



Roundtable on Good Governance Principles: International and Aboriginal Perspectives

Summary of the Inaugural IOG Aboriginal Governance Roundtable

Ottawa, September 21, 2004

Speakers:

Frannie Léautier, World Bank Institute

Larry Chartrand, University of Winnipeg

The views expressed in this document are the views of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Institute On Governance or its Board of Directors.



The Institute On Governance (IOG) is a Canadian, non-profit think tank founded in 1990 to promote responsive and responsible governance both in Canada and abroad. We define governance as the process whereby power is exercised, decisions are made, citizens or stakeholders are given voice, and account is rendered on important issues.

We explore what good governance means in different contexts. We undertake policy-relevant research, and publish the results in policy briefs and research papers.

We help public organizations of all kinds, including governments, public agencies and corporations, the voluntary sector, and communities to improve their governance.

We bring people together in a variety of settings, events and professional development activities to promote learning and dialogue on governance issues.

The IOG's current interests include work related to Aboriginal governance; technology and governance; board governance; values, ethics and risk; building policy capacity; democratic reform and citizen engagement; voluntary sector governance; health and governance; accountability and performance measurement; and environmental governance.

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2004-05 Institute On Governance Roundtable Series: “Towards a New Aboriginal Governance Agenda - TANAGA”

The IOG Roundtable Series for 2004-05 explored a number of governance issues affecting Aboriginal communities. At each of eight events, 20-25 senior policymakers from Aboriginal organizations and federal departments participated as individuals in the informal discussions. The series was supported by in-depth research and featured expert speakers to stimulate discussion. The eight events in the series were as follows:

<u>Event</u>	<u>Speakers</u>
1. Good Governance Principles: International and Aboriginal Perspectives – September 21, 2004	Frannie Léautier, Vice President, World Bank, responsible for the World Bank Institute Larry Chartrand, Director, Aboriginal Self-Governance Program, University of Winnipeg
2. First Nations Citizenship and Membership Issues – October 20, 2004	Stewart Clatworthy, Four Directions Project Consultants, Ottawa Andrew Delisle Sr., O.C., Elder Advisor (and former Grand Chief), Mohawk Council of Kahnawake
3. Environmental Management and the on-reserve ‘Regulatory Gap’ – November 17, 2004	John Moffat, Stratos – strategies to sustainability David Nahwegahbow, Senior Partner, Nahwegahbow Nadjiwan Corbiere; Chair of the Board, Forest Stewardship Council
4. Aggregation and First Nations Governance – December 8, 2004	John Graham, Director, Institute On Governance Val Monague, Chief, Beausoleil First Nation
5. Urban Aboriginal Governance – January 20, 2005	Calvin Hanselmann, Senior Policy Analyst, Office of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians Peter Dinsdale, Executive Director, National Association of Friendship Centres Patrick Brazeau, Vice-Chief, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples
6. Indigenous Legal Traditions – February 16, 2005	John Borrows, Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Victoria; Law Foundation Chair of Aboriginal Justice and Governance
7. Métis Governance – March 29, 2005	Jason Madden, JTM Consulting Inc. John Graham, Director, Institute On Governance
8. Government-to-Government Relations in the First Nations context	John Graham, Director, Institute On Governance Alan Latourelle, CEO, Parks Canada Mike DeGagné, Executive Director, Aboriginal Healing Foundation

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Speakers:

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The opening TANAGA Roundtable provided a theoretical basis for the series of discussions on Aboriginal governance in Canada by engaging the issue of good governance principles and their applicability in indigenous contexts in Canada and around the world.

Participants were welcomed to the traditional territory by Elder Linda Zaluska, from the Anishinabeg community of Kitigan Zibi, who provided opening and closing prayers.

The first speaker, Ms. Frannie A. Léautier, a Vice-President of the World Bank responsible for the World Bank Institute, presented on the question of “Can Good Governance be Nurtured: Experience from Developing and Transition Countries”. Ms. Léautier spoke from her experience as an individual and her comments were not intended for attribution to the World Bank Group.

Her presentation was followed by a speech by Larry Chartrand, Director of the new Aboriginal Self-Governance Program at the University of Winnipeg, entitled “Searching for Good Governance in the Aboriginal Context.”

Both speakers provided a platform for group discussion on the meaning of good governance and how it applies to Canada and to Aboriginal communities.

Presentation by Frannie Léautier

Ms. Léautier’s presentation addressed the following questions:

- Are there universal principles underlying good governance?
- If so, what are they? And how are they influenced by culture, history, and tradition?
- How can ‘good governance’ be nurtured in developing or transitional countries?
- What can we learn from the experience in working with indigenous peoples?
- Has governance improved around the world? If not, why not? What is the World Bank doing about it?



Are there universal principles underlying good governance?

