate this role further?

- How does this role or perspective relate to other theories on leadership and leadership training?

## Research Approach

The topic is explored through a literature review and qualitative research using an interview approach with 14 subjects. The literature review includes: a study of the process work literature in regard to the elder role; explores the role in Indigenous communities to both link this concept to the process work understanding of the role and to help elucidate the role

further; and a review of the mainstream leadership literature to discover if and how this concept relates to mainstream leadership theories.

The qualitative study follows an heuristic methodological design, which assumes the personal involvement of the researcher, who searches for qualities, conditions, and relationships that underlie the fundamental question (Moustakas, 1990, page 11). This approach assumes the researcher is a part of the study, being challenged to travel in a disciplined fashion into an exploration of human issues or concerns, and to deepen their own knowledge of the phenomenon.

## Chapter Overview

The first chapter provides an overview of the project, research questions guiding the project, contributions to the field and briefly describes the research approach.

The second chapter presents a literature review, exploring three different perspectives to locate the intersection between leadership and the elder role. The literature review explores Indigenous literature, the mainstream leadership literature, and an overview of the elder role in the process work literature.

The third chapter describes the methodology used in more detail and describes the interview process and research subjects who participated in this research.

The fourth chapter provides an analysis of findings from the research interviews and delves

into an experiential understanding of the qualities of the elder role.


The final chapter provides a discussion of findings, compares the literature review and field

analysis, discusses limitations to the research and provides concluding remarks.

# 2. Literature Review

## Context

This literature review is an exploration and overview of three very different perspectives that are brought together in the search for the intersection between eldership and leadership. The literature research explores the role of elder, as understood in process work, and how the role is a crucial aspect of deep democracy and leadership.

The context of the literature review is explored against the backdrop of the following research questions:

- What can we learn from process work to capture an understanding of and/or to deconstruct what is required in the formation of the elder?

- What can we learn from Indigenous communities that can elucidate this role further?

- How does this role or perspective relate to other theories on leadership and leadership training?

The three areas investigated in this literature search include a review of literature from the process work field, the leadership field and writings that either transcribe Indigenous perspectives on eldership or provide an analysis of the Elder in Indigenous societies (primarily from North America). Each area uses its own language and jargon, and each provides different views and understandings of the terms 'leadership' and 'elder'. This first

stage of academic research has been a fascinating foray into different world views, that in some interesting ways, seem to be colliding.

Process work provides a unique perspective and model that addresses the gap that emerges in how to locate these two very different ways of seeing the world - the Western understanding of leading (predominantly influenced by corporate and military leadership research) versus the Indigenous understanding of leadership (most Indigenous perspectives tend to have little resonance with the term 'leadership'). Process work sits somewhere in the midst of these views, providing a bridge so to speak, without adopting one ideology over another nor melding worldviews. Rather in its approach to fluidity, openness, acceptance of all voices and process of following nature, it creates space for all the views to emerge.

## The role of Elder in Indigenous communities

The Elder or wisdom keeper role, holds a significant spiritual and cultural position in many Indigenous communities. In North America, the First Peoples have shown great resilience and tenacity despite centuries of a continued program of destruction of people, culture, language and land. The role of the Elder is a key ingredient in building this resiliency, in relearning, teaching and maintaining culture, language and individual development. This literature review explores the Elder role, from the perspective of Indigenous peoples from North America (primarily) and Australia. The academic literature capturing the words of Elders is a bit scarce, but it appears to be growing, which is heartening. There is tremendous wisdom in much of this sharing; with teachings that are significant and relevant to the world.

A brief note on terminology in referring to First Peoples. The term Indigenous or First

Peoples is used to refer globally to the indigenous peoples of any country or location.

Aboriginal is a term that is generally applied to whole groups of First Peoples within a

country. For example, the Aboriginal groups in Canada or Aborigines of Australia. Aboriginal

New Zealanders are the Maori. Indigenous groups in Canada include First Nations, Inuit and

Metis. First Nations refers to groups that are sometimes called Bands in Canada, and also

references self-governing groups. Native American is used frequently in the United States.

Native is not a term that is considered appropriate by First Peoples in Canada (National

Aboriginal Health Organization, 2012). A Grand Council Assembly of Anishinaabe or First

Nations Chiefs called for the term 'aboriginal' to be outlawed in reference to First Nations

citizens in Canada, as the prefix 'ab' is understood to mean 'not', thus suggesting the word

means, 'not original' (Shertow, 2008). This paper uses the term Indigenous or First Peoples

interchangeably, when not referring to a specific nation or peoples.


Defining who is or becomes an Elder varies from community to community. Age plays a role

in some descriptions, but not all, as Mary Anne Mason, from the Shayshas Nation in Klemtu,

British Columbia states:

> I've been asked this, 'When do you become an Elder, who is an Elder?' The way my
> grandparents say, 'When you have your first grandchild you become a real Elder.
> Before that, as long as you are older than the person that seeks help, whatever it is, if
> you are able to help them you are their Elder' (Kulchyski, McCaskill & Newhouse,
> 1999, p. 425).

The academic literature on the First Peoples in Canada is increasingly seeking to understand

and locate indigenous culture and perspective within the modern experience, in some ways,

to create ways to try to heal the immense damage that has been done; and also to document

and analyse processes that can be used to change policy that adversely effects indigenous

communities. Academics have tried to classify the Elder role, and find it challenging as

"there is no institutional process that recognizes or validates them [the Elder] as

such" (Kulchyski, et al, 1999, p. xix). The Elder is an Elder because the community they are

part of recognizes them as such. Phillips writes that Elders are "[s]urprisingly, …. not

determined by age. Elders are well-respected individuals within their communities" (Phillips,

2010, p. 68). They have earned the respect of their community; and the community

recognizes their knowledge of traditional ways, wisdom and the life experience they hold.

How one becomes a elder varies from community to community. For some First Nations,

there is an elaborate initiation process that involves knowledge, ceremony, and

transformative actions (Kulchyski, et al, 1999, p. xix). The Venerable Dhyani Ywahoo

(2012), wisdom keeper and Elder of the Cherokee Tsalagi people was prepared, trained and

mentored by her Grandparents from childhood. Eva McKay of the Dakota Sioux says: "Role

models of Elders are Elders who tell life stories in a way that teaches others" (Kulchyski, et

al, 1999, p. 298). My dear friend and mentor, Gerard Sagassige of the Ojibway Nation in

Ontario is called by the 'old ones' regularly. He is often challenged mentally, emotionally and

expanded spiritually, given tasks, pushed to think broadly, and specifically, about his family,

the community, provided with healing, guidance and held in processes of transformation.

Mindell says in Deep Democracy of Open Forums:

> Most multicultural elders have been deeply hurt at one time or another - abused, shamed, or stripped of social power… In a way, they have even died, in the sense of having detached a bit from their earlier identities. … [They] may have been victims of oppression, but they learned to free themselves enough from the oppressed role to feel their way into other "spirits" in any given conflict (Mindell, 2002, p. 162).

This kind of trauma transformation process is profound and incredibly powerful. It is sadly, the current experience of many Elders in Indigenous communities. In Eva McKay's words: "To be an Elder, you have to suffer a lot. We suffered a lot up to today. The Elders who are around seventy, eighty, ninety years old have suffered a lot" (Kulchyski, et al, 1999, p. 298).

The transformative ability to detach, yet provide profound teachings out of suffering is a key quality of Elders. Dhyani Ywahoo tells the story of her grandparents speaking of the Trail of Tears: "And what amazed me, as a young child listening to the wisdom of the elders, is that they spoke without bitterness. They described the Trail of Tears as an indication of dark times for the mind of *all* human beings" (1987, p. 5).

Twylah Hurd Nistch from the Seneca Nation in New York, in response to a question about European colonizers says:

> Our Elders said: 'They are children of the Earth, just as we are, who brought new thinking and new ways of life. But a day will come when they see that their ways spread disease and loss of inner peace. Then they will wonder why we, the Native people, have survived. Their rope will have frayed and will have loose ends. They will ask, "How have you withstood fear?" (Kulchyski, et al, 1999, p. 77).

Walter Nona, an Elder from Australia says: "I am praying for all the Indigenous people and all the white people too, because we are one. We are all one family, all brothers and sisters. My responsibility as an Elder is to pass knowledge from one generation to the next, and make sure this knowledge is correct" (McConchie, 2003, p. 79).

Elders are described as role models of Indigenous identity. They are frequently described as humble, displaying humility, storytellers, someone who stays in the background, does not intrude and try to help unless asked; they encourage people to seek answers within, to find one's own way, through their own heart path (Kulchyski, et al, 1999). Ywahoo shares this about her experience of Elders:

> The most obvious expression of Native American view shown to me by my Elders was the awareness of energy potential and the clarity of what was energized. Their consciousness, in many ways, was like a clear lake. They did not react to things. They observed me as if I were observing myself in a mirror. Sometimes I thought it was passivity they expressed, an ultimate quiet. Then, as the day would go on, there was a sense of expectancy or potential as they were careful about what they chose to energize. As children, we would often test them. I would especially like to see if I could get a rise out of them because others around them would get angry or annoyed. Yet, the Elders did not express annoyance or anxiety. They were like mirrors reflecting back to me what I was doing and saying. The equanimity they displayed was amazing. Seeing this lucidity and quiet, yet ready-for-action quality, made it clear to me that I too, was in charge of my own life and my own mind. Their way of being and ultra clarity protected them from projections of racism or culture that others sought to define them with and allowed them to maintain their spiritual sovereignty (2012, p. 41).

Julien, Wright and Zinni (2010) produced a unique journal article that sought to learn from Indigenous leadership, rather than the other way around (of which there were many more articles). Their study involved interviewing a number of Indigenous leaders, as identified by

their communities, and to highlight the challenges Indigenous leaders have fitting into

Western notions of leadership. The interviewees had difficulty with the 'leadership' label; and

some had trouble finding words in their own languages that were equivalent (Julien, Wright

& Zinni, 2010, p. 119). Others attempted to define the term culturally, describing something

closer to Greenleaf's original servant-leader perspective - a role that is more spiritual, a

calling: "There are Aboriginal leaders who are natural leaders, they just are. People seek

them out for advice, they don't have a title, but they are leaders, they just are, naturally and

respectfully and humbly and they are beautiful spirits" (Julien, et al, 2010, p. 119).

This Indigenous view of leadership is not about using power-over others or static positional

roles. The role has some fluidity, as leaders serve when they are called by their community to

step up, and when their task or responsibility is complete, the way is made for another to step

in who is best skilled or suited to lead in that moment. The leader and community are "ever

in a reciprocal relationship" (Ywahoo, 1987, p. 16). Leadership takes many forms and resides

in all people, at different times (Julien, et al, 2010, p. 119).

Many of the stories and words of Elders made it clear that the Elder role is deeply cultural

and spiritual for Indigenous peoples. The initiation to become an Elder is sacred and signifies

another transition in life, such as the transition from child to adulthood. Many Elders told of

communities where the traditions and language have been wiped out, and the lack of cultural

history and perspective, racism and oppression, has resulted in situations of chaos, suicide,

sense of feeling lost, substance abuse, disrespect towards elders, disconnection from the land and family.

The re-learning, regaining of tradition and culture is not about going back in time. As King states: "Native cultures aren't static. They're dynamic, adaptive, and flexible, and for many of us, the modern variations of older tribal traditions continue to provide order, satisfaction, identity and value in our lives. More than that, in the five hundred years of European occupation, Native cultures have already proven themselves to be remarkably tenacious and resilient" (King, 2012, p. 266). And in our frayed world, many of these cultures recognize it is time to also share knowledge.

The aim of this research, in a sense, is to build bridges between cultures. Yet, we need to be careful that we honour the learning of our Indigenous brothers and sisters; that this process does not become about creating a mystical image of the Indigenous Elder, and that this is not about cultural appropriation. The following mainstream leadership review shows how we, ensconced in the Western view of things, are grasping for deeper meaning, consciousness and spirituality in our daily lives, and so, in our leaders. I think we are looking for ways to be in right relationship[1] with one another and the earth. In process work, the elder role, the understanding of the fluid and changing nature of roles and of power, is deeply resonant with

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[1] 'Right relationship' refers to the practice of a sacred relationship, of good relations with all in the family of life. Family includes all that walks, swims, flies, creeps; mountains, streams, valleys and all things related to our thought and action (Ywahoo, 1987, p. 21-20).

First People's perspectives as outlined here. This is about seeking what all humans are hungry for - deeper more meaningful whole lives - and finding a path there.

