



## ADDRESSING LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES IN RURAL ALASKA

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**E-mail:** ozodiosuji@gmail.com**Article Type:****Review****ISSN 2315-9829****Abstract**

*Leaders are people who have the ability to discern what the group they are part of need and decide to help them meet those needs; they set goals pursuit of which help to accomplish the aspirations of group members. Some say that leadership skills are learned and others say that they are part of the individual's psychological makeup. Whatever are its roots, what is empirical is that effective leaders quickly discern what needs to be done and go about helping to get them done. They have the ability to organize people to accomplish group goals. Group goals are accomplished through human and capital resources. Leaders are able to coordinate human beings activities and manage capital resources in the pursuit of set goals and monitor and account for how those resources were utilized. Effective leaders trust the people they lead and the people in return trust them; effective leaders are optimistic and have hope for a better life and future for the people; the people bloom in the presence of effective leaders, for in them they see hope for living; people relish the sense of direction towards a better future that pervades the ambience of effective leaders. Having delineated the nature of leadership the paper used those as criteria to look at leadership practices in rural Alaska. It delineated some of the problems with exercising effective leadership in rural Alaska, such as the different conception of leadership by native cultures and mainstream American culture and suggested heuristic ways to overcome those identified problems.*

**KeyWords:** Leadership, Rural, Challenges,

**INTRODUCTION**

I will begin this paper by summarizing what we know about leaders and leadership. This will set the stage for us to look at leadership issues in rural Alaska. Human beings live in groups; certain tasks are best performed through team work. Whereas the individual can set a goal and pretty much go about accomplishing it by his self alone certain goals attainment require that many persons participate in working towards their accomplishment. Goals that require many persons working together to attain them are arenas where leadership skills are called for (Drucker, 2001). Leaders are those men and women who coordinate the activities of other people in pursuit of group or organizational goals. Apparently, some persons have more ability than other persons in discerning what the group they are part of need and decide to help them satisfy those needs; they set goals pursuit of which help to accomplish the aspirations of their groups. Leaders are persons who see problems and set about trying to solve them as realistically as is humanly possible. They do not pretend to have magical abilities with which to solve problems once and for all time. For example, they see the need to build a road and go about getting the human and capital resources to build a road as current technology can allow them to do so; they do not build castles in the air. Real leaders do not compare actual people to imaginary ideal people and say that they are not doing fine just

because they do not live up to the standards of imaginary perfection; that is, they are not neurotic leaders like Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin who wanted to attain the impossible of making people perfect and in the process killed those who to them seemed imperfect. Some say that leadership skills are learned and others say that they are part of the individual's psychological makeup, such as what Douglas McGregor called theory X and Y type leaders (McGregor, 1960). Whatever are its roots, what is empirical is that effective leaders quickly discern what needs to be done and go about helping the group to get them done. They have the ability to organize people to accomplish group goals. Group goals are accomplished through human and capital resources.

Leaders ask questions like these:

What needs to be done (Goals)?

How are we going to get those things done (means to goal accomplishment)?

How will we know that we have accomplished the goals (evaluation of what was done)?

The question, what needs to be done helps to focus minds and attention to the purposes, goals, aims and

objectives of the group. The leader and his group must determine the outcome that they are seeking to attain. Having clarity of purpose concentrates the mind and action whereas not being sure what is to be done leads to not being focused and the wastage of energies.

Goals are statements of a group's intent, what they hope to accomplish within a certain time frame. Objectives, on the other hand, tend to be the steps needed to get to the overall goal. A goal requires the accomplishment of small objectives before it is finally accomplished. Every work group or organization has goals and enabling objectives that must be done before the overall goals are attained (Miner, 2005).

Enabling objectives are, if you like, steps that need to be taken if the overarching goal is to be accomplished. For example, if your intent is to win the Olympic medal in the 100 meters race (goal), there are steps that you have to take before you can accomplish your dream. You have to run regularly; you probably have to attach yourself to a good coach who trains you on how to run at the level you want to run; you have to develop the discipline to persist in running, perhaps daily and timing yourself to make sure that your time is up to the requirements for participating at the Olympic level (below ten seconds).

The question, how are we going to accomplish our goals clearly calls for clarity on what needs to be done to reach a goal. Generally, the accomplishment of goals requires using human resources and capital resources (Tittemore, 2003).

Human resources entails delineating what kind of labor is needed to do the work that needs to be done to accomplish the work goal. Every work situation requires different types of labor. For example, if the work situation is aimed at healing the physically ill a hospital is needed; you need those trained in the healing arts, such as medical doctors and nurses and the sundry personnel that work at hospitals. So you need doctors and nurses, the next questions are: where are you going to get persons with those skills? Where are the medical schools that train medical doctors? Where are nursing schools that train registered nurses?

There is no medical school in the entire state of Alaska. This means that hospitals in Alaska must go out of the state to recruit and hire medical doctors (MDs). The state has nursing schools. Are the local schools of nursing producing enough registered nurses to meet the needs of the various hospitals in the state? Generally, hospitals in Alaska go out of state to recruit nurses because of the dearth of nurses in the state. How much are medical doctors and nurses paid? Does the hospital have the ability to pay the wages of medical doctors and nurses? Are the expected patients able to pay for their medical treatment so that hospitals are able to have the revenue to recruit and pay for the services of medical doctors?

Hospitals in rural Alaska mostly provide medical treatment to Native Alaskans (the Yupik, Inuit, Athabasca, Tlingit, Haida and Aleut etc.). The majority of this population does not necessarily have market

based medical insurance to pay for their needed medical services. They access medical treatment through the various Native Hospitals that provide them with government subsidized medical services.

In a capitalist economy the realities are that good things cost money and the best things cost the most money. You get what you pay for. Generally, publicly subsidized services tend not to be of the best quality. Those who run hospitals, leaders and managers, are responsible for understanding the medical market, where to recruit medical personnel, acquire the money to pay them, hiring them, supervising them and using them to accomplish hospitals goal of providing medical services to the general public.

