

## **Indigenous People and Human Resource Management**

**Alf Walle**

**University of Alaska at Fairbanks**

*Increasingly, international business takes place within rural/hinterland regions and involves indigenous, Native, and rural people. Although modern human resource management is increasingly cross cultural, sensitivity to the needs of these populations is often lacking. Key issues pertain to such populations must need to be addressed in order to stimulate discussions involving these important issues.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

When he became chairman of the Security Council, John Bolton, the United States ambassador to the United Nations, implemented significant changes. “Bolton...cracked the whip while presiding over the 15 nation U. N. body in February [2006], starting meetings precisely on time, even with empty chairs in the room, as part of a plan to modernize council operations” (Anonymous 2006.) At first glance Bolton’s actions may seem to be reasonable and productive. Modern Western countries, such as the United States, have developed sophisticated ways to run organizations; why shouldn’t such tactics be applied to the UN and throughout the world?

Although the “common sense” of the Western mindset might suggest that such standardized business methods need to be universally implemented, others reject that notion. While some people might have applauded Bolton’s initiatives in this direction, others did not. The “unpopular punctuality drive launched...by...Bolton came to an abrupt end...when Argentina took over the council’s rotating presidency” (Anonymous 2006.) Is the more relaxed style that has been reestablished at the Security Council, a reassertion of the old fashioned inefficiency that Bolton has vowed to stem? Or do members of other cultures merely manage their professional affairs and interpersonal relationships in different, but equal ways? One fact seems to be clear; Bolton’s management style did not have a positive effect; it was resented and quickly tossed aside.

These events reveal challenges long recognized by human resource management professionals who operate internationally. Is applying Western/mainstream standards, techniques, and yardsticks of evaluation appropriate or should local customs prevail? To what extent do strategies of human resource management need to be tailored to the particular group of people being dealt with as well as their particular goals and needs? To whatever extent the answer is “Yes” to this question, the perspectives of social scientists should have a role in forging strategies and policies involving how people interact in the workplace, how they can be

most effectively compensated, motivated, etc. These concerns are addressed here with special reference to indigenous peoples.

This paper is largely based on my personal experiences. Not only am I a scholarly anthropologist, but also I have worked within indigenous communities in Alaska, Central America, and elsewhere for a long time. I served as a program director for the Tanana Chiefs Conference (a major Alaska Native corporation), I was the professor of Tribal Management, serving remote villages only reachable by bush plane. (An account of my tribal management days was recently published in *Cultural Survival Quarterly* (Walle 2009) and the reader is encouraged to take a look at it.

## **THE CHANGING SCOPE OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

After many years in a clearly subordinate role, modern human resource management has emerged as a strategic discipline that has its own universe of discourse, clout, and decision making responsibilities. Once known by terms such as “personnel administration”, the new title “human resource management” indicates an expanded strategic role in today’s complex world of business.

Human resource management is responsible for developing and carrying out policies involving employees. Specific sub-tasks of the field include (1) planning for the personnel needs of the business, (2) recruiting, and selecting employees, (3) developing human resources, (4) establishing compensation and benefit policies, and (5) dealing with safety and health issues. After a relevant introduction, these issues will be considered.

Under some circumstances, top management may have a fairly good understanding of the issues and implications involving employees. In situations where corporate leaders are operating within an environment they know well, for example, they might possess an intuitive understanding of what personnel policies are appropriate and will be productive. In situations where top management lacks a sophisticated understanding of a culture, workplace, and employees, however, human resource management professionals (who develop a sophisticated understanding of the local community by working closely with it) may need to exert a greater degree of control and decision making authority. Projects involving Native, indigenous, and traditional people can easily give rise to this type of situation.

As a result, strategies of human resource management need to expand beyond the models provided by the West and industrialized regions. This can best be done by looking to social scientists, such as anthropologists, in search of strategies and tactics that can be effective with specific people.

## **NATIVE, INDIGENOUS, AND TRADITIONAL**

Although the terms “Native”, “indigenous”, and “traditional” are often used in interchangeable ways, each has a specific meaning that needs to be understood by those involved in human resource management. These distinctions are discussed below.

**Native People.** The term “Native” (with a capital N) refers to a person who is descended from the historic (or prehistoric) peoples associated with a region. The term Native is typically used when referring to those who lived in an area immediately before the era of Western expansion. American Indians, the Maori of New Zealand, and Native Hawaiians are representative examples of Native people. The term “native” (with a small n) refers to someone who was born and/or

raised in an area, but is descended from later immigrants. Thus, a White person born and New Zealand would be a “native.” A Maori, in contrast, would be a “Native.”

**Indigenous People.** The term “Indigenous”, in contrast, is typically used to identify Native people have faced (or continue to face) some sort of mistreatment or discrimination as a result of their racial and/or cultural identity. Consider the following definition provided by Sigfreid Wiessner:

...indigenous people are best described as groups traditionally regarded, and self-defined, as descendants of the original inhabitants of the lands...These people are and desire to be culturally, socially and/or economically distinct from the dominant groups in society, at whose hands they have suffered, in past or present, a pervasive pattern of subjugation, marginalization, dispossession, exclusion, and dispossession (1999, p.60)

According to this formal definition, not all “Native” people are “indigenous.” The people of Iceland, for example, certainly fit the criteria of a “Native” people because they are descended from the first human inhabitants of the region. They, furthermore, are a well documented, homogeneous, and distinctive group of people. Native Icelanders, however, control their government and they are not persecuted or treated as second-class citizens by the regime in power. They are not a minority group and their government does not discriminate against them. Thus, Icelanders, fail to fit the criteria of “indigenous” (as described in the definition above) even though they are indisputably Native.

