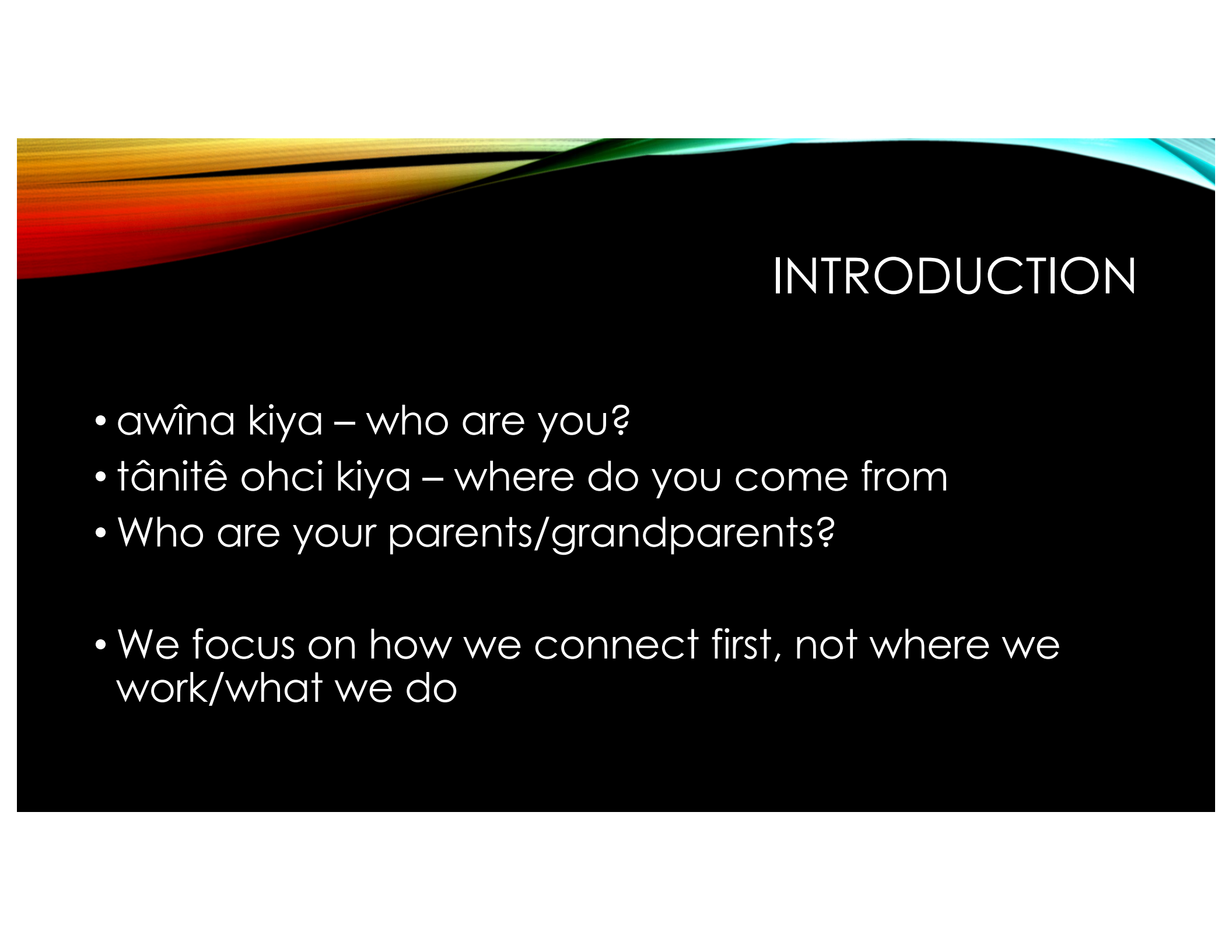




INTRODUCTION

- awîna kiya – who are you?
- tânitê ohci kiya – where do you come from
- Who are your parents/grandparents?
- We focus on how we connect first, not where we work/what we do