In addition to organizing the human resources of hospitals the leaders/managers have to deal with how to obtain the capital, money to build and operate hospitals. Capital projects, such as the buildings in which hospitals operate are very expensive and where to obtain the funds to build them is a responsibility of leaders in this specific milieu. Not every person understands how to obtain the money needed to attain goals and have sufficient financial and accounting skills to manage the millions of dollars needed to run hospitals. Many people dream of what they want to do but do not know how to get the funds to make their dreams a reality (Maxwell, 1999). Leaders are people who know how to translate wishes, dreams and goals into reality by obtaining the human and capital resources necessary for doing so. Given the rarity of ability to put together human and capital resources to accomplish organizational goals, leaders and top managers are expensive (they command top salaries) for without them people merely talk about what they want to do but do not know how to go about doing them (Vroom and Yetton, 1973). Positing goals and gathering the resources needed to pursue attaining them is only some of the things that need to be done by leaders; the others include making sure that what is being done in fact helps to accomplish the goals. How do we know that the activities of the organization, in fact, lead to the accomplishment of the organizational goals? Indeed, are the organizational goals the goals the organization ought to be pursuing? This call for the establishment of evaluation criteria to evaluate what the organization is doing (Bossidy and Charan, 2002). There must be an ongoing way to critically examine the means and ends of an organization. Are the steps taken to reach the goal leading to the accomplishment of the goal; is the goal the right goal? Organizations must continually reexamine their goals to make sure that they are still realistic. Organizations whose goals are no longer what are sought by the people often find that their products are not demanded and have to go out of market. People must buy what you are selling for you to be in business; therefore, you must make sure that what you are selling is what the people desire. Who are the people demanding your products, anyway? Work organizations must continually know who their target market is and what they desire and how they desire it

(see Deming's total quality management crusade, 1993). The work organization must continually examine how it produces its product to make sure that it does so efficiently, for if it does not those who do it better will produce better products and sell at lower prices hence drive it out of the market. Built in evaluation research unit into work organizations are critical for them to do what they set out to do, do it well and change course when demand structure for their product and or service changes.

## THEORIES OF LEADERSHIP

Leaders make a world of difference as to whether organizational goals are attained or not. Many can talk about goals but very few persons actually have the ability to organize human and capital resources and use them to achieve organizational goals. Leaders are few but followers are many (Schultz et al, 2010). Because of the critical nature of leadership in organizations' success people have speculated on what makes some people good leaders. The oldest hypothesis on what makes some people leaders and others not is probably the great man hypothesis (Hook, 1955). Here, it is speculated that some people are born to be leaders. Let us consider children. Some children have the ability to organize other children in their neighborhood in pursuit of goals. A child, for example, wants to play soccer. He obtains a soccer ball and goes to the other boys in the neighborhood and asks them to come and play with him. He gets the other kids to come to the field and assigns to them roles to play in the soccer game. He makes sure that they play by the rules of the game. What he is really doing is exercising leadership skills. He has set a goal (playing soccer); he has obtained the instrument needed to accomplish his goal (a ball) and he has recruited soccer players and has organized them to play soccer. He has shown leadership skills at a very early age. Many of the other boys in the neighborhood may wish to play soccer but lack the ability to do what the boy who organized the other boys did. Leaders have wishes and visions of what they want to do and organize people and resources to get them done; not all people can do so. Because only a few persons seem able to rise to leadership challenge some people speculate that leaders are born and not made. They claim that there are only so many Napoleon Bonaparte, Winston Churchill, Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the world.

In the business world, there were only a few Rockefellers, Fords, Bill Gates and Steve Jobs. In the world of social movements there were only a handful of folks like Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela. (See Homans, 1961). Given the rarity of effective leaders the hypothesis that leaders are born and not made must be taken into consideration wherever leadership is discussed.

Another theory of leadership is that leaders are people

who simply rise to the challenges of their times. For example, in the 1960s America was going through radical social change and some persons rose to that challenge. President Lyndon Barnes Johnson, a southerner who no one had expected to champion the course of civil rights, rose to the challenges posed by Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Stockley Carmichael and the other civil rights agitators to get Congress to pass the landmark civil rights act of 1964, followed with the fair housing act (that outlawed discrimination in housing); LBJ also helped bring about other legislations, including the great society programs that helped the poor, such as Medicare, Medicaid and Community Action Programs. (See Gordon, 1977). The point is that the events of the time produced leaders like LBJ and MLK who rose to the occasion. If there is war a leader who hitherto seemed dovish may turn hawkish and lead his people to victory. Clearly, events of the times tend to call forth appropriate behaviors; before the Second World War Winston Churchill was considered a failure and probably would be a footnote in British history, for until then he had done nothing spectacular with his life. Without the Civil War Abraham Lincoln probably would not have become one of the greatest leaders of America? We must, therefore, not discount this theory of leadership. It has some merit although one may ask: why is it that only some persons rise to the occasion and not others?

What is it that made John Fitzgerald Kennedy, upon realizing that the USSR had beat America into space via Yuri Gagarin's sputnik, resolve to send a man to the moon by the end of the 1960s decade, whereas Barack Obama seem bent on downsizing the US space program? Kennedy rose to the challenge posed by the successes of the Soviet Union's space program but Obama tells us that we do not have the resources to send a man to Mars; a visionary and charismatic leader like Kennedy probably would find the resources and mobilize the people to send a man to Mars in a few decades (Van Wormer et al, 2007). Great leaders inspire people to do greater things whereas mediocre leaders do not inspire people to greater action. When great leaders enter a milieu they generate mass activity, people act alive and feel alive whereas boring leaders make people feel as if life is boring. Great leaders give people passion and enthusiasm to accomplish the seeming impossible whereas boring professorial leaders like Barack Obama tell us about our diminished economic resources and how those cannot justify the economic outlay needed to undertake great tasks.

China and India goes to space and America under Obama has no space craft to even take astronauts to the International Space station and have to hitch a ride on ancient Russian rockets!

Another school of leadership says that leadership traits can be identified and taught to future leaders (Leavitt, 1978). We can delineate the traits found in effective leaders and teach people those traits. We can teach folks how to identify with groups, ascertain their group's aspirations, what they want done, figure out ways to go

about getting those things done, teach them how to set goals and objectives and mobilize human and capital resources to accomplish those goals. Clearly, we can teach aspects of leadership but what makes for great leaders, that inner urge to do something despite all odds is probably not teachable?

In our business schools' MBA programs they pretty much teach students principles of management, human resources, finance, accounting and other aspects of being a leader (Peters and Waterman, 1982). We train managers who go into organizations, know what their organizations mission statements are and internalize them, accept them as their personal goals and help the organizations to attain those goals.

Clearly, we must train people to become leaders and managers. That been said most people agree that what is easily trained for is management skills but not leadership skills. Any John Doe can be trained to go into a university and become its president but not all university presidents can have the vision to establish a medical school for the University of Alaska; not all leaders know how to inspire the legislators of Alaska to pony up with the resources needed to build and operate a medical school in the state; what is common is having leaders who give us excuses why Alaska's population cannot support a medical school. Mediocre leaders tell us about what is not doable but great leaders tell us what is doable and go about doing it despite obstacles to doing it.

Effective leaders find a way to do the impossible while managers merely carry out the visions set by other persons. There is a difference between a good manager and a good leader. A good manager may also be a good leader but that is not always the case. A manager merely implements already set goals of an organization. A good leader helps set the goals that the organization came into being to accomplish (and when old goals are no longer useful help set new ones to make the organization useful hence alive). A good leader can also be a good manager but that is rare; a great leader like Bill Gates had the vision to hire Steve Ballmer as the day to day manager of Microsoft.

For our present purposes, there is a theory that leaders can be trained and we must keep training for leaders.

## STYLES OF LEADERSHIP

Scholars in the study of leadership have identified many styles of leadership, including autocratic, laissez faire, participative-democratic, narcissistic, toxic, task oriented and relationship oriented leaders (Vroom and Jago, 1988).