## Mainstream leadership literature review

The purpose of exploring the mainstream leadership literature is to discern if there is any overlap with the concept of the elder role, as expressed in process work. This is investigated with the understanding that the term 'elder' is not likely to be used. The mainstream leadership literature is immense, and it should be noted that it is outside the scope of this research paper to provide a definitive literature review. Rather, the focus is on extracting thinking from the literature that focuses less on perspectives of what makes 'good' leadership, more to map the emerging focus in leadership thinking around elder qualities of consciousness raising, guidance, spirituality, deeper awareness and compassionate detachment.

The literature was also reviewed with a question in mind: Where in the scope of current leadership theories, are there ways in which the process work paradigm, particularly the principle of deep democracy and the elder role, can enhance, support and add depth to current mainstream leadership perspectives?

Bettridge and Whiteley provide a general critique of the literature on leadership, that it "largely overlooks the fact that most important decisions in politics and corporations are not informed by the principles of sound leadership at all" (Bettridge & Whiteley, 2013, p. 1).

They nail the crux of the problem, which became evident while wading deep into this vast

area - "leaders think they require skills to 're-engineer' - something called an organisation",

when in reality they are dealing with people (Bettridge et al, 2013, p. 60, footnote). This

point is made well by Tim Casserely of Edge Equilibrium consultancy:

> Organisations don't really exist. All that exists is human beings in a constant
> process; communicating, interacting. I could point you to particular individuals, and
> to groups moving in the right direction; could I point you to an 'organisation'? I
> don't think the world works like that" (Bettridge et al, 2013, p. 58).

It is encouraging that more recent literature, such as adaptive leadership, emotional

intelligence, systems change thinking, and integral leadership, place people in the centre, and

explore human development, individual change, consciousness and spirituality.

It is challenging to provide one agreed upon definition of leadership from the literature, as

each theory provides its own perspective, and emerges from a different world view. Barbara

Kellerman aptly suggests a very uncritical leadership industry defines leaders as: "… people

who do the right thing" (Kellerman, 2004, p. 31). Julien, et al, provide a leadership definition

that resonates more, and they clarify that within this definition, leadership is not reliant on

positional context: "the art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared

aspiration" (Julien, et al, 2010, p. 118).

Leadership study began in earnest in the early 20th century, with Barnard, who put forward

the "great man" theory, focusing on special or innate traits possessed by a great leader

(Julien, et al, 2010, p. 116). This "heroic model of leadership" sought to discover the traits

great leaders possess; and if these traits could be discerned, then the right kinds of people

could be found to hold the reigns of power in social, political and military situations (Ream,

2005, p. 124).

More "great men" were needed than could be found, particularly with the growth of large

business and increased need for effective leaders in America (Ream, 2005, p. 124). The

theory also had a few faults, in that it identified a number of essential traits that were

contradictory (for example, high personal integrity and high narcissistic personality) (Julien,

et al, 2010). In addition, the list of these traits was so extensive, that it was not likely any

leader could possess all the 'important' ones in one lifetime (Julien, et al, 2010, p. 116).

Leadership study shifted to a focus on behaviour and investigating styles of leadership. This

examined leadership in relation to others, but left out situational context (Julien, et al, 2010,

p. 116), bringing to light the importance of leadership behaviour. A number of studies from

this perspective looked at the ways "leaders mixed task and relationship to create a particular

leadership style" (Reams, 2005, p. 125). Almost concurrently, a theory examining situational

context and interactional perspective of leaders within group dynamics was being explored

(Chemers, 1997, p. 20).

The situational context approach began to assess what a leader needs to understand in his or

her followers to support their development; the approach suggests a leadership style of

"directive and supportive elements" that followers or subordinates may need in any given

situation (Ream, 2005, p. 125). This lead to some interesting experiments in the 1940s and

50s, between autocratically or hierarchically directed groups and democratically led or more

participatory groups. Although one study showed little difference in productivity between the

two groups, another, unsurprisingly, showed that the autocratically led groups displayed the

"highest level of aggressive activity, especially when the leader was not present" (Chemers,

1997, p. 21).

The evolution of leadership theory becomes more interesting and less linear as emphasis

begins to focus on the group, and the interaction of leader and group on one another. The

contingency theory suggests effective leadership is a match "between the leader's orientation,

inclinations, skills and demands of the leadership situation (context and

contingency)" (Chemers, 1997, p. 42). In this model, everything matters; and this is

interesting, as it begins to suggest that leaders need to be open to diversity, different cultural

perspectives and world views. It is criticized for being too complex for a leadership

approach, and this is true if leadership is set up as a measurable and concrete set of skills.

This is the first theory that begins to look at the diversity of humans in the equation.

In the late 1970s, Burns introduced the distinction between transformational and transactional

leadership. Transactional leadership is the self-interested transaction or exchange that takes

place (Burns, 1998, p. 4). Transformational leadership goes beyond a mere exchange, and

creates situations where others are motivated to go beyond their self-interest, to do more than

they originally intended or thought possible; it is the "transformation of followers into

leaders, and leaders into change agents" (Chemers, 1997, p. 80). Transformational leadership

introduced values-based leadership, moral conduct, and human development into leadership

theory (Reams, 2005, p. 126).

> A leader sees greatness in other people. You can't be much of a leader if all you see is yourself. Only equals make friends. A man or woman who sees other people as whole and prepared and accords them respect and the same rights has arranged his or her own allies (Maya Angelou quoted in Beard, A., 2013, p. 2).

Angelou's quote captures the thinking Greenleaf brought to leadership, bringing in a

worldview and whole person focus (a shift from a more egocentric view) into leadership

discussions, and introduced the concept of servant-leader (Reams, 2005, p. 126). Some of

Greenleaf's perspectives on leadership can be seen as transformational. He went further

though, imbuing his writing and lectures with the high dream that the leader is a servant for

the greater good of humanity (Reams, 2005, p. 126). For Greenleaf, change begins with the

individual who is driven by an inspired path or philosophy (rather than a measurable skill

checklist). Greenleaf states:

> One begins with oneself, with an attitude of awe for the mystery that underlies animating Spirit, with a decision to learn competencies, to continue learning, and to make a difference in the world as it is. One embraces the potential for personal greatness while rejecting grandiosity. Most of all, one becomes - and remains - a seeker (Greenleaf, 1996, p. 10).

The ten critical characteristics of the servant leader are: "empathy, listening, healing,

awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth

of people, building community" (Greenleaf, 1996, p. 4). For Greenleaf (1996), leaders are

chosen by followers; and a leader's impact is measured only by their effect on followers.

Reading Greenleaf, his words often echo those of First Nations and Indigenous Elders whose stories I had read. Greenleaf places relationships, community and human development in the centre. More current literature in leadership picks up from Greenleaf and many thinkers have greatly expanded in this direction on leadership.

Goleman brings emotional intelligence into the picture, and with the work of Boyatzis and McKee, identifies a theory of change, competencies and assessment tools to measure the competencies required to achieve greater emotional intelligence. Greater emotional intelligence is tied to the leadership qualities expected of transformational leaders - leaders who "lead from the heart" (Matthews, Zeidner, Roberts, 2012, p. 156).

Boyatzis (2006) provides an analysis and systematic study of intentional change. This theory, which is understood to be a complex system, seeks to describe how a person sustains enduring individual change (Boyatzis, 2006, p. 609). Boyatzis (2006) suggests the process is non-linear and discontinuous, experienced as epiphanies or discoveries. In Boyatzis' summary research analysis of studies into change behaviour, he finds that change is not sustainable without intentional efforts; and he believes this applies equally to individuals, teams, communities, organizations, and even countries (Boyatzis, 2006, p. 619).

In the context of exploring the elder role, Boyatzis and Goleman provide both a set of competencies to consider (see Appendix), and a model of change - the intentional change

theory (ICT) (see Appendix). This provides a potential framework for more systematically

capturing the qualities inherent in the elder role in process work. The ICT theory is exciting,

as it provides a lens through which intentional learning to pick up the elder role can

potentially occur.

Margaret Wheatley introduces perspectives from biology, chaos theory, quantum physics, and

fractals, to understand the impact of self-referential ideas, sincere values, guiding vision, self

and organizational reflection as keys to effective leadership that is equipped to work with

complexity and change (Wheatley, 1999, p. 130). Similarly, Harrison Owen suggests we

become wave riders with a "deep awareness of the self-organizing nature of our world",

allowing us to become "keenly aware of the limitations of his or her … power of

control" (Owen, 2008, p. 7). Senge (1990) and his colleagues at the Society for

Organizational Learning (SOL) bring systems thinking to the self-organizing nature

perspective. These perspectives focus less on qualities and leadership competencies and more

on worldviews, ways of thinking, taking a panoramic view (in addition to the long view); and

explore the idea that something mysterious and greater guides us. While drawn from science

and ideas in quantum physics, there is something deeply spiritual in the insight that Senge

names as the key principle of systems thinking - that earth and nature (including us humans) -

are part of an indivisible whole (Senge, 1990, p. 382).

Parks (2005) captures learning about teaching adaptive leadership by observing Heifetz's

approach at Harvard's Kennedy School. Heifetz defines the adaptive leader as a "resonant

and responsive node in a dynamic network or field of energy and an agent of emergent

possibility" (Parks, 2005, p. x). Parks suggests that when a systemic view is taken, the world

becomes larger, more complex, less manageable, leaving one feeling vulnerable and less

secure (Parks, 2005, p. 55). When leadership happens in this vast dynamic world, outcomes

become uncertain. This calls for a new understanding of reality that calls for "an enlarged

measure of humility and courage" (Parks, 2005, p. 56).

This systemic, holistic and integral perspective feels so much like a search, a hunger, seeking

ways to consciously awaken. Here is where process work, the Indigenous worldviews and

leadership theories collide.  Thinkers such as Anderson argue dialogue (suspended

judgement, deep listening, curiosity, etc) are key to building collective spiritual intelligence

(Anderson, 2007, p. 13). Wilber's integral spirituality theory expressed as integral leadership

(Ream, 2005), and Burke's (2006) integral spiritual connectedness all speak to spiritual

intelligence, the compassion needed to bring mind, body, spirit into balance, with the purpose

of evolving human consciousness.

In summary, the concepts of servant-leadership, emotional intelligence, adaptive leadership

have tilled the soil in a way, creating a path in which to explore the concepts of deep

democracy and the elder role more profoundly. The valuable research, models and teaching

concepts created in these areas point to potential frameworks in which to position deep

democracy as an essential element and change theory for consciousness growth, individual

change and development. Emotional intelligence provides a way to analyse and position

qualities inherent in the elder role.

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## The Elder role in Process Work

I understand process-oriented psychology or process work to be a personal and group change

model. Process work is a multi-disciplinary approach developed by Arnold Mindell and his

colleagues, with roots in Jungian psychology, modern physics and Taoism. Process work is

an "awareness modality with applications in areas such as organizational and community

development, diversity and leadership training, spiritual practice, individual psychotherapy,

relationship counselling, and group work" (Diamond & Jones, 2004, p. 1).

Mindell first introduced worldwork and deep democracy in 1992, in *The Leader as Martial

Artist*. Deep democracy is a conceptual framework for analyzing group dynamics and

conflict, and a set of methods for facilitating group interactions. In deep democracy, conflict

is seen as an opportunity for growth and transformation. Worldwork is a method "that helps

small and large groups of people to live, work, and grow together within their

environment" (Mindell, 1992, p. 11).

The process of deep democracy values diverse leadership, bringing to the forefront voices

that are not usually heard or can become lost in traditional decision-making models or

mainstream democracy. Democracy usually means hearing different perspectives but

functioning by majority rule. In this way, some voices get pushed to the margins -

particularly those that seem irrational (emotional or altered states), chaotic, those deemed

irrelevant or too extreme. As Mindell (1992) points out, many global theories, and I would

add to this the mainstream leadership field, assume they are working with people only in

reasonable states of mind. "The attitude of deep democracy … must strive to develop a

worldwork that deals with everyone, even those in violent emotional states and chaotic

conditions, because those prevail during periods of rapid change" (Mindell, 1992, p. 16).

Deep democracy means supporting both mainstream and marginalized voices, and to honour

and work with all the diverse parts within ourselves as well.

On leadership, Mindell argues "sustainable, viable leadership means elders who are

politically wise, psychologically oriented people interested in personal development and

everything else" (Mindell, 1992, p. 176). Solutions to our complex and intractable world

problems need leaders who act with love, human understanding, compassion and "quietly

model the eldership role at home" (Mindell, 1992, p. 175).