**Traditional People.** Besides the terms “Native” and “indigenous”, a third term is “traditional people.” Traditional people may or may not be descended from the original population of a region. And, perhaps, traditional people do not face discrimination. But these people still possess a culture that gives them a distinctiveness that is recognized both by themselves and by outsiders. A classic example of non-Native traditional people is Appalachian hill folk of the Southeastern United States. They are descendants of White immigrants of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, so they are not Native. Although there may be some slight prejudice against them (the derogatory terms “hillbilly”, “poor White trash”, and “red neck” are often applied to them in hurtful ways by outsiders), they are not systematically discriminated against in a pervasive manner that parallels the experiences of many indigenous people. Nevertheless, traditional people (such as Appalachian hill folk) share many of the concerns and pressures that are faced by Native and indigenous people. Their members, for example, often complain that their culture is being overwhelmed by the modern world and by the intrusions of outsiders. In addition, tourists may seek these people out with preconceptions (good or bad) regarding what they will find.

Thus, the term “traditional people” refers to lifestyle, “Native people” refers to descendants of original populations that maintain a distinctiveness that can be identified, while “indigenous people” is a term that is reserved for Native people who face (or have historically faced) discrimination, hardship, etc. because of their racial/ethnic identity.

Many Native and indigenous people may simultaneously fit the definition of “traditional people” if they practice a lifestyle that is long-established and distinct from the mainstream population. Nonetheless, simply being a traditional person does not provide the person or community with any distinctive entitlements; many Native and indigenous people, in contrast, possess certain legal rights and privileges by virtue of their cultural and ethnic status.

Such terms are important to human resource management professionals because certain obstacles and vulnerabilities (as well as rights, privileges, and opportunities) may be associated with membership in these categories. Thus, they often have legal implications. As a result, it is important to keep these categories and identities in mind when human resource management strategies and policies are being developed. While matters of space prevent a full discussion of these issues, they are acknowledged.

### **THIRD WORLD AND FORTH WORLD**

Increasingly the Native, indigenous, and traditional people of the world have begun to carve out collective identities for themselves that transcend their cultural differences. Within this context, the terms “third-world” and “forth-world” are often used. As the terms were originally used, “first world”, of course, refers to the capitalistic west, “second world” identifies the communist (and formally communist) east, while “third world” historically referred to various unaligned nations. Many of these third-world countries gained their independence after World War II and are former African and Asian colonies of the European powers.

Although many third-world countries were once colonies dominated by outsiders, relatively few immigrants moved there and the Native populations remained in the majority (even when the local people were economically suppressed and politically disenfranchised.) In the post World War II era, these former colonies gained their independence and third-world intellectuals came to exert a powerful influence. As various African countries gained their political independence, for example, writers such as Franz Fanon (1952) made a call for third world people to throw off the “colonial mentality” and assert themselves. This thinking led to post-colonial thought that urged Native and indigenous people to embrace their heritage and not to emulate the West. During this era, many local leaders began abandon the western “suit and tie look” and appear dressed in Native garb, etc. Thus, this first wave of post-colonial intellectuals spoke to third world regions where the European intruders never became a significant percentage of the population. The colonial powers, in contrast, largely functioned as “absentee landlords” who while skimmed profits while living elsewhere.

In other parts of the world, in contrast, large numbers of immigrants from Europe moved into a region and made it their home. The demographic shift that resulted often turned the Native population into a small minority that, being outnumbered, faced hardships and discrimination. Although some writers use the term to identify the hyper poor, “forth-world”, it is also used to describe people who have become minorities in their own homeland. (For an orientation of alternative uses of the term see the Wikipedia entry for “Forth World”). This is the way it is to be used in this chapter. Marie Battiste and James Youngblood have called them “the unofficially colonized peoples of the world, the tragic victims of modernization and progress” (2000, p.2)

Currently, forth-world intellectuals are at the cutting edge of thought regarding the relationships of Native and indigenous people with the larger, outside world. The typical goal of forth-world people is not to gain nationhood, but to achieve equity and parity within the national (and global) context in which they reside.

These fourth world thinkers and activists, consciously aware of the local conditions their people face, strive to improve their specific situations. In addition, they seek a vision that all forth-world people can collectively embrace. Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999) and Marie Battiste and James Henderson’s *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage: A Global Challenge* (2000) are two representative books that do so.

Although they deal with specific areas (New Zealand and Canada respectively), the thinking of both expands beyond local concerns.

Today, various groups of fourth-world people band together in order to affirm their collective needs and desires. One example of doing so is the “Recommendation from the Voices of the Earth Conference” held in Amsterdam, Netherlands in November 1993. This document includes discussions of “Political rights”, “Economic rights”, “Cultural, scientific, and intellectual property”, and “Right to self-development.” Items 3 and 4 of this last category of discussion are as follows:

3. Indigenous peoples must have full control over the planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and follow-up of projects involving them (reproduced in Posey and Dutfield.
4. Indigenous peoples’ knowledge and culture should be taken fully into consideration before entering into development relations with indigenous peoples. (reproduced in Posey and Dutfield, 1996, p.213)

In essence, Native and indigenous people are increasingly concerned with the way they are treated in circumstances involving economic development. Appropriately responding to the issues that arise involves considering how the strategies of human resource management professionals are forged, implemented, and evaluated.

Increasingly, these emerging perspectives require acknowledging the distinctiveness of indigenous peoples and the issues they face. Social scientists such, as anthropologists, have a pivotal role in offering alternatives to generic solutions and strategies.

## **THE TUEPLO MODEL**

Who should assume the leadership role when strategies are developed and when decisions are made? These are key issues of economic development. In many circumstances, outsiders assume leadership and decision- making responsibilities. Those who advocate this kind of arrangement may suggest that the methods employed in the developed/mainstream regions are inherently superior, universally appropriate, and can be applied in equitable ways. Those who favor this kind of outside intervention laud the benefits of professional, experienced, and capable leaders from the outside whose abilities are superior to those of their local counterparts. On many occasions, large firms embrace this kind of perspective when dealing with rural areas and the Native, indigenous, and traditional people who live there. Doing so often involves a minimal degree of cultural sensitivity. Ad hoc goals are pursued and the impact upon the local population is given scant attention.

