VOICES FROM THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR:
PERSPECTIVES ON LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES
Edited by Frederick Bird and Frances Westley

Voices from the Voluntary Sector contains reflections by practitioners on some of the significant challenges faced by today's not-for-profit organizations in Canada. Broad in scope, these essays present a rich, multidimensional set of vignettes that as a whole express the vitality and humanity of the voluntary sector.

The contributors discuss organizational and managerial challenges, social entrepreneurship, and methods to foster effective global movements. The essays include a discussion of the ways that young people can find the courage to become leaders, a review of the nature and extent of collaborations between voluntary sector organizations and First Nations families, and a consideration of how parental incarceration affects the life prospects of children. *Voices from the Voluntary Sector* is a valuable resource that addresses a wide range of concerns related to the responsiveness, character, and leadership of not-for-profit and non-governmental organizations.

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Voices from
the Voluntary Sector

Perspectives on Leadership Challenges

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PART ONE: THE REFLECTIVE MINDSET

Through the use of excerpts from the personal reflections of youth, this essay explores the emergence of leaders in the Youth in Care Network in Canada. The voices of the young people, who spent difficult years in foster care and found the strength to deal with their inner doubts and external difficulties to become leaders and organizers, highlight the transformative role of such voluntary sector networks.

The author reflects on her own experiences as she moved into a position of local and then regional leadership in her organization. Leaders often become extremely busy with day-to-day activities. This

essay reflects on the need to regularly reflect personally on one's own experiences, what can be learned from them, and what has overall priority. Mutoigo also examines the struggles, especially within faith communities, to strike a suitable balance between leading and serving.

BERNARD VOYER

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ELIZABETH MOREAU

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sector. Mah-Sen starts by reflecting on her own experiences as an intercultural bridger, and then more broadly considers the correlations between her experiences and Amnesty's experiences as a bridge between voluntary and corporate sectors.

PART FIVE: THE CATALYTIC MINDSET

This essay examines closely the current difficulties and life prospects of the children of offenders, especially single mothers and Aboriginal women. These children are largely ignored by the correctional system. As a result, Bayes argues, expectations for their normal social function is very low, and the probability that they will eventually become offenders themselves is unusually high. Bayes concludes this thought-provoking essay by discussing a number of initiatives to address the needs of these neglected children.

In this essay, Dale explains and evaluates three approaches to fostering public dialogues about pressing contemporary issues. Citizens' Juries (initiated originally in Scandinavia), Participatory Budget Processes (utilized in a number of Brazilian municipalities), and deliberative dialogues (which the author initiated while working for the Canadian Council on International Cooperation) are examined. Dale reviews the strengths and weaknesses of these alternatives, while pointing to the overall benefits that result from any attempt to involve citizens in give-and-take public discussions of important issues.

Social entrepreneurship is an approach that combines the creative delivery of social mission with innovative ways to fund activities,

often using earned income streams and other business models borrowed from the private sector. Drawing upon her experiences in Actua, a Canadian charitable organization, as well as comparable experiences of other organizations, Flanagan argues that social entrepreneurship is a mindset that can help organizations marshal the resources required to be more sustainable and to deliver more services.

Foreword

The universe of voluntary sector or 'public benefit' organizations in Canada is vast; indeed, the sector in Canada is second only to that of the Netherlands in size relative to population: over 80,000 registered charities, perhaps double that number of non-profits, 1 million full-time staff and 11.8 million volunteers. Although the sector accounts for some 8 per cent of our GDP, it works largely in obscurity. Feel-good stories in newspapers and, infrequently, reports of malfeasance are the most attention it receives from the media. Governments at all levels rely on the sector to deliver services, build healthy communities, and articulate needs, but seldom consider the impact of legislation or regulations on its vitality. Yet strong voluntary organizations are the essential building blocks of community, both the driving force and the tangible expression of a vibrant democracy.

For decades community organizations have pursued their missions, working within a context that assigned them a role variously defined as complementary to government in the delivery of services to hard-to-reach populations, or addressing 'market failure' in the provision of goods to vulnerable groups, or even as the proverbial 'canary in the mineshaft,' giving early warning of impending social needs and challenges. In the 1990s, however, roles began to blur: business values were increasingly viewed as dominant, with both governments and not-for-profits urged to 'become more businesslike,' which presumably meant more results-oriented and efficient. At the same time, governments began to cut back on social spending, offloading responsibilities to provincial and municipal jurisdictions and, eventually, onto the backs of voluntary organizations. Organizations were exhorted to 'do more with less,' to address root causes and not merely symptoms, and to

situate their operations within larger 'systems' of health care, educa-
tion, and so on.

It was in this changing context that the J.W. McConnell Family
Foundation launched a leadership development program specifically
for the voluntary sector, in partnership with McGill University. This
initiative was new in several respects: it was intended to provide a
learning opportunity on a par with what is available to senior private
sector executives; it was conceived as a partnership between a funder
and a university, requiring a tight marriage of theory and practice in its
design and execution; and it was planned as a time-limited program
that would reach enough present and future leaders in the sector to
constitute a 'critical mass' to influence the sector as a whole.

The essays in this volume, as Fred Bird and Frances Westley explain
in their introduction, reflect the themes around which the program was
built. Now, several years after the completion of the program, it is evi-
dent that it had a profound impact on the participants' careers and their
personal lives. Many have gone on to become even more prominent
and effective leaders as well as agents of change. The impact on the sec-
tor as a whole is more difficult to assess, though one can see new rela-
tionships and networks that have been formed, at least in part due to
this intense experience of sharing and learning together.

In the past decade the pace of change has accelerated. Terrorism,
global health threats, economic shocks, natural disasters, and a
changing climate are having a profound impact on the world, and on
Canada. At the macro level it is increasingly clear that nation states
cannot address these challenges alone; within countries, it is equally
apparent that no single sector of society has the capacity to respond
successfully. Big Issues call for a societal response, not fragmented ef-
forts, and a commitment to collaborate and to engage citizens in the
search for solutions. What has been called the Age of Deference is long
over; people no longer expect employers or governments or experts to
tell them what to do or how to think. Apparent citizen apathy and dis-
engagement from formal political processes is belied by a willingness
to get involved in community-level activity where cooperation can
lead to tangible results.

Fifteen years after the first meetings to design a program for volun-
tary sector leaders, we face a new set of challenges. Some are familiar: a
return to government deficits, for example, and the need to make
Canada more economically competitive; others are new, like meeting
the needs of an aging population. The community sector, in addition to

the evergreen problems of managing, staffing, and funding the thousands of organizations that comprise it, is also crafting a different 'narrative' of its role and value to Canadian society, a role that goes beyond caring, causes, and conviction to embrace innovation, entrepreneurship, and creativity. Shifting to a 'green' economy, responsible consumer choices, new models for the delivery of essential services like health care and education, require leadership from the community sector.

The contributors to this volume are evidence that the leadership exists. They explore what is required to focus on the mission while working in complex situations, how Canadian values interact with an increasingly global context, and how organizations must navigate between asserting their separate identities in a competitive marketplace for money and ideas and the need to collaborate for greater impact and effectiveness. The collective portrait is daunting in the scale of its challenges, and inspiring in the commitment and optimism of its actors.