For Mindell, the leader as facilitator in deep democracy group processes must also locate the

elder role within themselves. In *The Deep Democracy of Open Forums,* Mindell writes: "[It

is my] burning passion… I want us each to become one of its wise elders, in the role of

facilitator making group life easier for all" (Mindell, 2002, p. viii). Thus, the elder role and

leadership intersect deeply, and "the best leader is at best only a facilitator for the wisdom

already inherent in a group" (Mindell, 1992, p. 144).

## What is the elder role from a process work perspective?

Diamond and Jones describe eldership in process work as follows: "An elder is like a loving grandmother who makes you feel better, but who has seen too much and done too much to get all wrapped up in the particulars and passions of everyday life" (Diamond et al, 2004, p. 35). Elders are more than leaders and bring what Amy Mindell calls "special feeling skills and attitudes needed to be of service to others 'metaskills' " (Mindell, 1995, 183).

The metaskills of eldership are love, an attitude of support, compassion, inclusiveness, seeing things from a long-term perspective, the ability to work at different levels of reality at the same time, to follow a process in the present while keeping an eye on a sense of history and context (Diamond et al, 2004, p. 35). It is "a comprehensive view-point and a sense of being guided by something greater than himself" (Diamond et al, 2004, p. 35). The powerful trust generated by the elder comes from her impartiality, the elder's lack of attachment to an outcome (Diamond et al, 2004, p. 35). The detached compassion in the elder role, comes from an attitude of what Mindell calls: "you today, me tomorrow" (Mindell, 2002, p. 36).

In the following chart, Mindell contrasts conventional ideas of leadership with the elder role (Mindell, 1995, p. 184):

| Leader | Elder |
|---|---|
| follows *Robert's Rules of Order* | obeys the spirit |
| seeks a majority | stands for everyone |
| sees trouble and tries to stop it | sees the troublemaker as a possible teacher |
| strives to be honest | tries to show the truth in everything |
| supports democracy | supports democracy as well, but listens to dictators and ghosts also |
| tries to be better at their jobs | tries to get others to become elders |
| tries to be wise | have no minds of their own. They follow nature. |
| knows | learns |
| tries to act | lets things be |
| needs a strategy | studies the moment |
| follows a plan | honors the direction of a mysterious and unknown river |

And I would add, the leader sees their role and themselves in it as important and indispensable; in contrast, the elder "knows she is a person and also a role. She is aware she is dispensable" (Mindell, 2002, p. 165).

## How does one become an elder?

Mindell (2002) calls the Open Forum an Elder's Monastery. Leading an open forum is a way of "becoming an elder and of discovering eldership in your communities. If you have any bit of an elder within you - that is, if you have learned anything from the hard knocks in your life, gained any wisdom and detachment about being a human being - then the Open Forum is a good place to share your awareness and gift to help others as well" (Mindell, 2002, p.

16).  So, the elder has experienced life, has been marginalized in some way, has suffered in some way, and has been able, through inner work, to transform this to valuable learning and wisdom about the world. When Mindell interviewed such elders as showed up in his Open Forums, they told him "that they feel that the whole world was their child or their family" (Mindell, 2002, p. 162).

Elders are like the 'wounded healer', having survived their suffering and pain, they transform this into an ability to be of service, to help others (Mindell, 2002, p. 162). To me, this is like a shamanic or alchemical process, making gold out of what can be the turbulent mess of life. To become an elder in a group requires sensitivity to the social atmosphere; this sensitivity also tunes you into the dreaming process. Dreaming allows you to tune into something other than consensus reality, and to sense feelings, intuition, fantasies, insights - other things in the atmosphere (Mindell, 1995, p. 186). The elder learns to recognize the disturbers in a group as potential teachers, and gives attention to rational thinkers as well as altered states of consciousness, those states (and people) that are usually marginalized because they are unfamiliar (Mindell, 1995, p. 187).

The elder as facilitator sometimes leads, and sometimes follows the unknown. The elder learns to let go of tidy outcomes or resolutions when they do not exist; and Mindell (1995) indicates this can be a relief to the group. The worldwork elder learns to wait and follow the field - signals in the environment and in humans - to follow nature (Mindell, 1995, p. 189). The elder learns to become uninhibited, to facilitate nature in whatever direction or

communication it wishes to make - there are no "should" and "should nots" (Mindell, 1995, p. 190). These metaskills help the elder allow seemingly 'impossible' things to happen.

For Mindell (1995), additional metaskills of the elder include the detached mind of the elder, who sees beyond the good and bad in things and people; they see these terms as relative and needed at times. This creates compassion and tolerance for the way people and the world are. The elder is present and active but not pushing to achieve a result. The way to arrive at such a detached position is by doing the opposite; Mindell writes: "It takes some of us years of struggling agains the river, of pushing and straining, before we accept life" (Mindell, 1995, p. 193).

The way to this place is through second training. In the process work paradigm, the tools and techniques, the hard skills one learns are considered first training. Second training helps people access underneath the skills, to connect to a deeper essential place of knowing and connectedness to self, earth and world. Second training has no one way, no one path. Mindell states: "[j]ust as there are many paths to the top of a mountain, any second training method that enables one to be partially detached from the tensions of a group and follow a path that can be shared is important" (Mindell, 2007, p. 227). One can use meditation, some form of inner work, walking meditation, any ways to find the essence of your being, your core being or experience of the total you, the you that is more than the everyday ego you, and compassion for all directions - all and any of these are useful (Mindell, 2007, p. 43-44).

Dawn Menken guides us to find our inner elder, to touch into the longing we all have for "an inner experience of love, compassion, and guidance" (Menken, 2013, p. 186). The inner experience of this open and loving elder helps us with the difficulties in life, helps us remain grounded, keeps us open and curious: "This inner elder has transpersonal qualities. It is the sense of yourself that is somehow eternal; that which supported you to breathe your first breath and will be present at your deathbed. As an everyday experience, this inner parent sees your wholeness, can protect you from internalized negative tendencies, and reveals your deeper, more compassionate nature" (Menken, 2013, p. 186).

# Conclusion

The process work literature is rich in describing elder qualities while honouring the mystery behind the role. One way into elder-fulness, besides a varied and sometimes painful life experience, is through learning and honing hard skills and metaskills. Mastery comes through second training, the place of deep awareness beyond consensual reality, where we access our dreaming, relate to our emotional experiences, and even further, explore the essential place of knowing within us, the place of our profound humanity.

The Indigenous experience of the Elder in the literature review resonates with the process work perspective in many significant ways. While the role has a traditional place in many Indigenous communities that is tied to culture and tradition, there is a common understanding of the qualities that make up the elder. These include a deep compassion and detachment, inclusivity, fluidity, acceptance of the whole group or person, moving with different levels of

awareness and with consciousness of the field or spirit of the group. And, Elders are

proclaimed by the community or group, rather than being self-identified.

The current leadership literature, particularly those theories focused on systems thinking,

self-organizing systems, complexity, adaptive leadership and emotional intelligence, enhance

our understanding of leadership and eldership. Although the term 'elder' is not used in the

mainstream literature, the qualities described for the kinds of leaders needed to manage

through complex and chaotic systemic problems is akin to those of the elder role. For

example, the literature describes a need for leadership that recognizes the diversity within a

system, adaptive qualities, ability to work collaboratively to shift systems, and the need for

emotional intelligence. Many of the key emotional intelligence qualities have some similarity

to the qualities of the elder.

The braiding of knowledge and wisdom across these three areas of study, the Indigenous

experience, the process work paradigm, and the mainstream leadership literature, creates a

powerful well to drawn upon. Seeking the elder in reading these three perspectives begins to

create a weave of interconnectedness that was not expected when the research was embarked

upon. The systemic, holistic view that seeks to shift worldviews and understand the chaos

and complexity from a more panoramic and interconnected perspective leads many

leadership authors into awareness discussion, into the realm of spiritual development and

growth. This is intriguing as it almost begins to touch on and support the idea that we need to

become aware of the world around us beyond the usual realm of awareness. It indicates a

curiosity for dreaming - the realm of the sensed experience rather reliance only on concrete

consensus reality.

# 3. Methodology

## Introduction

A qualitative heuristic research methodology was used to explore the experience of elder-ful

leadership. The intention of this approach was to ground the learning and concepts from the

literature review with experiential knowledge, and to bring the elder role forward more

intentionally.  Interviews were conducted with a variety of individuals about the concept of

eldership and its role in facilitation and leadership. It was interesting that everyone could

immediately relate to the concept of eldership, and more so, the feeling of being held well

when in presence of eldership. It worried me, as I initially embarked on the field research,

that I had not developed a succinct definition of eldership, but this proved to be unwarranted.

Research participants were selected who displayed some elder-ful qualities in their

leadership. I referred to the chart provided in the process work literature review (see above),

comparing traits of leaders versus elders (though individuals did not need to meet all

criteria).

## Research Approach

The qualitative research approach used followed the heuristic research model as described by

Moustakas. The heuristic method assumes an investigation into a human concern or

transformative process that includes a self-search, the deep involvement of the researcher

into the inquiry (Moustakas, 1990). Disciplined analysis is used to create meaning of the

unique stories gathered from respondents. The heuristic approach is as much a process of

self-growth and self-understanding, as it is a gathering of qualitative data. By its very nature,

it relies on meaning making by the primary investigator or researcher in their self-searching

quest (Moustakas, 1990, p. 32), thus it is not an objective study. Meaning-making is a

judgement made by the researcher, as they follow the process from initial inquiry to analysis;

and "heuristic inquiry utilizes qualitative methodology in arriving at themes and essences of

experience" (Moustakas, 1990. p. 32).

In the 'long interview model' McCraken (1988) recommends that eight respondent interviews

are sufficient in scope and depth to understand the experience being researched. This

research process interviewed fourteen respondents, after reaching out to a potential twenty-

two research respondents. The larger number of respondents was chosen with the intent to

interview an equal number of respondents from the process work community, leaders outside

process work, and Indigenous elders; seven respondents were from the process work

community, and seven were external to or not related to process work.

A set of questions were created using an intuitive process. My academic advisor guided me in

this process, helping me drop into a slightly dreamy, altered state, that allowed me to follow

nature - in this case, I was drawn by the sound of the wind outside - and to seek wisdom from

the experience of nature, from a slightly meditative state, to formulate my interview research

questions. These questions guided the conversation though were not always kept to script.

The process allowed the interview to evolved naturally. The results section synthesizes the

conversations, and pulls out insights provided through the knowledge, experiences and

perspectives of the interviewees, that widen understanding of the elder as leader. Because of

the heuristic nature of this research, the results discussion also brings to bear my own

learning, transformation and growth during this research process.

## Research Participant Characteristics

I identified respondents by making a list of people, both well-known and in my own personal

network, who exhibited elder-ful leadership qualities. I then spoke to colleagues, Master's

program cohort members and friends, talked about some people on my list and added more

names, to help identify additional potential respondents from a variety of fields and

experiences. Respondents were mixed in age, ranging from people in their 20's to those in

their 70's, in gender (6 males, 8 females), ethnicity, sector (nonprofit, entrepreneurs, social

activist, consultant, etc.), and experience; respondents were all from North America. Only

two Indigenous elders were interviewed, though outreach was made to six. Time limited the

outreach and relationship building required to properly connect to Indigenous elders who

would be willing to be interviewed.

Two respondents replied to questions via email, and one interview was not audio recorded,

due to technical difficulties, though detailed notes were taken. The remaining eleven

interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

# Ethical concerns

All respondents signed confidentiality forms, and were fully informed of the nature of the research. All transcribed audio-taped interviews were sent to respondents for an opportunity to provide feedback, clarification or changes. Insights from respondents are aggregated, but where an idea is expressed clearly by a respondent, a direct quote, with permission of the respondent, is provided.

As researcher, I have a dual relationship with a number of the respondents. Some are current faculty at the Process Work Institute, part of my Master's program academic study committee, one is a past mentor of mine, another is a current mentor, and one respondent is a mentee, some are colleagues that I have worked with in the past. This was not intended to be an objective study, so my dual relationship with many of the respondents did not impact objectivity. In some cases, I believe the existing relationship created a trusting space where respondents were perhaps more free to share personal stories; I suspect in some cases, because of faculty-student relationships, in particular, some respondents may have held back sharing personal experiences or stories. Because insights were analyzed for common and unusual themes, no special dispensation was given any one respondent over another. All insights were seen as equally valuable and unique.

The purpose of the interviews was not to study the respondents, but to create a point of reflection to draw out ideas of how the elder role is formed. While the interview did surface past experiences and personal sharing, the exploration was focused on shared learning and

reflection. There are no known adverse effects believed to have resulted from participating in this research project.

# Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews were themselves a fascinating and insightful, reflective and exploratory process. I felt the respondents and I embarked on a learning journey together in our conversation and exploration of eldership. I reached out to all respondents via email, requesting their participation in the study. Research respondents all live in North America, residing in Canada or the United States.

The script of the questions was not always followed in each interview. Some interviewees addressed all questions; others provided such depth in a particular area, the additional questions did not seem necessary. The questions were created as a guideline for the research rather than a survey. A majority of the interviews lasted about one hour, with some extending to two hours, and some ending after forty-five minutes. Consistent with the heuristic method, conversations ended when they had run their natural course, while also remaining conscious of and cognizant of the generosity of time respondents were giving.

# 4. Results

## Introduction

This section provides a discussion of the results from the research interviews. It reveals how people understand and relate to the elder as leader, drawing from their own experiences. Other than the Indigenous elders, who honour and recognize this role with intentionality, most had not generally identified themselves as an elder-ful leader prior to our interview. And so, the interview process was a fascinating journey of joint discovery. Themes are identified that emerged from analysis of the interviews, that help bring light to the ways this role fits with leadership, how it emerges, whether the skills of this role can be learned. Examples or stories are shared without identifying information and are not attributed to maintain confidentiality. Direct quotes that encapsulate or introduce an idea are cited, with permission. This was done to honour people's own stories, voices and perspectives.

As I began, I wondered if the term 'elder' would resonate outside the process work field, and began thinking I should find or invent another term for the elder role. We live in a very youth focused culture, and I was afraid some might be turned off by the term. This might have been the case with those leaders who did not respond to my outreach for an interview.  However, as I started my interviews, I was struck by how much resonance people had with the term, how little respondents felt hung up on the term elder as it relates to age, and the incredible commonalities that surfaced in experiences and understanding of how this capacity emerges in individuals.

## The Elder as Leader

> We need leaders. But, we need much more. We need facilitators who can elder communities, and are able to flow with all parts of an organization, group, or nation, and can help bring about sustainable process and resolutions (Amy Mindell, 2014).

The research interviews revealed that most respondents see the elder role as part of what leadership is. Some had not thought of the term before, but feel it conveys the qualities of leadership that are important to them. This includes: bringing out the best qualities in those around them; being attentive to what is happening in the group and moving it forward; being cognizant of diversity in the room and working with it; sharing their experience or wisdom in different ways, as people appear and call on them for learning or help; being a natural guide who empowers and challenges; someone who steps into leadership because they have been called to, at times reluctantly; "a very gentle, quiet, relentless, strategic leadership" (Pearpoint, 2014).

Good leadership happens when one is also an elder; when a leader can pick up even a little bit of eldership. One respondent noticed, in their coaching of executives, who are all smart and do great things, that those without eldership skills tended to get into more conflicts. "The thing that's really important about an elder, is that an elder, while they own their rank completely and utterly, they don't limit themselves to always being in a role" (Diamond, 2014). The elder is always within touch, is always accessible to an individual. It is a sense of knowing who you are, being at home wherever you are. This means that the leader with this

quality is aware of their personal power and holds it clearly, they are grounded and self

aware, and know who they are. As a result, when they step out of a formal or positional

leadership role, they still carry this presence, this self-knowing, without needing to be the one

in charge at home, in the gym, with family, wherever.  Intriguingly, all the interviewees,

while they named this quality, also consistently, either showed an emerging awareness of or

very clearly hold a strong awareness of their personal power, and how they move in the

world.

This clarity also creates a quality of transparency and clarity for the individual as a leader.

The distinction here on positional or contextual leadership, refers to someone who is hired or

chosen to lead a company, organization or country, as contrasted to a more fluid, informal

leadership that emerges when needed and recedes when not. The contextual leader is

expected to be powerful, and often, is one-sided, to feel they can accomplish their task and be

seen as in-charge. For example, a one-sided leader may stick to one way of functioning such

as focusing on efficiency, hierarchical decision-making, or sticking to one political view. It is

this kind of leadership that, many respondents felt, most needs to touch in with some elder-

fulness.

When one identifies with a role, for example, as president of an organization, this often

becomes a part of a person's overall identity.  This results in two potential issues: first, once

the leadership role is ended or lost, if a sense of self-knowledge is not present, one can feel

suddenly lost, out to sea: who am I if I am not president? This can result in a useful but

painful search for self, identity, and wholeness. Second, a lack of awareness that this is a

temporary role can result in unawareness of rank and power-over behaviour, in the way the

person interacts with others both in and outside the role. This kind of leadership has its uses

at times - in situations of high stress and chaos, people are often looking for a strong,

decisive, powerful leader. The difficulty, is this kind of leadership causes the person in the

role to potentially become seduced by this power.

The qualities listed above by respondents require a leader that has eldership and the ability to

facilitate as well as lead. Holding diverse perspectives and experiences can feel very chaotic.

"If you are unable to facilitate diversity and different viewpoints, a group can become chaotic

and often a strong leader emerges who makes order. In some cases, a dictator." (Menken,

2014). The skill to make room for everyone's viewpoint is important, to be able to represent

and respect everyone's perspective; and to be in touch with something bigger and deeper

within oneself, can help a leader hold that diversity and start to move the group forward.

"The elder reminds you there are other views, and it is important to expand our view beyond

either - or: this is significant" (Ywahoo, 2014). The interactions start to mean something and

the space is created for the group to co-create together.

The elder-ful leader teaches, coaches, facilitates, challenges, when needed. The elder also has

the propensity to wait, be patient, and act when the time is right, or make subtle adjustments

that move the whole system forward. The elder can also be a trickster, a brat, audacious,

challenging you, bringing you into awareness of your wholeness of being. While the elder

can exhibit all these qualities, they are not necessarily these things. The quality of

detachment creates a lack of agenda, which can be an extremely powerful attitude and ability

in working with complex or intractable issues. Dhyani Ywahoo says about the elder:

> The Elder resonates with the heart of unity and being in relationship with each being in the circle. The potential to hear the heartfelt voice and reach a co-operative conclusion is a gift within each person. Awareness of our heart communication calls us to walk a careful path because our thoughts and actions interface with the circle of relationships (2014).

## Emergence of the Elder

"It takes a village to raise an elder. It takes the culture really to raise an elder" (Wheatley, 2014).

How does the elder emerge? Are we all elders? How can you know eldership is present?  All

respondents felt eldership is something bestowed on you; "elders are not self chosen - a

person demonstrates a skillful activity that benefits many beings" (Ywahoo, 2014). You are

an elder if people say you are, which means the quality is relational. It can be contextual, as

one respondent pointed out: "you are called on to elder because the group values what you

are bringing, the quality you bring fulfills a role in the group" (Allen, 2014). "Communities

will put you in that position without you even knowing you've been put into that

position" (Sagassige, 2014). At the same time, it is natural and elemental, it emerges

naturally and is evidence of a deep connection to the world.


It is a seed that is within us all. It is about how we grow into it that it shows up more fully in

some than in others. Throughout our lives, our deep inner elder surfaces occasionally. And

then it gets forged in the fire of life, of experience. Certainly, some people lend themselves more to eldering. But I find, that if you look for it with more intentionality, you can bring it out in the moment, honour it and nurture it. If we honour this quality more, perhaps it is one way it will show up more frequently in our world. In this process of digging into the mystery of the elder role, I have realized that, in all my years of mentoring young people and others, working with teams, organizations, communities, a big part of my drive and passion, which I am just getting clarity on now in retrospect, has been to support people in their eldership, to facilitate their own elder to come out. These are the qualities I gravitate to, that I have not had a name for. I see the elder qualities in others and I want to coax them out, encourage them, nurture them, to facilitate their growth.

## Life Training

Training for eldership is life, it seems. You find it within yourself or it is discovered through innerwork, through your inner world. Interestingly, the youngest and eldest respondents both said, it is about love - you feel eldership when you feel love for everyone.  Other respondents identified it as a deep inner quality, "like a light is switched on in me, I am following some deeper value in myself, and I am grounded to that" (Allen, 2014). Eldership could be felt when people had a detached viewpoint and genuinely felt open to everything that was happening. Respondents could also identify when they were in the presence of an elder: the group relaxes, there is increased equanimity. The elder sees meaning in things and puts perspective on where the group is at, goes deeper, under the surface of what is being said, and brings the group further.

The natural emergence of eldership can be related to a life myth or deepest dreaming. A number of respondents shared actual early childhood dreams or experiences that revealed their elder-ful qualities were already seeded, present and, in a way, calling them. This speaks to the recognition that the elder is not defined by age, and it is a quality, a way of being in the world. I believe we long for the elder, within and without. It is why people seek altered states, through religious experience or hallucinogens. We are trying to reach our inner elder, to touch into the depth of ourselves and connect to something bigger than us: to discover the elder in yourself is "a truly embodied relationship experience. [R]elationship not only with yourself and other human beings, but it is also relationship with some kind of beyond this world connection; some people might call it divine or some people might call it spiritual" (Emetchi, 2014).

**Inner Journey**

Somewhere in the midst of this research journey, I came to admit to myself that, while I feel the elder role is significant and needs to be illuminated brightly and intentionally, this is also a very personal inner journey. I have been seeking elders all my life. As an immigrant to Canada, I had no connection with any of my grandparents, I felt neither Canadian (land of immigration), Ukrainian (ethnic background) nor Polish (land of birth). This lack of connection and rootedness to land, culture, language, ancestors, is destabilizing, and creates a challenge in our search for self-knowing, that feeling of being at home with oneself. My experience as an immigrant growing up was often confusing. What I learned out in the world,

was not always consistent with home knowledge; I saw things at school that I couldn't relate to, and I was often called weird by grade school classmates. My parents were working hard, and there was no time for anyone to help navigate this new world - my parents and brother were deep in their own confusing navigation. The sense for me has always been that grandparents provide a stabilizing energy that I longed for; a clear sense of connection to who you are. Meg Wheatley states: "I think, if you have been eldered, nurtured by a wise old person, then you really know what the role is and aspire to it" (2014).

As I matured, this longing shifted, to seeking examples of how others' were making meaning in the world and in finding purpose and meaning for myself. I am strongly affected and moved to action by social injustices, inequality, racism, violence, genocide. People I have gravitated to, mentors, teachers, role models, drew me because of the elder-ful qualities they possess, a being at home in the world, a stability, not in geography, but in who they are. Some of them continue to teach me as they are included in this research. And in that journey, I began to feel the eldership within myself. I have to admit that like many research respondents, I did not identify with the elder role in myself. I had a head spinning experience this past spring when a friend and colleague with whom I had co-facilitated an annual training with young activists in the mental health system in Ontario asked me to show up this year as an elder rather than as a facilitator. I felt honoured, scared and confused. What? Me? I spent a great deal of time in self-reflection, trying to understand what is the quality she sees in me, that she is asking me to show up this way? I likely asked too, but was unable to hear the response.

I think my whole life journey has lead me to this place. In my mind, I am not sure I am an elder, yet. Though, I have felt the sparks of eldership in myself when I came to understand that those profound moments I was working with individuals or groups, when I suddenly felt compelled to speak from a deeper place, a place of knowing that shifted the entire trajectory of the group or individual, was not this strange one-off, and that it seemed to be happening more frequently as I started to tune into it. For example, I might be asked for advice, and suddenly I find myself speaking from a heartfelt place, somehow supporting who this person is at their core. And the person I am speaking to leaves happy, lighter, joyful, clear. Or a group that seems chaotic, in conflict, or lost, suddenly completely shifts their energy and starts moving forward. On these occasions, I feel open, I tune into something and speak from a deep place, and I cannot always recall what I have said. This is what eldership feels like. Chris Allen describes it, "like being in touch with a deep river of purpose" (2014).

And so, you can find eldership in yourself. To use the elder quality skillfully is a developmental process, accelerated with clear intention. Some communities in the world hold people in their eldership, such as more traditional or Indigenous communities that have been able remain in touch with or reestablish connection to the spirit core of who they are, to their culture and language. Some religious communities also hold this role clearly. We can discover eldership through modelling, through mentoring. "God is a teacher, nature is a teacher, near death is a teacher, experience is a teacher" (Diamond, 2014) - "hard experience where we struggle to learn that where we are one day can be the opposite the

next" (Schupbach, 2014). The ability to understand this builds compassion, and helps us see that we can be all roles, that we can be on all sides at different times.


