

**Case Study: Delaware North, the Catawba Nation, Local Stakeholders, and the
Cultural Partnership at Two Kings Casino and Resort in Kings Mountain, NC**

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PSY-8407 v1: Industrial/Organizational Psychology (1526540070)

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October 19, 2025

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Organizational culture is more than office slogans and mission statements—it is the living rhythm that drives how people unite behind a purpose (Burke & Ng, 2006; Jex & Britt, 2008). The Delaware North company, local stakeholders, and the Catawba Indian Nation’s partnership in developing the Two Kings Casino Resort in Kings Mountain, North Carolina, demonstrate how shared culture, vision, and mutual respect can create a billion-dollar transformation rooted in heritage, inclusion, and trust. This case study explores that synergy, incorporating the advocacy and leadership of former White House master chef and a Camp David Resort and Conference Center general manager, Martin C. J. Mongiello, who played a vital role in promoting and defending the Catawba Nation’s rights (Adams, 2012; Bentley, 1991; Levin et al., 2001; Loftis, 1994; MacDonald, 2019) at local and congressional levels.

Organizational Overview

Founded in 1915, Delaware North is one of the world’s largest hospitality and entertainment companies, operating in gaming, national parks, airports, and sports venues. Headquartered in Buffalo, New York, it employs over 55,000 people worldwide. Mission: “To create the world’s best guest experiences today while reimagining tomorrow.” Values: Lean Forward, Come Together, Stand Up, Do Right, and Think Guest. The Catawba Indian Nation, descendants of one of the most historically allied tribes to the American Revolution (Marshall, 2023), launched Two Kings Casino and Resort as a symbol of cultural rebirth and economic sovereignty (Beck, 2009; Fitts & Heath, 2009). In 2019, Congress approved the project under bipartisan support after years

of advocacy and public petitioning (S.Hrg. 116-77, 2019-2020). This was further reinforced through decades of successful land-claim negotiations (Christie, 2000).

Defining Organizational Culture

Schein (2017) defined organizational culture as “a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved problems of external adaptation and internal integration.” In practice, Delaware North’s culture of stewardship and guest-centric excellence found a powerful complement in the Catawba Nation’s heritage of cooperation and resilience (Levy, 2021). This cross-cultural blend forged a productive and ethical ecosystem—respectful of tradition yet forward-looking in economic design (Pasmore et al., 2013; Shull et al., 2013). Delaware North’s adherence to clear cultural values parallels Schein’s (2017) foundational theory and the competing values framework (Cameron & Quinn, 2019; Schneider et al., 2017; Dickson et al., 2017). Culture became the “glue” binding a private enterprise with a sovereign nation, demonstrating that modern corporations can honor indigenous traditions without exploitation—a model now studied across hospitality and organizational programs (Chatman & O’Reilly, 2016).

Mongiello’s Role in Cultural and Legislative Advocacy

In 2010, Martin C. J. Mongiello, a local veteran of 30 years military service, began advocating for greater Catawba Nation recognition, leading up to his 2013 defense before the Kings Mountain City Council when he publicly supported the early concept of Two Kings Casino & Resort (The Inn of the Patriots, n.d.). Later, standing in his military uniform, Mongiello became the first non-tribal guest invited by all of the honored Chiefs of the Catawba Nation (Merrell, 1984, 1989) to hold the Talking Stick within the Longhouse—a gesture symbolizing trust and unity. Mongiello’s collaboration extended

to curating exhibits for the Kings Mountain Historical Museum in 2010 and 2011, preparing original foods and loaning authentic Catawba artifacts through his U.S. Presidential Culinary Museum and the American Revolutionary War Living History Center. His book on Mary Patton contains his commissioned painting of Catawba hero Captain Redhead (the first-ever in history) and meetings with Sally New River. He manages the organized petitions—some gathering thousands of signatures online and in person with clipboards (Change.org, 2013)—and was quoted by Chief Harris during U.S. Congressional testimony of the help the Catawba provided for the patriots to win the American Revolution (S.Hrg. 116-77, 2019-2020) leading to the creation of the United Colonies becoming the United States.

