



Tribal Leadership Techniques Through the Eyes of an Agilist

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After spending 15 years leading Agile teams around the world, I spent close to a year in the heart of the Amazon jungle in two of the most remote indigenous reserves in Brazil visiting and living with indigenous tribes. I observed tribal rituals and leadership practices through the eyes of my experience in agility. I wish to share some of those insights with the Agile community.

1. INTRODUCTION

During the year I spent on a social project with indigenous tribes in the Brazilian Amazon rainforest, I was inspired by their peculiar leadership practices. Nightly circle gathering rounds of discussions, regular visits to neighboring villages with ritualized discussions as well as many intriguing daily practices.

When I came back to Europe, I had to quickly return to a much different reality, going back to leading Agile teams on a complex project. The project was quickly growing. In a little over a year, I was in charge of leading 10 feature teams, with the challenge of balancing autonomy and alignment. I decided to experiment preserving the simplicity of XP by implementing some of the practices I had seen during my year in the rainforest. This report is an attempt at summarizing three years of experiments.

My stay within indigenous tribes was divided in two major indigenous reserves. The first one, close to the Rio Negro where I was invited by two NGOs (ISA Instituto Socioambiental, and CCYP Comissão Pró-Yanomami). The first one aimed at installing a radio relay at a summit close to the highest mountain of Brazil (Pico da Neblina) in the middle of the Yanomami Reserve [Leite], with 6 indigenous Sherpas carrying equipment and 2 anthropologists. The second one aimed at installing and maintaining HF antennas and radio stations in 11 remote villages in the Yanomami reserve, 10 days canoe upstream of the Rio Marauia, alone with a Shaman and an indigenous “interpreter” speaking rudiments of Brazilian Portuguese. The second part of my stay was upstream of an affluent river of the Rio Solimoes, which is itself the main tributary to the Amazon River. I followed my wife on a mission for the Univaja [Univaja] to help document traditional agricultural processes of Marubo tribes, two weeks by motorboat upstream of Rio Curuça. I took part in the project helping document rituals and traditional processes in the areas of fishing and hunting involving mostly men.

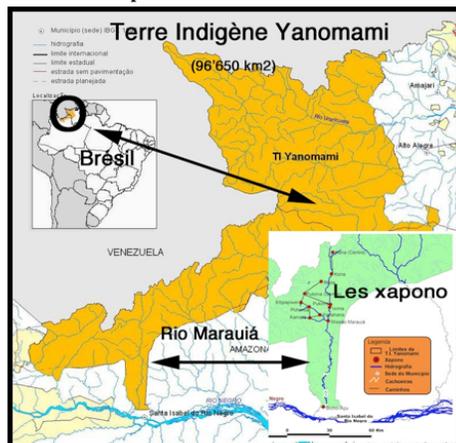


Figure 1. Yanomami Indigenous Territory

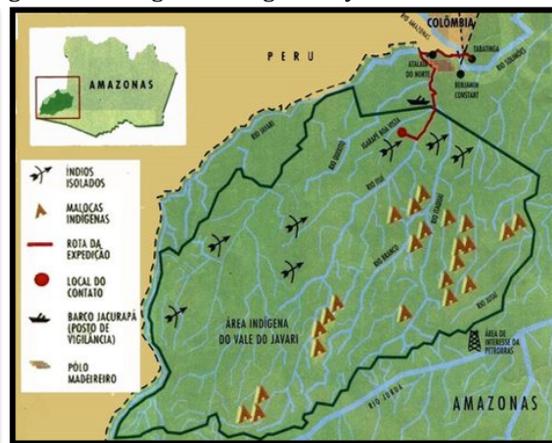


Figure 2. Vale do Javari Indigenous Territory

These two regions are among the most preserved indigenous areas in Brazil. According to Fabricio Amorim from Fundação Nacional do Índio [Wikipedia], the region contains “the greatest concentration of isolated groups in the Amazon and the world”. Although we have visited many different ethnic groups during our stay, we spent most of our time with the Yanomami and the Marubo. Coming from far away regions, they have different cultures.

