



UnLeading invites us to challenge common-sense assumptions and center often-silenced approaches to leadership, allowing us to re/imagine possibilities for leading, learning, and being in relation to ourselves, each other, and the more than human world.

<https://www.yorku.ca/edu/unleading/>

Season 1: Facilitator Guide

“UnLeading requires a commitment to holding multiple truths, troubling common-sense assumptions, living the inquiries and sitting in the ambiguities of complex ideas such as leadership, schooling, and society. UnLeading asks us to engage in the praxis of leadership, a continual interplay of action towards systemic change and deep, inner reflection. In this way, it is a process of becoming, with no predetermined destination or finite goal. UnLeading asks us to look for leadership in unfamiliar places and challenge the notion of the individual leader.” (The UnLeading Project, York University)

SUMMARIZE by identifying several themes/concepts that arise in this conversation with the guest speakers. Note similarities, differences, tensions, connections, and possible contradictions between and among them. Additionally, note the perspectives, ideas, and voices that might be missing as well in this conversation. You are also invited to draw out compelling quotes from the speakers and comment on them

MAKE CONNECTIONS to your experiences in/with communities and to larger socio-political and historic contexts. Think about and comment on how the thoughts and ideas presented by the speakers connect to similar themes/concepts in other contexts of leadership.

REFLECT on how the conversations with the speakers inform your understanding of leadership outside of familiar frameworks using the guided reflection questions posed below.

ACT by committing to possible actions (immediate and long-term) that you will engage in to disrupt the status quo, which will steadfastly guide you in actualizing the type of leader you hope to be in and with communities.

The Four I's: Embracing Fractals as Possibilities for Leadership

“A fractal is a never-ending pattern. Fractals are infinitely complex patterns that are self-similar across different scales. They are created by repeating a simple process over and over in an ongoing feedback loop.

How we are at the small scale is how we are at the large scale. The patterns of the universe repeat at scale. There is a structural echo that suggests...that what we practice at a small scale can reverberate to the largest scale.

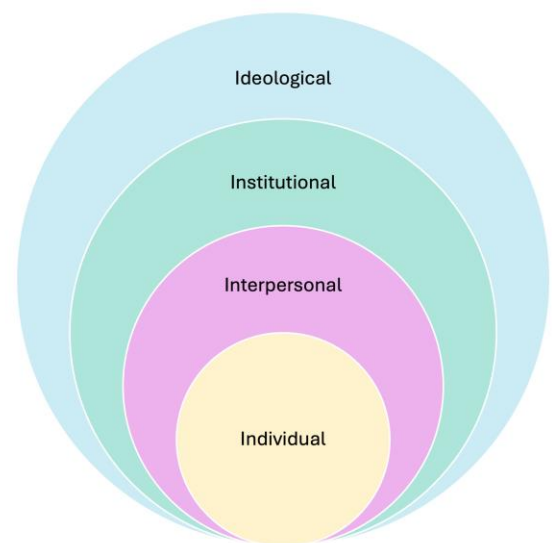
These patterns emerge at the local, regional, state, and global level—basically wherever two or more social change agents are gathered. And this may be the most important element to understand—that what we practice at the small scale sets the patterns for the whole system.” (adrienne maree brown)

Individual Relates to the emotions, biases, perceptions, thoughts about ourselves.

Interpersonal Concerns relationships, how we treat one another as individuals and communities.

Institutional Applies to structures, policies, curriculum, professional learning, parent and family engagement, classroom and school climate, and larger policies.

Ideological Connection to ideas about each other and the world.



SEASON 1



COMMUNITY CENTERED LEADERSHIP

(Click image to listen)



Guiding Reflection Questions:

What might educators and administrators learn from studying the knowledge and leadership practices of parents, community groups, and students?

1. What experiences and realities of activism, advocacy, and engagement by community groups are rendered as problematic by our educational institutions?
2. How might we challenge our understanding of educational leadership and create spaces for shared leadership practices that center the voices of the communities?
3. Who do we need to be as leaders to lead centring communities?
4. Who do we need to be as leaders to lead centring communities?
5. How might we apply this understanding to the work we do in communities, schools, and academies?

Individual Relates to the emotions, biases, perceptions, thoughts about ourselves.

Quotes to provoke our thinking and guide us in our actions:

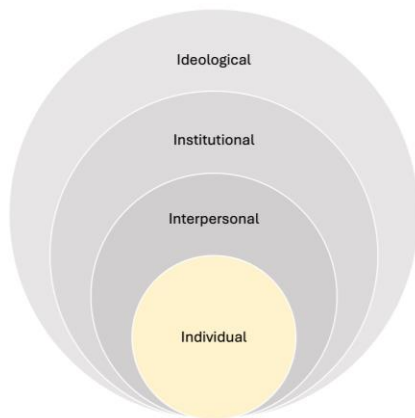
“Leadership is centered around people who are putting their loyalty to the system, or career-based decisions as opposed to community-based decisions.” (Neethan Shan)

“When I look at leaders or so-called leaders, I'd want them to understand that leadership isn't really real, and that it's a construct. In that, what is real is community, what is real is love and what is real is the experiences of Black and Indigenous students and that needs to be what the priority is.” (Ahona Mehdi)

“For my everyday practice of community centered leadership, it means being in community, learning to heal and liberate myself and challenging myself to deconstruct my beliefs based on how I was taught in school.” (LeRoi Newbold)

Reflection:

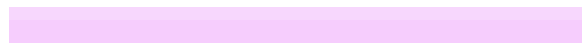
How do these statements resonate with you in terms of how you see yourself leading?