THE PRIVILEGE OF LEADING FIRST NATION SCHOOLS

Saskatchewan Principal's Short Course
July 2026

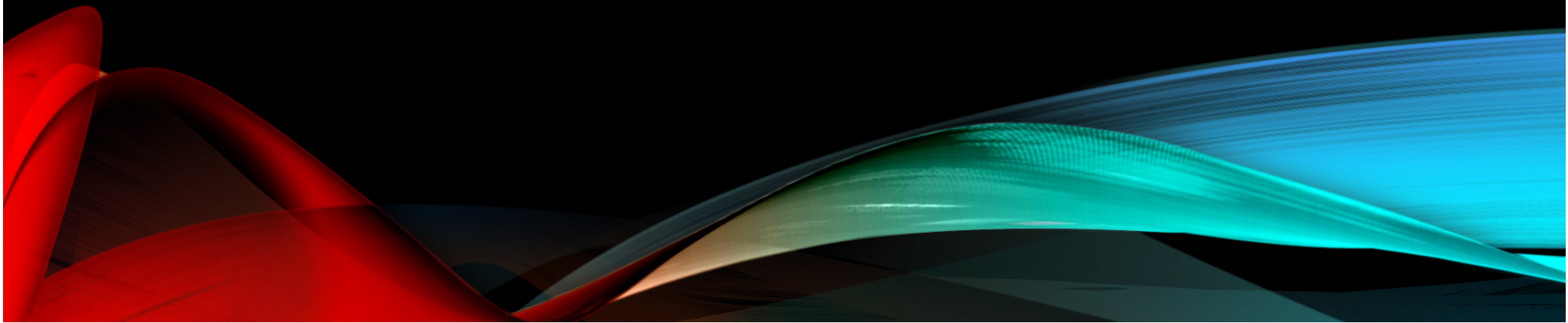




SESSION OBJECTIVES

- Understand the unique First Nations and federal education context
- Become more aware of the importance of relationships
- Develop approaches for supporting teachers and staff
- Strengthen instructional leadership practices
- Identify strategies for leading responsive and effective schools

UNDERSTANDING CONTEXT





SYSTEMS GROUNDED IN TRADITIONAL TEACHINGS AND NATURAL LAWS

- Love: sâkihitowin
- Respect: manâcihitowin
- Courage: sôhkitêhêwin
- Honesty: kwayaskatisiwin
- Wisdom: iyinîsiwin
- Humility: tapahtêyimisowin
- Truth: tâpwêwin
- Interconnection/balance
- Stewardship (responsibility)
- Sharing and Reciprocity
- wâhkôhtowin - Relationship
- wîcihitowin - Help each other
- pâstâhowin/ohcinêwin
- **The Seventh Generation**



CONTEXT SHAPES LEADERSHIP

- **First Nations schools are influenced by:**
 - Community priorities and governance structures
 - Treaty relationships and Indigenous rights
 - Federal education funding and accountability
 - Language, culture, and local knowledge systems
 - Historical experiences with schooling and colonization
- **Leadership begins with understanding the story of the community.**



FOUNDATIONS OF LEADERSHIP

- **Effective Leaders:**
 - Lead with humility
 - Listen before acting
 - Build trust over time
 - Honour local protocols
 - Make decisions with - not for - the community
- **Relationships are the work**

