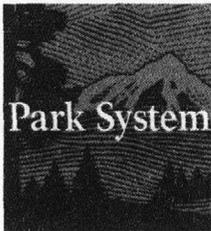


*National Park System Advisory Board*



*Citizen advisors chartered by Congress to help the National Park Service care for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.*

# **Developing a 21st-Century Leadership Culture**

## **Status Report to the National Park System Advisory Board**

**November 2012**



# Developing a 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Leadership Culture

*Annotated with supporting documents*

**Background:** The National Park System Advisory Board has been focused on developing a 21<sup>st</sup>-century NPS organizational culture that is adaptive, resilient, and sustainable. This culture develops leaders who are good learners, innovative, and who collaborate on solving complex system issues. They learn and gain support from each other in formally sponsored communities of practice, and they work well with multiple partners, neighboring communities and other agencies. This vision of the workforce is offered in the National Parks Second Century Commission report and recommendations. Board Member Meg Wheatley served on that Commission and chaired a committee which prepared the recommendation. Seven other Board members served on the Commission. They view their service on the Board as a continuation of active work on behalf of the National Park Service.<sup>i</sup>

**Addressing the Task:** We have used a theory of culture change different than the usual: rather than filling a “gap” between the present and the future, new organizational cultures are created by noticing who’s *already practicing* attributes and behaviors of the new culture. Their work is amplified and spread through a four-stage process of: *Naming* the exemplars; *Connecting* them to each other; *Nourishing* their work with resources, ideas, time; *Illuminating* their achievements to inspire others.<sup>ii</sup> This theory of change is based on working with emergence, which is how all living systems change.<sup>iii</sup>

**Progress Report:** The National Park Service Director's *Four Priorities* and the *Call to Action*<sup>iv</sup> plan created focus, coherence and direction for the NPS, and produced multiple opportunities to implement 21<sup>st</sup>-century leadership practices.<sup>v</sup>

1. *The Collaborative for Innovation.*<sup>vi</sup> A new organization function that brings together all players involved in leadership development and learning, pooling resources to promote: best practices for all NPS issues; communities of practice; collaborative processes and facilitation skills.<sup>vii</sup> Current work includes:

- a. Retooling the Superintendents Round Table—a robust community of practice.<sup>viii</sup>
- b. Applying learnings from just-completed one-year pilot of an online network of Youth Program leaders to other potential Community of Practice participants.<sup>ix</sup>
- c. Supporting the new NPS initiative for Urban Parks and also the EVS process (see below).
- d. Developing multiple means to name, connect, nourish, and illuminate the exemplars throughout NPS.

2. *Redesign and Redirection of the Organization Development Function* to support the Four Priorities and the Call to Action. The redesigned OD function has:

- a. Focused on changing leadership "from hero to host" and to learn group practice and facilitation skills that support this.

b. Focused their consulting work on the Four Priorities: Stewardship; Workforce; Education; Relevancy.

3. *Addressing issues surfaced in the Employee Viewpoint Survey*<sup>x</sup>. The OD function has begun in-depth work with 20 parks to address issues raised in the Employee Viewpoint Survey, and will work on a lesser basis with up to 50 more parks.<sup>xi</sup> This ambitious, multi-year process will use 21<sup>st</sup>-century leadership practices of inclusion, conversation, diversity, and critical thinking to use survey data to resolve issues specific to each park.

**Achieving Our Vision:** We have made great progress in embedding this approach to culture change in many senior leaders, and in the functions responsible for leadership. The Collaborative for Innovation and Change provides a clear organizational focus for the continuation of this work. Both the Collaborative and the OD function have already begun working well to support these changes and to develop 21st century leadership. We are extremely optimistic about the future of this work.

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ii **Building and strengthening a 21<sup>st</sup>-century culture of innovation and leadership**

Margaret Wheatley

Report on activities submitted Spring 2010

As a member of the NPSAB, my portfolio focuses on leadership and developing a 21<sup>st</sup>-century organizational culture that is adaptive, innovative, and collaborative, thereby becoming resilient and sustainable. Rather than filling a “gap” between the present and the future, new organizational cultures are created by noticing who’s already practicing attributes and behaviors of the new culture and amplifying those individuals, units and practices. Therefore, I’ve focused my work on discovering and supporting the 21<sup>st</sup>-century culture that is already in practice within NPS. A great deal has already been accomplished with the NLC, superintendents, and the functions most focused on leadership, such as Learning and Development, Organization Development and the Conservation Study Institute’s work with the Superintendents Leadership Roundtables.

**Here are the three key areas of focus going forward:**

1. *Create Alignment and Congruence among all leadership efforts.* Align everything that impacts leadership to be coherent and consistent, based on the same values, behaviors and expectations. This includes all training materials and modules; hiring, evaluation and promotion; Human Resource policies. Specific actions over the next year include:

- aligning the leadership taught in Operations Management
- working on approaches to Human Resources evaluation and promotion decisions with Regional Directors
- developing close alignment with Workforce Planning (Kate Richardson)

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## *2. The Network for Innovation, Creativity and Change.*

- As an initial implementation phase for the Network, conduct a 6-month experimental pilot to offer a robust online platform that connects innovators; provides a resource of innovative ideas, programs and information; and spawns self-organizing interest groups and communities of practice for specific issues. The experimental pilot is scheduled to begin in Summer 2011 and will focus on connecting youth development program practitioners.

## *3. Promote and create Communities of Practice (CofPs) as a major learning modality.*

CofPs are a low-cost and highly effective means for peer-to-peer rapid learning to occur both within an organization and among those in different organizations. At this time of shrinking finances and increased problem complexity, CofPs are a practical means to promote organizational learning, healthier relationships, and more collaboration and support among those doing similar work or tackling the same issues. In the next several months, we will:

- illuminate the learnings from the highly generative Superintendents Leadership Roundtables (SLR)
- develop regional CofPs based on the SLR model, to promote learning and collaboration regionally
- support the CofPs that develop from the Network for Innovation

## **ii Four Stages for Developing Leadership and Creating Culture Change**

**©Margaret Wheatley**

The Berkana Institute ([www.berkana.org](http://www.berkana.org)) works with pioneering leaders and communities using a four-stage approach. This has evolved out of our understanding of how living systems grow and change, and years of practice and experimentation.

### **I. Name**

Pioneering leaders act in isolation, unaware that their work has broader value. They are too busy to think about extending their work, and too humble to think that others would benefit. Berkana's first act is to recognize them as pioneers with experiences that are of value to others.