Inspirational leaders inspire people to aim at greater heights and actions. President Kennedy was an inspirational leader in the sense that he inspired the nation to aim at landing a man on the moon. President Obama talks eloquently but people soon learned that he

did not fight for what he talked about and he was tuned out so that he now mostly talks to an empty chamber and not taken seriously.

The autocratic leader makes all the decisions and expects other persons to merely carry out his instructions or else he punishes them, examples would be Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin; the laissez faire leader, as delineated by Douglas McGregor (1960). Theory Y type of management is a manager that has participative-democratic approach to management and permits employees to participate in decision making and implementation of made decisions made whereas a theory X leader would be autocratic.

A narcissistic leader sees the world from the prism of his inflated ego; he feels as if the entire world exists to admire his ego and pay him attention; he does things to get other persons attention and as long as he feels that he is the center of attention may actually do good work; however, his motivation is not to serve the public but to make his ego seem important (Mouton and Blake, 1964).

The toxic leader is a pathological person whose presence generates conflict in the leadership and or management situation.

The task oriented leader is happy when he has a goal he is working towards whereas the relationship orientated leader, as Fiedler (1967) explicated is invested in making sure that people in a work situation get along with each other; he pays attention to people's emotional needs and nurtures the emotionally hurt; sometimes a leader needs to be a social worker, therapist but it is also true that sometimes what is needed is a task oriented leader who sets goals and mobilizes workers to get them achieved. Some leaders operate within the accepted culture of their society and have goals that suit that culture; such leaders figure out ways to do things that are congruent with the extant culture of their society. These types of leaders do not change the situation they find themselves in. On the other hand, there are leaders who are change agents. These people posit a picture of society that is radically different from the current picture of society. These are called transformational leaders.

Until the 1930s America operated what we might call Laissez Faire economy with the government playing very little or no role in people's lives. Perhaps, as a result of the great depression that began in 1929 FDR transformed the American economy by injecting aspects of socialism into it. He borrowed heavily from the British economist, John Maynard Keynes and essentially got the government to play roles in the economy. Beginning from FDR to the present, the US government, through its central bank, the Federal Reserve, engage in monetary policies (raise or lower the prime rate, the interest it charges banks who borrow from it) and use that policy to fight inflation or depression and recession; we have also accepted taxation policy, raising or lowering taxes to stimulate or depress the economy (if you raise taxes you take money away from the people and reduce investment capital hence reduce investment; if you

reduce taxes you make money available to the investor class and they invest in industries and thus create jobs).

President Roosevelt transformed the US economy from what we might call pure capitalism to a mixed economy, so that today government is accused of over regulating the economy. Roosevelt introduced such novel ideas as social security to help support the aging poor, welfare to help poor women with children; his administration limited the number of hours a worker may be worked by his employer a day to eight hours (40 hour weeks...anything over that is over time pay). The man radically changed the US political and economic landscape and was a transformational leader.

If Barack Obama were able to change the US health delivery system so that all Americans are provided with a single payer health system he would go down in history as a transformational leader; as it is he helped enact what he calls the Affordable Health Act that no one knows exactly what it aims at accomplishing since millions of Americans (40 million) are still uninsured.

There are other types of leaders, such as transactional leaders, reformation leaders and situational leaders and contingency leaders.

## OBJECTIVES

As noted above, a critical aspect of leadership is goal setting. Having set goals there must be goal achievement. Leaders help their work group set goals and help them to achieve those goals. Not every person knows how to set goals and how to achieve those goals once set. Consider that in rural Alaska there is a whole lot of smoking of cigarettes, drinking of alcohol and taking of other drugs. A visit to a typical native village and perceiving the people smoking, drinking alcohol, doing drugs makes one wonder if the people have not heard that those activities are correlated with medical disorders, some of which are fatal. Alcoholism produces liver cirrhosis and damage to the brain and if the drinker is a pregnant woman damages the fetus, including fetal alcohol syndrome. The kids who take street drugs (cocaine, heroin, Amphetamines, marijuana and or sniff paints) are obviously damaging their brains and bodies. This problem can easily be perceived by anyone who has visited rural Alaska. There have been sociological and psychological studies telling us why native Alaskans engage in these self-destructive behaviors (their life span is 42 years whereas the life span of white Americans is 80 years). What is now needed is what is to do about the identified problems; how can the problems be solved?

Clearly, these problems can be approached to from many angles including education on the damages done to the human body by mood altering agents and treating those who are already psychologically and physiologically addicted to drugs.

Drug treatment requires establishing drug treatment centers and training drug treatment counselors who

provide counselling services to those addicted to drugs. That is the technical part of the equation. The leadership part of it is having persons with the vision of stopping the problem. It takes a few determined persons to say that we have to reduce addiction to drugs and go about doing what needs to be done to do so. Many can talk about the dangers of using drugs but few can actually take steps to help those who take drugs. Leaders would come up with visions of treatment centers, coming up with money to fund such centers, money to pay for drug counselors and hiring drug counselors to actually provide the drug treatments that the people are crying out for. Establishing the goal and enabling objectives, steps necessary for attaining the goal, is the task of leadership. And having done so figuring out a way to evaluate the activities meant to attain the goal to make sure that they are doing so and taking corrective action is part of leadership.

What are the goals, what are the enabling objectives, what is the evaluation method; what is the corrective action plan?

Established goals have to be adjusted to meet changes in the milieu. Society changes and its needs change; organizations must make changes that produce what a changed people demand or else they are no longer useful to the people and would go out of existence. Is the behavior of the employees in an organization conducive to the attainment of the organizational goals? The ability to analyze peoples behaviors and ascertain appropriate behaviors in a given work situation, figuring out ways to positively reinforce appropriate behaviors and extinguishing inappropriate behaviors is a critical part of leadership and management. Those who do the right things are rewarded (with praise, promotion to positions of higher responsibility and pay raise) while those who are unable to do what contributes to the goal attainment of the organization are helped to do so and failing to learn gotten rid of. In the work place folks hold their jobs to the extent that they do what they are hired to do, for the organization must do certain things if it is to stay in business. Identifying concerns and issues that come up as employees go about working towards organizational goals is a critical part of management. Once issues and concerns are identified doing something to respond to them is necessary to creating a positive work environment where all workers contribute optimally to their work. (See Kouzes and Posner, 2002).

