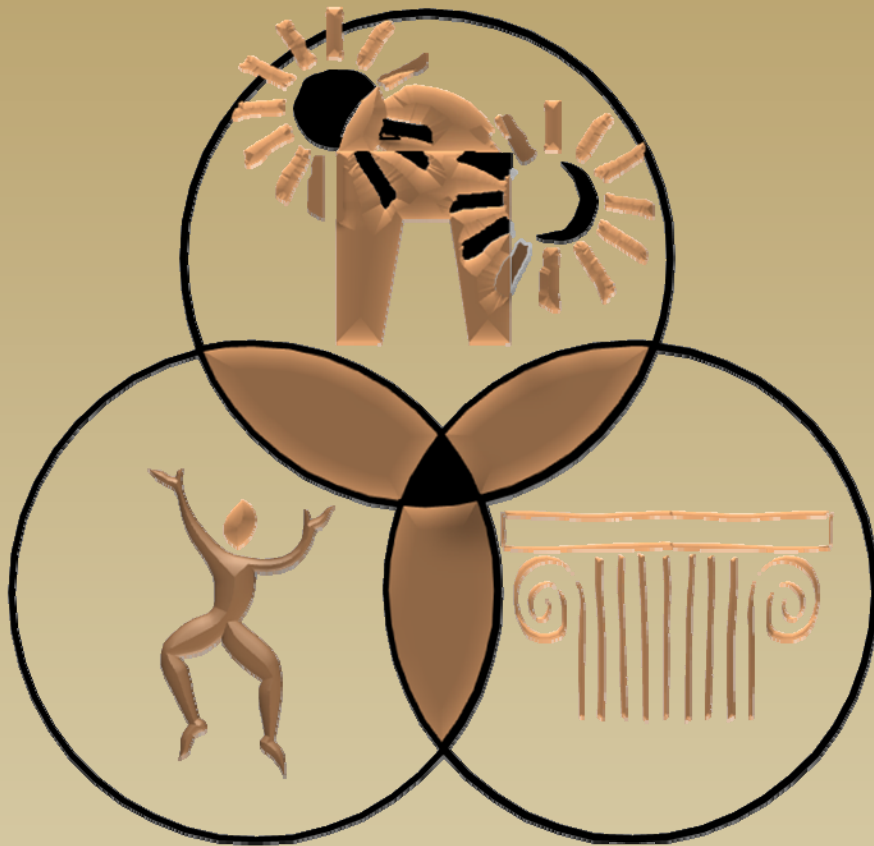


The Cultural Wellness Center

TERMS, CONCEPTS & PRAXIS



The Cultural Wellness Center

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Introduction

The Cultural Wellness Center is a non-profit cultural knowledge producing institution, dedicated to promoting an ever deepening understanding of cultural harmony and social change. Its scope is local, national, as well as international.

While cultural harmony is generally considered desirable, little is understood about the transformative qualities it possess, and the impact it has on the health of humankind and the ecology.

The Cultural Wellness Center is committed to exploring these qualities and the possibilities they contain in order to meet contemporary economic, ecological, social, and health challenges. The possibilities become apparent through a sincere search for knowledge, wisdom and insight from every culture, through dialog, understanding, patience and humility.

The Cultural Wellness Center is firm in its conviction that no culture has the monopoly over truth or reality, and to keep the knowledge producing process alive, the Cultural Wellness Center hosts conferences, workshops, retreats and customized activities throughout the year.

The Center provides a space and a process for cultures to privately study, hold internal dialogs, practice ritual and ceremony– as well as come together, communicate with and learn from other cultures, and to celebrate together as a community.

Introduction

In everyday terms, what are referred to as ‘communities,’ are often not communities, but rather a set of structures that contain groups of disinvested individuals who live near each other without any sense of connection or belonging. The disinvestment has historical causes dating back centuries, and it could be said that those causes continue today in social realities such as: race-based housing segregation, race-based discrimination, and race-based denial of resources such as employment, health care, housing and education. People who come from the experience of disinvestment often hold a deep distrust toward those who’ve never lived it; people who’ve experienced disinvestment describe a deep sense of rejection, disappointment, pain and anger over unresolved historical events.

At the Cultural Wellness Center, we have studied the micro and macro-level effects of disinvestment, and we now place the challenge of broadening and deepening this study back in the hands of the people to examine the potential for transformation, beginning with their own lives; to determine whether there is a personal benefit of reinvesting in community. In addition, we propose that the time has come for re-expression of community to expand access to the available resources to all people, community as a system of accountability for the access, and a system of accountability for the development, consumption and stewardship of resources; community places limits, sets boundaries, establishes value and meaning for human dignity and personhood. Institutions are structures that communities create to maintain orderly, organized resource development and allocation. Institutions are created to develop curriculum and educational materials which society uses to sustain itself, grow upon and build for future generations.

