

# JAM

THE JOURNAL OF ABORIGINAL MANAGEMENT ISSUE 17 OCTOBER 2015

## COMMUNICATIONS

CREATING, MANAGING AND CONTROLLING YOUR MESSAGE  
IN A SOCIALLY CONNECTED WORLD

*Communication: The Hardest Simple Thing You'll Ever Do*

*The Art of Communication is The Language of Leadership*

*The Power of Your Emotional Intelligence*



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*Building a Community of Professionals*

## JAM THE JOURNAL OF ABORIGINAL MANAGEMENT

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# COMMUNICATION: THE HARDEST SIMPLE THING YOU'LL EVER DO

WAYNE K. SPEAR

## COMMUNICATION IS BOTH SIMPLE AND COMPLEX.

**SIMPLE, IN THAT IT MAY BE ELEGANTLY DEFINED AS THE VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL EXCHANGE OF IDEAS, INFORMATION, FEELINGS, THOUGHTS, AND BELIEFS. COMPLEX, IN THAT FEW OF US COMPREHEND ITS WORKINGS.**

Before there were words, there was homo sapiens. Our survival depended upon an ability to perceive and to interpret the non-verbal cues of our fellow humans. That is why, to this day, less than ten percent of our communication is accomplished by words. Gestures, body language, and tone provide more than 90% of the meaning we parse from our day-to-day interactions. Words, it happens, are Johnny-come-latelies.

We misunderstand, and we are misunderstood. We struggle to be clear and persuasive, not always with success. We present the right message to the wrong audience, and the wrong message to the right audience. Our carefully crafted message falls upon deaf ears. We speak from the podium, and up come the smart phones. Why don't people care? Communication, we discover, is difficult.

Marketing experts tell us that sellers fail by not speaking the language of buyers. Advertising experts point out that it can take as many as twenty repetitions of a call-to-action to get a conversion. In the workplace, communication failure is often at the root of low morale, mistrust, project failure, sluggish productivity, staff turnover, and interpersonal conflict. Communication breakdown can be deadly. Worst of all, in most cases we are unaware that it's even happening.

This issue of JAM considers the world of communication. In my work with finance and management professionals, I have unearthed the consensus that communication is the business of "getting your message out." Accurate though this is, there are other important facets of the topic. At the top of the list is getting the message *in* – also known as listening. Effective organizations begin by listening to, and understanding, the needs of the people they exist to serve.

Robust communication policies and protocols do not restrict themselves to the effort of transmitting your messages to the outside world. Attention is given to internal communication, within and throughout the organization – because your staff are also a component of your audience. The bi-directional flow, between the organization and the outside world, is the second sphere of focus. Third is the public conversation – the perceptions, beliefs, conceptions (or misconceptions), and unfulfilled needs of your target audiences.

In each of these spheres, your challenge is to apply the appropriate mode of communication expertise.

- » The work of managing internal communication is **Organizational Development**.
- » The work of managing the effective, bi-directional flow of information is **Public Relations**.
- » The work of understanding your audience's needs and perceptions is **Marketing**.

The illustration on the next page is meant to show the dominant communication focus of each sphere. There is however overlap. Effective marketing, for example, requires good public relations. Good internal communications is furthermore the foundation of your marketing and PR strategies. The point is that you need all three, and that together, these three facets of a comprehensive communication strategy will help you to understand, and to be understood. That, in a phrase, is the goal of all communication.

The articles of this issue look at communication from a variety of perspectives. That is because each organization, and each community, has its unique communication needs, challenges, and opportunities.



Sarah Robinson writes about using social media, in “The Toquaht Nation: Communicating Through Change.” Membertou First Nation’s Mike McIntyre reflects on what he’s learned about communicating financial information to the community. In her article, “Strategic Public Relations within a Tribal Nation: Promoting our stories, promoting our success,” B. Lynne Harlan provides practical advice on working with media and Ismo Heikkila, of T.E. Wealth, perceptively connects the art of communication to leadership. “Even with strong leadership skills,” he writes, “little change can happen unless the vision, mission, decisions, and results are communicated in a way that the intended audience understands.” Rounding out this issue, William George-Thomas reminds us why it’s important to include youth in the conversation, and Paulette Tremblay summarizes the communication components of AFOA’s CAPA Education Program.