For the Foundation, sponsorship of the McGill-McConnell Program helped to create strong bonds with many important organizations and inspiring leaders with whom we have continued to collaborate. It deepened our understanding of the potential of voluntary or public benefit groups to create positive change, and of the need for targeted support to enhance their ability to do so. It also led directly into our involvement in the field of social innovation and to our commitment to identify, support, and strengthen entrepreneurial individuals and organizations so that they can contribute even more effectively to exploring and implementing solutions to complex social challenges. In the words of Arundhati Roy (2003, n.p.), 'Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day I can hear her breathing.'

Tim Brodhead
President, The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation

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Preface

This book is written by a group of leaders in voluntary sector organizations in Canada to voice their concerns about particular contemporary challenges facing the voluntary sector. The topics of their individual chapters range from ideas about better ways to manage unexpected crises (chapter 4) to opportunities afforded by social entrepreneurship (chapter 15); from ways to manage leadership succession in charismatically led groups (chapter 3) to ways to forge effective international links with other NGOs (chapter 8). Some of the essays are quite personal, as leaders reflect on their own leadership experiences (chapter 2) or on their own roles as fundraisers (chapter 10). Several are written to alert readers interested in voluntary sector issues about pressing problems, such as the overlooked situation facing the children of offenders (chapter 13) or First Nations children living on reserves (chapter 7). Several of the authors inquire into the relationship between voluntary sector and private sector organizations when the latter act as sponsors, donors, or partners (chapters 10, 11, and 12). One (chapter 5) is written to raise fundamental questions about appropriate ways of evaluating the effectiveness of voluntary sector organizations. Another (chapter 1) is written to reflect on and celebrate the capacity of some former children in care to transform themselves and become social leaders. One explores the opportunities associated with public dialogues (chapter 14), while another analyses ways of renewing organizations that have become set in their ways (chapter 6).

The essays also vary considerably in style. A few are in the form of research reports. Several others take a more personal approach in order to explore unexamined feelings and assumptions. All are written to speak up and speak out from new angles to address pressing issues in

the world, issues facing their organizations and the voluntary sector, and issues facing the authors as leaders.

Readers involved in Canada's voluntary sector – whether as volunteers, professionals, donors, members, participants, students preparing for careers in the sector, or current leaders – will be drawn into the varied worlds of these authors and feel at times sympathetic, outraged, inspired, enlightened, and informed. They will learn about very diverse ways of exercising leadership through administration, listening to others, thought-full analysis or initiating change. In many instances, real leadership development begins, as several of these essays show, by developing one's self.

These essays were all originally written when the authors were participants in a special program co-sponsored by McGill University and the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation. The McGill-McConnell Program – officially known as the McGill-McConnell Masters in Management for National Voluntary Sector Leaders – is described in the introduction. It was not an ordinary academic degree. It was an executive program, which lasted long enough so that three classes of forty leaders could each participate in a series of five two- to three-week modules, along with additional executive exchanges and tutorials, while still continuing their regular professional responsibilities. Working with academic advisors (located at McGill University, as well as York University, Concordia University, McMaster University, Oxford University, the University of Calgary, and the University of Victoria), each participant prepared a major paper related both to what they had learned as part of the McGill-McConnell Program and to challenges in the voluntary sector that especially interested them. Altogether they produced 120 papers, which originally varied in length from 45 to 125 pages. On the basis of recommendations from the academic staff, half of the authors were subsequently invited to present their papers at five specially organized seminars, where the papers were read and critiqued by the participants. Certain authors were then invited to revise their papers substantially for publication. (See also the section 'Additional McGill-McConnell Papers' at the end of this volume.)

Building upon an approach originally developed by the International Masters for Practicing Managers (co-sponsored by five universities in Canada, Great Britain, France, India, and Japan), the McGill-McConnell Program organized its modules around particular themes or mindsets (see Introduction). The sections of the book reflect the modules of the program, with the papers grouped in an approximate relation to the

major themes of these modules. While there are indeed some connections between these broad themes (focusing on leadership and reflection, organizational analysis, global perspectives, collaboration, and action), most of the essays cover material discussed in several themes while focusing on a particular challenge.

We have found these essays to be engaging and *provocative* in the root meaning of this term, namely, as vehicles for *voicing* concerns about vital matters. It is fitting that these essays are so varied in topic and style. Diversity is, after all, one of the virtues of the voluntary sector in Canada.

Frederick Bird and Frances Westley

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Introduction:
Leadership and the Voluntary Sector
in Canada

FRANCES WESTLEY and FREDERICK BIRD

In 1997, the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation launched a major innovative initiative, in collaboration with the Faculty of Management at McGill University, to create a new master's degree program, called the McGill-McConnell Program for National Voluntary Sector Leaders. Three ideas made this initiative novel in concept: first, that the voluntary sector needed and deserved a leadership program of the same quality as the best executive business degrees; second, that the sector as a whole needed to exercise more leadership in Canada, shaping the public debate so often dominated by corporate leaders and politicians; and third, that an academic program could contribute to a change of this kind by bringing voluntary sector leaders together and giving them a chance to rethink the major challenges facing the sector and build a community of response.

At the time when the McConnell Foundation envisioned the possibility of such a program, its mission was focused primarily on helping Canadians deal with change. The foundation saw the voluntary sector as facing leadership challenges in multiple domains – the most important being collaboration with the private and public sectors. The voluntary sector was in danger of losing its soul, caught between demands for 'rationalization,' 'accountability,' and cost effectiveness from the corporate sector, on one hand, and demands from the public sector, on the other, that the voluntary sector assume delivery of services hitherto provided by government. A 'colonization' of the voluntary sector remains a real threat.

If the private sector is about commerce and the public sector is about guardianship (Jacobs 1993), then the voluntary sector remains the chief arena for debate and dialogue about civil society and those values we

wish to honour apart from considerations of the market or of governance. But how to strengthen this voice? This became the organizing question for the team that designed the program. As most of the team members were from business backgrounds, a secondary challenge was to balance the theory and practice of business management with the value orientations of the voluntary sector, building synergy when possible and identifying difference when helpful.

The program was built around six themes or mindsets, five of which – the *Reflective* Mindset, the *Analytic* Mindset, the *Global* Mindset, the *Collaborative* Mindset, and the *Catalytic* Mindset – are represented in the main parts of this book. These five mindsets represent key leadership functions as identified by Henry Mintzberg: to reflect, analyse, contextualize, collaborate, and catalyse action. The sixth, the *Ethical* Mindset, while increasingly important for the business world in a post-Enron era, was deemed so crucial to the voluntary sector that it was included as a two-day segment of each of the other five modules.

Designing the Program: Leadership Roles and Challenges to the Voluntary Sector

The team of academics who designed the program included Nancy Adler and Michelle Buck (Reflective Mindset); Brenda Zimmerman and Kunal Basu (Analytic Mindset); Nelson Phillips and Tom Lawrence (Collaborative Mindset); Harrie Vredenburg and Rajesh Tandon (Global/Contextual Mindset); Frances Westley (Catalytic Mindset); and Fred Bird and Travis Kroecker (Ethical Mindset).

From the beginning, team members immersed themselves in the concerns of the voluntary sector, bringing their own management specialties to bear on the challenges of leadership. Workshops were held with voluntary sector leaders around the mindset themes, and from these workshops there emerged a set of sub-themes of particular concern to leadership:

1. *Leadership demands reflection as well as action*. Giving voluntary sector leaders the space and frameworks in which to reflect was key to the program as a whole and became the overriding theme of the first module. Reflection was linked to self-knowledge and discernment, and to the idea that *to be a leader entails a capacity for and a determination to acquire self-knowledge, and to use that knowledge self-confidently in the service of a mission.* This internal focus is quite a departure from the mainstream

business literature on leadership in both the academic and popular press. 'The power of authentic leadership is found not in external arrangements, but in the heart,' says Parker Palmer (1990, 23), who urges us to turn away from a life of ceaseless activity to one of greater contemplation.