A literature review shows seven separate, yet closely related, definitions and factors of good governance:

Democracy and good governance. Although each country will have to develop a version of democracy that is based on its unique history and culture, certain core values are shared among these democracies. Members of the society must freely choose their governments; the functions of the state must reinforce and uphold the rule of law; there must be freedom of expression as well as transparency and accountability in government.

Good governance and self-governance. There should be efficacious management of human resources, public institutions and natural endowments towards the common good.

Local and Global Governance. As a result of globalization, good governance is becoming increasingly important at both local and international community levels. The importance of globalization to development, through remittances, foreign direct investment and trade, also shows the importance of private sector organizations in achieving good governance.

Globalization and good governance are closely linked, as shown by a number of indicators. For example, high levels of globalization result in good governance through low illegal party financing, low diversion of public funds and a higher quality of postal system.

An empirical examination of the Millennium Development Goals¹ shows that good governance is a critical component of global development. There are correlations between low infant mortality and low levels of corruption; a strong rule of law and high levels of literacy; and, strong voice and accountability on one hand, and per capita income on the other.

Peace, security and good governance. There is evidence that reaching development targets in the economic or social sectors is difficult in regions experiencing violent civil conflict. Good governance can be used as an effective tool to reduce conflict within countries, where more effective measures of participation and accountability empower stakeholders and involve them in political processes.

Knowledge and good governance. Access to knowledge and information is a crucial component of effective governance. Evidence clearly shows that a free press, through creating and distributing knowledge on government performance, leads to greater accountability. Information technologies, such as the internet, modes of distance learning and other forms of communication allow for learning and knowledge-sharing that benefits the poor.

Governance and corruption. Corruption undermines development, good governance and has a disproportionately harmful effect on the poor. Research from the World Bank indicates that the higher the control of corruption in a country, the lower its level of infant mortality – an effective general indicator of health and well being.

¹ Outlined in the UN Millennium Declaration, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set specific targets and practices for international development to be achieved by 2015. <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals>



The more transparency, the less the corruption; the less corruption, the more private investment. For the benefits of globalization to be realized more effectively, through private sector investment, there needs to be greater transparency in government operations.

Governance and corporate performance. Good governance involves appropriate and productive relationships between private sector and government organizations. If these are characterized by illicit and non-transparent provision of private gains, the financial health of firms is harmed and the general benefits to society reduced.

If there are universal principles, what are they? And, how are they influenced by culture, tradition and history?

There can be a general definition of governance that reflects a universal set of principles.

- Governance is the process and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised.
- The process by which governments are selected, held accountable, monitored and replaced;
- The capacity of government to manage resources and provide services efficiently, and to formulate and implement sound policies and regulations; and,
- The respect for the institutions that govern economic and political interactions among them.

These principles can be measured, monitored and analyzed through several layers of indicators: *macro* (global), *'mezzo'* (comparative across domestic institutions), and *micro* (in-depth, in-country towards cultural and historical factors for citizens and organizations).

How can "good governance" be nurtured in developing or transitional countries?

The challenge is how to most effectively incorporate traditional notions of good governance into inherited models of government.

There needs to be a match between the governing institutions and the political culture of the community. Communities need decision-making powers that reflect their peoples' culture and values. The existence and enforcement of customary law are essential for conflict resolution. Resources and mechanisms must be employed that allow for the development of national public policy that involves indigenous communities.

There are many "entry points" to incorporate Aboriginal governance ideas: institutional checks and balances within the governmental system; political accountability; civil society voice and participation; public sector management principles; and, those affecting the private sector.

What can we learn from the experience of working with indigenous peoples?

Good governance practices exist in Aboriginal communities around the world. Some cases show the development of inclusive and democratic grassroots decision-making powers; others, the willingness and ability of indigenous leaders to develop effective policy relationships with central governments.



Has governance improved around the world? If not, why?

Evidence suggests that results in achieving better governance have stagnated since the mid-1990s. Some aspects of governance, such as democratic voice and accountability, have involved progress, but others, such as corruption and the rule of law, have not. The results are also mixed across countries and regions.

Governance development has encountered significant and various obstacles. In certain countries, there has been no political will despite the pressures from civil society; difficulties in sustainability when there is little political traction; and opposition from interests in the cabinet and bureaucracy.

Presentation by Larry Chartrand

A new Aboriginal governance agenda, as part of renewed thinking on good governance, must be based on effective governance practices between Canadian governments and Aboriginal communities. Any new Aboriginal governance agenda must treat all parties, both native and non-native, as co-operative equals.

However, the relationship between Canadian governments, at various levels, and Aboriginal societies remains a colonial relationship: it is complex, based on a problematic history and, unfortunately, has often involved feelings of mistrust. Recognizing, and overcoming, a legacy of these relationships is fundamentally important for progress to be achieved.