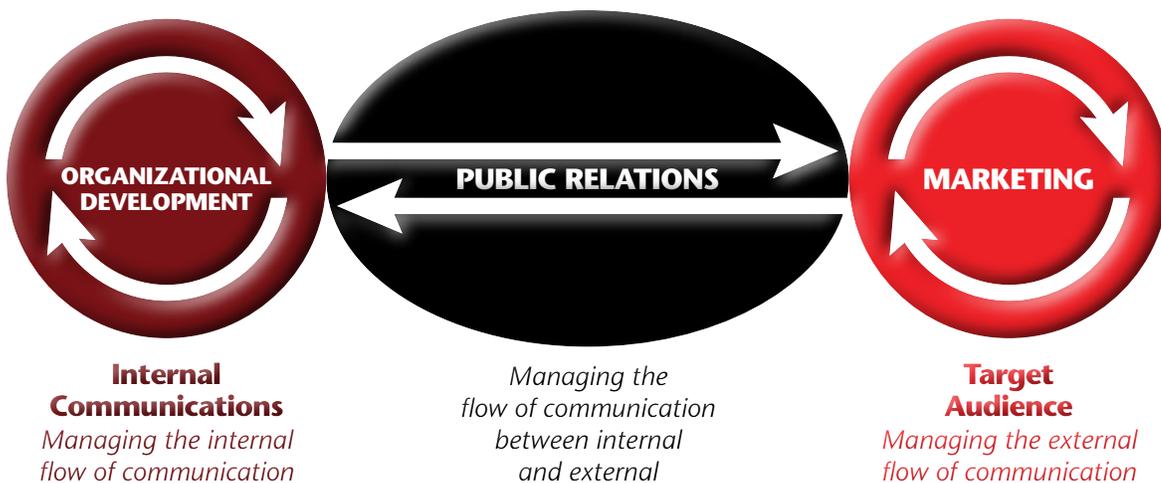
As a communication professional, I will tell you that effective communication is difficult and complex. It is not, however, mysterious and unfathomable. Our cultural traditions, as indigenous people, have deep wisdom embedded within them. A Haudenosaunee person, my culture is organized around the principles of deliberation, consensus, harmony, and peace. The longhouse council, the Condolence, and the Ohen:ton Kariwatekwa stress the importance of gathering face-to-face, so that we may clear our minds and share our thoughts. It’s probably no coincidence that so many of us become communications consultants!

In my communication consulting business, I also use data-driven assessments including WorkPlace Big Five, StrengthsFinder, and DiSC. I am a big believer in introducing the power of these tools to Aboriginal organizations. They are fun to use, and they provide a shared, neutral language to talk about our different communication styles. And they work. I know this because I have seen the results over 25 years, since I began using Myers-Briggs in the early 1990s.

We have compiled this issue of JAM in the hope that you will avoid the single biggest, and most common, communication mistake: not thinking about the communication needs and opportunities of your business or organization. Many communication errors are preventable. As in every other field of human endeavour, there are tried-and-true practices. I hope you enjoy this issue, and I encourage you to commit yourself today to practicing effective communications.

**WAYNE K. SPEAR** was born at Buffalo, New York and grew up in Fort Erie, Ontario. He completed graduate studies in English Literature at Queen’s University and worked for over two decades in Aboriginal health and education. From 1999-2012 he employed at the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, where he was the Director of Communications. He is the author of two books released in 2014, Full Circle: the Aboriginal Healing Foundation and the unfinished work of hope, healing and reconciliation and Residential Schools: With the Words and Images of Survivors. Today he lives in Toronto, where he appears regularly on CTV News and writes for the National Post and Huffington Post.

### THE THREE MODES OF COMMUNICATION



# STRATEGIC PUBLIC RELATIONS WITHIN A TRIBAL NATION PROMOTING OUR STORIES, PROMOTING OUR SUCCESS

B. LYNNE HARLAN, PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER, CHEROKEE INDIAN HOSPITAL, NORTH CAROLINA

**PUBLIC RELATIONS IS VITAL TO THE SURVIVAL OF TRIBAL NATIONS BECAUSE OUR VERY EXISTENCE HAS OFTEN DEPENDED ON OUTSIDERS TO HELP PROMOTE OUR CAUSES AND FURTHER OUR AGENDA. EVERY GENERATION OF OUR PEOPLE HAS FELT THAT THEIR SITUATION WAS CRITICAL TO THE SUCCESS OF OUR NATIONS, AND THAT IS WHAT DEFINES US AS NATIVE COMMUNITIES. OUR PLACE IN OUR HISTORY AS A CONTINUUM OF THAT HISTORY CANNOT BE UNDERESTIMATED.**

It is not, however, in our nature as traditionally-minded people to promote ourselves. In fact, it's downright foreign! Our humility is the challenge our nations face when we must promote ourselves to our own communities and to the larger society in which we live and work. That humility provides a cultural lens which tempers our telling of our own stories, because we see our work as part of a larger story and not a story unto itself.