## DECISION MAKING

Leaders and managers are good problem solvers; they perceive problems and come up with ways to solve them. Decision making (Blinn, 1980) requires having many alternative solutions to what needs to be done to solve a problem and choosing one or some alternatives and letting go of others and accepting the opportunity cost of those options not chosen. Participating in

decision making, cooperating with other persons in seeking appropriate solutions to the problem, assuming personal responsibility for the chosen solution instead of waiting for other persons to try to solve a problem and then blame them when they fail in doing so, is what characterizes good leaders. Good leaders motivate workers to doing their best, delegating responsibility where that needs to be done, organizing people and material in the pursuit of goal attainment. We are always deciding on what to do. This means that we have to come up with goals and objectives. And having done so, we have to come up with how to attain those goals and objectives. If you think about it, there are many things you could do to solve a problem. How do you choose one thing and not others? Decision making entails positing several alternative courses of action and looking at each course critically and considering their cost benefit realities. If I do this and not that what is the cost and benefit equation for me? Choosing to do one thing and not others means that one forgoes the benefits of what was not done. Leaders therefore must look at the various alternative courses of action available to them, do some cost-benefit analysis of each alternative and choose the one they believe best serves their needs. Consider this all too common problem in rural Alaska. In rural Alaska a lot of men abuse their spouses and children. What is the solution to this endemic problem? The answer seems simple enough: arrest the abuser and send him to jail. Abusers and batterers should not be allowed to do what they do. However, given the extended family nature of native communities the option of sending the abuser to jail may not be the best option. If a male, a father is sent to jail he probably will feel loss of face and upon release may not go back to his community; he may drift to the cities, say, to Anchorage and the chances are that he may lose contact with his children. Since he has been jailed and tagged a criminal he has nothing else to lose and may not care to be bothered by the need to take care of his children. He may become a homeless person seeking solace in alcohol. This means the loss of a community member and a loss of a father to his children. Given this cost, is there another option available to the community's leaders? How about providing him with domestic violence treatment and doing so within his community instead of transporting him to a jail hundreds of miles away from the only world he knows, his village?

Clearly, the offender is not to be allowed to continue abusing other persons but what needs to be done in each abusive situation is not as simple as sending him to jail. Whatever course of action is chosen has costs to the abuser, his spouse, children and the village as a whole. Suppose he is the only village carpenter and you send him to jail has the village not lost its only carpentry skilled labor, and if so who is to do his work for the village?. The point is that making decision as to how to intervene in this matter is not a simple matter. It takes a person with good judgment who takes all the ramifications of the choice been made into consideration

to decide the best choice to be made. Good community leaders are those who decide what serves their community interests rather than choose arbitrarily because an option seems the expected thing to do. (See Robinson and Clifford, 1974). Good leaders are paid to make choices. A choice could give advantages to the group or cause it headache. Persons that make good decisions are few. Understanding decision making is a very critical part of leadership.

## GROUP DYNAMICS

Leadership takes place within groups of human beings; leaders work with people to attain goals and must therefore understand a bit about human psychology especially social psychology (Hollander, 1978). This does not mean that they need to formally study social psychology but that they have to have a feel as to how people behave in groups. Group dynamics, that is, how people in groups behave is something we are all exposed to. At play, at school, on the job we are involved in group arenas and relate to other people. Each person in a group brings his already established personality to it and behaves as he normally behaves towards other people. Some persons are shy and keep quiet in groups, others are passive aggressive and do not say much because they are afraid that if they make waves they could be rejected by other group members and since they do not want to be rejected they keep quiet. However, if the group goes in a direction they do not want to go, their aggressive part kicks in and they would feel angry and do whatever they could to prevent the success of where the group is going. Some persons are assertive and generally express their opinions in group settings; they get their two pennies worth of opinion felt by all group members. Assertive persons generally influence the direction of their groups and thus feel efficacious and tend to support the direction their group is going for they feel that they participated in deciding that direction. Good leaders must have a feel as to how each group member behaves within his group (small group, not large groups where the leader cannot possibly know about all members' behavior patterns).

In group meetings, a good leader makes sure that he engages all members in whatever discussion is going on; he tries to get all the people to participate so that they are heard. He gets people to brainstorm and proffer their ideas on how to solve problems. (See March, 1965).

Consider goal setting. It is democratic to hear from all group members as to where they want to go and what goals they deem right for their groups. Not all goals are acceptable to all group members; leaders make sure that goals and decisions are made in a consensual manner, that is, a good leader makes sure that goals represent the choice of the majority of the group. (See, Robert, 1979).

In reaching decisions democratically tradeoffs are

made; bargaining takes place and compromises made so that even those whose ideas are not selected get the impression that aspects of their views were incorporated into the resultant decision. If a person feels that his ideas were not selected he tends to be angry and angry folks can work to prevent the attainment of group goals. One should never underestimate what one offended person can do to the health of a group (Jay, 1971).

The ability to participate in group processes is affected by the level of information available to group members. Those who possess more information than others on any given subject tend to be more vocal in articulating their views than those with no information on the subject. Leaders work to make information available to all group members so that they not only participate but do so effectively and do so with good information. Ability to facilitate group processes is a key attribute of leadership; facilitating group discussions, making sure that all members focus on the subject at hand and that all participate in the process is a skill that can be taught to group leaders. William Ouchi made these points rather excellently in his book, *Theory Z* (1981).

## COMMUNICATION

Organizations have mission statements, goals they exist to accomplish. Those goals and missions must be communicated up and down the organizational ladder. Those at the top of organizational pyramids tend to have more information than those at the bottom. For the organization to do its work well those with relevant information must communicate it to all members of the group. Keeping communication channels open, making sure that management communicates to the workers and that the workers communicate to management is crucial for organizational success. Communication is done in many ways, including written and oral. In organizations written memos are often the way management communicates with the employees; oral communication is taking place all the time when people talk to each other. Different people have different communication skills; leaders must have excellent communication skills; they must make organizational goals known to all members of the organization and make sure that all members understand what the organization exists to do and hold them responsible for doing it (Hawley and Hawley, 1975).

## ABILITY TO GIVE AND TAKE CRITICISM

Leaders must be able to give criticism and accept criticism. Insecure leaders often surround themselves with yes persons, those who are unassertive and do not criticize them, do not tell them what they are doing wrong. The leader must be able to accept constructive criticism for there is no way that a person can go through a week without making mistakes, mistakes that if other

people catch them and tell him about them and he corrects them, all group members benefit from such behavior. The health of organizations requires that all members be empowered, given the right to criticize their superordinates without fear of punishment should they speak up (lose their jobs).

Leaders, managers and supervisors are in a position to hire and fire subordinate workers. The decision to fire someone is not as easy as it sounds. People have attachments to each other and it is difficult for a manager to just let go of an employee who is not doing his work. Developing the courage to let go those who are not pulling their weight can be taught and learned and must be done or else deadwoods are kept around organizations and their continued presence lead to less productivity.

## LEADERS, ACCOUNTING, FINANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES

Leaders accomplish organizational goals with money. Money comes from somewhere and must be spent appropriately and accounted for. Appropriate accounting of how money received is spent must be instituted in work organizations (Drucker, 1999). Large work organizations generally have departments of accounting. That department keeps records of accounts receivable (money coming to the business) and accounts payable (money that the business pays out on a regular basis). Accounting departments have daily journals (ledgers) that keep records of moneys coming in and moneys going out of the business. At the end of the month accountants prepare monthly financial statements for managers and leaders (such statements show the money that came in that month and where they were spent and show variances in income and expenditure; they show how each department did moneywise during the month, whether it lived within its income or overspent). Accountants work with managers and leaders to prepare the organization's annual budgets and financial reports (budgets delineate money expected to come in during the year and where they would be spent...on areas like wages, benefit, rent and so on). The accounting department makes sure that the organization's incomes and expenditures are balanced.