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## **II. Connect**

Life grows and changes through the strength of its connections and relationships. (In nature, if a system lacks health, the solution is to connect it to more of itself.) Berkana creates connections in many different ways. We design and facilitate community gatherings. We host networks where people can exchange ideas and resources. Our collaborative technology supports communities of practice through dedicated websites, online conferences, asynchronous conversations and co-created knowledge products.

## **III. Nourish**

Communities of practice need many different resources: ideas, mentors, processes, technology, equipment, money. Each is important, but foremost among these is learning and knowledge: knowing what techniques and processes work well, and learning from experience as people do the work.

Berkana provides many of these sources of nourishment but, increasingly, we find that the most significant nourishment comes from the interactions and exchanges among pioneering leaders themselves. They need and want to share their practices, experiences and dreams. Creating opportunities for people to learn together has become our primary way of nourishing their efforts.

## **IV. Illuminate**

It is difficult for anybody to see work based on a different paradigm. If people do notice such work, it is often characterized as inspiring deviations from the norm. It takes time and attention for people to see different approaches for what they are: examples of what the new world could be. The Berkana community publishes articles, tells our stories at conferences, and host learning journeys where people visit pioneering efforts, learn from them directly, and develop lasting relationships.

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For further explanation, see *Walk Out Walk On: A Learning Journey Into Communities Daring to Live the Future Now*. Margaret Wheatley and Deborah Frieze, Berrett-Koehler Publisher, 2011.

iii See *Using Emergence to Take Social Innovations to Scale*. Margaret Wheatley & Deborah Frieze ©2006. [www.margaretwheatley.com/articles](http://www.margaretwheatley.com/articles). Also see *Walk Out Walk On: A Learning Journey into Communities Daring to Live the Future Now*. Margaret Wheatley & Deborah Frieze. Berrett-Koehler Publisher, 2011.

iv **Implementing the Call to Action Plan: Thoughts and Recommendations**  
Meg Wheatley July 2011

**Orientation:** The Call to Action Plan is *not* parachuted in or imposed from the top. It is *not* another set of activities for people to add to their existing workloads. Rather, it is an unparalleled opportunity to create a clear, strong focus, to cohere all activities and programs in support of the four priorities. Such focus and clarity are of paramount importance at this time for NPS: shrinking financial resources can serve to turn attention to the reservoir of human resources and people's ability to innovate and create solutions that do not depend on money.

Implementation of the Call to Action also is a powerful opportunity to practice and develop the 21<sup>st</sup> century leadership skills of a workforce that, at all levels, can: adapt to continuous change; respond intelligently to crises; think and plan systemically; evaluate risks and make decisions based on evidence; work collaboratively with diverse communities; maintain motivation and creativity in the face of increasing challenges; rely on the esprit de corps that characterizes NPS.

Successful implementation will result not only in actions accomplished, but in an NPS that has learned how to learn, how to think well and make intelligent decisions, how to include and collaborate, how to adapt and change as needed.

Successful implementation is based on three key principles:

- 1/ People support what they create.
- 2/ People act most responsibly for those things they care about.
- 3/ Simple rewards not complex punishments increase people's intrinsic motivation to contribute.

**System-wide Issues for Successful Implementation** (necessary activities without specifying which functions do what)

A. *Accountability at all levels*. (accountability and ownership for the Call to Action must penetrate to all levels, not just senior leaders.)

1. For all levels, measures get built in to performance and development plans.

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2. Staff are supported to develop their own personal measures for demonstrating success.
  3. Formal HR systems—policies, including hiring and evaluation, support the skills and capacities required by the plan.
  4. The Director holds senior staff accountable for both results and the processes and leadership style by which those results are achieved.
  5. Focus on simple rewards and publicizing of exemplary efforts.

*B. The plan as a living document--adapting and changing the plan as it's implemented.*  
(as with any living system, good feedback loops create the ability to adapt and thrive)

- Development of robust feedback loops at all levels
- Need an individual or small group with formal authority to steward the plan at a system-wide level and to have the power and influence to make necessary changes as needed
- NPS becomes a true learning organization (adaptive, innovative, resilient) by the processes and behaviors it develops in learning from experience as the plan is implemented.

*C. Aligning existing resources and programs that impact leadership and skill development*

There are many resources for leadership development in existing programs, vendors, training. These need to be aligned at the core by creating coherence rather than top down control. Coherence means that every program, trainer, vendor, etc. support and teach the same leadership qualities, skills and behaviors, no matter their individual techniques and models, and that all training also focuses on developing skills relevant to the four priorities.

- Develop criteria for programs, training—every effort needs to demonstrate how their activities serve the leadership approaches and the four priorities
- Congruence achieved through relationships and participation with others; nothing top down, nothing to provoke people into hunkering down and self-protection
- Focus is on the common good and the overall goal of creating NPS for the 21<sup>st</sup> century

*D. Living the Future Now*

The leadership we use to implement this plan must embody the leadership skills we want throughout NPS in the future. *How the plan is implemented is as critical as what gets implemented* in order to bring into form an NPS that is adaptive, collaborative, resilient, learningful, and innovative.

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v *Creating a 21<sup>st</sup>-century organizational culture that is adaptive, innovative, resilient, with a particular emphasis on leadership skills and competencies developed through Communities of Practice.*

Meg Wheatley November 17, 2011

## I. Implementation of the Call To Action

**A SECOND-CENTURY NATIONAL PARK SERVICE** *will develop a workforce that can adapt to continuous change, think systemically, evaluate risk, make decisions based on the best science and scholarship, work collaboratively with all communities, and maintain our characteristic esprit de corps in the face of new challenges. We will create an environment where every employee can reach his or her full potential.*

Prior to the release of the Call To Action (C2A) and now continuing, I've been very active in focusing attention on what's required for successful implementation. This has included:

- Conversations with the Director that helped shape his remarks to the August NLC in positioning the C2A
- Phone Call and meeting with the Regional Directors
- Preparation of a conversational process and resource guide to be used by Park Superintendents
  - This process was adopted by Learning and Development and offered by Org. Development as a free service to a few parks
- Conversations (that continue) with L&D and Deputy Director Fearn on how to align and streamline leadership activities and programs (there are 45 throughout NPS) to support the C2A and create deeper coherence among disparate offerings
- *Currently* active is supporting the redesign of Organization Development
- *Currently*, working closely with Mickey Fearn and Michael Creasey to redesign the work of the Conservation Studies Institute (following the retirement of Nora Mitchell, Director). We are proposing to the Director that NPS utilize the core competencies of CSI for Communities of Practice (CofPs),

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evaluation, and the development of system-wide practices, and to mobilize these on behalf of implementation of the C2A.