For traditional tribal nations, our stories are nearly always placed within the generations of stories which came before and led us to where we are now. As public relations professionals, we see the dozens of stories daily which define our community values as a normal occurrence, not as a significant event worthy of re-telling.

Perhaps the most crucial decision for tribal leaders is determining what outcome you want your public relations plan to yield. The development of a public relations plan comes from conversations involving the image you want to portray to a specific audience. My experience has been two-fold. First and foremost is to inform the tribal membership about the goals and objectives of tribal leadership. It is crucial that tribal members understand why the leadership has moved some stories to the public and not others. Or why the media are fascinated with stories that are viewed as negative to tribal members.

Second is the challenge of meeting the needs of media to foster a relationship. Often our communities only garner media attention when bad things happen. That is the nature of the news business. In today's media marketplace, good stories often rely on tribal resources to promote our stories. News agencies simply don't have the budget to locate, produce, and promote good news. A well-defined public relations plan will include those headline grabbers as well as our success stories.

The public relations plan should include several things. Identifying your media market first will help you to develop the messaging necessary to fulfil your goals. A media market should include the primary outlet in your region. Often tribal nations have access to radio stations in their communities, and these are a natural outlet for stories you wish to share with your tribal members. Other media outlets, such as tribal and regional newspapers and television news programs, are ideal for getting your message to a wider audience. Social media are the easiest way to access a wider audience.

When a media market is defined, it is imperative to make personal connections with reporters, producers, and news teams. These personal connections can be made through professional organizations, community events participation, and social media. Connecting can be as simple as a phone call. Many news outlets will overlook press releases if there are no contacts provided for further investigation. It is critical for journalists to know who is sending them material if they are going to build any kind of relationship.

The press release should be a one-page synopsis containing the who, what, when, where, and why of your story. But perhaps more critical is the contact information. It is also critical for the point of contact to be available. A press release can be followed up with a phone call and an offer of more information, sources for interviews, photography, or video. Explanations of what the information means should be avoided, unless the journalist requests a point-of-view. This fosters a relationship of mutual respect between the public relations professional and the journalist.



Another method for fostering a relationship is to offer a point-of-view for a story which is not necessarily connected with the tribal community. For instance, weather stories offer an opportunity for the public relations professional to contact a journalist and provide information about the response from a tribal community. This type of outreach provides the journalist with a new dimension to a story and requires them to make little or no effort. It also provides the journalist with a “go-to” contact for future stories.

The public relations professional should work to maintain a list of people in the community who could comment as the “man on the street.” These people are willing to offer their opinion to journalists on a variety of subjects and should be vetted prior to receiving a call from a journalist. Public relations professionals can provide these contacts with information about a specific subject, or trust that the individuals are informed through other channels.

Journalists also seek stories which require few resources. Photos, videos, and background sources are helpful to a journalist. I try to have a resource available to journalists at all times. I load this resource with stock photos and bios of key personnel, photos of public buildings, landmarks and significant images, and details of the tribe or business such as size of land base, population, and a brief history. (To make it accessible, you can upload it to a public website, Dropbox folder, or Cloud file.) I also post information about upcoming projects, event dates, and a list of alternate resources such as You Tube, social media, and website links.

It is important to have these connections established so if, and when, an emergency arises media have a contact person, know where to find you, and are comfortable knowing you are the resource available. Critical situations also call for a space for media to gather and a method for understanding how information will be distributed. The public relations professional should know what deadlines the journalist faces and how best to accommodate those deadlines.

In emergency situations journalists are not the focus of most information distribution but are useful to assist in the distribution of information to those affected. Emergency responders will have time-sensitive information for the public, and keeping an open communication with a journalist expedites that process.

Communication is a critical tool for many situations, but teaching about ourselves and our history is an opportunity we can't afford to miss.

**B. LYNNE HARLAN** is an associate of Legend Weavers, LLC a private company composed of Native American artists, writers, photographers and other professionals which provides services to the Native American Community. Harlan currently serves as the Public Relations Officer for the Cherokee Indian Hospital, Cherokee, North Carolina. She previously served as the Public Relations Coordinator for the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and Harrah's Cherokee Casino Resort. Harlan holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from the University of North Carolina Asheville. Harlan has worked in cultural resource management, as an independent author, curator and consultant for more than twenty years. Harlan is a member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and currently resides in the Big Y Community of the Qualla Boundary, home of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in Cherokee, North Carolina.