To this end, we designed much of the first module and the threads of the rest of the program around the practice of reflection. For some participants in the program this was a challenge on multiple levels. Not only can self-exploration be difficult and disconcerting, but it is frowned upon in the sector as self-indulgent. We found early evidence of this difference through the 360-degree evaluation and feedback instrument we used to assess skill levels before entry into the program – an instrument created by Stephen Schoonover, a Harvard psychiatrist, expressly for the voluntary sector in Canada. On compiling the data for all 120 participants in the McGill-McConnell Program, an interesting pattern emerged. Voluntary sector leaders were stronger than their private sector counterparts in their emphasis on teamwork, their courage and commitment, and their ability to build networks and alliances. They were dedicated, ethical, and determined. But as a group they were less strong than the private sector at delegation, implementation, and what might be considered the command style of leadership. In comparison to his or her counterparts in the private sector, the Canadian voluntary sector leader looks rather like a one-man band, trying to play all the instruments and get the melody right, but then handing off the credit for success to his or her fellow musicians. This is quite a different image from the type of CEO widely praised in the U.S. business press, whose style Mintzberg (1999, 26) terms 'loud management, or Management by Barking Around.'

Instead, voluntary sector leaders in the program were attracted by the idea of the servant leader, the 'leaderful' organization, and shared leadership (Greenleaf 1991). But while these approaches may avoid the excesses of 'loud' leadership, each casts its own different shadow: a tendency to self-effacement, or to self-sacrifice – or both – which *can* get in the way of the organization's mission, despite the leader's best intentions, and which most certainly prevents leaders from the kind of deep self-knowledge we have described above. According to one McGill-McConnell participant,

My most powerful insights came during the course of the first module. I discovered that leadership was not only about what I know and my skills

as a professional, but also about 'being.' It requires knowledge of myself and my values, a capacity to reflect on and connect values and action, to listen to various perspectives and weigh various perspectives. Proud of being a professional in the voluntary sector, this subjective dimension to leadership was a total surprise. What had been mostly an intellectual perspective on leadership began to go to my guts, to connect head and soul.

The surprise on our side was the degree of modesty and the self-effacement, which seemed absolutely basic to the sector. For example, a critical leadership skill, which we spent time on in this first module, was that of storytelling. As Howard Gardner and Emma Laskin wrote in their landmark study, *Leading Minds* (1996), 'Leaders achieve their influence through the kinds of narratives or stories they tell; about themselves, their society, and the people with whom they are dealing' (9). The McGill-McConnell Program thus made storytelling a privileged tool for developing leadership, drawing on Gardner and Laskin's ideas, as well as from Joseph Campbell's studies of the role of storytelling in mythology.

But where many leaders had difficulty was in seeing the link between their personal story and that of their organization. Many struggled with feelings that their organizational issues were more important; that to create a story about their own lives as a way to present central issues or dilemmas in their organizations was somehow self-aggrandizement. Most were not even comfortable with the use of the first-person singular ('I did this,' 'I said that'), insisting rather on describing organizational choices in the first-person plural 'we,' even when the individual leader was clearly responsible. Gradually, however, some exciting experiments emerged. One leader was able to see that her experience with the early loss of a much-loved parent was her personal link between her organization and the needy children it served. Moreover, in telling the story she was able to put into words a much more universal experience of loss, of parenting, and of why her organization existed:

When a father dies, a child grieves. I have lost someone I love. When a father leaves, a child feels anxiety and self-blame. What did I do wrong? Why doesn't my father love me? Death is final. He won't come back. Abandonment is indeterminable. What would make him come back?

Yesterday, when a father died, our society affirmed the importance of fatherhood by comforting and supporting his family. Today when a father leaves, our society discounts the importance of fatherhood by accepting

his departure with reasoned partiality. Death kills men but sustains fatherhood. Abandonment sustains men but kills fatherhood. Death is more personally final, but departure is more culturally lethal. From a societal perspective, the former is an individual tragedy; the latter is a cultural tragedy.

To reach a place where she could tell this story powerfully required some deep reflection, a search into her own motivations and drives, which for many leaders is disconcerting and difficult. Annie Dillard (1982) describes this as the most difficult journey anyone can take, into 'the substrate, the ocean or matrix or ether which buoys the rest, which gives goodness its power for good, and evil its power for evil' (94); but this journey is necessary in order to arrive at the kinds of truths that it is the leader's responsibility to name and to bring to light.

Part One of this book presents the McGill-McConnell papers inspired by the Reflective Mindset. The essays by Lynda Manser, Ida Mutoigo, and Bernard Voyer illustrate how deep reflection on the part of a leader can be married to organizational mission. These three essays read most like stories, as the authors work to create parallels between their own life narratives and those of their respective organizations.

Through the initial essay, written by Lynda Manser, former executive director of the National Youth in Care Network, readers hear the voices of a number of young people who have experienced rejection and powerlessness but have responded to their circumstances by becoming leaders within the network. They have expressed the 'courage to become.' Manser describes the process by which these young people emerged as leaders as an often difficult journey, by means of which these young men and women were able to identify, affirm, and develop their own particular gifts. In the end she concludes, 'Our capacity to see and change the world coevolves with our capacity to see and change ourselves.' This initial essay explores how people who never would have imagined that they could become leaders find ways to assume both greater charge of their own lives and, in the process, become leaders of others. In the process, Manser's essay moves from interesting and quite engaging accounts and observations about a handful of emerging leaders in one particular organization to a much more general insight about the value for any would-be leaders of identifying and offering as a basis of their leadership their own personal strengths.

While Manser uses her essay to reflect on how some young people, struggling to achieve in spite of difficult conditions, have become

leaders, Ida Mutoigo uses her essay to reflect on her own experiences as a leader in an international faith-based organization. She considers her particular calling; reviews various ideas, exercises, and experiences she has found helpful; and spells out a framework for further cultivating her own approach to leadership in a religiously oriented community. What especially stands out in her essay is how important it is for leaders to regularly take time to personally reflect on their own priorities and their sense of what is taking place in their lives, organizations, and worlds. Leaders so often get caught up in continual motion and overwhelmed by the day-to-day agendas. These preoccupations may become even more protracted in faith organizations, Mutoigo muses, where there is such an emphasis on doing things in just the right way. Thus, it is important for leaders to schedule regular times for reflection, so that they can review the larger global situation in which they are working, and the overall purposes of their organization. They can also use these occasions to review, re-assess, and re-affirm their own personal passions and priorities and, in words which Mutoigo uses from Gandhi, 'Be the change you wish to see in the world.'

Bernard Voyer, a director of the Taoist Tai Chi Society of Canada, writes his reflections on leadership quite consciously as a follower rather than as a leader. His essay is especially relevant for any organization, whether religious, political, private, or civil, which has been inspired or directed at any time by a charismatic leader. Voyer states that what was especially interesting about Moy Lin-shin, the charismatic founder of the Taoist Tai Chi Society of Canada, was that Moy expected his followers not to be unthinking and devoted recipients of his direction but rather self-disciplined and well-skilled apprentices in the healthy ways of living that this group promotes. Correspondingly, Moy arranged it so at his death he was succeeded not by a newly designated charismatic leader – in effect, a replacement founder – but by a council of skilled, journeymen-like officials, capable of managing an organization committed to helping people learn and practice certain healthy exercises and lifestyles.