2. BACK TO REALITY: FROM THE JUNGLE TO THE OFFICE

By October 2017, our stay was over; we knew we had to come back. Our project was finished and staying more would cost too much to the community who was supplying food and care to our family. We were invited by the son of the Tuxaua (local leader), as he wanted to document the knowledge of his culture when it was still lively. Meeting with others communities closer to civilization, he knew the damage it could do to it, attracting youth outside of the forest and leaving villages deprived of their youth. Involving the youth to share and document their community’s knowledge helped them realize how profound and interesting it is. Our recurrent questions and astonishment at many basic parts of their life (at least for them) made us look silly, and—we hope—contributed to valorize their fantastic knowledge.

The way back was hard. Our family (my wife, myself, and our two daughters 4, and 7 years old) shared the space of a small wooden canoe with a Marubo family of 6. We went downstream the Curuça River for two weeks, stopping only at night, sleeping on the banks of the river, hanging our hammocks close together around a small campfire. Our friends caught fish and hunted along the way, stopping at the smell of game. Food was scarce and the meat spoiled quickly making us suffer long lasting stomach problems. Due to extreme humidity and heat, I suffered from a foot infection that quickly rendered me unable to walk. Thanks to the oldest woman sharing our canoe, I recovered after a few days, but soon—in the middle of the night—the boat capsized, hurting the riverbank sideways. There was still one week of travel to come back home.

A month later I was back to my home country, France. My profession was not anthropology. My experience was of almost 15 years of leading large tech / digital teams. Before I could realize what was happening, I met a former colleague that had become the group’s CTO. He knew what I had achieved at the Brazilian Subsidiary [Belbéoc’h], and offered that I take over a strategic project for developing the digital publication platform for the group, a project that was famous in the company for having failed three times, over a period of 10 years. I had not yet reconnected with my own culture and was struggling with the bureaucracy needed to connect the family back to the French system. After a year in the middle of the forest with no money, no stores, no communication whatsoever, I was left in a state of mental distress, feeling a profound loss of meaning and isolation. I believe this is the reason I jumped on the opportunity. To me it was almost like coming back to the Amazon River. I would experiment managing the project and the team the way I learned from the Yanomami and the Marubo.

3. INDIGENOUS TRIBE ORGANIZATIONS

With the advent of Agile, small team sizes have been preeminent in software development organizations. The now famous “two-pizza-team”, coined by Amazon, has brought it into common tech culture. There is less agreement when we speak on larger scale organizations. Although the Spotify Model has been adopted or mimicked, others have favored a more structured approach with the SAFe framework.

More recently interest has grown on multiple Agile teams’ organization and collaboration, notably with the book, *Team Topologies* [Skelton], and the growing popularity of dynamic governance frameworks such as Sociocracy or Holacracy, and its growing adoption within the Agile community. (See for example the Bossa model from Jutta Eckstein [Bossa]). These higher-scale team structures share in common some principles; they try to align many smaller (pizza teams) into a common objective, while preserving as much as possible their autonomy. Speaking about sizing in these higher-level organizations, there doesn’t seem to be a lot of common knowledge of the “right numbers” even in terms of pizzas or at least an ideal number of pizza-teams. One of the insights regarding larger-scale team sizing was brought by Robin Dunbar, a British anthropologist who proposed a maximum of 150 personal relationships humans can maintain. This number, known as the “Dunbar number”, came from extrapolating the relationships developed by primates to humans. Although having a specific number in mind can help, it should be taken with much more caution at this scale. For a two-pizza team, it is commonly accepted that an Agile team can be from around 3 to about 10 members (a factor of 3). At the higher scale, if we have in mind the Dunbar number that would mean between 50 to 150 people. It should

be taken only as a guiding reference but should not undermine the challenge to define the appropriate team's organization in an efficient way.