Alternative models, in contrast, argue that decision making needs to remain at the community level, local leadership needs to be developed, and decisions should reflect the will of the community, not outsiders (no matter how well-meaning they may be.) Those who embrace this perspective typically call for an increase in local leadership and seek to provide the community and its members with greater decision making authority. Many Native, indigenous, and traditional people advocate this perspective and call for more internal decision making. In tandem with these goals is a move towards building local leadership skills.

The “Tupelo Model”, developed by Vaughn Grisham (1999; 1999a) and Rob Gurwitt and implemented by rural leadership and development organizations such as the Brushy Folk

Institute, provides one way of envisioning and operationalizing this kind of localized strategy. The model is presented in the form of a pyramid in which the upper segments are built on and dependent upon the lower foundation. The most fundamental component is human development of the local population. This gives rise to leadership development. With local people in positions of responsibility, businesses can better nurture the community and develop more appropriate strategies of economic development. Believing that progress and prosperity depend upon local leadership, not merely upon tapping the skills and wisdom of outsiders, this perspective is the antithesis of the type of top down leadership so commonly advocated by large external companies that intrude into rural areas.

Being locally centered, the Tupelo model advocates helping local people to develop their own skills and tools as an alternative to outside forces directing the economic development of the region. The goal is to implement a multi-step process that ultimately leads to cultural enrichment and economic development that stems from the people themselves (and their goals and desires), not outside visions. Graphically, portrayed appears as:

**FIGURE 1  
THE TUPELO MODEL**



*Based on the work of by Vaughn Grisham (1999; 1999a)*

Although the Native communities I have worked with do not appear to be consciously aware of the Tupelo model, many of them have independently invented its basic orientation and applied it to their goals, strategies, and orientations.

Human resource management professionals working with Native, indigenous, and traditional people in rural regions can benefit from being aware of this perspective because they will often be dealing with people who overtly or covertly embrace a perspective that parallels the Tupelo Model. Thus, the Tupelo Model provides a means of understanding the perspectives of the host population as well as its goals and attitudes.

Businesses that employ human resource professionals often seek to enhance their strategic and tactical options by maintaining a fairly tight control over leadership, decision making, etc.

This course of action, however, may conflict with the goals and aspirations of local communities that wish to build their communities by developing the skills and decision making abilities of local leaders.

The Tupelo model provides human resource professionals with a way to understand and explain why many communities prefer local leadership. Peter Hille, director of the Brushy Fork Institute, an organization that encourages applying the Tupelo model to Appalachia, observes “leadership for the public good demands that values, as well as skills, be taken into account.” Third and fourth world people have values that need to be considered when human resource management strategies are established.

By acknowledging that Native, indigenous, and traditional people have their own values, human resource management professionals can avoid trivializing the feelings of local communities. Doing so can help management to overcome various “social Darwinist” attitudes they might hold in regard to rural community. Local communities are not vestigial remains destined for speedy and inevitable extinction; the decision makers and strategic planners in the firm who work with these people need to accept that fact. Perspectives such as the Tupelo model provide human resource management professionals with a better understanding of insights and perspectives needed to deal with local people in appropriate ways.

Having provided this introduction, a number of key issues facing human resource professionals who work with Native, indigenous, and traditional people will be discussed. Specific issues include planning for the personnel needs of the firms, recruiting, and selecting employees, developing human resources, establishing compensation and benefit policies, and dealing with safety and health issues.

## **PLANNING FOR PERSONEL NEEDS OF THE FIRM**

When estimating the needs for personnel, human resource management professionals often rely upon their previous experience in the Western/modern world. By doing so, existing strategies are adapted to a new situation. Applying such perspectives to a rural area dominated by Native, indigenous, and/or traditional people, unfortunately, can hurt both the local community and the firm.

Employees who identify with the mainstream world tend to accept the fact that their job is the primarily source of their livelihood. Companies tend to prefer employees who possess this company-oriented perspective because it encourages people accept a subservient relationship and adjust themselves to the needs of the firm. Many mainstream managers have become so accustomed to working with people who possess this orientation that they question the ambition and work ethic of anyone whose point of reference is not primarily centered around their job.

Many firms, for example, tend to dismiss the value and dedication of Native employees with reference to what they call “Indian time” (a term that has equivalents for describing the perspectives of many Native, indigenous, and traditional peoples: “Alaska time”, “Yukon time”, “Belize time”, etc.) The basic idea of “Indian time” and its analogues is that you can never predict when Native employees will work and when they will unexpectedly refuse to show up to do their job. As a result of this inability to adhere to the schedule and priorities of the firm, local people are viewed as undependable and unsuited for anything but menial casual labor. When management harbors such beliefs, the firm tends to provide minimal employment opportunities to tribal members and to the local community. As an alternative, expatriate workers from the outside are brought in, typically at a high additional cost.

Actually, of course, parallels to “Indian time” occur within the White world. In Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Michigan (to mention areas where I have firsthand knowledge) many people enjoy hunting. As a result, the absentee rate during the first day of “deer season” is often crippling. Managers faced with this White version of “Indian time” have learned that nothing can prevent their employees from “playing hooky” on this particular day. Punishing people who don’t show up will have no effect and only build resentments. As a result, insightful managers who anticipate the shortfall of manpower use the first day of deer season for some alternative purpose. Instead of scheduling the manufacture of a certain number of units, for example, the employees who do show up are asked to spend the day cleaning the work-place, painting, etc. By accepting reality and acting accordingly, those who do come to work are given something productive to do while the high rate of absence does not throw the facility off schedule.

In the case of the White deer hunters, the first day of the season is important primarily for social and “manly” reasons, but it is not essential to survival. The opposite situation often prevails within many Native communities. I have spent considerable time in interior Alaska and met numerous hard working and ambitious individuals who earn the majority of their livelihood by practicing a subsistence way of life. These men and women (and their families) are dependent upon the bounty of nature for their livelihood and they have no choice except to participate in the harvest whenever it comes. Thus, many Athabascans go to “fish camp” when the salmon are moving upstream. No other option exists. The money earned during that period is insignificant compared to the value of the fish. Even loyal, responsible, and dedicated employees need to participate in the salmon harvest and nothing will stop them from doing so.