Glossary of Terms

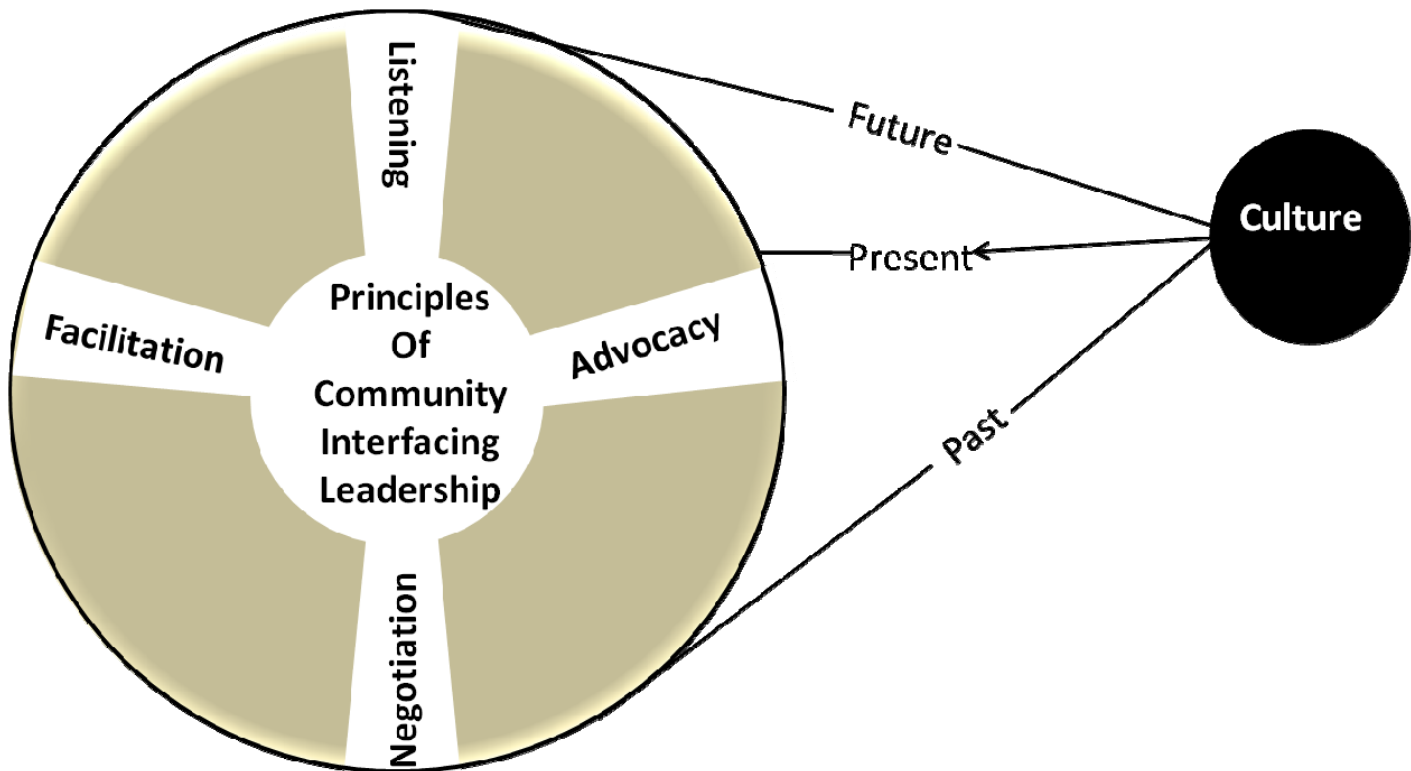
Community - is an expression of a culture's knowledge system; it is a container for a culture's knowledge system. It is a way of organizing based on belonging which gives meaning to human life. It is in community that a person is socialized; he/she is given identity, a place of belonging, human dignity and personhood. Through ritual and ceremony, community links the spiritual, temporal and physical aspects of existence – giving its members a sense of closeness, integral wholeness and fulfillment.

Institutions - are societal structures which maintain social order and cooperation. They are mechanisms for governing the behavior of individuals. Institutions are identified with a social purpose detached from individual human lives, but that makes and enforces the set rules governing human behavior. The term is commonly applied to customs and behavior patterns, as well as to particular formal organizations of government and public service.

Partnership – in the case of community – institution partnerships, a partnership is a committed relationship to share and exchange knowledge, teach each other how to solve problems, share authority, work as a team and together close the door on cultural disrespect, arrogance, paternalism and exclusively individualistic perspective on human behavior.