## II. Creation of the on-line Youth Program Network Pilot

**Destination  
Innovation**

31

Accelerate the spread of ideas, encourage innovation, and inspire peer-to-peer collaboration across the Service. To achieve this we will create a network for innovation and creativity to rapidly share new insights and solve mission-critical problems using online tools such as blogs, discussion forums, and “wikis.”

In May, the NLC approved and funded the creation of a Youth Development Network as a pilot/learning laboratory for the creation of a Network for Innovation and Creativity (The 2nd Century Commission had proposed this, but originally as a physical "Center".) The goal of the Network is to create a forum for the rapid exchange of knowledge, questions, experiences, and support by creating CofPs among NPS employees. The Youth Program Network pilot is experimenting with an on-line social media platform (Socialtext).

*Current status:*

- The Network is up and running, with 102 participants (double what had been expected). In it's first week (10/18/11), more than 60% of those signed up participated. 15 CofPs have been created in this on-line environment to deal with specific programs, issues and challenges.
- Participants are from every region and D.C.; 88 parks, 6 programs, and a variety of positions, including every regional Youth Coordinator and the head of Youth Programs. The NLC sponsored the call for applications. Those accepted signed an agreement specifying the terms of engagement.
- The design for this Network as a learning lab includes multiple points and types of evaluation during its 6 month tenure.
  - This is important because the Network is intended to be a major resource for implementing C2A.
  - We're aware that we chose a group (Youth Program Staff) that eagerly uses technology. We're also planning other means to create CofPs among older staffers.
- Meg led the first Webinar for 70 participants in August. Additional webinars on how to use the technology have been offered, with more planned.

NB: It was very difficult (took 4 months) to get the Network up and running even though we had NLC approval and fund authorization in May. This is a case study in complexity and bureaucracy. The Network is only up because of extraordinary creativity and perseverance on the part of the CSI staff and the

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NE Regional leaders. The NE region has also contributed additional funds and are backing this whole-heartedly.

*Summary:* I continue to feel energized and useful in every interaction I have with NPS. As the environment constricts in terms of money and time, I feel confident that we're moving in the right direction with Communities of Practice as the means to develop a new culture of innovation; they create the most efficient, low cost means for staff to learn together, and support one another as they continue to do good work in an increasingly difficult environment. And we're strategically embedding these new structures (the Network and the redesign of CSI) so that they withstand any shifts in the political environment.

## vi The Collaborative for Innovative Leadership

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE MAY 29, 2012

DRAFT CONCEPT

The following concept paper was prepared by the National Park Service Conservation Study Institute at the request of Director Jarvis. The proposal was developed as a concept to begin a larger discussion about how the National Park Service will explore how to accelerate the spread of ideas, encourage innovation and inspire peer-to-peer collaboration across the Service, as suggested in the Call to Action, “Destination Innovation.”

## **The Collaborative for Innovative Leadership**

The Collaborative will identify, connect, and assist leaders at all levels of the National Park System and partner organizations who are innovating in mission-critical arenas. Complementing existing training, development, and workforce programs, it will focus on transformative change in leadership. It will build and sustain communities of practice that connect employees across geographically dispersed sites to accelerate the exchange of knowledge, new approaches, and insights from practical experience.

By creating environments that increase the cross-fertilization of ideas, the Collaborative will model and promote 21st century skills that foster collaborative, adaptive, and resilient stewardship. A “hub and spoke” infrastructure will enlist a network of pioneering parks and programs—“innovation incubators.” An advisory team will guide the effort and will be served by the “Keystone Partners” — Learning & Development, Workplace Enrichment, Conservation Study Institute, and the Center for Park Management. The Collaborative will help realize the

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vision of transforming the National Park Service to meet second century challenges.

## Background

On August 25, 2011 National Park Service Director Jonathan Jarvis held a Town Hall-style meeting that launched *A Call to Action: Preparing for a Second Century of Stewardship and Engagement*. The report challenged the employees of the National Park Service (NPS) and our partners to put forth a second-century vision for the National Park System and take personal responsibility for advancing the mission as we mark the Service's 100th anniversary in 2016. In particular, the report sets forth a strategy that recognizes the great work that is performed everyday across the Service while suggesting a need to focus on critical issues and opportunities that will meet the changing needs of our nation. Thirty-six actions fall within the following four themes: 1) *Connecting People*

*to Parks*, 2) *Advancing the NPS Education Mission*, 3) *Preserving America's Special Places* and THE COLLABORATIVE / Page 1

4) *Enhancing Professional and Organizational Excellence*. Embracing the last theme, *Enhancing Professional and Organizational Excellence*, is pivotal to forming alignment within the Service to achieve the vision set forth in the Call to Action report and will be the focus of this paper.

Director Jarvis recognizes the critical need to reawaken the National Park Service, characterized as a "sleeping giant" that *is too cautious, too resistant to change, and too reluctant to engage the challenges* that must be addressed in the 21st century. He has provided the following guidance to a small working group that has been tasked with recommending an operational strategy for the proposed Network for Innovation and Creativity (c2a #31):

- Urgently organize around the Call to Action in order for the NPS to achieve its shared vision for 2016 and our second century.
- Strategically engage in a systematic and networked approach with greater integration of parks and programs working toward a set of common goals, whereby the aggregate of those efforts are deployed more seamlessly in a collaborative relationship among parks, regions, communities and partners.
- Make the Service and our partners more aware of our exemplar, forward-thinking programs that have large-scale stewardship impacts, economic benefits and fiscal advantages—examples include but are not limited to the National Heritage Areas Program, Historic Preservation Tax Credit, and the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program.
- Find ways to break down unnecessary bureaucratic barriers and

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become a more flexible and nimble organization where innovation is supported and encouraged to rise and spread.

- Create environments that encourage networking, openness to new ideas, creative approaches to complex problems, and a strong defense of resources but with a willingness to find different ways to accomplish the goal.
- Learn from the work currently underway with the Network Pilot for Youth Development and move toward “organizational utility” that will provide the infrastructure to support innovation through enhanced learning exchanges, peer-to-peer networking and communities of practice.
- Look at the work being undertaken by Organizational Development, Learning and Development, the Conservation Study Institute, partner programs, and others to drive organizational shifts that promote and promulgate individual and park/program successes which can be shared across the System.

