

***GETTING TO BETTER
THEN & NOW***

Reflections of
a Leader
in the *MOMENT*

Glenn W. Sinclair, Ph.D.

2020

PREFACE: Then & Now – Leadership & Getting to Better

There is a song by Charles Aznavour when translated is entitled *I didn't see the time go by!* Both Aznavour and Glenn Yarbrough do remarkable renditions of this haunting piece of music. And when I realize that I was first encouraged to write this book forty years ago, time certainly has gone by *in the blinking of an eye*. Here is my *pre-publication edition* because I simply have stopped trying to refine the writing one more time. In fact, as I was finishing the penultimate draft, two long-time colleagues sitting at two different tables separated by over 4,500 kms, both indicated that this book really might not be the book I should be writing.

- *Is it all that interesting?*
- *Ought I not to be talking about what I really have been – an agent for change?*

The first question only you can answer as you read it. The second question I have come to realize is uncomfortably true and I have already started down that path.

Did I waste half a life-time trying to get this book to this point? I don't think so. The entire question of leadership is not easily answered nor readily explained. You are invited to read my take on it. And I would like to thank you in advance for doing so. Share it if you wish. Reflect on your own leadership journey, for all of us are called to lead at some point or another. I'm no minstrel, and my poetic talents are limited, but I do understand what Aznavour says *Now as the wheel of life turns faster, now as the seasons seem to fly, I see so many things at last, but didn't see the time go by...* Sometimes the road does bend before we are quite ready, but I give this book to you content in the awareness that time gave me the moment to get it this far.

Thank you,

g.w.

CHAPTER ONE: HELLO!!

I wish someone had thoughtfully asked me while I was younger: *do I really want to be a leader?* Or perhaps even more to the point: *can I really expect to be a good leader?* And, what might be of value if I turned out to be a misunderstood leader? Or simply an inconsequential one? Could I be or make a significant difference? And, could I inspire others to carry the challenge(s) on and manage from the moment to the established?

Well, guess what? If nothing else, I'm an unapologetic one! What drives me now to want to describe how it all came to be? And why do I, and hopefully should you for that matter, want to figure it all out? When we think we might have leadership aspirations, what is it that we ought or need to know? Should we be looking for patterns or cycles? Or examining opportunities and choices? Or, analyzing expectations and disappointments? Perhaps the issue is merely trying to decipher the mists, the fogs, the wondering just how to get there – to a place of leadership, to a place of helping others and the world to *get to better?*

These are queries I've pondered, probably not soon enough on my life's journey, but still and all I do so now. And I'm sharing them so you can reflect on them too, no matter where you are on your journey – the earlier, the better!

Writing this book required me to dig deep into my past to really figure out how I got to this place where I am now. While the writing hasn't been easy, the real challenge has been dealing with the findings – the discoveries concerning the influences, the moments in time when a unique individual or an amazing happening or a special place, provided an extraordinary boost to my leadership journey or an intriguing insight into how I might *get to better!* I'd like to help you avoid some of the pitfalls, detours, and distractions I've encountered, and remember, for me, it wasn't so much wanting to be important as to do significant things or moments – *getting to better* rather than merely trying to be the best. As a long time friend and colleague has said (*I am an enabler and explorer, unconventional yet significant.* And these significant moments may not get me an Order of Canada designation, but I genuinely believe I've made real differences in many lives.

What are the questions we often face concerning leadership, or at the very least, the desire to be a leader? People and situations constantly generate questions about leadership, but from where come the answers – academics, famous political people, corporate CEOs? I want to invigorate a conversation with you about leadership from the perspective of someone who has had a working life in leadership and its partner-in-action, ethics, even to the point of being a leader in learning.

This is not a textbook, though you might find it useful as a reference if studying in a secondary or post-secondary institution, faculty, or school where aspects of leadership are taught. It might even find value in a school leadership class or coaching group. My primary intention is to convey insights on leadership accumulated during a career in business, education, and community that kick-start conversations as to how we can *get to better* in our decision-making. In the final analysis, you are going to have to develop your own leadership model. I just want to help you try to do it yourself.

I have come to use the expression *getting to better* from the many times in my ethics classes where students have asked me to tell them what is right or the best answer to a presented problem. Or, they have wanted to know what the best choice is in resolving a moral dilemma. Unfortunately, I had to tell them that wasn't the right question – even if I had an answer, they deserved better, they needed better. I would state unequivocally: my classes are designed to examine reasonable applications of ethical leadership and are neither theological nor philosophical in their principal focus.

I hope my students when faced with a moment of critical choice, have a more definite sense, not the perfect scenario. I want students to realize what are better reasons for making that decision, and what will be perceived by most as a more effective resolution. So, as we progress through this exploration of leadership, I want you to enhance and strengthen your ability to *get to better* in your efforts at leadership. Don't get caught up on best. Focus on how to concentrate your energies to *get to better*. Seldom is it realistic to expect there to be an idealistic, single perfect, and therefore best choice. We are forever involved in decision-making where we have to weave our way through a myriad of possibilities, probabilities, and potential miscues. Even the most theoretical among us realize that the end result of such a process is unlikely to be anything more than a better solution than the situation we started with. If you aren't *getting to better*, are you really leading?

But what makes one person a successful leader and another person, who is otherwise successful, not? Does one have to be on the cover of *Fortune 500* or featured in the *Globe and Mail's Report on Business* to be relevant to those who want to be leaders? I don't think so. There are many many more leadership moments than exist only in the top tiers of the corporate world or the inner sanctums of public service. I unapologetically present myself as one such example.

In some early discussions reflecting upon the potential for this book, a colleague told me matter-of-factly that while I've *had success in (my) careers and (they) don't want to downplay that...well done, but it is lower echelon...*and thus not worthy of a book. That triggered thinking

about why we are eager to categorize the significance of position or echelon in attempting to determine what might be useful to present and future leaders. Are problems any less severe to the Boy Scout Troop Leader than the Bank Manager? Is life easier because you head up a volunteer organization promoting dragon-boating than if you were a public servant in charge of running a fish hatchery? Does running a major transportation company gives a person a better perspective on getting the job done than the volunteer who organizes seniors to participate in a pickleball game? How much more accurate might the head of a political party's advice be than the individual who chairs a local school board committee?

Over the years, I've had the good fortune to know and, in several cases, work with some exceptional people. I count among my friends and acquaintances who, at one time or another, have wielded considerable clout with human or financial resources, or both. Many of these people have laid the foundations for significant impacts on the world around them. But not all are rich, or famous, or of the highest echelon, not sure if most of them ever aspired to be. Yet, in their own way and context, each has been noticed for their leadership prowess for *getting to better*. And I'd like you to be too!

Simultaneously I have known people who have occupied positions of power, prestige, and presence. Yet, I am reluctant to call them leaders – certainly, I would not use them as positive examples for students to emulate. The power they exercised did not move the world significantly towards better; the prestige of the position they often besmirched; and, their presence was most notable and best appreciated by their leaving.

Reflecting on this dichotomy suggests that the value of one's insights may be more appropriately determined by the individual seeking to make the journey than by the one who has all but completed it. It is not the public standing any author may have achieved that is as critical as much as the impact the one coming after wishes to bequeath the world in the future.

I am very proud of the many moments in my life where I could lead innovatively and dynamically. In many ways, looking back, I created something new a couple times every decade or so. At the same time, I now see many former teammates, for they were more than just followers, who subsequently have led or are still leading in even more dynamic ways than even I imagined. Perhaps characteristics of good leaders are they are enablers and explorers; they lift up their followers, their teammates, their co-workers, position them to become leaders to find new ways to solve unique or recurring problems.

I could give a litany of projects, tasks, positions and moments where I either was labeled or perhaps saw myself in a leadership role: from having control of almost all the paper routes in a village during my elementary school days to leading several major public involvement programs and most recently, to being asked to teach leadership and ethics courses to professionals and/or their younger would-be protégés. For now, let me tell you about pivotal moments in my life as both an undergrad and a graduate student at the University of Alberta (U of A), which definitely influenced my approach to leadership.

From an early age, I liked to play sports, but other than the occasional moment, I seldom was great. I did quite well as a high school basketball player, even going to the provincial playdowns a couple of times. And I both played and coached fastball at a competitive level. Nevertheless, a couple of years into college, it became apparent that I was not talented enough to play first string anywhere anymore. But there was a Student Radio Society at the U of A that needed announcers. When I transferred from the east as I knew next to no one on campus and radio work can be quite solitary, I decided to check it out. My voice turned out to be radio quality, and in short order, I had my own supper hour show and was given some play-by-play basketball gigs on the closed-circuit network.

This really hooked me, and as the Sports Director was in his senior year, I began to increase my involvement. When I asked why university sports weren't broadcast over a public radio station like in Eastern Canada, no one really had a good answer. If we are good enough to broadcast on closed-circuit, why not on the air. I soon took on the role of Sports Director and made the pitch to a radio station that broadcast throughout Alberta that we should at least try a season of college football as the U of A Golden Bears were a really good team. The pitch was successful, and by that fall, my entire broadcast crew was trained and ready. I did all the play-by-play for each home and away game that year along with a couple of special varsity hockey games – and the teams continue to be on air to this day! Sometimes a moment comes along; an attribute is right (in this case, my voice combined with some determination), and new things happen.

Now I only did the play-by-play for that inaugural year because of another solitary moment. The News Director and I were talking one day about the fact that a new Students' Union Building (SUB) was being built and how we could make sure that Student Radio's interests were properly advanced. It appeared no one from radio had ever been elected onto the executive of the Students' Council. So we decided one of us should run for the position of Coordinator of Student Activities. The News Director was going to be away at a Broadcasters' Conference when the election week happened, so it was I who would be the candidate even though I really was only known as the voice of the Golden Bears. At that time, every candidate running for a position on

the executive had a kick-line of young co-eds to dance and sing as part of the candidate's entertaining of the masses (so to speak). I found this to be a deceptive practice.

What did kick-lines have to do with discussing issues, especially when the new multi-million dollar SUB built and paid for by students' money could open many new possibilities for programming enhancements to student life? To me, the student body deserved a more thoughtful, and perhaps more ethical option – one focussed on real issues that would resonate with regular students and would actually explain why you are running for office. So, in consultation with a colleague from the Gateway (the student newspaper), we decided to go forward in a clear and forthright fashion without a kick-line. We would use the old soap-box approach. My colleague would carry a placard on a movable stand that said *SINC is HERE* and I would bring the wooden Coke box, and a third guy, a piper, would accompany us. We walked around campus, and whenever we saw several people (like at a bus stop), the bagpipes would begin – most people would stop, then I'd stand up on the box and give a short Hyde Park-type speech. We did this all week. On the final day, we were slated to speak in the big residence dining hall, filled mostly with out-of-town students. The other candidate, a fraternity leader, and well-known campus personality was speaking while we waited downstairs for our turn. As the piper began to tune-up, the diners heard him and started to chant *SINC is HERE* – they drowned out the candidate who cut short his speech and left without his kick-line performing. By the time we entered the Hall, close to 500 residents were on their feet, some on the tables, stomping, and shouting. It was amazing! We won an overwhelming landslide the next day at the polls. I had a solid platform, but I wasn't well known. However, the innovative, *out of* (or maybe *on*) *the box* thinking and energetic campaign without the frills and a piper rather than the sexy kick-lines resonated with the voters.

As so began a two-year stint on the Executive of one of the best university Students' Councils in the country. Included were numerous innovative moments, such that I never returned to radio work again in a big way – I shall discuss this more later, although I will briefly mention one. Shortly into my first term, I was able to create a new approach to orienting new students to the campus. Frosh Intro Week (FIW) never really introduced me to anything substantive, so why not develop a program that would enable current and incoming students to have a conversation about what, why, where, and who matters at the university. Freshman Orientation Seminars (FOS) gained government and university support for its innovative and thoughtful programming, which utilized small group hands-on interactive peer learning with ordinary students as leaders. Today, some form of this FOS-style orientation is found at most post-secondary institutions across the nation.

When I reflect back, innovative, out of the box thinking combined with energetic, inclusive action was a continuing characteristic of my entire vocational journey. As another colleague commented recently:

(I) had an innate ability to bring together people with diverse backgrounds, educational, and life experiences to provide the best advice...

(My) vibrant curiosity and enthusiasm, sense of humour and questioning mind encouraged the (participants) to gain new insights and perceptions into how other stakeholders viewed the challenge and how best to find solutions...

(I) created an environment where all felt comfortable expressing their strong opinions but also where people could learn from each other and comprehend the complexity of the issue...

(It was amazing) how contagious (your) enthusiasm and belief in the issue helped find ways for the group to give good advice...

Another U of A moment happened after returning from graduate studies in the USA. I linked the question of leadership and uniquely applied ethics. While launching my consulting firm, I did some sessional lecturing in Educational Foundations in the Faculty of Education. Even though I had two Master's degrees, I was informed I would not keep my part-time position without a doctorate. More interestingly, the Department Head recommended switching fields, that I'd be more at home in Educational Administration. The problem was that the Department expected their grad students to have spent at least five years in the field, demonstrating some semblance of educational leadership potential. The Educational Administration leadership all knew me from my days on the Executive of the Students' Council (when I had been successfully enrolled in the BEd Program). They were quite confident in my actual leadership skills, so I was accepted, and a year after leaving the Educational Foundations gig and three years into running my consulting firm, I embarked on my doctoral program – indeed a remarkable moment.

But there was one more fortuitous moment before my formal academic journey would be complete. In a course on educational policy, I wrote a paper on the positive use of conflict in management, based in part on my experiences as a consultant in the corporate world. This theme was not well-received by my peers who, being products of the late '60s, early '70s were skeptical of how a good administrator would even want to consider using conflict as a tool. Furthermore, how could such actions ever be regarded as good? So they pressed the prof to have me do a second paper that would examine what a *good* administrator would be. From that paper and class experience combined with the appointment of a very forward-thinking prof as my advisor came the idea of possibly training administrators in ethical leadership.

My mentor's leadership within Educational Administration and his connection to Harvard enabled me to move way *outside the box* and pursue something that only later would come to be known as *applied ethics*. In many ways, my dissertation was ground-breaking, especially considering I was neither deeply academic nor intent on a career in the academy.

When it was published (1978), my dissertation (titled, *A Program to Enhance the Moral Reasoning of Educational Administrators*) was unique, at least for the U of A's Faculty of Education, as it was program-oriented not statistically-based. Using ideas set out in it, I was able to show the value of proactive, engaged adult learning as a pedagogy for leaders. Immersing a diverse group of potential and practising school administrators in a fifteen-day experience, undertaking small group and team exercises, and reviewing audio-visuals and listening to the occasional lecture while analysing ethical cases and trying to resolve moral dilemmas was a different way to do doctoral research. In many ways, it was the precursor to the field of Applied Ethics. It definitely was about helping people *get to better*. And while the curriculum that resulted did not immediately gain me any access to university professorial positions, it formed the basis for a process that I've been able to replicate, fine-tune, modify, re-shape over the years in a wide variety of applications for professionals in business, health, education, justice, counselling, community service and the like. As recently as the 2010s, I've been fortunate to teach graduate students to carry on the model, and they have been expanding, diversifying, re-making it for new times, new clients.

This book is a compilation of musings, reflections, and observations to assist the aspiring leader. The thinking here is less about validating my journey and more about giving insights to facilitate yours. If I have had any impact at all, it is in what those who worked with me or learned from me, do in their lives *to get the world to better*. The book is intended to explain and or articulate certain qualities of extraordinary leadership from a personal perspective.

There is something more: I want you to be a better leader than I was – in fact, better than my era. I am reminded of something Stephen King wrote in his book *On Writing – A Memoir of the Craft: I don't want to speak too disparagingly of my generation (actually I do, we had a chance to change the world and opted for the Home Shopping Network instead)*... He is quite right, no matter how much we accomplished, much of the revolution is still to be improved upon and implemented. In the past, I think leadership tended to be viewed as an objective, specified series of skills that, if acquired, makes one good at it. Today I am more convinced leadership needs to be that force that, in the moment, gives people real hope. It should inspire each participant to reach out and be a hero, at least to her/himself, and to continually want to *get to better*.

To fully understand why I argue for the kind of leadership I do, and to appreciate why I actually will try to convince you to create your own footsteps even if they parallel mine, work hard to develop an even better leadership path. Hopefully, by coming to know some of the most salient factors that brought me to such an understanding, you will gain valuable and lasting insights. One analysis after another reflection, prompted by the writing of the book itself, has shown me how, and perhaps why, I've come to see myself as a leader – and felt it was worth sharing this leadership journey with you.

(By the way, as a matter of style and format, any quotes or references will be located appropriately and are provided both out of respect for the originator of the idea and to give anyone genuinely interested in following up some further perspectives.)

CHAPTER TWO: What grounds us?

When I was really young, the Sunday School I attended had a weekly comic book called something like *Sunday Pix*. They were the best thing about that hour each week as I got to bring them home and re-read them. The one story, complete with graphics, I remember vividly is the parable about the two house builders. One chooses a nice location on the waterfront of a beautiful lake, quickly erects a fairly decent looking structure, and eagerly moves in. The other guy climbs up a small cliff nearby and digs out a solid foundation in the rock before ever starting his house. Finally, he too puts up a fairly decent looking structure – in appearance on the page, much like his colleague below, who, of course, has been enjoying his place throughout. Then a big storm comes up with strong winds and huge waves. The pictures show the water coming and hitting the base of the cliff with a good deal of fury. When the calm finally returns, the waterfront house is no more, just a few pieces of boards floating along the shore. The house with the foundation is standing, its lights on, its owner sitting looking out at the lake.

I'm not sure what the printed moral of the story was, but I clearly remember thinking – find a place for a solid foundation, dig and finish that, then build. That lesson stuck with me; it resonates in any conversation about leadership – what is the foundation? What is your purpose in leading?

For me, this has been about *getting to better*. To make a solid start, I need to ask: how can I help make the moment better for those around me? How can I overcome problems that others don't? The foundation ought to be strong enough to move the world, or as much of it as I can influence, to a better place. Basic is an initial commitment to the Golden Rule – how would I like to be treated in a similar situation? If I genuinely believe a potential action is a better course, then I ought to lead by doing it with the hope that others will see, appreciate, and do likewise. I realized early on that it's tough to define what is best or perfect: my less than a successful foray into a career as a theologian taught me that. I recognized that perhaps it was more helpful to assist people to *get to better*: to improve on the challenge that is being faced, reforming the present into something that lifts us more expectantly and eagerly towards the future.

So, what are the components that underpin my essential leadership aspirations? Recognize these are the key foundation blocks that ground me and have for almost all my life. You should reflect long and hard as to what yours are — they could be similar, but perhaps they are something other – just make certain they are solid. For me, there are three:

- good mental wellness/health
- appreciation for music
- commitment to effective, ethical reasoning

When any of these grounding supports were inadequately addressed, discarded, or ignored, it resulted in flaws, faults, and unevenness in my leadership processes and accompanying tasks. However, when all three were effectively linked and functional, productivity was dynamic, comprehensive, and very fulfilling.

Good Mental Wellness/Health

Society is finally making amends for its insignificant recognition for open, supportive dialogue about mental health and wellness. Consider this: a skilled worker on the oil rigs who breaks an arm is quickly taken for medical treatment without condemnation or criticism. Furthermore, they are supported at a place away from the worksite until fully healed, and then, is welcomed back – as a healthy teammate. The professional goalie who has an ankle sprain, minor as it may seem, does their team no good by trying to play through it when the medical team says rest is the only cure. No one says, oh, just give your arm or ankle a shake, roll up your shirt sleeves or put back on the pads, and get back to work! Someone with a severe cold or flu bug doesn't help the office team by coming to work and spreading the virus – better to heed the doctor and stay in bed. There is an appreciation of the need for robust physical health as a requisite to be a good workmate and teammate.

However, even today far too many who are suffering mental health issues meet with the advice, to just *give your head a shake and saddle up*. Frequently inadequate support is provided, or sadly, at times, even expected. Even good friends often shy away from telling colleagues that perhaps some attention to mental wellness would be most worthwhile.

In pursuing *getting to better*, I always realized total success might elude me. More useful seemed to be the attempt to help improve on what is already here and reform the present into something better. But achieving such a focussed purpose requires good mental wellness. I have a condition known as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), yet it's important to understand that from my perspective, it is a condition, not a disorder. Don't label it a disability, especially a mental one. By sharing my experience with it, we can engage in a serious conversation about what it means, how it impacts my leadership, and how it or other mental health conditions might affect yours. My mental abilities have been reasonably good, but I will admit to one lie I tell

myself often: *I don't need to write that down, I'll remember it!* (i.e., I can be quite forgetful.) In university, I was assessed to have an IQ north of 125, and in high school, I invariably scored as one of the top two students in my class. I managed to obtain five degrees, including a PhD within fourteen years following Grade XII. None of this is a vaccination against mental health problems.

I travelled that dark road of depression at a time when I should have been at my best as a leader as I had the education, the experience, the expertise, and there were needs to be addressed that I was uniquely capable of addressing. After several surprising failures, including four CEO-type position firings and two major relationship break-ups, all in less than six years, to me, the world had gone crazy. But it was coming to the awareness of my condition that woke me to the realization that I did have a serious health issue. My mental wellness was more than uncertain – it was in tatters. Oh, in the midst of it all, I could seemingly still function at times. Not all my choices were wrong, and dissolving the deep, personal relationships was undoubtedly in the best interests of all concerned. But I was making some terrible decisions; I had lost any consistency of focus. One of my foundation blocks was AWOL.

Thankfully while on that downward spiral, a few colleagues finally did feel comfortable enough to suggest that I needed help and that my decisions were becoming erratic. My kids (now successful adults), after incidences in which I wasn't my usual self, pointedly asked if something was wrong. These moments, coupled with becoming unemployed and perhaps unemployable, brought me to a place where I became significantly uneasy with the seeming inconsistencies and counter-productiveness in my choices. I wasn't *getting to better*; I wasn't getting anywhere.

Upon getting back in sync with myself (so to speak), I discovered the larger world was picking up speed in acknowledging the necessity of openly addressing mental health issues and needs. There was more and more research, and more and more people opening up about their lack of mental wellness.