Cultural Interfacing Leadership

Communities and institutions have grown distant and in many cases, individual disinvestment is re-enforced because of this distance. A leadership from the community is now emerging to restore the linkages between communities and institutions. The leadership skills required to restore these linkages are: facilitation, negotiation, advocacy, and listening.



Cultural Interfacing Leadership

Partnering Principles (definitions) from Old Cultures/Traditions:

- **Germanic:** “A gift for gift.” A gift is always given in exchange for a gift received. Everyone benefits from this mutual exchange. This pattern of 1 to 1 binds us to our ancestors and the natural world. There are ceremonies/rituals used to acknowledge the sacredness of coming together. There is a ritual called a “blot” where gifts are given to the ancestors, gods or spirits, and to the land.
- **Celtic:** The protocol for partnering together is a reflection of the sacred partnership between humans and the spiritual world, between humans and the natural world. In these partnerships, people acknowledge that they cannot do the work alone, and humility is required. There is an understanding that the power to accomplish something can only be brought to bear if you create a sacred trust. In accessing that power, you have to be very careful that you observe the proper protocols. You must be open to learning, to questioning the way you do things, to deferring to others even when you don’t understand why they are doing something. You will be tested, but it will be a test more of your character than your knowledge.
- **African (Ancient):** Partnering between yourself and the Creator is a natural process. You are constantly moving between the forces of the spiritual and material world. Who you are in the material world the “Little Man” is a reflection of the “Big Man.” The reason for the interaction is to make you the “Big Man.” Instruction and teaching are always happening to widen your consciousness. You are always acknowledging the existence of spirit and an ecosystem of which you are a part. You are shown that you are connected/interconnected with everything. The vision is oneness.

Cultural Interfacing Leadership

Terms

Advocacy – positioning, strategizing and valuing the details of personal, familial, communal or cultural experiences.

Culture –culture consists of practices that people create to give themselves continuity and cohesion across generations. Culture consists of a set of highly patterned, unspoken implicit rules, behaviors and thoughts which control everything that we do.

Facilitation – the process for negotiating idea development in the production of knowledge; the intentional approach for pulling ideas, thoughts, expressions, feelings from individuals and groups. Facilitation requires mastery of an intense understanding with the people from whom the ideas, thoughts and expressions emerge.

Knowledge – is a coherent articulation of a cultures vision, explanations and ways of knowing. Knowledge determines a culture’s ontological disposition.

Leadership – a response to the recognized need from within a community to draw upon the particular strengths of its members for the purpose of group benefit and continuity.

Listening - The ability to listen with both our ears and our hearts; the ability to listen underneath the words. To listen with an open mind with the intention of understanding, as much as possible, what a person is saying from his or her own perspective without constantly trying to put his or her words into our own viewpoint.

Negotiation – the process of sharing of intellectual authority in the production of knowledge.

Self-Study – studying one’s thoughts, attitudes and behavior through the purview of culture. Self-study is about learning from inside about self-knowledge, self-thoughts, self-concept, self-worth, and self-value.

Transformation – the process of spiritual maturation from one phase of being to another; the process of becoming self-mastered, self-directed and self-governed.

