

AIO & AMO Bring ILIS to Northeast Asia

AIO's Laura Harris and AMO's Kate Cherrington joined forces to facilitate in Tokyo, Japan in February. Kate (Maori), AMO's Vice President, led the facilitation while Laura (Comanche), AIO's Executive Director, orchestrated the dialogue that engaged 25 Northeast Asia students and civil society participants from Japan, Korea, China, Russia, Mongolia, and a Comanche from the US a.k.a. LaDonna Harris, AIO President. Dr. Jacqueline Wasilewski, Ambassador Program Advisor and a Professor at ICU, organized the forum, *Boundary-Spanning Dialogue*, which took place at the International Christian University.

Liana Poutu (Maori), AMO board member, and Paul Hays, Professor at Kwansei Gakuin in Kobe, Japan assisted the AIO/AMO facilitation team, which utilized AIO's unique Indigenous Leaders Interactive System (ILIS™). ILIS is a methodology with more than two decades of application in a variety of complex situations.

The forum in Japan signified a first for AIO. Using the ILIS in a multi-lingual setting posed new challenges. In addition to the five languages spoken, the group represented several different cultures. Besides the national culture of each country, the participants included people with mixed ethnicities, an Indigenous Ainu of Japan and an Indigenous Evenki from Russia. To complicate matters even more the facilitation team was made up of Native Americans and Maori. As Laura guided the technical aspects of the process, Kate took up ILIS facilitating for the first time. "Kate has a natural talent. The participants fell in love with her and she gracefully moved through the complexities of the issues and the process with ease," said Laura who has 12 years facilitating under her belt.

In the first session, the group talked about cultural values that sounded familiar



Kate and Laura, that dynamic ILIS™ duo, with the Northeast Asian participants.

to the AIO/AMO team: love, family, relationships, nature, coexistence, perseverance, community, language and culture, respect for other cultures, the need to minimize economic differences, and the obligation to protect the vulnerable of society. The Russians said that they valued the Russian "search for truth" and the compulsion to try to save the world.

Through ILIS, the forum participants identified and described 78 obstacles to intercultural/boundary-spanning dialogue in Northeast Asia. They explored the relationships among eleven challenges that the group voted as the most important, using the *RootCause Mapping™* software as a tool for recording the group's decisions about these relationships. (See the Influence Chart, page 3.) The group decided that the underlying problem (that obstacle that must be addressed first in order to overcome the other obstacles) was that

there was no place or opportunity for diverse groups to interact. The other two most influential obstacles were the differences in historical perspectives and the lack of resolution of wartime and colonial oppression.

After the group understood the relationships among the obstacles, the participants proposed and clarified 32 actions that would encourage dialogue in the region. The stakeholders agreed that young people hold the key to establishing exchanges.

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Letter from the **PRESIDENT**



As I reflect upon our thirty-five year history, I am deeply gratified by AIO's conscious evolution. Like my grandfather who said, in his lifetime, he had gone from "arrows to atoms," AIO has gone from self-determination, to Indigeneity.

The story of AIO's conscious progression stars many people and has unearthed effective Indigenous techniques and values, such as the four R's. Each story has a lesson and an intrinsic value to the future of Indigenous leadership. While AIO inspires unique, culturally based leadership, AIO aspires to see that leadership transferred and institutionalized back into an Ambassadors individual Indigenous community, whether it be in the form of a youth Ambassadors Program or using the facilitation process ILIS™.

AIO has always served as a source of renewal for our Board of Directors, and I now want it to be the same for the Ambassadors. I want the relationships of our AIO community to be strengthened. While the AIO staff reports on their

journeys to Brazil, Japan, Hawaii, San Francisco, and NYC, the Ambassadors will share the progress of their initiatives. The AIO board and advisors will reciprocate with tales of their struggles and triumphs, reminding every Ambassador that there is always a beginning.

Together, AIO's constituency of intergenerational, international, indigenous leaders will face globalization, equipped with the knowledgeable of how their unique core cultural values are an asset to the ever-changing world. Where colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism have failed, Indigeneity will prevail.