2. *Leadership in the voluntary sector demands the ability to manage highly complex situations and emergence.* For this, the capacity for discernment is required, in order to find useful patterns in the complex world around us. This second capacity is built on the first – because contemplation is required to discern such patterns, and a comfort with self, silence, and ambiguity is necessary to give us the capacity to listen, to wait, and to

contemplate until that pattern becomes clear. According to Gardner (1995), 'Reflecting means spending a lot of time thinking about what it is that you are trying to achieve, seeing how you are doing, continuing if things are going well, correcting course if not; that is, being in a constant dialectic with your work, your project or your set of projects' (294).

In the second module of the McGill-McConnell Program, the 'Analytic Mindset,' we asked participants to look at two pictures: one of a calm beach, the other of a turbulent ocean. We asked, 'When you are managing in your organization, which does it feel like?' Participants invariably suggested the ocean. Leaders in the voluntary sector saw the world not as stable and unchanging, but as highly unstable and connected, 'immersed in and consumed by social connection' with (at times) 'numbing' results (Gergen 1991, 2).

Such social connection has only been intensified by the advent of email. Estimates suggest that the average manager spends at least two hours a day on email correspondence and that it doesn't reduce any of the demands described above. This is what T.S. Eliot called 'distraction from distraction by distraction' (Eliot 1969, 120). Contemporary theorists writing about leadership suggest that this level of distraction, this level of complexity, represents one of the key threats to effective leadership. In such an environment, reflection and its associated skill, discernment, are not luxuries but necessities. It is critical to separate the wheat from the chaff, the key elements from the peripheral, the patterns from the chaos.

This is not easy. The management theorist Peter Senge, who has written extensively about learning organizations, has argued that complexity is defined by a system of non-obvious relationships. What do we mean by that? Well, take the stormy ocean of the photograph. Now imagine you are one ship on that ocean. You have to contend with the waves coming from multiple directions. This feat is complicated, sometimes surprising, but obvious; you literally see them coming. Now imagine that under the waves, you are connected by cables, which you can't see, to numerous other boats that you don't know exist and you can't see, and that they in turn are connected to each other in a complex web. As you attempt to steer your craft in the waves, one of the cables suddenly tautens, pulling you sharply off course; you try to correct by yanking another invisible cable, and so on. These are the non-obvious connections, which Senge says it is the leader's job to anticipate, illuminate or even, under some conditions, design; to this extent leaders must be teachers (Senge 1990).

Leaders as teachers help people restructure their view of reality in order to see beyond superficial conditions and events into the underlying causes of problems – and therefore to see new possibilities for shaping the future (Senge 1990).

These are the underlying system dynamics, which are unseen, but which, like the underwater cables, drive our behaviour. In the McGill-McConnell Program, we began this process of restructuring our view of reality by exploring the notion that in situations of complexity, asking the right questions to reveal the mental models and underlying assumptions within our organizations is as important as giving the right answers. And we introduced the notion of minimum specifications: the notion that in leading under circumstances of complexity, our goal is to strip our requirements to the most basic, and the most essential. According to one graduate of the McGill-McConnell Program,

> Conversations have changed in my office, and it has been noticed. We are more honest, straightforward, and supportive of each other. There was not a particular day when it changed. But there is no doubt that 'listening' has become important to the group I work with. If only one lesson remains ingrained with me from the McGill-McConnell program, it would have to be the understanding that 'good conversations take time.' A good example would be my first meeting with a team that had developed a habit of talking all the time, over each other – a style of combative, challenging, intense, no-listening conversation – just go at it! As their new manager, I did not say anything in that staff meeting, just held my own calmly – and when space opened up I still did not say anything, for what seemed like an eternity. There was noticeable discomfort with the non-communicative silence. And I knew that if I was in such a situation two years earlier I would have assumed that such a leader would be seen as lacking in control, and weak. But I was off on a different path, and testing my ability to 'listen' for the real issues as I pulled together threads of their conversation, each one of them, and strung them together into a system. For me it was important that I really heard what they were saying. I didn't have answers for them that day, but I trusted the insight I had learned – that there are times when it is much more powerful to listen than to have an answer ready – because answers without reflection and understandings will not have meaning or be genuine.

The Analytic Mindset is represented by the essays in Part Two. Marg McGregor, Jerry DeMarco, and Mark Langlois all deal with organizational

challenges through an analysis which deepens understanding. All three authors assume that organizing and managing complex problems require a systemic, multifaceted, multi-level approach. Again, personal experience is combined with analytical and complexity approaches to illuminate an important aspect of leadership in the voluntary sector.

In the initial essay, Margaret McGregor, who is the CEO of Canadian Interuniversity Sport, especially reflects on the need for timely responses, focusing in this case on guidelines for responding to crises. She draws upon the experience of sport organizations, in order to offer some general guidelines for exerting leadership in times of crises. Observing that crises ordinarily pass through a number of different stages, McGregor indicates when different kinds of responses are called for. In these kinds of settings, she notes in particular that leaders need to have developed the capacity to tolerate both considerable confusion and unanticipated hostility.

In the second essay, Jerry DeMarco, former managing lawyer for the Sierra Legal Defence Fund, criticizes one particular approach that has been developed for assessing how well voluntary sector organizations are performing. He looks at what other organizational analysts have called the 'tyranny of the means,' that is, the rigid focus on efficiency of particular organizational processes, analysed apart from a larger concern for organizational purposes and outcomes. He analyses the Donner Awards for 'Excellence in the Delivery of Social Services.'

While recognizing the need for organizations to evaluate their own performances regularly, he criticizes the way these awards carry out evaluations of voluntary sector organizations. He argues that these awards exhibit a tendency to adopt a business model, which especially looks for and rewards efficient utilization of organizational resources. What is needed, DeMarco argues, is more attention to the varied forms of evaluation geared to the diversity of organizations and their purposes, along with the diversity of objectives they are seeking to realize.

In the third essay in this section, Marc Langlois analyses the experiences of contemporary youth organizations and looks at their prospects for self-renewal. He emphasizes how critical it is for organizations to appreciate where they are in relation to their own life cycle. Renewal may assume different forms, whether organizations are rapidly developing, mature, or declining. Having started a youth organization in Nova Scotia more than twenty years ago, Langlois uses HeartWood, his own organization, as a comparative point of reference for looking at the prospects and problems facing mature youth-serving organizations.

Each of these essays demonstrates a concern for devising lively and fitting forms of accountability. McGregor counsels organizations to analyse the extent to which they are prepared for dealing with unexpected crises. To be accountable entails becoming ready to respond to unanticipated threats and surprises. DeMarco directly criticizes certain approaches to evaluating voluntary sector organizations because they focus attention too narrowly on the efficient use of particular resources. In the process, these forms of evaluation fail to focus enough attention on the wider range of less easily calibrated resources – morale, volunteerism, community feelings – as well as the realization of organizational purposes. To be truly accountable entails devising practices of accountability that foster learning and commitment among organizational members. Langlois counsels mature organizations to fully appreciate possibilities for reviving themselves, while staying grounded in their own histories. To be accountable from this perspective often entails a willingness to relinquish some activities in order to foster others.