Many companies, realizing the priorities of those who practice a subsistence way of life wrongly conclude that these people cannot fit into the workforce in any responsible way. The logic is that Native employees will be unable to adapt to the needs of the firm and nothing can be done to make them comply. As a result, outside businesses often hire non-Native employees whose work schedule will not be interrupted by other concerns.

Ironically, these same firms might benefit themselves and the community by creating and encouraging innovative ways to accommodate local employees who have multiple responsibilities. One such option is “job sharing” in which multiple employees pool their time to fill one full time position. Consider two mothers who have significant family responsibilities, but want to remain within the workforce. They may team up and jointly fill one full-time slot. These employees are able to work at a level that is acceptable to them; the firm, in turn, acquires the services of well qualified, loyal, and motivated employees.

Why can’t this kind of arrangement be used with Native employees instead of merely writing them off as unemployable? Many Native people want jobs and, given the chance, they can be dedicated and effective employees. Like the working mothers involved in job sharing (discussed above), however, they often have other responsibilities that cannot be avoided. If they (like the working mothers) are forced to make a choice, they will make a decision away from their employer and towards their other duties. Why not avoid a situation where such hurtful decisions have to be made?

If two Native people share a job, arrangements between them may allow each to fulfill his or her subsistence responsibilities while earning a dependable wage from the firm. Thus, while one employee is at fish camp, etc., the other could be on the job. And vice versa. This kind of arrangement can serve the firm and the employees. By providing subsistence people with job sharing opportunities, firms may be able to gain loyal employees who contribute to the



organization and remain on the payroll for many years. Such strategies can also reduce the cost of paying expatriate employees a premium wage to enter the region.

Few people in today's world practice a "full subsistence lifestyle." Typically a "mixed economy" dominates in subsistence regions. People need to earn some money in order to augment their subsistence activities and pay for items such as vehicles, fuel, non-harvested food, and personal items (soap razors, etc.) For people living in a mixed economy situation, part time wage labor is essential even though they are not in a position to work full time. These individuals can be loyal and productive employees, but only if they are able to integrate the requirements of the job within the larger frame of their lives.

Thus, when planning for personnel needs, the human resource management professional may want to envision the work that needs to be performed, how many full time equivalent employees are needed, and keep an open mind regarding how these positions will be filled. By doing so, a wider pool of possible employees emerges and the firm may be able to employ a larger number of local people. This discussion can be presented as Table 1.

**TABLE 1**  
**PLANNING PERSONNEL NEEDS**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Discussion</b>
<i><b>Problem</b></i>	Many Native employees are unable to embrace the needs of the firm on a full time basis although they are motivated and good workers.	Due to this inability, many firms do not consider Native people to be viable job candidates, complaining about attitudes such as "Indian time."
<i><b>Innovative Solutions</b></i>	By innovating ways to adjust to the needs and lifestyle of the local community, firms can create a situation where local people can participate. Doing so transcends the "mainstream" model of personnel needs in positive and constructive ways.	If organizations focus upon the work to be performed and the number of "full time equivalent" workers needed, they will be better able to view their needs in terms of the local pool of candidates who are available on a part time basis.
<i><b>Examples</b></i>	Within the mainstream economy, options such as job sharing are increasingly used. These techniques accommodate employees who have multiple responsibilities besides their job.	Many Native people (such as those who practice a subsistence way of life) have responsibilities that can't be avoided. Job sharing provides a way for such people to juggle their jobs with other needs.
<i><b>Benefits</b></i>	By embracing innovative solutions to planning and resolving human resource needs, organizations can hire more local people, gain goodwill, and save money.	Communities are often very interested in economic development projects that will provide local jobs. By envisioning personnel needs from the context of the community, the firm can create an economic package that helps the local community.
<i><b>Analysis</b></i>	By planning personnel needs around the tasks that need to be performed and the "full time equivalent" number of workers that are needed, the organization can make better use of local people. Doing so avoids making decisions purely with reference to the mainstream methods for planning personnel needs and can result in a greater ability to utilize local people.	

A fruitful strategy is to think in terms of the local community and its needs when evaluating personnel requirements for the organization. If this strategy is followed, local people can be

evaluated on their own terms, not with reference to inappropriate models from the mainstream world. In order to do so, a degree of cultural sensitivity is needed that expands beyond the skills and perspectives of many mainstream human resource management professionals. Anthropologists who can understand the culture, however, are better suited to devise strategies of employment that can serve the needs of all impacted stakeholders including both firm and its wide range of employees.

Following this course of action can give the organization greater flexibility, more options regarding how to satisfy personnel demands, and foster a greater loyalty on the part of the community and those who live within it.

## **RECRUITING AND SELECTING EMPLOYEES**

Negotiators who work with local communities in order to ratify contracts for projects have a special task to perform: getting agreements worked out. That is what these people do and that is how their work is evaluated. When economic development projects are being negotiated, human resource management professionals are often not asked to participate. This situation can result in significant long-term problems because, in the heat of closing the deal, negotiators tend to emphasize what will help their cause while ignoring everything else. Sometimes these negotiators (while not actually lying) present a rosy picture that does not clearly reflect reality.

Negotiators, for example, may state that a sizeable percentage of the high paying jobs will be reserved for members of the Native community who can meet the requirements established by the organization. While this may be true, the negotiators may not mention that a large number of Native applicants will not be able to satisfy these criteria.

Firms, for example, have a right to set reasonable standards that prospective employees must meet. Two such criteria include (1) satisfying a criminal record check, (2) being able to pass a drug/alcohol test, and having a certain level of education, such as being a high school graduate. Negotiators (while not lying) may fail to emphasize such conditions in the contract and leave these "small print items" unaddressed. After the agreement is signed, candidates learn that they cannot be hired due to the personnel policies of the firm. When this happens, personnel directors become hated because they are the ones who break the bad news, not because of any actual wrong-doing on their part. Under such circumstances, furthermore, local people often become resentful of the firm because they feel they have been cheated or (at a minimum) they believe that the company has misrepresented its intent. Rebutting such an assessment can be difficult.