Clearly, leaders and managers must know how to read accounting statements so as to understand how their monies are spent. Many businesses started by minority persons lack proper accounting procedures and expertise and that is always their doom, for they double dip and comingle monies and spend the organizations money recklessly and often go broke. Leaders need capital to achieve their goals. Where are such moneys obtained? Start-up capital usually come from the savings of the leaders and eventually from borrowings (from friends, banks etc.). If the business becomes a successful concern finance is obtained through issuing stocks and in some cases (governments) selling bonds.

Profitable organizations often have finance departments with financial officers (stock brokers) inventing their surplus monies. When monies are needed to expand old programs and or start new ones seeking monies from investors.

Non-profit organizations seek grants from those providing grants in their area of operation. Business may receive moneys from venture capitalists that are willing to take chances on them hoping to make profits in the future should the business succeed. Leaders must understand the nature of financial markets and ought to be able to ascertain where they can obtain finances for their business. They do not have to be financial wizards but they certainly need to have taken, at least, one course on business (corporate) finance, one course on accounting and a course on human resource and a course on organization behavior. Work organizations use people to attain goals and must understand personnel practices, especially the laws guiding human resource practices, hiring and firing and nondiscrimination and non-harassment policies etc. (See Pfeiffer and Jones, 1975).

## **NORMAL VERSUS NEUROTIC IDEALISTIC LEADERS**

Normal leaders see problems and seek ways to solve them; they solve them realistically; they do what needs to be done in our imperfect world; they work with imperfect people to accomplish their imperfect needs. They accept people as they are, imperfect and do not expect people to be perfect before they accept them.

On the other hand, are neurotic leaders who are pursuing perfection and posit perfect goals and expect people to pursue those perfect goals? First of all, there is no such thing as perfect goals; those are mental constructs and are not attainable in the real world of flesh and blood. Pursuit of imaginary perfect goals guarantees nonattainment of them hence failure and sense of frustration. Whereas in times of crisis neurotic leaders like Adolf Hitler come along and give folks imaginary ideal goals for them to aspire to and inspire them the fact is that ultimately they will fail for in the real world no one can attain those perfect goals. It is necessary to do what normal leaders do and pursue attainable realistic goals, not the grandiose goals of idealistic, neurotic leaders.

## **EVALUATION**

To evaluate is to judge something relative to how it is expected to be; there must be standards of expected performance for there to be a realistic evaluation. One must first posit a goal and posit standards of expected behavior and use them to judge actual behavior to see how they measure up. You cannot judge something to be good or bad unless you compare it to something. The something you compare actual behavior to is the goal

that the organization is meant to achieve. A leader must therefore make sure that all employees understands the goals and standards that they are expected to measure to before he uses them to judge their work performance.

Once goals are set and made known to work groups and steps to attain them are set, there must be on-going evaluation of performance to see to what extent the goals are achieved and how well the steps taken were. The evaluation process entails deciding who does the evaluation, how he gathers data, information on work performance and analyzes that information.

Appraising work activity, deciding what was not done as expected, establishing corrective action plans, and where original goals are deemed the problem adjusting and or changing the goals (initial goals may be unattainable and may have to be changed, and made attainable) is part of the evaluation process.

Ideally, every program within an organization ought to be evaluated, at least, once a year to see if it is performing the function it is meant to perform and if not corrected and or eliminated (Argyris, 1964). With the above general information on leadership let us now turn our attention to leadership in rural Alaska.

## **LEADERSHIP ISSUES IN RURAL ALASKA**

The observations made in this paper were based on the writer's experience living in rural Alaska, especially in the Yukon-Kuskokwim delta. He held a top management position and observed the behavior of those around him. In the nature of things his observations are anecdotal since they were not based on experiment where there was a control group to compare what he saw to. He hopes to in the future conduct a more rigorous research in which he tests his hypotheses. The reader may therefore see the observations made here as heuristic and not necessarily the truth (what is the truth?).

Let us begin our discourse by making a few historical observations. Alaska, meaning the great land, a word derived from Aleut Eskimos (Ransom, 1940), was inhabited by the various Indian and Eskimo groups, such as Athabascans, Yupik & Cupik, Inupiaq, Aleut & Alutiiq, Eyak, Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian before Russians under Bering came to them in 1746 (Borneman, 2003). Russia took over Alaska during the age of European conquests of non-European lands. Thus, Alaska was considered a Russian territory (Nordlander, 1994). Russians established their presence mainly along the coastal regions of Alaska and made little or no impact in interior Alaska (Black, 2004; Wharton, 1991). The coastal towns of South East Alaska and the Aleutian peninsular have beautiful Russian Orthodox churches everywhere (Afonsky, 1977).

In 1867 the government of Russia approached the United States Secretary of State, Mr. Seward and asked his government to buy Alaska. The US paid \$7.2 million dollars to acquire Alaska, a territory one fifth the size of



the lower 48 states of the United States (Grueining, 1954, 1967). After the purchase very little was done to colonize Alaska as white America did to the lower 48 states. Thus, Native Alaskans continued living pretty much as they had lived for thousands of years untouched by Western civilization. Nevertheless, a few American explorers and naturalists ventured into interior Alaska to find out what are in it.

In the late nineteenth century gold and other minerals were discovered in Alaska and there was a rush by men and women from the lower 48 states to Alaska. Within a short period of time the once unknown territory became host to many white Americans. Americans traversed the state searching for gold and other minerals (Morse, 2003). It should be observed that Alaska was the only United States territory that the Japanese invaded and stayed on for a while during the Second World War. The tip of the Aleutian Peninsular saw the United States military fight with the imperial Japanese army that had settled there for a while (Chandonnet, 2007). Alaska was also part of the Second World War in many other ways for it was from it that the United States government rushed much needed war fighting hardware to the embattled Soviet Union. During the cold war the landscape of Alaska was dotted with United States military bases for it was anticipated that Alaska could become the frontline between the USA and the USSR should war break out. To the present Alaska have many military installations. Indeed some of the ballistic missiles interceptors are based in Alaska.

Finally, it should be noted that like many other native persons in the Americas, the coming of the white man exposed Native Alaskans to diseases that were not common in their lands hence they had no immunity to them. Thus, many Native Alaskans died when they first met Europeans. Additionally, the Russians worked the Aleuts as if they were slaves and many of them died. (See Fortune, 1989).

## ISSUE ONE: CULTURE CONFLICT

During the early decades of the twentieth century, Christian missionaries were all over Alaska trying to convert the natives to Christianity; the various Christian denominations divided the state into areas of influence; each devoted its time and efforts to propagating its religion and converting the natives in its region to its particular brand of Christianity (Andrews, 1944).

