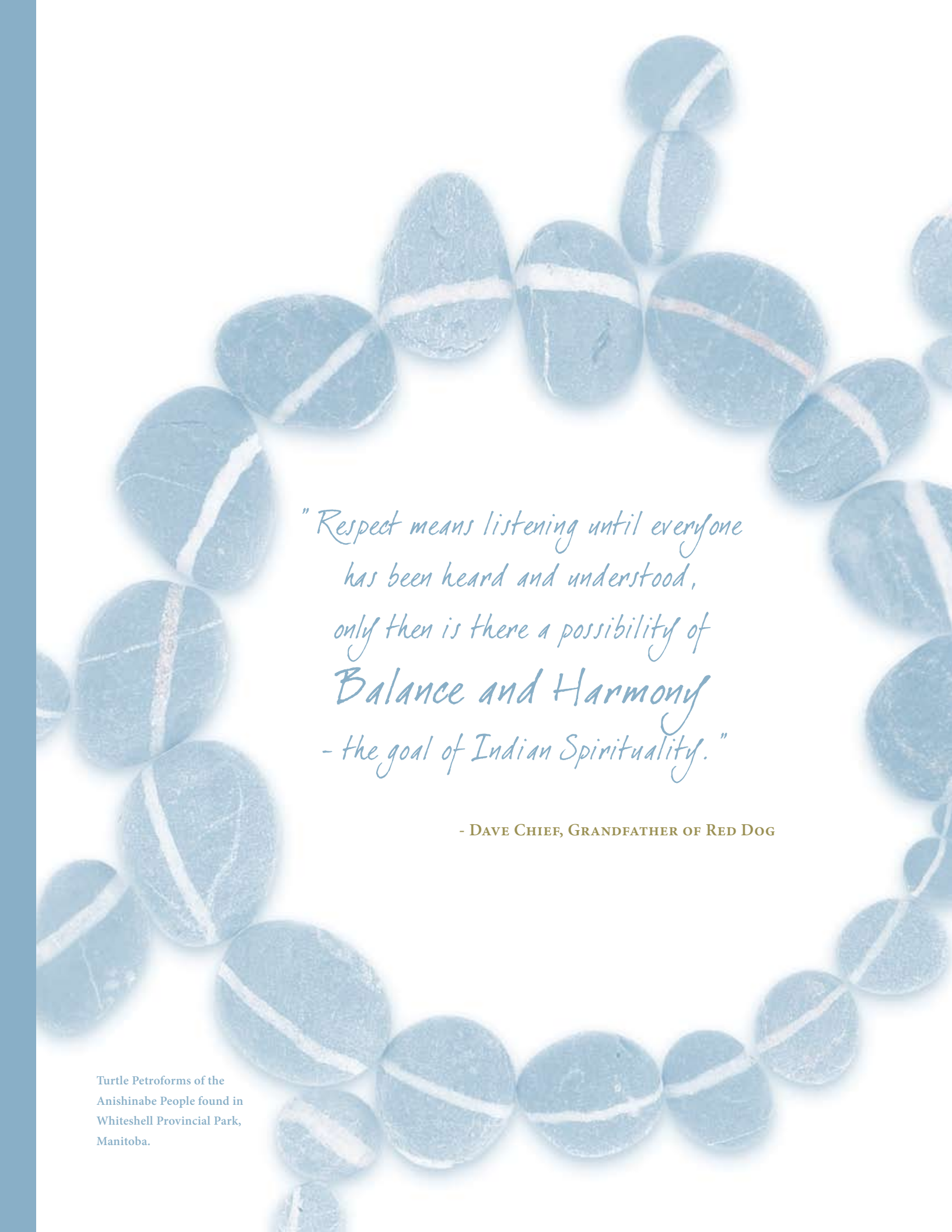




*Moving Toward a Stronger Future:*

**AN ABORIGINAL RESOURCE GUIDE  
FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

*[www.aboriginalchange.com](http://www.aboriginalchange.com)*



*"Respect means listening until everyone  
has been heard and understood,  
only then is there a possibility of  
Balance and Harmony  
- the goal of Indian Spirituality."*

**- DAVE CHIEF, GRANDFATHER OF RED DOG**

Turtle Petroforms of the  
Anishinabe People found in  
Whiteshell Provincial Park,  
Manitoba.

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# Moving Toward a Stronger Future...