Warmest regards,

*Traditional Wisdom,
Today's Strength,
Tomorrow's Vision*

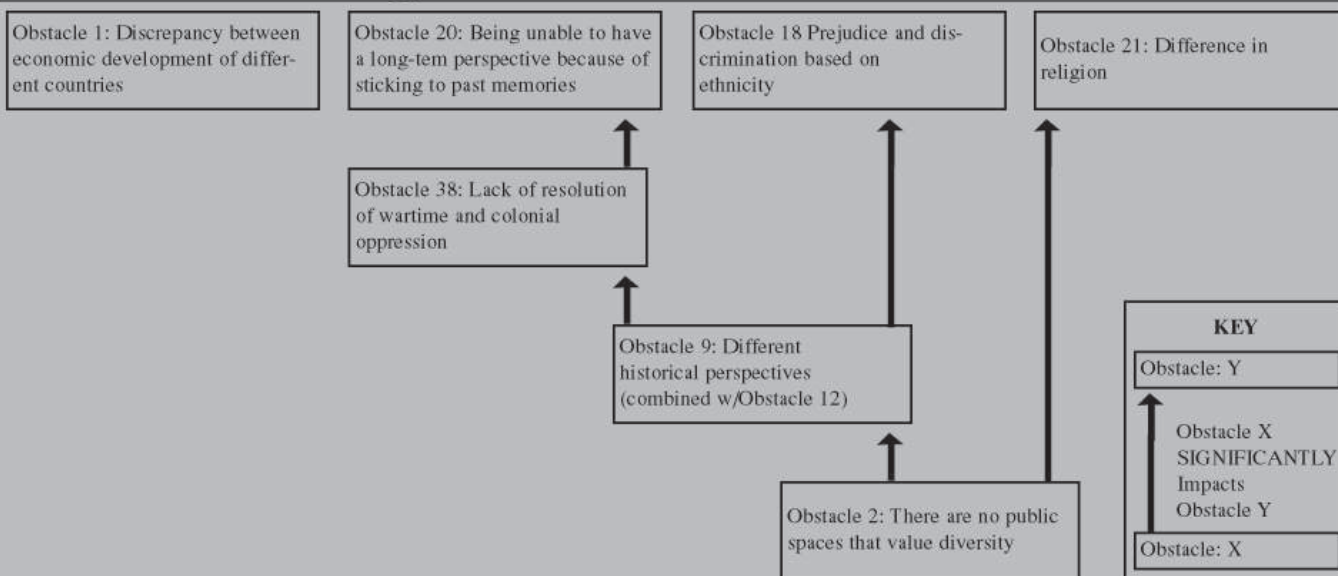
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Figure 1 – Influence Chart



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They envisioned the creation of a non-governmental organization at the ICU dedicated to multi-cultural dialogue. The group concurred that there needs to be an international day of reconciliation so that governments begin working together to empower ethnic minorities and increase economic equality.

The participants concluded that the region's long history of conflict and distrust could be overcome. "The dialogue was so powerful," said LaDonna, "They

engaged in the discussion without defensive posturing even though many of their countries have often been bitter enemies at different times throughout the ages."

"We learned much from this experience that AMO and AIO can use as we reach out to other Indigenous communities in other countries" said Liana. Kate added, "We now know that simultaneous translation and ultra, ultra cultural sensitivity are a must. We constantly had to 'check in' with the participants ensuring everyone was

comfortable and contributing to the discussion."

This is just the beginning of AIO's work in building multi-cultural and boundary-spanning dialogue. Dr. Wasilewski proudly announced that the forum had exceeded her expectations. She said, "I look forward to the next meeting when we add an Ainu to the Indian/Maori team."

