but effective ritual of repeating the following pledge together before the start of each board meeting:

In deference to my solemn public trust as a trustee of this foundation I will hereby attempt to put aside my preconceptions, my biases, and any entangling relationships with my fellow trustees that might limit my ability to see things clearly or make rational judgments and decisions of behalf of the public good.

Families take varied approaches. Sarah Cavanaugh, a family trustee and former executive director for the Russell Family Foundation, focuses on the positives of family dynamics and history, and includes time in each board meeting agenda to celebrate and share family stories, photos, and heritage.

**Agreeing Upon a Meeting Schedule**

An agreed-upon meeting schedule provides guidance around the timing and location for the annual and other meetings of the full board. This helps ensure that trustees and other family members are able to plan for and participate in these meetings on a regular basis. Some families choose to have at least one of the meetings in conjunction with other annual family gatherings — Thanksgiving, Easter, or the annual family reunion — to minimize travel expenses and time, and to add a new level of meaning to these events.

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**Surdna Foundation Statement of Board Culture**

- We have respect for one another and for one another’s rights as a board member.
- We value honesty and truthfulness. We go beyond niceness, politeness and avoidance to niceness, politeness and directness. We owe each other both negative and positive feedback.
- We value due process. We seek a process on the board that will mirror our intention of personal empowerment. Just as we seek to empower others through our grantmaking, we wish our own process to empower ourselves and serve as a model for foundation governance.
- We acknowledge that differences can be energizing and can lead to learning. Collaboration and conflict go hand-in-hand.
- We seek to align ourselves around a common vision and deepen our conviction that our work together will make a difference.
- We seek to work together as a team, with a shared sense of purpose and inspiration. After bringing our unique insights as individuals to our collective process, we will endeavor to support decisions taken by the whole.
- We will seek consensus first. After airing disagreements, we will use voting as a fallback technique to permit us to move forward.
- We value Board leadership, which facilitates our process, and helps bring us to a consensus.
- We seek innovation and the group’s acceptance and encouragement of individual initiative and risk taking.
- We encourage board members to commit fully to making the Foundation the best it can be.
- All board members share responsibility for facilitating our process and resolving conflict. We are committed to improving facilitation skills and sharing leadership roles.