Being a leader requires getting beyond the nervousness of conversing about the importance of good mental health and wellness. Discuss it openly, frequently, and in a supportive manner. Hugs are helpful but are no match for thoughtful support for someone who appears to be sliding south in their ability to deal effectively with rational decision-making. Leaders must create an atmosphere in their workplace and among their team, where conversations about mental wellness are frequent, relaxed, accepted, and acceptable. And, there needs to be a real support for those who get sick.

While being fired four times from CEO/COO positions in four years was less than favorable for me, it was more unfortunate for the organizations. There, people within the organization and those served did not reap the potential benefits from a fully engaged me as their leader. In each case, I had all the skills, abilities, and expertise to do it. Still, without my faculties' full control, some critical decisions were made without my customary thorough analysis – my usual *modus operandi*! The ultimate result of inadequately addressing a mental health problem was the institution never received the abilities and insights I should have offered to them.

Now, most people are aware that mental illnesses include schizophrenia, dementia, depression, autism (in its most severe locations on the spectrum), and anxiety disorders. However, it needs to be said that these makeup only part of the overall mental health challenge. Other types of mental unwellness include: mood disorders, eating disorders, personality disorders, substance abuse disorders along with attention deficit (hyperactivity) disorder (ADD/ADHD), although again, I would prefer them all to be identified as mere conditions.

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) is concerned about four *myths* it considers dangerous, including¹:

- young people don't suffer from mental illnesses – (actually) 18% of young people ages 15-24 do experience at least one of the above-mentioned disorders – and suicide accounts for 24% of the deaths in this group
- the mentally ill are dangerous – if anything they more often are the victims of violence
- people with mental illness are only fit for low-level jobs – they are like everyone else – the level will depend on their abilities, experience, and motivation – p.s. Look at me!
- if one has had a mental illness, one can't ever be normal – most people recover (and with proper assistance, even more will) – p.s. I did!

Margaret Sinclair (no relation), mother to a Canadian Prime Minister, Clara Hughes, a Canadian Olympic athlete – winner of several gold medals, Michael Landsburg, a successful television sports analyst and commentator, all gained my respect when they came out about their battles with depression. They demonstrated that depression doesn't make you crazy; it makes life very hard to live, and it is harder to heal if your world isn't supportive or proactive.

Perhaps a brief analogy might help. During my depression, as the darkness intensified, I would try to climb to the light. Yet, each rung on the apparent ladder as I was climbing would suddenly

¹HC Intranet of May 14th, 2012 quoting a May 12th story in the Winnipeg Free Press, p. A6.

break and drop me even further down. This seemed strange punishment – for what, I could not initially figure out. After all, everything I was doing was oriented to trying to help people *get to better*. But then I wondered if this was God's way of getting my attention: maybe I had been too cavalier about my personal life? Or perhaps the reality was I had done all the corporate leading I could? Was it time to go in new directions, to help new generations of leaders find their way of *getting to better*?

Another aspect of mental wellness too often ignored is that decisions made when one's brain is not fully engaged means those decisions are themselves incomplete and potentially incoherent. If you sense a leader is having mental wellness issues, then gently but assertively confront the problem head-on. It won't always be easy; you may be somewhat uncomfortable speaking to your leader (or having people talk to you as their leader) about such issues. Creating a supportive workplace environment may be the best way to facilitate avenues to positive mental wellness.

If I am honest with myself, I'd briefly experienced a form of mental unwellness in the mid-1980s. It was suggested at the time I might be suffering from executive burnout² – trying to do too much, working too hard, burning the candle at both ends. An interesting label, not necessarily suggesting a lack of talent or even success, but a hint, at least, of confusing effectiveness with hyperactivity. In this instance, the mental health problem was likely brought on by my reluctance to take any significant vacation time. When running a consulting firm, revenues that pay the expenses (including team members' salaries) only come in when the principal consultant(s) work. Throughout the 1970s, I never took a full week off even when I did take a holiday, and this pattern continued into the 1980s.

To overcome the burnout, I took a week or so and travelled to Scotland with my father on an *exploring one's roots* trip. It was rather therapeutic, and from then on, I began to book the occasional week off through every contract period. I also began to preach the value of vacations to teammates, colleagues, and almost anyone else within earshot! Restoring my mental health was essential to any hope I might have had of once again demonstrating effective and efficient leadership skills. Effectively developing and supporting good mental wellness is a preliminary step if one is hoping to have any leadership success. And sometimes, this may mean a sabbatical of several months: step away from everything and live in some type of retreat mode to re-establish vital cognitive equilibrium and refresh decision-making capacities. By the way, encourage others to take their vacation time and seek support when needed. Most of all, make sure that the overall workplace environment supports positive, constructive mental wellness.

² Later discussed in useful detail in the book *Workaholics – the Respectable Addicts*, Barbara Killinger, Key Porter Books Limited (Toronto 1991).

Appreciation for Music

Some who question the value of music, criticize those who jog or read with headsets on, demand perpetual silence in their workplaces. However, music is the only activity that stimulates both sides of the brain simultaneously, an assertion validated by psychologists and other academics, front line *people-helping* professionals, and the counsellors and mental health workers I've met. Music is essential to active brain development and positive emotional well-being. You don't need to have music blaring throughout the whole day or the entire building; but, if you want a productive, stimulating atmosphere, music must be part of it. Music playback systems and headphones may not indicate a distracted employee but a very focussed and creative one. The presence of music may well do more than comfort a group of people; it can stimulate a team! Music, no matter the genre, no matter the source, can help move me to a better space, to a more dynamic place, and a more contented, fulfilling, and effective leadership role. In essence, music helps me *get to better!*

I know I studied more effectively with music in the background and was undoubtedly less distracted than when there was dead silence. Some suggest those of us with ADHD benefit from this more than most. There is no doubt in my mind, some of my best presentations were accompanied by well-chosen and well-placed musical moments. Fauré's *Canticle to Jean Rachine*, as recorded by the Vancouver Chamber Choir, invigorates me to positively think through a problem much more efficiently than the roar of a diesel truck or a Harley Davidson. The Beach Boys' *Santa Ana Winds*³ creates in me a more reflective moment than sitting on a bench at a favourite park, let alone a busy intersection. For me, trying to explain the nuances impacting a personal relationship is much easier listening to the Jefferson Airplane putting forth⁴ *Today* or *My Best Friend* or the New Christy Minstrels singing⁵ *Anything Love Can Buy* or their version of *Today*. Sometimes a song's lyrics can express my feelings better than I can, thus helping bridge the communication gap. Even when I was young and on special dates, I often gave a 45 or even an LP record album to help express my joy surrounding the occasion. Today I'll buy or create a complete CD.

For me, going to a concert is rewarding. Listening to an old LP album can be personally meaningful. Hearing a favourite artist or song is fun and usually generates smiles, hums, and even singing a few bars. In each moment, the brain is growing or at least restoring and quite

³ From their 1980 album, *Keeping the Summer Alive*

⁴ From their album, *Surrealistic Pillow*

⁵ From their album, *Today*

possibly healing! Sometimes when leadership challenges mount or when leading becomes somewhat burdensome, music will provide more than a respite from the storm. It can help the brain relax long enough to enable me to sort through the moment and better determine what is wheat and what is chaff.

Is the appreciation of music one of the reasons why one sees many community and corporate leaders at symphony concerts and sponsoring music festivals? Maybe this helps explain why armies train basic recruits to march while singing. Perhaps this is how musicians themselves seem to live reasonably good lives without large amounts of money. And possibly this is why memorable movies seem to have good film scores. I know I go to sleep more quickly when there is music playing; interestingly, when I'm ill, I begin to recover more quickly if I have access to some of my favourite musical artists. And in my library-study, music is a constant companion, and not just there. Personally, while on a ski run with a particularly good fall line, I often find myself singing *Wise men say only fools rush in...* (and as much of the rest of that Elvis standard as I can remember or ad-lib) or perhaps the Beatles' *Long and Winding Road*. This primes me for some good thinking time on the chairlift returning me to the top of the mountain. It's more likely to be Symphony Hall from the satellite or Stingray Baroque from the cable network in my den.

When I think back, music has always been part of my scene – I was exposed to LP records as soon as they came on the market. My mother signed me up for a musical record club in Grade III, and there are a couple of songs I still can sing verbatim. Of course, she also enrolled me in piano lessons both in Alberta and again in Ontario, although I would have preferred the second time to have learned the pipe organ. And when I reached high school, I started buying my records – most of them I still have to this day. And all this music was played constantly during homework while reading or studying. Later a great deal of it was converted to cassette and then to CD and now abides in my computer – always waiting to be called upon to help establish the creative moment. To me, the point is that leadership needs the reinvigoration music can give to the brain and thus help restore the creative juices.

I believe music that resonates most with the individual should be a regular companion on the leadership road. Music should not be excluded from teammates and those being supervised because it doesn't seem to fit the moment. Instead, adopt a degree of flexibility and mitigate differences of opinion and preferences by authorizing the use of headphones, earbuds, or even earplugs.

There is also merit in a leader taking the time to develop various playlists to convey feelings or even intentions. For one thing, it might reveal individual attitudes to life – reflecting relational as well as vocational preferences or even statements thereupon. While I first did this as a way to communicate my feelings and thoughts about particular personal relationships, I began to see the benefits of actually working through different decision-making challenges by assembling targeted playlists. It was not so much that I would play the music for my team as I would have it on as background for critical one-on-one conversations or small group meetings. As important, a good sense of how to vary the music can help calm the environment, allowing the decision-making to be based on more reflective thinking. Classical music can be especially useful, but it must be carefully selected – raucous or frantic pieces are far less helpful than gentle or lilting tunes. Oft-times good jazz or upbeat folk songs can establish a creative atmosphere from which more reflective and forward-thinking will emerge. And now, with various streaming sites and other options, putting together a playlist is so easy.

Music can help create effective time-out moments. If a teammate needs to get away from the office crush, allowing them to work sitting alone in the empty boardroom with sounds of their favourites, may help inspire creativity as well as restoring an inner calm or effecting more profound clarity. Both sides of the brain need to be stimulated, but not to the exclusion of wholesome group development and team effectiveness. Thus, I think it is always worthwhile for leaders to discuss the possible impact of music to team well-being with the entire team, an overall consensus as to what is played, and when may be necessary to ensure the maximum benefit to all concerned.

If one thinks this attention to music is a bit far-fetched, it is useful to read a brief summary of a conference at the University of British Columbia in the spring of 2014 and reported by Adriana Barton⁶. The focus was on music therapy; the lead organizer was Dr. Larry Frisch, an Associate Professor of Population and Public Health at UBC. He brought together leading neuroscientists, psychologists, and music therapists. The presenters shared findings showing that music therapy can calm Alzheimer's patients, help addicts commit to treatment, and ease suffering in people with clinical depression and anxiety. One is immediately struck by the vast diversity in improvements in human performance that music can render. While the conference focussed on music therapy and healing, there is one quote that transcends it all: *Listening to music changes a person's experience of time, space, body and relationship.*⁷ Dr. Nicol adds that the key to

⁶*The Globe and Mail* Globe Life & Arts Section L7 (30/05/14) [The power of music to heal](#), Adriana Barton.

⁷[op cit](#) Dr. Jennifer Nicol, a music therapist and Associate Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Saskatchewan.

developing psychological well-being is *familiarity, choice, and the enjoyment of listening to music*.

On a completely different front, a colleague of mine has created a leadership development package based on jazz music. Following the publishing of his book, he leads workshops where jazz and his leadership expositions merge⁸. While countless other examples could be referenced, the critical thing to note is that music grounds productive human performance, sound mental wellness, and, most of all, a generally healthy lifestyle.

Commitment to Effective Ethical Reasoning

It is essential to recognize the necessity of ethical reasoning in the development of the leader's grounding. Before you can get to positive ethical action, before you can effectively be better at working through the moment of critical choice, you must be aware of the moral dilemma you face and how to appropriately reason through the decision-making process to *get to better*.

Why this focussed interest in ethics and ethical reasoning? Earlier I told the story I came to focus on ethics and leadership in my doctoral program. My intrigue about the conundrum between moral behaviour and effective, ethical reasoning probably began much earlier. As a minister's kid, one is always in the community's spotlight. Often people in the parish are quick to report instances where they feel the minister should firmly discipline his offspring. I experienced this on numerous occasions, but I often didn't see eye-to-eye with the interpretation of my behaviour or the reasoning behind why I should be reported, let alone punished. Several of these instances stand out even yet.

I was not the best-behaved kid, and some of my intransigences may have been due to my (at the time, undiagnosed) ADHD. But when I was elected President of the Madoc High School (MHS) Students' Council, I took the administration's word that they expected the Council to lead, to play an important role in the school's extra-curricular life. Among the issues that brought my ethical stance into conflict seemed almost inconsequential at the outset. Under my suggestion, Council agreed that since the province was about to bring four semi-rural high schools together in one rural super secondary school, we should invite the student presidents and their dates from each of the other three schools to be our guests at our annual *At Home* - a formal dance put on by the students but to which many in the community came too. It was held each February in the student re-decorated local Armouries and always featured a live, big band/small orchestra. The motion for the invitations was passed, and we set about to extend the invites.

⁸*Jazzthink – Playing with the Stuff of Success*, Brian J. Fraser, PhD Trafford Press (Victoria. 2004).

I was then called to the Principal's office and told that we couldn't do that – the limit on complimentary tickets had already been reached. Since these were the only *comps* that I knew about, I asked how that could be. I was then informed that the administration of each of the other three schools had been invited along with other dignitaries as well as the MHS teaching staff. I had no problems with the teachers getting in for free, although I would have preferred the Students' Council to be allowed to do the inviting. But of what purpose were these others even considered, and why did the administration think it had the prerogative to give away tickets to our dance and then prevent us from inviting our student guests? What was the reasoning behind this? Why should school staff determine who our guests were (or were not)?

There was no satisfactory response, but we were told we couldn't give comps. The ethical dilemma for me was, *do I accept this or not?* I said no and was promptly expelled from school for disobeying a school directive. After explaining this all to the Chair of the School Board, who I knew quite well, I was quickly re-instated. As a compromise, the Students' Council authorized the purchase of three tickets, which we then forwarded to the other Students' Councils. However, this resolution irked me somewhat and kick-started me to probe the reasoning behind ethical decisions.

Later in the same school year, I was again expelled (this time for two weeks) for challenging another instance of administrative interference in the mandated work of the Students' Council. Still, I couldn't get a satisfactory reason from the Principal – not only was it arbitrary, but it was also nonsensical. This time, I decided I was highly unlikely to pass the year successfully, so I made arrangements to move to my aunt's in Ottawa and take the final semester at a collegiate there. When I showed up on Monday morning, the Collegiate's Principal stated I could not start because I was under suspension. When I explained the suspension ended the previous Friday, he countered that the MHS principal wouldn't release my file. I had no choice but to hitchhike back to Madoc and return to MHS. I walked in, told the Principal he was unethical, and obviously wanted to be stuck with me. I was still Students' Council president for the rest of the year, and he might as well get used to it but that there would be no more suspensions. I did complete the year, ironically with top marks, left the Students' Council in great financial shape for the following year, and moved on with a quiet appetite to vigorously require people to give me thoughtful reasons for any decision impacting the quality of my life.

In many instances throughout college and in the early days of leading my consulting firm, an underlying question was: how does one get another to apply sound ethical reasoning effectively? And how did this evolve into an integral part of my leadership persona? In a sentence – when my advisor and mentor, Dr. Gordon McIntosh, introduced me to the work of one of his former

professors at Harvard. The paradigm or perhaps more appropriately a prism I use evolves from Lawrence Kohlberg's six stages is a *cognitive-developmental* approach to ethical reasoning. Each stage of moral reasoning has a particular approach to how it contributes to resolving an ethical dilemma. (For a complete explanation, go to www.e-sinclair.com and refer to the paper entitled: *Kohlberg Through the Sinclair Prism.*)

Here is a quick overview of the six stages:

- Stage One** *punishment and obedience - fear*
- Stage Two** *the attempt to make a deal -you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours!*
- Stage Three** *let's try to get along -being a nice person to those who count.*
- Stage Four** *law and order - the norms: show me the rules!*
- Stage Five** *social contract -Golden Rule: I have an obligation to you*
- Stage Six** *universal principles - I believe!*

In my own experience, upwards of half the moral conflicts emerge not from a difference in basic stances of right and wrong, but the disagreeing parties are operating at significantly different moral reasoning stages. Thus, they cannot adequately understand where the other party is coming from, let alone appreciate that the other may be in basic agreement. Being comfortable with the various stages and more adept at determining the perspectives at which others predominately operate gives you the grounding to adapt or adjust the stage(s) you choose to use when attempting to mediate or resolve a dilemma.

One thing to note in the application of this approach to ethical decision-making: these stages do not dictate whether or not a person is moral in the eyes of the critic, but rather indicate the depth and intensity of ethical thinking at which the individual is operating regarding the way they reason through moral dilemmas. Any organization is a constant source of interaction between all sorts of individuals and influences. This interaction, in turn, provides challenges that are bound to create ethical dilemmas for the manager or, for that matter, any professional leader who faces moments of critical choice in their daily work. There must be a balance between responsibility for the organization's long-term survival with the need to care and provide for staff (particularly the management team) and respond to the community's concerns at large. Attempting to respond to such diverse pressures or expectations places you in situations where conflicting moral decisions will arise. And to be effective, you cannot recuse yourself by saying: *don't touch me with that moral stuff!*

There is a need for constant self-reflection about the extent to which ethics is part of the foundational grounding of your leadership makeup. Do not ask yourself if you are ethical in your decisions if you are not first prepared to analyze the quality and nature of the reasons that lead you to the choices. To ensure one is adequately grounded, several questions arise:

Question 1: How can we hope to understand ethical behaviour if we only look back?

It may be helpful to study ancient seers and thoughtful tomes of several great ethicists, but will such alone get us knowingly to ethical action? These writings give useful philosophical contexts. Much can help us try to determine the good. Looking back at our decisions can be invaluable in moving forward. Many individuals use long-held theories naturally without conscious thought about their origin; but, only looking back or relying on *handed down* theories will not be sufficient for the active leader.

Question 2: Can we get to action before we come to grips with our ethical reasoning? Is it not beneficial to understand how we reason when facing a moral dilemma?

A person will not easily get to moral action if they are incapable of moral thought.

Sub-question 2a):

What makes me think a particular decision is the better one?

Sub-question 2b):

How does a critical decision most consistently get justified when I reflect on it?

Sub-question 2c):

Why do I think I am (or am not) facing an ethical dilemma?

Having a clearer understanding of the various stages of ethical reasoning, having a better sense of how you decide in leadership moments, particularly those moments of critical choice, certainly help clarify what the better decision ought to be. For me, it tended to reflect a desire to find out not so much a compromise, but the middle ground that gave serious acknowledgement of the various key points-of-view while still getting closer to a plausible and lasting benefit, what Purdy Crawford called *the art of the possible*⁹ Perhaps the best word I can suggest is collaboration. Leaders are not merely coordinators; they have to manage the conversation, steering it toward actionable results that in the least provide a collaborative foundation for further, potentially more substantive solutions going forward. Leadership becomes that action, behaviour or word which moves a group of others collaboratively toward a goal or within a process and being prepared is far more ethical!

⁹Pitts, Gordon *Fire in the Belly*, Nimbus Publishing (Halifax, 2014) p. 188.

Let me conclude this part of the conversation on what grounds me by reminding you of the three fundamental attributes that have guided me – good mental wellness/health, incorporation and appreciation of music into all aspects of one's life and a commitment to ethical reasoning. These need to be part of my leadership makeup, and in many ways, I believe they could be vital to yours too. It is critical to develop and strengthen each component. Don't be half-hearted if you intend to construct a leadership persona thoughtfully. Don't try moving forward until you've established what your leadership foundational makeup is! And throughout it all, keep at the back of your mind, leadership is not a career; it is a moment! Like a dot on the tire of a moving car, it never hits the same spot on the road again – unless, of course, you're spinning your wheels!

CHAPTER THREE: Making the Moment Work

The question I have often wrestled with is: When did I know *I'm a leader*? What should I comprehend when a colleague comments to a third party, *he has followers, not friends*? Is it when a teacher from my high school years remarked that *I could see tremendous potential in you and others*. Is it when an institution awards me a degree or diploma after a program full of studies on aspects of leadership? Is it when I occupy a series of positions that organizations state are leadership tasks or jobs? Can leadership be a career choice or a goal? Are leaders born or made? Is it nature or nurture? Or both or neither? And does family background play a role? And if so, can one overcome that to develop more individualism or at least a sense of individuality within one's leadership patterns? The fact is there are many books on leadership. Is it the consensus gained from those I've read and studied? We can't precisely define it, but when we see it, we feel we know it. Yet do we know how it all got there?

What was it, in retrospect, that made me a leader? And equally important, what did I do, and learn, from those challenges that might be helpful to someone aspiring to be an effective leader? In 1980, for several varied reasons, I took an executive position as Regional Director of Education in the Saskatchewan Region within the federal government's department in charge of Aboriginal peoples. I oversaw the on-reserve elementary-secondary programs, negotiated with the provincial government regarding such off-reserve programs, and also helped First Nations' governments access to design, develop and deliver extensive post-secondary learning and training. It was an exciting time as we worked towards more autonomy for Aboriginal peoples, particularly in education.

It was not always cheery and back-slapping, though. One day a group of mothers from a northern reserve came to my office. They had taken their children out of the local on-reserve school because they wanted a better building. Unfortunately, their community was not at the top of the priority list due to a backlog of other, more severe deficiencies. They asked me what I was going to do. After respectfully thanking them for making the long trip, I picked up my office phone, called my *ex* and asked her if our two kids were in school that day. I put the phone on speaker, and everyone heard her say: *Of course they are, it's a school day!* I thanked her, hung up the phone, turned to the assembled group, and calmly said: *I am directly responsible for two children, mine, and they are in school, where they should be. I'll leave your children's learning in your hands. Parents are always the first line of support.*

The mothers arose, went home, and put their kids back in school. I never had a similar incident in the next three-plus years I was in the position. The word got out. Now I did meet with the community a little later, and we did get the new school planning process underway. As a colleague who worked with me in Aboriginal education once said: *(My) vision of the future for a people that had given up hope during the residential school years inspired not only staff and students but also the parents who had previously felt alienated from the school system.* It wasn't that I didn't care for those concerned mothers, but for my leadership to be effective, it had to focus on the real issues I could influence or impact. It would be in such moments where success could be possible.