*"There are many different interpretations, but from our perspective the turtle is a significant and powerful symbol that we honour in our ceremonies. The turtle is central to the creation story when the land was built upon the back of the turtle; and this is why we call Mother Earth by her name: Turtle Island. It means our people were built upon a strong foundation; and so the strength of our people is signified by the turtle because of our close connection to the land..."*

**- ELDER CHARLES SCRIBE  
(CREE/LAKOTA)**

Churchill, Manitoba

# Introduction

Aboriginal communities are going through accelerated change across Canada. Each community is at a different stage in their development. When we take a step back into history we can see how as independent Nations we were quite inter-dependent with creation and dependent on one another for survival. This whole interaction was disrupted with the onset of a whole range of impacts from contact with European explorers, settlers, missionaries from diseases of every kind to Residential schools... and the list goes on. The disruption was so damaging that every Aboriginal community in Canada has wounds of one kind or another that they are still dealing with today. But, the healing journey is moving along at different rates for each community and we are reclaiming our rightful place in the country and committing to positive change. We are taking greater strides in leadership, re-organization, and getting back to the principles and values that helped us thrive over many thousands of years.

This resource tool has been created with all of this in mind.

We, a small group of First Nation and Métis citizens came together to create this guide to help each community on their journey to a stronger tomorrow. Whether you are just beginning in your development, or well on your way, we have pulled together tools for change that can assist you and your community to build even greater momentum.

In our discussions with our fellow First Nation and Métis community members, we were told very clearly that whatever we developed had to have the following *Guiding Principles* if this resource tool was to be effective. It needed to:

- Be Holistic
- Be Culturally Relevant
- Encourage Community Involvement
- Recognize the Gifts and Strengths of Individuals and Communities
- Be Respectful of each Community's current state of Development
- Be developed *by* and *for* Aboriginal people

Throughout this guide, we have tried very hard to respect and be consistent with these Guiding Principles.

We invite you now to browse through our menu to view what we have created and gathered and to begin using these tools for your community's benefit.

*Thank You!*

## a) Background Information:

In the summer of 2010, Public Safety Canada - Ottawa, provided funding to the Cree Nation Tribal Health Centre to develop a strategic tool to assess Aboriginal Communities and their readiness for change and to begin or continue the process of mobilizing and developing their communities. The Cree Nation Tribal Health Centre, in turn, contracted Little Black & Associates to conduct two initial focus group workshops and held several interviews with First Nations and Métis representatives from British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario and the Atlantic Region, with the goal of capturing their knowledge and expertise. Several common themes emerged, and among them was a clear direction that whatever was created had to

be easy to use, have several entry points (where to begin) and be flexible enough so that communities could benefit from these resource tools in their own process of change.

A number of common threads emerged in the process that suggested ***An Aboriginal Community Development Approach*** that incorporated the following key elements:

- Start with raising awareness in the community
- Obtain buy-in from the community and its leadership
- Help to build trust
- Use clear communication methods within the community and extending outwards (beyond the community)
- Promote early, active involvement of community members - especially the youth
- Provide a focused vision, goals & objectives
- Lead by a core group of committed community members

This guide, therefore, follows the very simple, valuable advice provided by the participants of this project. Every effort was made to honour their knowledge and experience.