There is a difference, of course, between recruiting and selecting. Recruiting is merely attracting a pool of candidates. Selecting is hiring. Organizations need to follow a policy that will result in a pool of recruits that have a reasonable chance of being hired. If this does not happen, tensions can result.

Human resource professionals need to be involved from the very beginning when negotiations are taking place. By doing so, they can eliminate misunderstandings that, otherwise, might emerge at a later date. The local community needs to be made overtly aware of personnel policies that may negatively impact local hires. Leaving key information hidden in the fine print and not discussed (only to emerge in hurtful ways after the fact) is not fair to the local community nor is it in the best long-term interests of the firm. The firm, in all of its dealings, needs to alert local communities regarding how employees will be selected and whatever obstacles or disqualifiers certain candidates may face. This is especially true in areas where policies of the firm may work against the interests of a significant number of potential

employees. The firm needs to be candid about these realities in order to avoid disappointing surprises later on.

As the discussion of the Tupelo Model (above) emphasized, furthermore, local communities are increasingly equating robust and long term economic development with local human development. As a result, communities want to be sure that local people will be eligible to rise up the corporate ladder to positions of responsibility. Many managerial trainee programs, however, do not easily accommodate local candidates who seek significant promotions. Thus, many firms require managerial trainees to move from location to location over a period of several years in order to groom them for more responsible managerial assignments. The variety the trainee receives under these circumstances provides seasoning and experience that can be valuable both to the company and the employee.

Many rural and Native people, however, are not in a position to be absent from their communities for a number of years and, as a result, they will not be able to participate in this kind of managerial trainee program. Does this mean that local, Native employees (no matter how dedicated, intelligent, and competent) will be unable to advance in the organization to a position of responsibility?

If the chances of success and promotion are stacked against these local and Native employees, both the local community and the organization may suffer. Morale among employees may wane and resentments of the company and its policies may grow. Alternatively, if managerial trainee systems devise a method that allows local people to advance without a multi-year absence from their communities, these negative feeling can be replaced with goodwill towards the company and a stable and highly motivated local workforce.

These examples, of course, are merely representative and do not exhaust the range of issues involving the recruiting and selecting of Native employees. In general, firms need to provide a clear and unambiguous picture of who has a chance to be hired and promoted. Whatever stumbling blocks may exist need to be acknowledged, addressed, and where possible eliminated. Firms can also benefit by developing policies that help qualified and ambitious Native employees advance in the organization. Put in tabular form, these issues can be depicted as in Table 2.

The method of recruiting and selecting employees is a first step in determining the degree to which the local community will participate within the organization. All other things being equal, greater involvement by the local community benefits the firm. As a result, strategies and tactics that involve the local community should be embraced wherever possible. Nonetheless, doing so may be difficult, especially if the firm embraces corporate-wide standards for employees that cannot be relaxed.

Anthropologists and other social scientists with a broad view of the people being targeted are able to help mainstream firms and human resource management executives overcome cultural blindness.

**TABLE 2**  
**RECRUITING AND SELECTING EMPLOYEES**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Discussion</b>
<i>Beyond Negotiations</i>	People who negotiate contracts with local communities may ignore issues that militate against the local community. Some of these issues may involve how employees are selected, job requirements, etc.	Human resource professionals need to be actively involved when contracts are being negotiated. By being candid regarding the jobs, the requirements, and hiring policies, future problems can be reduced
<i>Disqualifiers</i>	Certain criteria may disqualify employees from being hired. The company needs to think hard about these policies. When it has a clearly defined policy, this fact needs to be clearly articulated in order to avoid unnecessary disappointment.	The company needs to be candid about whatever criteria for employment it has. Doing so can help avoid future resentment. If possible, the organization might want to establish specific criteria for members of the local community.
<i>Facilitating advancement</i>	Organizations with highly structured managerial trainee systems may need to devise ways that facilitate local people advancing in their careers while not relocating.	Local people who seek advancement need opportunities to do so. Facilitating advancement can lead to the loyalty of individual employees and the community.
<i>Local needs</i>	Communities increasingly view economic development as a means of developing the skills of local people and view opportunities accordingly.	Communities that view progress in terms of building human capital seek opportunities for local people
<i>Analysis</i>	Recruiting is gathering a pool of candidates for a job. Care should be taken so that the people recruited have a reasonable chance of being hired. Organizations need to create a system where local employees have a chance to rise to positions of responsibility. This is especially true because communities increasingly equate economic development with the development of local "human capital." While it may be tempting for negotiators to ignore issues that can work against local employees or job candidates, organizations need to be completely candid in order to avoid resentment on the part of the community.	

## **DEVELOPING HUMAN RESOURCES**

First, training must be adequate, appropriate, and given to people who have a chance to benefit from it. Sadly, these obvious rules are not always followed. In the discussion (above) regarding the recruiting and selecting employees, the point was made that on some occasions candidates are recruited for jobs that they can never hold because of issues such as a criminal background, being unable to pass a drug test, lack of a high school diploma, etc. Unfortunately, on some occasions these candidates are not made aware of their ineligibility for employment and, as a result, they experience a significant (and avoidable) wasting of time, disappointment, and the shame and humiliation of being rejected. Such possibilities need to be eliminated.

The situation, unfortunately, can get even worse than that. Miranda Wright (a faculty member at the University of Alaska at Fairbanks), for example, tells of Native job candidates enrolling in a lengthy, difficult, and time consuming training program in order to gain employment with an outside corporation that was entering the region. Many of the Native students studied hard and successfully completed the program only to be ultimately rejected as employees because they failed a drug test. By any standard, allowing such a situation to develop in a patterned and recurring way is completely unacceptable.

If hard and fast rules regarding drug tests exist, for example, candidates need to be made overtly and consciously aware of this fact before they invest in training. Some people may choose not to take the training because they know they will be unable to pass the test. In other cases, candidates will be happy to adjust their lifestyle so that they can get the job. These people however need advice. The tell-tale residue of different drugs, for example, flushes out of the system at varying rates. Alcohol mixes with water and is burned by the liver and will be completely gone in a short time. Other drugs, such as marijuana, are absorbed into the fatty tissues of the body and can be detected by drug tests for a much longer period.

