

Community Leadership

A partnership between community organizations and Libraries, Community and Voluntary Services Branch (LVCS), Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Wild Rose Foundation, Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture

Oct 2007

Volume 1, Issue 2

Cultivating “Self-Leadership”

Pursuing a leadership journey or simply striving to be a better citizen requires us to pay attention to how we cultivate our own capacities. Applying discipline to your life allows you to focus your energy, learning, caring and action in the right direction.

It is quite natural for humans to spend time pursuing low demand activities. Sometimes we use these as a “break” to regenerate or for “entertainment”. These include activities such as grooming, napping, watching TV or watching people, low skill games, chatting, simple reading, listening to music, daydreaming, drinking or acquisitive shopping. These are all activities that require little striving as they do not exercise or develop our mind, heart or body. They are generally harmless if kept in balance.

So where is the harm?

Disempowerment and eventual breakdown will occur if these types of activities displace striving. We give up our personal power when we only engage in “easy” and it becomes more difficult to develop “life fitness”. Life fitness means matching your personal powers to life challenges. To do this requires engagement in effective life education, access to and creating cultural assets, understanding history, nurturing relationships and finding a variety of experiences and opportunities to be useful. It requires you to seek significant challenges that force you to be uncomfortable, learn and grow your heart, mind and body.

We have a responsibility to pay attention to what is most important in our own development in order to effectively contribute to what is most important for humanity and all life on this planet.

So while it is fun to watch the latest sit-com on TV, read the latest Harry Potter book or socialize at a party, don't forget to pay attention to growing your self-leadership capacity and pick up Naomi Klein's latest book, take a course at your local college or volunteer for a organization that is working on building societal wellbeing.

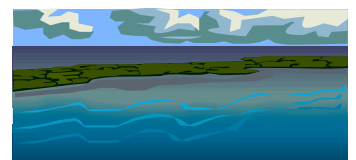
(Adapted from: Action Studies Institute)

For past issues of the Newsletter visit www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca

- click on the “Municipalities and Communities” tab
- click on the “Services for Communities” link
 - listed under “Resource Links”

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“Be not the slave of your own past. Plunge into the sublime seas, dive deep and swim far, so you shall come back with self-respect, with new power, and with an advanced experience that shall explain and overlook the old.”



Ralph Waldo Emerson

Extending our caring out to the widest horizons is an important part of leadership learning and action. As we come to better understand the interconnectedness of life, our sense of “what most needs doing” and “how to do it successfully” changes. This is an essential step in aligning one’s life with the human venture (*The human venture is the collective and cumulative efforts of individuals and societies to shape our own evolution in ways that are wise and not destructive. It is seeking out the best of humanity and striving for wisdom, sustainability and wellbeing*).

As humans, we often struggle with expanding our horizons of caring beyond our own group. Most of us are still ruled by the troop or tribe mentality. Extending our boundaries of caring is an important step in our evolution as a species. Now more than ever, our interests are linked globally. What is good for our own family, community or country cannot be considered in isolation from what is good for other people and life forms on the planet. A failure to understand the interconnectedness of life is one of the factors that contributes to our inability to manage threats or take advantage of opportunities.

Maintaining wide horizons of caring in the face of fear, anger and uncertainty is a sign of leading edge leadership. Looking at some of the current events happening throughout the world gives us a glimpse of how difficult it is to understand and care about others who do not perhaps share our heritage, land, religions or ideas. We often hear rhetoric like “you are either for us or against us” or “we need to protect our own.”

The movie *Crash* (directed by Paul Haggis) demonstrates the consequences of underdeveloped horizons of caring in a profoundly moving way. The characters in the film construct their boundaries of caring and understanding in a very narrow way. As a result, they have far fewer options available to them as they go forward. Their choices lead to a chain of consequences that cause tragic and needless suffering. Sadly, we see this very dynamic played out on a global scale all the time. Watch the film and think about how extended horizons of caring would have impacted the characters’ ability to see beyond their narrow world view and biases.



Can we see our future?

Last spring, hosted by the Alberta Nonprofit/Voluntary Sector Initiative (ANVSI) Leader’s Council, a group of sector leaders got together to explore what the future of the sector might look like. These were people from various community and nonprofit organizations that share a common interest in supporting the valuable work of civil society. They were led through a process of “scenario building” by Arden Brummell of GBN. It is impossible to predict the future but with the help of a comprehensive process, we can get an idea of what might lay ahead and help us identify where we can influence the outcome.