The Christians established schools in the various native villages. Children were often taken away from their villages and sent to centrally located secondary schools, such as at Sitka. The goal was to make the children as American Christians as is possible and extricate them from their supposed pagan ways. Those children were taught English and essentially made to be ashamed of their native cultures (Williams, 2009). A generation of some Alaskan natives grew up speaking English and trying their best to seem like they are like the rest of

America. However, those native Alaskans left in their villages remained culturally different from other Americans. It is safe to say that many Alaskan villages pretty much remain different from mainstream American culture; they continue living as their ancestors lived. Of course, they have an admixture of native and American cultures. In a typical village is a school, a post office, a building housing government offices, usually social services. There is generally a bed and breakfast hotel where those visiting the village stay. The larger villages tend to have airstrips where bush planes, air taxis can land. Beyond this evidence of Americanism the natives essentially live as their ancestors lived for centuries. Indeed, many of them can only speak broken English (in addition to their native tongues).

Simply stated, many native Alaskans still live in their world; they are not necessarily part of the American mainstream culture. I lived at Bethel and from there visited most of the villages in the Yukon-Kuskokwim delta. Bethel is the unofficial capital of the Yupik Eskimo area of Alaska. From Bethel government workers take small planes (bush taxis) to the villages where Yupik Eskimos live. Bethel is the hub, the main city in the area. What struck me as I visited the various villages is that the Yupik (as well as other Eskimos, such as Inuit) live in a different culture; they are essentially not living in what we generally understand as the American culture. Many of them are of course making efforts to become part of American culture but, by and large, they still live in their culture and approach the world from the perspective of their cultures frames of references; their world views remain non-Western. By Western I mean acceptance of the scientific method (Popper, 1959) as the primary methodological approach to phenomena and a tendency to see the environment as outside human beings and as something to be exploited rather than coexisted with. The natives understand phenomena not as white America does but as their people do. Their mental framework is not the usual Western scientific-technological approach to phenomena but theirs. They construe themselves as part of nature and want to coexist with it without despoiling it. They look askance at any effort to exploit the environment for mineral resources or cut down the trees and kill the animals. To them nature contains their great spirit and it must be preserved and worshiped. Simply stated, these people do not perceive the world as Euro-Americans do (Catton, 1997). But to survive in white America controlled society the natives have to try their best to operate with the cultural parameters of white America. They do their best but it seems that something in them resent being made to deny their culture and pretend to live according to other people's cultural paradigm. They seem to have inner conflict, a sort of approach-avoidance relationship with white American culture. Approach because they must learn that culture to operate in white dominated America and avoidance because they would rather not do so. Given their apparent resentment of the dominant American culture they seem to have half-hearted

adherence to that culture. They try to operate in white American cultural milieu but still want to retain their native cultures. In the work arena they know that they must operate within the framework of Western cultural attitudes to work organizations. The American cultural attitude to work is that workers are like things; they are work instruments that the owner of capital, the employer uses in producing the goods and or services he produces and sells in a capitalist market. To the employer the worker is not that much different from the machine he uses in producing his goods. If the worker is able to perform the work specified by his job he is hired and is retained for as long as he is able to perform the job and when he is no longer able to do so he is gotten rid of. The American work place is not a charity house; the employer did not hire you because he likes you or wants to help you but because of what you can do for him. Can you help him produce what he is in the business of producing? If yes you are hired and kept but if not you are not wanted in his work arena. Essentially, the American worker is seen as a utilitarian appendage to the production of goods and services; there are no emotional and sentimental feelings towards the worker.

Management in typical American work organizations embody the Western attitude towards workers and also embody the Western view of human beings and phenomena in general (Ouchi, 1981). To the West the environment is outside the people and we are to exploit it for what it gives us. Indeed, the West seems to have a hostile attitude towards nature. It is as if nature is an enemy to be conquered and tamed. Nature is to be transformed to suit human needs. This Western attitude toward the environment is in sharp contrast to how Native Americans see nature. To them nature is sacred and is to be left as it is and preserved. Let it be noted that Native Alaskans did not develop the type of agricultural practices that cut down forests and planted crops (Naske & Slotnick, 2003). Instead, they took from the land what it gave to them and hunted animals for meat; they mostly lived hunters-gatherers existence before the coming of the white man to their world.

In Western work situations a worker is expected to be there on time, say, 8 AM and leave at 5 PM. The worker must be at his work station and do what he is assigned to do until it is time for him to go home. He may not leave his work station and if he does he risks being fired. He is expected to do so five days a week, four weeks a month and fifty weeks a year (he is generally given two weeks' vacation every year). In contrast, native populations have a different attitude towards work. Their men went hunting and killed moose, caribou and whales or fished salmon and other fish for food. They did so leisurely. The entire male of the village may go kill one moose and go home and eat it for as long as it lasts before they go on another hunting party. The women pick berries from the tundra. The salient point is that the natives did not have set time for going to work and how long they would stay on the job before they went home. They did not live by the clock as Western workers do. In

fact, during the summer months in Yupik territory the native workers often disappear from their jobs for weeks; they go hunting or fishing; they want to get sufficient meat and fish to be dried (at their various fish camps) for the coming six months of winter when folks pretty much stayed indoors. It takes a great deal of efforts to get the natives to come to work and to stay on the job for the required eight hours work day. Clearly, the natives are rent by culture conflicts; they would like to operate in mainstream American culture but would also like to live in their cultural world. They have a divided psyche; they are conflicted by the need to be Western or to be native. To be or not to be Western is their existential question. A people who are divided between two worlds' ways of doing things may not be able to do one of them well. Natives generally do not do well in Western world milieus; this is not because they cannot do the job but because in their minds are desire to do things their own way. As it were, natives feel angry that they are forced to live by other peoples cultural parameters and to deny their own culture. They are involved in an existential, life and death struggle to preserve their ancestors' ways of life. If they succeed in becoming thoroughly westernized their culture dies and if they refuse to be socialized to Western culture they remain on the margins of American society; indeed, if they do not incorporate aspects of white American ways into their cultures they may face extinction.

Animals that do not adapt to changes in their environment tend to die off, evolution biologists like Charles Darwin tell us. When the environment changes some animals change to adapt to it and survive, whereas those who do not change may not adapt to the changed exigencies of their environment hence die off. Life on earth is a grim struggle for survival and the fittest survive and the weak die. Many Natives are unable to cope with the intra psyche struggles going on in their minds. They are devastated by this life and death struggle. Unable to resolve this cognitive conflict some of them take to alcohol and drugs. Drugs and alcohol is sort of like a salve for their divided souls. They use drugs to obtain some surcease from their inner conflicts but at a severe cost to their bodies. The level of alcoholism, smoking and drugging in native Alaska communities is incredible. It came to pass that nonnatives often refer to Eskimos as drunken Eskimos. You see them drunk and staggering even in the cold months of winter. Some fall and are chilled to death.

Additionally, there is a whole lot of sex abuse of children in native communities (Doro, 2008). Apparently, some folks get drunk and rape children!