In an earlier instant, shortly after getting an MA from the University of Minnesota in Education and Social Reform and returning to Canada, I found myself without employment. In 1971, neither the Edmonton Public School Board nor an auto dealer's sales manager felt I had useable skills. The former (via a school board administrator) stated I was now too expensive with all my academic qualifications; he told me that they could hire two rookies for the price of me. The latter didn't think it was worth his time to try to train me because once a different challenge or more intriguing opportunity presented itself, he believed I'd quickly leave. Both were doubtless correct in their assessments.

Moreover, though one of my alma maters, the University of Alberta (U of A), would hire me as an occasional sessional instructor in the Department of Educational Foundations because I didn't have a PhD, they wouldn't offer me full-time employment. As a result, I sensed no real choice but to go out on my own, incorporate a company, and see if I could be successful in an entrepreneurial fashion as a management consultant. The question was, would anyone hire me to give them advice, help them better solve problems, get projects to better solutions?

Reasonably quickly, after forming my company, I obtained a succession of contracts, first with a human resources group. A governmental task force then challenged me to examine options for future community economic development. There were some short-term opportunities, too, as I turned nothing down. When governments changed and gave notice of intent to terminate a significant contract, I found a new one. An interesting thing about the profitable opportunities in this corporate launch was that initially, none of the major tasks drew directly on my academic certifications. They weren't in education, and they weren't specifically about ethics (applied or otherwise) – they were about the future. The focus was on water management, city planning, improving the corporate culture in a private sector company, fisheries, and then Aboriginal issues, followed by more work in renewable resources including power generation and working with a forestry company. However, later on, after obtaining my PhD in Educational

Administration, there were requests for help in the discipline of education, despite my limited field experience.

Moreover, I had devoted considerable time and energy, researching and reading, listening, and observing in a wide variety of different settings others who, through their writing, and lectures and speeches, apparently knew about leadership, organizational development and motivation. I had also directly watched many real and apparent leaders. Not only had I sat at the feet of learned folk, but I had also experienced on-site moments with several people - political premiers, corporate presidents, community leaders as diverse as big-city mayors and small-town arts chairpersons, aboriginal elders and chiefs, scientific experts, public policy managers, educational administrators, and in-classroom learning and teaching artists. The diversity was almost overwhelming in its magnitude and its intensity. So, of course, I felt I knew leadership. And when I applied it, and things didn't quite work out, the solution was obvious – work harder, be more creative, and pour additional energy into it. Sooner, rather than later, it would work – if it was workable at all!

It took me quite a while to realize that perhaps I was not as smart as I thought and that creativity is not a single attribute, and energy alone cannot correct that which may be fundamentally flawed from the outset. And as this all dawned on me, it became equally apparent that perhaps I didn't know as much about leadership as others might assume. More importantly, it might not be possible to give others as much insight as they felt they could obtain – that for all my success, I might not know the answers. And it might even be dangerous for you to ask!

There was then a startling epiphany: **leadership is neither an art nor a science – it is a moment!** It is a moment that can last for some time, a moment that can disappear almost instantly. And, interestingly enough, I am not alone in this feeling. In an interview with Canadian-born musical superstar David Foster, Alex Strachan¹⁰ records this comment: *I have these 10, sort of cornerstone hit moments in my life. Not hit records, but hit moments.*

Let me give you an example of a *hit moment* in my life: it happened during my graduate school days, yet it wasn't directly related to my courses of study. I was asked to help chaperone at an interdenominational church youth weekend. As the event unfolded, I sensed it was not as well organized as it could be. It was insufficiently focussed. Almost simultaneously, another chaperone came to a similar conclusion. Without having ever met, through a couple of comments from this individual, I realized that I knew action had to be taken, and I did. The other person

¹⁰Vancouver Sun Entertainment Section, Wednesday, March 9th, 2011 *Pop's soft-spoken hitman* (an interview with David Foster) by Alex Strachan.

responded quickly and positively, and the conference re-calibrated, new energy emerged, and the youth became very engaged. The weekend was a success.

I believe this moment is both significant and ironic: significant because it was the beginning of the convergence of thinking and feeling. Throughout my early years as a graduate student (the Masters' years: 1968-1971), even though the advertised value of the programs was to develop educational leaders, I found little that nurtured my leadership skills or ambitions. None of my academic instructors inspired me to think grand thoughts, nor did any of my graduate peers significantly connect with me. I held graduate assistantships but didn't have to teach. I did supervise student teachers at one institution and assisted a department chair at another. But neither role gave me any real leadership focus. I enjoyed going to class and entering into dialogues with profs and peers. Still, after receiving my second Master's degree, I have to admit that the only leadership moment happened outside the educational institutions and within a church setting – ironic, because I had left a theological career as I completed my first Bachelor's degree.

After incorporating my firm, one of my mentors insisted I strongly re-consider returning to school and obtaining my doctorate. This thought was a daunting challenge – my consulting work was taking off, I no longer lived close to a university, and disciplines in which I had Master's degrees weren't that interesting to me. While successfully teaching¹¹ on a part-time basis in Educational Foundations, the Department Chair was forceful in his advice to pursue my PhD in Educational Administration. This suggestion led to another vital moment in my grad school experience.

Even though I had never managed any formal school system, nor did I have a Master's in Educational Administration, the Department accepted me primarily because the people in charge were well aware of my leadership moments on campus. Moreover, numerous academics both within the program and throughout the school attested to my innate capacities. I enrolled, and due to my firm's financial success, I was able to pay the tuition fees and avoid the need to take on a graduate teaching assistantship. In many ways, the academic transformation from potential theologian to a promising leader was complete – albeit in ways never conceived as each of the four degrees were obtained.

Another moment of impact occurred very early in my consulting work. I joined a team that carried out a very successful, though prematurely shortened planning project. Right from the get-

¹¹The Students' Union conducted evaluations of courses and their professors; an undertaking was originally launched while I was on the Executive of the Students' Council.

go, the young team coalesced. According to one of the senior support staff, it started when I walked into the office and simply said: *Hi, I'm going to be working here!* Exuding a sense of confidence with a bit of swagger without boasting or brashness, I gave others the feeling that work would be good, and it would be significant, so let's get at it!

My more personal transformation to someone with an adequate relational ability was still a work in progress. It did not happen again during my consultative leadership era. As the round-about way to finally finding my vocational journey occurred, it is intriguing to realize that during the graduate studies period, it may have opened my eyes to relational possibilities. Ironically, the system didn't reward that. It did reward vigorous focus on vocational tasks, which I devoted much energy to, thus setting aside or overlooking relational opportunities, possibly because I didn't believe I could do anything significant. I did manage to enjoy many leadership moments, and my vocational successes were substantial. It is only speculative to reflect on what might have happened to my professional life had a relational moment been thoughtfully pursued during graduate school days. And it may be a bit fanciful, but still worthy of a moment of reflection, to think there might even have been such a moment in the final years of high school had I been more prepared for such a possibility.

Perhaps a flaw in all of this was my thinking that my leadership skills would neatly translate to a better personal life and resulting relationships wouldn't require a great deal of work. After my consulting experience was put to rest, I developed a more dynamic and productive relationship with the academy. The intriguing thing is that in my new role within academia, the leadership focus came to be on learning leadership, not managerial or administrative. I retained the opportunity to think, feel, and function outside the box. In so doing, I also became a better candidate for an outside-the-box relational connection and setting.

This example is a good one because it demonstrates to me the need, in fact, the importance of always being vigilant. One never knows when the moment may arrive nor for how often the window may be open to seizing that moment. Nevertheless, it remains a moment. But if so, then how does one better understand this moment? What, with all the training seminars, courses, programs, and degrees, might be the real core components? Before trying to create paradigms or models or twelve vital characteristics or one hundred and three necessary skill sets, might there be a floor upon which all else might be built? As I've noted previously, for me, I believe there are three fundamental planks of good organizational leadership from which all else can flow, evolve, and be designed: mental health, ethics, music. Find yours!

When it comes to trying to encapsulate my uniqueness, if any, perhaps I've been more of a rogue wave. Possibly that is the key to being a successful leader – being able to bring all the right forces together at the right moment to create a powerful result. But like so many things, a leader is only as good as the next success. Like a quarterback (QB) who led his team to the Grey Cup, a new season starts 0-0 all over again. And a leader needs to know, like the QB, when to hang 'em up, or at least give way to a young QB (whom they might mentor or tutor) or a different coach who sees a revised approach being necessary due to changes in the league or the game itself.

Leadership, as a moment, is simple as the rogue wave. And it can be powerful as a rogue wave. But like a rogue wave, much about leadership is unpredictable – even when all the signs are there, or when all the intentions are good. Sometimes it isn't so much the theory to be learned or the skill sets in which to be trained. Quite often, it is knowing when you are getting into trouble and need to change course. Or, when your mental health is on the wane when you need to heal. Or, when the music has been turned off, and you are missing that full brain stimulation to keep you alert. Or, you are opting for bad choices because you are ethically reasoning at the wrong level or perhaps not. And this can be just as relevant to one's relational life as to one's vocational life.

Upon reflection, I realize now I lost focus early in graduate studies. It wasn't until I met one of my three great mentors (my advisor in my final and most successful graduate program that led to my doctorate) that I zeroed in once again on learning. Had that happened earlier, who knows where my graduate education might have taken me, or at least opened different doors for me to travel through? At the outset of my return to doctoral studies at the U of A, I harnessed it, and a new, dynamic, and very successful professional life ensued. And while the professors responsible for allowing me to enter the educational administration were necessary, the key was my doctoral advisor, who ultimately taught me to seize and build upon that moment!

Now bear in mind, I am a firm believer in looking forward to being vigilant enough to be ready, willing, and able to seize the moment. Why then even write this book which, in large part, is about looking back? The value of occasionally looking back is to give you perspective as well as a check-off moment – are you still on course? And, if not, why not? I didn't do this nearly enough, especially in the relationship aspects of life. Had I done so, it is intriguing to contemplate how significantly more successful I could have been and how many convergence moments might have been engaged. So, make sure you take more of those moments yourself, early and often!

CHAPTER FOUR: Developing a Leader's Mindset

Many have asked me my secrets to being a good leader. They do so I surmise because they have viewed my curriculum vitae and have assumed that I must be a leader due to all the projects I have designed, developed, and delivered. Because most of those tasks led to significant improvements in an organization or public policy or general community well-being, they further infer that what I did was right and, therefore, a worthwhile model for their efforts at transforming the challenges they confront. A colleague once commented: *his encouraging nature lent to much success*. But the same individual also stated *I not only demonstrated a serious work ethic but encouraged others to work extremely hard and do whatever it took to move towards that vision*.

Remember, leadership is neither an art nor a science – it is a moment! A moment that can last for some time; a moment that can disappear almost instantly. Time, energy, skills, training, and knowledge may be helpful, but without the abilities to recognize, and the strength to seize the moment, the opportunity to lead may simply not be realized. And it may also benefit from adequate recognition of teammates. In one particular project, it was noted *that clearing away the organizational roadblocks (I) enabled staff of varied backgrounds and beliefs, to develop their natural creativity and initiative and let it shine*.

Common folklore claims that being in the right place at the right time means everything to one's achievements. This maxim applies equally to successful leadership. Another colloquial gem asserts that successful leaders make the best of their situation – that they create the right ambiance to ensure that all things come together for the good of the project. To me, some other perspectives could be even more helpful: intuitiveness, holding a variety of interests, being aware, refraining from categorizing too quickly, being vigilant, keep moving forward, and always facilitating engagement. All these and perhaps a few more may come to you, and they can be vital to your development of key leadership moments.

Intuitiveness

Are evolving leaders aware of their leadership talent, or are they just frustrated with the lack of it in others or the organization? Perhaps vacuums in direction-setting by others generate a desire to initiate a self-directed leadership role. In other words, in some instances, perchance, a person steps up to fill a felt void or replace an emptiness. In such cases, is it someone who already is a leader who recognizes the absence of strong leadership? One can still have strong leadership capacity, but that leader may not be aware of a need or is too busy to recognize it because of their position. So, it is essential for the organization to permit leadership to flourish and for the organization to support the person to seize the moment.

If an organization is overly restrictive and a person is trying to infuse it with new energy, they may, if push comes to shove, leave to look for new opportunities to deploy developing leadership skills. If the organization generally is stuck in Stage Two or even Stage Three ethical reasoning mentality, it may inadvertently lose the growing Stage Five leader.

Varied Interests

Another aspect of developing a sense of leadership may come from advice to rein in one's profusion of interests and energies. Of this, I'm not too sure. There is value in nurturing diverse interests, and as many as time and energy will permit. To have many interests, to work in short bursts and limited time-frames are not failures or even shortcomings – they are often characteristics, at least, of good consultants. These folks are oft-times blessed with viable leadership qualities. Overall I think having ADHD can be more a blessing than a curse – it may not help one's relationships, but I do believe it can aid the vocational side of a leader's life.

For one thing, facilitating others to take the stage at times may present different ideas by which you can build new processes or even create new projects. I did well with this approach. It was mentioned that I had *excellent critical self-reflection skills where (I) set aside ego and instead sought the active involvement of stakeholders or experts to inform and continually evolve professional and extensive volunteer practices.*

Awareness

I am an introvert¹². There are a couple of traits I have developed to enhance this psychological phenomenon. When I enter a room, my first tendency is to move to a corner, intent only on observing the assemblage or perhaps spending some time with those that may seek me out or cross my path, whether for a few moments or an extended conversation. The alternative, usually when expected to play a more leader-like role, is to get the centre of attention, control the mike or the dais as the case may be. This latter approach ensures I don't have to deal with people individually – the crowd is as one, and the agenda is mine (or at least theoretically well laid out beforehand). It is beneficial to appreciate where you stand on the introvert/extrovert axis; it can help you determine how best to predominately handle group as well as most individual situations. Another introvert put it this way: *alone time allows the introvert to recharge whereas extroverts gain energy from others – be aware of how you recharge so you can handle social situations* – that recharge may be music!

¹²Validated on three different occasions by professional psychologists using, among other evaluative tools, the Myers-Briggs assessment instrument.

It is useful to recall the ethical reasoning prism I discussed earlier. We seldom are indelibly entrenched at one stage forever and for all times; however, my primary stage is five. Thus, I tend to operate from the Golden Rule. This self-knowledge is vital for me as I know that the vast majority of people I deal with will be at other stages. Therefore I need to understand those levels and have respect for them. I need to be ready to shift the stage I use – not change my core values, but alter how I explain my ethical reasons for them. This ability to change the level of moral reasoning we use to better connect with our colleagues also increases our ability to resolve the ethical dilemmas we face individually or collectively. It helps train us to be more adaptable and collaborative when meeting other challenges within our leadership spectrum.

Just as we reason on a continuum, often based as much on the people we are working with as on the dilemma we are facing, so too our basic personality will be impacted by mental wellness, rest and relaxation, happiness, and the state of our intimate relationships. Varying moods are not necessarily signs of problems in mental wellness. Nevertheless, to ensure some checks and balances help clarify when certain situations are indicators of gathering issues, develop a couple of solid friendships within and outside your familial contexts, which you can trust to give straight-up and in your face reliable advice. And then commit to listening to that advice.

Likewise, take breaks frequently – don't continuously bank holidays. There is a reason all people-caring organizations and institutions allocate vacation time. Humans need the rest for restorative purposes. In my earliest days, I always thought that change was as good as a rest – that is simply not true. As I began to learn – every week away at a beach or on a ski hill could work wonders for my physical and mental health. And most weeks, I learned to take at least Sunday morning off. Because of my faith aspect, it was CBC's Choral Concert, followed by church. The phone and other communication devices, the computer, the clients, the team were all excluded – it allowed me to regroup and reconnect with myself if nothing else. But as life unfolded, one week or longer adequate vacation time became essential. The infrequency of such moments may have been as significant a cause of my slide into darkness as anything else – my brain, as well as my brawn, may have simply run out of fuel. An active, restorative vacation is a genuinely refueling moment.

Don't categorize...at least not too quickly.

If there is any other component critical to developing into a good leader, it would be wary of making quick categorizations. It is far too easy to start a trend in a world of instant communications, rapid tweets, and innumerable Facebook or Instagram likes. More critically, too many of these trends are based on rather weak foundations such that as they build momentum, they become dangerous because of their inherent limitations and, more often than

not, falseness or at least inaccuracy. Modern technology has not eliminated rumour mills of old – it has exacerbated them. If you want to conduct a quick test to validate this assertion, start by seating ten people in a circle then whisper the following sentence into the ear of the first person: *Facebook is certainly a very reliable way to describe your friends.* Have that person repeat the sentence and continue the process until the message arrives at the tenth person. Have that individual repeat what the ninth person had said to them. If you're still not convinced, make your eleven-word sentence and start the process in reverse order.

The same warning is necessary for actually describing or naming individuals. Saying someone is conservative or liberal, radical or conventional, elite or commoner may be relevant to your glossary of terms. Still, it is not guaranteed to be heard let alone interpreted in anywhere near the same way. I'm a conservative, but not anything like what some people call alt-right. I think I'm pretty progressive but shudder to think that might mean I'm a leftist. Be cautious about relying too steadfastly on apparent popular fads or categories!

Be Present

The one aspect I no doubt enjoyed in my professional life was being ready to turn up the creative juices at a moment's notice and take up the leadership challenge of trying to *get to better*. Whether it was marshalling human resources, resolving organization-related financial quagmires, or untangling misapplications of policy. For good (or bad), I made myself available 24/7. The tendency towards hyperactivity worked to my advantage – I perpetually had a surfeit of energy. I was always willing to travel to the scene of the problem; I didn't sit back, expecting the client to bring the challenge to me!

I know I'm a transformational or developmental leader – I'm never good at managing the status quo or even attempting to be the chief administrator for the long haul, stabilizing, and then reining in the organizational talent to move forward. Context, vision, and human capital are all critical to an organization's move forward. But I am best dealing with this in the formative years, the design and development phases. I'll start the delivery portion – but to keep it progressing and maintaining the appropriate momentum is best done by someone else – in other words: know thyself and your areas of strength!

Leaders need to be present. They need to have a presence. They need to recognize that those being led are not necessarily on the clock – ready only to be engaged in a nine to five context. According to one teammate, I had an *uncanny ability to motivate the staff to achieve at the highest levels. (I) noticed and praised staff and student progress – a tremendous amount of energy was unleashed in the process.* However, when work is continually front and centre, it can

be easier to believe the emotional and even social worlds can be handled somewhat cavalierly; not necessarily a good strategy but, perhaps, adopted almost unknowingly. Indeed, this occurred within my frenetic world of creative development, resolutions and responses.

The relational aspect of my life never did get better after grad school. While there were people I was working with who were fun to be around, even someone I liked to socialize with from time to time, the general tenor of my world was focused on my leadership challenges. Deep, enduring relationships in the context of the assignment, including at times, working within a public federal or provincial bureaucracy seemingly just were not going to work – they either could lead to conflicts of interest, or convoluted supervisory situations, or even disjointed friendships.

Aspiring leaders need to think seriously about all personal relationships and their potential impact on the leader's world of work. This is not to say that deep relational connections cannot be developed in parallel with the dynamics of a successful work-life in leadership challenges. Instead, it means that any leader must be prepared to work as diligently at the unique personal relationships as they are investing in workplace opportunities. And relationships in the workplace must be developed with thoughtful attention to their impacts on fellow teammates, clients, supervisory forces, and even relevant publics. To be most effective and most enduring – work from Stage Five ethical reasoning.

Perhaps if I had started with more coaching on this aspect of my being, the choices I made early on would have been significantly different. In the least, they would have been made with more thoughtfulness, more questioning, and more conversation about the relevance of individual goals in any downstream attempts to merge lives. I know there was an awareness of the Golden Rule – I'm just not sure there was much of an effort to move me to where it was embedded within the totality of me. Ironically in my vocational role, people often commented that I facilitated a process that created a supportive environment. It just didn't happen relationally.

Accelerate

Somewhere I heard or read, and on more than one occasion: *if life is an uphill journey, then it is best to keep one's foot planted firmly on the accelerator, not the brake.* It's undoubtedly true when driving successfully through mountain passes in winter or prairie mud in the spring! And it is something to bear in mind when contemplating a leadership role or a front-and-centre challenge. Leadership needs more acceleration than braking. Engagement will often provide the necessary restraint before indiscriminately trying to implement potentially excellent new ideas, policies, operational strategies, or managerial dicta.

This is oft-times the real challenge for the leader – learning how to ensure engagement keeps the locomotive on track and not becoming a train wreck. This brings the needed momentum to accompany the new policies or programs, but energy doesn't equate to being better. Instead, it merely makes sure that inertia doesn't become the norm. Again, reflecting on the Golden Rule will help sharpen the focus!

Facilitate Engagement

When starting on a project or administrative post, some pieces of advice ought to be obvious. Bring together a diversity of interests and talents – even if some might appear contradictory. Give those you are leading a solid understanding of the dilemma being faced and the challenges to be overcome, along with insightful education into some of the options that might be helpful. The odds of getting reasonable solutions then tilt very much in your favour. Leadership can only occur if there are people to lead. And these folk will only be effectively led if they are engaged in the decision-making challenges. From an ethical perspective, treat teammates and clients alike from the perspective of the Golden Rule.

Many talk about engagement but confuse it with communications. Merely telling people where you want to go and explaining the potential troubles that might be encountered is not leadership. Moreover, it certainly is not engagement. Active listening will help move the leadership paradigm forward, but again will not be sufficient. You must achieve more than listening – commit to hearing. Follow this by conversing, which is more than merely telling; then actively involve people as participants in the decision-making process. Leadership obtains the maximum number of useful, applicable ideas and feedback placed on the table. It then guides the group through the struggle to find a better solution to the prominent questions being addressed. Once achieved, leadership makes sure all understand and appreciate the direction to be taken – even if they don't necessarily agree.