Staying with more than 40 villages from more than 10 different ethnic groups was a little like an "accelerated cultural training" where I had to interact, communicate and collaborate with people having very different cultures than mine. I have tried to summarize some of reflections with a simplified model.

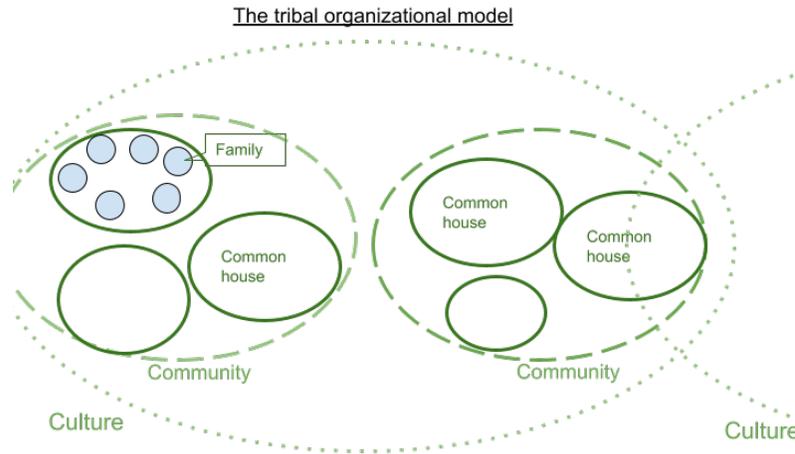


Figure 3: A simplified model of tribal organizations.

This model shows three levels of importance in the tribal organizations. In the real anthropological sense, it is of course much more complex with many parental links and cross relationships but the aim is to make it easier to grasp and to compare it with Agile teams' environments. I will follow the layers of organization of a traditional community, showing some of their rituals and practices and how it can be inspirational for Agile teams: the family or individual level; the Common house level; and the Community level.

I decided to follow a bottom-up approach starting with individual practices toward larger group practices although the order doesn't have anything to do with importance and the three levels are simply different ways to understand the organization of traditional indigenous communities.

We will start by looking at indigenous education and how they develop autonomy and resilience from the younger age. We will then explore what happens at the common house level, where leadership and collaborative decision making take an important role. Then we'll finish our journey by looking at some community rituals and how they can strengthen the culture of the tribe. After each section I will explain how I have integrated these insights in my practice of Agile.

4. INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILIAL LEVEL

Families are the smallest nucleon in indigenous tribes; they raise their children and take care of their own survival.

4.1 Survival skills: autonomy and self-responsibility

Once, after a 10-hour exhausting journey carrying heavy radio equipment, I felt upset that we weren't even proposed food or beverage by the Yanomami communities we visited. When I asked my expedition mate, a Shaman, why the tribes were not welcoming us and why they didn't offer us some food, he explained that the community wouldn't be willing to offend us by offering food, but that they would be happy to give us if we asked them. This was a shock for me as this is the complete opposite of all the cultures I had been in contact with. From Europe to Asia or even North Africa. In every country I visited, especially in traditional or rural parts, the stranger that arrives from far away is always welcomed with some kind of food and beverage. In Amazonian tribes, learning to be responsible for his own survival is part of the primal responsibility of every human being. It is such an important principle that it was considered impolite to propose food to a guest, as if it was saying, "I suppose you are not able to take care of yourself".

Indigenous tribes in the Amazon encourage self-sufficiency and autonomy from early childhood.

Being able to feed oneself is of primordial importance in the rainforest. Most Amazonian tribes are nomadic, they will regularly move to a new place for food, hiding from enemies or other reasons. To stay nimble and

resilient, they must be able to survive in difficult conditions. Young children are encouraged to eat their own food to encourage them learning the skills required to gather it, often requiring long practice such as for catching fishes and animals, or risky climbing for picking fruits at the top of palm trees.