UNDERSTANDING GOVERNANCE

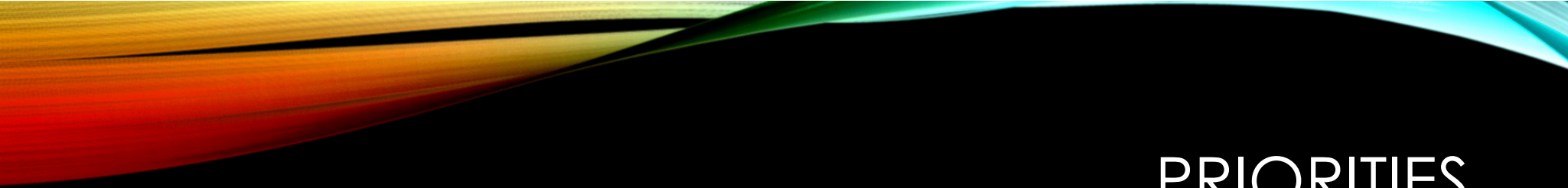




FEDERAL AND FIRST NATION CONTEXT

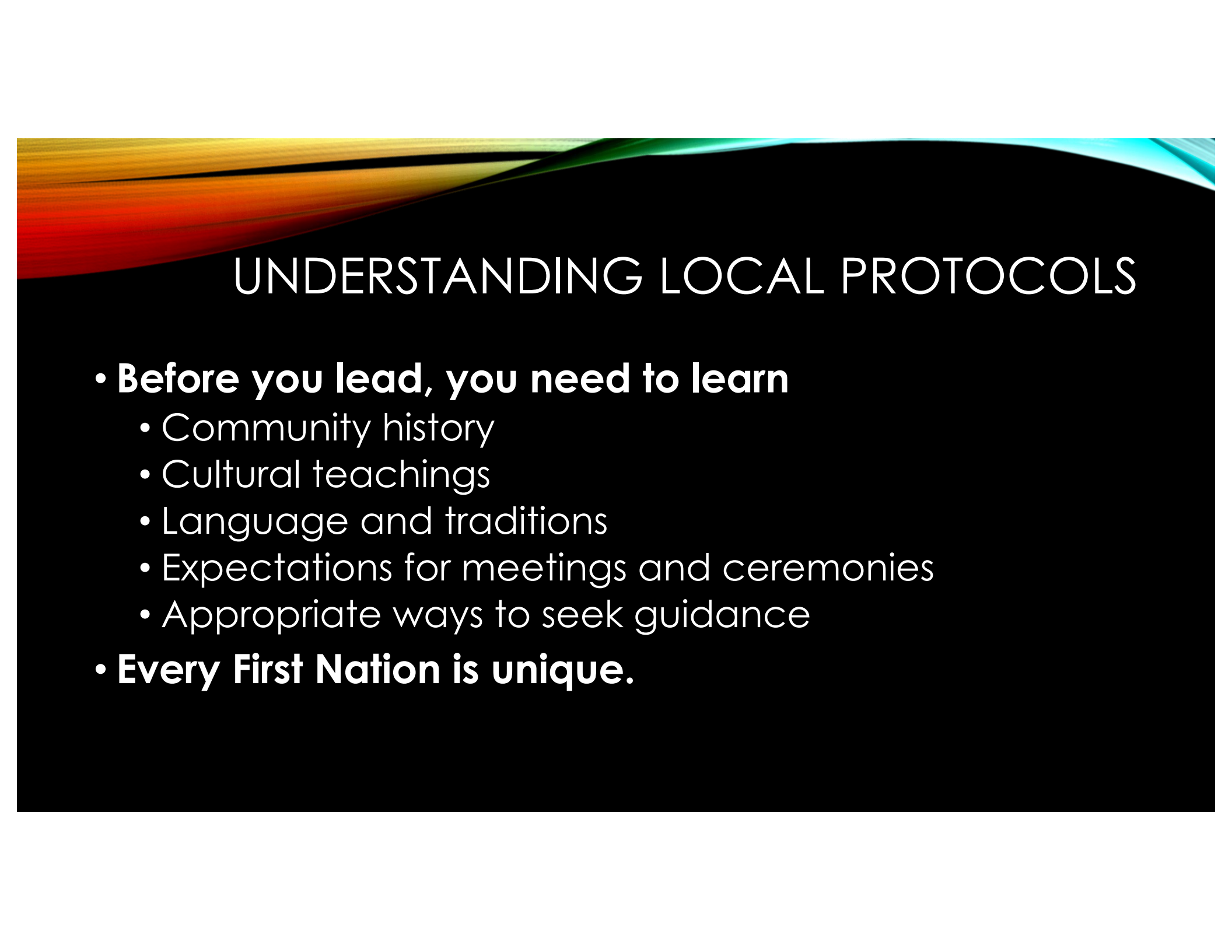
- **Key Areas to Understand**

- Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) funding structures
- Local education policies and practices
- Tuition agreements and local/external partnerships
- Jordan's Principle and student supports
- Special education processes
- Transportation, nutrition, and wrap-around services



PRIORITIES

- **Meet, listen, seek to understand, build relationships**
- **Observe school culture, strengths and needs**
- **Build trust, be visible, follow through, communicate**
- **Learn policies, procedures, reporting requirements**