Resist Excessive Repetition

Another lesson in leadership is if innovation, energy and youthful enthusiasm combine to be your *hallmark*, remember you can't keep going to the same well because both it and the water aren't new anymore. And don't let yourself get caught up in the mantra *well it's been working before, so let's just fine-tune the model and go for it again*. Fine-tuning can be useful. It can often be refreshed appropriately to make it newly relevant and successfully implemented with adequate input from the new group of clientele participating in the process. But such action must start with the leader's commitment to accept significant change if the freshly engaged group thoughtfully argues such is a possibility or opportunity, if not necessarily essential. If the client has retained you or the organization has hired you because of your past successes (i.e., track

record or you gain a promotion), be careful not to resort to Stage Three ethical reasoning. Don't function to be liked – lead to be effective. Seldom will even Stage Four be sufficient – as simply following the norms may not move the process or project adequately for change/enhancement to be effective to *get to better*.

The lesson is this: know your strengths, be content to work from the paradigm once a real track record has been established, and ensure the client, group, or team is significantly engaged so that they not only understand but reasonably buy into the paradigm. Ask yourself if you were them, would you want this route to be strictly followed? Be prepared for reform even if only subtle. Don't try to solve relational issues by taking work you don't need or want! Occasionally turning down deals or dissolving contractual relationships with clients is the best thing one can do for one's mental wellness! If you are a consultant, removing or replacing 10% of your clientele at least every third year can be more than therapeutic, it can rejuvenate you and thus reinvigorate the organization. If you are within an organization, shifting the roles of those reporting to you every three years can do similarly good things; if you are not the senior leader, consider moving to another position within the organization, even if it is a lateral move. If there is not a favourable opportunity, consider stepping outside the company but agree that you would like to return once you have gathered more exposure to alternative ways of hearing, seeing, and doing.

Experience

Be careful about relying too much on experience. It may make for conversation fillers at a high school reunion, but it may not go further. Experience is the ultimate personal moment, but it seldom is transferable or even replicable! Too often, I have heard too much made of it – both to explain success as well as the lack thereof. Experience may be something that we can and do learn from, primarily if it is used as a check or balance, not as complete validation.

Experience is merely that -- experience. Now, *if only I had known better*, is hardly a billboard message for anyone, let alone someone at the front of the pack. Yet it is probably a phrase used more by leaders in moments of honest reflection than anything or anyone else. Looking back too frequently leads to walking into parking meters. Let me explain:

At the University of Alberta, for two years, I was on the executive of the Students' Union as Coordinator of Student Activities (now titled the Vice-President of Internal Affairs). One of the perks in those days was reserved parking, complete with a plug-in for a block heater; Edmonton can still have frigid winters, climate change notwithstanding! One brilliant moonlit evening, after an executive meeting, the four of us were walking briskly to our cars, but on a sidewalk designed for three. So I was walking in front, but looking back, engaged in conversation. Suddenly the

face of one of my colleagues took on a somewhat startled look, so I turned around just as a parking meter hit my chest – the force knocked the wind out of me and dropped me to the ground gasping for air – I thought I was going to die. I didn't, but from then on, I saw looking backward as an excellent lead-in to walking into parking meters!

So how does a leader strike the necessary balance: standing up, walking, not falling? I've learned by talking about it and seeking assistance. Teaching and doing some better ethical reasoning, both vocationally and relationally got me standing again. Some great music helped me move forward and, in a way, increased my willingness to tell you about it. If you think you are a good leader, remember I thought so too – but I didn't always deliver. I'd like you to be more successful, not just at avoiding the pitfalls but at standing up. We need more stand-up leaders – the world my grandkids are inheriting will only be better if there are many more leaders than we've ever had. So join the journey, if but for a little while.

Learn, Accept, and Adapt to Change

For me, I think the common thread was the *new frontier* nature of the tasks. Sometimes, the work itself was cutting edge, but in each case, I was learning a new world, a new series of problems, a new sense of opportunity. Consequently, I believe that the feeling of delving into the unknown is critical to developing the leader as it requires a real commitment to learning, combined with a willingness to accept and adapt to change. Getting too comfortable with a challenge or a team or a style of leading can quickly slide into complacency, which then breeds arrogance or, at the very least, over-confidence. Remember, whether you are a transformational leader or an administrative one in an interim or long-term context, the world around you is in constant change. Leadership requires an edge – a keenness for finding the seemingly unknowable solution or resolving the apparent convoluted challenge. And it often happens in a moment.

Ask Questions

I had tremendous amounts of energy, self-confidence in my sense of creativity, and youthful enthusiasm. And I knew how to ask questions – particularly of the experts. I could convincingly come across as sufficient at misunderstanding or, at least, not fully interpreting the issue such that the scientific and technical experts would explain in detail and with patience. In a way, I was professionally inquisitive – not trying to appear smug or cute, falsely seeming to know. Such times were authentic learning moments leading to a better understanding of the problem, greater connection with others associated with the challenge, and, ultimately, a more effective way of crafting solutions. Most often, the leadership moment was not in knowing the answer but rather drawing it out of the experts on my team or in the organization with which I was working.

I knew very little about trucking or water or fish; but, after spending time with those who did know and who had ideas about what was currently wrong with that world or where significant improvements could be made going forward, I became wiser. Where I excelled was in translating this into a language to which all could understand and respond. Whether it was the public servant and the environmentalist, the executive, the local dispatcher, the citizen, and the politician, by making the common language more straightforward, moderating the ethical reasoning used, and giving a plausible option for a middle ground, acceptable solutions could be presented, agreed upon and effectively implemented.

Have the Right People

I know that I had the good fortune to emerge into a working world fomented by revolution. During my high school and college days in the '60s and '70s, many of my generation were challenging the status quo, continually looking for solutions that could move us all to a better world. For example, during my early consulting days, as a way of keeping connected with academia before I returned to pursue a doctorate, I taught a course for a couple of years in the Faculty of Education at the U of A colloquially titled *radical school reform*. It was a fun moment – students were engaged, I was able to try some innovativeness in my approach to teaching, and together we pushed some envelopes in the learning and teaching process. In the workplace, we attempted to overcome gender bias and inequality – I often hired more women than men on my teams. I gave them more power and authority than was usual at the time to make decisions. Why? They just seemed to be the smartest people to do the jobs required. Similarly, when I worked in Aboriginal communities, it seemed natural to promote those who gave the most evidence of being ready to undertake significant roles – men or women.

Did my approach always work? No – sometimes, the promotion gave the individual a false sense of superior competence. They stopped wanting to learn, instead prematurely began making decisions detrimental to the long-term agreed-upon goals. Giving a person a promotion to provide them with prominence may well be vital to the project's long-term success. However, there needs to be extensive, often repeated, communication as to the training still required and the learning yet to be acquired. Failure to do this is unfair to both the community and the individual aspiring to be a potential leader. There were times I did not sufficiently reiterate my three foundational building blocks and the importance of being willing to learn. I did not give enough attention to the fact that potential leaders might be coming from a more standard view of leadership than the one that I was successfully using within their community or organization. So it was, that occasionally giving a person the title of manager or project lead inadvertently gave that person the added sense they already were a complete leader and no longer needing advice or coaching. The result was the project didn't gain the measure of success it could have.

One of my innate failings is that once I detect a potential leader, I tend to think that they automatically will think like me and can understand the challenges being faced in the same context as I do. In such moments I assumed that my professional relationship would, by osmosis, be transferred to the up and coming leader. Occasionally I was insufficiently aware of the potential pitfalls in such evolving working relationships. Once in awhile, female co-workers became too close, and we would develop a personal relationship that, while quite satisfying in the short term, distracted both of us from the overall aims of the project or organization. The project didn't always immediately suffer, but the working relationship did – making subsequent opportunities to accomplish greatness more difficult if not impossible collectively. Having a dynamic team that fully understands the value of openness and togetherness can be very helpful to the overall success. Just make sure needed boundaries are known and maintained. Get the project finished and then ascertain if some relationships bear further exploration.

Upon Reflection

Every critical decision should be premised with this question: **what is my contribution to getting to better? And for whose benefit?** *Getting to better*, referencing Purdy Crawford's leadership recipe, means avoiding *a blind search for perfection (for it) is the enemy of getting things done.*¹³ *Getting to better* means improving our world and, more importantly, the people in it as much as is possible and within ever-widening concentric circles beyond where we first find ourselves. In *getting to better*, we must also be ready to commit with or despite uncertainty as we are attempting to define what is better, what needs to be improved, and how it could be described as representing a path. Better may even be aspirational – things can always get better, so we will also need new leaders for the next journey, or even just part of the voyage. Let the philosophers and the theologians define the good and allow the idealists to determine what is best. As a leader, you are tasked with helping those who share the moment with you, *get to better* – sometimes elusive, often challenging but always the goal, no matter how long attainability takes. The result benefits us all.

These perspectives help form any conversation I have when asked to teach, train, and mentor *aspiring leaders* in high school, college, graduate studies, or the workplace. And now, I suggest that you reflect on them as to their potential assistance when you come to that moment where you may have an opportunity to exercise some relevant, vital leadership skills. I repeat this because success from effective leadership only happens in moments – not a linear lifetime.

¹³ Pitts, p. 188

CHAPTER FIVE: My Projects and Teaching Moments

Patterns and Reflections

Now here is where it might be useful to engage in some idyllic musing – retrospectives, on occasion, need to be taken in the search for leadership journeys. The purpose isn't to relive the past or try to reinvent and bring it into the present, but to determine if there are patterns. My specific question is, are there patterns and procedures that could lead us away from our usual successes and onto off-ramps, possibly even into wildernesses if not corrected and occasionally deleted?

So here, for you, is my retrospective of my projects and teaching moments, hoping that it will generate an appetite to conduct your own moments. Without suggesting a flight into the pseudo-science of numerology or off-hand referencing of repetitious asides from the world of astrology, it is somewhat fascinating to consider some apparent cycles that have emerged or recurred in my life. I can point out recurring nine-year cycles, each containing three-year blocks of specific activities. While sparing you the details, it does suggest that I might have avoided some unnecessary lapses if I had been more diligent earlier in my vocational journey. I began to realize in the 1980s that three years seemed to be a repeating pattern to successful contracts. I still didn't look closely enough to fully appreciate the relevance and, therefore, the necessity of planning my contractual expectations on such cycles. I'm not sure what yours might be – but do take time to study the possibilities early in your leadership journey.

My Projects

What all did I do that might be constructively helpful to an aspiring leader? What were some projects that bear highlighting at this juncture? What may be of most significance as to how I came to be involved in some of these ventures?

Well before I was thirty, I'd taken an idea about getting people involved in the planning of future worlds that several colleagues and I initially had begun to experiment with it while undertaking a short-lived study in Alberta (later terminated by a change in government). I redesigned it developing a new, more in-depth paradigm. The concept of public participation in planning for the future was discussed in the '60s but other than the attempts by Sargent Shriver in the USA in his *War on Poverty*¹⁴ it was mostly talk by politicians during elections and afterward promptly shelved in a vault entitled *Forget or at least Do Not Touch*. Nevertheless, by the early '70s, there

¹⁴For a complete understanding of the vision and impact of Sargent Shriver, check out the video on YouTube: *American Idealist – the Story of Sargent Shriver*, Chicago Video Project (presenting station W.T.T.W.) 2008.

were some investments by governments to see if it could make a difference. Could getting the public effectively involved in long-range governmental planning lead to better applications of more thoughtful policy? This question came with fortuitous timing as it meshed with my desire to experiment with unresolved queries and imprecise expectations about *getting to better*.

Public Involvement Program

The Public Involvement Program (PIP) model I designed, developed and delivered for the Okanagan Basin Study worked very well. This success overcame the study's initial efforts, which had floundered and found to be inadequate. The earlier approach had been overly preachy and ultra-environmental – almost tokenism – telling the people what opinions they should have instead of inviting them to provide input and asking for their perspectives on the challenges. My PIP model facilitated the coming together of people from a cross-sectional diversity of interests within the community to study, investigate, analyse, discuss, and then recommend real, practical, and saleable solutions to water management problems. You can read all about the joint Canada-British Columbia joint water management study in some detail in the *Technical Supplement XI, Okanagan Basin Study, 1974*.

What fascinates me to this day is how I landed the contract. The Okanagan Basin study was advertised across the country looking for a consultant at the very time the study I was working on was shutting down. I sent in a proposal and promptly forgot about it because I was mailing out numerous ideas to different agencies, hoping to entice someone to offer me a contract. I later received a telephone call asking me to come for an afternoon interview scheduled before one of my university seminars. The resulting interview was not going well. I was becoming somewhat bored – the questions were too predictable. I decided to go for broke, so to speak, and explained to the interviewer that his questions indicated a line of reasoning that was antithetical to good public involvement, that he was talking more about public relations. I then described a multi-media event I had hosted for the current study I was working on. It involved a radio station that broadcasted across all of central and southern Alberta. The program content included pre-program advertising of the events, key questions to be discussed, key experts lined up as guests, and the core study team as the interactive panel. The program ran for ten hours and mixed in prepared comments, guest presentations, phone-ins from the broader community, and feedback plus conversations with the core study team. The event was a significant success. Even though the study would soon end, it provided enough input for us to complete a couple of our preliminary studies and lay the groundwork for the continuation of one segment on local government planning.

After finishing this little soliloquy, I thanked the interviewer for hearing me out; however, I had a seminar to conduct, and I couldn't let my students down. Surprisingly he asked if after the seminar, would I come back for dinner. Unfortunately, no, I replied, as I also had an early evening seminar with another group of students. Surprisingly he then asked to meet him in the hotel lounge when I was finished. Long story short – I did. I then later expanded on my original proposal and described how PIP would work in the Okanagan Basin Study. Shortly after that, the contract was offered, I accepted, and the work began. This assignment was the first major consulting success. In fact, upon its conclusion, I was asked to help lead two follow-up studies in the Okanagan – one on water management of a sub-basin, the Kalamalka-Wood Lake Study, the other an important community planning exercise for the major valley City of Kelowna. I also took the model and adapted it for use within the private sector by leading an organizational review of the Canadian portion of a multi-national transportation corporation based in Calgary. Again, it was most revealing that cross-sections of the company would come together to work on potential solutions to the challenge of making the organization more productive and more enjoyable as a workplace.

To re-cap, the recommendations the process brought forward were all about *getting to better*. They were not only accepted by the governmental authorities but implemented such that the Okanagan Valley some five decades later is a much better place. Certainly, the Okanagan Basin Water Board, which became the prime implementation agent, today is a vibrant, thoughtful, scientifically grounded organization that continually engages the community in the conversation around good water stewardship. And it is the continued engagement that is vital to making progress continue and do so successfully!

Sidebar: I applied the same concept to the pedagogical aspect of my work when I designed the application stage of my doctoral dissertation research. The process centred on small cross-sectional groups meeting to resolve various ethical questions and dilemmas. The results were sometimes unexpected, but always fruitful and moved the entire study forward.

Salmonid Enhancement

The next big consulting task, which occurred from 1976 to 1980, was to help the Salmonid Enhancement Program¹⁵ (SEP) develop its public outreach and input. The model had to be adapted to the entire Pacific watershed of the Fraser, Skeena, and Nass rivers plus the water systems of Vancouver Island and Haida Gwaii – formerly known as the Queen Charlotte Islands, as well as referencing the watersheds of the Stikine and Yukon rivers. This contract was also

¹⁵ Another federal-provincial program involving the entire Pacific watershed of BC, except for the Columbia River basin.

landed in a very unconventional fashion. I was wrapping up the corporate relationship, doing a short gig as a fill-in junior high school teacher in Penticton BC, and filing reports with the completed studies, when I received a phone call that started, *Are you THE Glenn Sinclair?* For a fleeting moment, I almost said, *No, that's my cousin,* but since I was standing in the school's main office and the secretaries knew who the caller was, it seemed I should be somewhat more serious. After confirming that I was indeed the public involvement specialist, I was invited to an evening dinner meeting near the Vancouver airport. I caught the late afternoon flight hoping I could take the early morning return flight in time for school. The conversation was somewhat more focussed than the one four years earlier. The two people meeting me had done their homework. The problem was that I didn't know anything about fish, let alone salmonids and the difference with salmon. Previously, while I was not very knowledgeable about the intricacies of water management, I understood what water was all about because I used it in many different ways. But I don't fish, never have, even though I love seafood!

The interviewers didn't seem to mind this lack of knowledge – they were already aware I was a quick learner, and the study possessed some of the best technical and scientific minds in the world regarding salmonids. They just wanted me to bring all this potential together with a mix of BC citizens to ensure the program reflected the values and aspirations of the populace, was understandable in the broader political realm, and that it made economic and environmental sense in a better way than at present. At that point, I decided to make a bold push as I did with the first interview with the people from the Okanagan Basin Study. I knew I could do what they wanted, but would they do something I wanted? I quickly outlined the importance of education, mainly elementary and secondary. Only by investing in a novel educational package would there be any hope of longevity to the enhancement programs. When I finished, they agreed.

And so, I not only took on the PIP challenge but I also developed the Educators' Program Package (EPP), which when finished, authored *Salmonids in the Classroom*, now forty years later still used in BC classrooms. Both projects were exciting; both projects were energizing; both projects taught me a great deal about salmonids and learning. Learning all about the lifecycles and sustainability needs of these fishes was essential for my success. Mastering that knowledge allowed me to lead the EPP as well as PIP and provide crucial advice and communicate valuable input from diverse sectors in the community to the Board. This leadership moment enabled me to gently but effectively educate federal and provincial policymakers and implementers to the important connection between fish enhancement and improving the overall environment for people. Moreover, the enhancement process itself would be strengthened by gaining thoughtful input from the community in that environment.

This nine-year period of innovation [1971-1980] is especially memorable because it didn't come about from a defined career perspective. My initial move into consulting was not pre-ordained by some sudden vision. Upon taking up the consulting role, I certainly didn't envisage working with water or fisheries resources. And even though I ended up with four degrees in the formal discipline of education,¹⁶ I had no burning desire during my studies to become an academic leader. Yet, when the opportunities presented themselves to do something innovative, to accomplish something most said was highly unattainable, the challenge seemed too delightful and too tempting to pass up, let alone ignore. My academic training provided some credibility in the eyes of those who retained my services and helped gain some significant ears in the Ministry of Education. But, the results of this period were due primarily to getting good people to work with me, involving as many interests and as much diversity regarding the input of ideas, facts, and perspectives as possible, and working hard at melding it all into coherent processes and useable products.

Inadvertent Changes in One's Professional Life

As this period drew to a close, there was an interesting sidebar moment, which initially did not strike me as having anything to do with my leadership roles. Yet, in the end, it did! While in Prince George with the SEP Task Group¹⁷ investigating the potential impacts of the BC Hydro-proposed *McGregor Diversion*¹⁸, I had a late evening conversation with an esteemed Chief of the Kwatiults – Jimmy Sewide. He asked me *how long might a person's professional life usually last?* I replied, *Oh, about thirty years!* I assume that it takes about five years to learn enough to get going, and at the time, most people were talking thirty-five years of work. Furthermore, if a person did work for forty years, I felt likely they would spend the final five years somewhat on autopilot – i.e., preparing for retirement!

He asked me if I was a Christian to which I off-handedly replied, *well, I'm a Presbyterian, which is close!* He subsequently asked what the term *tithing* meant – my response was that we are to give back a tenth of our earnings to the common good (our offering to our God). He then made a surprising but very intriguing comment – he said, *You then owe my people three years of your professional life – a form of giving back for us welcoming your ancestors to this land!* He said

¹⁶ BEd (Social Sciences), MEd (Curriculum Development), MA (Education & Social Change), PhD (Educational Administration: Ethics & Leadership) – All from the U of A, but the MA which was from the U of Minnesota.

¹⁷This was the major cross-sectional interested-based planning group I brought together from across BC to advise and direct the PIP efforts so that the overall SEP direction would reflect the needs and wishes and desires of the BC community.

¹⁸This was a plan to divert water from the Pacific watershed into the Arctic watershed – beneficial for hydropower, devastating for salmonids.

that at some point, I would know when these three years would start and what the task(s) might be.

Then in 1980, after finishing my tasks with SEP and having completed short studies of the education programs in both the Victoria BC School District and the Institute for the Development of Indian Government (IDIG), I was asked to take up the position of Regional Director of Education, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). With the words of Chief Sewide in my head and wondering how he knew this invite would come, I accepted – not as a consultant, but as a member of the regional executive in Regina. Coincidence? Perhaps, but never be too quick to doubt the prescient wisdom of a progressive and reflective Aboriginal elder.

Innovation as an INAC executive became possible when the national office decided to revamp its education policy. While many didn't think this would amount to much, I saw it as an opportunity to attempt to introduce new concepts and bring outside perspectives into the policy and programming equation. I proposed federal policies that were later approved to allow Aboriginal communities to establish incorporated, officially authorized *Independent School Authorities*. These policies allowed them to obtain provincial certification yet maintain local ownership as well as charitable tax status, achieving an arms-length relationship with the federal government. I also helped set in motion the processes that could lead the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC) towards university status¹⁹ Also, I managed to assist the leadership of the Saskatchewan Indian Community College (SICC) in moving forward, developing, and building and transforming the institution into the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT). They were then enabled to participate meaningfully in the technical and trades training of Aboriginal peoples of all ages.

Perhaps central to all my efforts in Aboriginal education was to address the unrealized potential I saw. Even when chiefs wanted me fired from INAC, I would challenge them to go beyond the victim mode or the protest or reactive perspective and work with me to make real change, being pro-active and leadership oriented.

The Aboriginal Independent School Concept

The idea of creating Independent Schools for First Nations came to me after I had enrolled my two children in private schools following the split with my first wife. I felt the kids needed a bit more structure now that their dad was definitely out of sight most of the time, and their mother

¹⁹ It's now called First Nations University and is located on the campus of the University of Regina.

was working again. As I delved into the operation of their respective schools, I realized that while they operated with their Boards of Directors, they were monitored by the province to ensure adequate compliance with curriculum standards even for their own individually created courses. Furthermore, the teachers were certified and fully recognized by the provincial College of Teachers. In addition to the tuition fees paid by the families, the schools received a provincial subsidy for each student enrolled as long as they remained certified by the Ministry of Education. My thinking then was – if this could work for segments of the broader population, why not for First Nations?