My daughters were trained just like the other children to catch their own fish by hand. Just like other children in the tribe they could eat their own catch proudly for lunch.

Following the same principle, Marubo families are responsible for bringing and preparing food for themselves. Even when they eat together as a community, each family brings and shares the food they prepared. There may be some sharing between families but each one is responsible to bring its share.

4.2 Tribal leadership style

Leadership or responsibilities within the tribe doesn't bring relief from material and physical duties. In the tribe, children, adults, even leaders or Shamans—however respected they might be—take care of their own. They go hunting for their own food, prepare it, maintain their home space and equipment... We saw the old and respected Chief of the tribe cleaning and sweeping the external space around the common house himself every day while other young people were playing nearby. Similarly, during our expedition, the Shaman always carried heavy car batteries on his shoulders just as anyone else would do. This had nothing to do with pride or being a respected leader.

What does it have to do with Agile? As with indigenous tribes, it is the duty of elders to show the way by doing it for themselves. Old members of the team should show the way by resolving “seemingly low value” issues so that newcomers can take the same spirit. A team able to avoid being “blocked” by low importance impediments will reduce its overall lead time and increase the flow of delivery of “high-value” outcomes.

The simple fact of seeing a respected leader doing a basic chore in front of its team conveys a strong message to the team. After seeing a Product Owner waiting weeks for his “white board” to arrive after respecting the formal ordering process of the company, I invited him to join me in my car and we took a drive to the closest office supplies store to buy it, then did an expense report with him and screwed it on the wall myself. The team was amazed at what I did, as it was not the norm to purchase office furniture directly without following the standard process, and even less to drill holes in the company's open space walls. The results were increasing the spirit of initiative of my team to a high standard, recognized by the whole company for their efficiency and reliability.

Agile culture means autonomous cross-functional teams. But performing Agile teams—especially within the XP culture—means more than that. It means autonomous and reliable individuals.

Every team member should be responsible for doing the “dirty” jobs when it needs to be done. In large business environments it is often “blurry” what team members are allowed to do themselves, especially when they are not on a permanent contract. This practice can help them take back their responsibility. Team members should be eager to solve problems by themselves, so that they can move on. They should not wait until they receive food from their backlog or that someone else will solve their “bureaucratic” issue. Conversely, they should not be afraid to ask and look for help by themselves when they need it.

4.3 Strengthening rituals, preparing people to face discomfort

During my stay with Marubo, I observed some strange “physical” rituals. Such as people brushing themselves with stinging nettles each morning, or children having to run through wasp nests one after the other, or games where one participant was trying to throw inflamed resin by agitating a torch made for the occasion. Physical rituals are present in the daily life of the indigenous. It is a way to prepare them for the hardship of their life in the forest where they face many bites and scarifications from insects, plants and wild animals. Being “trained” from the younger age makes them prepared to support future hard moments.

This principle can be very useful for XP teams. Of course, the point is not to prepare team members to the hardness of their office chair or the bite of a mechanical keyboard, but what makes the office environment hard for young XP practitioners is more psychological. They'll often have to face a very different culture in the company they work for. If they want to keep working within XP values in such an environment, they must be prepared to resist bites and cuts from delivery pressure, office politics, bureaucracy, communication, and have recognized and got accustomed to these dangers. Fatigue, timidity, impatience, bad communication, lack of courage to communicate problems in face of external pressure, all these aspects can be worked with small recurring rituals, so that new team members can recognize them and face them more easily when they encounter it in the real jungle of a high-stakes project.

In our current team, for instance, there are many opportunities for such rituals: from the self-presentation speech in English (foreign language for us) at the weekly demo in front of 40+ people, to the “wheel of chance”

random selection for the organization and facilitation of Agile rituals, cross-team PR validation, face-to-face interview and recruitment participation from the teams. The objectives are to develop and train emotional and relational intelligence within our team members to make sure they are fit for thriving within our business environment, not only for tech skills.