Action:

- Engage in reflecting upon your reasons for taking on leadership role(s)
- Connect with various communities (within and outside of school)
- Write down at least 3 ways you can commit to centering leadership around community-based decisions

Interpersonal Concerns relationships, how we treat one another as individuals and communities.



Quotes to provoke our thinking and guide us in our actions:

“Lots of the behaviours that we've learned have destroyed some of our matriarchs. We want to see a re-matriation occur.” (Sylvia Maracle)

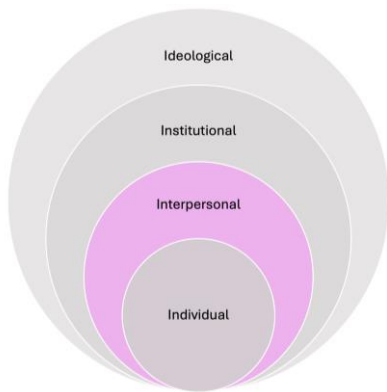
“It's when I think about community and the importance of the work that we do, it's to another level because for us, it's survival.” (Charline Grant)

“People of colour who often put their own communities down to feel like they're closer to White privilege- those are harmful leaders. Non-Black, non-Indigenous folks who fall into that trap of model minority, trying to please the colonizers and their power brokering are harmful leaders.” (Neethan Shan)

“Community leadership looks like co-learning, it looks like creating spaces of healing among one another.” (Ahona Mehdi)

Reflection:

How might we bring people together to locate leadership in spaces between people, structures, and ideas committed to racial and other forms of social justice?



Action:

- Create collaborative spaces where different community members can come together to share their experiences and stories
- Open school spaces outside of school times for community members, especially those who have been historically excluded and offer variety of times for families to communicate with school
- How might you create spaces in which different ideas, especially those you find challenging and disruptive, can be voiced and shared with others?

Institutional Applies to structures, policies, curriculum, professional learning, parent and family engagement, classroom and school climate, and larger policies.

Quotes to provoke our thinking and guide us in our actions:

“We want our children to experience education, free from oppression, free from harassment, free from abuse, free from racism. We want educators to see our children.” (Charline Grant)

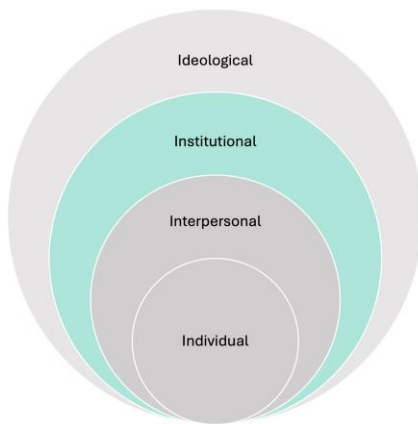
“We have to recognize that there is a lot of trauma within the every day.” (Ahona Mehdi)

“Community centered leadership is being able to bring the voices of those people that are often forgotten.” (Diana Grimaldos)

“You're talking about what are the oldest colonial structures from wherever in the world you came from, there were certain groups that went out and decided certain things and that's the issue.” (Sylvia Maracle)

Reflection:

How can educational institutions provide support for leaders and ensure they show actionable care?



Action:

- Make a list of the structures in your school/district that prevent or quiet the voices of families and communities. How can you interrupt these patterns as a leader?
- Make a list of the everyday practices that privilege the voices of families and communities with more social power (on the basis of race, religion, sexuality, etc.) over families and communities with less social power. How can you interrupt these patterns as a leader?

Ideological Connection to ideas about each other and the world.

Quotes to provoke our thinking and guide us in our actions:

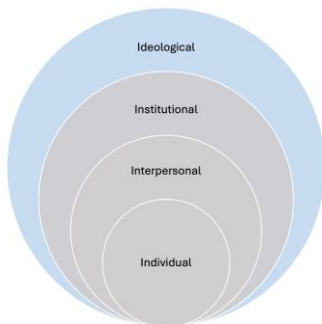
“I think community leadership, it's not very much recognized. It's not something that's seen as real. I think it's something that's very much romanticized. It's kind of like community leaders are invisible in a lot of ways.” (Ahona Mehdi)

“Community centered leadership means that Black kids and Black parents are the leaders of Black education because community centered leadership is connected to the idea that communities should have control and agency over our own education.” (LeRoi Newbold)

“The people that have collective accountability, the people who are here will not be able to break away from their principle because they have this strong sense of collective responsibility and credibility within them, that's part of who they are. They're not doing this for a job. They're not doing it for loyalty to a system. They're doing it for the purpose of grounded in people.” (Neethan Shan)

Reflection:

Why isn't parent advocacy, activism, and resistance considered leadership in common conceptions of educational leadership, especially when parent and community efforts have led to transformative changes in racial and other forms of justice?



Action:

- Consider the students, families, community partners, and educators who you think are more resistant and difficult to work with. What do they care about and value? What are the leadership qualities they possess? How might these reflections invite you to think about their actions differently?
- What does leadership look like that is motivated by service to community and what does leadership look like that is motivated by service to self?