3. *To effect real change in the areas which concern voluntary sector leaders, single organizations need to think systemically, across sectors, sub-systems, and scales.* The global context becomes critical for voluntary sector leaders. The kinds of problems that deeply concern them – poverty, youth engagement, homelessness, chronic disease, community development, and the environment – are 'evergreen' issues. They don't go away; they are intractable. Moreover, in an increasingly interconnected world, 'when you try to pick anything up,' as John Muir said, 'you find it connected to everything else' (Muir 1911, n.p.). The drivers of poverty, environmental degradation, or even illness are often global. Understanding the global context is a necessary part of 'thinking like a movement,' working not just to problem solve in the short run but to create change in the long run.

When we move to a global system context, however, we do need to be able to think systemically. Understanding issues such as food markets in China demands an understanding of how industry and environment are interacting at a global scale (Brown 1995). From the point of view of the voluntary sector, to understand how to address issues of poverty, homelessness, social justice, or the environment in a Canadian context, it is important to understand the global drivers of local problems. It also means understanding how the same problems are handled differently in different cultural contexts.

Understanding the global context builds on the capacity of analysis and how to lead change. The McGill-McConnell participants travelled to India, Australia, and Singapore in order to understand firsthand the ways in which economic context and Western values contrast with the more religiously based, local perspectives of the developing world – what Thomas L. Friedman (2000) has famously symbolized as the contrast between 'the Lexus and the olive tree.' In meeting their counterparts in India, in particular, and in confronting the scale and severity of problems there – as well as surprising sources of resilience – participants came to frame some of their own problems differently:

> One of the surprising differences in the Indian voluntary sector was the way in which leaders did not accept service, advocacy, and activism as distinctive organizational missions. Most voluntary sector organizations did all three. In addition, the 'sub-sectors' in the voluntary sector, health, environment, arts et cetera were not seen as entirely distinctive concerns, but rather like separate petals of a daisy, the heart of which was the enhancement of the human spirit. For example, Vendana Shiva noted in a public speech that the environment should be protected, not only because it provided ecosystem services, but also because a beautiful and intact physical environment feeds the human spirit.

Another voluntary sector leader, who headed an organization that worked with street prostitutes, defended the value of an in-house theatre group for the organization's mission. After all, she noted, 'We can tell people how to live, but it is the artists that can tell them why.' This sense of the underlying connection of different sub-sectors further stimulated McGill-McConnell participants to view problems systemically.

The essays in Part Three all take this broader, systemic view of intractable social and environmental issues. Cindy Blackstock looks at the way in which the local experience of Aboriginal populations within Canada is determined by a complex system of drivers that have national and global roots. Alain Roy, in looking at global partnerships, emphasizes the need for collaboration and partnership in order to get traction on global problems – an approach which we call 'thinking like a movement.'

A global mindset entails a full appreciation of cultural diversity, which is an unmistakable characteristic of our increasingly globalized world. Becoming globally aware means more fully acknowledging and

seeking to work with the ways others with whom we interact see the world. It is challenging both to recognize these cultural differences and to learn to converse with others in relation to their own valued terms of reference. Correspondingly, to be globally-minded calls for an ecumenical or cosmopolitan attitude: that is, a readiness to seek to understand issues from the perspective of diverse others. In subsequent essays Mah-Sen and Dale respond to this challenge respectively with their analyses of the importance of bridge-building and deliberative dialogue.

In the initial essay in this section, Cindy Blackstock, executive director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, highlights the importance of fostering truly appreciative understanding between the First Nations people living on reserves and voluntary sector organizations in Canada. She begins her essay noting both the risks which these people face and the enigmatic fact that First Nations peoples living on reserves are so poorly served by regular voluntary sector organizations in this country. She then seeks to explore why voluntary sector organizations, otherwise so exemplary in the ways they address social problems, seem to remain so unresponsive to the concerns and needs of First Nations living on reserves. She considers the extent to which this lack of response occurs because of lack of knowledge, differing assumptions about volunteerism, and different cultural expectations. If Canadians are going to respond more effectively to First Nations issues, Blackstock argues, they will need to develop a more attentive and more appreciative understanding of these people.

To the extent that voluntary sector organizations address current issues from a global perspective, they will often, correspondingly, explore ways to collaborate with other organizations in other parts of the world addressing the same kinds of issues. They will explore how to become more effective by finding allies and partners with the same kinds of concerns, whether their interests are related to development, poverty, environmental concerns, youth engagement, animal rights, or health care. In his essay on 'Letting Be or Making Collaborations Happen,' Alain Roy, program director at Amnesty International, reviews varied ways in which voluntary sector organizations from different countries have collaborated globally to share information, engage in dialogues, and work on common projects. He discusses a number of noteworthy examples, such as global, cross-border initiatives to ban landmines, forgive third world debts, address and reduce corruption, raise labour standards, and protest the OECD's proposed Multilateral Agreement on Investment. Roy uses these examples as a

basis for inquiring about the diverse ways civil society groups from around the world might work collaboratively to address the issues raised by current forms of economic globalism. What patterns of collaborations, he wonders, are most likely to make the most difference over time? As something like a global civil society begins to emerge, what form is it likely to take?

4. *Because of the reality of the hyper-connectivity, as well as the values of voluntary sector organizations, collaborative frameworks and competencies are a key part of leadership in the voluntary sector.* One of the realities of leadership in the voluntary sector is that it makes increasing demands on a leader's capacity to build sustained collaborations across the sectors. The relative paucity of resources in the sector, as well as the problem-oriented focus of most voluntary sector organizations, makes direct competition, even for resources, counterproductive.

This does not mean that competition in the voluntary sector does not exist; quite the contrary. But it is not valued in the same way as it is in the private sector. As MacMillan points out, the challenge for the voluntary sector is to identify the areas where they should help build up their partners, turn over responsibility to others, and try to win because they indeed are the best organizations to solve the problem. MacMillan recognizes that an emphasis on collaboration sometimes weakens strategic thinking in the sector. This can cause 'mission drift' and a tendency to go after funds reactively as opposed to strategically:

> One approach which combines private and voluntary sector strategic thinking is the use of 'strategic intent' – the creation of a centralized set of ideal goals, a vision of possibility, as it were – in order to stimulate co-ordinated, goal directed activity throughout the organization. The process of arriving at these goals is decentralized, however, allowing for creative means and different approaches. (Macmillan 1983, 70)

Ultimately, however, much more can be gained in the voluntary sector by 'thinking like a movement,' which means combining forces with other voluntary sector organizations, as well as government or private sector actors, to try to induce a 'tipping point' (Gladwell 2000) where initiatives which might be started at a local scale cascade up and cause a whole system transformation. The skills of building partnerships, alliances, and collaborations are therefore key to voluntary sector transformation (Kanter 1989). As one participant said,

Prior to my participation in the McGill-McConnell Program, my approach (to the question of context for educational leadership) would have been straightforward: check opinion polling for attitudes to education; review policy initiatives from across the country, and predict where things might go. Ken Gergen's idea of 'multiple voices all claiming to be the truth and the right' came to mind as I developed a presentation using responses to the 1999 protests against the World Trade Organization in Seattle, challenging us to envisage education as an arena of multiple voices and to explore the implications for educational leaders. An important thing happened: our board's leadership committee decided to reconceptualize its framework for thinking about leadership in education. It determined that it should concern itself with the leadership role that superintendents and others should play in society, and not just in their institutions. As a result, a regular meeting of the board was transformed into a seminar for the board and other national education associations on global trade. It was one of our most successful efforts. A year ago, the board would have said, 'That's not our business.'