5. THE COMMON HOUSE LEVEL (THE MALOCA)

Common houses, or “Malocas” are wood and palm constructions that host one to a few families. Elders, grandparents, and young couples have their own place around the construction. Each family organizes their place with a fireplace in the middle around which they tie their hammocks, small belongings and food reserves. They leave together as an extended family sharing strong ties.

5.1 Learning from your peers

A great deal of the education of children is done at this level. Children from the same community play together mixing age and sex. The younger ones try to copy the more experienced climbing trees to catch fruits, catching fish with their hand, or playing with small bows and the blowpipe. This kind of learning by copying someone close to one’s age and physical ability is extremely effective. With the support and emulation of all children the learning speed is impressive. My daughters, 4 and 7 years old, managed to catch fish by hand and learned to swim in the river by simply playing with other children.

To spread good practices in a large team without imposing them, it is very efficient to favor this kind of peer learning. Just like indigenous children do, start off with a base of open-minded team members already attuned to the practices, and let newcomers work with them through pair programming or other collaborative practices. They will quickly adopt the practice and form a new habit. Later they will be proud to spread them to newcomers, just as the child that finally managed to climb the tree is eager to teach it to his friends.

5.2 Craftsmanship mentoring

My mission with the Marubo was to follow and document their craftsmanship. Although I will not dive on this topic, craft is to be found almost everywhere in the life of indigenous people, from house constructions to beautiful woven sieves, hammocks, pottery for cooking, arrows, body painting, etc. Most of these crafts are made from highly complex and precise processes, with a goal of mixing usefulness and beauty. Passing this knowledge is very important for tribes, as craft is part of their culture. This transmission is done from “elders” to youngsters when they are entering teenage years. They will spend hours close to the elders learning side by side with direct feedback from them, until they are able to make their own craft by themselves. Sometimes achieving their first complex craft like a woven hammock is a proof of readiness for entering adulthood.

Transmission in XP teams can benefit from these learnings. Growing teams should be done with great care, always understanding well its composition. Before growing a team, we should be careful of preserving a good balance of senior and junior members. Seniority and juniority should be understood in terms of overall experience as well as time spent within the team. One solution is sometimes to move an experienced team member to another team so that he will be able to mentor newcomers and preserve overall craftsmanship.

5.3 Decision making and the “council of elders”

In almost every village I visited, the Cacique, leader of the tribe, was a very respected man. Many times, however, when I asked an important question that needed a precise answer, he seemed elusive or indecisive. I was perplexed: if he had the power to decide, why wouldn’t he just answer me simply yes or no. Having spent years in Asia, I knew it has something to do with culture and was very curious to discover how indigenous decide important matters.

One of those situations arose when we were preparing an expedition to install radio stations on some remote tribes upstream to a river that crossed the border from Brazil to Venezuela in the Yanomami territory. I wanted to know when we would depart, how long it would take... how we would organize for the food of my family. Being from very different cultures we were not used to drinking water directly from the river nor skipping both breakfast and lunch. I knew I had to be precise in the things I wanted or needed to make sure to limit the risks and bad surprises for my family. The leader seemed indecisive on many of those questions. He would not answer or said he didn’t know yet. I was starting to feel anxious, not knowing how long we would stay in this place or even if we were finally going anywhere...

A few days later, the leader organized something that looked to me like an informal gathering with various people from the tribe, adults from different ages, including men and women. About an hour later, the decision

was taken. I was going to leave the tribe with a Shaman and another indigenous who spoke some Portuguese the next morning. My family would stay here as some said this was too risky for women and children to go as there were some recent conflicts with kidnapping of women in the most remote villages. The list of communities, the order in which we would visit them, how we were to communicate and find food during the trip... many details were decided during this gathering. The leader had managed to take a complex, inclusive decision, reducing risks to the minimum.