People need to know in advance if a drug test will be administered before they are hired. These individuals also need to know how long a period must elapse before specific drugs do not show up during the test. Many occasional marijuana users will happily abandon the drug in order to get a good job. This kind of person needs to be provided with the knowledge they need to pass the test. Providing this information is not skirting the law or helping people to defeat the test. It is simply providing sincere job candidates with the counseling they need to live a life that will result in employment opportunities.

Once on the job, employees need the opportunity to receive training that can help them advance in their career. In the section on determining personnel needs, we discussed the fact that certain employees may choose a “job sharing” arrangement because doing so can mesh with their subsistence lifestyle. These people might be valued permanent employees, but not available to work full time. Will these individuals be eligible for training that can help them gain more interested in financially rewarding assignments? Policies may need to be developed with these individuals in mind.

When outside organizations enter a region, confusion often exists. The firm and its mainstream employees are often not adequately understood by Native employees and the local community. Under these circumstances, difficulties can arise that need to be addressed.

Mainstream/outside employees, likewise, can benefit from training that provides the insights they need to work with their native counterparts in a pleasant and harmonious manner. Programs aimed at both mainstream and Native employees can build mutual respect and understanding which, in turn, enhances the effectiveness of the organization.

Unfortunately, on many occasions the leaders of outside organizations are convinced that their methods are superior and represent the inevitable and the wave of the future. As a result, these leaders may feel little need to gain a subtle understanding of local conditions and traditions. As contemporary scholars emphasize, however, the Native way of life is not inherently inferior and it is not slated for inevitable extinction. Outside organizations and their leaders need to appreciate local cultures and understand that their ways of life will not inevitably fade in the wake of so-called “progress.” While local cultures inevitably adapt and adjust to circumstances, many of them are surviving and even thriving. Human resource professionals need to emphasize this fact. Put in tabular form, key issues of developing human resources can be presented as in Table 3:

**TABLE 3**  
**DEVELOPING HUMAN RESOURCES**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Discussion</b>
<i>Who gets trained?</i>	People should be encouraged to gain training only if they are viable candidates for a job.	Human resource professionals need to provide advice so people do not get training that cannot lead to employment. By doing so, disappointment and resentment aimed at the firm can be reduced
<i>Part Timers</i>	As indicated above, part timers and job sharers may be a significant part of the workforce. These people should have training and advancement opportunities.	Some individuals, while permanent employees, may not work full time because of other responsibilities. These individuals should be eligible for training and development
<i>About the Organization</i>	Native employees may not understand how outside organizations work. Training that deals with these issues can be vital if these people are to emerge as productive and happy with the firm.	The community and employees that live in it may lack an understanding of the firm and how it works. Various seminars about the firm needs to be provided both as required for both the community at large and for employees.
<i>About Native life</i>	Many mainstream people who work for outside organizations lack an understanding of the Native people they work with. Gaining this information can significantly improve their effectiveness.	On many occasions local people will be supervised and managed by outsiders. Training regarding the local community and culture should be provided to mainstream employees on a regular and on an ad hoc basis
<i>Discussion</i>	The development of human resources, while responding to the needs of the firm, also needs to take the community and the local employees into account. If a significant amount of local employees are part timers, they should have opportunities for training. Training, however, should be reserved for those who have a chance to get a job. If cultural differences are significant, training about the local culture and the corporate culture of the organization should be provided as required.	

Training is often the key to long term success and advancement on the job. As a result, organizations should be sure that it is readily available to local employees. Those who have no chance of being hired, furthermore, should be advised of this fact and discouraged from gaining training that will not contribute to their employability. Not only should training be aimed at the local community, efforts should be made to provide “mainstream” employees with the understanding they need to understand and deal with local employees and the community.

### **ESTABLISHING COMPENSATION AND BENEFIT POLICIES**

Firms that operate in rural areas and work with Native communities often hire outsiders, especially for high ranking and technical positions. These individuals, while understanding the firm and the Western world, often lack the skills needed to be effective among the local people. These outsiders, furthermore, (1) often receive a premium wage and benefits schedule and (2) may not work out as effective leaders in a rural/Native environment, and (3) are prone to exhibit a high turnover rate. These are issues that need to be avoided, especially among upper management and other key employees.

If local people can be installed in high ranking positions within the firm, overly generous compensation and benefit packages given to outsiders can be reduced or eliminated. When this happens, the local manager would be paid approximately the same as other employees of similar rank who are living at home (and not in an expatriate situation.) Replacing expatriate with local employees is a current trend in international business and it can be an effective strategy in rural/Native regions. Even if the firm is not operating internationally (a United States firm in rural Alaska, for example) the situation can still reflect an expatriate situation from a cultural and/or environmental perspective, and it can be dealt with as such.

As a result, where possible the firm might want to recruit and reward local people. Doing so can save the firm money by reducing expatriate expenses while building morale by demonstrating that local people can work their way up the corporate hierarchy to a position of responsibility. Another key issue that often needs to be addressed is pay equity. To what extent do employees feel that they are being paid a fair wage? Much of the current thinking on pay equity concerns gender issues. Women often receive lower pay than men in a patterned way that does not reflect the contributions made by various employees. Initiatives aimed at achieving pay equity have emerged as one way of dealing with such problems.