**A Call for a “Center for Innovation, Creativity and Leadership”** The initial call to establish a “Network for Creativity and Innovation” was spawned from the work of the Second Century Commission that stated: *...the National Park Service should establish a Center for Innovation to gather and share lessons learned quickly throughout the organization. Place-based education, leadership, public engagement, and collaboration should receive particular attention. The center should form communities of practice, connecting people engaged in similar work so that they can more easily share ideas and experiences. As a public-private consortium, the center could include the Park Service, universities, foundations, school systems, corporations, and professional organizations. Effective leaders enlist the hearts and minds of employees and associates, create a shared vision of the future, motivate others to work toward it, and clear roadblocks from their paths. Strategic thinking, problem solving, and the ability to inspire and motivate can be taught. National Park Service leaders must be fluent in collaboration, empowerment, research-based decision-making, and systems thinking.*

Commissioners Margaret (Meg) Wheatley and Peter Senge provided great insight and suggestions for building and empowering a second-century National Park Service, emphasizing a need to institutionalize leadership throughout the NPS that intelligently responds to crises, thinks systemically, evaluates risks and makes decisions based on evidence, works collaboratively with diverse communities, maintains motivation and creativity in the face of increasing challenges, and relies on the esprit de corps that characterizes NPS resilience.

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Meg, in her presentation to the National Leadership Council, and subsequently to other NPS leadership meetings suggests:

1. The solutions we need are already here;
2. People support what they create and act responsibly when they care;
3. People are skillful and creative;
4. People are motivated and ready to move forward;
5. People want to find meaning in work;
6. People are powerful, though they may not know this;
7. Leaders are responsible to support people to realize their power.

### ***Advancing Innovation: Network Pilot for Youth Development***

In May 2011, the NPS National Leadership Council requested the Conservation Study Institute (CSI) to undertake an experimental “pilot” social media platform as a means to inform a larger initiative in the future. Youth development was intentionally targeted as a cross-cutting priority program with an engaged constituency. CSI designed the pilot to examine three key components of the Network concept—practitioners, communication tools and the support team.

**Practitioners** are the people of the NPS and their partners who use and contribute to the Network. They benefit from finding their peers and exchanging knowledge to improve practice and their performance. They participate as individuals, in groups, and as communities of practice with colleagues who share a profession or an interest in a topic important to their work. Through their active participation the Network will grow and become increasingly useful.

**Communication Tools** will support rapid and widespread exchange among practitioners by using a variety of collaboration technologies. Practitioners will make critical new connections through expanded online communities—an internet platform of blogs, discussion forums, wikis, and other tools—in addition to video conferencing, telephone, email, and face-to-face meetings.

A **Support Team** will assist people as they build and use the Network and form communities of practice. Experience from other organizations indicates that to fully leverage the impact of a network it needs to be supported and cultivated, especially in the early phases of development. The Support Team will provide technical assistance and ensure that significant new learning is highlighted for the wider NPS community. The Youth Development Pilot was launched in August and over 100 participants are currently involved. Although the pilot is in

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its early stages, and is intentionally limited to this scale, several observations can be made that inform the development of an expanded Network initiative which supports implementing the Call to Action. Lessons learned include:

1. Wide-spread recruitment and voluntary participation led to more participants than anticipated;
2. The Pilot benefitted from a backbone support operation with specific skill sets (technology, data support, evaluation, facilitation, content support, and professional development) to provide structure and assistance to participants. Additional key learnings:
  - Facilitators of the community need to be “content” people as well as good facilitators. These “connectors” are critical to providing relevant information, probing questions and stimulating conversations, directing people to resources, and providing energy to the community;
  - Purpose for participation needs to have a value-added component and provide something that can’t be gained from other sources;
  - If other communities are built, there will be a need to have leaders communicate among all of the communities;
  - Need to be mindful that the platform can only take participants so far. The community will ultimately need greater resources to support more specific and technical issues.

## **The Collaborative for Innovative Leadership**

The Collaborative for Innovative Leadership is proposed to serve as the formal organizational space in the NPS to support developing and institutionalizing a 21st century leadership culture, Service-wide. The Collaborative should be imagined as a network of leadership laboratories. It will focus on ways to rapidly share knowledge, new approaches, and insights from practical experience to address critical problems and advance organizational excellence. The Collaborative will utilize both online platforms and field-based experiential learning.

The way the Collaborative works—through collaboration, horizontal communication, learning from experience, collegial interactions, and leadership that supports rather than controls—models what we want the NPS to become in the future.

The Collaborative will:

- convene and facilitate the “best thinking” on NPS related issues in order to build and sustain networks that connect practitioners across geographically dispersed sites and programs to enhance their ability to solve problems more quickly and strategically;

- 
- accelerate dissemination of ideas and lessons learned through both face-to-face dialogue as well as various mediums; the Collaborative will develop an on-line platform that will tell the stories of NPS pioneers and share them with others in compelling ways—journalist writing and audio, video reports and podcasts, blogs and discussion forums, and a topical library that highlights current practices;
  - identify road blocks that stymie innovation and creativity;
  - rely on the collective intelligence of our workforce and the knowledge and insights of our network of partners; and
  - challenge and inspire our leadership;

***Operationalizing the Collaborative*** As there is a desire to mobilize quickly, it is suggested that an advisory team be appointed and served by a dedicated staff that would focus on the development and management of the Collaborative. An appropriate “scaling up” of a backbone operation with a talented staff and advisory team to advance the Collaborative will need action. To a great extent, the Collaborative will utilize existing or redistributed resources and programs. The recommendation is to activate the current Conservation Study Institute as the hub for the Collaborative. However, the Collaborative will utilize the leadership network across the NPS to build a broad national perspective for addressing leadership challenges. As such, there may be a need to shift resources and people with appropriate competencies and skill sets to perform Collaborative functions.

Structurally, it is envisioned that the Collaborative will be a “hub and spoke” operation. At its core, an entrepreneurial staff supported by innovative leaders will guide the Collaborative program. The “spokes” will be field innovators and experiences that contribute to creating rich and inspirational learning environments. These field venues may be parks, trails, heritage areas, rivers, and potentially other protected areas in the United States and internationally—they will serve as place-based and online learning centers for the Collaborative.