I had just witnessed a “council”. A decision-making process studied by many anthropologists in many parts of the Americas, from North to South, with a similar setting. Indigenous tribal leaders don’t make important decisions themselves without calling a council. Depending on the tribe or the community and probably the kind of matter to be decided, the composition of this council would vary.

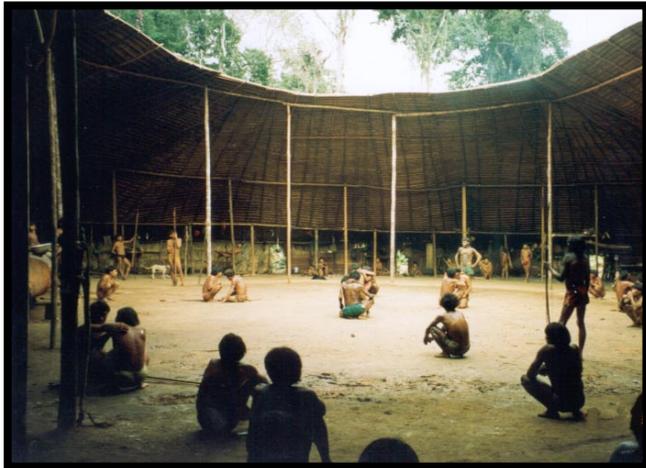
The leader’s authority for important decision-making comes directly from the tribe through some of its representative members. The Yanomami call them the “Pata”, which translates into “big guys”. Where “big” is a mix of “old” and “great / important”.

The leader deliberates the decision with the “Pata”. Once the decision has been approved by the council, the leader has full authority over its execution. At this moment only he becomes an “executive” leader.

How does it relate to Agile? I had the opportunity to explore this kind of decision-making process to manage important decisions for our global team. The team I managed grew rapidly from 20 to about 120 members in three years, partly from external hiring, partly with the integration of new products and their teams. Maintaining cohesion was very important if we wanted to preserve our initial culture and practices.

We decided to convene a “circle” each time we had a common standard to discuss or a common challenge to solve. We trained ourselves on consent decision making from the Sociocracy movement. Our team is continuing to “call the council” when needed, about twice a month in the past two years. This has resulted in lightweight governance and a deeper connection between each tech lead and PO who participates in these gatherings. My role and the role of each team leader is then to communicate and execute the decisions taken by the group.

5.4 The Kawa Amou, the daily meeting of the Yanomami



During my stay with Yanomami, I witnessed a strange ritual that happened at dusk. To better describe this ritual, it is important to understand the setting of a Yanomami village. A Shabono is a circle-shaped village home for a handful to a few dozen families. Each family has its own space, around a campfire. The construction is built around a large cleared clay court. Yanomami participate collectively in the construction of the Shabono, but each family is responsible for the maintenance of their space.

In the tropical rainforest, dusk comes quickly around 6p.m. Sounds of the forest are still loud, and most families are back at their home space inside the Shabono. Yanomami are very independent and this is probably the perfect moment to get the presence of most people.

At this moment, when obscurity starts to be deep enough so that it gets hard to distinguish even neighbors, and when people are busy rekindling fires, the leader comes out at the center of the village.

A strong voice shouts so that it can be heard by everyone in the Shabono. It tries to overcome the thick air of the rainforest, blend of bird songs, low voice discussions. In the dark, the speaker looks like a figure of ancient Greece. I was asking myself: what is he really doing? It looks like no one is really looking at him, busy preparing dinner, resting in their hammock and chatting with neighbors. Then a strong voice came shouting, like a reply from somewhere in the circle-village. I could not tell exactly the origin of the voice, probably due to the moist air that deformed sounds. A moment later, a second voice came from another point in the circle, as if it were responding to the first. Then after some time the strong chanting voice started over from the middle of the circle. I could observe this ritual many times in different villages far away from each other. A Shaman told me it was called “Kawa Amo”. Its purpose was to discuss and align families around some common goals, as well as resolve potential conflicts before they grew too much and became serious.