Since the end of the program, one of its chief accomplishments has been the number of novel and broadly based collaborations that have sprung up across the sector, as well as collaborations between voluntary organizations and governments or private corporations. Faith communities have collaborated with other NGOs; First Nations organizations have partnered with health- and youth-oriented NGOs. At the sector level, contacts and collaboration have been strengthened and deepened, and some of these have led to continuing, productive relationships. Collaboration within the voluntary sector is not always easy, as many organizations are often in direct competition for funds. Personal contacts established with a colleague during the intensive residency periods of the McGill-McConnell Program paved the way to much more productive dialogue on how collaborative fundraising could be done.

The first two essays in Part Four closely examine the interactions between voluntary sector organizations and the donors who support their activities. In the first essay, Charlotte Cloutier, former executive director of the Newton Foundation, analyses the increased role played by donor-directed contributions to voluntary sector organizations. The astronomical growth of high-involvement giving vehicles, such as donor-advised and venture philanthropy funds, suggests that donors increasingly wish to play a greater role in directing where their gifts go

and how they are utilized. Higher levels of donor involvement are not without problems, Cloutier observes, to the extent that donor-directed contributions may lead recipient organizations to shift their orientations and, over time, lose sight of their priorities. Citing several anthropological studies, Cloutier argues that charity 'on the ground' occurs primarily within ongoing and evolving relationships, and is deeply associated with general feelings of identity and community. Correspondingly, voluntary sector organizations should view high-involved giving as an opportunity to build lively and interactive relationships with donors, of the kind that trigger and nurture dialogue, shared learning, and growth.

While Cloutier makes her recommendations as an aspect of professional responsibility, Robert Ryan reaches complementary conclusions in much more personal terms. In his essay 'Can't We Be Friends?' he tells of his experiences soliciting bequests for an international humanitarian organization and a university for which he formerly worked. Imaginatively using Aristotle's discussion of friendship as a point of reference, Ryan explores the fine line between cultivation and manipulation, between respect for the mystery of giving and effectively managing sound financial transactions. After reviewing several ethically ambiguous situations he has encountered as a fundraiser, Ryan wonders whether these kinds of dilemmas can be adequately resolved guided largely by common sense and personal integrity. In the end, he too views fund-raising as an activity that seeks to build relationships, at once utilitarian and personal, between donors and the organizations they support.

In the third essay in this section, Elizabeth Moreau, director of communications and public education of the Canadian Paediatric Society, examines collaborations between pharmaceutical firms and other health care businesses and voluntary sector organizations working in the field of health care. Over time, these organizations have engaged in a number of collaborations, often undertaken to educate various publics regarding beneficial practices, concerning, for example, the immunization of children, sleeping positions for infants, and the value of low fat foods. She predicts that the number and variety of these collaborations will grow over time, as public funding declines. These collaborations have been both necessary and useful. At times, nonetheless, voluntary-private sector collaborations have been abused in ways that seem to advantage particular businesses, evade regulations calling for full disclosure, and infringe upon the priorities of

health care organizations. Moreau considers alternatives to respond to these problems. She surveys the diverse policies which groups like the American Medical Society and the World Health Organization have developed to guide health care organizations as they consider and enter into these collaborative relationships. Given the possibility for misunderstanding and misuse, she ends her essay recommending that more efforts be invested in developing useful screening and monitoring procedures for these kinds of collaborations.

In the fourth essay, Lily Mah-Sen, who works as a grass-roots coordinator as part of the Community Activism program of Amnesty International, considers policy alternatives that her organization has been debating. Amnesty has developed its reputation by working to defend human rights, especially the civil and political rights of individuals oppressed and sometimes imprisoned by governments. The organization is now thinking about focusing greater attention on defending as well the social and economic rights of individuals, as they are adversely affected by both governments and businesses. In order to develop this line of action, Amnesty has been exploring the possibilities of collaborating on specific terms with particular businesses. There has been much debate over whether Amnesty, as it engages in corresponding actions along these lines, will have significant impact, will compromise its standards, and/or will divert its energies. To address this question, Mah-Sen, who, as a Chinese-Canadian considers herself to be a hyphenated Canadian, reflects on her own experiences as an alternator and bridge builder in order to consider the degree to which Amnesty has been and can become a bridge builder in the global effort to defend human rights.

5. *The need to act in the face of high uncertainty and high stakes is an ongoing concern for the voluntary sector, particularly those involved with vulnerable clients and populations.* One of the key challenges in voluntary sector organizations is that their work entails not only programmatic but also deeply ethical concerns. When working with fragile and vulnerable populations, the cost of mistakes can be high. If a product line fails, workers may have to be laid off, and profits may decline. But when a youth worker in an international NGO dies far from home, the harm is irreversible. Nonetheless, it remains an ideal to address the needs of the most vulnerable.

When we were in Delhi, we learned something that Gandhi said, that when you're faced with a decision, if you make that decision so that it

benefits the most vulnerable person involved, then you know you are go-
ing in the right direction.

Action in a context of high complexity is, as we have noted, based on
low control. An initiative such as a leadership decision may have not
only unexpected, but also devastating consequences. However, with-
out risk there can be no transformation. Palmer (1990) notes the need to
balance contemplation and action, insight and courage. The risks can-
not be ignored. But to dwell on them is to risk immobilization. It points
again to reflection and discernment as crucial leadership capacities, but
these need to be combined with the courage to make mistakes, even in
risky situations. As noted by General Roméo Dallaire, the former head
of the UN forces in Rwanda, men went out to fight every day because
they believed in his leadership. Some of them died and, ultimately,
lacking the cooperation of key nations, the peacekeeping effort failed.
But a leader must try; and a leader can't escape responsibility, even for
things that cannot be controlled (Dallaire 2004).

The recognition that mistakes will occur in the voluntary sector is
one thing; the capacity to learn from those mistakes is another, requir-
ing a special kind of courage. It requires the ability to listen deeply to
others, even if that deepens our sense of culpability, to know oneself
deeply, and to be prepared to reveal both strengths and frailties in dia-
logue with others.

In the first essay in Part Five, Shawn Bayes writes about a particular
problem, namely, the way the correction system puts unanticipated
stress on the children of offenders. As the director of the Elizabeth Fry
Society of Vancouver, Bayes provides compelling evidence of the stress
from which these children suffer and the long-term cost to Canadian
society. In powerful and persuasive ways, her essay is a call to action. It
provides disturbing evidence and then invites readers to explore how
they can find ways to address this situation. As her essay was originally
read by classmates in the McGill-McConnell Program, it has already
aroused others to explore ways in which their organizations might act
to help these children. Effective communication often serves as a means
of rallying people to take action.

Jacquie Dale, who currently is the president and CEO of One World
Inc., also discusses the importance of communicating effectively, but
focuses on a very different form of communicating, namely, inter-
active public dialogues. Her essay provides accounts of three different
initiatives from Scandinavia, Brazil, and Canada: Citizens' Juries,

participatory budget debates, and deliberative dialogues. All of these tools function as means of opening up public discourse, developing common ground from which plans of action for addressing value-laden, controversial, and potentially divisive issues can arise. They have each had measurable success. In the late 1990s, while still working for the Canadian Council for International Cooperation, Dale initiated a series of public conversations across Canada about international issues, like global trade and world hunger. On the basis of this experience, the council began a consulting firm that Dale manages. It organizes dialogue processes for various public, private, and voluntary organizations.