Instead of a federal or band-operated school (both existing financially at the annual whims of INAC, with the teachers receiving no professional recognition in the larger community no matter what their training was) an Aboriginal Independent School would have its Board of Directors, could apply for provincial certification, its teachers would be appropriately recognized, and it would be funded on a direct tuition-fee basis to the Government of Canada for all on-reserve students. Moreover, it could accept off-reserve students and receive a partial subsidy from the provincial Ministry of Education. It would give each community an arm's length relationship with both senior governments without having to go through the usual red-tape process with Ottawa.

By early 1986, the idea of establishing independent schools in Saskatchewan still wasn't catching fire due to Treaty concerns. The Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) worried that having a direct legal link to the province would weaken the crown's demands through the federal government's fiduciary obligations. While I respect that viewpoint, it still seemed counter-productive to the children's long-term learning success and training for young adults. In BC, the interest in independent schools was beginning to percolate on some reserves and within provincial education circles. After writing a paper on the subject for the provincial Ministry of Education, I was invited to help a Tribal group determine what to do with an old residential school on their collective property. While establishing an independent school was attractive, there were too many factions within the three participating First Nations, each with vastly differing agendas, and it didn't come to fruition. Nevertheless, during this preliminary planning exercise, the people of the Gitanyow in the Gitksan First Nation were more than a little intrigued by this option. They subsequently provided the first real opportunity to initiate the innovative idea of an Aboriginal Independent School.

Gitanyow Independent School (GIS) was incorporated in the late spring of 1986 and grew to become very successful. A robust strategic planning process, quality local participants, cooperation from the Canada Revenue Agency (for a charitable tax number that allows external

bodies to donate contributions), and a general can-do attitude all came together in a concentration of energy and initiative and productivity. Provision of a summer school program in the first two years as well as some serious cultural and language instruction was very rewarding. A couple of years after I was gone, GIS did a five-year review and asked me to return to participate. I found many positive steps had been taken, and the institution was continuing to grow and improve. In the tenth year, another review was conducted, and I was invited to retake a key role. I attended a preliminary meeting in Vancouver not far from my office. When I arrived, I recognized within the Board of Regents, the school system's governing council, at least three people who'd been students in the initial years of GIS I knew right then that the institution was moving forward and would not look back. They no longer had any need for me at all.

Following the GIS success, I was recruited, primarily by word of mouth to help other First Nations' groups to revamp their education systems. The first was the Ktunaxa/Kinbasket Independent School System (KKISS). A Tribal Council wanted a more responsive educational system that was more inclusive than the public school they were attending. The model was introduced but re-adapted for a regional institution. New distance education technologies were tried, with varying degrees of success, and some progress was noted. However, there also was some impatience. In pumping up the community to believe in itself, the seeds also were sown for excessive self-confidence. While I've never been overly successful at selling myself, I have been able to sell others' ideas and products. Sometimes, I wonder if I should always try so hard to help everyone by pushing them as it has sometimes over-reached for the wrong reason(s). Indeed, this happened at KKISS and again later at Mestanta Technological Institute (MTI).

At KKISS, a belief quickly developed that sufficient leadership existed within the community. The external consultative help was eliminated prematurely. Subsequently, some internal division emerged between the two participating First Nations, and perhaps I didn't handle it as well as I should have. The summer schools had been successful; a quality team of professional talent was brought in to assist. The frameworks were in place, but instead of pushing local control, a wiser course of action might have been to extol the virtues of contracted professional leadership for one more year. Nevertheless, the basics of the model worked, and the institution did move forward.

The Good Hope Lake project was initiated in the same time-frame. It was located in northern BC in a relatively remote Aboriginal community. Here I was able to negotiate the largest tuition agreement between the federal government and an Aboriginal Independent School, primarily because we had taken the time to assess each student and knew precisely where they all fit on the

special needs allocation formula. However, once the Band Council saw the amount of money coming into a School Board they didn't control, even though it consisted of their people, they dissolved the Independent School, and converted it into a band-controlled institution. Thus, the Council would manage and control the dollars. As a result, the federal government reduced the tuition, as there was no obligation in such a quasi-legal system to match provincial funding levels. Sometimes politics will trump the best of leadership moments.

The last project of this type was Mestanta Technological Institute (MTI). This undertaking provides another lesson in leadership – if creativity, exuberance, and youthfulness combine to be your hallmark, remember that you eventually are going to be older. The water in the well is neither new nor perhaps even pure anymore either. Don't get caught up in the mantra, *I know this scene well and I'm good at it!* For it was in this period that the warning signs emerged prescient to my mental wellness fall. The school had all the right components for the ultimate success as an Aboriginal Independent School. We initiated a year-round academic calendar to coordinate with and incorporate the seasonal Aboriginal traditional activities. We gained full provincial certification coupled with attracting off-reserve students (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) as attendees. We had assembled a quality team of teaching talent. We had designed a good governance model and were slowly developing a potentially thoughtful Board of Regents as the local board of education. The design work was thorough, and there was a robust evolution of the long-term implementation process.

My trusted lieutenant pulled me aside one day and said, *I'm going home, and I think you should too – we've done as much as we can, and we have to leave it to the people!* I'm not entirely sure to this day why I didn't listen. Looking back, I realize that my judgment was eroding slightly, and my mental wellness was becoming compromised – cognitive competence was slipping. Did I succumb to a high associated with riding the wave, especially if it was a wave that I created in the first place? Or, did I just fail to recognize that my foundational expertise was in the design and development of ideas and concepts, not necessarily continuing through to the administration of such concepts once the product was established? The lesson is worth repeating; know your strengths, be content to stick with the paradigm once a real track record has been set. And, don't try to solve relational issues by taking work you don't need or want! In any event, while MTI turned out to be the last Aboriginal Independent School I designed and developed, after twenty-five years of consulting leadership, I felt good about what had been accomplished.

The Public Involvement Project model didn't win any academic awards for intellectual superiority, but it did facilitate significant on-the-ground improvements in the world BC residents live within. And the model, through the use of interdisciplinary and cross-sectional

task forces and task groups, did help to spawn the notion that focus groups could be valid, valuable tools for ensuring that government policies and plans worked for the betterment of society!

The Educator's Program Package from Salmonids in the Classroom didn't gain any curricular awards at the academy's Congress – the national gathering of academics of the Humanities and Social Sciences in Canada. Still, it did help students, teachers, and communities learn more about the value of the salmonid resource. It gave ordinary people a doorway to directly assist in the enhancement of that resource and, in so doing, also improved their world. I believe it also enhanced students' appreciation as to the significant contributions of Aboriginal peoples to the maintenance of the resource. I know from my experience designing Aboriginal Independent Schools that it was beneficial in the creation of renewable resources management curricula in those schools. This, in turn, helped reinforce the cultural significance of the salmonid resource among Aboriginal peoples.

The Aboriginal Independent School projects were each vibrant and valuable in their own right. For one thing, the students often, for the first time, felt important. They got to do neat stuff while in school, just like the other schools' kids. Three of the five are still operating in some variant of the process I designed and delivered, and there are others now in existence in a variety of communities. Perhaps the only short-coming I had was a reluctance to more extensively manage my involvement to ensure my advice, and their original plans, were still being considered but without the need for my frequent on-site presence. Moreover, it might have been helpful to have forged additional links with Faculties of Education at different universities, so more young educators would be trained to lead effective programming in such Aboriginal Independent School situations and systems.

What worked for me was taking a focussed perspective while gaining the assistance and partnership of truly dedicated professionals, and not always solely from those within the direct scope of the project being undertaken. I listened to them and incorporated their input on as many relevant aspects of the problem, and the potential solutions worked for me. It also gave me a sense of renewal and continually re-fired my brain. My mental health and emotional and spiritual health became more interwoven to the point that during the early part of this same period, I also completed my PhD in Educational Administration. I focussed on ethics and leadership, and later I designed and delivered university courses on the same theme.

Learning and Teaching as a Leadership Moment

After the extensive efforts at establishing Aboriginal Independent Schools and some other short-term consulting assignments, I undertook some hands-on leadership with a variety of organizations. In each case, I was recruited more by word of mouth even though there were some open competitions for the positions. The common problem underlying each assignment was the state of my mental wellness. Part of my inability to recognize my lack of mental wellness may be a legacy that goes back to army cadets at Madoc High School. Very quickly, I became an officer, rising to be the Second-in-Command of the entire Corps. We won competitions annually as the best in our provincial region. I even achieved the Master Cadet designation without advance study. The day it happened; I was on my way to a class when it was suggested I should take the test because the army officer who oversaw it was at the school assessing three cadets who had been preparing for it. Such success seemed, in retrospect, almost too natural and gave me a sense of confidence that occasionally perhaps needed serious reflection and even toning down. It took the fourth firing in four years to get my attention that I needed to undergo a major vocational shift along with a mental wellness check. As the new millennium dawned, and amid another relational misfire, it seemed appropriate to consider a significantly different professional thrust that still might draw on my leadership experience and expertise.

From early in my college days, I found the *teaching moment* to be more than intriguing, and it was compelling. Before completing my first degree, while serving as a student minister in a rural parish in Alberta, I was asked by the local school principal to fill in for him three days before the Christmas break as he needed to go into hospital a minor operation. It was a neat moment, and the students responded very positively. While enrolling in the Faculty of Education was more due to my failure to submit my application for the MBA program on time, once into the Faculty, I became very intrigued studying curriculum and pedagogy. In my final year of the BEd, I obtained a half-time teaching position in a local junior-high following my student teacher practicum due to my overseer/mentor leaving for grad school to earn his MEd.

Now in neither of these instances did I have any overt leadership role, let alone permanent teaching position. During my MEd, I supervised some student teachers, and while at the U of Minnesota, I was the assistant to the Department Head. But again, neither position afforded me any real leadership time nor, for that matter, any teaching tasks. As mentioned earlier, after returning from the USA and establishing the consulting firm, I did occasionally manage to teach a course in what euphemistically might be called my spare time. This activity continued on a more consistent basis after obtaining my PhD – always in a sessional or adjunct type role. However, through this entire process, my prime interest and the primary focus of my energy was consulting.

The corporate change came when I was still involved with the Certified Management Accountants (CMA) leadership program in British Columbia. However, it was showing signs of re-organization and, in a direction that, while educationally interesting, was not going to improve the pedagogy. I began to explore other opportunities, wherein I could do more than simply teach within a standardized curriculum.

There were aspects of my pedagogy that extended beyond the classroom itself or at least the immediate confines of a class session. Students were always amazed at the time I took to conduct one form or another of an exit survey wherein they could anonymously comment on the learning experience. They were encouraged to suggest revisions and other changes to the curriculum going forward, particularly. I also would spend time every couple of years with a randomly selected group of students conversing about the possibility of a best before date. So far, no group has indicated that the moment has arrived. Depending on the course, the frequency at which I bring guests varies. But again, I've found it always enhances the learning moment when an individual with more expertise or experience than I can be found and brought before the students. And when they come, the individual is always forewarned to be prepared for a vigorous Q & A.

Students even thanked me for an effort I made to help champion a woman to be Rector of a Roman Catholic university. While I appreciated the student gratitude, I didn't do it for any personal recognition. Instead, I strongly felt the organization needed such leadership to get to a better place. It may have been a bold or even disruptive idea at the time, but it provided an opportunity for progressive change at the institution. At this moment of writing, the individual remains the only woman at the international meeting of Roman Catholic Rectors. Lesson from it all: never think you can't help foster change, just look for moments where you can assist other change agents.

Special Instances

Concordia University of Edmonton (CUE) realized after serious environmental health incidents at Walkerton, ON, and North Battleford SK, an ethics course was needed for its after-degree professional program training future Environmental Health Officers (EHOs). There was a willingness to accept a unique format, and so I designed, developed, and delivered a seminar/workshop-style course – three modules of three days each with two or three weeks between each module. This course allowed for a more expansive curriculum and a considerably higher interactive pedagogy. From the outset, students responded very positively – many stating their surprise that an ethics course could be such an enjoyable learning moment. Each iteration

included an extensive course review and evaluation questionnaire at its conclusion. From this feedback, subsequent offerings would be revised, strengthened, and altered. The course has undergone many changes over its two decades and is still fresh enough to make each offering a new adventure for me as well as my students.

My role at CUE has extended beyond the course on Ethics and Environmental Health. I've taught leadership-related courses in the Continuing Education field and developed a two-part course in Leadership in Public Health Ethics. I was also involved in the larger Public Health program helping build the case for a Master's degree.

Also, I assisted the Vice-President, Academic, to develop a new course evaluation template, and consider how we might build an ethics center bringing various faculty representatives together in a common theme of applied ethics. These efforts result from the successes of my *learning leader* approach. Many other moments have been the result of former students requesting that I come and conduct workshops for their organizations.

At the same time as I started at CUE, due to the recommendation of a former CMA student I was asked by the federal department of transport to develop a half-day ethics workshop for its middle management workshop training program. This workshop required a significantly different curriculum though I maintained the pedagogical strengths of the CUE approach. It was also well-received, and several sessions were held over three years before the federal government melded ethics training for all departments into a single format under the theme of values and ethics in government and took it all in-house.

As word spread concerning my talent at both designing engaging curriculum and implementing dynamic, interactive pedagogy, my workload expanded in both numbers of courses taught, and the themes addressed. At times I was leading various *learning moments* in at least half a dozen different universities. Some wanted me to focus on ethics, but others asked me to deliver courses on leadership, good governance, organizational development or organizational behaviour, curriculum development, inclusive and special needs education, Aboriginal education, or critical pedagogy. In every case, I'd bring my applied and discipline-focused curriculum combined with a very dynamic student-participative pedagogy.

The diversity in opportunity included teaching as an Adjunct Professor in the MBA program of Cape Breton University, part of which was one summer as a Visiting Scholar on Ethics at the Sydney NS campus. I taught courses on ethics, governance, organizational behaviour and /or development, and change management. The student evaluations not only rated the teaching very favourably but highly praised the pedagogy of small group and team tasks, including the value of having to make presentations that applied the knowledge to real-life cases. Moreover, the students felt listened to and thus empowered to contribute more vigorously in the conversation.

At St. Paul University (UStP) in Ottawa, I was an Adjunct in the Faculty of Philosophy teaching primarily in the Master's in Public Ethics program. I introduced graduate ethics courses on environmental health, the dichotomy of the public face/private person (the ethical challenges faced primarily by civil servants in being true to themselves when political dicta are at odds), and learning leadership. I also taught senior undergrad courses, including some in the Faculty of Humanities. In all the courses, the student evaluations consistently commented that they learned to think, became better at interacting with their peers, and better understand the subject matter and apply it in real-life situations and contexts. Simply put, they felt empowered through their sense of real engagement to *get to better*.

As an Adjunct at the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI), my time was divided between leading a wide variety of graduate courses in the Faculty of Education and teaching ethics, organizational development, and a course for international students on Canadian Business Culture in the School of Business. Again, the students responded positively to both the curricular and pedagogical aspects of my approach to the *learning moment*. The sense of empowerment led to many students remaining in touch long after their course was finished.

It was pretty much the same situation at the other universities. As an Adjunct, I came in either as a temporary replacement, or a regular specialist usually in ethics and leadership, to focus on student engagement and pushing participants to try to *get to better*. The efforts bore results. And it has been fun. Each class and course was as much a learning journey for me as for the participants. I have found students still thirst for knowledge most when they are learning when they are surprised or moved gently or otherwise out of their comfort zone and found a reward in doing so.

In most ways, students today act pretty much as the public (or other clients) did of yore. Give a listening ear, provide interesting structure to input and feedback, and make the challenge an applied and practical one of *getting to better*. The response will be positive, effective, and relevant. In some ways, this attitude was given positive growth when living at Knox College on the University of Toronto's main campus. When asked to sit on the Residence Constitution Committee, my core question of the administration was, *Why can't students you laud as smart not then be true partners in an institution dedicated to smart?* The response was, *They could, and they ought*. The result was a very well put together revised constitution that was accepted by the administration and the college's board. Perhaps a good way to test your leadership abilities is to try to teach a group of students in the same manner, with the same focus as you would if they were your team in a work assignment. If they learn, if they respond, if they indicate it has been an excellent experience – you have a good handle on the leadership moment and your place as a leader. If not, then it may be time to reboot or at least re-think your role!

CHAPTER SIX: My Influences, Role Models, and Mentors

In any leadership journey, either towards or during, some people and moments are very influential. I could reiterate moments in college – particularly at the University of Alberta. Sometimes these mentors, role models, or people with influence impact us profoundly; other times, they simply validate paths or actions that we have taken on our own. Yet, how do these mentors all come about? Can we search them out, or do they descend like angels upon our life's path? I think a bit of both, although some will be naturally part of our developmental road.

Family

In my journey towards leadership, I'm not sure to what extent I can attribute to my familial background; however, there are undoubtedly significant figures in my past. My maternal Grandad, orphaned at four and who, with not much more than a grade two formal education, established a successful ranch in southern Saskatchewan, which is still in the family today and enjoyed a reasonably profitable grain buying career. There was my paternal great-grandfather who set aside a corner of his farm for a school wherein he taught, particularly during the winter and other months, when farming was not all-subsuming of his time. The site now hosts a very modern hi-tech secondary school named Sinclair Secondary School, near Whitby, Ontario. I had a paternal great uncle who was a very accomplished lawyer and political leader in Ontario. His clients included Sam McLaughlin for whom he helped establish General Motors in Canada. Among his friends was Prime Minister MacKenzie King, who occasionally dined at Laurier/King House.²⁰ His brother, my grandfather, was a well-respected Presbyterian minister²¹ and a keen advocate of public education.²² Does this suggest evidence of a *leadership gene*? Maybe, if there is such a thing!

While I knew my maternal Grandad and paternal Grandpa quite well, neither spent much time discussing leadership challenges. In my home, my father, also a successful Presbyterian minister²³, while a steady presence, focussed on his ministerial duties, my mother effectively ran the household. Again, neither my mother nor I recall making much ado about any of their offspring becoming leaders. The clearest goal I ever remember them emphasizing was to be an

²⁰ One of the place settings on display at that historic house notes the names of my great uncle and great aunt and where they sat during a particular evening meal.

²¹ As evidenced by Knox College (University of Toronto) granting him a Doctor of Divinity *Honoris Causa* during his lifetime.

²² As witnessed by a plaque honouring his leadership in promoting public education.

²³ Also evidenced by Knox College (University of Toronto) granting him a Doctor of Divinity *Honoris Causa* during his lifetime.

independent thinker and take responsibility for your actions and thus for your life. It wasn't that they weren't supportive of any attempts to organize new ideas into action. Instead, it was more: if I thought something worthy of pursuing, then I had the responsibility to put every appropriate effort into it. I think this was leadership advice in disguise – reinforcing the need for accountability in my thinking and my actions.

Modelling Leadership

At the same time, perhaps by their very beings, my parents exhibited and even modelled leadership. As with Sargent Shriver's mother and father²⁴, possibly parents, and often grandparents too, rarely teach their children about leadership. Instead, they live life openly, and if they are persons of moral substance, they act on their values, and hope abounds for there to be a success in the children's future in *getting to better*. I think I was learning aspects of leadership just by being in their presence. For example, when I was a young lad, working at my first summer job on the family ranch, I observed my Grandad's dealings with grain elevator operators, farm implement dealers, and the officials at the stockyards in Moose Jaw. His presence showed me more about people's leadership than many later studied textbooks. I also saw my father's commitment to visiting his parishioners and asking questions about their lives and occupations. Did this form the groundwork for my penchant for quizzing those with a more foundational knowledge of issues related to projects I was being asked to help lead?

It's fair to say they did help prepare me for a world of exploration of the new and, at times, transient opportunities by merely taking me on many substantial trips. When I discover how many of my high school peers still live within two hundred kilometres of old Madoc High, I realize my lack of fear of travel and moving has been a blessing. Dad took me on my first train ride from Alberta to Ontario when I was only three. And two trips later, at the age of five, I took my first flight (on Trans-Canada Airlines from YYZ to YWG) in a North Star piston prop airplane (where at night it looked like the wing was on fire).

When few people other than the financially well-to-do (which my family was not) travelled extensively, I spent my elementary school summers until I was twelve enjoying a month's vacation with my family quite a distance away from home. We visited, always by car, Saskatchewan at Grandad's ranch, Ontario, where Dad's family was, Oregon, where Mother's best friend had moved and even my mother's sister's place – a farm outside Olds in Alberta – after we moved to Ontario. These were the days before the Trans-Canada Highway was finished, so we often journeyed through the northern USA I saw the building of the Hungry Horse Dam, travelled along the Columbia River by the Dalles, and watched native Americans

²⁴Op cit. (DVD)

fishing while Dad warned of problems to come when a dam would be built downstream and would flood out all the fishing grounds. I even spent time in my aunt's house in Ottawa before it was expropriated for the Parkway upon which I later, as an adult, rode my bike.

Without expressly saying anything, did my parents demonstrate that the world was not too big to explore, that new places were never too strange to enter? Or, that I didn't need to go to movies to see sights beyond the village limits? And new places, different motels, and other tourist facilities were operated by ordinary yet interesting people, so ask questions and learn!

Perhaps my being comfortable travelling helped mitigate my ADHD and introversion, so I was unafraid to go to new places when I'd done as much as I could in my current locale. Additionally, it prepared me to accept different ways of doing things and to celebrate differences and diversity. I know I was introduced to the magnificence of our physical environment very early on those train rides and car rides across North America.

Changing Residential Locales

I've lived in thirty-five different communities on this continent and had seventy-eight addresses in two countries and therein – eight provinces and three states. Seldom did I not feel at home. Maybe as parents moving or extensively travelling, we give our kids experiences that will allow them to move forward exponentially. Even now, my son lives in another province, and my daughter lives in another country.

Throughout my young life, due to my father's career, we moved several times. Shifting locales certainly affects views concerning relationships as well as the willingness to take on new and potentially leader-like roles. By the time I finished high school, I'd attended classes in four school systems in two provinces. I delivered newspapers in one community, eventually controlling all but one small sector of all the paper routes for the three different publications that came into that town. Moreover, I had worked on at least five farms in the summers, again in two provinces. I spent some time one summer in the Canadian Army Militia (the active Reserves), attended the Ontario Athletic Leadership Camp²⁵ as well as our church's Presbyterian Young People's Society²⁶ camps, and conferences.