While the pay equity movement has been spearheaded by gender inequalities, other segments of the population might suffer (or appear to suffer) from arbitrary pay scales that do not reflect the actual contributions of employees. On many occasions, rural and Native employees might not be adequately compensated for their efforts. Human resource professionals need to ask if there are any overt or covert, conscious or unconscious policies of the firm that can lead to pay inequity and/or an inequity of opportunity for local people. Earlier in this essay, we saw how various policies (regarding part time employees and the inability of local people to relocate for a managerial training program) may inadvertently lead to pay and opportunity inequities. These policies may need to be rethought. These issues can be portrayed as in Table 4:

**TABLE 4**  
**COMPENSATION AND BENEFIT POLICES**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Discussion</b>
<i><b>Expatriate issues</b></i>	Expatriates are often paid a premium, prove to be ineffective, and have a high turnover rate. These are hurtful issues that need to be addressed	Many firms import high ranking and other key employees instead of grooming and hiring local people. This can lead to an ineffective leadership while reducing local morale
<i><b>Replacing Expatriates</b></i>	Local employees in high ranking positions can save money, lead to longevity on the job, and build morale in the local workforce and the community	If local people can be hired for responsible positions, both the local community and the firm can benefit. As a result, human resource professionals should consider this option .
<i><b>Pay equity</b></i>	Increasingly, the issue of pay equity is emerging within the field of human resource management. In general, policies (overt or covert) that reduce pay equity should be eliminated.	Policies regarding employment patterns (such as part time workers) need to be rethought so that no overt or covert pattern of pay equity develops.
<i><b>Opportunity equity</b></i>	The ability to gain pay equity may be based on being able to gain higher ranking and paying jobs. Firms need to develop policies of opportunity equity	Compensation is often linked to employment opportunities. As a result, policies aimed at providing opportunities to local people need to be developed.
<i><b>Analysis</b></i>	One reason that rural and Native communities want to become involved in economic development projects is the promise of jobs and good jobs. By creating policies that achieve this goal, the firm can better mesh with the local community, build loyalty, and more effectively function in the region.	

Issues of compensation and benefits, of course, are much more complex than the brief orientation provided here. This discussion has merely presented a representative sample of compensation/benefit issues that are of direct concern to rural and Native people. I hope that this discussion triggers further thought about these considerations and encourages a better understanding of the wide array of issues that involve compensation and benefits.

## **DEALING WITH SAFETY AND HEALTH ISSUES**

Human resource professionals often offer a wide array of services aimed at health and safety issues. Besides dealing with generic concerns (dangers to health and safety in the workplace, etc.) human resource professionals are increasingly becoming involved with issues such as stress on the job, employee burnout, etc. Tensions or unhappiness at work, furthermore, often trigger hurtful side effects such as alcohol and substance abuse. These are issues that are often dealt with by health and safety programs.

On some occasions, firms become involved with addressing problems that are not directly related to the job. Many firms, for example, are instituting Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) to help employees deal with their personal problems. Although often connected with unions, freestanding EAPs sponsored by the firm can exist. EAPs provide assistance for a wide array of issues including domestic problems, financial difficulties, as well as psychological dysfunction, including substance abuse. These programs, in addition to being altruistic, can enhance the productivity of employees, reduce absenteeism, and eliminate the need to terminate and replace troubled employees whose performance is deteriorating below an acceptable level.

Various discussions on these health and safety topics are readily available and the reader is encouraged to consult them. Here, the focus will be upon rural and Native employees and the special needs they might have. Unhealthy stress often occurs when outside organizations enter a region. Even changes triggered by the outside that have a positive impact may inadvertently trigger negative impacts. Many people who win multimillion dollar lotteries, for example, ultimately end up unhappy as a result of their good fortune. An outside firm entering a rural, Native community may provide many benefits and yet trigger hurtful impacts that need to be recognized and mitigated. The firm needs to recognize this possibility and act accordingly. Human resource professionals may be in the position to take a leadership role in dealing with these potentials. Removing stress, tension, and dysfunction is in the best interest of the firm, its employees, and the community; as a result, human resource professionals can help the firm by expanding to serve in such roles.

Thus, the firm may benefit if the EAP program extends beyond the workplace and the employees of the firm in order to serve the larger community. In a large community, the impact of any firm on the economic and life is apt to be rather slight. In a small community, in contrast, one firm and its actions can have a tremendous impact. As a result, firms might want to (or be mandated to) take overt actions to deal with these maladies. Presented graphically, key issues emerge as in Table 5.

Safety and health issues are profoundly important. When working in Native and rural areas, however, a number of factors, not normally present in more mainstream areas, may need to be addressed. In a rural area, for example, the firm might exert massive unintended impacts upon the entire community. This potential needs to be addressed and methods of mitigating hurtful ramifications need to be addressed. Increasingly, Native and rural communities are raising these



issues when contracts are being ratified and/or renewed. Under these circumstances, human resource professionals may have an important role to play in resolving such points of contention.

**TABLE 5**  
**SAFETY AND HEALTH ISSUES**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Discussion</b>
<b><i>EAPS</i></b>	Employee assistance programs can help employees (and others) deal with a wide array of problems related to and distinct from the job or the intrusion of the firm into a rural setting. Due to the stress triggered by outside firms in rural and Native settings, such programs have a role to play.	Rural communities and their employees are often impacted in profound ways when outside firms enter a region. As a result, EAPs may have an especially important role to play. These programs may serve employees and/or the larger community. The format of the EAP may be a point of negotiation.
<b><i>Culture Stress</i></b>	The culture of rural and Native people often faces significant stress that can trigger hurtful results. Acting to mitigate this stress can be both altruistic and a good business strategy	Native people and rural people experience significant changes and tensions that are triggered by outside Firms. Strategies that deal with this situation need to be developed.
<b><i>Employee Stress</i></b>	Individuals often feel stress due to the job and/or due to the impact of the firm on the community. This employee stress needs to be addressed	Rural and Native individuals interacting within an alien organization often experience stress that can trigger dysfunction. Since the firm is often the cause of these problems, it may need to act to reduce these negative impacts.
<b><i>Community Stress</i></b>	Changes triggered by the outside firm often place the community, as a whole, under stress. Such potentials need to be addressed.	When the actions of the firm trigger dysfunction within the community dealing with these issues needs to be recognized as a cost of doing business.
<b><i>Analysis</i></b>	Outside firm often exert extraordinary pressures on both individuals and communities. Human resource managers need to recognize these impacts and be ready to mitigate them. Stress triggered by the firm often impacts individuals (both employees and others.) Firms often impact the community, as a whole, in negative and unanticipated ways. These influences need to be recognized and addressed. EAPS may have a role in this regard.	