UNDERSTANDING LOCAL PROTOCOLS

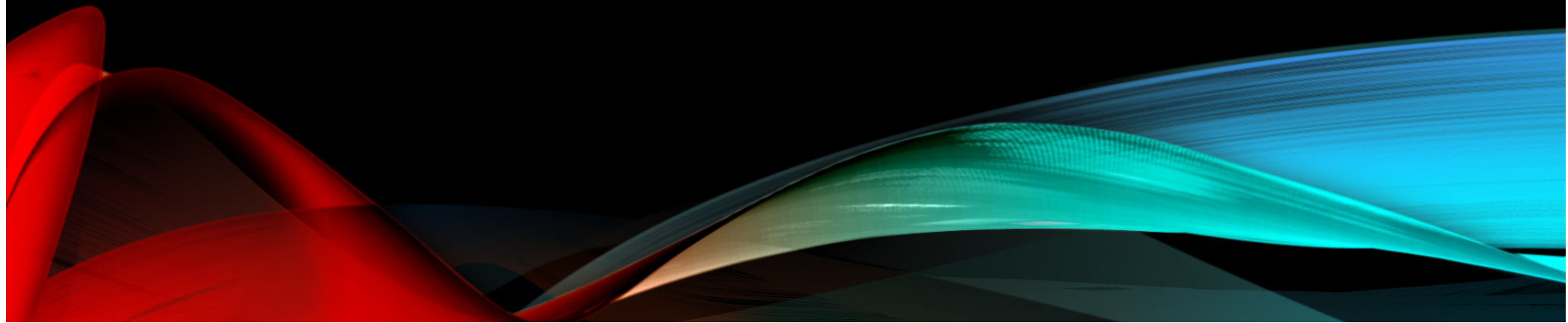
- **Before you lead, you need to learn**
 - Community history
 - Cultural teachings
 - Language and traditions
 - Expectations for meetings and ceremonies
 - Appropriate ways to seek guidance
- **Every First Nation is unique.**



LEADING THROUGH TRUST

- **Trust is built through:**
 - Presence
 - Consistency
 - Honesty
 - Transparency
 - Humility
 - Follow-through
- **People remember how leaders make them feel**

MANAGING SCHOOL STAFF





SCHOOL OPERATIONS SUPPORT LEARNING

- Home/School Liaison
- Transportation
- Human resources
- Front Office Staff
- Caretaker/Maintenance
- Elders/Knowledge Keepers
- Scheduling
- Finance
- Budgeting
- Facilities
- Community Supports
- Communication



MANAGING STAFF

- **Create Conditions for Success**
 - Set clear expectations
 - Communicate frequently, check in often
 - Address issues early
 - Recognize strengths
 - Foster collaboration and educational risk taking
 - Create space
 - Shoulder failure, praise team