²⁵the Ontario Athletic Leadership Camp, located on Lake Couchiching – attendance was by nomination, one's high school teachers and administration selected one student each year based on their perceived leadership potential combined with athletic ability.

²⁶*Presbyterian Young People's Society*, a very active church organization in my teenage life which devoted considerable time to having members participate in leadership activities, workshops and reflective thinking – how to lead a better life.

Was diversity of family and family experiences a prerequisite or progenitor of my leadership? Did relocating from one town to another create a well-spring of energy, enthusiasm, or even motivation for me as a student to lead, or did it more likely hone my ability to survive or perhaps better able to deal with change? While I lived at home during Grade XIII, there were days I didn't see my family, only coming home to sleep. I might arrive late and leave again very early, eat directly from the fridge, at school or a friend's. I'd already spent several summers away from home, including one, after Grade XII alone as a student minister in the Maritimes. In many ways I never remember being young and foolish – at least never feeling the quickly *fleeting summer days of youth* that the Lettermen²⁷ so convincingly sang about during my high school days. I always seemed to be working on something – even when I bought a speed boat near the end of Grade XI. Never did find time to race it. And yet, I always felt carefree!

Youthful Leadership Moments

At a young age, I did have several opportunities to acquire and hone leadership skills. As noted previously, I was sent by my high school, to the Ontario Athletic Leadership Camp at Lake Couchiching (known by attendees as Cooch). I was an acceptable school athlete, excelling at basketball, and pretty good at football and track. Still, my sports prowess was not sufficient to gain admission to *Cooch* itself, and I was never offered an athletic scholarship to any university in Canada or the USA. It had to be the selection committee thought I had leadership qualities, adequate to meet the bar of that program. Certainly, there were some real athletes there; a few times, I caught for an aspiring young pitcher, Ferguson Jenkins²⁸. It might be the only time I worked directly with a future Canadian professional Hall of Fame athletic star; I also served on the camp's student executive with him. Nevertheless, my life in sports, even later when I occasionally broadcasted, coached, or competed, was not the venue for extensive leadership training.

After Grade XII, I was sent by my denomination to New Brunswick to look after a small church that did not have a minister. The reasons given for this appointment were twofold: my significant theological knowledge gained in large part from my father, a respected Presbyterian Church of Canada leader and authority on church doctrine; and the evidence of leadership skills demonstrated in the PYPS as mentioned above. Maybe there was a third unspoken reason; my

²⁷From the song *Young & Foolish* Side One, Cut Two on the LP *Once Upon A Time*, The Lettermen; Capitol Records (date uncertain, perhaps 1959)

²⁸*Fergie* went on to play many seasons of professional baseball, initially with the Philadelphia Phillies, but mostly with the *Chicago Cubs* – I met him at the Cubs' spring training camp in 2016. We reminisced about the great time we had that summer at Cooch.

family connections. At the time, my paternal grandfather, father, and paternal uncle were all ministers in the PCC, so our family was well known. The New Brunswick opportunity included a two-week secondary appointment: a church camp leader in Nova Scotia. Throughout this entire experience, leadership was mentioned in the official declarations. That, along with my record as a very successful public speaker, including the year I progressed through several rounds of competition to the Ontario finals for impromptu speaking, doubtless reassured the PCC officialdom it was worth taking a chance on me as a young pre-theolog!

Counter-moments

The fact I was seemingly on my way to becoming a minister may have served to satisfy those who might not like my style or persona or youth. On the other hand, I was suspended three times in high school (even while president of the student council) basically for questioning tradition, challenging the hierarchy, and being outspoken in what I perceived as incidences of unfairness and injustice. Are moments of rebellion that I exhibited necessarily critical to leadership development? I'm not sure, though they did help me.

Education

As discussed earlier, during my last year at Madoc High (MHS), taking Ontario Grade XIII, I was elected President of the Student Council. Furthermore, I was ultimately promoted to Second-in-Command of the entire Corps with the school's Cadet Corps, and I was awarded the Master Cadet Star for my knowledge and leadership skills. The only other leadership-related moment came from a teacher whom I respected. He told me that I had the potential to be a great leader, but with the caveat. I needed to become more focussed and be less an annoyance in the classroom. At that time, no one knew about ADHD!

Today school systems seem to be smarter, at least more relevant. They now understand a broader spectrum of abilities, behaviours, and learning styles, and they are beginning to offer leadership courses at an early age. This change is a good thing – but not necessarily are they making young people leaders. Instead, it may help some realize whether they want to be leaders or even why some of their peers are or aren't good at leading. Most of all, it would be great if they learned that leadership is a moment – therefore, once a leader not always a leader. Perhaps more would celebrate the moment when they are needed to lead and enjoy the moments when they just have to participate or even stand aside to observe. This idea is something useful for their future working lives and their responsibilities as good citizens.

In retrospect, I'm not sure that genes or family traditions are the most critical prerequisite. In comparison, I've known many offspring of good leaders who have been unable to take over the role successfully. Similarly, I've met competent leaders who seemed to have emerged out of nowhere – neither their backgrounds nor their apparent upbringing would have predicted their success. And I'm not sure childhood location is a significant determinant. Until I finished Grade XII, I never lived in any place larger than 1,500 people. On numerous occasions, I have returned to several of the towns of my youth, more often to reflect or serve as a guest in one of my father's pulpits he filled during his active ministry than to visit anyone in particular. All of these places have provided good memories, but none of which would rank me as a favoured son. I return now because they are neat places to visit.

In my early post-secondary learning journey, I don't recall any offered leadership courses. Still, again perhaps that was due to my early programs of study being more directed towards my initial career goal of becoming a theologian. Maybe if I'd been in another faculty, like business or education, I might have seen such. The question remains, though, if there was such a course, would I have enrolled in it?

One question that occasionally popped up then, and I ponder more frequently during reflective moments, is this: why was it not until graduate school that leadership, as a concept let alone a subject, is discussed in some classes? By this time due to significant differences of perspective, I had set aside my theological intentions and was immersed in roles that bespoke leadership. If I'd been given better, more focussed but less biased, career guidance in high school, especially after my Lake Couchiching training experience, might I have chosen a different university? At McGill, I might have studied engineering or business, where in retrospect, I was likely a more natural fit. Perhaps, at that institution, known for its ability to produce leaders, I would have studied and experienced a more extensive developmental leadership path.

While my parents may have been happy about my choice to follow in Dad's footsteps into theology, I don't remember that they ever overtly encouraged it. Later in life, I would often pinch hit for my father when visiting my parents at their various homes in Ontario. I never recall either of them expressing any real disappointment when I left that career path. Moreover, none of my closest friends ever made explicit reference to my apparent leadership potential. While I held leadership roles in high school, including being co-captains of various basketball and football teams, my real emergence in the world of leadership happened when I transferred to the University of Alberta (U of A) and moved a significant distance away from family and friends. But even at that institution, I didn't enroll in leadership courses.

Interestingly, at the U of A, my most prominent and creative sorties into leadership positions happened outside my courses of studies. Even in my first graduate program, my focus was less about leadership and more on creativity. It became apparent at that time that I didn't fit well into the academic mold. I had no problem with the course material. I rallied to intellectual challenges, but I was often sidetracked by extracurricular activities such as systemic institutional reform, broadcasting, and sport. In retrospect, I see that my undiagnosed ADHD impacted my academic career substantially, perhaps even pushing me to explore if not thoroughly study numerous diverse disciplines. Extracurricular activities gave me the much-needed scope for my boundless energy, creativity, and reforming spirit.

Eventually, in my first graduate program of studies, working towards a Masters of Education in Curriculum & Instruction (MEd), I opted out of the thesis route, substituting courses in aspects of educational pedagogy. My purpose in going to the University of Minnesota was to get a PhD in Educational Foundations – even though I took some administration-related courses, the focus, like in my MEd, was on pedagogical reform. Due to philosophical differences with my advisor, the Department Head, I never completed that PhD journey. I opted instead to accept a Master of Arts (MA) and return to Canada, where I did eventually complete a PhD but in the field of educational administration even though I'd never held a formal leadership position in an educational setting other than student government at the U of A.

Reflecting on my family's tradition, it manifested in producing many individuals with undeniable leadership qualities, but the emphasis was on education, worthwhile work, and social responsibility. In that context, my diligent efforts spent working in education, ethical reasoning, renewable resources management, and community involvement reflect that tradition.

My ADHD

To what extent has my ADHD²⁹ impacted and influenced my leadership roles? It wasn't diagnosed until I was an adult in my late fifties, but I've had this condition all my life. I won't call it a disability. How can I with the experiences I've been able to live? But it is a condition, and it does cause me moments of vexation (i.e., the grad school relational moment) and even trouble (i.e., dealing unsuccessfully with my first two marriages). However, ADHD wasn't the totality of the reasons for my relational miscues, as it wasn't realized until after my consulting company closed. It wasn't a significant factor in me shifting directions dramatically, and it didn't cause me to fall into depression, as I'll clarify later.

²⁹While I was diagnosed as an adult, two different educational psychologists determined that it is most probable that I had this condition from birth.

But, many other questions can quite rightfully be raised:

- Is ADHD itself a cyclical condition, that unbeknownst to me, re-orientes my working life periodically? Research in the field of ADHD is in its infancy and might prove yet to have such aspects that are not, however, recognized. Consider this: Could my three-year blocks of time have been a benefit, if only I'd realized this sooner?
- Does my ADHD lead to a propensity to need short-term work assignments and, in turn, impact my views on leadership?
- Has my success as a consultant been partly due to my hyperactivity manifesting itself in boundless energy, enthusiasm, and impulsiveness, all in short time-frames?
- And, has my attention deficit contributed to my errant behaviors in the past, such as
 - a) failing to devote enough time to my family in the early, professionally productive years?
 - b) failing to listen to my close friend and colleague who told me we'd taken the Aboriginal Independent School model as far as we could?
 - c) failing to make positive relationship decisions?
 - d) was this, in combination with my introverted nature, the principal cause of failing to reach out to establish a serious personal, intimate relationship in my young adult life?

And where does all this fit within my philosophical leaning towards existentialism, within a Christian faith context? My faith and my sense of the existence of God has not been upended or even diluted. Moreover, during the nadir of depression when I was without a permanent residence, I have not been shiftless, without focus. I was able to keep moving forward, if somewhat haltingly. While seizing the moment is undoubtedly a very existential trait, my faith also was able to keep me aware of distant goals or, at a minimum, targeted aims. And within my vocational world, I could design long-range tools. Even during the dark period, when working with another consulting colleague to form a new consulting venture, we developed a very focussed approach to corporate strategic visioning and planning. Unfortunately, I had to carry this work on alone as he suddenly died while we were still working on that paradigm. Yet, it has proven to be very useful and quite successful, especially in the not-for-profit and faith organizations.

Overall, to have many interests, to work in short bursts, and limited time-frames have not been failures or even shortcomings for me – they are often characteristics of good consultants. I think having ADHD has been more blessing than a curse – may not have helped my relationships, but I do believe it aided my consultative vocational life.

Another Validation

Gordon Pitts, a former columnist with the national newspaper *The Globe and Mail*, and a good friend, has written a delightful book on a leader probably few Canadians ever knew but should have. This lack of awareness is one of those Canadian quirks that we often look everywhere else but within our borders and history to find role models and unique leaders. Purdy Crawford, a person who came from a small town in the Maritimes, grew to become a key player in many pivotal moments in Canadian history from the mid-twentieth century to the early twenty-first century. The book on his life as a leader, entitled *Fire in the Belly*³⁰ is an interesting life story in leadership every Canadian secondary school student, not just those who want to be leaders, should read.

I wish I'd had the opportunity much earlier in my life to sit down with the man and, while enjoying a glass of fine scotch, shared some experiences and perspectives on a range of aspects of leadership. While I like to think we share many ideas and values, it would have been both exciting and illuminating to be in the same room, one-on-one. Instead, I'm just thankful that Gordon Pitts was able to and wrote the book that we all can read.

The one thing I most felt a kinship about was looking for passionate teammates. He called it *fire in the belly*; I phrase it as a passion for *getting to better*. Gordon Pitts, in his chapter on *Trusts & Talents* succinctly describes Purdy Crawford's take on leadership:

His best leaders are those who see the big picture, have broad interests, and are open to change.

As mentioned, it makes me wish I'd met Purdy before he died. It would have been exciting to reflect together on the impacts leaders who fly below the radar can have. Perhaps we could have compared notes on some of the stars we each recruited and how much in parallel they were. No matter the result, the conversation would have been worth the time and energy.

I've had several notable influences, role models, and mentors and you'll have yours in your unique leadership journey. The key is to be ready for each, no matter where or when. Don't expect grandiose answers or earth-shattering advice. Instead, listen for wisdom that you then can translate or transform into effective solutions and useful advice.

³⁰Op. Cit.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Relationships and Leadership

In this journey of reflection on my journey through leadership moments, one question continues to gnaw at my brain: How important are interpersonal relationships in the enhancement of, or detracting from, a leader's success? Since intimate personal relationships tend to occur in all our lives, what are their impacts on the effectiveness of a person aspiring to leadership roles? More critically, how does a condition like ADHD intersect with professional expectations and personal desires? Why did it take me most of my life to find I may have had it all wrong from the *get-go*? I now know I needed to think and feel in unison and recognize that just as much as exceptional leadership is a moment or a series of unique moments, the dynamic relationship is the fusion of many moments. Whereas the leadership moment may come and go, the relationship moments may have to be searched without thoughtfulness and pre-conception, if one wants them to last.

It's probably necessary to point out that I'm now in my third marriage. My first marriage, which happened during my first year in student government, ended as I was finishing my most creative period as a consultant as well as completing my doctorate. As I've said elsewhere, my first wife is special, not just because she's our two kids' mother. She was there from the beginning of the second degree through to the completion of the fifth. She was a great woman and mother; we just didn't work out as marital partners.

My second marriage occurred near the end of the second very energetic period. However, my partner with whom I had dated for six years prior chose to live with me for only nine months during Year II of the Gitanyow Independent School (GIS) project. There, she brought her outstanding elementary teacher persona, but she returned to her regular school in Saskatchewan from which we had seconded her, and we never lived together again. We did keep in close contact for almost a dozen years and did share some memorable moments. That it never really became a permanent, long-lasting relationship can't make me too sad: she significantly helped GIS, and in particular, several young students who excelled under her teaching.

Furthermore, she was a *tour de force* in each inaugural summer school we conducted before launching three different Aboriginal Independent Schools I developed. For three years running, my right-hand associate tried to recruit her to his west coast school district at a substantial pay raise – but without success. She was an excellent teacher; her school district in Saskatchewan was very fortunate to retain her.

Bob Chartier in *Handcrafted Leadership*, starts his chapter on The Relationship Question by quoting Jerry Weintraub: *Relationships are the only thing that matter in business and in life.*³¹ Throughout the rest of the chapter, although presenting a good case for the leader in addressing more efficiently the people side of leading, he doesn't touch on the personal side of the relational question. Chartier argues vigorously for the possibility of changing our approach to hiring people for management positions.

*Could we not, at the very least, try to pick people who are attracted to relationship-building, to manage and lead our human beings, instead of the best carpenter, math teacher, engineer, policy analyst, or detective. The significant mental model shift will be in helping people see the building of relationships as the first big step in actually "getting 'er done"*³²

He wants us all to build around three words *Relationship – Possibility – Action* and provides his favourite quote: *Action without relationship has no commitment, and action without possibility has no imagination.*³³

I don't disagree with Chartier – he just doesn't delve deeply enough. If you want to be a leader and you hope to achieve the degree of effectiveness Chartier believes necessary, you need to retain a very firm grip on your ability to nurture your own specific deeply personal relationships. Be good with your own, and you'll be considerably better at dealing with those involving your team, organization, client, whatever. And in turn, as you get better in those, your special relationships will blossom.

My search for a personal relationship with a woman was coloured by a desire to connect with someone who could enhance my interest in life, the pursuit of learning, and the enjoyment of the existential moment. Unfortunately, I didn't see myself as a particularly worthy date, let alone a partner. So from the earliest dating moments, I didn't think the really popular dates would give me much consideration. Maybe I remained too unskilled at personal relationships and couldn't completely comprehend the potential for an extended moment in large part because I needed to put work first. If I had been more open, more willing to engage in deep conversation about the long term, more eager to take a serious risk in a relationship to the same degree I already was well-versed in taking in my work world, who knows what relational success I could have achieved.

³¹ Chartier, Bob *Handcrafted Leadership* Doghouse Publishing, (Calgary 2015), p. 43

³² Ibid p. 45

³³ Ibid

From an early age, I tended to be somewhat of a loner but not without some desire to be liked or at least accepted within the larger group. It wasn't that I preferred being alone either – it's just that I think that era was shaped as much by the communities I lived in, and the role of my father in those places. Perhaps the best example comes from a late November day in Grade I. The teacher, out of teaching materials to give us on a Friday afternoon, asked us what we'd like to be when we grew up. I said I'd like to be a car-transporter driver: I was told that it was nice, and I could connect with another student who wanted to be an auto garage owner and mechanic. Afterward, I noticed four students were back at the sandbox playing while the rest of us continued with some desk-based tasks. I realized they had chosen to be a nurse, doctor, teacher, engineer. Later in winter, when the teacher again asked about our future, I promptly said a minister – immediately, I was sent to the sandbox – from then on, I was going to be a minister! Leaders got to play in the sandbox, and while I liked to be team captain most of the time, I just didn't want to be chosen last. I also won a couple of elementary school public speaking contests, but the competition didn't seem that fierce. Nevertheless, by assuming leadership roles, I began to stand apart to a greater or lesser degree.

High school started in much the same fashion – the town I lived in at the time was too small to have its own, so we were bused to a neighbouring city. There, student leaders from the city's junior high schools (Grades VII & VIII) were known in the system and played a more prominent role, especially in Grade IX. Another impact: my entrepreneurial paper route business interfered with joining after school sports. The only real introduction to personal leadership happened in PYPS³⁴. Here again, though, I was on the periphery as most of the leaders were university students or working young adults, and I was barely into high school.

Early in Grade X, we moved to a town with a high school. It was a liberating experience as I exited the newspaper delivery businesses and daily school bus rides. I could walk to school, stay for team or drama practices, get involved in whatever activity I wanted. By Grade XI, many opportunities arose to build relationships and to develop some sense of leadership. Obtaining a driver's licence and the occasional use of the family car certainly changed the social world. Also, physically growing into a reasonable height, about six feet, meant making the school teams increased significantly. On the relationship front, dating and other social events were influenced by all manner of incidental moments or situations.

³⁴Presbyterian Young People's Society – the official youth program within our national church – at the time the age range was about fifteen to twenty-five.

Some events may have been more helpful than I first realized. High school drama productions and public speaking contests were excellent at moving me as an introvert onto the stage. There were ready-made lines that simply had to be memorized so that one could concentrate on presentation. Good teachers in these events were those who were excellent coaches. Moreover, I was lucky. My father was an outstanding preacher and a good coach of public speaking. A couple of upbeat teachers who loved drama aided the crafting of my stage persona. Also, I had a few fellow students who worked with me to make my roles more dynamic. In Grade XIII I was asked to direct the play, *If Men Played Cards as Women Do*³⁵, consisting of an all-male student cast. It was fun, and I knew I was in a real leadership role. Moreover, from the audience responses and critical reviews, I sensed I'd been successful.

Music probably could have played an even more critical role, especially if I'd continued my piano lessons, which I dropped after Grade IX. Several schoolmates were involved in a singing group and others in a dance band, and they all became notable leaders in different aspects of student and academic life. For me, impromptu public speaking, especially, was very impactful – winning at the local level and moving on to larger venues introduced me to new competitors, different judges, unknown contexts, and the like. I excelled at public speaking, but I didn't fully appreciate the importance of seriously playing a musical instrument or even singing in high school. I would occasionally go over to the church to play the organ, and I enjoyed singing. My father, who had an excellent singing voice, offered to tutor me, but I turned him down. It's just that music was a sidebar at the time. I had no idea of its significant value to my overall brain development. Had I maybe then, both my leadership and relational skills would have become more focussed and refined much earlier.

Being elected Student Council President reinforced this sense of being good at leadership. It was a defining moment for me in many ways. I had started the school year helping a male friend design his campaign for the presidency. But another, maybe my best male friend at the time, was insistent that I run myself as he felt the school needed my leadership. After a short reflective moment, I did jump into the race – and won.

My high school dating life is best described as chaotic. Perhaps here, the foundation didn't develop sufficiently to allow the success at inter-personal relationships I experienced in leadership challenges. In reflecting, there was one young woman with the potential to be a close friend. But either my social ineptitude or my ADHD or skewed perceptions created a distance that prevented me from really connecting with her in any deep and lasting way.

³⁵*If Men Played Cards as Women Do*, Kaufman, George S.; Samuel French Publishers (NY 1954)

Not having any successes at my school, I dated a young woman from another school in a town some distance away. It served to remove that part of my life from my leadership challenges in my home community. I think this compartmentalization of public and private life is not uncommon amongst successful leaders. But that doesn't mean it *gets things to better*. When a leader and partner work well together towards a common goal, even if the partner's role is relatively obscure, something extraordinary is brought to leadership; when there is tension or inconsistency in commitment, perhaps development is stunted. While working on this book, it became evident to me how potentially pivotal this person had been regarding my life as a young leader. At a dinner to discuss the part of this book that referenced her, she validated that she saw that I was a leader and had enjoyed our interactions around leadership back in the day.

Teachers, counsellors, and other adults didn't often talk to teenagers about the importance of considering dates as potential life-mates. But in that era as one neared the end of high school, dating did matter; several contemporaries, it turned out, were choosing their life partners. No one, including my parents, sat me down and engaged me in a discussion on this question:

What do you think would be good characteristics of the young woman you would need, let alone want, to be your life companion as you proceed to ministry, which in itself would be a leadership role?