In the last essay, Jennifer Flanagan, president and CEO of Actua, writes about ways of fostering effective programs of action by integrating commercial activities into voluntary sector organizations. In part, she argues that these money-making activities provide additional sources of funds, without which many program activities might otherwise have to be curtailed. She makes this argument because such commercial activities can provide the most effective way of delivering particular services to targeted groups. Over the years, a number of voluntary sector organizations, such as the YMCA, have developed commercial activities in the form of summer camps, fitness programs, and craft and cooking classes. Flanagan makes another point as well. She wants to call attention to the ways entrepreneurial initiative, so characteristic of many businesses, can be cultivated effectively by voluntary sector organizations.

In spite of their different forms, these essays emphasize the following common points. First, imagination plays an important role in fostering effective action. Imagination can be used by listening to others (Dale), by considering alternative ways of action (Flanagan), and by confronting overlooked information, in this case about the children of offenders (Bayes). Imagination allows us to gain new perspectives, to consider excluded alternatives, and to envision mediating positions between supposed mutually exclusive alternatives.

Second, effective action is often taken by identifying and building on current assets rather than thinking about problems and deficiencies. We can see evidence for this belief in Flanagan's discussion of entrepreneurial activity in the voluntary sector, and in the ways the participants in deliberative dialogues are encouraged to draw upon their own experiences.

Third, effective action calls for people to take risks. Each of these authors points to large risks which typically cause hesitation, anxiety,

vacillation, and correspondingly, inaction. The risks in all these cases are real and significant. Bayes reflects both on the risks faced by the children of offenders and the risks that accompany any efforts to address this problem. In the public debates Dale describes, the participants are invited to voice their anxieties about the risk associated with the alternative responses they are discussing. Finally, Flanagan acknowledges the risk associated with the kind of entrepreneurial activities she is championing. These essays are grouped together to compare and appreciate the different ways in which the authors describe methods of addressing risk. Bayes argues that the risks involved in responding compassionately to the children of offenders are smaller than the risks that these children and society will face if we fail to respond. Dale shows how people who otherwise strongly disagree and fear the positions proposed by others can overcome these differences by taking the time to listen to each other. Finally, while acknowledging the risks associated with social entrepreneurship, Flanagan makes a compelling case that the uncertainties are manageable and that the outcomes are well worth the venture.

These five themes, as well as the ethical concerns which run through them all, shaped the conversations in the classroom and shape the essays in this book. The writing of the papers and the process of preparing them for publication made it obvious that the challenges facing today's organizations require not only new understandings but also new forms of knowledge production, best achieved by creating a dialogue between practical academics and thoughtful practitioners. These papers were selected from 120 essays in total; they were nominated by academics who felt that they represented excellent research and practical insights into leadership in the voluntary sector. They were further refined at workshops where practitioners and academics worked together to give voice to areas of key concern for both. What was achieved in this volume is therefore not only an unusual look at the voluntary sector in Canada but also an unusual blend of thought and practice.

As educators, we have discovered in the McGill-McConnell Program a pedagogy of human learning which engages us in the building of knowledge rather than simply the gathering of information, which seeks to foster the development of learning communities in which learners are engaged intellectually, emotionally, and physically.

The essays in this volume are valuable to students and researchers interested in exploring some of the most critical areas of leadership in the voluntary sector. They raise questions for those who want to

understand work and practice in this area in greater depth. They also offer new perspectives for the practitioners themselves, providing guidance in their own particular efforts to support social good, social change, and those values upon which civil society depends.

PART ONE

The Reflective Mindset

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1 The Courage to Become

LYNDA MANSER

For young people in the care of Canada's already large and rapidly growing child welfare system – dealing with past traumatic experiences, faced with difficult challenges in the future, and lacking effective control over their own lives – life can be intensely frustrating. Many youth in care express feelings of isolation, loneliness, and hopelessness. As a result of this situation, the National Youth in Care Network was started in 1985 by a group of young people from across Canada who were determined to do something about their feelings of powerlessness within the child welfare system and wished to regain control of their lives. Over twenty years later, although the faces have changed, the National Youth in Care Network's purpose remains the same: to empower its youth members and help them, in turn, to empower their peers in care.

The National Youth in Care Network is a national charitable organization made up of young people, ages 14 to 24, who are either in or from state care across Canada. State care includes the child welfare and protection systems, children's mental health systems, and young offender systems. In any year, there are approximately 76,000 young people in the care of child welfare authorities, and 25,000 young people in custody in Canada; countless others in mental health institutions, and still others who fall through the cracks of these systems and live on the streets.

Youth-in-care networks are peer support groups run by and for youth in care, focusing on support and advocacy activities that teach young people skills which will help them to help themselves and their peers. They are the conduits through which youth in care can support one another and effect positive change in the child welfare and custody

systems. These networks provide young people with an opportunity to redirect their abused energies in order to help themselves and their peers to heal.

Since I began working with the National Youth in Care Network, I have consistently found inspiration from the youth leaders, even on days that are filled with tears from the horror stories and bureaucratic frustrations that make up a large part of their lives. In gratitude and admiration, I wanted to honour their struggles and their 'courage to become': their ability to find their own humanity within an inhuman system of 'care.'

Storytelling has great power within the Youth in Care Network Movement, and it is the chief mechanism used in this essay to explore the courage to become through reflection and expressive action.

This exploration is an attempt to uncover the common paths taken by young people towards achieving emotional well-being, and to extract the lessons to be learned from their personal experiences of pain and triumph over abusive home situations and the lack of empathy in the child welfare system.

A common theme in these young people's stories is the experience of injustice – of situations leaving youth with a stark choice to act or not to act. When their reaction to this injustice was inaction, they felt despair; but when their reaction was to act, they discovered that they could begin a self-transformation that led to the realization of their own leadership abilities. The creation and narration of their personal stories guided them through a process of expressive action and reflection: an exploration of their motives, their struggles, the others in their lives, their gifts and skills, and the results of their actions. Through this process, they came to know who they were within the context of their personal history and in relation to a community of others like them. They were able to achieve leadership, inspiring other youth in care to begin the process of becoming and increasing the understanding and empathy of others with the situations and needs of youth in care.

Despite the generally positive outcomes in the stories that follow, names have been changed in order to protect the identities and confidentiality of the young narrators.[1]

1. The Injustice: Youth in Care

Physical and sexual assaults are among the most frequent causes of harm and death to children and youth, yet they are also the most

difficult to document (Trocmé and Brison 1997). Assaults by family members account for a substantial portion of all assaults against children and youth. These incidents are frequently under-reported because they often take place within the privacy of the home, and involve victims who are dependent on their abusers and who fear the consequences of talking to anyone about their experiences. One victim describes the feelings she had as follows:

> When I think of family violence I think of my father batting me around the house pretty bad. He put me in the hospital. He'd scream and yell at me. You get pretty scared of it. It's like you want to back off. You just want to go, run away and that's what I'd been doing for about thirteen years of my life around there. I'd been running away from home and that really got me even more mad because when I'd get home I'd get the worst of it. When I was first born my mother said she had problems with me even before I was born, that I was the lousiest baby in the whole department. She's always been running me down. And the sexual abuse, well, that put me in a scare because if I didn't do it, what would he do? It's like laying there thinking to yourself, 'When is it going to be over? I want to get it over.' That's all I could think of. My mother could have put a stop to it. She could have gone to the police. She did nothing. She just let it go, and that's why I blame her. I hate my mother. (Raychaba 1993, 17)

There is a general consensus among academics and clinical professionals that family violence has a long-lasting detrimental impact on the lives of child victims (Raychaba 1993). Behaviours commonly exhibited by child victims of violence include non-compliance, hostile and aggressive behaviour, poor peer and social relationships, insecure attachments, low self-esteem, impaired moral development, and an overall sense of anxiety and emotional insecurity. By and large, a history of family violence or abuse is associated with higher rates of delinquency, adult criminal activity, psychiatric illness, and teenage pregnancy (ibid.).