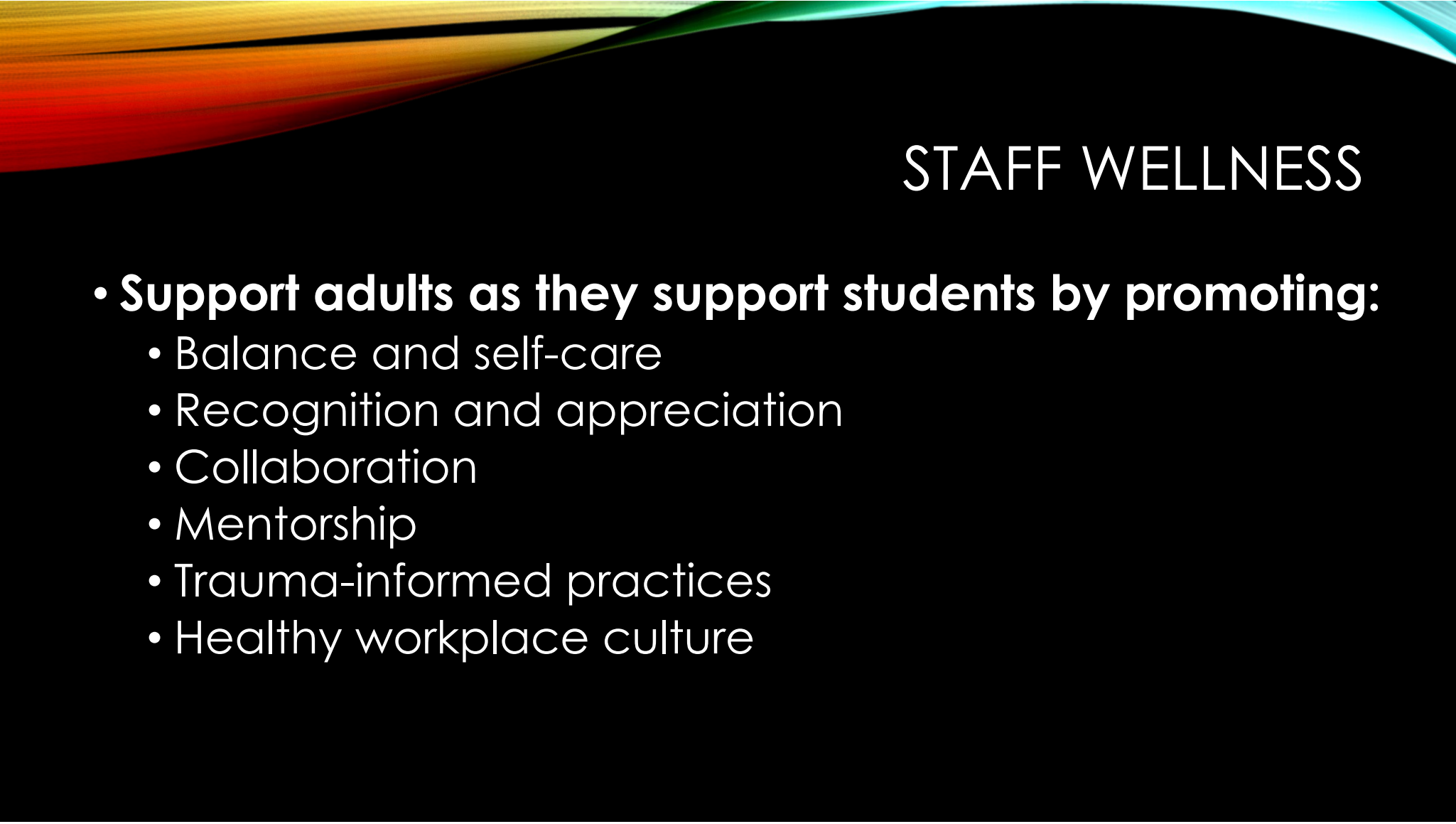


COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

- **Principles**

- Consider practice/policy with colonial influence
- Be respectful
- Address concerns promptly
- Focus on behaviour, not personality
- Document appropriately
- Seek support when needed
- Preserve dignity and relationships

- **Keep the “Human” in Human Resources**



STAFF WELLNESS

- **Support adults as they support students by promoting:**
 - Balance and self-care
 - Recognition and appreciation
 - Collaboration
 - Mentorship
 - Trauma-informed practices
 - Healthy workplace culture