In Peter Schwartz’s book “The Art of the Long View” he describes scenarios in the following ways:

- Scenarios are alternate descriptions of the future – stories, images or maps of how the future could unfold.
- They are stories about the future designed to gain insight into the forces driving change and the major uncertainties shaping the future.
- The process of developing them is just as important, if not more important, than the stories themselves.
- They are not predictions. They are useful in “charting the waters ahead” so that the consequences of today’s decisions can be played out, evaluated and tested against the uncertainty of the future.
- They are intended to challenge assumptions, explore issues and broaden understanding of the range of possible societal outcomes that we could face in the future.

The results of these sessions may be helpful in your own organizations with future planning as they set a good context for planning. To find out more about scenarios and the Voluntary Sector in Alberta visit the Alberta Nonprofit/Voluntary Sector Initiative (ANVSI) website at

www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/mc_Research and Other Models.cfm

Leadership West Yellowhead

by Andrea Russell Coté

The Leadership West Yellowhead program provides emerging leaders from all sectors with opportunities to develop and practice leadership skills. The program offers hands-on learning experiences, focuses on real issues facing the region, and fosters networks of community oriented leaders.

The program was initiated in July 2007, after funding was received from the Alberta Community Futures Rural Community Economic Development Initiative and Alberta Employment Immigration and Industry.

There are six participating communities who have appointed a member to the Steering Committee, with the remainder of the members coming from the private and non-profit sectors. The committee met in September for a 1-1/2 day planning session, and will meet again in early November.

A unique aspect of Leadership West Yellowhead, as compared to other Community Leadership Programs, is the collaboration between multiple small communities. None of the communities individually has a large enough population to implement the program alone, but as a regional group, we believe that it will be a success. With collaboration comes some challenges as well, since we are dealing with six councils, six administrations, six local economies, multiple chambers of commerce and many non-profit community groups. We believe that we are the first program to attempt something like this.

Using a model for leadership development that communities across the country have successfully implemented, Leadership West Yellowhead is a 7 month program designed to fit busy schedules. There are day long sessions once a month beginning with a 2 day opening retreat and ends with a 1.5 day closing retreat.

Participants will complete a community project during the program, providing them with an opportunity to put their learning into practice. Each participant will be mentored by an experienced leader in the community.



L.Gen. The Honorable Roméo Dallaire, (Retired), Senator and author of “Shake Hands with the Devil” will speak and help launch the new initiative on November 14, 2007. The purpose of this launch is to kick off the program with a call for participants, mentors and community projects.

The inaugural class will consist of up to 30 participants, hailing from Jasper, Hinton, Edson, Grande Cache, Yellowhead County and Woodlands County. The first class is scheduled to begin in April of 2008.

For more information on the program contact the Leadership West Yellowhead Coordinator:

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Think on Your Feet

Ever been asked to give a quick speech and you have 2-3 minutes to prepare? Keith Spicer, author of “Think on Your Feet” (1985), offers these handy suggestions for organizing your ideas:

- Move through time and work chronologically using the “clock” approach
- Work from extremes to compromise using a “pendulum” approach
- Organize ideas using a “snowball” approach— cause to effect
- Use the “journalistic” approach—the 5 W’s (who, what, when where, why and how)
- Use the “zoom lens” approach—start big and move to a smaller perspective
- Move around using a “geographic” approach from place to place



Books worth reading... “The Courage to Lead”

In Brian Stanfield’s book “The Courage to Lead: Transform Self, Transform Society”, he talks about four basic relationships leadership must have to be authentic: the relationship to life, relationship to self, relationship to the world and the relationship to society. Each relationship is expressed through three stances. One of the stances in our relationship to life is “everyday care”. Here is a summary of his ideas on everyday care.

Care is everywhere and we tend to take for granted the network of care that sustains each of us in life – our parents and relatives, our friends and societal systems. Care is a two way thing – everyday people spend their life energy and others benefit.

Work

Part of our challenge in doing our work with care is the many demands on our time. We also can be guilty of spiritual laziness – not pushing our task to a level of excellence. Our lives are complex and we are usually trying to do several things at once and therefore can’t be totally present to attend to the current experience. What is most urgent is not always what needs our attention.

Structural Care

Structural care shows itself by setting up and maintaining structures that enable people to know what they need to know, do what they need to do, be what they need to be. Structural care is the practical expression of concern by creating or maintaining structure that cares for everybody, day after day through the vast system of services that are done out of love or care. Objectivity in care needs to be emphasized over the notion that talking about your problems will be beneficial – commiserating over your problems or problems of others does not necessarily care for yourself or anyone else and it is easy to turn into a sympathy junkie.



Rituals of Care

Saying good morning, celebrations, sending cards for various occasions are examples of rituals of care.