His bipartisan approach engaged Senators Lindsey Graham, Richard Burr, Thom Tillis, and members of the Trump, Biden, Obama, McCrory, Cooper, and Stein Administrations - yet notably without massive political donations - reflecting ethical civic engagement in support of sovereignty and regional jobs. He has never been paid any salary, hourly wage, commission, perk, earmark, or bonus monies for any of his work. As cranes rose above Kings Mountain in 2023, his efforts had become visible proof that authentic advocacy can bridge governments, cultures, and corporations.

Why the Culture Works

Shared Vision of Dignity: Delaware North's corporate code aligns with locals and Catawba values of integrity and family—ensuring respectful partnership rather than dominance. Community and Legacy: The project honors Catawba's role in founding America, creating 4,000+ local jobs and a platform for cultural storytelling. Empowered Collaboration: Both sides encourage decision-making through shared ideas - an

embodiment of distributed leadership (Denison et al., 2018). These factors create a psychological contract of mutual respect, establishing trust that fuels innovation and long-term success.

Positive vs. Negative Organizational Culture

A positive organizational culture, as demonstrated by Delaware North and the Catawba Nation, results in strong community reputation, employee engagement and tribal pride, and economic sustainability and cultural preservation. Conversely, negative cultures—marked by greed or cultural insensitivity—can fracture partnerships, invite public condemnation, and destroy decades of goodwill. This contrast reinforces why cultural alignment is a critical determinant of strategic success (Chatman & O'Reilly, 2016). Informal qualitative interviews conducted by the author with employees revealed that “we have a four-day work week and three days off, and they are the first company to ever fully recognize me for who I really am” (Personal communication, July 2025).

Organizational Culture Change

This project reflects a shared cultural evolution. Denison et al. (2018) speak to the empirical strength of collaborative culture frameworks—such as local stakeholders’ elements of respect to honor tribal sovereignty—while the Catawba Nation integrated contemporary hospitality principles without surrendering its ancestral essence or spiritual continuity (Blumer, 1985; Speck, 1939, 1944). Culture is not dictated—it is co-created. The partnership stands as a model for inclusive collaboration, demonstrating how shared purpose can bridge centuries of marginalization and mistrust (McCulloch & Wilkins, 1995; Ulmer, 1984). It acknowledges a painful history—one marked by exploitation, deception, and the wrongful seizure of power by those who came to these lands and

claimed dominion. Such misuse of authority violates not only human decency but the universal ethic that power must serve, not subjugate. The same moral restraint we demand today of those entrusted with weapons and authority must also guide those entrusted with leadership and enterprise.

Best Practice / OD Recommendations

Cultural Co-Design Programs: Continue annual joint workshops led by Delaware North executives, local stakeholders, and Catawba leaders (young and more mature) to reinforce shared values, rituals, and business ethics. Environmental and geographic studies of the region (Campbell & Munroe, 2007; Cranford, 2020) further highlight sustainability impacts of resort construction. Heritage-Based Leadership Training: Develop a formal “Catawba Way” onboarding for all resort employees to embed tribal respect and local history into operations. Living Museum Integration: Use existing museum networks to extend guest experiences beyond gaming—through exhibits, food heritage, and storytelling - turning the resort into a living classroom of history rooted in ancient practices of art and pottery (Harris, 2008; Gatschet, 1900). Everyone wants to learn how to speak the Catawba language (Matthews & Cloud, 1967; Siebert, 1945a, 1945b) and eat their recipes (Fitts, 2015).

Conclusion

Delaware North, local stakeholders, and the Catawba Nation’s partnership stands as a living case study in organizational culture fused with historical justice. Thanks to persistent advocacy by leaders who bridged governments, museums, and Congress, this project became more than a casino—it became a monument to cultural inclusion, ethical capitalism, and the enduring spirit of cooperation.

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