## Hardship & Forging

We learn eldership from hardships: "it's unfortunate we learn from tragedy. It's too bad we're such a tragic learning people. And somewhere in that dark time, in the darkness, there is a light that goes on" (Sagassige, 2014). To learn from our hard and painful experiences requires an ability to make a choice, to illuminate the experience or stay in the dark: "you have to recognize that something happened to you and give it meaning … an interpretation …you have to define your life experiences and you have to redefine who you are in the context of what's emerging" (Chandler, 2014).


A certain depth of wisdom comes from persevering, from sorrow, loss, hardship, adversity, failure, deprivation, dark nights of the soul, and surviving. A lack of definition and not choosing to extract some life lessons from the experience results in bitterness, hatred, rage, destruction. Maybe we are a tragedy learning people because only by "having been somewhere else, allows you to tell the truth differently" (Pearpoint, 2014). And as Dawn Menken points out, perhaps "personal crisis is not a bad thing" (2014). What is also evident, is that to transform hard and painful, or traumatic experiences to learning, experience and wisdom requires community. This cannot be done alone; all respondents spoke of needing to be held in community to allow the elder role to flourish and find its way out. If we do not have models, examples, openness, love and healing, and we cannot see other ways of moving

out of our dark experiences, our lives can become clouded with the darkness such pain can

cast. "I think it is illuminated by opening the possibility in you. I think we can be inspired by

others. When others creatively step into eldership, I think we're inspired by them. And we go,

oh, that's what that is. I think if you are closed, nothing can happen" (Chandler, 2014).


## Eldership and Age

Eldership becomes so convoluted with age in our culture, that it is difficult not to equate

aging with wisdom. However, almost all of the respondents felt we all have the seeds of

eldership that can show up at any time. It does appear the intentional ability to call on your

own elder capacity requires deep clarity, self-knowing, a level of consciousness that develops

with age, the forging that comes with living through life experiences and coming out the

other end, an ability to use your rank in the world, your psychological and spiritual power

wisely. Certainly, these kinds of wise souls can emerge at any age. Dawn Menken beautifully

explores the spiritual and emotional wisdom children express in their early years in her book,

*Raising Parents, raising kids;* in that time when children are still in touch with their deepest

natures, with creation and closer to nature itself (Menken, 2013). Yet, many respondents also

felt, there is a certain amount of maturity that is required, "a certain non-reactiveness, for

example, a certain core self-esteem, a certain resilience … the development of psychological

abilities to overcome tough early life obstacles" (Diamond, 2014). It is part of our evolving

process as humans. If "you have wisdom, it is usually coming from experience" (Kang,

2014).

## It's Spiritual and it's Fluid

"There is only one elder, and that's the creator. The rest of us are just spirit

helpers" (Sagassige, 2014).  Eldership is also profoundly spiritual. To access our elder-

fulness, we often have to tap into another state of consciousness, what some call a

transpersonal third state, the Tao, the deep nature centre; what Arnold Mindell calls the

processmind or system-mind. Some call it a deeply awake dreaming state. We enter such a

state to touch into our connection, our relationship to our bigger selves, that which is more

than our everyday, regular human selves. It is about creating a way to connect into nature,

into creation, into the wisdom of the universe.


The ability to touch into this place allows us to see and experience something more, beyond

our daily focus, and from here we begin to feel connection and concern for the well-being of

all people, of earth. This place is the place of mystery, where prayers begin and end, where

we learn that we are not in control. It is the state in Zen of emptiness, of nothingness - that

allows reconnection with "something way bigger than the framework in which we

live" (Emetchi, 2014). When people are facilitated to learn how to connect to this mystery,

their deepest being is supported in coming out. One respondent shared a story of watching

people walking up to see Arnold Mindell for a session. Arnold Mindell is the co-founder of

processwork, a teacher, prolific author and therapist, and also facilitates conflict problems

with organizations and groups. Mindell continues to provide therapeutic sessions, based in

process oriented psychology. On their return from seeing Mindell, people look really happy.

When this deepest part of us is brought out, it makes us happy. When we are happy, we tend

to do better in groups. We are happy because we feel whole - we are at peace with our inner

diversity and no longer at war with all our parts. "Just be. It's ok to stay [and be yourself]. A

spirit helper will tell you that. They'll pick out those qualities in your life that are shining

with beauty" (Sagassige, 2014).


## Fluidity

Once we discover our eldership, is it always present? No role is permanent and persistent. We

can identify strongly with one role, but it can be stifling, arrest our growth and evolution. It

would not be possible to always be in an elder-ful state. I think this would be the like being in

a state of enlightenment, and our experience as human-beings challenges us to stay

permanently in such a state. I am not sure that we are meant to stay there. To come in and out

of this state or role is part of our developmental process. It can also be a relief and freeing to

admit to not knowing, in a moment or situation. This in itself is an elder-ful quality. I do not

think we are meant to be stuck in any role permanently; who we are at our essence is much

more whole, much larger than the roles we hold in the world.

Respondents shared that sometimes you are not able to always know; sometimes you do not

or cannot feel elder-ful. It is awareness of not knowing that has significance. The non-

permanence of the role creates the space to step out of it, to not be elder-ful. The ability to

recognize the responsibility of the elder role, but to also know it cannot always be present,

speaks to a strong sense of self, a clarity of personal power. Gerard Sagassige says: "But a

really really good spirit helper is one that is able to say, you know what, I can't, but I know

someone who can. That's a real special admittance, to say, I've never dealt with that, but I

know somebody I trust who has" (2014). Mindell states that: "[our] awareness will suggest

that we can leave our positions when others arise who do it better" (Mindell, 1992, page

178). When we don't know what to do, this allows other elders to emerge. In this way,

eldership is fluid: whoever has awareness is the leader or elder in the moment.

With this recognition, that eldership is part of us and something bigger than us, we are given

an access point to eldership, the ability to move in and out of it. The question is how to

access it intentionally and consciously.

## Can Eldership be Learned?

> As we grow into becoming elders, we need encouragement as we fumble along.
> Modeling [sic] deep democracy may sometimes be as difficult as it is awe
> inspiring (Mindell, 1992, page 176).

Many respondents felt eldership is not something that can distinctly be taught, as in a formal

lesson or workshop in 'eldership'. As explored above, there are different ways the capacity

to elder emerges within us. Yet, in deconstructing eldership, there are some skillful abilities

that respondents named, which can be learned. "Teaching eldership skills is doable and we

emphasize a lot of that [at the Process Work Institute]. I notice process work graduates go

into their organizations and clinics, and are able to share this idea of being grounded in

yourself and able to see different sides of things and not get too upset as they do, this seems a

clear value of our training that people take with them." (Allen, 2014). Respondents named

the following eldership capacities that can be learned or coached:

*Self-knowledge*: This is described as the need to get in touch with something inside yourself,

"about who you are in the world, a sense of groundedness - without this, it might be a set up

to ask [someone] to be an elder" (Allen, 2014). Self-knowledge is about working through

identity issues, who you are, where you came from, your ancestry, that which grounds you in

a place in the earth. Self-knowledge is also about one's beliefs, values, and developing self-

awareness. One way to gain self-knowledge is to open yourself to the world: "the most

important thing is, you just need to have as many experiences as possible" (Kang, 2014). The

next step, it seems, is to make meaning of those experiences, to learn: "meaning is an

interpretation. I have to [ask myself], I went through this, what did it give me, how did it hurt

me, what do I want to do with it. Whatever that action is, is the thing that gives it

meaning" (Chandler, 2014). Experiences without this reflective action, as an example, can

result in bitterness, vindictiveness, or a constant seeking for the next adventure. The quality

of knowing self is also described by respondents as an ability to touch into some deep part of

self, so when faced with the chaos of many voices, or tough decisions, for example, the elder

is able to listen to something deep within themselves.

*Self-love*: Respondents spoke of needing to find their own self-love before being able to step

into leadership in elder-ful ways. A lack of self-love, as respondents described it, resulted in

being taken over by a strong inner critic, inability to take feedback, really being down on

oneself, and guilt that resulted in a retreat from others. Respondents shared the significance

of self-love being a quality that creates a feeling of love for others that allowed them to be

facilitative or lead with love, compassion, fluidity and openness. In preparing to facilitate a

difficult and contentious group session on racism and diversity, one respondent spoke of the

importance of creating an environment where people could get deep: "I was able to find my

voice and figure out what's my style, and how do I want to love people. … The same way I

love inside that room is the same way I'll love outside that room. For me, it starts outside that

room, it starts with my personal life. How I choose to live and how I choose to love, and my

view and understanding of the world" (Ali, 2014).

*Self-regulation*: Respondents described the importance of self-regulation or non-reactiveness,

which is about impulse control, having some control over our reactions, outbursts, desires

(for example, not acting on immediate desires). Chris Allen describes the quality of self-

regulation as a key aspect of elder-fulness: "self regulation is about feeling unconditionally

accepted for who and where they [a person] are at, being calm about who they are, and yet,

because of that groundedness, they can also take feedback. You need some self-love at work

inside yourself or at least somewhere near yourself to be able to take strong

feedback" (2014). An openness to hear feedback is related to both self-love and knowing

yourself, with the ability to remain grounded in who you are at your core. Deep democracy,

which values diversity also includes valuing and accepting our own inner diversity. This

takes us further than impulse control, by bringing awareness to our multi-dimensional ways

of being, and acceptance rather than self-critique or suppression for our reactions, occasional

outlandish expressions and outbursts. Valuing all the parts of ourselves, creates a deeply

democratic internal viewpoint, and shows us how these diverse ways of being might interact

and co-exist.

*Capacity to self-reflect*: The discipline of self-knowledge, to make meaning of experiences,

requires self-reflection. The ability to self-reflect and make meaning, was described by

respondents as part of the forging nature of life; the way we gain wisdom, over time. Self-

reflection helps us become more detached, become more calm, and build more self-

compassion. Self-reflection is needed to see "the bigger picture, [to see] how much [people]

are in the weeds, how much are they able to get things" (Diamond, 2014).

*Empathy and compassion*: Empathy and compassion were identified by respondents as key

aspects of elder-ful leadership. Empathy is the ability to feel or share another's emotions. In

my understanding, compassion goes further, and moves you to action, to feel the suffering of

another, to have a profound sense of stepping into their experience and identifying with it,

and wanting to do something about it. To experience a strong sense of compassion for others

requires self-compassion and again, a deep sense of self-love. In process work, the ability to

be compassionate or empathetic to another goes even further. Inner work helps us do more

than identify with the other; we seek to know how we are truly the other. For example, when

writing an essay on terrorism last year, I had trouble identifying with this role, the terrorist. I

felt frightened of it and abhorred the violence in it. I asked my peer group to help me process

this, and was able to take up the role of the terrorist in our role play. I could identify with the

feeling of being deeply disempowered and oppressed, hurt and hopeless, which made me sad.

Suddenly, my sadness turned to revenge and anger, and I could understand how I could act

like a terrorist, when I could relate to a situation where I had nothing to lose.

*Ability to find and feel your high rank*: High rank in process work refers to your power in

relation to others. Rank can be contextual (Director or CEO of a company), situational (I

might take the lead at home, but have no authority at work, for example), psychological (how

you feel about yourself and react to situations) and spiritual (feeling of connection to

something bigger, mystical, a higher power). The elder is able to own their rank fully, as

stated earlier, and so they are not limited or seduced by a particular role they play.  Being

aware of and in touch with your own rank and personal power creates the conditions to be at

home with oneself in the world. This capacity of awareness works in tandem with self-

knowledge, and, I believe regulates ego and identity attachment to the role. It supports the

ability of the elder to not seek centre stage, to be able to recede into the background if

needed, to know they are dispensable, to create space for others to find their own personal

power.

*Meditation or mindfulness practice*: Many traditions teach different forms of mediation or

mindfulness practice, such as Vipassana or Buddhism. A number of respondents named

personal practices that were important for their own grounding, self-reflection and a way to

gain self-knowledge. In addition to more formal methods, respondents shared that meditative

practice for them could mean just being or sitting in nature, walking meditations, using their

prayer closet, tantric yoga, or connecting with your earth-spot in your imagination - the place

on the earth, in reality or your imagination, that makes you feel well, whole and strong.