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Firms that interact within rural regions that are populated by Native, indigenous, and traditional people need to expand the role and authority of human resource management professionals. On many occasions, the upper management of the firm does not understand the unique personnel issues that the firm faces in these circumstances. As a result, the human resource professional needs to be given increased decision making responsibilities.

In some ways, this situation resembles a general trend within human resource management to develop a greater degree of cultural sensitivity. Certainly, doing so is vital. In addition, however, human resource management professionals need to recognize that in addition to cultural distinctiveness, indigenous, Native, and traditional peoples often face an array of pressures and conflicts that make them, as a group, distinct.

In order to deal with this situation, a number of issues have been discussed including (1) planning for the personnel needs of the organization, (2) recruiting, and selecting employees, (3) developing human resources, (4) establishing compensation and benefit policies, and (5) dealing

with safety and health issues. Presented in graphic form, an overview of these discussions includes (See Table 6):

**TABLE 6  
CONCLUDING SUMMARY**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Discussion</b>
<b>Local Leadership</b>	Encouraging local leadership should be a goal of human resource management professionals. Not only is doing so morally correct, it is also good business because it can lower costs, reduce turnover, and build morale.	Ultimately, outside firms are guests. They can best develop relationships with the community by having key jobs being held by local people. Doing so can also be cheaper and lead to less turnover because local people will be less prone to demand an expatriate pay and benefit scale and will probably remain on the job for an extended period. Opportunities to local people will also build morale.
<b>Personnel Needs</b>	Personal needs should be evaluated with regard to the tasks performed, not with who will perform them.	Outside organizations often think in terms of full time employees while in areas (such as those that are dependent on a subsistence lifestyle), part time employment may be the norm. By focusing on the tasks to be performed, not who will accomplish them, a more appropriate strategy can be developed.
<b>Recruiting/selecting</b>	People should not be recruited unless they have a chance of being selected. Selection should be based on the contribution to the organization, and not merely reflect strategies and policies that the firm uses elsewhere.	Selection needs to focus on the needs of the local organization, not some standardized, corporate-wide formula. Where specific guidelines exist, local candidates need early notification regarding what will prevent them from being hired.
<b>Developing employees</b>	Strategies of development need to reflect the local community, not the way the organization operates in other areas.	Strategies for developing and providing training to employees need to reflect the local needs of the organization and the situation of the community. They should not be based on "corporate guidelines."
<b>Compensation</b>	Compensation needs to be based on the task performed, not on who does it.	In situations where two individuals share a job, the compensation (including benefits) needs to be for a full time employee, not merely 2 part timers. The resulting equity can result in goodwill and encourage part timers to remain as permanent team members.
<b>Health and safety</b>	Not only should the usual health and safety concerns receive attention, human resource professionals need to acknowledge that the participation of an outside organization in a rural/Native region are can trigger health and safety issues.	The intrusion of an outside organization can exert significant stress not only upon employees, but also upon the community as a whole. The human resource professionals needs to be aware of this situation and prepared to act accordingly in a proactive manner.
<b>Analysis</b>	When operating in a new region, such as rural communities inhabited by a Native population, the human resource management professional needs to be aware of possible problems and innovative solutions that deal with them as a local level. In general, these communities tend to function in ways that are significantly different from the "mainstream world." As a result, the usual ways of dealing with issues may not be appropriate. This essay has offered suggestion ion this regard.	

As a result of this situation, firms often need to embrace appropriate strategies and perspectives when working in rural areas populated by Native people. By moving in this direction, human resource management professionals will be able to help provide a context for the development of strategies and tactics that are beneficial to the firm, its employees, and the culture/community.

Certain orientations such as (1) the differences between Native, indigenous, and traditional people, (2) models regarding the third and fourth world, and (3) visions of economic development centered on the rural community and local leadership are useful in understanding how human resource management strategies can (and should) be tailored so they appropriately serve Native and rural people.

Although human resource management is increasingly cultural sensitive, the distinctive pressures facing indigenous, Native, and traditional people need to be overtly recognized and addressed. Doing so requires an understanding of the stress that cultures must face in a changing world and in situations typified by outside intrusions. Human resource management professionals can benefit from an anthropologically oriented focus upon social change and its implications.

### **Author's Notes**

Many of the ideas that are presented in this paper derive from a course on Human Resource Management and Native Alaskans that the author took in the fall of 2005. The course was taught by Miranda Wright and offered through the University of Alaska at Fairbanks. The author is grateful to the help provided by Professor Wright and the students in this course. While the terms Native, indigenous, and traditional are important and distinctive and although specific terms will be used, when appropriate, throughout this essay, after this section the term "Native" will typically be used in generic fashion as a matter of style. Although the term Native is used, the reader needs to remember that much of this discussion applied to indigenous and traditional people as well.

### **REFERENCES**

Anonymous (2006). Bolton's Punctuality Drive Comes to an Early End. Reuters News Service. ([www.newss.yahoo.com/s/nm/2006030p3/od\\_nm/un-punctuality-dc](http://www.newss.yahoo.com/s/nm/2006030p3/od_nm/un-punctuality-dc)).

Battiste, Marie and James Youngblood (2002). Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage: A Global Challenge.

Fanon, Franz, (1952). Black Skins White Masks. New York: Grove.

Grisham, Vaughn (1999). Hand in Hand: Community Development in Tupelo. Aspen, Colorado: Aspen Institute.

Grisham, Vaughn (1999a). Tupelo: The Evolution of a Community. Dayton, Ohio: Kettering Institute.

Posey, Darrell, and Dutfield, Graham (1996). Beyond Intellectual Property: Toward Traditional Resource Rights for Indigenous People and Local Communities. Ottawa, Ontario: International Development Research Center.

Smith, Linda (1999). Decolonizing Methodologies. London: Zed.

Walle, Alf (2009). "Pro Choice [and tribal management]" Spring 2009.

Wiessner, Siegfried (1999). "Rights and Status of Indigeneous Peoples: A Global and Comparative and International Legal Analysis" Harvard Human Rights Journal v 12 Spring.