

About Manito-wish Collaborative Leadership

Why Collaborative Leadership?

To collaborate simply means to “work together”. Collaborative Leadership is a process-oriented approach that is three-dimensional in which leadership flows around, and through, a group of people according to the strengths of each individual member. It brings back a sense of community and teaches people what it means to be interdependent.

In an ideal community of collaborative leaders, it is not possible to pick out “one leader.”

Everyone in the group is seen as having the capacity to lead and the responsibility for getting a job done rests with the entire group. A sense of trust between group members is nurtured to allow for an environment where risk taking is valued, where direct communication is achieved, and where conflict is worked through instead of ignored.

Collaborative Leadership is based on the following fundamental beliefs:

- 1 Everyone has the capacity to lead.
- 2 Increasingly, leadership will come not from a position of authority, but from within a group.
- 3 In order to learn how to lead, one must have the opportunity to lead.
- 4 Leadership is an act of risk taking.
- 5 Leadership involves an action orientation.
- 6 Leadership takes place in the context of relationships.
- 7 Learning to be a leader is a lifelong journey that begins with the question, “What is leadership?”

Your Role as a Collaborative Leadership Facilitator

To fully realize a community of collaborative leaders, one must examine one’s role as a teacher. When living collaborative leadership, it is necessary for the teacher to step out of the traditional role of information provider and step into the role of facilitator. To “facilitate” means to “make easy.” Although it may not always be easy, it is essential that the facilitator allow group members to make mistakes in order to learn from those mistakes. Participants need to feel comfortable with each other in order to take risks, such as making and recognizing mistakes. One of the facilitator’s responsibilities in this approach is to help a group develop that sense of trust. That sense of trust is created and collaborative leadership issues are addressed through the use of the **Collaborative Leadership Model**.

How does the Collaborative Leadership Model work?

Learning to be a leader takes practice. It is necessary, then, to provide people with opportunities to lead. Since collaborative leadership takes place within the context of relationships, it is vital to spend time building relationships. Within any group that is engaged in a common task, in order to steer clear of the trappings of autocracy, group members must become versed in the group process. Barriers to efficient communication must be addressed and the foundations of mutual trust and respect need to be built.

The Collaborative Leadership model has four stages of development:

- 1 Trust
- 2 Test
- 3 Try
- 4 Transfer

It begins with group building and **trust**. This is achieved through the use of icebreakers, deinhbitizers, and trust activities. Once a group has a sense of cohesion, they practice or **test** the Seven Qualities of a Collaborative Leader.

Seven Qualities of a Collaborative Leader

- 1 Builds a shared vision
- 2 Builds models...tries it, changes it, tries it again
- 3 Shares a common space with others
- 4 Lets others amplify their abilities
- 5 Knows that followership and leadership go together
- 6 Doesn't collaborate to turn out the lights
- 7 Celebrates successful collaborations

These qualities and collaborative leadership skills are taught through use of activities, such as problem-solving initiatives, designed to create an opportunity for participants to learn from their experiences. Additionally, during these beginning phases of Trust and Test, certain questions must be answered: What does it mean to be a member of a group? What does it mean to be a leader? What is a collaborative leader? How can I be' a collaborative leader?

After much trial and error, reflection, discussion, and sharing of insights, participants **try** their new skills in real-life situations. This means using the model as part of what already occurs in an existing environment as a whole. In order to accomplish this feat, it is necessary to create an atmosphere that is both physically and emotionally safe. The group and individual needs must be looked after.

Finally, participants are given opportunities to **transfer** all that they have learned. This involves the integration of collaborative leadership into everyday life. The Seven Qualities of a Collaborative Leader become unconscious and natural. This is only arrived at after a history of practice with the skills and collaborative leadership is evident in all parts of a person's life—at home, in the community, and at work or school.

Although access to the Collaborative Leadership Model begins with group building and trust,

every group is different. Some groups proceed through the phases quickly and easily. Others struggle with one or more issues at a given phase. It is always advisable to begin with Trust and allow a group to proceed at its own pace. Every time a group convenes, they must be considered a new group, especially if members have left or new-members are added to the group. Therefore, if a group has had multiple experiences with the model, it may be possible to begin at Trust and move directly to Try. The telltale sign is whether or not the group members are comfortable with the issues at each phase. For example, if members are name-calling or nursing hidden agendas, they will need more work with the activities and issues surrounding put ups and sabotage of the group process. Without this foundation, trust will never be established and collaboration is impossible.

As with any type of skill development, the more a person uses a skill, the better he/she becomes at it. After all, learning to sound out words is just the beginning of learning to read. Leadership is similar. Once an individual learns collaborative leadership skills, constant use affords an opportunity to gain expertise as a leader. Every day brings new insights and a deeper understanding of what it means to lead collaboratively. Eventually, leading collaboratively becomes akin to breathing—it becomes internalized through use. Without practice, it atrophies. When initiating a community building process with a group, it is necessary, to establish certain ground rules. The-ultimate goal is to create an environment where everyone feels physically and emotionally safe. Once a safe atmosphere is achieved, participants are more willing to take risks, such as making mistakes and trying new ideas. The act of risk taking encourages emotional growth and aids in building confidence. There are two main tools that are helpful when engaged in the community building process: the “Full Value Contract” and “Challenge by Choice” (described below).

Collaborative leadership exists within the context of relationships. If a group can develop trust, then risk taking is encouraged and personal growth can occur. The Collaborative Leadership Model provides a structure through which one can teach leadership experientially. With experience, group members can develop their skills until collaborative leadership becomes a part of their lives.

What benefits will all of us gain from leading each other collaboratively?

Increased communication levels, greater understanding of group work, trust between participants, willingness to try, higher levels of self-confidence and stronger leaders.

What tools will we use to make all this happen?

Many! We are each other’s greatest resource, but we also depend on various leadership activity props, the Full Value Contract, small group discussions, action planning, and keeping journals. Other group adventures can also be used for “teachable moments” and leadership metaphors, as well as fun!

Where will the activities and this type of leadership training take place?

Any new environment, like Camp Manito-wish, provides wonderful places for participants to grow away from their known and familiar environment. We will take advantage of various

outdoor spaces like the low and high challenge courses and greater wilderness, and indoor spaces like the classrooms in the Manito-wish Leadership Center.

What if anyone is not comfortable with all of the activities?

All of the activities are governed by the Challenge By Choice principle. Although we recognize that to grow one must reach outside his or her comfort zone, not everyone has to reach the same distance. The concept of Challenge by Choice allows each person to be in control of his/her level of participation. It means that a person may choose what he/she wishes to share with the group about him/herself. It does not mean that a person sits idly while the group goes about its business. No matter what level of participation an individual chooses, he/she is still part of the group. Although we encourage full participation, there are many different ways in which to participate and still be an active member of the group.

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