A complicating factor is that native cultures do not encourage assertiveness, the type seen in white Americans. Natives tend to be quiet and respectful of their elders. In the white world, on the other hand, assertiveness and aggressiveness is valued and rewarded. Natives are unable to be assertive and aggressive and thus are generally not seen as desirable employees by an American culture that hires those who

are bold and assertive. All said there is a culture war going on in the minds of Native Americans; this culture war impacts how they do their work in western work environments. The cumulative result is that they tend to be less productive than their regular American counterparts. The result is that they are not always considered the best prospects for hiring. Many white employers do not pay serious attention to them come hiring time and probably would not hire them unless pressured to do so by affirmative action programs. It came to pass that native Alaskans tend to be found mostly working in native corporations (in the 1972 Alaska land settlement Act, Congress give natives part of Alaska and set up native corporations to manage those lands; those corporations are generally run by Americans who have the required management skills; natives tend to work at the lower echelons of work organizations).

## ISSUE TWO: TRAINING NATIVES

In the overview of leadership and management the reader would have recognized one thing: it is Western conception of leadership and management that was described. At American schools of business administration Western approaches to leadership and management are taught. These approaches are pretty much what are practiced in American work places. Here is a question: how do Native Americans approach leadership and management? Wouldn't it be worthwhile to find out how native Alaskans views how human beings ought to be led. With clear understanding of how native Alaskans view leadership and management it seems necessary to incorporate aspects of it to extant Western approaches to leadership and management if natives are to feel like their world view is validated. Ignoring how Native Alaskans approach leadership and management and superimposing the Western approach on them probably offends their spirit and contributes to their tendency to passive aggressive relationship with their Western work bosses. The solution to the identified culture clash is not necessarily an either or one. Clearly, the natives have to live in the modern world and that modern world is shaped by Western values. Whether they like it or not they have to understand Western philosophy, psychology and approaches to work. In as much as they have to operate in a western environment, including work milieu they have to, willy-nilly understand Western leadership and management styles. Given their present lack in this area the simple solution is to train them. Instead of talking about what they are not good at, what needs to be done is to train them in Western leadership and management practices. This does not mean that they should ignore their traditional approaches to leadership and management but instead suggest incorporating their traditional patterns of leadership to their new work milieu. (See Weber, 1968). In their traditional societies their elders made decisions for their

people (Arnold, 2008). How can the wisdom of the elders be incorporated into present Western work situations?. Still, natives have to be trained in Western management practices while they figure out a way to inject their own practices into them. It is not the case that they have to be totally Western or totally native; the fact is that there is such thing as culture diffusion.

When two cultures meet they influence each other; they incorporate aspects of each other and in the end both change. Over time, no culture remains pristine (Campbell, 2008).

Native culture, all things being constant, will have to change; Western cultures are always changing. Indeed, what we currently call Western culture is an amalgam of borrowings from many cultures. What makes the West thick is its ability to borrow from all the people they have met. The American constitution, for example, is said to have been greatly influenced by the Native American governmental practices the men from Europe saw in the Americas, especially by the constitution of the Iroquois. In Europe they had kings who claimed to rule by divine rights but in America they saw Native Americans who ruled themselves democratically and emulated that practice. The salient point is that white Americans borrow whatever is good from other people and there is no reason why Native Americans should not borrow whatever they construe as good in white American management practices. Native Americans clearly need training in Western work practices and could use some socialization to Western work ways. They need to internalize how Westerners approach work and try to adjust their culture to it and in the process have Western culture adjust to their culture. In the real world what we have is thesis, antithesis and synthesis; the thesis (current culture) conflicts with the anti-thesis (new culture) and both of them are synthesized into new and unique cultural practices. Hegel made this point rather well in his book, *Phenomenology of mind*; Karl Marx in his book *Das Capital* built his view of society on it.

## ISSUE THREE: HIRING VILLAGERS

Given the lack of trained natives there is already a practice in rural Alaska of using paraprofessional natives in doing certain jobs. For example, a job that in mainstream America requires a master's degree in social work to do it is performed by natives with high school education. This practice is useful for if we wait until the local population has the skills set to perform needed jobs many jobs would go unperformed.

Moreover, it should be remembered that until recently many of the jobs performed by degree holding Americans were performed by non-degreed people. There is actually no evidence that you need MSW degree to do social work; the fact that we now require MSW degree to do social work is probably meant to offer jobs to those with such degrees; there is no evidence that those holding those degrees do better social work

than high school graduates.

Therefore, it makes sense to offer natives positions in their villages that they could do regardless of them not possessing college degrees. What seems necessary is to provide them with on-the-job training and ongoing supervision to make sure that they do what they are hired to do. At present many of the hiring agencies send those they hired in the villages to workshops in cities (Anchorage, Fairbanks and Juneau etc.). This is a good idea and under the circumstances is the best that can be done. If one is made a supervisor of a work force in the village it makes sense to send one to Anchorage to undergo one of those weekend workshops on the essentials of supervision.

Of course it would be nice if such persons have some college training in management but that takes a lot of time and money to accomplish. Moreover, there is really no empirical evidence suggesting that one needs more than high school education to do supervisory work. Both Bill Gates and Steve Jobs had less than one year of college education and could be said to be only high school educated. The giants of American industry, such as Henry Ford, John Rockefeller and others did not have more than high school education. Beyond professional fields such as medicine, law, engineering etc. it is doubtful that many extant jobs require all the college agrees that folks these days are required to have before they do them. Where is the evidence that one needs more than secondary schooling to be a police officer, fire man and prison warden? But these days you are likely to find those doing those jobs with strings of college degrees! In sum, use the skills of villagers to do jobs that they can do and provide them with on-going training and supervision. Evaluative mechanisms, however, must be built into their jobs to evaluate how well they do them. In so far that we are talking about leadership and management there ought to be a way to evaluate the quality of leaders in rural settings. Perhaps, the University of Alaska could establish an Institute for leadership training for rural Alaskans in Anchorage and invite villagers who hold leadership positions for occasional trainings, say, six weeks of intense training in leadership and management, and thereafter evaluate how well they learned and do their jobs.

#### **ISSUE FOUR: EVALUATION RESEARCH**

In the real world if a business embarks on doing something it must figure out a way to evaluate what it is doing to ascertain that it is doing it well. If a business is not doing what it sets out to do well it might go under; the market evaluates the business's performance. Thus, there must be built in ways to evaluate what the people in the business are doing in an ongoing manner and corrective actions taken to make sure tht the business is still producing what there are demands for so as to stay afloat. If you, for example, implement a rural leadership training program for rural Alaskan leaders at the University of Alaska, there has to be a way to figure out

that they are in fact doing what leaders are supposed to do? For example, a control group could be used to evaluate those trained. That is to say that the performance of a control group that did not participate in the training program is compared to those who participated in it to ascertain who is doing a better job at leadership matters.

To accomplish this task, we first have to define the traits of leaders and define what leaders do and use those criteria to judge what the trained leaders and non-trained leaders do. It is clear to me that an institute of leadership at a university could be assigned the task of performing on-going evaluation research on leadership practices in rural Alaska.