## COMMUNICATING FINANCIAL INFORMATION TO THE COMMUNITY

# AN INTERVIEW WITH MIKE MCINTYRE

**JAM:** Tell us about your role at Membertou First Nation.

**MM:** I'm the Chief Financial Officer. I'm responsible for all our financial reporting and oversight of day-to-day operations for the finance section of the band, as well as for developing projects. A big part of my role is putting finance proposals together. Risk assessments, things like that. I'm pretty active as well on the capital projects, the construction phase, constantly involved and not just sitting back waiting for the bill to come in. Just because we have a budget and a tender out doesn't mean we don't look to save money and get better value.

I get my feet wet in a lot of different things. We've got retail operations, real estate, commercial fishing, gaming operations, hospitality and hotels. We're pretty diverse. And we have a government to run. I have an understanding of everything that's going on in Membertou right now. Chief and Council rely on me to keep them in the loop and to keep things on track. I'm the conduit between the finance department, the council, and the community.

**JAM:** Let's talk about how you communicate financial information.

**MM:** I make sure, obviously, that I communicate with our financial partners regularly. With our new financial administration law, we've been engaging more of the community. We have a couple community presentations a year where I do a report on financial results. It's a high-level document where I look at total revenues and total expenditures.

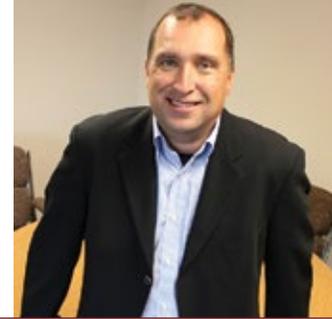
We also do a five-year annual budget presentation to the community, to show what things will look like in five years. This is our estimated revenue and net cash. The scary part – and I do this intentionally – is that when you look at revenues versus our government expenditures, our funding is only going up about .5% while our expenditures are going up maybe 2-3% a year. I do that to show that if we don't keep diversifying and finding new sources of revenue, the shortfall of our government programs is going to be \$500,000 bigger in five years. It keeps us thinking and focused. Most bands and communities don't do that, but it's part of our financial administration law.

**JAM:** You raise a good point. Financial reporting isn't only about capturing the current state, it's about planning and priorities. Talk a bit about how you make reporting meaningful for the community.

**MM:** What I do with each entity is pick some bulleted points, some accomplishments and objectives for each of our areas. I try to tie our financial statements to objectives and take key messages so people can understand what we've accomplished and what the numbers mean.

One of the key messages I always use, which is probably the most important, is our current ratio. That's what most financial institutions use, and what Indian Affairs use. It's a measure of liquidity. I focus on that number more than any. Sure, I talk about our surplus – but a surplus in the financial statements can be misleading. We have the Public Sector Accounting Standards. And I'm happy to have a uniform road map. Prior to this, First Nations had a variety of ways to account for their financial statements. But the drawback of the Public Sector Accounting Standards, and there are two drawbacks, is that they are meant for big governments like the provinces or the feds. So they don't put a key measure on some of the metrics that are important to Membertou, for example the current ratio. Governments aren't worried about their day-to-day cash flow. There's always money for government to operate. Banks don't really care what the government's current ratio is.

But we're a hybrid. Banks look at Membertou as a government, but we're also a commercial operation. That means if you don't have cash in the bank, you've got issues. That's one drawback. The second is the capital revenue costs, and taking that as income. A lot of First Nations are showing huge surpluses now, because they got a major capital project with federal or provincial funding. Initially with the financial statements, people may think they're doing well when they're actually losing cash every year.



I put everything in English. Every year I take our financial audit and I take our reported surpluses – for comparative as well as budgeting purposes – and I add my depreciation, deduct my capital revenues, things like that. I normalize my income, by turning it into a cash flow. I think my model would work in any First Nation. We're all different, but explaining what you're doing in terms people can understand ... I always look at it like a family. We've got X dollars of income. We have to pay the mortgage.