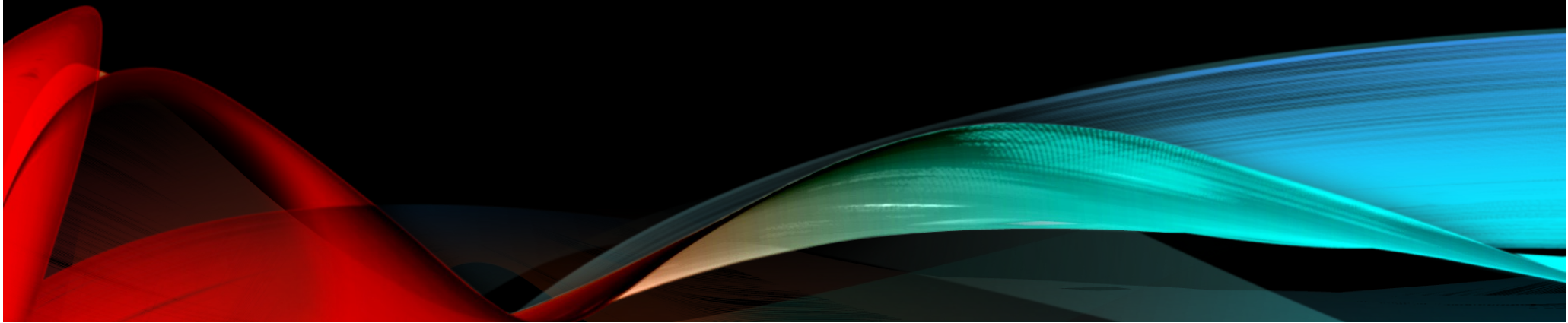


BUILDING HIGH TRUST TEAMS

- **Strong teams:**

- Share a common purpose
- Engage in professional dialogue
- Celebrate success
- Focus on solutions
- Solve problems collaboratively
- Maintain high expectations
- Create space

SUPPORTING TEACHERS





INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

- **The Principal as Lead Learner, focuses on:**
 - Teaching and learning
 - Student achievement
 - Professional growth
 - Data- and experience-informed decisions
 - Cultural responsiveness



SUPPORTING NEW TEACHERS

- **Provide:**

- Mentorship
- Coaching
- Clear expectations
- Frequent feedback
- Encouragement
- Access to resources

- **People stay where they feel supported.**



CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

- **Observe with the purpose of:**
 - Supporting growth
 - Identifying strengths
 - Encouraging reflection
 - Improving learning experiences
- **Ask:**
 - What are students doing?
 - What evidence of learning is visible?
 - How are relationships being built?



PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

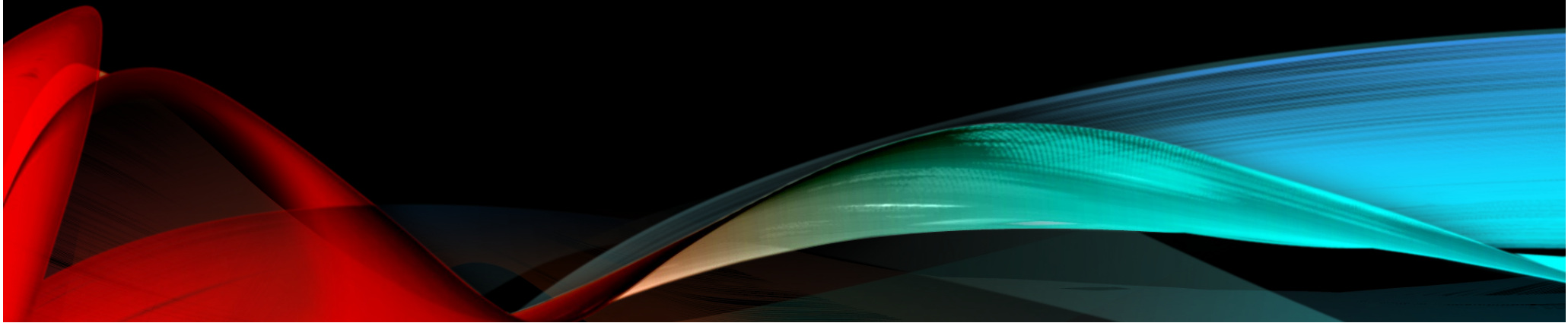
- **Collaborative teams focus on:**
 - What should students learn?
 - How will we know they learned it?
 - What if they haven't learned it?
 - What if they already know it?



DATA WITH A HUMAN FACE

- **Use multiple sources:**
 - Satellite Data - High level, leading/lagging metrics (test scores, attendance, grad rates, etc.)
 - ***Street Data*** - Student voice, experience, qualitative, observations, family perspectives, gives voice
- **Asset based - Look at what is right not what is wrong**
- **Numbers and qualitative data help to tell the story**