#### **ISSUE FIVE: SECURING GRANTS TO DO EVALUATION RESEARCH**

Doing research requires funds, so how would the institute of leadership secure funds with which it performs its evaluative function? It could do so by writing grant proposals and hopeful securing funds from grantors willing to fund it. It should also have some government funding. It is true that in these days of diminishing resources it is difficult to secure grants but the fact is that like all things in life the more one seeks something the more one is likely to get it. Many institutions hire development officers who are grants writers; they are charged with writing many grant proposals. If twenty grant proposals are written in a year the chances are that one may be secured.

#### **LEADERS AS GREAT LISTENERS AND COMMUNICATORS**

There are those who say that leaders are great listeners; that they are people who really, really listen and hear what other people say and try to help them realize their wishes. Others say that leaders are great communicators who are able to articulate what other people wish to do and help them do it. All these are true. The Native Alaskans I know are great listeners and truly pay attention to what folks say and not just jump in with their own views. They would make great listening leaders.

#### **SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND NATIVE ALASKANS**

There is a concept that leaders are servants of those they lead. This makes a lot of sense in that a leader does not just do his own thing but does what serves the interests of those he leads. The leader is a servant of those he leads. The term minister is used to denote leaders in many parliamentary democracies, such as Britain; that term actually means servant; the leader then is a public servant.

In other contexts, it is said that leaders should be

followers in the sense that they follow their group. A leader ascertains where his group wants to go and follows it and acts as a mere facilitator in helping the group to go to where it wants to go to. A democratic leader is not the boss of those he leads but serves them. However, this concept of the leader as a servant can be overdone for the very term leader is derived from leading. A leader is in front leading a group to a destination, motivating them to come with him to where they are going. In this sense then a leader is always the front person and not a person in the back seat. The person in the back seat is not leading any one to any goal.

## LEADERS AS CONFLICT RESOLUTION MANAGERS

In human groups there are always conflicts; people have different interests and therefore sometimes conflict arise. People need conflict resolution managers and leaders serve that function. To serve that function leaders must have excellent interpersonal skills. To have excellent interpersonal skills one must be able to relate to people assertively and not avoid people. Looking at native Alaskans and their tendency to respect their elders and take directions from them it seems to me that they would make excellent servant leaders. Perhaps, they could make contribution to the idea of leaders as servants.

The Native persons I worked with tend not to be egotistical and narcissistic; they tend to be motivated to serve other people's needs. That quality is not always what we see in mainstream America where leaders are often folks with ginormous and humongous egos who feel that they know what is good for the people.

Native Alaskans could teach all of us something about servant leadership. These gentle and loving people will yet change our conception of leadership so that our future leaders are men and women who serve social interests and not just stroke their egos, pride and self-interests.

## DISCUSSION

Leaders who are in rural Alaska often feel cut off from what is going on in the larger world and experience the urge to return to that world. They feel restless, for part of being a leader is being in an environment where one interacts with one's peers and colleagues. Local politics, especially native politics in rural Alaska is often not especially friendly to outside talent; the locals appear to obtain a sense of efficacy from exercising hostile control over imported leaders rather than working with them to accomplish organizational goals. Thus, such leaders may leave and return to cities, such as Anchorage or go to the lower forty eight states. The result is that rural Alaska experiences dearth of quality leaders. The absence of high caliber leaders in rural Alaska means that those functions performed by such leaders are not properly performed; second rate stringers are often left to do what first rate stringers ought to be doing hence

poor delivery of needed services in rural Alaska. How can high caliber leaders be attracted and retained in rural Alaska?.

As noted above, Alaska was acquired by the United States government and belongs to the people of the United States. That makes doing anything on the land a national issue. Thus, the national debate as to whether to drill for oil in ANWAR (Kaye, 2007)! Every American feels that he has a stake in how the lands of Alaska are utilized after all it theoretically belongs to him and his permission (via Congressional approval) must be obtained (Haycox, 2002). This leads to deadlock and needed developments not taking place in Alaska. As we talk, there is a battle going on as to whether to allow the construction of a pipeline to carry natural gas from the slope to the southern part of Alaska. As expected, many Americans who know nothing about the oil business intone with how such construction is a great disaster for the environment. Yet such persons decry the high cost of oil and gas but would not do something about it if it means, as they see it, desecrating their beloved natural Alaska. In the meantime the nation pours money to Middle Eastern countries buying their oil! The politics of oil in Alaska is a serious business (Coate, 1991; Busenberg, 2013). Some of the rabid environmentalists in the lower forty eight states literally would like to transform the entire state of Alaska into one wild life preserve, parkland. The matter is complicated by Native Alaskans respect for their lands and investment in not spoiling it by those interested in development and modernization.

The politics of land use is a serious business in Alaska. What elsewhere entails only securing a municipality's permission to build something on a piece of land, in Alaska entails getting permission from not only local governments but the federal government itself? The result is that little or no developments of the land are made; God, to build a road or bridge several government agencies must approve its construction! Alaska is one of the country's least developed states; yet it has oil and other natural resources in abundance and development of which would make the state one of the richest in the land (McBeath, 2008). But who can extract the oil and other natural resources when even folks living at Boston, Massachusetts feel that they need to give their approval before any one does something to their land, Alaska? It is as if folks in the lower 48 states are compensating for the mistakes they feel that they made in over developing their lands and now want to prevent any kind of development in Alaska. This is a mess. Something got to give for people live in Alaska and they could use necessary development of their state; for one thing such developments would generate good paying jobs for the local inhabitants of the great land.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper I looked at the nature of leaders and leadership. Having provided a broad overview of leaders

and what they do I looked at the leadership situation in rural Alaska and pointed out its leadership issues and challenges. Having identified some of the leadership issues facing rural Alaska, some corrective suggestions were presented. Making suggestions are easy, what is difficult is to decide which ones are actually useful and effective. There needs to be built in ways to test the suggested model on how to go about training rural Alaskans.

It is recommended that an institute of leadership training for rural Alaskans be established at the University of Alaska and that it is assigned the task of not only training rural Alaskan leaders but have a section that does evaluation research on the program. The institute could be funded with a combination of funds from the government and from private grantors able to provide funds for leadership training and evaluation. It is generally difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of leaders, for such evaluation often entails presuppositions of what constitutes effective leadership. Deciding who is a good leader or not is often dependent on the evaluator's political ideology. Conservatives and liberals have different perceptions of good leadership. For example, many conservatives consider Ronald Reagan the best leader of America during the twentieth century, whereas liberals would vote for Franklyn Delano Roosevelt. Each party evaluates leadership effectiveness from the parameters of its accepted political-economic ideology.

That been said, most people correctly identify persons whose leadership of their community or work organization made a difference in their lives. Thus, regardless of the difficulty of deciding the effectiveness of leadership we ought to persist in trying to ascertain what constitutes effective leadership in the state of Alaska, especially in rural Alaska.

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