*Burning your wood*: Burning your wood is an aspect of inner work, a term that is used often

in process work. It is one way to become less reactive, more self-regulating, and is a way into

self-knowledge. Burning your wood refers to spending time working on your inner conflicts,

inner struggles, inner diversity; identifying what triggers you and doing the inner work to

understand why you get triggered in certain circumstances. Burning wood can also mean to

allow yourself to experience all of the heat of your emotions, the anger, fury, agony and hurt,

and so on.  You are less likely to be possessed by these emotions if you literally burn them

out, allow yourself to experience the emotions fully. This is also an effective way to bring a

more complete detachment to a situation where you feel a lot of heat or reactivity (Mindell,

1995, page 208). To burn your wood is a discipline that requires personal time to struggle

through your triggers and reactions. This process allows you to relate to people who might

trigger you in the moment rather than bringing your rage, life myth, history or past hurt into

the interaction. It is also another way to then create space for empathy and compassion

towards others. Burning your wood requires a great amount of self-compassion.


All of these capacities are intertwined and interconnected. They require discipline and inner

work. Respondents spoke of the commitment and interest required, to forge life experiences

into meaning and wisdom. All of these can be modelled, taught, learned - but mostly, they

need to become a part of regular practice, a discipline, and are sustained in a community that

holds you in this learning.

## The Missing Elder Role

Some respondents felt that the elder role is missing culturally, particularly in the West, but

this could also be seen globally. They raised issues of our youth-focused culture, technology,

the experience in some countries or regions where the elder is in effect killed or marginalized

through military coups and revolutions. I would add genocide, wars and migration to the list.

The feeling of a missing elder role creates a deep hole, a sense of loss, and fragmentation.

And some feel it is tied to the kind of leadership we are seeing in the world today: "I see

leadership on an incredibly destructive tract right now. It's destroying human capacity rather

than creating the conditions for people to enjoy work and contribute to work. And I do feel

this is the role of formal leaders who are elders" (Wheatley, 2014).

One respondent described his country of origin as an example of a wonderful place with

beautiful people that has lost touch with its history, culture and elder-fulness. There are huge

migrations to urban centres, those who work the land are dismissed as simple, people are

disconnected from the land, and from family. The country is youth-focused, materialistic and

described as toxic, in part evidenced by the high rates of plastic surgery, suicide and divorce.

Through revolution and coups, elder-fulness has been severed. Migrations, within a country

and across the globe, happen for very good reasons. My parents wanted to leave the soviet

system in Eastern Europe and find a better place, a better life to raise their children. Yet,

family ties often get severed through migration; and we lose connection to our ancestry and a place-based sense of identity.

Wars and active campaigns of genocide, cut-off, among many other aspects, the connection to elders in that group. The campaign of assimilation and destruction in North America of Indigenous populations, led to the hiding of elders and their knowledge and information, when it was not completely destroyed. When there is genocide, and the cutting off of the existence of elders, for a time, it is like the potential even of eldership is murdered; the continuity to what came before is severed: "But [lack of eldership] is that feeling of being lost; that a traditional culture has, through its elders, through its stories through its traditions and rituals, it keeps re-creating the world and has a way of locating itself in the present moment" (Wheatley, 2014). We can witness in many regions of the world today, a lack of eldership: we see it in Ukraine and Russia, we see it in the middle east, we see it in parts of Africa, we can see it in the poverty, inequity and racism in North America.

Respondents raised our general current obsession with technology as another factor in our disconnection from eldership. It shows up in attitudes of impatience, and young people who devalue the wisdom or knowledge someone might possess if they are incapable of pushing the buttons correctly on their computer or cell phone. This is felt as a loss of respect which also marginalizes wisdom and knowing that is not about pushing the right buttons. Technology, certainly, has also become a medium for the transmission of a great deal of superficial noise and inauthentic connecting.  At the same time, technology is neither good or

bad in itself. It is a tool and has also been used to increase our ability to connect across

continents, learn more intimately about what is happening in far away places; and even

compels some people to act. Chris Kang describes technology as something that the system

may be in the process of balancing. Technological obsession is a "by product of the

civilization just getting wrapped up in all of this new technology, all of this mysticism and

this magic; that's kind of what computers are, probably, relative to the different things our

species has encountered. So maybe we are temporarily losing sight [of] what's valuable to

us" (Kang, 2014), because of this current fascination.

Whether we are conscious of it or not, we long for eldership and eldering. When we do lose

our connection to elder-fulness, we experience it as a sense of loss, we experience chaos,

fragmentation, violence and increasing polarities in human systems. Yet, respondents

describe the experience of eldership as a core part of who they are; as a significant part of our

humanity. It is part of our wholeness and a resilient aspect of the human spirit, that cannot be

completely lost. "Our wholeness, the wholeness of individuals, and the wholeness of

communities, is always present. We just at times lost contact to it. But that's an important

part, losing the contact is important, because it helps you to look, to go on a journey where

you can rediscover it; and in the rediscovery is the rejuvenation, and it keeps it

alive" (Schupbach, 2014).  This fascinates me and reinforces the personal drive behind this

project, to identify and nurture eldership intentionally in ourselves and others. We must be

conscious of bringing forward the elder within each of us, and respecting the elder in all

aspects of our lives. It is a respect for something mystical, and at the core, it is touching into

the deepest part of who we are.

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## The Elder role and system mind

> I feel these days some kind of atmospheric support or earth support for continuing on
> the path of eldership. I feel that something on the earth wants more eldership from all
> of us. I'm not always sure where it comes from (Allen, 2014).

Some respondents were asked if the elder's leadership has non-local effects, meaning, the

effects of eldership as non-specific to a particular location. It was for me a strange question,

even when I asked it. It found its way in my research via the intuitive process described, but I

was deeply curious about the answer. I found it fascinating that whether asked or not (most

respondents did not receive the questions prior to the interview), many respondents shared

stories that indicated eldership did indeed appear to have non-local effects, in that individual

life stories, leadership decisions, political changes occurring in one place could be seen to

have effects in other places, were inspirational and had larger, wider ripple effects in the

world. To provide a simple example, people found when they worked alone on a conflict,

upon returning to the situation or relationship in conflict, something had already shifted.

The idea of the elder existing as part of a natural self organizing system also surfaced, with

the elder role seen as part of the system-mind. This relates to the complex systems

perspective as a way to understand the many issues facing our world. Thinking in systems

provides a wider and deeper perspective on challenging issues. A systems perspective seeks

more innovative and collaborative approaches, is more about learning rather than easy solutions; and calls for a curiosity in the sense of mystery inherent in discovering how systems organize themselves. We can not control a system; though we forget at times that we are a part of a system. In that way, we can have an effect on the system and certainly have an effect on keeping some systems functioning according to status quo or shifting, changing and evolving. This is the difference we feel when we can roll with the changes rather than when we feel they are rolling over us, that things are happening to us.

Max Schupbach suggests that the concept of leadership is maybe a bit old fashioned. That leadership is "becoming more and more, the ability to contribute within a system, to discover and forward, partially or co-create with what a system-mind or self-organizing principle wants in the background" (2014). Leadership then is about helping systems understand themselves at different levels of awareness, to seek to understand that which can be known about a system, the consensual reality, and the more mystical, that which is unknown in the moment. Systems thinking requires an overview of and curiosity for the interconnectedness of complex situations and events. Accessing such a perspective, means gleaning as much information as can be known, and then tapping into something else in the field, which is like being affected by non-locality. It is keeping an open mind, open will and open heart (2009), as described by Otto Sharmer and colleagues, to see unlikely links at different levels of awareness.

Process work identifies three levels of awareness: the consensual reality, the ordinary

dimension of reality that is seen and agreed upon by the majority, based on beliefs,

assumptions, perceptions; the dreaming level, which is akin to actual dream state, but also

refers to the place of feelings, imagination, the more hidden but felt dimension; and the

essence level,  which "is host to the deepest, subtlest feelings, visions, and dreams behind

any given feeling, role, or part of the group. When someone touches upon the essence level,

speaking very deeply about her or his feelings and dreams, it frequently touches everyone

and brings a sense of unity or common ground, at least for that moment in time" (Amy

Mindell, 2012).


Deep democracy, as described previously, is both an underlying value and concept in process

work, and a metaskill, a methodology. Deep democracy values all levels of awareness and all

experiences, which is a profound thing to hold central in a concept. Diversity is chaotic, it

can be confusing, difficult and scary to work with, especially as it appears at different levels

of awareness and being.  In practice, from a systems view, when all levels of awareness are

valued, we get more sustainable outcomes. Unity does not appear to stabilize a system over

the long term, as unity requires ongoing control and rigidity. In a systems view, deep

democracy engages both the consensus reality and non-consensus levels of awareness

(dreaming and essence levels). The ability to engage and touch into these levels in the field,

the sense of energy or atmosphere created by a group is something we often sense. We can

more intentionally acquire or hone skills to sense more subtle aspects of the group

atmosphere through disciplined inner work, practicing metaskills, becoming grounded, and

developing compassion for all sides or parts of the group.

When the essence level is revealed, described as presencing by Senge and Sharmer,

transformation is possible. As these different levels of awareness become unfolded, we begin

to understand the system and to co-create within it. While this is not a mainstream view, the

increasing experiences of groups to creatively prototype and reveal solutions together that

could not be imagined alone is leading to a shift, and a focus away from the 'great' leader, or

even current mainstream ideas on leadership.

> So when people say eldership is missing, I have the opposite idea. I think we see
> much more eldership coming forward, a deep understanding in all communities I met
> these years, a beginning deeper understanding that inclusion, some sort of inclusion,
> in the long run is needed and important and makes it [the system] more
> stable (Schupbach, 2014).

# Conclusion

All the interviews agreed that the qualities of the elder are an important aspect of effective leadership. Leaders who could pick up even a little bit of eldership are more democratic, facilitative and able to work with differing perspectives and flow with the chaos of group diversity. The lack of an overall agenda, a detached compassionate quality, sense of groundedness, self-knowledge and awareness of their own rank were identified as significant elder-ful qualities.

Elder qualities can both be learned and modelled, and it is a seed within all of us. The elder role is a part of our deeper humanity, expressed in the relationship we have with our inner nature and external nature. The seed of eldership sometimes shows up early, as some research respondents shared childhood dreams or myths that showed an awareness, wisdom and knowing that could be identified as the elder path. The elder role is not age related and is a developmental process. We are called into our eldership by others, by a group or community that values what we bring. It is forged by life, by hard experiences, and how we are held in community to learn and grow from those experiences.

The connection through eldership to nature (our inner nature and the world) was described by participants as spiritual. Feeling deeply connected in this way results in a feeling of wholeness, of being well in the world. This deep spiritual aspect of eldership also indicates the role is fluid. It is a role we move in and out of, something that is a part of us but not fully defined by us. While certain metaskills and qualities can be learned, such as how to increase

our self-knowledge, self-love, self-reflect more through meditation or some mindfulness practice, or through burning our wood actively, there is a more mysterious quality that is present. This seems to be the seed of eldership that is within all of us, and relates to the spiritual aspect, of connecting to something bigger than our daily selves.

A disconnection from the elder role can be felt as loss, fragmentation and could be one reason behind an overly material focus in some societies. Research respondents named significant migrations, wars, revolutions, genocide, and general group displacement can result in a cutting off from our ancestral roots, and from cultural eldership. With the idea that the elder role is a seed within each human, while we lose some tangible connection, we appear to long for this role and are able to rediscover it, over and over again. The elder role is revealed again when we seek to discover what is happening within a system and, after learning what we can tangibly know about the system, connecting to the another level of awareness to connect to what is less tangibly known.

The connection to the system-mind or self organizing principle allows us to co-create with in the system and move it forward. Elder-ful leadership within complex chaotic systems seeks ways to work with the field or atmosphere of the group. A group that feels out of control and in chaos can dissolve into conflict and polarity. The elder-ful leader is able to work with the atmosphere of the group, to follow its process, by both learning what is possible to be known about the group and feeling or sensing into it. When we are seeking to touch into this non-consensus level of awareness, we are calling forward the elder role and in the process,

rediscovering it. I experienced this when asked to show up as an elder for a training I usually

facilitate. I noticed, with fascination, that intentionally creating space for this role allowed

eldership to surface as it was needed, not only in myself, but also among the young

facilitators and participants in the training. I saw myself as a place holder for the role; and

perhaps the intentionality allowed me to witness it and create a more nurturing space for it

when it emerged.  Some argue this is actually what leadership is all about - finding our way

within systems thinking, creating space for working with inclusivity and diversity, to shift

systems.

# 5. Discussion

## Introduction

This section makes connections between the literature review and the field research. It does this by creating points of comparison and expands on the contributions to the field. This section also explores the limitations and challenges in the research, suggestions for further research or study, and provides concluding remarks.