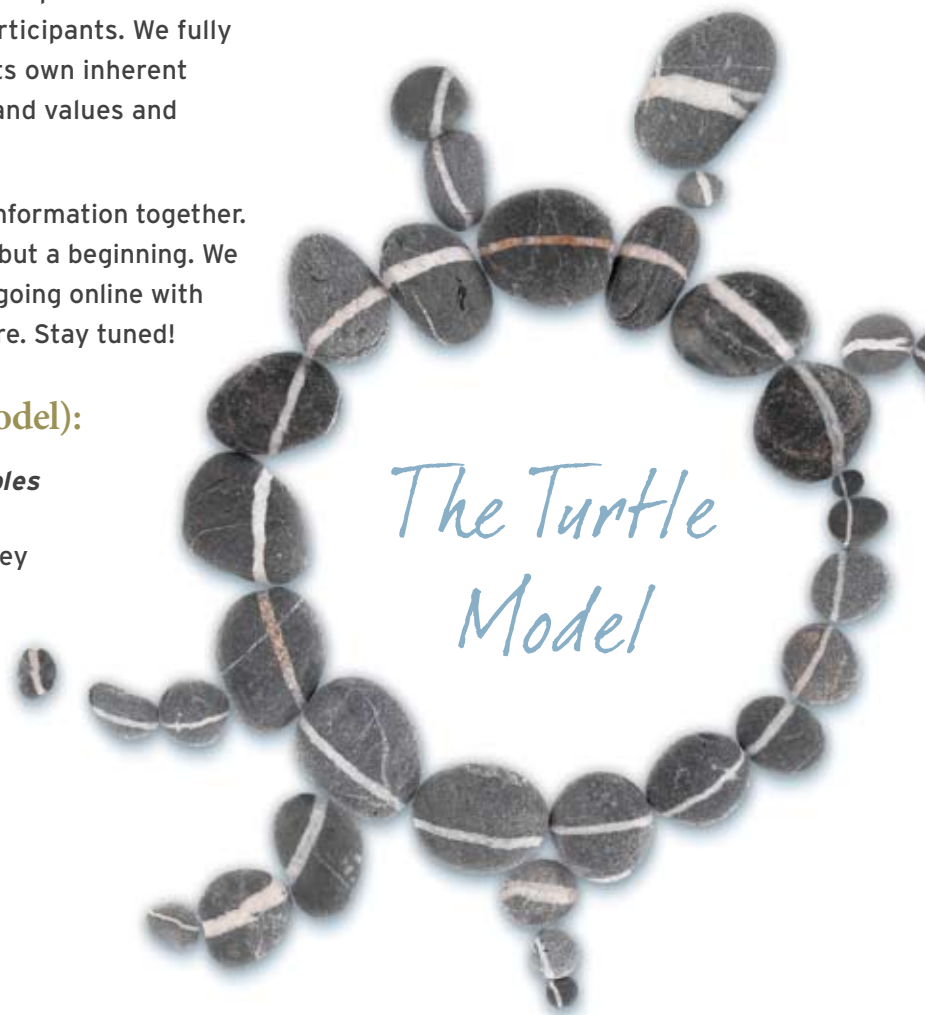
We, at Little Black Bear and Associates, took a good look at what was currently available in communities - along with a few good resources that had been previously developed such as the CARING Kit developed by the First Nations & Inuit Health Branch. We combined this with our experience and knowledge in facilitating and mobilizing organizations and communities and have developed this resource guide for Aboriginal communities to use. Hopefully we have included all of those important elements suggested by our core group of community participants. We fully respect that every community is unique, has its own inherent strengths, possesses the capacity to change, and values and desires a better future for their children.

This is our first attempt at pulling this kind of information together. It is not a comprehensive study by any stretch but a beginning. We shall be building on this process and hopefully going online with the same content on a website in the near future. Stay tuned!

## **b) Description of the Framework (Model):**

The framework is built on the ***Guiding Principles*** mentioned above. The model we have used is simple. It takes the form of a turtle with six key entry points: the head, the tail, and the four limbs. The over-arching shell also contains broader themes that are basically common concepts that affect every stage of the development process. Think of them as belonging to the big picture or the “grand scheme of things”.

Each component of the Framework (model) is explained below:



## The Turtle – 7 Components for Change



**The Turtle's Shell: (The Community & Big Picture)** - The protective shell of the turtle represents the community; and a healthy community is the protector of its own people. The shell also points to the big picture or the broad scope of matters in the community. Our participants identified a number of key aspects of a community that can be summed up in the following statement:

*"A strong, healthy and vibrant community has sound leadership, essential facilitation skills, is well organized, and ready to move forward guided by core values." Each of these main components is outlined in the shell section.*



**Upper Right Limb: (Taking a Look - Determining Where the Community is at)** -

The upper right limb of the turtle represents tools of assessment or taking stock of where your community is currently situated in its development. These tools are about exploring your community's history, mapping out the assets, strengths, gifts, and opportunities in the community, discovering how community systems work, and creating an inventory of resources.



**The Lower Right Limb: (Creating the Environment for Change)** - The lower right limb of the turtle represents creating the right environment for change. In order for the community to embark on a journey of development, the timing and conditions must be right for change to take place. Much like tilling the ground to prepare it for planting, the community must take steps to prepare for moving forward together. This involves building trust, positive relationships, partnerships, teamwork or working collaboratively together, listening to the voice of the people in the community, creating a core group of committed individuals, planning the first meeting, incorporating strong communication strategies, and making presentations and public speaking skills.



**The Upper Left Limb: (Mobilizing the Community)** - After the right conditions for change exist in the community, the next step is to mobilize all the available resources (financial, human, physical, etc.). The upper left limb of the turtle represents this component. To begin, we have outlined how to get started, find the community champion(s) or key people to make things happen and obtaining their buy-in to the development process and finally, engaging the community in committing to mobilizing its resources.



**The Lower Left Limb (Planning for Change):** The lower left limb signifies concrete planning for change. These are specific processes that begin to bring the plans of the community into focus. To do this, we explain how to develop a focus question for any session; how to create the vision and statement of purpose (sometimes called the "mission statement"); how to set goals and objectives; and finally, ending with some concrete advice on how to create a plan of action to move the community forward.