What struck me was the way voices seemed to “respond” to the leader in a very direct manner. Responding in such a way to a leader—especially while speaking in public, in front of his own team—could be judged at least ill-mannered or clearly rude to someone from our culture. At first, I thought that the leader was not so well respected in this village. But when I saw the same pattern repeated in many different places, I felt that this was something else. Something cultural.

The leader would speak up with a strong “motivational voice”, summarizing what was done during the day and what was planned for the next, interrupted by the voices of people’s consent, remarks or sometimes disagreement. Then, sometimes, if a latent conflict was perceived or reported during the day, the leader would give feedback about the bad behavior and urge the proponents to quickly resolve their issue before it would become serious and impact the whole tribe. Often people would react or deny strongly, but thanks to peer pressure, the conflict will often fade quickly. This is as well an opportunity for tribe members to understand the risks of misbehaving.

If we compare it to known Agile practices, Kawa Amo looks like an interesting blend of an Agile stand-up meeting and “radical-candor” feedbacks. I have taken inspiration from the Kawa-Amou to our daily inter-team Standup. The ritual started when we had to all work remotely due to the Covid restrictions. Instead of having a single team representative, everybody is welcome and there are often around 30 people connected. Like the Yanomami, we do it with voices only. The product manager shares the general Kanban and makes a quick round of Epics in progress. After that, we take the opportunity to speak up for any important matter. Latent issues, generally regarding quality or communication issues are brought up in a friendly but explicit matter.

6. THE COMMUNITY LEVEL

Communities are what resemble most a village; they consist from a handful to a dozen of common houses distant from a few minutes walk to about an hour. They have close ties, share frequent invites, have family links or strong friendly ties, and work together from time to time (hunting group of animals, sharing meat when they have too much). When social distance is greater, people meet once a week to once a month.

6.1 The Frog’s bite: Passage rituals, belonging to a team

Physical rituals are also used by indigenous as a form of “passage” from being a child to becoming a man or a woman. Those passage rituals are done in front of the Shaman and other tribe members to testify. This is a strong, visible way to recognize the belonging to a tribe.

Once the Shaman of the tribe where I was residing, an old respected leader, invited me to participate in an important ritual. Out of curiosity, but without much possibility to understand what was really going to happen, I accepted. I followed six adolescents to a small stream where the Shaman had attached a living frog on two sticks with small lianas. He took a small incandescent stick and pressed it against my skin four times. Then, he scraped the back of the frog with a small wooden stick, collecting a white gooey liquid. He applied the venom carefully over the burn marks on my skin. After a few seconds I immediately felt an intense burning sensation from everywhere inside my body. I was helplessly passing away. After some time, I opened my eyes and found myself sitting in the middle of the stream supported by two indigenous throwing water at my head with a big smile on their face. I had become one of them. Although I was still feeling lost and dizzy, I felt a profound emotion of pride and belonging shared with the others that shared the ritual.

What does it have to do with Agile? Despite the distance to our common business environment, I believe we can use some insights from these passage rituals. On the teams I managed during the past ten years, I have started a collaborative recruiting process where I joined a few of the most experienced team members to define how we would select the new members entering the team. Year after year, our recruitment process improved to become highly popular, influencing HR in the company and many other teams. The test and interviews are designed and passed by team members themselves and never outsourced. As well, we don’t make any difference for the kind of contract or the position; everyone entering the team should go through it. The test may not be perfect, and of course, its content differs according to the position, but it is known to be very selective. Passing it is a motive for pride for the new team member and a great recognition by the rest of the team as well as from people outside the team.

6.2 The Shaman, guardian of the tribe’s culture

If you spend some time in a native tribe—wherever it may be: Asia, Australia, Africa, or South America—you will quickly notice that leadership is not embodied by the “leader” only. An important figure, the Shaman, shares the leadership of the tribe.