As the Collaborative is developed, it will follow a similar path to that of the Youth Pilot modeling entrepreneurialism and engaging the Service so that there is ownership built into its creation. A Collaborative Organizing Committee was appointed by the Director and included members of the NPS directorate, National Park System Advisory Board, national and regional staff, superintendents, emerging leaders, partners, and select Call to Action “champions”:

### **The Collaborative Organizing Committee**

Mike Caldwell, *Deputy Regional Director, Northeast Region, Cassius Cash, Superintendent, Boston National Historical Park and Boston African American NHS*  
Sarah Conlon, *Chief, Organization Development Branch, Learning & Development,*  
Michael Creasey, *Superintendent, Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park/*  
*Director,*

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*Conservation Study Institute (CSI), Jonathan Doherty, Assistant Superintendent, Chesapeake Gateways Program, Virginia Farley, Program Manager, Superintendent's Leadership Roundtable, CSI, Mickey Fearn, Deputy Director, Communications and Community Outreach, Andrew Ferrell, Historian, National Center for Preservation Technology and Training, Kathy Hanson, Chief, Learning & Development, Jennifer Jewiss, NPS Partner, University of Vermont, Brian Joyner, Management Assistant, Deputy Director, Communications and Community Outreach Barbara Little, Archeologist, Washington Office, Rebecca Stanfield McCown, Community Engagement and Partnerships Coordinator, CSI, Greg Moore, Executive Director, Golden Gate National Recreation Area Conservancy, Brent Mitchell, CSI Partner, Quebec Labrador Foundation/Atlantic Center for the Environment Cicely Muldoon, Superintendent, Point Reyes National Seashore, Alan Ragins, Chief, Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance, Intermountain Region, Michael Reynolds, Regional Director, Midwest Region (via phone), Kate Richardson, Program Director, Workplace Enrichment, Mary Gibson Scott, Superintendent, Grand Teton National Park, Sandy Taylor, Superintendent, Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site and Selma to Montgomery NHT Meg Wheatley, National Park System Advisory Board Member, Leadership Committee, Julie Williams, Vice President, Center for Park Management*

Steven Wright, *Facilitator, Wright Collaborative LLC*

The Organizing Committee was responsible for meeting twice to test the Collaborative concept and develop an operational strategy that would add value to field operations. The first meeting was held on March 20, 2012 and the final working session was held May 29-31, 2012. The notes from these meetings as well as the Youth Program Pilot brief can be found at [www.nps.gov/csi](http://www.nps.gov/csi).

## vii **About Collaboration and the Collaborative**

Some thoughts for Conversation and Development

Meg Wheatley

### **Some Assumptions**

1. We all know the value of collaboration
2. We want to collaborate
3. We are not working in systems that have taught us how to collaborate
4. If we already were collaborating, there'd be no need for this new resource, The Collaborative for Innovation
5. Therefore, we are setting out together in a *collective experiment* to learn what collaboration means on a day-to-day, project-to-project basis on behalf of NPS.

*This is an experiment in new behaviors.* To facilitate our learning as we practice these new skills, we need to develop measures, based on these questions:

- 
- What does collaboration look like?
  - What are the skills of collaboration?
  - What will we hold ourselves and one another accountable for in terms of skills and behaviors?
  - How will we know if we're learning the skills of collaboration?

Examples of essential categories of collaborative behaviors

1. Information: How we handle information of all kinds--successes and failures
2. Decision-Making: How we involve one another in decisions, even those that only concern our own function
3. Relationships: How we rely on one another as thinking partners, problem-solvers, supporters

In general, *the desired end state of healthy collaboration* is that we seek each other out, we rely on one another's expertise and experience, we don't make complex decisions alone, we're not afraid to share information, we support one another's risk-taking, we learn from experience in an on-going, regular way.

These are the types of behaviors we hold ourselves accountable for and, periodically, we review together how we're doing. But it's important to remember that we're not yet good at all this. We begin with the expectation that we're learning together how to collaborate, that we can't know how to do it well at the start, that we'll make mistakes, and that we'll be learning as we go.

#### viii **Superintendents Leadership Roundtable & Communities of Practice**

Margaret Wheatley  
Spring 2010

*Superintendents Leadership Roundtable (SLR) is an extraordinary example* of discovering the already existent practices that *embody* the culture we want to develop throughout NPS. The innovations we need are already here; the leadership we need is already here. The work is to learn from these existing examples and support and amplify them as the means to shift the culture.

*It is essential that SLR is renamed and reconceptualized.* It's presently seen as a one-off training event—you go, you get it and don't need to go again

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(known as the 'inoculation theory' of training). In a perverse recognition of its usefulness, one criticism is that because there are many others who need to attend, those who continue to go are 'selfish', taking the space that should now go to others. Yet SLR is a true CofP already, and recent evaluations demonstrate the same outcomes (listed below) that are common to CofPs.

*Communities of Practice.* CofPs are the most effective, least costly and most time-effective means to learn from experience, promote growth and adaptation, and develop professional competency and courage

- CofPs historically have been self-organized groups, where people of similar practices, specialties, roles reach out to find others with whom they can share ideas, resolve problems, and gain support.
- The mandate for today's leaders is to learn from experience in order to adapt to a constantly changing environment. CofP participants learn how to solve problems quickly in real time as they work together, pooling their knowledge and experience.
- Collaboration reduces the loneliness that is intrinsic to being a leader, especially those trying to create change. And the support of colleagues has been demonstrated to increase people's focus, risk-taking and courage.
- Research has shown that the Core Competencies of the organization are developed within CofPs rather than from complex training programs or strategic initiatives.
- CofP members develop greater tenacity, motivation and commitment to their work. These results have been demonstrated many times over in all types of organizations for the past 20 years.

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*Case Example:* The Army is well-known for CompanyCommand.com, which began as a porch conversation between two captains and grew into a CofP that operates real-time in battle in Iraq and Afghanistan, credited with saving thousands of lives. Soldiers communicate electronically and immediately, advising, warning, sharing info about today's battlefield, e.g. where the bombs are hidden. This CofP has now superseded the traditional Army Lessons Learned because it is instantaneous and more effective. And it has spawned many other CofPs for different issues and populations.

*SLR evaluations exemplified results familiar in CofPs:*

- trusting selves as leaders
- building on one another's examples, role models, ideas
- Learning and implementing new processes, programs
- Feeling supported to try new things
- Time to think and resolve problems
- Becoming more thoughtful, skilled and adaptive
- Changing their problem-solving mode with Park staff
- Becoming more participative leaders, engaging staff more

*Future NPS leadership development, at all levels, could best be accomplished by using the CofP modality.* These could be developed regionally, and among different categories of staff. In a budget-depleted time, it is the most cost-effective and time-efficient means to maximize learning, develop teamwork, and create real solutions. And as Park staff feel more connected and more confident, their enthusiasm, commitment and risk-taking increases exponentially.