LEADING RESPONSIVE SCHOOLS





CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SCHOOLS

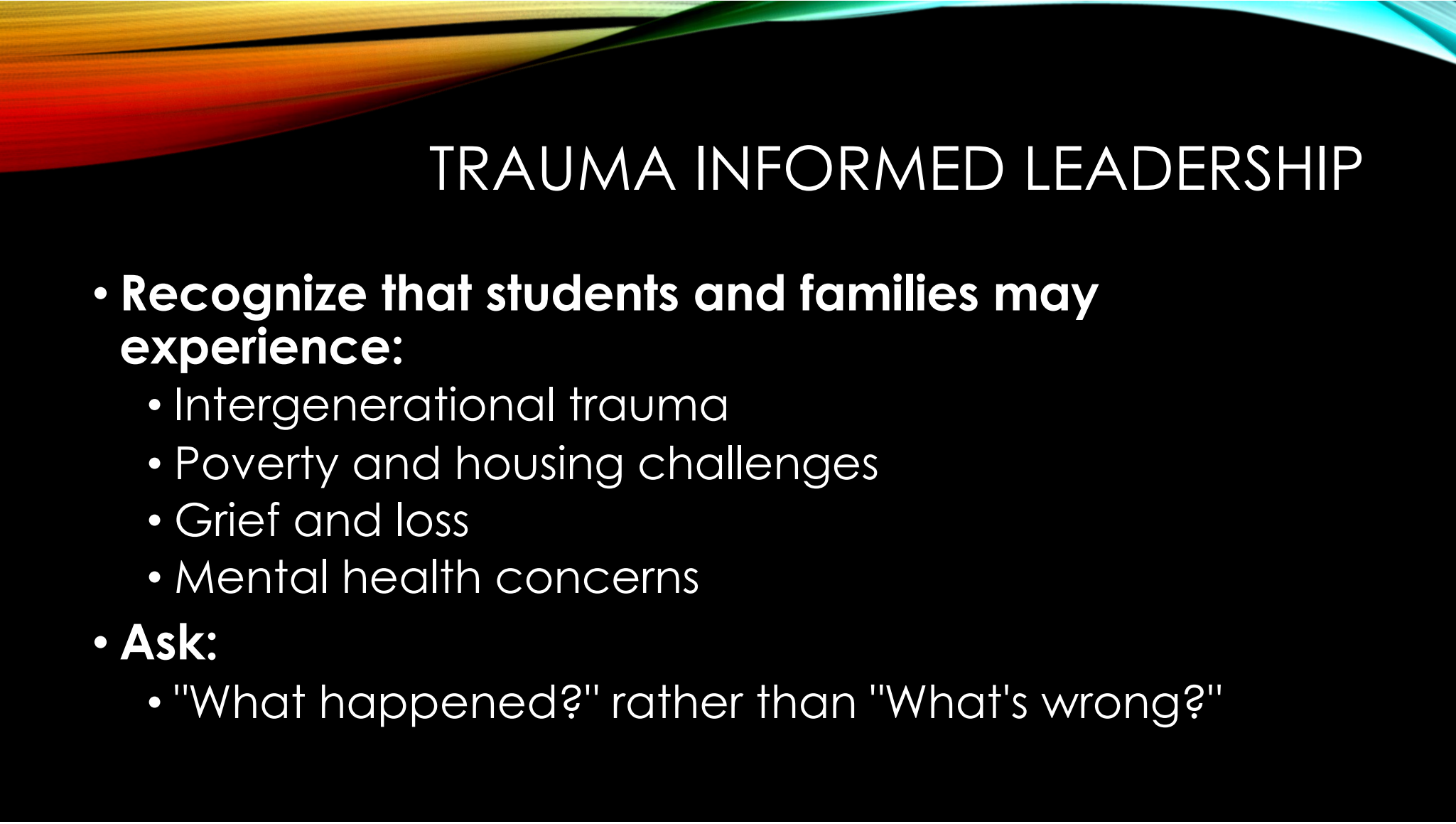
- **Promote:**

- Land-based learning
- Language revitalization
- Authentic involvement of Elders/Knowledge Keepers
- Indigenous perspectives across subjects
- Community partnerships
- Foundation is First Nations ways of knowing, understanding, teaching, learning
- Be mindful of ensuring you are 'walking the walk'