Protection for abused children: The child welfare system

Canada has in place a wide array of legally sanctioned protocols and programs that provide for the protection and substitute care of children and adolescents who either have been abused or, for a wide variety of other reasons, cannot be cared for by their biological families. These

were based on the system originally designed for the protection of animals, the Humane Society.

If and when abuse or maltreatment is suspected, a child welfare agency or department of social services initiates an investigation to determine whether or not the allegation is founded, and whether it falls into the jurisdiction's definition of abuse or maltreatment. If the allegation appears to be well founded, child welfare authorities are legally authorized to take the child into custody. The state assumes legal guardianship of young people in need, and thus is considered to be acting *in loco parentis* (in place of the parent). These children or adolescents are then designated as being 'in care.'

Consider the experience of Julie, and her description of how she came into the child welfare system:

It started when I was about twelve years old and I was always running away from home. At first it consisted of sleeping at friends' houses. Then in stairwells, when my friends' parents would call my mom to tell her that I was there, which defeated the purpose of my running away. Then it turned into longer bouts, became a week at a time. I would be staying up all night in coffeehouses and fast-food restaurants, moving from place to place for as long as I could, as long as they were open.

I lived in the projects in the north of the city with my mom and two brothers. What I remember about my childhood is being surrounded by sadness and poverty. The projects I lived in had mainly single-parent families. There was a lot of drugs and alcohol in our community. It wasn't a safe place to be. So this combined with the mental illness of Mother. She experienced serious depression and found it hard to take care of three kids by herself on top of dealing with her own stuff and everything else in the community. I remember our place on a normal day. The house was always dark, the drapes closed. If you open the fridge, there may be a jar of old pickles and mouldy bread in there. It wasn't a great place: cockroaches and things no one likes to live with. I felt a great deal of responsibility for my brothers, and this caused a lot of conflict with my mother around issues like discipline versus punishment. Her opinion was to punish immediately and physically, and sometimes it got out of hand.

When I was 13, I went to live with Aunt Lucy, who wasn't actually an aunt, just a friend of my mother. She lived in the same neighbourhood as us. Living with her opened my eyes to things. I began to see that things at home weren't normal, that parents didn't have to resort to corporal punishment immediately. Lucy was the same as mother, but she had coping

skills. I lived there for seven months, and during that time my own disposition started to improve. I was happier, safer. I began to realize that there was more to me than 'You're a stupid kid, you're never going to amount to anything.' After seven months, I went back home because I had made decisions in my life with regards to religion and felt that being at home would be better for me.

I asked my grandma if I could live with her. She said no, since my grandpa had just died. But I think it was more because my mom said to her, 'Don't you dare let her live with you.' I think she said that because she was feeling like a bad mom and didn't think it was a good idea. I couldn't live with my father, so my options were to stay put in the institution, or go home. I decided to try to do everything I could to go back home.

People always ask me, 'How can you go back? It never changes.' It's like, no matter what, they are still your parents. No matter what they do to you, they are always your parents. No one else will ever take the place of your parents. You always think that things might be different.

I stayed in that institution for almost a month. The day before I was to go home, a psychiatrist came to my room and asked me, 'What would you do if your mom didn't want you back?' I said, 'I guess I would be on the streets.' My mom had told them she didn't want me back, but she hadn't told me. They had already contacted the ministry, and had planned for a social worker to come the next day and take me to a receiving home. I found out that Mom had known about this for a week and had already packed up my stuff, without saying a word to me. I freaked out and spent the afternoon crying. The only thing that helped me that day was one of [the] co-op students came into my room and closed the door behind her. She didn't say anything for a while. Then, in a quiet voice she said, 'I don't normally tell anyone this, but I'm telling you this to help you.' She told me that she had been in care and it was the best thing for her because of her own home life. She told me that going into care saved her life, and that it may be a good thing for me too. She told me that it was only temporary, and that it didn't make me a bad person, it didn't make me abnormal. She was supportive, and that gave me a source of strength to help me get through it.

But I still had a lot of things that hadn't been dealt with. I was still in depression and using drugs, and basically living a double life. Going to school was really hard, as I was constantly getting the 'What did you do?' or 'You must be a bad ass' or 'You must be easy because girls in care are easy.' After going to three different schools in less than two years, you learn to keep your mouth shut and you don't say anything. You just hope

you'll meet a nice person who will become your friend. But, without fail, I always met up with people who smoked pot or had no respect for life and I would just end up sitting under a bridge doing drugs. I was supposed to be getting counselling and tutoring, but I think that no amount of counselling would have helped me, because I didn't feel ready to do it. I didn't realize at that time that I was not the bad person.

The experience of being in the care of the child welfare system

The experience of being in the care system is unlike anything one would want a child to experience. Children and adolescents frequently have difficulty adjusting to the disintegration of their families and subsequent removal from their home. Being placed in a stranger's home with little more than a garbage bag of belongings compounds the barriers for adjustment. While some social workers, judges, or foster parents may attempt to explain to them that they have been removed from their families 'for their own good,' the children, removed from everything that is secure and known, typically feel that they, not their parents, are being punished for the abuse they have suffered.

Once placed in the care of the state, youth are frequently moved to new foster or group homes, causing further ruptures in what stable relationships they have. This transiency may be the result of inadequate placement selection, insufficient contact with caseworkers, inadequate supervision, or a caseworker's misdiagnosis of the child's needs. Emotional and behavioural problems resulting from past histories of family violence often manifest themselves in anti-social, hostile, and aggressive behaviours, also leading to the breakdown of a placement (Raychaba 1993).

Unfortunately, although this 'acting out' is a natural response to their earlier separation and loss, displaying this response leads into a self-perpetuating and unhealthy cycle of non-attachment and disruptive behaviour. Successful experiences with attachment provide children and youth with the psychological security and confidence necessary for them to cope with stress, fear, frustration and worry later on in life, while providing the foundations upon which future relationships are built.

Unfortunately, the experience of the child in care is often associated with considerable instability. This situation is undesirable for any child, especially one who has an unhappy background that has been characterized by an unstable relationship with parents (Cruikshank 1991). Youth in care living transient lifestyles over a sustained period of time

tend to develop a conditioned inability and an understandable unwillingness to interact, integrate, and become emotionally connected to or attached with either peers or adult caregivers (Raychaba 1993).

They Soon Forget

You came,
You became a number
You ate
You slept
They kept your mind under lock and key.
They chained you to rules,
To their way of life.
You went,
They waved,
They soon forgot,
But, did you?

Anonymous, *Youth Exchange* (1987, 2)

2. The Reaction to the Injustice: Courage in the Lives of Youth in Care

In the midst of these unhealthy conditions, and despite the interference of a system originally designed to ensure the protection of animals, some youth survive. They become strong enough to overcome the impact of a vicious childhood and stop the cycle of violence. And some excel, leading organizations that support young people who suffer under the same unhealthy conditions and oppressive bureaucracies. They have the courage to work with the perceived enemy, to prevent their experiences from happening to other, younger children. At some point in their lives, they have sensed their own possibilities beyond their immediate existence and have chosen to represent those possibilities to others. But what is it that drives some to live with courage, while others are forever trapped in a cycle already determined for them?

The courage to become

Courage refers to the attitude of facing and dealing with anything recognized as dangerous, difficult or painful, instead of withdrawing from