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## **Predictable outcomes from a well-functioning Community of Practice:**

### **Developing New Practices**

1. Rapid exchange of practices "trans-local learning"
2. Willingness to take risks and try things learned from colleagues ("if they did it, I can do it")
3. Culture of experimentation and innovation develops within the community
4. Practices that work well go to scale horizontally, spreading rapidly through the network of relationships.

### **Personal Leadership**

1. Increasing self-confidence
2. Colleagues to call on and consult as needed

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3. Openness to experiment and learn
  4. Increasing effectiveness as a leader
  5. Feel supported, less alone
  6. Growing capacity to adapt to changing situations and crises
  7. Personal resilience

### **Learning Organization**

1. Curiosity, openness and willingness to experiment become part of the culture
2. Organizational capacity to learn from experience and apply those learnings
3. Learning and knowledge transfer occurs many times faster as compared to conventional training and development means.

## **ix Developing a Network for Innovation and Creativity to Enhance NPS Learning and Effectiveness: A Concept Paper Requested by the National Leadership Council May 2011**

This concept paper, requested by the National Leadership Council, describes the goal, benefits and next steps for initiating the Network for Innovation and Creativity.

### **Goal of the Network**

*"It's not about critical mass; it's about critical connections." -- Meg Wheatley*

The goal of the Network is to rapidly share knowledge, new approaches, and insights from practical experience to solve mission-critical problems and advance organizational excellence. The Network will directly benefit NPS and partner practitioners in all disciplines, building an engaged 21st century workforce with the capacity and creativity to accomplish the NPS mission. By supporting peer-to-peer collaboration across the national park system, the Network augments and leverages existing organizational structures and formal communication processes. Ultimately, the Network is a tool to help the NPS remain relevant and more effectively serve the American public.

### **Benefits of the Network**

*To capitalize more effectively on successful innovations, a Center [now Network] for Innovation will "quickly identify instructive organizational experiences – successful and otherwise—and swiftly share lessons learned, along with demonstrably effective models of leadership, education, public engagement, and collaboration for landscape-level conservation and preservation." -- Second Century Commission*

As the National Park Service prepares for its second century, there is a sense of urgency to learn and adapt at a pace required by a rapidly changing world. To advance national priorities – relevancy, education, stewardship, and workforce – the Network will:

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- accelerate dissemination of ideas and lessons learned
  - build and sustain informal networks that connect practitioners across geographically dispersed sites and programs to enhance their ability to solve problems more quickly and strategically
  - leverage existing investments in program development, evaluation and learning to provide greater benefits for the system – to think and learn like a system.
  - attract, welcome, and retain the next generation of leaders who learn and communicate through online communities.

### **Key Components of a Network**

- Practitioners are the people of the NPS and their partners who use and contribute to the Network. They benefit from finding their peers and exchanging knowledge to improve their practice and their performance. They participate as individuals, in groups, and as communities of practice with colleagues who share a profession or an interest in a topic important to their work. Through their active participation the Network will grow and become increasingly useful.
- Communication Tools will support rapid and widespread exchange among practitioners by using a variety of collaboration technologies. Practitioners will make critical new connections through expanded online communities—an internet platform of blogs, discussion forums, wikis, and other tools— in addition to video conferencing, telephone, email, and face-to-face meetings.
- A Support Team will assist people as they build and use the Network and form communities of practice. Experience from other organizations indicates that to fully leverage the impact of a network it needs to be supported and cultivated, especially in the early phases of development. The Support Team will provide technical assistance and ensure that significant new learning is highlighted for the wider NPS community.

### **Recommended Next Steps for Moving Forward on the Network**

This paper describes the substantial promise of a Network for Innovation and Creativity. As this is a new approach, we recommend a pilot be used to move forward from this concept to an initial phase of implementation. This pilot will demonstrate all three components of the Network and work with **practitioners involved with engaging youth in diverse communities**, a cross-cutting high priority area where new approaches are urgently needed. Given the number of youth engagement programs already underway, practitioners have a wealth of experience to share and have indicated that they would benefit from opportunities to learn from each other.

We envision the pilot as an online community where enhanced peer-to-peer exchange significantly advances design of new youth programs and capacity for problem-solving for existing programs. Parks, program managers, and partners will be invited to participate. Practitioners will be able to form affinity groups on specific

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topics such as mentorship, intake and career development, and cultural competency. This pilot will serve as a “learning lab” to determine how practitioners use and benefit from the Network. In addition, we will identify what works well and what needs improvement, required capacity building and support, and needed future investments.

**To make this pilot effort successful, NPS leadership can:**

- encourage youth program practitioners to actively participate in this pilot;
- endorse innovation in the use of emerging technologies to facilitate collaboration; and
- ask NPS offices and programs (including several represented on the Coordinating Committee, see attached list) to work together as a Support Team and in collaboration with Network users to implement and learn from the pilot.

**Attachment: Project Team Members**

The project team, drawn from nominations by the NLC, includes a mix of disciplines, positions, and experience, representing parks, regions and the national office. At the request of the NPS Director, Deputy Director Mickey Fearn is providing leadership for this effort and Nora Mitchell, Director of the Conservation Study Institute, is serving as project coordinator. Margaret Wheatley, a member of the National Park System Advisory Board, has offered advice in the development of this concept paper as an integral part of her work with the Board on enhancing 21st century leadership skills, practices and systems.

**NLC Advisory Group**

Chris Abbett, ARD Partnerships, SER, Sgt. Stephanie Clark, Special Events Coordinator, USPP, Michael Creasey, Superintendent, LOWE, Andrew Ferrell, Historian, NCPTT, Bill Gwaltney, ARD Workforce Enhancement, IMR, Marta Kelly, Chief of Interpretation & Education, WASO, Sanny Lustig, Ranger Hurricane District, OLYM, Dr. Ryan Monello, Wildlife Biologist Wildlife Health Team, Wendy O'Sullivan, ARD Partnerships, NCR, Bob Page, Director, OCLP, Pedro Ramos, Superintendent, BICY, Woody Smeck, Superintendent, SAMO currently Acting Regional Director, NCR Robin White, Superintendent, CHSC, Clara Wooden, ARD Equal Employment Opportunity & Recruitment, MWR