We must take care to outline principles of Aboriginal governance that go beyond “traditional” practices of good governance that pre-date European arrival in Canada. They must recognize the contemporary relationships, realities and values of Aboriginal communities.

Furthermore, speaking of *universal principles of governance*, can inadvertently use ideas and practices that are “Western” in tradition. This has been the case involving governance research both in Canada and internationally. Of course, there are common tenets between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal conceptions of good governance, but other values, such as efficiency, are more problematic when applied to Aboriginal communities.

Two possible principles of Aboriginal governance are: *responsive leadership*, where final decision-making power rests at the community level, and there is an emphasis on inclusiveness; and, *balance and harmony*, founded on a respect for other and nature.

In thinking about good governance, therefore, it is useful to postulate the existence of a continuum. In the middle are a number of values which are shared by Aboriginal societies and ‘western’ democracies. On either end of the continuum, however, are values and principles that are more unique to Aboriginal societies, on the one hand, and western democracies, on the other.



Questions and Answers, Open Discussion

Note: Participants spoke as individuals at the event, and because their comments do not necessarily represent the views of their departments or organizations, they are recorded without attribution.

Q. How can an ingrained culture of corruption be purged from a country's governance system?

A. (Ms. Léautier) While transparent and accountable governance processes are part of the answer, any system is only as reliable as the people within it. Part of the answer may lie in working with youth to change the approach down the road, or indeed with women, who the data suggests are far less prone to corrupt practices. It is not an easy question.

Q. What are the implications of this discussion of governance for societies which are not land-based?

A. (Ms. Léautier) We don't have much empirical information on such societies, although there is some experience from virtual communities, such as diaspora communities. For example, the Albanian diaspora, through a virtual network with an interesting governance approach, has influenced the development of their home country. Another example is Greece, which built a 'virtual' society around the Olympics.

A. (Mr. Chartrand) The Nisga'a, under self-government, have instituted a virtual Nisga'a council, where their citizens, be they in Vancouver or elsewhere in Canada, can vote in band elections and stay tuned in to local politics from afar. The Nisga'a government has jurisdiction over certain aspects of the lives of Nisga'a citizens, even when they do not live in Nisga'a territory, and so it is important that these people remain connected politically.

Q. How should Urban Aboriginal issues be dealt with from a governance perspective? This is a very political question. What legitimacy should be given to an Urban Aboriginal association? More than any other urban ethno-cultural association? Do they have an 'inherent right'?

A. (Mr. Chartrand) A very difficult question. Many Urban Aboriginal people have been in the city for three generations, and identify with Urban people but are still clearly Aboriginal. While many have no connection to a particular reserve, some are 'claimed' by First Nations communities to boost membership figures. Much more research into these complex issues is required.

Q. The success of many organizations and societies is dependent on the role played by individual leaders. How can effective leadership be fostered?

A. (Ms. Léautier) Leadership is important, but it isn't everything. And also, societies where leadership is not embodied in a single individual are more successful – what is important is fostering support for leadership and a culture of leadership rather than individual leaders *per se*.



Concluding Comments – Larry Chartrand

Among the most important challenges on the Aboriginal front are to improve the Canadian public's understanding of Aboriginal issues. A number of myths, stereotypes, and prejudices remain, and lead to mistrust. Educational institutions, particularly law schools, need to work on these issues. Cultural dialogue between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people needs to be fostered. Institutions must be established where Aboriginal people have a real voice. Aboriginal knowledge is actually quite valuable to Canadian society and must be shared.

Above all, however, *patience* is required for Aboriginal communities to improve their political, social, and economic circumstances. A long time ago, two good things came together and created chaos in their coming together. It will take the societies a long time to work through that history. Part of the task can be achieved by trying to learn from international experience.

Concluding Comments – Frannie Léautier

Canada must continue to think of diversity as an advantage rather than as a constraint. Canada has benefitted in many ways from its heritage – patents on bilingual information technology applications are just one of many examples. Canada plays a global leadership role because of its diverse foundations. Canada has made significant progress, but it can still benefit from bringing in outside perspectives to help it work through its problems.

In terms of the application of good governance in different cultural contexts, it is important to note the differing hierarchies of values, as Larry Chartrand did. The Aboriginal emphasis on the balancing of self and nature is one example that other societies could learn from, particularly in trying to achieve environmental sustainability. Another lesson to take note of is that countries' origins are important determinants of their governance approaches. Indeed, historical roots can be instruments of modernization, as the treaty experience in Canada shows. Finally, inclusiveness and compromise are essential elements of any approach to good governance, and Canada is indeed a leader in this respect.



Participants Attending²

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² Attendees participated in their individual capacity, not as representatives of their organizations.