A full report and a list of all participant contributions can be found on AIO's website: www.aio.org. ©

AMO Ambassador Update

By Lee-Ann Sperling, AMO Board

AMO
Advancement of Maori Opportunity

The Advancement of Maori Opportunity (AMO) is heading to New Mexico! AMO will be here July 24-August 5 to hold their international gathering hosted by AIO alumni, advisors, board and staff. The gathering will include interactive sessions with tribal leaders, community activists and state government officials; tours of historic and prehistoric sites and places of natural beauty; presentations on Native American history, sovereignty, economic development and culture; and group dialogue on international Indigenous

issues and language preservation. AIO will host an Albuquerque community reception for the 2005 Class of Maori Ambassadors at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center on August 3, 2005.

AMO's new 2005 Maori Ambassador class of 22 people are from various parts of Aotearoa (New Zealand). Their calendar for the year will include five, four-day hui (gathering) once every two months and four, one-day hui on the "off" months. October's gathering will include past and present AMO Ambassadors as we will be

incorporating the graduation for both the 2004 and 2005 classes. Speaking of the 2004 AMO Ambassadors, they have been very busy fundraising for the trip which has included catering for four days for the first of the five hui for the new 2005 AMO Ambassadors.

Everyone at AMO is very excited that Mama LaDonna and AIO whanau (family) will be in New Zealand for the World Indigenous Peoples Conference of Education (WIPCE) and to join AMO in their final gatherings of the year. ©

The Beginning of a Beautiful Friendship*



LaDonna and Aleco discuss that first meeting.

Since 2005 is AIO's 35th year and designated year of renewal (pause, reflect and renew), it is important to reflect upon our conscious evolution as an organization. I want our Ambassadors to glimpse how the past generation of Native American leaders utilized modern technology to capture the wisdom of our ancestors and see how that wisdom has been a gift to the world.

Here is a tale of an AIO meeting in 1987 where seventeen Native American leaders congregated. It is told by Dr. Aleco Christakis and myself. I met Aleco in 1985. A native Greek, he was developing a consensus-based, structured dialogue facilitation process that was aimed at helping groups aspire to participative democracy. The Native Americans present at that first meeting incorporated our own original tribal protocols and methods of consensus based decision making to help develop it. Today that process is called ILIS™ (Indigenous Leaders Interactive System) and has been used to successfully facilitate amongst federal and tribal officials, urban Indian leaders, to improve the FDA's systems, and to negotiate between Cyprus and Greece.

LaDonna Harris

LD: In the mid 1980's, AIO had received a grant to work with three Indian tribes on management and administration, to evaluate the status of the tribe and determine what direction they should take. Reuben Snake, who was Chairman of the Winnebago Tribe at the time, was very active in this project of governance that AIO was undertaking. We set out

looking at conflict management as a resource to try and resolve issues within tribal society and tribal governments, for there was a lot of turmoil and there continues to be. Conflict management offered some methods that were helpful, but it wasn't satisfying. Somewhere deep inside, Reuben and I knew there was something deeper that we should get at.

In Washington, D.C., I met Aleco, and almost immediately afterwards, I called Reuben Snake and said maybe we had found a solution.

Aleco: I was committed to developing a new paradigm for the practice of scientific dialogue. At the George Mason University, the Center of Interactive Management, I and other researchers were developing and testing a process that would make the ideal of experiencing participative democracy by all citizens an achievable objective in the Information Age.

You see, people all over the world aspire to participative democracy. In the history of Western government, we have pro- (or re-) gressed from participative democracy, to representative democracy, to government by experts, to government for corporate lobbies. There must be ways that we

can engage in democratic dialogue to attain designing efficiency while retaining participative openness and fairness. We need a workable human science, one that honors and uses the authentic voices of people to design their futures. It was this insight that led me on a journey to find a scientific paradigm for bringing the wisdom of people to the surface by engaging them in dialogue.

LaDonna: In 1987, Reuben and I gathered about seventeen Native American leaders, all like minded people, but representing the diversity that is Tribal America

Aleco: They had one thing in common and that they were all stakeholders.

LaDonna: They were burdened...