Looking from their main activities, Shamans look both like a doctor and a priest. They spend part of their time praying to attract good spirits and repelling dark ones to help their tribe get away from diseases and misfortune. When somebody from the tribe is severely sick, the Shaman can spend days chanting by the sufferer's side, until he manages to extract the spirits that have entered his body. He is also the leader of the important ceremonies that rhythms the life of the tribe. He guides the tribe for the preparation of the celebration and leads the ritual with mastery.

Shamans act as the main protectors of the culture and traditions of their tribe. They are the living memory of the history, beliefs and traditions of the tribe. I have been dazzled by the incredible memory they can develop. During one ritual with the Marubo, the Shaman counted legends of their tribe during the whole night. Shaman apprentices and the rest of the tribe repeated in unison while dancing in circles around the common house. This is a way Shamans pass the tribe's history and traditions to new generations

While the "Cacique" plays the role of the classical leader, uniting the tribe towards a short or middle term goal—like coordinating harvesting activities or organizing a hunting expedition—the Shaman is responsible to perpetuate the culture and keep it strong. Without a strong culture, the work of leading the tribe would be much more difficult. The leader would have to convince, decide and discuss good and bad behaviors every time. Culture helps facilitate most of the daily decisions, as it defines a common framework helping them resolve most daily social or moral problems. Having a common "cultural framework" provides a common understanding of what is "right" or "wrong", and how things need to be done in many different situations. In an oral culture—where nothing is written—culture provides the basis for meaningful cooperation.

In the business world, we can use the analogy of the Shaman and the Cacique to help create a resilient system that will have long lasting performance. Effective teams that perform well under a good leader can be ruined with his departure. When a strong culture has been developed, a new leader can join without risking too much to break down the team's performance. This is especially the case when the new leader comes from the same culture. In this case, his people are reassured as they can easily predict how he will behave in most situations. This is why it is important to make sure there are some people to assume the role of Shamans inside Agile teams. People that understand well the team's culture and will promote it in the team. In the Agile world, Shamans could be Agile coaches, developers with a passion for craftsmanship, PO with a passion for customer value prioritization... Some methodologies such as Scrum have brought awareness to the importance of an ongoing "cultural work". The Scrum Master for example, has the important task to keep an eye on the important rituals in the team, even while they are under pressure of short-term delivery.

6.3 Shamanic vision

Shamans will often spend a large part of their day entering in deep contact with spirits. After consuming hallucinogens, they begin to enter a trance that can last for hours. When they come back to reality, they explain their vision with great details in a somehow theatrical manner. Their audience is compelled by their story, which connects their imagination and creates a powerful common dream.

While staying with tribes, we quickly see how important Shamans are to give faith to their people, and keep them connected with the spirits of the forest, their main ecosystem. Shamans are probably key to maintaining a happy, joyful way of life in the jungle, instead of merely surviving, as most of foreigners can only do under such conditions. Indigenous people also suffer from heat, bites from mosquitos, humidity, malaria, infections, hunger... but they leave fully connected to their environment with happiness or what we would call a great "mental health". We could relate the role of the Shaman to the "Visionary style", one of the four styles of resonant leadership from Daniel Goleman's *Primal Leadership* [Goleman]. Having a Shaman and a Cacique in your team, or at least having clear roles for them will ensure you can have action oriented, well-grounded leadership while developing long lasting culture and developing and sharing Vision and Values in your team.

7. CONCLUSION

Indigenous people's traditional knowledge comes from generations of experience of living in harmony with Nature. They have learned to adapt to a hostile environment and achieved the feat of inventing a healthy and happy way of life. Adapting to a complex and sometimes hostile environment is one of the key values brought by Agile. I wish that sharing some insights from Indigenous people can be a great source of inspiration to help us find a more human and healthy balance in this quest, and to be more respectful to the planet we all live on.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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