Cultural Interfacing Leadership

Cultural Interface Leadership Skills-Set

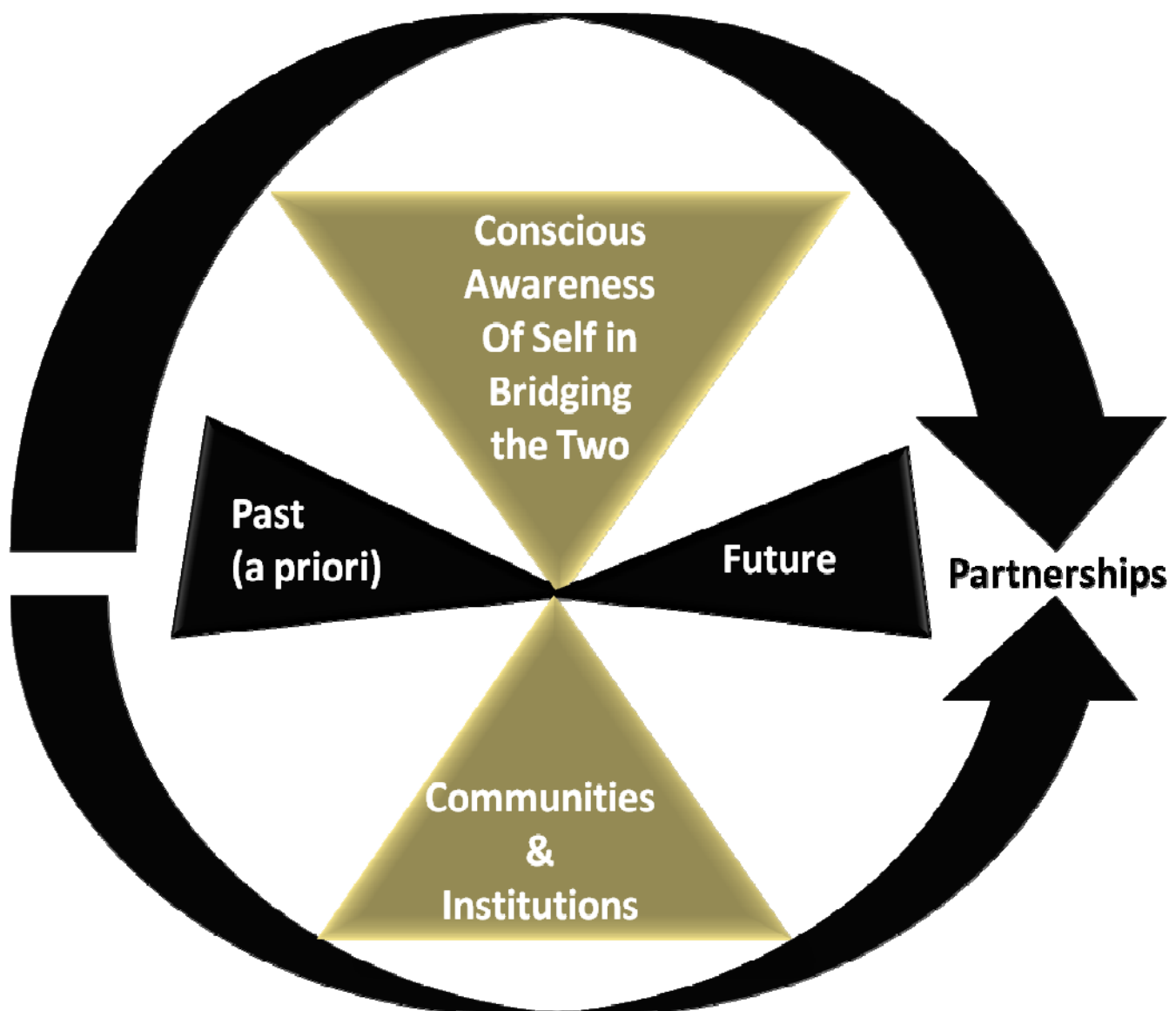
Cultural interfacing is a Cultural Wellness approach to creating social transformation where people use their cultural ways of knowing to articulate problems and identify internal resources to take action. The cultural interface leader bridges the divide between institutions and community as he/she gains a conscious awareness of the self as a bridge between past and present social circumstances. The skill-set of a cultural interface leader centers on facilitation, listening, advocacy, and negotiation. To acquire the skill set, one must come from the inside of a community, and be able to identify with the community at a visceral level, with the collective experience that the community is trying to transform. A cultural interface leader is one who facilitates the internal, preparatory work for their communities to be able to partner with institutions.

Leadership
Praxis:
Knowledge
Systems,
Leadership &
the
Interfacing of
Cultures



Models & Exemplifies Internal and External Community Leadership

Cultural Interface Leadership Skill-Set



Cultural Interfacing Leadership

Closing Questions

What is Cultural Interface?

Cultural interfacing is an strategy to bring cultures together to stimulate thinking, feeling, and knowledge production. It is a an organizing tool that helps guide and give structure to the formation of partnerships for social change. The cultural interfacing leader challenges him/herself to listen without judgment; to develop the ability to listen underneath the words with an open mind and with the intention of understanding as much as possible what a person is saying from his or her own perspective without trying to put them into his or her words and own view. The purpose of cultural interfacing leadership is to prepare communities to partner with institutions and institutions to partner with communities.

Why Cultural Interfacing?

Cultural interfacing creates a balanced dynamic where many voices and everyone's thinking power is engaged. Cultural interfacing leaders help stir the mind into action and create the safe space for members of their community to self-reflect and self-study—which provide the foundation for self-correction and collective transformation.

Are you Ready?

Every community has rising leaders; people who are visionary, have skills and talents to put into action. The skills of the cultural interfacing leader include:

- Knowledge of the experience of the people he/she is helping to prepare for future interfacing.
- A strong obligation and sense of responsibility to the people of their community.
- A strong sense of connection and connectedness to a vision over the long-haul.
- Readiness to reconcile with the past and present.
- A culturally-intelligent and culturally-grounded vision.
- Futuristic in thought.
- Flexible, highly motivated to their own personal growth and development, and committed to the process of making change for the benefit of all.

Cultural Interfacing Leadership