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### Eldership and Process Work

Arnold Mindell discusses the importance of the elder role in almost all of his writings. In *The Leader as Martial Artist*, it is difficult to distinguish the elder role from the facilitator role from deep democracy - all are so intertwined and make up a part of the whole. While these roles are distinct, respondents in the field interviews mostly agreed that even positional leaders need to exhibit facilitative ability at times and would benefit from being more elder-ful. Leadership that is more fluid, facilitative and elder-ful has the potential for more stable and sustainable solutions.

To facilitate in turbulent situations, to hold the minority position as well as the majority, to hold the tragedies of oppression, trauma and racism without getting overwhelmed actively in the pain and fury of injustice requires life long training and deep transformative awareness. Corinna Baumgartner (2011) provides a rich investigation into the process of trauma transformation in the context of process-oriented facilitator development. To be able to use

this pain in the service of the world, to be detached and compassionate, and hold the long

view, while keeping in mind the ghosts, myths and history, is a tremendous act. I was

personally drawn to explore the elder role, and the mystery inherent within this powerful role

and tool. It may seem ridiculous, but only through this research process has it clearly dawned

on me how central the elder role is to process work. And, I am convinced, to mainstream

leadership thinking as well.

Elucidating the elder role in process work places intentionality on this role, on the training

and initiation. This work contributes to the field by deepening understanding of the role, and

its relevance to the world. Intentionality is a key element in sustaining individual changes in

our behaviours, in our learning. Boyatzis (2006) also identifies that being in a social setting

that supports the change is also crucial. Thus, the intentionality of intensive learning within a

community or cohort model, such as employed at the Process Work Institute, provides us

with a context within which we can interpret the process of desired changes we are going

through, are provided feedback on our behaviour; and, this social interaction also gives us a

sense of identity. The risk of trying to sustain a desired change when people around us do not

provide feedback or information, or pull us back to our previous patterns and ways of being,

usually means we are unable to sustain or integrate the changes. All research respondents

spoke of the need to be held well by others, in community, to move through painful life

experiences, and to allow for the emergence of the elder. The elder is in part forged through

community.

The intention cannot be to become an elder. This is not something we choose. In both process work and in the words of Indigenous Elders, this is a role that calls you when you are needed, in service of your community (home or work), family, yourself, the world. Others see the elder-fulness in you and seek you out. It is bestowed on you. If one enters process work training with the intention to become more whole, to become more open, to learn how to access processmind, then we collectively create a sacred space of initiation and learning. Processmind is described as a field, having its own characteristics, whether it be in an individual, relationship, group or organization (Mindell, 2010, p. 26). Mindell writes: "Thus sensing the processmind is one our deepest feeling skills. However, most of the time, we are unaware of this power, which is a power of the processmind to sense itself" (Mindell, 2010, p. 26). When we access our processmind or system-mind, we connect to nature inside and outside of ourselves; it is a state of mind of interconnectedness, the essential part of our being and humanity. It is that which moves us.

As I read the recorded stories of many Indigenous Elders from around the world, it also became clear that Indigenous Elders have been our teachers. In their unobtrusive way, they have been quietly teaching. We need to start hearing and learning; lessons that all humans need to absorb at this time. Mindell quotes Black Elk: "My story … is the story of all life" (Mindell, 2007, p. 228). Here, Black Elk is speaking from his essence - he is speaking from a place of deep elder-fulness and recognizes his story is connected to all life. The contribution of process work effectively and respectfully bridges the Western world (Jungian psychology, science), the Eastern (Taoism) and the central or what I think of as spiritual core

earth-based wisdom, the Indigenous. In this way, process work is an integral and teleological approach.

The significance of this is that it locates process work in the centre (and in many ways in the forefront) of the growing field of thinking around leadership and the evolution of human consciousness, systems thinking and complexity theories. Process work goes further than many of these theories. These theories provide us a way of thinking about the world, about organizations and systems; process work helps us build our internal capacity to work within the massive shifts happening in the world around us, and maintain our centredness.

Taking learning from the Tao, Mindell states: "The ancient Chinese concept of the elder or sage reverses our conventional Western ideas of leadership. While our leaders gather information to find out what to do next, that is, "learn day-by-day," sages notice how irrelevant "expert" knowledge can be to the reality of the moment. … Nature teaches them to be losers, wait and do nothing but become aware" (Mindell, 1995, p. 189).

If process work is really an initiation into eldership, by stepping into process work and deep democracy training, we are entering into the elder dojo. We learn to master the techniques and methods in first training, to prepare us for the discipline required to step into second training: "We need first, a disciplined training to notice facts, figures, signals, roles, flirts, and feedback. Then we need a second training on how to sense and follow experiences that cannot always be verbalized" (Mindell, 2010, p. 147). The results section outlines the

qualities that can be learned, practiced, modelled to bring the elder forward. Some of these can be learned readily, such as empathy. And some require discipline and guidance, to follow our lesser known experiences, to embrace the full diversity of ourselves, to know ourselves, burn our wood and develop a strong sense of self-love.

## Eldership and the Leadership Field

The intersection of the leader and elder role in particular, and process work in general, have a great deal to contribute to the leadership field. The evolution of conscious awareness and its potential and importance in leadership has become a popular discussion in leadership and organizational literature. Metaskills and deep inner awareness are called on to actively lead with conscious awareness. Deep humility and fluidity - and understanding that one possesses a momentary role rather than a permanent position - requires inner work and self-awareness, a grounded knowing of one's own centre: to know - who am I when I am not in an appointed role. And as revealed in the field research, an awareness of and owning one's rank. This speaks to a deep self-knowing and ability to walk solidly in the world, with or without the mantle of clarity a position or role provides. Process work provides a context and approach to build the metaskills needed to be a leader with elder-fulness.

Daniel Goleman's work in emotional intelligence correlates nicely with the field research findings that elucidate the key capacities of eldership and the ways eldership capacity emerges. As a comparison, Goleman identifies the following as components of emotional

intelligence, as key capacities of the best leaders: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation,

empathy, social skill (1998). Key capacities of eldership, as described in the results section

are: self-knowledge, self-regulation, self-love, capacity to self-reflect, empathy and

compassion, ability to find and feel your high rank, mindfulness practice and ability to burn

your wood. I would argue that elder capacities are the next developmental step that evolve

the ideas behind emotional intelligence further. Goleman, seeking to understand if emotional

intelligence can be taught, finds that while we are born with certain components of emotional

intelligence, that psychological and developmental research also suggests that emotional

intelligence can also be learned (1998).

In addition, process work has much to contribute to thinking around complexity, self-

organizing systems and systems thinking. Max Schupbach noted this in a 2007 interview:

> The self-organising principle is an acceptable way of talking about 'dreaming'. Self-
> organisation is a term that has come out of complex systems theory. It's a euphemism
> because what does it mean to self-organise? It organises itself - it means, it's not
> organised by you - it's out of control; it doesn't necessarily dissociate (Schupbach,
> 2007, p. 149).

The complexity and chaos concepts pick up from quantum physics, and the idea of the non-

local observer role. If we hold this concept as key to understanding the dynamics of change

and complexity of groups we work with, then it is not enough to be aware of the idea; we

must be able to act from that understanding. In deep democracy, accessing different levels of

awareness and the inner work that allows us to access the elder role provides an approach for

working with open mind or beginners mind; how to become open to experiences within self

and the group, and ways to work with these in the service of the group and the broader

systems field.

It is this self-organizing system that I understand Mindell to be referring to when he mentions

the dreamlike atmosphere in an organization:

> Furthermore, it is my hope that organizations will get to know the mystical
> background that moves them. In fact, awareness of this background is a central
> organizational and social issue. I feel that social and practical problems cannot be
> well facilitated without access to the dreamlike atmosphere in the
> background (Mindell, 2002, p. viii).

Once we are able to access awareness of the system, we become systems citizens, as Peter

Senge writes, we start "seeing the systems that we have shaped and which in turn shape

us" (1990, page 343); we see larger patterns and our part in those patterns. We begin to see

different possible resolutions once we see these patterns (Senge, 1990).

In systems thinking, being able to see or feel the mystery of the atmosphere or field, to catch

the patterns as they take shape out of chaos, does not really call for the typical conception of

leadership we are familiar with in the West. People are needed who can follow nature, who at

the essence of the work, believe in the indomitable spirit of humans and see human nature as

part of the self-organizing nature of the world. The leadership that is needed, as discussed in

the field research results, is a leadership that can help systems understand themselves. To do

so requires learning all parts of the system, those seen and known and those unknown. The

unknown can be tapped by learning to access other levels of awareness and experiencing the

interconnectivity of the complexity of the system. The elder can touch into this view. What is

needed more than good leadership is the intentional ability to see the elder as an inherent part

of this natural system, the self-organizing field, and to nurture and bring forward the elder

wherever and however he or she emerges. Eldership cannot be broken because at our deepest

core, we are always whole. We only lose our connection at times.

## Eldership and Indigenous knowing

> What we must do now is learn from each other — the way it was when your people first came here. We must reach our hands out to each other again. My people must keep our hearts open to what is good about your ways, and you must open your hearts again to what is good about ours. It is time for our Indian voices — the voices that have been silenced — to be heard again (Nerburn, 2009, page 305).

In the literature on leadership, few researchers have taken an active study of wisdom

traditions, past or present, from around the world to inform our understanding of leadership,

yet, many refer to these perspectives and often describe a sense of loss or distance from these

views. The literature review elicited only one academic study that looked at what we can

learn from First People's leadership thinking; perhaps there are more, but they did not reveal

themselves readily. A look at traditional wisdom or knowledge is often relegated to

anthropological or even archeological study. We search for wisdom, for knowledge and seem

to miss that it is here, willing to be shared, in front of us. We are just not reaching out to the

right people, the right places, or in the right way.

This work contributes to creating a bridge between different worlds, in providing a comparison of the elder role in process work and Indigenous traditions, and with the aim to bring this role into the spotlight in the mainstream leadership field. While the Elder is a more formal and recognized role in Indigenous communities, the understanding of this role has much resonance with process work's characterization of role fluidity, of the role as something bestowed on a person when they demonstrate a skillful and needed capacity. It is also considered impermanent in many Indigenous communities. Indigenous traditions have a similar fluid view on concepts of leadership, where leadership is a calling, something a person is called to by the community, a responsibility taken until it is time for someone else to take on the demands of the role. This is done in service to the community (Julien, et al, 2010), and not a mantle one holds permanently. Field research interviewees, across cultures and experiences, felt there was a special disposition in the leader or elder who could step out of the role and make room for another to fill it, who may be better equipped in a given situation.

Dhyani Ywahoo shared the story of how her people's teachings were brought to the public by taking them outside the specifics of the culture; how sharing the inner teachings can lead to peace-keeping. She calls the result peace-keeping because the teachings focus on how to transform inner aggression into tools of peacemaking. The teachings are based in the roots of Cherokee thinking that we are all interconnected (2014).  There are many Elders and wisdom keepers who have taught, written, and spoken out to share their knowledge for the benefit of humanity. Creating a spotlight on the way process work has integrated this wisdom into the

roots of its own thinking is not a side-note. By using the term 'elder' this connection is made

clearly and respectfully. Arnold Mindell, for example, in many of his writings, frequently

refers to wisdom traditions and shares his experiences with elders from many cultures and

communities. What I notice, more than anything else in comparing the research, are the

commonalities, rather than the differences. Gerard Sagassige says we learn together from our

commonalities:

> [T[here's always different dynamics. I always look at the commonalities. Just practice the commonalities. For years we've practiced the differences. We've always talked about the differences of people, but there is a lot of commonness. …[I]f you look at the commonality, it creates friendship. Once you have friendship you have strength. And once you have strength, you have growth. And that's one thing that fear [sic] modern day governments, it is strength and growth (2014).

## Research limitations

This project suffered primarily from limitations of time, which in turn affected the process of

analysis. The research approach benefits from sitting with the data over a longer period of

time, to engage research participants more actively in critiquing and providing feedback on

the analysis and themes. This would have resulted in a more strictly followed heuristic study

and likely provided somewhat richer and more collaborative data analysis and deeper

learning reflections. The time recommended to absorb and make meaning of material is

thought to be a long incubation, a time of solitary absorption and reflection. This process was

fast-tracked to a month rather than the six to twelve months as recommended by Moustakas,

and so there are limitations to the depth of reflection possible (1990).