**The Tail: (Overcoming Pitfalls)-** The tail of the turtle signifies the challenges and obstacles that may need to be overcome. These are called pitfalls. We provide some ideas to help your community think about personal and community healing; conflict resolution; dealing with divisions, resistance to change; and criticism within the community; dealing with staff turnover and overcoming fears. Some of these pitfalls are going to take generations to deal with but the key point is to carry on with developing your community in spite of these obstacles. The Elders told us we should not wait for everyone to heal before you begin. They are right, the more you keep working at developing your community and yourself as an individual, despite these obstacles, the better it will be for your community's future.

*The Head of the Turtle: (Leadership & Taking Action)* - Finally, the head of the turtle is about leadership and taking action - the head greatly influences and oversees the process of development. This means the community is ready to move forward by taking action, evaluating its progress, celebrating successes, obtaining leadership support, making presentations and public speaking, and writing a funding proposal.



The tools we have included at each of these entry points of the turtle - including the broader concepts - will hopefully assist your community in the process of working toward bettering your community. This model does not suggest that beginning at any one point means that any individual community is better than another, but simply that they are beginning at different stages and working toward one key, significant goal: "creating a better future for our children" (*Elder participant*).

### c) How to Use this Resource Guide

Each module is divided into two components: "*The Story*" and "*Tools & Tracks*". The *story* provides background information and "food for thought" on the subject. The tools and tracks section consists of practical steps and processes to assist you in focusing on a particular topic. This may include focus questions that may get you thinking and moving in a certain direction. We called it *tracks* because, if you implement these ideas, it begins to take you down a path... and when you travel a path you most always leave tracks or signs behind that some activity was undertaken or something was accomplished. These tracks are indicators of progress.

Finally, we have included quotes that offer kernels of wisdom and experiences. These came from our participants and others that have shared their wisdom on a particular topic.

### d) A Comment about Community Development:

This resource manual has been written to appeal to individuals. After all, individuals read things - people don't usually read something like this document as a group. Therefore, we encourage you as an individual in your community, or as a person interested in assisting others in their development, to ensure that when you start on a process of development that you have the right people involved. Certainly, smaller teams within your community can utilize these tools in their particular settings. For example, if you are the Coordinator of a Program, you can take these tools and put them to good use with your team or with a group that you work with such as an established Committee. Without a doubt, there are many ways this resource tool can be utilized and you are free to try any approach that you think will work in your community. We do encourage you, however, to gather support to begin any community-wide initiative. This may mean seeking the Chief & Council's or the Community Council's support through a resolution. Or simply creating a briefing note requesting support. Or it may mean forming the Core Group that we speak of in Section 4. *d) Creating a Core Group of Committed Individuals*. To ensure your community has a good start (or continuation), pull together the right people and obtain support from the right leaders to maximize your community's development process and a greater chance of achieving success.

As a community member, you are in the best position to determine what the best course of action will be to obtain buy-in and support for a community development initiative. We strongly urge you to pursue the avenues that will garner the greatest support from within your community. Clear communication is the key to any successful endeavour in any community.

Throughout the resource manual, we have indicated where some sessions may or may not require a facilitator. While other sections do not indicate whether a facilitator or some other

resources are needed. We leave it to you and your community to decide on the best way to deliver any section of this manual. You may refer to the Lead Facilitator in Section 12 (About & Contact Us), a Regional Facilitator that has worked with your community, or a key individual in your community that knows the proper protocols (steps to respect and follow) to begin any development work on behalf of the community.

To get any community development initiative or project moving in your community, we recommend that the focus be on first determining what is needed or desired and whom it is that can lead or support the developmental work. Let this be your starting point. Get that Core Group of Committed Individuals together, get your vision in focus, and start building there onwards as a community.

## 2. The Turtle's Shell: The Community & Big Picture

*"Big thinkers always know where they're going, even if they don't know exactly how they're going to get there. They know that you cannot achieve what you cannot define, and they go out of their way to define exactly what success means to them..."*

- JOHN ASSARAF & MURRAY SMITH

All Aboriginal communities are in various stages of development. Some have created methods of their own to help their community grow; many more have forged relationships with outside agencies, government departments, and organizations to build up their community such as housing, roads, office buildings, administration, etc. Effective community leaders draw on their experiences and utilize their community's strengths to build and enhance their community. No matter where they are in the process of development, these visionary leaders always have the big picture in mind and make decisions by always consulting their people - especially their Elders. But, they also have the pulse of the youth and understand how integral they are to the future of the community. This has been going on for generations. Yet, there are some communities still struggling to begin and wondering where to start. This resource guide was created to help your community begin, or to continue on from where you are situated now in the development process.

The "big picture" is about recognizing that each community is unique and at a different stage in its growth. Each community can therefore take the next step forward to become