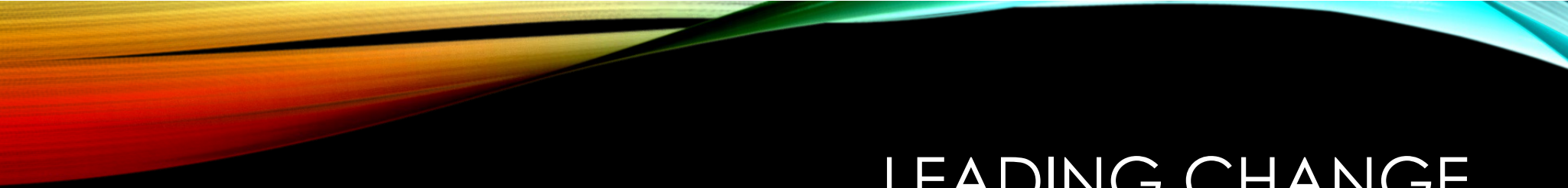
TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

- **Leadership commitments include:**
 - Honouring Treaty relationships
 - Understanding colonial and residential school impacts
 - Responding to the Calls to Action
 - Advancing equity and belonging
 - Supporting Indigenous student success



TRAUMA INFORMED LEADERSHIP

- **Recognize that students and families may experience:**
 - Intergenerational trauma
 - Poverty and housing challenges
 - Grief and loss
 - Mental health concerns
- **Ask:**
 - "What happened?" rather than "What's wrong?"



LEADING CHANGE

- **Change Happens Through Relationships**
- **People need - purpose, clarity, support, time, trust**
- **Move from:**
 - Compliance → Commitment
 - Isolation → Collaboration
 - Programs → Purpose



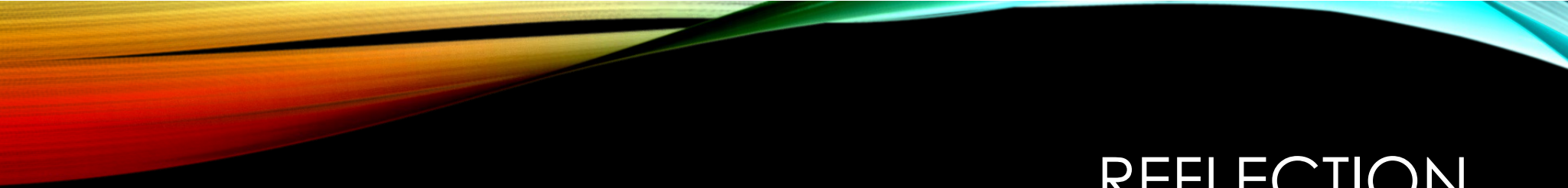
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- **Questions effective leaders ask:**
 - What is working?
 - What are students experiencing?
 - What evidence do we have?
 - What should we do next?
 - Who needs to be involved?
 - What did we learn?



COMMON PITFALLS

- **Avoid:**
 - Trying to change everything immediately
 - Leading without listening
 - Working in isolation
 - Avoiding difficult conversations
 - Focusing only on management
 - Forgetting self-care



REFLECTION

- **Consider:**

- What colonial/western understandings do I need to consider/unlearn that influence my decisions?
- What relationships should I prioritize?
- What do I need to learn about my community?
- How will I support staff?
- What instructional leadership practices will have the greatest impact?
- What kind of leader do I want to become?

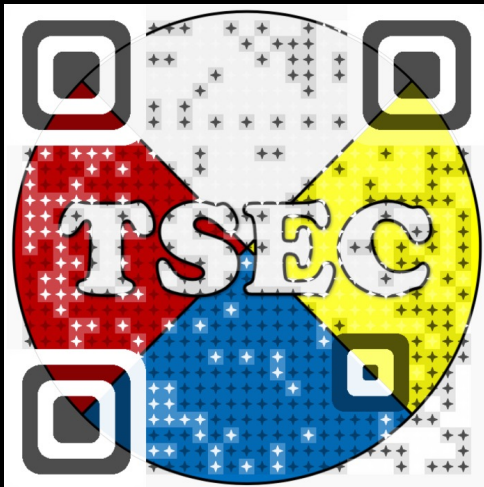


CLOSING THOUGHT

- If we treat our role as being part of a **ceremony**, one which is selfless, and focuses on the students of today and those yet to come, we begin to understand the impact of our leadership on generations – making our decisions and interactions with students, staff, parents, and community that much more important

CONNECTING

- Web - <http://www.tsec.ca>



- Email – pat.bugler@tsec.ca