A longer time spent in reflection and study would have allowed for more and deeper reflections on my personal transformation during the duration of this project. Transformations have been happening so rapidly during the intense time spent in this research that it is difficult to see them all yet and to fully assimilate and describe the shifts taking place. For example, I tend to be someone who needs to feel prepared and have a hard time not stepping in to try to fix things, to make people feel better; I also have a strong voice of inner criticism. I noticed, in the facilitation training I was requested to attend as an 'elder' earlier this year (as described above in the results section), I arrived with more conscious awareness of my role, but besides some inner reflection, I did little preparatory work. I was fascinated that this state of awareness allowed me to tap into my intuitive process more readily. A big change was my ability to be detached, to not want to fix hurts, things that became chaotic or confused. I was able to be present and stepped in when asked; and I was able to provide a deeper framing for the group on what I witnessed occurring with the broader group of youth activist participants, and was able to readily notice when the main group of facilitators were stuck, at an edge in their work and process. I felt strangely that I had more effect but worked less hard at it. I could sense the field, the group atmosphere more readily when my analytical mind was not functioning in over-drive. It was a new experience for me, obviously, as I was exhausted each night. A major inner shift from this experience was the integration of increased feeling of groundedness, which interestingly, resulted in more self-compassion as well.

The research, by what seemed to be necessity, covered three vast topics, and sought to notice their intersections. There are limitations as a result, to the depth and breadth covered in each area of focus. The project might have benefited from a narrowed focus, comparing Indigenous Elders and the process work view of eldership; or comparing and contrasting mainstream leadership theories with the process work perspective.

Ideally, more First Nations and Indigenous respondents would have strengthened the project and provided more depth to our understanding of traditional perspectives on eldership and how the elder is formed. This would require a different scheduling of time and a great deal of up-front time to build relationships with First Nations communities, and potential research participants.

A focus on traditional or Indigenous views of eldership might have provided an opportunity to share perspectives and learning more actively across cultural experiences, more directly focusing on bridging the worldviews, as described previously.

## Concluding remarks and suggestions for further research

This project has been a transformative journey that has helped me realize how profoundly all my life experiences have led me here. Much of my personal understanding and learning about the elder role has been in retrospect: the realization that I have chosen mentors who often show themselves as elders, that I have been drawn to mentor and draw out the elder-ful qualities in people I have had the privilege of working with; that those difficult experiences

and struggles, and the constant questioning and inner explorations, are all different roads to

discovering the elder within and without.

Out of this, it is my clear path, my vision, to turn everyone onto their emerging elder-fulness,

to help all of us see the seed of the elder within us and around us. That the elder is never

completely gone; and if we can connect to our deeper dreaming state, our connection and

knowing to something older, wiser, essential and whole, can be rewoven.

As a next step in this research, it would be exciting and enlightening to spend time talking to

Indigenous elders in North and South America, Australia, and New Zealand. The intention

would not be to learn their ways or elicit an anthropological study, but to respectfully ask to

hear their messages for the world at this time, and to capture those teachings.

A study that is outside the scope of this paper, but triggered a great deal of curiosity in me, is

the study of the effects of genocide, and political and economic migration, on the loss of the

connection to the elder, and effect on aspects of self-knowledge, self-love; how communities

hold people suffering from post traumatic stress and exploring how groups of people heal and

rediscover the deeper connections to self, to their wholeness, and to eldership.

Finally, while the research sought to elucidate the elder role and explore what, if any, aspects

can be taught, it did not seek to provide a concise definition of eldership. It also did not seek

to deconstruct or reveal the mystery behind this role, only to deepen our understanding of the

qualities and potential within this role. This project has revealed a deeply personal search and

longing, and as much as it wishes to contribute to the world, it has also lead to a deeper

exploration of the meaning of eldership and system-mind. If we can nurture more elders,

more people who work together to learn the patterns revealed in chaotic self-organizing

systems, perhaps we can move to greater fluidity, diversity and stability in our human and

earth systems.  And, this can lead to a redefinition of leadership and the kind of profoundly

inclusive and collaborative leadership needed to move this forward.

# Appendices

# Appendix A: Field Research Interview Questions

1.  What are your thoughts on leadership? On the elder role?

2. Can you discover eldership in yourself or do you need a teacher, someone to show you?

3. What do you think it takes to transform into an elder? How is it cultivated? How is it found?

4. What if eldership is broken, can you rediscover it?

5. Were you called on this path of eldership and if so, when and how, what was your experience?

6. How old were you when you had your first experience of feeling like or being an elder?

7. How is eldership illuminated, how can you see it unless it is pointed out to you?

8. Does the elders leadership have non-local effects, like in the world of politics or the environment, or the broader community?

9. Does the elder have a path, or does it show up when it is needed?

10. Is the elder a way of life? a state of mind?

# Appendix B: Research Consent Form

**Title:** Deep Democracy in Action: Exploring the elder role in process work as a significant aspect of leadership development

**Researcher:** Violetta Ilkiw

**Supervisor:** Emetchi, Process Work Institute, Portland, Oregon

**Purpose:** I am requesting your participation in this research project. Please take your time to read the information below and feel free to ask any questions before signing your consent to participate.

The purpose of this project is to explore the formation of the elder role (in process work) in the context of leadership and whether this role (process of transformation) can be learned/ taught. The elder in deep democracy is not a static role and is not related to age. The elder is someone who can hold a comprehensive view-point and a sense of something greater than his or herself, is impartial and has a lack of attachment to an outcome. The elder displays special feeling skills and attitudes (metaskills) that include love, an attitude of support, compassion, seeing things from a long-term perspective, ability to work at different levels of reality, be in the present while keeping an eye on context, sense of history, and the future, and is most importantly, highly inclusive.

**Procedure:** If you are interested in participating, you will complete an interview in person or via telephone or Skype. You will be asked a series of open-ended questions that will be audio-taped and transcribed. I will contact you to arrange a time and place to complete a 1-2 hour audio-taped interview.

During the interview, I will ask you questions about your particular leadership abilities that relate to the concept of eldership. I am interested in learning how you developed these skills and metaskills. This may include discussing your background experiences and sometimes difficult / challenging life path.

After the interview, it may be necessary for me to contact you for a brief follow-up conversation to clarify some of the information from the interview. After the initial interview, I will send you (via email) a write-up of our conversation together. You will be invited to email me with any comments, feedback, clarifications you wish to make. If you do not have access to email, we will communicate via regular mail.

**Risk to participants:** Discussing your past experiences may bring up difficult memories or feelings. If at any time during the interview you have questions or concerns, please let me know. We can pause or stop the interview at any time.

**Benefits to participants:** There is no direct benefit from participation in this research project. Bringing perspective on the transformative experiences you have had that have shaped you may be personally enlightening/ helpful. I do hope the information from this

study will enhance current understanding of leadership and the kind of adaptable, fluid leadership that is needed in the world. If you wish to receive a summary of the findings, please provide your mailing address in the Consent Form below.

**Alternatives to participation:** Participation in this project is entirely voluntary. You are free to not answer questions, end your participation or withdraw from the research at any time. There are no repercussions to withdrawal from the project. Your interest and involvement is respected and very much appreciated.

**Confidentiality:** During this study, I will collect your name, telephone number, email address (or mailing address). The written transcripts of our conversation will be numbered, rather than identified by your name. Your name or identity will not be used in my research project or any presentation or publication that results from this study. All interview documents will be kept under my supervision in a locked cabinet and destroyed once the study is complete.

**Questions/ Concerns:** If you have questions about this project, please contact me at 647-290-0997 or **violettailkiw@icloud.com**. If you have any other concerns about this project, please contact the Dean at the Process Work Institute, Katje Wagner at 503-313-5733 or **katjewagner@gmail.com**.

**Consent**

**Participant**
The research project and procedures have been explained to me. I agree to participate in this study. My participation is voluntary and I do not have to sign this form if I do not wish to be a part of this research project. I will receive a copy of this consent form for my records.

**Signature of Participant:** _____

**Date:**

If you wish to receive a summary of the findings, please provide your mailing address here:
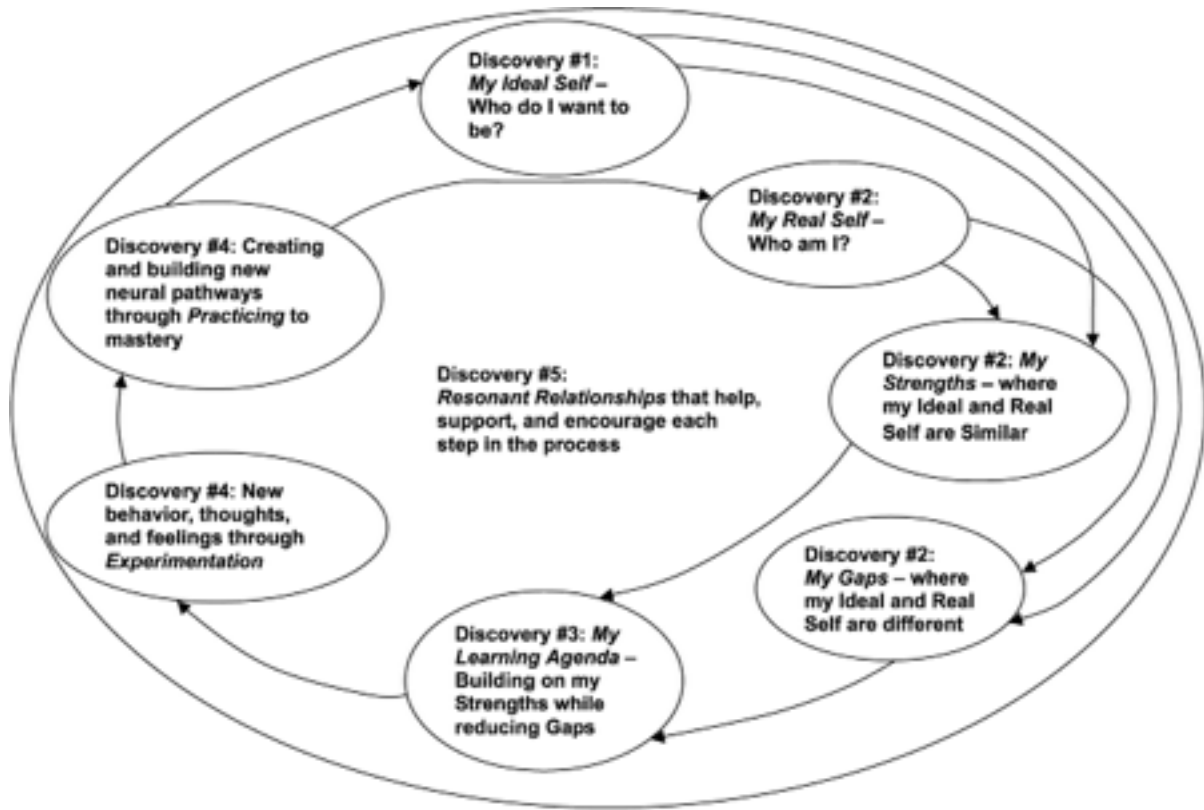
**Signature of Person Obtaining Consent**: _____

**Date:**

# Appendix C: Interview Respondents

1. Julie Diamond

2. Chris Allen

3. Max Schupbach

4. Dawn Menken

5. Emetchi

6. Amy Mindell

7. Arnold Mindell

8. Dhyani Ywahoo

9. Gerard Sagassige

10. Jack Pearpoint

11. Meg Wheatley

12. Chris Kang

13. Jasmine Ali

14. Clarissa Chandler

# Appendix D: Boyatzis' Theory of Self-directed Learning



From: Boyatzis, R. E. (2006). An overview of intentional change from a complexity perspective. *Journal of Management Development, 25, 7, pp. 607-623*.

# Appendix E: The Five Components of Emotional Intelligence

## The Five Components of Emotional Intelligence at Work

|  | Definition | Hallmarks |
|---|---|---|
| Self-Awareness | the ability to recognize and understand your moods, emotions, and drives, as well as their effect on others | self-confidence<br>realistic self-assessment<br>self-deprecating sense of humor |
| Self-Regulation | the ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods<br>the propensity to suspend judgment – to think before acting | trustworthiness and integrity<br>comfort with ambiguity<br>openness to change |
| Motivation | a passion to work for reasons that go beyond money or status<br>a propensity to pursue goals with energy and persistence | strong drive to achieve<br>optimism, even in the face of failure<br>organizational commitment |
| Empathy | the ability to understand the emotional makeup of other people<br>skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions | expertise in building and retaining talent<br>cross-cultural sensitivity<br>service to clients and customers |
| Social Skill | proficiency in managing relationships and building networks<br>an ability to find common ground and build rapport | effectiveness in leading change<br>persuasiveness<br>expertise in building and leading teams |

From: Goleman, D. (1998). What makes a Leader? *Harvard Business Review. Best of HBR 1998.*

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