Had this ever been asked of me, and had there been a serious conversation about the ramifications of partnership and leadership, I am sure that my attitude towards dating would have been more focussed and less rudderless. While researching this book, I tracked down a couple of teachers from that era at Madoc High School. One engaged in conversation about my concerns over the lack of serious counselling related to relationships and potential leadership. In response as to why teachers other than the designated guidance counsellor didn't take an informal lead in challenging those of us in apparent leadership roles, the individual candidly stated:

It would have never occurred to me at that point in my life to discuss careers and relationships since I did not have a long term relationship in my past to relate to. Even now, I would have no advice for you, yet I have completed a teaching career and been married since Madoc days... I was full of optimism and energy at that time, but I directed it to my teaching and extra-curriculars like drama, music, and art, all of which were not covered by the curriculum in Madoc.

I also think that dating was considered very much a personal thing, and (the guidance counsellor) would not have been the best equipped to direct you. Nor I...I'm not sure people of the age you were thought critically about relationships, nor do they now. Isn't it more instinct than logic?

In those days, sixteen was the predominant school leaving age for many, so we tended to at least listen, even if we preferred to move on beyond the conversation. In my case, I believe I would have recognized more quickly that out-of-the-box relationships at that point in my life, would have been worth exploring. Such a relationship could have lessened, if not removed, the impact of my erratic, energetic, impatient, supercharged, self-imposed schedules. I could have been schooled on alternative ways of looking at almost any contemporary issue – social, emotional, or intellectual.

This woman (that I met at the end of Grade XII) was my first real companion – a person who wanted to know me while simultaneously allowing me to know her. During the Students' Council Presidency, she usually was my date for key events, but her willingness to be a sounding board was most helpful. Later she travelled with me to pulpits I would fill as a student theologian and afterward would critique my sermons. She also shared her aspirations for a career and her interest in helping people, a precursor of the common theme of *getting to better*. But I'm not sure others couldn't have done the same if I had reached out earlier.

My introversion, or perhaps lack of social self-confidence, probably was the death knell of this relationship. I never asked her how serious she saw us as a partnership. When I moved to the U of A in Edmonton, I didn't even think to ask if she would wait for me to return. I just walked away! Doubtless, this was part of my penchant for keeping everything personal to myself. I was able to thoughtfully search out a better university to fit my style of learning and take the risk of moving across the country to a place where I had limited personal support and did all this with a self of confidence that my vocational world would be better off. Relationally, well, I didn't give it a proper first, let alone a second thought.

Why do I even reflect on these moments some five decades later? I can't change my life – nor would I want to. It's just that I don't want you to live a lifetime trying to be a leader before you carefully examine the relational aspect as part of your life. I know now I'm capable of deep relational commitment. I even have come to understand what it takes to be an equal partner – at times being a helpful #2, at other times an effective co-conspirator, and then again a kind originator or even leader. I've been able to establish and maintain a very much out of the box relationship – with an individual not originally of my denomination and not extensively religious, an individual from another cultural orientation, a person even with different monetary and organizational values and perspectives.

I'm glad I finally discovered some relational success now. I just would not want you to have to wait five decades to finally finding it! Some would argue that many in high school are not ready for this type of challenge or intervention in today's world. If that's your reality, make sure your college days are more than parties and physical passion! Just recognize too many opportunities to develop strong foundations in one's youth are lost because of a reluctance to encourage conversations about the present and future options. Start asking questions as soon as you sense you want to be a leader. I've had a good life, but, just possibly, I missed an even better one.

Other Insights

As mentioned earlier, I've been married twice before my current wife. Both women were talented in their own right. Those relationships did not work out because I didn't balance personal partnerships and leadership issues with the required energy, commitment, and time. It's not *rocket science* to suggest marriage and family life often suffer from the demands made upon leaders. Leadership is not a skill set that can be turned on and off as you wish. It is a moment, and one has to be ready, willing, and able to respond to the challenge when it arrives. But relational grounding may be vital to making sure you have the needed strength and preparedness.

My work was my vocation and always came first in my life. That approach takes a toll on all other aspects. So while I was able to provide a relatively affluent lifestyle for my family, I did not invest enough in personal relationships. Not surprisingly, at the height of my consulting success and shortly after also earning a PhD, my first marriage dissolved. The divorce was amicable, and decent support payments ensured that neither the children nor my first ex-wife suffered economic hardships – emotionally, the cost was higher. Perhaps in some sense, some debts will never be fully paid. Throughout the marriage and afterward, she strove unceasingly to offset my lack of sufficient relational commitment to family. During this period, however, my professional world did not suffer unduly. Another leadership challenge would come forward, and I was off again to another locale and more excitement. I conveniently set the emotional struggles aside or tried to replace them temporarily. When work is continually front and centre, it can be easier to believe the emotional and even social worlds can be handled somewhat cavalierly. This belief is not necessarily a good strategy, but perhaps adopted almost unknowingly, which you shouldn't do as a leader.

Beginning the decade following my doctorate, I seemingly felt more confident in my ability to succeed in a personal relationship. But as my first marriage waned, I didn't undertake sufficient self-analysis to understand how best to adequately apply this new confidence. As a consequence, the relational aspect of my life didn't get significantly better. While there were people I was working with who were fun to be around, even some who were interesting enough to have

dinners with, the general lay of the land was focussed on my leadership challenges. Deep, enduring relationships in the context of the assignment, including at times, working within the public and federal bureaucracy, were not going to work – they either could lead to conflicts of interest, convoluted supervisory situations, or even disjointed friendships.

In retrospect, perhaps it was the failure of this extensive investment of time and energy in personal, intimate relationship building that helped precipitate the slide into *the journey in darkness*. I tended once more towards a lone life environment. Maybe my second wife recognized some degree of long term relational limitations in me as she saw her life more fulfilled in her home province, closer to supportive family and friends, and sensibly moved on. I can't and won't blame her for my slide. Still, my failure to decisively address our incompatibilities on any level other than periodic dating and occasional holiday trips illustrates the importance of dealing with each relationship thoroughly and openly before allowing it to impact one's efforts at leadership.

At the same time, I did have some healthy, beneficial, and mind-expanding relationships that were special. Some were mentors. Perhaps the first such individual was from my days as a Students' Union (SU) executive. He was a young prof, a former SU Executive himself, though at another university, studied for his doctorate in the USA, very bright yet personable. He was an excellent teaching professor and worked hard to know his students. His pedagogy reinforced my ideas of good learning as he led extensive participation in his classes. He expected students to come prepared to share insights while simultaneously accepting other viewpoints. In many ways, he was all about *getting to better*. He pushed me to complete my doctoral journey after the U of Minnesota approach derailed. Throughout the years following, our paths would often cross, and he was always willing to talk, share stories, and in the midst, offer compelling insights and advice. We still are intermittently in touch.

Another advisor/coach was the General Manager of the U of A Students' Union. A focussed individual with a good sense of students' capacities for leadership and commitment, he was willing to spend considerable time with me as I worked on various projects, proposals, and even just novel ideas. He encouraged me to run for a second term on the Executive, but to stay in the current position rather than challenge for the presidency. He felt my leadership skills and creative energies were better deployed in the more innovation-friendly Coordinator of Student Activities.

A third very strong mentor in my early days was my lead doctoral advisor. He was a unique individual in that he started his post-secondary journey in engineering and then switched to educational administration by the time he did his doctorate at Harvard University. While he was ruthless in his efforts to improve my writing style, he was a scion of encouragement towards my desire to do a dissertation somewhat outside the box. Very helpful at facilitating a non-statistics-based study, he felt I would do much better focussing on a program-based approach. It was novel for the time³⁶ but it enabled me to put forward a new way to develop leaders with a solid grounding in ethical reasoning. He brought out a new level of confidence in me that energized me to see leadership and ethics to combine practical boots on the ground applications with academic discipline and foresight. Although we never worked together again, his influence on my leadership persona remains to this day. And meeting him after my personal relationship eureka moment in graduate studies enabled my work world to move forward in greater harmony, albeit it took a couple of decades to mesh fully!

At about the same time, another mentor came into my life during the SEP project. His value was both direct in teaching me about the salmonid species' ways and encouraging me to make a dynamic connection to the Aboriginal community and indirectly supporting my inclusive and inter-disciplinary approach to public involvement and my desire to develop the Educators' Program Package. He made sure my methods were assisted at the highest political levels by arranging briefings for me with both the federal minister of Fisheries and Oceans and key provincial ministries. After the project was completed, he continued to remain a mentor and friend – his most significant push was that I write a book on my views on leadership and ethical reasoning. Unfortunately, he passed away before this book that you are now reading was finished. In many ways, it is a testament to his influence that I tried to write it.

The last confidante to come into my world has done so later in my life, and he is younger than I. Moreover, he has tended to restrict his influence on the spiritual side of my being. His thoughtfulness, along with his vocal support, has enabled me to see the intersection of the spiritual with the intellectual and socio-psychological. Many a moment, while sharing a fine scotch, he has subtly shifted my focus or my energy when such a nudge was most needed.

³⁶Recently validated at the 2018 Association of Practical & Professional Ethics Conference when several leading scholars noted that applied ethics, leadership, and related developmental studies didn't emerge in a big way until the early 1990s!

Collegial Friendships

Others were not mentors but were exceedingly influential. The most prominent was the leader who served as a vital associate for nearly twenty years – from SEP to MTI – and was more than a working colleague. He held the principal's position at each of the summer schools I organized while launching Aboriginal Independent Schools. He was an excellent educational administrator and central to the curriculum development work in areas of renewable resources management. He was a vibrant sounding board. But he was also a good friend, and when he was completing his master's degree, we worked on an ethics paper together. I miss his companionship.

Another close friend and colleague I met when she was a mature student in one of my courses the first summer after obtaining my doctorate. She was acquiring sufficient credentials to be a teacher. One of my top students, she was always inquisitive, never afraid to challenge the ideas or comments that arose in the course. Shortly after, as a member of the graduating class committee, she invited me to give the address to the Education class of 1980 at the University of Saskatchewan and then a special talk to her school district's professional development conference. I mentored for about twenty years while she rose from part-time classroom aide to a very successful teacher to occupy more than one principal's office as one of her district's top administrators. She reciprocated by occasionally working on an educational project, co-presenting academic papers at international conferences, and critiquing project reports.

There is one individual who continues to be a good friend since first becoming a colleague on the Students' Council at the U of A. We have worked together, taught together, and shared advice. We have similar but not always coincidental and coterminous perspectives on politics, religion, and community; we seem to have a shared sense of faith. In some ways, we might even exemplify that term from another era – brotherhood. Interestingly our connection and mutual respect go back now over fifty-five years. He has been a staunch ally and supporter of many of my leadership moments. He is still a person I look to for insights and critiques when contemplating new ventures or revisiting earlier ones; and, he's one of the few renaissance persons I've known well enough to be able to call a wonderful friend.

Professional Friendships

There have been others who have worked with me on academic papers and presentations, project proposals, staff recruitment, and even training gigs. They were special because they were willing to move past the formal, more-distanced working context to get into the relational challenges that specific tasks or assignments invariably generated. They would listen to the personal side of the conversation and provide thoughtful input and advice. They were willing to have the reflective discussion over dinner that enabled me to see the world's issues in a broader

context – thus giving me a perspective wider than my own, which in turn kept me from too brashly charging forward. Those relationships were not long term, but they did extend beyond the initial project or *raison d'etre* for meeting. More than merely friends, these individuals were all able to develop a vital professional relationship capable of engaging and exploring personal topics and issues of interest. In the more than twenty-five years that I lived on my own – some of these people kept me from retreating too severely into my introversion – some also tried to help extricate me from the dark journey. However, perhaps due to their reluctance to question my mental wellness, they were less helpful during this period. Others surfaced during the *learning leader* days and so didn't have to deal with the mental wellness challenges – in many ways, they have helped the generation of this book.

Given the number of disconnected relationships throughout my life, it would appear a better grounding early on certainly would not have hurt! As I moved into my fifties, with personal relationships going south, my ability to adequately communicate and listen to my close male colleagues also began to suffer. Again, I firmly believe that there needs to be a good self-understanding about the connection between leadership successes and desirable relationships. It's not about being friends or even lovers; it's about the deeply personal relationships – these need to be separate (and equal) from one's leadership challenges and, in a way, parallel. As such, they provide a counter-balance rather than being counter-productive. And it doesn't matter what the gender is.

In a relatively recent TED Talk³⁷ psychiatrist Robert Waldinger comments on the data emerging from a 75-year study on adult male development in the Boston area. He addressed the quest for happiness and satisfaction.

*So, what have we learned? What are the lessons that come from the tens of thousands of pages of information that we've generated on their lives? Well, the lessons aren't about wealth or fame or working harder and harder. The most unequivocal message that we get from this 75-year study is this. GOOD RELATIONSHIPS KEEP US HAPPIER AND HEALTHIER. PERIOD. (emphasis mine)*³⁸

He goes on to point out the social connections help us; loneliness kills us. It's not the number of friends you have, or even if you're in a committed relationship,

³⁷[What makes a good life? Lessons from the longest study on happiness](#) Waldinger, Robert TEDx Beacon Street, filmed November 2015.

³⁸[Ibid.](#), comments from transcript minute: 5:50 - 6:21

it's the quality of your close relationships. For example, high conflict marriages, without much affection, turn out to be very bad for our health, perhaps worse than getting divorced. And living amid good, warm relationships is protective.

And his third lesson?

Good relationships don't just protect our bodies, they protect our brains...and those good relationships don't have to be good all the time.

Maybe this is why I wish my excellent high school teachers had been more proactive in moderating the conversation, getting us to realize that sometimes a strong personal relationship is necessary to inspire or initiate the right questions and encourage thoughtful discussion. It would be useful to consider Purdy Crawford's *recipe of leadership traits*:

...be interested in people, including in their lives beyond work and profession. Who are their partners and children? What drives their goals and hopes and fears. Read widely and deeply... Look for input outside familiar circles...Your influence does not come from who you know but who you help along the way... Great networks are not one dimensional but intersecting arcs of friendship and duty, work and volunteerism... Shrug off small defeats, insults, and imperfections... Don't look for the perfect solution – look for the one that can succeed, helping the most people. Practise the art of the possible. Be bold in your career... See the big picture... Don't forget the people who got you there...especially the mentors.³⁹

And throughout it all, maintain the conversation with those closest to you. That way, if they see a slip or a stutter or a pending fall, they can quickly bring it to your attention and help you to corrective action.

Do you want to be a strong leader? Don't look for the quick fix – reflect, assess, and develop a good, positive personal relationship with that special someone – that gift may appear at the most unexpected time and place! It may most often occur when you're young; if it doesn't, remain alert, age is no barrier. And it may be mutually beneficial when least expected. There may even be times when you will be blessed with more than one profoundly personal relationship in a, particularly existential moment. This will not necessarily be rare. Develop the energy for sufficient reciprocity; just don't try to subsume the other.

³⁹Pitts, p. 187 - 188

Good personal relationships form a solid base upon which you move forward. They may be with a partner, a colleague, a dear life-long friend, a person who comes suddenly into your life. It can be of any gender or other disposition. It just has to work and be both reciprocal and mutual. The better you are with your relationships, the better you will be developing professional relationships vital to leading small and large teams of people.

In many ways, this is most evident in the re-imagined and re-configured world that evolved from my decision to close the consulting firm and create a professional corporation this millennium. The move to *learning leader*, while initially burdened somewhat by the efforts to move out of the dark period, really took off after meeting and developing a very dynamic relationship with the woman who is now my wife. This relationship, definitely primarily one of equals but certainly at times one where I am #2, doubtless occurred in large part because of my renewed self-assuredness I could be successful in such a relationship. I had, for some years, decades even, ceased seeing class or position as a tiered issue wherein I would have to remain well down from the top. Now the search was over.

CHAPTER EIGHT: Where to next?

One day, when travelling on a ferry from Vancouver to Victoria, I thought we were not making much progress while standing on the bow. I walked to the stern of the ship and then saw how far away Vancouver was. Looking in a rearview mirror certainly helps you appreciate the distance you have covered moving away from the starting line. But I must caution you that looking in the rearview mirror too much may take you right off the road.

So as much as I hope sharing my life experiences can give you insights into how you can be a better leader or assist you in determining not to be one, maybe it's my scars that are the key, and aren't they supposed to be stronger than the pre-injured skin? As someone once shared with me, *the scars you share become lighthouses for people headed for the same rocks you hit!* Perhaps all I really can do is give you a bit of discomfort about your view of leadership – maybe a little interruption to a well thought out career plan. Help you miss a few rocks.

Don't forget the ethical reasoning prism that was discussed earlier. Having a clearer understanding of the various stages of ethical reasoning, having a better sense of how you decide in leadership moments, particularly those moments of critical choice, certainly help clarify what the better decision ought to be. For me, it tended to reflect a desire to find not so much a compromise, but the middle course that gave serious acknowledgement of the various key points-of-view while still getting closer to a plausible and lasting benefit, what Purdy Crawford called *the art of the possible*⁴⁰. Leaders are not simply coordinators; they have to manage the conversation, steering it toward actionable results that provide a foundation for further, potentially more substantive solutions going forward. Leadership is that action, behaviour, or word which moves a group of others toward a goal or within a process. As a colleague once remarked, and it's good advice: *I have a saying, **never take your eyes off the goal.** I use it to remind myself to keep moving forward when faced with barriers.*

As I previously stated, we seldom are indelibly entrenched as one thing forever and for all times. Just as we reason on a continuum, often based as much on the people we are working with as on the dilemma we are facing, so too our basic personality will be impacted by mental wellness, rest and relaxation, happiness, and the state of our intimate relationships.

Jack Whyte, an author in Kelowna BC, has written 15 best-selling novels. In the Okanagan Saturday edition of the local newspaper one weekend, Mr. Whyte had this to say about giving advice – he received this message from a mentor:

⁴⁰Pitts. p.188

Don't ever be seduced into giving advice to anyone, because it's seldom heeded and often resented. Besides, any advice you give to anyone will be based on your own experiences, influenced by how you followed a course of action and reacted to its outcome. It is intensely subjective, and therefore unlikely to satisfy anyone else's needs.

Jack believes this is sage advice and tries to abide by it – nevertheless, he does go on to provide some advice because he's had a great deal of experience. And while I too think the original advice he received is worthwhile to consider and occasionally abide by, I am also going to share some additional thoughts that you can take as advice. Consider only what you believe to be useful, or skim over as just some reflective remnants of a leader from another era. The significant advantage both of us have is that I won't know if you are listening, and you won't know if it works until you put the book down and try it on your own time and energy.

The leader needs to know the people about to be led. A person who simply covets the position is not a leader. More often than not, there is a real difference between leaders and those in leadership roles. As Chartier says, *leadership, it appears, is best when it is both universal and personal*⁴¹. You need to determine how best to prepare for any leadership role that might be thrust upon you, or is a desired pursuit. There will be personal elements to be sure; but, be careful about those personal relationships that become intertwined. Many situations are too unique to necessarily be adequately addressed by some universal perspective, as helpful as such might be.

This chapter focusses on some **to do** ideas along with a few thoughts for potentially avoiding the inadequately travelled paths I have trod. I've tried to outline key ingredients you need to consider to build your leadership capacities and credentials. I've attempted to show you how my life choices significantly impacted my leadership abilities. Moreover, I've also explained some of my personal attributes that influenced my leadership style. I caution you to be aware of those moments of critical choice you may face. As Mr. Rago says so poignantly in the film *Renaissance Man*, *the choices we make dictate the life we lead*.⁴² To ensure a great propensity for choices that will *get to better*, ground yourself in a post-conventional framework. This framework will allow you to be more open to those moments of connection, especially with special *others* and, more importantly, with yourself.

⁴¹*Bureaucratically Incorrect, Letter to a Young Public Servant*, Chartier Bob, Doghouse Publishing (Calgary, 2005)

⁴²*Renaissance Man*, a Touchstone Pictures release – directed by Penny Marshall, starring Danny DeVito as Mr. Rago.

First and foremost, every crucial decision should be premised with this question: **what is my contribution to getting to better? And for whose benefit?** *Getting to better*, if we reflect again on Purdy Crawford's leadership recipe, means avoiding *a blind search for perfection* (for it) *is the enemy of getting things done*. *Getting to better* means improving our world and, more importantly, enhancing the people in it as much as is possible and within ever-widening concentric circles beyond where we first find ourselves. In *getting to better*, we must also be ready to commit with or despite uncertainty as we are attempting to define what is better, what needs to be improved – in a way, it could be described as defining a path. Better may even be aspirational – things can always get better, so we will also need new leaders for the next journey, or possibly only part of the journey. Again, let the philosophers and the theologians define the good and allow the idealists to determine what is best. As a leader, you are tasked with helping those who share the moment with you to *get to better* – sometimes elusive, often challenging but always the goal, no matter how long attainability takes. The result benefits us all.

Here are a few examples of what my leadership advice would look like for different positions and roles:

The Elected Leader

No matter the level or geographic location, don't say, *but I have to deal with reality!* We all are dealing with reality. As much as it may be preached to you by *the party* or your *backers*, your truth is not about re-election, it's about service. Your goal ought not to be getting re-elected but rather to provide the best leadership in good governance you possibly can during the terms for which you have been elected. You are elected to serve the electorate, the entire electorate – not just those who voted for you and definitely not just those who supported you, financially or otherwise. I have several colleagues who have gone into politics – some have been quite successful at getting elected. But what is interesting is that few, in my opinion, have left any dynamic legacy about *getting to better*. Politicians are only as good as their ability to make strong, public-focussed decisions that indeed will lead the community (local, provincial, or federal) to getting to better. One-term successful candidates who stand strong are more impactful leaders than those who only march to the collective band. Each politician needs to ask each time a vote is cast in a parliament, legislature or council, *if someone else were making this decision how would I want this decision to be made not only for myself but also for my kids and grandchildren?* As a Cree elder once reminded me in an off-handed comment: *real leadership looks ahead for seven generations.*

The Corporate CEO

What you ethically owe your shareholders, and your workforce is an honest, reliable corporate performance that neither loses money unnecessarily nor has short-term profit trumping long-term stability and productivity. In my opinion, Warren Buffett builds for tomorrow in his long-term investment approach to the Burlington Northern railroad. In contrast, the late Hunter Harrison scratched for immediate profits today, no matter the peril it might place the particular railway he was leading, over the long haul. Today, we need corporate leaders, no matter the size of their organizations, who are seriously interested in helping their shareholders, employees, and customers *get to better*. You need to ask each time you are called upon to decide – *am I doing to/for others, what I would want to be done to/for me?* Still uncertain? Well then, read James Owen's book *Cowboy Ethics*⁴³. Here is a book that was written by a former Wall Street banker and successful investment professional, which challenges us to seriously examine why we lead and how to do it ethically. A definite *stage five* thinker, his insights can help you leave a lasting legacy no matter how short a time you are in a leadership position. And then read Gordon Pitts' *Fire in the Belly* – Purdy Crawford would be an excellent role model. It will not be enough just to try to be nice, to be liked; it may not be sufficient to simply follow the norms; it will never be enough to rely on making a deal.