**Coordinating Committee**

Mickey Fearn, Deputy Director, Delia Clark, NPS Partner, Sarah Conlon, Senior Organization Development Consultant, WASO, Kathy Hanson, Chief, Learning & Development, WASO, Jennifer Jewiss, NPS Partner, Brian Joyner, Writer/Editor, detail to Deputy Director, WASO, Dick Lazeres, Network Project Manager, PWR, Glen Mazur, Deputy Chief Learning & Development, WASO, Brent Mitchell, NPS Partner, Nora Mitchell, Director, CSI, Marcia Schramm, Human Resource Specialist, WASO, Rebecca Stanfield McCown, Community Engagement and Partnerships Coordinator, CSI Sue Waldron, Director of Communications, WASO, Julia Washburn, AD Interpretation & Education, WASO, Linda Wright, Organization Development Consultant, WASO

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## **Liaison with National Park System Advisory Board**

Loran Fraser, NPSAB, Margaret Wheatley, NPSAB member and advisor to Project Team

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### **21<sup>st</sup>-Century Leadership within NPS An opportunity to work with Great Places to Work Employee Viewpoints Survey in a systemic, forward-thinking way to make real change**

Margaret Wheatley August 2012

#### **Assumptions**

1. 21st century leadership is adaptable, flexible, and resilient because the leader knows how to engage the intelligence and caring of all staff, acting as *host* to others creativity and contribution rather than as *hero*.
2. Good leadership is absolutely essential for change and organizational effectiveness.
3. In nearly every case, no single individual is responsible for organizational problems; this includes poor leaders.
4. Organizational issues arise from complex causes and conditions--therefore a systems approach is necessary for effective change.
5. Good data/feedback from the organization is an essential first step. The survey data never adequately describes the real issues, but it provides an excellent opportunity to drill more deeply into fundamental causes.
6. Most staff are eager to talk honestly about the real issues. When they become clear, people are energized to do the work called for.

#### **Outcomes possible**

Now that the Great Places to Work data is dis-aggregated by park and programs, we have a real opportunity to use this data to determine what's going on in each park and/or program so as to remedy problems and improve outcomes. This proposed process simultaneously:

- creates accurate systemic diagnoses by park and program for what their issues are
- supports leaders to practice hosting by engaging staff in a conversational process to explore their survey results
- creates buy-in and ownership among staff and leaders for proposed remedies
- creates performance measures and accountability that are self-determined by leaders, yet clearly tied to issues raised by the data.

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- develops focus and direction, unit by unit, for outcomes that are directly linked to the survey results, and also linked to the Call to Action

## **Proposed Process**

Preliminary: RDs agree to take responsibility for this process

For Superintendents and Program Leaders

1. Each Superintendent and/or program head is given their data. This is reviewed with their RD or Deputy Director (programs)
2. Each superintendent and/or program head is tasked to engage their staff in a series of conversations to explore what this data reveals.
  - a. OD provides a format and process for these conversations
    - i. such materials had been prepared for the C2A and also the 2nd Century Commission report
    - ii. Further training materials will be created and made available in multiple formats.
  - b. OD provides facilitation support, varying from guides and back-up to direct participation in facilitating the conversations
    - i. the amount of direct support from OD will be determined for each park by assessing their needs.
      1. In the case of more negative survey data, facilitation will be provided.
      2. In the case of more positive survey data, superintendents will be supported to lead the process themselves.
3. As a result of these conversations, each superintendent/program leader will develop an action plan.
  - a. leaders will be made aware of resources available to support their action plans.
  - b. In some cases, conversations with OD will help leaders determine best practices to resolve their issues
4. This plan will be discussed with one's supervisor (RDs or Dep. Director). In that conversation:
  - a. accountability measures will be created.
  - b. these measures will comprise part of each leader's performance review
5. The Collaborative for Innovation will participate by:
  - a. collecting stories of best practices specific to each issue (these issues will emerge from each park and program's conversations)
  - b. making visible the work of successful leaders, again by issue
  - c. creating a library of selected resources for dealing with each issue

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6. Other programs, including those offered by L&D, Superintendents Academy, Superintendents Round Table will be utilized as forums for further inquiry and also to provide training programs for specific needs. It is assumed that as a result of this process of dis-aggregating the data, a clearer definition of *common* issues and challenges for park and program leadership will emerge.

xi **Employee Viewpoint Survey**

***Process for Introducing Results to Staff***

*Developed by Margaret Wheatley, Ed D., National Park Service Advisory Board Member, Used with Permission  
Adapted by NPS Learning and Development, Organization Development Branch*

**Why we need a conversational process:**

Everyone is already working too hard, many experience overwhelm and exhaustion (true of people everywhere today). People who are stressed lose the ability to see the bigger picture; they see work as isolated tasks added to growing lists. For the Employee Viewpoint Survey (EVS) results to be seen as opportunity, rather than more tasks, we must first shift people into a reflective capacity. This is the space that good conversation creates. With full brains functioning again, instead of feeling overwhelmed by more tasks, people become engaged about discovering work that is meaningful and intrinsically motivating.

And as the work progresses and learning is taking place, conversation serves as the best means to share learnings, support one another and build a stronger sense of team.

**Purpose of the conversations:**

- For the EVS results to be seen as an opportunity to bring focus and coherence to everyone's work.
- For staff to have sufficient time to understand the EVS results and its importance—to see the opportunities for meaningful work it offers
- For staff not to view the EVS as a series of additional tasks that they need to do in addition to their current lists, but rather to be in reflective space together so that meaning, patterns and sense-making become clear.
- To delve into the EVS results together—to build a sense of teaming and working together.
- To generate individual and team commitments—the actions they choose to focus on
- To formalize the process of people determining their own measures for success—what they'll be keeping track of; how they will know when they've accomplished their commitments; how they will realize when they need to change their actions or make course corrections.
- As implementation occurs, to encourage learning as we go, building a supportive and effective team for the long-term

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## **Conversational Process in three sessions**

### ***Session One: Introducing the EVS results***

Leadership introduces staff to the EVS results, sharing his/her expectations, hopes, visions, what's possible with it, what it means for NPS

Results are read by all or gone through together, with explanations from the ODB facilitator.

**Conversation Circle #1, half day- full day:** *Diving into the EVS results together*

- People share their reactions to the EVS results
- What most gets their attention?
- Which results do they feel most interested in committing to improving?

This discussion will follow the “Joint Data Analysis” section of the ODB Action Research Model. During this section the participants will not debate the validity or reliability of the EVS results. Instead, participants will discuss their interpretation of the results. Sample questions, “If this perception were true give an example of how this perception was demonstrated by employees in the NPS.” This discussion is about grounding perceptions, understanding how behaviors are interpreted and lead to perceptions (Ladder of Inference), and how these perceptions impact workplace engagement and workplace productively

*In the interim period (one –two weeks) park staff determine:*

1. What actions are they willing to commit to and why?
2. How will they measure their own success, what measures have they created?

