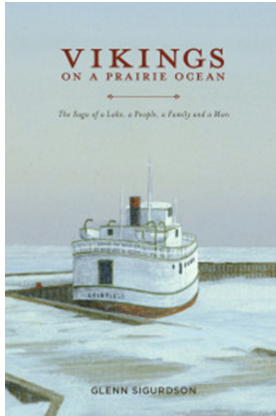


Strength in Diversity

P37 in *Vikings On A Prairie Ocean* by Glenn Sigurdson



When all the fancy covers are pulled back, organizations are just a bunch of people, and wars are a bunch of people fighting. The people business is tricky business. Logic takes a back seat, as hard as some would like to fight that reality. When it comes to people, if you want to work on the big stuff, sweat the small stuff. What is small to some is big to others. People's hearts measure the small stuff—the gentle kindnesses, the marks of trust. The participants in a complicated tangle involving a marina on Haida Gwaii years ago gave me a plaque that sits above my desk. It is a quotation from the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu, written in the sixth century BC:

Go to the people. Learn from them. Live with them. Start with what they know. Build with what they have. Work with the people, love the people and when the work is done they will say that they have done it themselves.

I have come to understand that the wellspring of this ancient wisdom is respecting people's "right to be" who they are, and that means that before agreeing or disagreeing with what they say or do I must first hear them to understand them. I gave a talk some years ago to the American Fisheries Society. I called it "Fish and People: Who is Eating Who?" Fish have been central to my life from the beginning, and professionally I have been in the middle of a lot of "fish wars," but that has been only one component of a very diverse body of work. You can learn a lot from fish, and from the people whose lives and lifestyles revolve around them. I have taken that experience and wisdom and applied it in many different contexts. There are no more complex problems than those of a fishing identity and culture. They embrace the past and the future, mystery and uncertainty, traditional knowledge and scientific reasoning, knowns and unknowns, lives and livelihoods. If you can work on fish problems, you can work on anything. My place in the world is grounded in people and fish, and that in the deepest sense of the word, is "home."