Since I started doing that with my Chief and Council, they've really understood how the financial statements work. When I do the presentations, I put less and less emphasis on the consolidated income statement. Yes, we talk about it. But I do a working paper on what that really means in terms of cash and our current ratio. I think that's brought us a long way toward simplifying things as well as communicating to the community, where I do the same thing as well. Instead of getting too bogged down with numbers, I more or less look at the fact that we're objective-driven. I look at measurements of how we did for the past year, as opposed to what are the generally accepted accounting principles. I turn things into a narrative.

**JAM:** The financial accounting rules don't take into consideration the needs of a community.

**MM:** I find that getting away from the traditional financial reporting that auditors do is helping people to get our financial statements and to have a comfort level. Deferred revenue, placement reserves: for me that language is second-nature. But people get overwhelmed when they see a lot of line items on a balance sheet. The public sector accounting rules don't help people like me explain things to our community. I think the guidelines are good, but they still have their deficiencies. I wish they would tweak them for First Nations a little bit. Financial statements are more and more complex. I don't even think Indian Affairs understands them. Just our consolidated audit is 56 pages, so there's quite a bit of information there.

**JAM:** So you've had to figure out what information is most meaningful and then how to communicate it.

**MM:** Exactly. I'm a chartered accountant by trade, so one of the first things you learn is how to look at user needs for financial reports. You can do tons and tons of financial reporting, but if it doesn't mean anything to the end user, it's almost worthless.

I have two sets of users. I have my government and banking partners, but I also have the needs of my community. If you look at the reports on our website, you'll see I try to hit some of the key accomplishments and bring it down to real terms. "What does this mean to us?" I really try to drill down to the needs of our community.

We have a very active finance and audit committee that has Chief and Council on it. I have a lot of people in the room that understand. They may not be experts, but they have a comfort level. We've conducted financial literacy training, and I'm lucky to have a stable Chief and Council.

Another thing I should mention is that I segregate commercial and government into two line items. Separating out the financial results of both government and commercial is probably another key thing. You can't have one without the other. I show "here's what government costs, here's how much commercial operations make." They see why commercial is so important. One subsidizes the other. Leaders get criticized sometimes for not taking care of the governance side, not putting housing needs first instead of commercial. You have to do it because communities need commercial revenues to fill social needs.

The federal government is not there. A lot of community members probably across Canada have the myth that Indian Affairs pays for everything. They only give you 20 cents on the dollar in a lot of cases, for certain programs. It costs Membertou \$4 million a year to run Indian Affairs programs, over and above what they give us. If you look at any First Nation across Canada, it's pretty much the same percentage. People are starting to understand that. We don't actually get any money for housing.

*In his role as Chief Financial Officer (CFO) for the Membertou Band, **MICHAEL MCINTYRE** advises the CEO and management team on a wide range of topics including project financing, business planning, and identifying and managing new economic development opportunities. He is responsible for: project management, role of liaison with government and the business community, implementation of ISO 9001 and the preparation of year-end consolidated financial statements and reports.*

*Michael was also a key player in the creation of the Membertou Market, Membertou Trade & Convention Centre, the Churchill Drive Extension, the Highway 125 Interchange, and the current Churchill Crossing Development.*

*Michael McIntyre comes from the Mi'kmaq community of Membertou. He has a Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) from Cape Breton University, earned his Chartered Accountant (CA) designation in 1993 and his CAFM in 2013. After working with Aboriginal Business Canada, Revenue Canada and the Eskasoni First Nation he joined Membertou in 2000.*

*Michael was also the 2014 Regional recipient of the Xerox Canada AFOA Excellence in Aboriginal Leadership Award.*

I FIND THAT GETTING AWAY FROM THE TRADITIONAL FINANCIAL REPORTING THAT AUDITORS DO IS HELPING PEOPLE TO GET OUR FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AND TO HAVE A COMFORT LEVEL. DEFERRED REVENUE, PLACEMENT RESERVES: FOR ME THAT LANGUAGE IS SECOND-NATURE.

They give us Ministerial loan guarantees. But they don't really fund housing directly. You see a lot of light bulbs going off. "Wow, we didn't really know that." They see why commercial revenue is so important.

Again, for me, it's a learning thing. It's not easy, but I've been really working on a good way of simplifying. I've got good compliments from community people, Chief, and Council. It seems like I'm getting through. And every year I'll get better at it. The community has been very supportive. They want to understand. When you explain things to people, they really start to say, "We understand what you're doing. We like it." People are worried about the overall wellbeing of the community, but they don't need to know the twenty ratios that you could calculate. What are the key couple ratios? Are they good or bad? After that, if there's money in the bank you can say things are under control. And people like that.