### ***Session Two: Action Planning and Measures for Implementation***

**Conversation Circle #2, half –full day:** Park/Unit staff brings their commitments and how they'll measure their work into the circle. Popcorn style so people build off each other's comments. After everyone speaks general conversation about what this all means for the park or program. ODB can provide action planning templates and assist staff in facilitating the action planning session.

*4-6 weeks later (or quarterly)*

### ***Session Three: How are we doing? What are we learning?***

**Conversation Circle #3, 90 minutes:** Everyone shares what they're doing, and what they're learning. Are their initial measures giving them useful information? What changes need to be made in actions and/or measures? This can be done through social media with ODB facilitating or observing and providing feedback. ODB will hand off facilitation to park/unit staff.

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## ***Session Four: Community of Practice, Social Media and Additional Forms of Supports***

Going forward, optimally, learning and tracking of progress is shared about every quarter using a conversational process like Community of Practice, social media, etc. At this point ODB is not involved unless requested.

### **How to Host a Conversation Process**

©Margaret Wheatley

Conversation is innate to humans. You can rely on this as you invite people to join a conversation. Talking and listening to one another is something we remember; it's what humans have done for thousands of years, so it's deep in our species' memory. These days, because of the bad habits we've developed and the frantic pace of our lives, we may need to be reminded about slowing down, not interrupting, listening to each other and not instantly responding. Here are some simple techniques to host a good conversation that help people remember and redevelop their skills.

**Start with a few friends or colleagues.** This is how all powerful change initiatives begin. Some friends start talking.

**Make sure the topic is one that matters to people, what they really care about.** Meaning is what motivates people. Talking about something that matters brings us into the conversation and keeps us engaged.

**Form as a real circle.** In a circle, everyone is equal. Thus, the form itself is crucial to a good conversation. No one should sit in back, and the circle shouldn't wobble around into different shapes. *An easy test for a circle is this: Everyone can see everyone else.* If latecomers stay outside the circle, or people gradually push their chairs back and shift out of the circle, stop and recreate yourselves as a circle, with everyone visible to everyone else. Don't let the circle form morph into an amoeba!

**Use a talking piece.** This is any object that can be passed around. It can be a pen, a cell phone, or something more meaningful, such as a special stone or object. The talking piece has two rules: 1. You don't speak unless you're holding it. 2.

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You try and speak truthfully while holding it. (These rules come from Native American and African traditions.) There is no easier way to change power dynamics, or to facilitate thoughtful conversation. A talking piece slows the pace of conversation down, and when someone is speaking too long, it's much easier to signal that you want the talking piece than to tell them to stop talking. You don't need to use it constantly, but the talking piece is most helpful when:

- you're just getting started,
- when the conversation heats up,
- when too many people are talking at once,
- when one person keeps dominating,
- when people are silent

**Check-in and check-out.** At the start of the conversation, pass the talking piece around the circle. Each person checks in very briefly. State at the start how much time you want people to take. Start with whomever wants to start, and then pass the talking piece *clockwise* around the circle. The check-in can be a few words describing how I'm feeling, or why I'm here, or what I hope might happen. In this process, everyone gets to speak, and thus their voice enters the circle. Check-out is similar, and closes the conversation. Start with whomever wants to go first, and then pass the talking piece *counter-clockwise*. Each person says a few words about the conversation, what was meaningful, important, distressing; helpful, etc. (The direction in which you pass is taken from Native American traditions.)

**Experiment with good listening.** Conversations rely on good listening, and this is one skill we seem to have forgotten. One helpful means is to ask people to *listen for the differences* in what people are saying. Instead of trying to find those who agree with you, listen for who is saying something new and different. Another means is to ask people to try and notice when they've stopped listening, when they've wandered off in their attention, and once they've noticed, to just bring themselves back to the conversation.

**Do not be afraid of silence.** Most of us fear silence that lasts more than 10 seconds. We jump in to get things moving again. Instead of fearing these moments, just sit with them. They're usually moments when people are

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thinking or reflecting. Even if silence seems to go on for an unbearably long period, do not interrupt it. It always ends, and what happens next is much richer than if the silence had not been allowed to continue.

### **Some things to watch for**

1. *Make sure latecomers come fully into the circle.* They'll tend to hang on the outside, not wanting to disturb what's going on. When they arrive, it's essential to stop the process and invite them in. Then check that everyone can see everyone else, the test that you' a true circle.
2. *The first several minutes will feel disconnected, even a bit chaotic.* People will bounce around and several topics will be introduced. ***This is o.k.*** In part, it's everybody trying to get into the conversation with their point of view. But it also gives people the chance to see which topic they want to talk about. After about 20 minutes, check to see if the group has found what it wants to talk about. If not, suggest that they pick up one thread and stay with it for a few minutes. If it doesn't go anywhere, look for another topic. When the group finally settles and finds the topic of most interest, you'll notice that the conversation shifts and people become more engaged.
3. *Don't be shy about using the talking piece.* It really helps. The only people who complain about it are those who routinely dominate the conversation. (They complain that it disrupts their spontaneity or slows things down, or that it seems unnatural.) Trust the talking piece—it works beautifully especially for the introverts or those with less power in the group.
4. *Notice those who remain silent.* Invite them to speak, but don't force them to. Sometimes the silent ones are the ones really listening; eventually they'll say something very useful and impactful.
5. *Keep noticing if the conversation is boring to people.* If you notice several people withdrawing (body language), ask if we're still talking about the right topic—does it still matter to people? If not, change the conversation.
6. *At the end of the conversation, ask people to notice what made this a good*

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*conversation, or not.* It's good to draw people's attention to the conditions that make for successful conversations. They become better participants the next time.

**You will know it's been a good conversation if:**

- People move toward the center of the circle. They lean into the conversation.
- Voices become quieter. The entire room grows more quiet.
- People don't want to stop. Time passes very quickly.
- People express surprise over how quickly they moved into deep conversation, even among strangers, and how satisfying that felt
- People want to do this again.

**Additional Resources:**

Baldwin, Christina and Linnea, Ann, **The Circle Way: A Leader in Every Chair.** San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2010.

Wheatley, Margaret J., **Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future.** San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2002.

Call to Action Report: <http://inside.nps.gov/calltoaction/>

The Appreciative Inquiry Commons: <http://www.appreciativeinquiry.case.edu>

The Art of Hosting Conversations that Matter: <http://www.artofhosting.org>

Margaret Wheatley: <http://www.turningtooneanother.net>