Aleco: They were actually burdened by the fact that they wanted to make progress. Find the problem and find the solution.

When we started, it was very awkward to become comfortable with all those distinguished leaders. You see, the actual participants were tribal leaders, so I remember them around the table. It challenged my capacity to fill comfortable with them, because I am culturally sensitive, but then I have to orchestrate a discus-

sion among people who are leaders of their tribes. The one who was most challenging to me, and a little bit sarcastic, was a man who later became a gorgeous friend and an advocate of the process was Reuben Snake. He apparently had read a lot about Greek philosophy, and he played with me about what the Greeks had done in terms of their influence on Western thinking, and how Western thinking has impacted Native Americans. It was gorgeous.

On the first day, we do what is called a diagnostic of the situation.

LaDonna: Together, we all make contributions, which are recorded, then we collectively identify how all of our issues relate to each other. What came to be revealed is how alike it was to our traditional forms of government. It honored everybody by letting them speak. There was a familiarity, particularly to those of us who grew up with traditional grandparents and had some sense of the old ways. Our ancestors understood the sacredness of sharing perspectives to come to consensual decisions. We were a part of a group that was uncovering a collective wisdom that no other facilitation process could produce.

Aleco: The complex problem of Tribal America, that the leaders articulated, it was the most complex problem that had ever surfaced. The diagnostic being horrible, horrible, because we discovered that they were in a loop with themselves. The way they perceived themselves and how others perceive us— it's a cycle. How do we get out of it? It was an interesting discovery at the time.

LaDonna: It was, it was. Individually, I realized how I filtered information and how others who had grown up in the Indian Community filtered informa-

tion. The information that they received from outside of the community, it would have to undergo their own cultural analysis. Not until then was I aware of how I distinctly did it.

Aleco: Even when people know something individually, you see, unless that knowledge is generated in the collective, they are not secure that they know it. At that 1987 event, every leader at the table knew the predicament of the Native American people, but they knew it individually. Collectively, they discovered they were in a very serious situation and actually that was emancipatory.

Later, Reuben invited LaDonna and me to his tribe to stage in his tribe a very critical event for him, because at that time he was Chairman for his tribe. He was trying to develop a plan for self-sufficiency of the tribe by the year 2000.

LaDonna: AIO designated the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska, as one of the three tribes it would analyze with the grant money we had been awarded.

Aleco: The process worked with the Winnebago Tribe. It worked beautiful.

LaDonna: Since that first meeting, the facilitation process had been further developed to reaffirm our traditional forms of government and that is why the Winnebago's embraced it, they could identify with it. People cried when they saw their words up on the wall, because it was the first time anybody had listened to them.

Aleco: There were two turning points. Number one, they knew that there was something deeper, so when we got to the root cause and we got it together, that turned them on. The second thing that turned them on is the start of the process everybody is legitimized or authenticated.

It was another way of honoring the capacity of every human being to contribute without being interrupted or offended, in fact the autonomy being defended.

LaDonna: As a result of this process, the tribe reexamined the federal guidelines under which most of their programs were being funded. They discovered that they actually took authority away from their tribal council. Their tribal council was governed more by federal program guidelines than by the planning and development efforts generated from within the tribe. Collectively, they articulated a solution – bring all of these programs together and create a centralized system of management. Reuben said going through this process really sharpened their skills in government.

Aleco: And he said it was like the passing of the pipe, the peace pipe.

LaDonna: Yes, because since that first meeting in 1987, ILIS has evolved to become even more Indigenous related, then when we first started out.

Aleco: The process has evolved a lot. The thing that is universal is the software, a computer program essentially. Everything else, it is Native American driven.

LaDonna: One of things AIO has learned is that you can't go in there and do this one time. So we figured out how to make it a gift, it is a gift that we give them. In the past, we have paid for the training of three people, so that it will continue after we go back home. That is our philosophy, it is the gift that keeps on giving. ☺

** This event is on audio file in the Elma Patterson Resource Center of Indigenous Knowledge in the AIO office.*