**JAM:** Thank you for your time, Mike, and best of luck.

**MM:** You're welcome.



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## Recognizing Excellence, Leadership and Achievement in First Nation, Métis and Inuit Finance and Management

### CALL FOR NOMINATIONS:

- ✓ Do you know an Aboriginal Professional who has made a significant contribution to your community or organization at a national or regional level through their finance and management leadership?
- ✓ Did their contributions result in enhanced management, performance or governance?
- ✓ Do you want to recognize and acknowledge that individual?

AFOA Canada is now accepting nominations for these awards,

### NATIONAL CATEGORY

Recognizes individuals who have contributed to the Aboriginal Financial Management profession on a national or institutional level.

### REGIONAL CATEGORY

Recognizes those individuals who have made their contributions at a regional, local or community level.

### AWARD CRITERIA

#### Recipients of both awards have;

- ✓ Continuously demonstrated a sincere and long-term commitment to excellence in Aboriginal finance and management in Canada
- ✓ Senior finance and management responsibilities in an Aboriginal community or organization
- ✓ Demonstrated leadership skills that have motivated and inspired others
- ✓ Made a significant contribution to the field of Aboriginal finance and management
- ✓ Made measureable impact on the management, performance and/or governance of Aboriginal community(ies)/organization(s), and
- ✓ Raised the standards of Aboriginal finance and management practices.

Awards will be presented at a special ceremony during the AFOA Canada National Conference in Montréal Québec on February 18th, 2016. Recipients will receive complimentary registration and financial assistance with travel to the conference.

**DEADLINE - December 4, 2015**

For more information on these awards or to nominate someone please contact AFOA Canada at;  
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# THE ART OF COMMUNICATION IS THE LANGUAGE OF LEADERSHIP

ISMO HEIKKILA, NATIONAL DIRECTOR, ABORIGINAL SERVICES, T.E. WEALTH

**THE ESSENCE OF LEADERSHIP IS REPRESENTED IN THE TITLE OF THIS ARTICLE, A QUOTATION OF JAMES HUME. EVEN WITH STRONG LEADERSHIP SKILLS, LITTLE CHANGE CAN HAPPEN UNLESS THE VISION, MISSION, DECISIONS, AND RESULTS ARE COMMUNICATED IN A WAY THAT THE INTENDED AUDIENCE UNDERSTANDS.**

Does this sound familiar: “I told them – I sure hope they get it!” We tell our stories, and we listen to the stories of others. We are communicating. Yet is the communication effective? How do we know if our messages are truly understood?

*“He who would do great things should not attempt them all alone”*

– SENECA PROVERB

Throughout history, from the earliest cave drawings, petroglyphs, hieroglyphics, and alphabets, to the printing press, man has employed new methods to advance communication. Today we have the Internet, smart phones, and cloud computing. Successful leaders adapt their communication behaviour to take advantage of these new technologies, because these tools make it easier for people to tell their stories and to reach a larger audience. With every new development, there are the “early adopters” who embrace the enhancement, there are those who tend to lag behind, and there are those who refuse to adapt.

Face-to-face oral communication has been the preferred communication method. So how has technology affected our oral communication?

Traditional and modern senders and receivers of oral communication would include parents, children, family members, teachers and students, employers and employees, etc. In today’s society, oral communication has been enhanced beyond the basic telephone by cell phones, radio, television, and social media.

Both urban and rural Aboriginal communities can take advantage of digital technologies to share information, engage their members, and give them a voice in decision-making.

*“Electric communication will never be a substitute for the face of someone who with their soul encourages another person to be brave and true.”* – CHARLES DICKENS

Traditional indigenous communication has always included instruction of young people, community meetings, cultural activities (such as festivals), record keeping through storytelling, and of course unstructured communication of learnings, observations, and opinions. Communication technology is having a behavioural impact on everyone’s communication, as there is an increasing merging of traditional and dominant communication methods.

Nothing can totally replace the value of face-to-face communication. We communicate over email and phone, but even then messages can be misinterpreted and a sense of personal connection is not truly established or maintained. In fact, it’s said that over 90% of communication is nonverbal, using cues like gestures and facial expressions.

Meetings can be effective at getting things done. When there’s an issue that requires a decision, consensus happens more quickly. One simple conversation could eliminate back-and-forth emails. When there are many people in a meeting, there’s more energy and opportunity to participate and creatively contribute. Oftentimes there’s also a synergy that ignites discussion and innovative thinking.

# JAM



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