

# BALANCING WHAT'S NECESSARY WITH WHAT YOU CARE ABOUT

**IN CHALLENGING SITUATIONS REQUIRING THE EXTRA ENERGY OF THOUGHT AND ACTION, RESILIENCY IS CRITICAL IN ORDER TO MOVE FORWARD**

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Resiliency in challenging times requires continual personal and professional development and an awareness and understanding of time and context. Understanding the present moment means understanding the context or environment of that moment. A comprehensive understanding of context includes awareness and understanding of the conditions both of the immediate and the extended past. This is what is required in order to gain insight into the present.

However, knowledge of the past doesn't guarantee knowledge of the future. One's perspective should also include a realization that there are aspects of the past that are unknown and that may influence not just the present but also the future.

**"Time and patience are the strongest warriors." - Leo Tolstoy**

Resiliency means incorporating past success with current challenges in one's personal and professional endeavours. What were the conditions and what lessons were learned? What knowledge of the past can be applied to the current challenges? What priorities were decided upon and why? What values were evident in those decisions? What had meaning and what mattered? Obviously, much can be gained from assessing past challenges, failures, and successes. While there are likely some similarities with the past, the current challenges are likely not identical because of the new context. One learns to expect the unexpected.

Personal and community values are fundamental for decision-making. One definition of "value" is a thing or condition which one consistently acts upon to get or keep. Money for example has no intrinsic value. It is simply a method of exchange for goods and services. How an individual or a community spends money reflects the values that are held. Decisions regarding community economic development absolutely incorporate traditional values with new opportunities. When conditions change and impact activities, resiliency and perseverance become priorities.

**"Acceptance of what has happened is the first step to overcoming the consequences of any misfortune." - William James**

Being forced to change is usually challenging, sometimes awkward, and occasionally difficult. Balancing what's necessary with what you care about is an important exercise in thinking through the process of answering the questions "what should I do now?" and "why do I have to do this?"

Personal resiliency is supported by a strong positive attitude, as evidenced by the following quote: "The relationship between commitment and doubt is by no means an antagonistic one. Commitment is healthiest when it's not without doubt but in spite of doubt" (Rollo May).

It's also helpful to establish some type of structure for thinking about the future, in order to be resilient in times of change.

The futurist Alvin Toffler stated that there are essentially three kinds of futures:

**Probable Futures:** There are some constraints with uniform outcomes. There is an expectation of predictability that hopefully is secure, expected, and familiar.

**Possible Futures:** This idea has more freedom and therefore variable outcomes. While somewhat unpredictable, there are creative alternatives.

**Preferable Futures:** Driven by individual or group-preferred values, where goals and agendas for the future have strong consensus and support.

## The Journal of Aboriginal Management



Dealing with the “what” of change is one aspect. The other aspect is the “how.” Is the change fast or slow? Is it being demanded, or can it be controlled? Change management is another individual and organizational skill that supports resiliency.

**“When we are no longer able to change a situation - we are challenged to change ourselves.” - Viktor E. Frankl**

Making an individual and collective commitment to having the skills, tools, and motivation to focus on specific goals means using resources within a time frame, with appropriate decision-making criteria. Commitment means having the resiliency and perseverance to keep going, in order to achieve the desired results.

Systematized continual transfer of generational knowledge is evident in communities. Elders have resiliency and they are willing to share how relationships in the current environment matter and have meaning.

**“Adversity has the effect of eliciting talents, which in prosperous circumstances would have lain dormant.” - Horace**

It's been said that energy follows the path of least resistance. Think of a stream of water and how it flows over and around obstacles in its path. Unfortunately for people, the path of least resistance manifests through procrastination and indecision. In challenging situations that require the extra energy of thought and action, resilience becomes critical in order to move forward.

Resilience in a challenging situation also requires a level of reliance upon a strategy, or at least some plan of action. Organizations typically use strategic planning and project management to achieve their goals. Individuals should also develop strategic and tactical thinking skills. There is certainly plenty of evidence that utilizing the knowledge and experience of others, also known as peer review, ensures better chances of a successful outcome. If the goal is to design and implement individual and collective futures in challenging times, the questions “what's necessary?” and “what do I / we care about?” will provide good answers for maintaining the resilience to keep going.

**“We don't control what happens to us, all we control are our thoughts and reactions to what happens to us.” - Epictetus**

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*Ismo has a demonstrated ability for developing and executing communication and change management programs through seminars, workshops, and real-time consulting. He is a long-time contributor to JAM and has been a speaker at both AFOA Canada's national and regional conferences. He has also presented on communication and change management at conferences hosted by the National Aboriginal Trust Officers Association (NATOA) and the Canadian Association of Native Development Officers (CANDO). Ismo looks forward to learning about the opportunities and challenges that community leadership is dealing with on behalf of their members and citizens. Visit Ismo Heikkilä Consulting at [www.ismoheikkila.com](http://www.ismoheikkila.com)*