Symbolic Care

Demonstrating honour for the group by taking exquisite care. Decorating for an event, setting up a room for comfort and function, starting a meeting on time and visual aids all are examples of symbolic care that announce to participants that something significant is about to occur here.

Care in Human Encounters

This is about more than maintaining basic courtesy, its about actually hearing what people are saying, taking a few more moments with someone than you may have time for and regarding them as humans rather than pests. The level of energy with which we respond to others makes a world of difference. Being able to forgive and express that forgiveness is a basic form of caring for others. Expanding your breadth of compassion to find out what is going on in people’s lives before condemning them, passing judgment or showing impatience is also a way of showing care.

The Cost of Care

Sometimes people who care greatly for others do not allow others to care for them (suffering martyr syndrome). We cannot maintain the combination of quality care for our tasks and depth of care in our human encounters unless we discover how to care for ourselves – for caring has a cost. It is always important to ask – “What does it mean to really care in this situation?” Sometimes it means saying no.

Leaders in Alberta's more than 19,000 voluntary/nonprofit sector organizations recognize the increasingly complex environment in which they operate. More than ever, they know that to survive and thrive, they must be skilled in not only managing within their organizations, but also be effective in leading in the wider community; both locally and globally. With an expanded role in leading effective social change, today's voluntary sector leaders must collaborate more, develop and nurture increasingly complex relationships, deal with multiple forms of resource generation and work with diverse community partners in achieving shared goals.

Grant MacEwan College, through the new Executive Leadership in the Nonprofit Sector post-diploma program recognizes the trend toward greater collaboration and complexity within the community. Through a part-time, hybrid program combining face to face and online learning, MacEwan has attracted students from throughout Alberta. The seven course, eighteen month program focuses on personal and collaborative leadership, organizational and community capacity building, human and financial resource development, governance and advocacy. It is a cohort-based program which encourages peer learning

and relationships to support collaborative work in the community.

Students in the program are often mature students working and volunteering in nonprofit organizations in senior leadership roles. Others aspire to adding to their experience in the public and private sectors allowing for a transition to roles within voluntary/nonprofit organizations. Most are experienced in the sector and are building on diplomas and degrees, but a combination of education and experience is welcome.

The next start date for the program is September 2008 and the College will accept admission applications beginning November 2007. For further information go to www.macewan.ca/leadership, contact executiveleadership@macewan.ca, or contact Wendy MacDonald at (780) 497-5267.



**"We are called upon to play the good Samaritan on life's roadside; but that will be only an initial act. One day the whole Jericho road must be transformed so that men and women will not be beaten and robbed as they make their journey through life. True compassion is more than flinging a coin at a beggar; it understands that an edifice that produces beggars needs restructuring."
Martin Luther King, Jr.**

The Courage to Lead (con't)

Questions to reflect upon:

- ✦ Which kinds of care do you find difficult?
- ✦ Which do you find relatively easy?
- ✦ What are the different ways you see people relating to their cares?
- ✦ What do you do when you want to escape from your care?
- ✦ What difference does it make whether you care or not in a particular situation?
- ✦ How wide a net will you cast in deciding who and what to care about?
- ✦ How does a wider horizon of caring make a difference?

**The longest journey
is the journey inwards.**

Dag Hammarskjöld (1905-1961)

Adapted from: "The Courage to Lead" by R. Brian Stanfield, New Society Publishers, 2000.

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From the Editor...

Do you have a story from your community or organization you would like to share?

If so, please give me a call or email me—I would love to hear from you...

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Learning from History...

Disturbed by the use of synthetic chemical pesticides after World War II, nature writer Rachel Carson felt compelled to warn the public about the long term effects of misusing pesticides. In *Silent Spring* (1962) she challenged the practices of agricultural scientists and the government, and called for a change in the way humankind viewed the natural world.

Carson was attacked by the chemical industry and some in government as an alarmist, but courageously spoke out to remind us that we are a vulnerable part of the natural world subject to the same damage as the rest of the ecosystem. Testifying before Congress in 1963, Carson called for new policies to protect human health and the environment.

Rachel Carson died in 1964 after a long battle against breast cancer. Her witness for the integrity of life continues to inspire new generations to protect the living world and all its creatures.

Credit : Linda Lear



For more information on Rachel Carson visit:
www.rachelcarson.org

In the Next Issue:

- **Why we don't learn from History**
- **Leadership Wood Buffalo**
- **Paul Hawkins on "Convergence"**
- **Books Worth Reading: "Dark Age Ahead" by Jane Jacobs**

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frighten us..."

Nelson Mandela