The Not-for-Profit Executive Director

You must execute the policies of your Board with openness and transparency, based on the premise of what serves the greater good of the organization. If the Board cannot see this, then it is time for you to move on. Do not take such a position as a job – it is not fair to the organization, and it won't get the best from you. *Not-for-profits* are primarily established to create a vehicle to deliver a better result than either government or business can. Moreover, it requires a serious commitment to Stage Five ethical reasoning – you really must believe in the Golden Rule, applying it across the spectrum – workers, volunteers, clients, patrons, and supporters. There will often be an aspect of social justice involved in your work, and this requires vision, which will quickly become impaired if you are always trying to make a deal by scratching someone's back or merely making decisions to be liked.

Manic reliance on the norms or rules of the place will prevent you from moving *outside the box*, which in turn stifles *getting to better*. If you believe in the vision or mission statement, you must truthfully acknowledge that your contribution will not be lifelong, as such organizations need regular reformulation. This happens best with new blood. Thus your leadership tenure will only be as long as you are energetically capable of being creative and leading to better. Sometimes this is for several years, sometimes not. In any case, re-read my thoughts for the corporate CEO.

⁴³Owen, James P. Cowboy Ethics – the Tenth Anniversary Edition Skyhorse Publishing (NY) 2015.

Make sure you regularly conduct thoughtful but also confidential feedback exercises. Give the organization beyond just the Board the opportunity to reflect and assess your leadership effectiveness. Once evidence begins to emerge that you do not have the full confidence or an emerging desire to alter course – don't hang around. Gracefully move on, thus allowing the organization to do so as well. Even if you think it's a mistake, remember the organization is not you. Later you can always return as an ordinary member and help work for changes, even if it has been deemed in the interim that the organization went off-track. But don't try to come back as its leader. And no matter what, take time to read Palmer's book referred to earlier (*Let Your Life Speak*⁴⁴).

As a sub-set to this, organizations of faith – churches, synagogues, temples, shrines, mosques, assembly halls – are somewhat unique cases. Quite often, the leader is appointed by persons above in authority, or, if called (i.e., invited to lead) by the membership; the hierarchy usually sanctions the appointment (hiring). This process frequently leads an incumbent leader coming to believe that they are the de facto leader in perpetuity if the hierarchy never says anything to the contrary. If you are in this situation, it is even more critical that you give yourself a deadline of less than a decade. If the hierarchy believes you are doing a good job, when you can see the decade approaching, you should be seriously considering the value in moving on – if not for your well-being, then for the welfare of the flock – the membership of the local faith grouping. If it has become more of a job than a calling, then a change of location is necessary. There is an adage that may be pertinent here: familiarity breeds contempt.

Leadership needs to be refreshed to be refreshing, and nowhere is this more apparent than in faith organizations. Stay too long, and you develop a following, and that's not what you've been called to create. You are to help others come to a better, or renewed, understanding of their faith – and you can only do that effectively for so long, and then someone new needs to step in to help effect or reinforce the renewal. Furthermore, if you're a Christian, it wouldn't hurt to read the book by Whetstone, *Leadership Ethics & Spirituality*⁴⁵.

The Public Servant

You owe it to the public you serve to be forthright and honest, giving as you would wish the service would be provided to you. I've met many professional and dedicated public servants – from clerks and secretaries to front-line program implementers (such as teachers, fisheries officers, city engineers) to managers and even up the org charts to deputy ministers. These

⁴⁴Palmer, Parker *Let Your Life Speak* Jossey-Bass (San Francisco CA, 2000)

⁴⁵Whetstone, J. Thomas *Leadership Ethics & Spirituality* WestBow Press (Bloomington IN, 2013)

people feel called to public service – their primary mission in life is to help their clients along with the general public *get to better*. But I've also met some who see their role as only a job – an activity that they are getting paid to carry out and usually they don't feel they are paid enough. If you are in this latter group – leave, get out, retire! You are doing neither the public nor yourself any good. The public is not being served, and your attitude is far less *well* than it could be. You may pride yourself that you are following all the rules, and you adhere to most of the norms; but, you are not coming close to the Golden Rule. I would argue you aren't even accepting, let alone following the foundational standards of the position, let alone of the overarching government. In many ways, you have lost the ability to morally reason at the Stage Three level, because you aren't sure who/what would validate that you are nice/liked.

Failure to maintain a presence going forward committed to *getting to better* can have a seriously negative impact on the recent recruit. Many young people come out of their training with great ideas combined with sincere hopes that they can make a difference, that they can move the bar up and forward. They are energetic and creative. But this will all go for naught if the organization's leadership functions at Stage II or III. You must not only be tolerant of their visionary energy; you must help facilitate it's becoming active and applied. Far from turning them off, you need to give them room to grow, for your sake and the sake of the organization as much as for them. They are the next generation. Eventually, they will be providing you the service when you move on or retire – how much better it would be if they have made the service delivery, the vision, and the product more responsive, more valuable, and tuned to your needs.

Fundamentally, if you are unable or unwilling to do this, you are unethical because you are occupying a position, not giving the public real service – and it doesn't matter what Stage of reasoning you operate from. You had reneged on the deal when you were hired, you aren't an honest person, you aren't meeting the norms we as a society accept and expect, and you certainly are off-line on the Golden Rule. The small thanks we can cling to is that there are only 20% of you in the mix – so most of your co-workers will be diligent enough to make up for a least some of your shortfalls. To help make sure you do the best you can, you could read Chartier's earlier referenced book, *Bureaucratically Incorrect – Letters to a Young Public Servant*.

But these are macro examples of advice. Let's reflect for a moment on individual steps. Develop many leadership talents. These skills will apply across the board, no matter the path an individual wishes to pursue.

What do you do when dealing with co-workers?

Ask yourself a couple of fundamental questions:

- Do I want to be liked or respected?
- In essence, what kind of worker do I want my grandchildren to find out I was?
- Would I want my peers to treat me the way I treat them?

These questions can be elucidated by the book *Superbosses* by Finkelstein, which is the result of a ten-year study that outlines the unconventionality that certain people bring to leadership roles – their ability to attract and develop talent, exude extreme confidence, almost fearlessness. These people see only solutions, not problems. *They all have integrity, not just honesty but a core vision or sense of self, avoiding playing games as some bosses will.* Even if you never aspire to become a CEO, this could be a worthwhile read.

What do you do when supervising a small team?

Being a supervisor is never really easy – you have responsibilities to your organization to lead well; you have responsibilities to your clients to deliver effectively and honestly. You are expected within the team to be fair. Ethical dilemmas can and will appear frequently and often unexpectedly. You can hone your skills in several ways but having Chartier's *Handcrafted Leadership* or Owen's *Cowboy Values*⁴⁶ on your office coffee table or the edge of your desk would be useful.

What do you do when trying to secure a promotion?

It seems redundant to say this – but be yourself. Read Palmer's book carefully. Ask what the organization needs in the desired position and then reflect on whether you're a good fit. Can you do for it what you'd expect the occupant would do for you if you were to be subjected to the same leadership skills you possess? You might even ask a good friend (outside the organization) how they think your skills and abilities match up against the job description. Don't go for the change only because it might give you some prestige or more money. Go for it when you can contribute more of your skills and truly help everyone concerned to get them and the organization to better. It might help to read how one rather unique and enterprising Canadian did it, Graham Day.⁴⁷

⁴⁶Owen, James P. *Cowboy Values*, The Lyons Press (Globe Pequot Press), Guildford CN (2008)

⁴⁷*The Last Canadian Knight – The Unintended Business Adventures of Sir Graham Day*, Gordon Pitts, Nimbus Publishing (Halifax, 2017).

What do you do when thinking about switching employment?

In many ways, this challenge requires the most energy of any potential leader. It isn't easy leaving a known place of work, no matter even if it is uncomfortable. If you are feeling somewhat uncomfortable, you need first to make sure your mental wellness is on solid footing. To assist, even in a cursory way, go into a private space, take your favourite music with you, put the speakers or earphones to a moderate level, turn down the lights and reflect on why you even want to consider moving. What are the benefits or potentially fulfilled needs? Where do you want to be, in the new position, in three or five years? What are your strengths now? What could be some obstacles getting you from here to there over that time-period? What are some downsides to this opportunity? Ponder these questions a couple of times or more. After perhaps the third session, come out of your reverie and try to write down your response with the music off and use pen and paper. Write it all out in one session – then type it out and share it with a trusted colleague (one outside your current and potential employment setting). This exercise will help you clarify your perspective on whether you can do for the other organization what you hope it will do for you.

I know one individual who left a well-paying professional post, took a considerable drop in pay and moved over to the academy primarily to restore mental wellness (initially to halt its degradation!). More importantly, the person felt once again that each day provided renewed opportunities to help the students *get to better*. The *golden handcuffs* can be strong. Many former colleagues, while congratulating this individual on the bravery shown, remained in their positions because the money was *too good to leave* even though they were miserable and likely not focussed any longer on ensuring that their work was leading in a way that was *getting to better*.

What do you do when involved in your recreational moments?

Leadership is not confined to the work environment. The skills you have as a leader can be honed in many other places. Your recreational pursuits are good testing grounds but should be used somewhat sparingly. I'm a very competitive person in many ways. I count and log the number of ski-runs and vertical metres to see if I surpass the previous year and try to outdo the guys I ski with. I joined the provincial golf association, even though I don't belong to any golf club, so I could maintain a formal record of my handicap. I use an app to track my regular recreational biking. I used to play more team sports, but not so much anymore! What I've finally learned is that there are times when I should not have tried so hard to be a leader in my recreational life – that's where I could have observed more of what other leaders do and thus learned more variations in leadership style. Occasionally stepping back, especially when it doesn't quite matter as much, you can see others' leadership skills more clearly because you

experience them. If you can quell your need to win, you can observe and access more clearly what makes alternative leadership moments successful. Upon further reflection, you can then better determine which you should try within your professional world.

What do you do when involved in domestic situations and environment?

One might question, given my track record for domestic bliss, whether I could have any useful thoughts on the relationship between one's leadership attributes and one's domestic milieu. But my graduate studies moment taught me something that took a while to fully sink in – accept that the other may well be an even better leader than you. Thus not only allow but celebrate that leadership and let it take you to new places of discovery. In my current marriage, I've come to discover that familial relationships like one's recreational world offer an excellent opportunity to back away from any eagerness to be competitive and allow the moment to be instructive and developmental. Treat your partner as you wish to be treated, and if there are moments where it seemingly becomes a bit onerous, then just try to be likeable and kind. Allow your significant other to lead, demonstrate, and encourage, and do this in a participative way. Accept the role of sous-chef with the tacit understanding that sometimes the chef will turn over the reins to the sous-chef. And occasionally, surprise the chef by taking a lead role.

This entire setting permits you to experience one-on-one leadership moments where the result is direct, not remote. And by the way, this support role extends beyond the kitchen to the other rooms of joint-occupancy. The home also allows working on job-sharing and job differentiation – there may be occasions to delineate distinct roles and responsibilities – again, do so in a collaborative framework.

What do you do when talking to one's offsprings?

The offspring can best assess the role of a parent. Perhaps this portion of my advice should be given over to my kids. Simply have the conversation often and help them progress from *scratching your back to being helpful in learning the norms and rules* until hopefully, you can get them also to live by *the Golden Rule*.

What do you do when having the opportunity to mentor another person?

Mentoring is both a skill and attribute good leaders work at, hone, and in many instances, can nearly perfect. If you treat others as you would be treated, it is a short step to being in a position to be a significant mentor to another potential, or even real, leader. For me: no advice would be given if it weren't advice I would want. No action suggested if it weren't the action, I'd wish to receive. Don't try to be a mentor – let the moment come to you.

What do you do when realizing that your career may be facing a critical moment?

How you get through each moment of critical choice will help shape your success and productivity and tell a good deal about the predominant Stage(s) of ethical reasoning from which you operate: *a leader doesn't work in a vacuum*. Thus, it stands to reason there will come critical moments in your leadership world – serious ethical dilemmas. While you may feel most comfortable at Stage Five operating from the Golden Rule, should teammate(s) be involved in resolving the dilemma, it is essential to remember that 80% of the adult population operate at either Stage Three (*let's make a deal*) or Four (*just show me the rules*). Thus it may be necessary for you to alter or shift your Stage of ethical reasoning to connect effectively with the others who are part of the moment of critical choice. To move them effectively towards better, you may have to adopt even Stage Three and subtly shift to Stage Four and then perhaps on to Stage Five.

If you are facing an ethical dilemma solely by yourself, you need to be firmly grounded in your moral reasoning level. If you are a Four, stick to it. If you wish to be at another Stage, work at it methodically – practice, if necessary, making a case at a higher or lower Stage. Rehearse your arguments until they sound cogent and clear at the Stage you now prefer. Moral reasoning then, will become more natural. In turn, this makes the resolution of the critical moment easier. Remember, changing the Stage of reasoning utilized does not mean you change your values and moral position. It is the language and reasoning level you are using that shifts to connect with and enhance the other.

What do you do when realizing that one's career may be over, or at least in need of a major makeover?

Perhaps the toughest decision a leader has to face is recognizing when your *best before date* is nearing. Acknowledging your current career is over is never easy, partly because your ego may not want to go along with the finding, and you have invested so much of you in the career. It's why you need to know your prime strengths – what it is that got you to this leadership position. Sometimes our vocational journey will take a hiatus; sometimes, it will take a refocus or a shift. While not as final as the career end, those moments still require an honest appraisal of what got you to that point and what remains in the tank. In any event, be prepared for the worst when you go over the results of your self-assessment. The worst may still be the best for you and your future. You don't have to be a leader forever, plus there is life after professional leadership, maybe even informal leading or teaching and mentoring others in leadership. Perhaps it's also good to think no to retirement, yes, to refocus!

My Transition to a Leader in Learning and Teaching

The last question above, brings me to share my experience in my ending my organizational leadership. In a way, I intuitively sensed in my vocational journey, even amid darkness, that a significant change was in the offing. I struggled with it, in part because my state of mental health was neither positive nor healthy. However, as I became more aware of my plight, I participated in some counselling sessions. During this time, I was asked what had made me a good consultant, an effective leader. In developing my response, I realized I was dynamic, creative, and young – but that could no longer be said. At that time in this new millennium, there are more youthful, more creative, and more dynamic leaders out there. And the energizing challenges that I used to *eat up* were changing as well – partly due to new technologies, but even more, due to more young adults out there, now living vibrantly in the 21st century.

I had to ask myself – what was it that I desired most when I started? I wanted the old guard to give us *young Mustangs and Mavericks* a chance to shine, move the finish line forward, and create the next world. At that moment, I knew my applied leadership world was over.

I wasn't done – I simply needed to re-invent myself and re-locate from organizational leadership towards conversing in learning and teaching leadership moments. The conversation now would address the values and skills of those involved in leading people to *get to better*. I would pass the torch of on the ground leading. I did, and it's been great, in large part, because I've found unique leadership is also required in the classroom! Leadership that engages involves and respects the *learning moment* and thus the learner.

I'm still a leader – now a *leader in learning*. In many ways, the paradigm I developed for the projects I led became the paradigm for the classroom pedagogy. I use small group and team formats, keep re-mixing the participant groupings so various cross-sections would be challenged to find new, or at least different, answers. Engage them in the conversation – worry less about getting them to agree with or even think like me and more about getting them to think period and be agreeable as appropriate.

In this new iteration of my life, now being more than half as long as my first vocational moment, I've been able to teach for eleven universities plus serve as a guest lecturer several times at a technical institute. Six institutions were probably the most I taught at in any one academic year – as my accountant said, *it was almost as if it was the university of Air Canada* due to the travel schedules involved. The diversity of subject matter allowed me to design and develop new approaches to both curriculum and pedagogy. While some had origins in earlier occasional teaching activities in leadership and ethics with the BC Chapter of the Certified Management

Accountants (CMA), upon becoming a *learning leader*, I refocused on ensuring the emphasis was more on the student than the institutionally approved materials. I redesigned student assignments from traditional written essays and exams by introducing team role-plays, debates, group crossfires, where the students had to manage the discussions. In-person dynamic presentations resulting from small group brainstorming and research replaced the usual banal written report. Classes had fewer lectures and more films, case studies, and special guests. Throughout it all, participants worked and studied in many different settings – learning to appreciate the full diversity of their classmates.

The intent was not merely to learn the subject matter, but to learn about the potential of each other and through that, the possibility and even the necessity of applying the learning. To further reinforce this, I also required students to carry out both peer evaluation and self-assessments. Those were done, in part, to prepare them for the workplace where this is becoming extremely prevalent in both government and industrial circles.

The students' overwhelming response, especially those in graduate and professional studies, was of thanks, appreciation, and acknowledgment of a real personal advance in learning. While a few found the process unsettling, the vast majority felt engaged and like my clients before, they gained their leadership capacities and abilities to apply the knowledge to actual situations even before finishing the course.

University administrations did not always find my approaches comfortable, but the student evaluations usually assured them that it was worthwhile keeping me. In some cases, permanent faculty found me a little too unorthodox as students would ask for similar treatment in their courses. As time marches on, I'm reducing my workload. But this is fine – I'm still busy! And there are others, some former students, who will take my place, excel, move the bar higher and students will be the better for it all.

Being a learning leader is fun. It even instilled at each institution a kind of loyalty factor in me towards my students. When starting at a new place, I would acquire some piece of identity apparel – sometimes golf shirts, other times athletic gear. I even bought some pieces as gifts for grandchildren or my kids. Quirky? Perhaps, but it was a form of giving back in a promotional kind of way. It showed others I was proud of my working relationship with the institution and what it was doing for the learner. Moreover, transferring my leadership role has been restorative. It has also allowed me to pass on some critical aspects of any legacy I may have – my torch. It certainly has enabled me to share my prism, my paradigm, and my story.

And strong leadership in the learning moment is not the same as tenured teaching or even trying to get tenure. It can happen with a thoughtful sessional lecturer, an energized graduate teaching assistant or a worldly-experienced adjunct professor. It can start while you're still engaged in the world as an applied leader. Do it sincerely, and it can be a form of reflection and restoration. You just need to be committed to lead, in a sharing way, the conversation in the *learning moment*. And be in the moment. Allow the learner to get to know you. They are not a widget, and no matter whether younger or older, they will always have something to share that makes your life better – to help you learn more yourself and re-discover aspects of *getting to better*. Let them share their music. And celebrate it, even if it's that spiritual, *this little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine...* Everyone contributes. As *The American Idealist*, Sargent Shriver's efforts in the 60's both with the Peace Corps and the War on Poverty attested – solve the problem rather than trying to maintain power.

Wrapping up may I say that honesty is not simply the best policy – it is much more than that, it is the best way of *getting to better*. I'm reminded of an incident over a decade ago when my youngest grandson met with Santa on Christmas Eve. The family had been to their Memphis, TN church, and on their way home, they came past a neighbour's place where he'd set up a sleigh with fake reindeer, and he was dressed as Santa. Each of my grandson's brothers had climbed into the sleigh, and after being asked if they'd been good and replying confidently yes, Santa would then ask what they wanted for Christmas. When the youngest's turn came, he too hoisted himself into the sleigh. When Santa asked if he'd been a good boy, my grandson lowered his head and, in a somewhat subdued, but audible, voice said *No!* Santa replied in a hearty voice: *Well, there's certainly something to be said for honesty, have a Merry Christmas, and you'll still get a gift from me!*

In all your decisions, in every critical choice you make, remember – there's certainly something to be said for honesty. You will still receive a gift, and you will have proven your humanity! As Connie Kaldor so aptly says:

*You're all right
You're not too young and not too old,
You're all right,
You're not too hot and not too cold,
You're all right,
You're not too foolish, not too wise...⁴⁸*

⁴⁸*Postcards from the Road*, CD lyrics written by Connie Kaldor

EPILOGUE: Then & Now – Leadership & Getting to Better

What Might Have Been

*There are paths you choose along the way
But don't you wonder what might have been
If you knew then, what you know today
Don't you wonder what might have been...*

*All the lessons learned
All the fingers burned
All the trouble you got out of or got in
Don't you sometimes wonder what might have been⁴⁹*

It is a moment of wonder indeed, when reflections get serious about the life one has led. Even thinking about the title for this book is a mirror of this. The original title was *After the Final Fall*. It came from a moment after regaining most of my mental wellness following the *journey in darkness*. In many ways, I was able to fully understand leadership only because of *the fall*. But that original book title was discarded because it was too focussed on *the fall* and not the resiliency. It was looking at the wrong side of mental wellness. It was too dismissive of the overall life I'd led as a leader, thus clouding what I might refer to as one of my best leadership qualities.

Now there are still questions I ponder, but I frame them in ways that help me continue to move forward in a positive fashion and direction. And it has been intriguing at times to wonder what might have been, but mainly for the benefit I could share with you. I want to make sure that I can be helpful to others, no matter their station in life or their relationship to me, on the quest for *getting to better*.

One final word of advice. Whatever you do, don't let the time go by. Go after the world before you, enjoy it and be joyful in it. Make sure that when all is said and done, you too can feel as I do using a Rod McKuen thought: *what a waste it would have been, had I been anyone but me...*

⁴⁹Kaldor CD Track 3

THE END

*Belated thanks to
(the late) RON & (the late) RAY
we finally got it done*

*Thanks to
PAULA
& all of you who helped...
it's been a long & winding road!!*

E-sinc 2020 ©