



# **Report from Group Two (2)**

*Montreal & Dominican Republic*

September 20, 2015 – October 4, 2015

## Participants

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## Introduction

To develop true leadership skills, one must challenge the comfort of their normative disposition. September 20 – September 30 marked an important step in that direction for five (5) Canadian and seven (7) Caribbean nationals who participated in the CCELD 2015. Having been exposed to a number of presentations and interactive sessions surrounding leadership and its multiplicity of facets in Ottawa, Canada, they left the comfort of those initial meetings to be immersed in “real life” experiences through meetings and consultations with industry leaders in Montreal, Canada and Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. During these encounters, over 20 leaders from education, environmental non-profit organizations, social change agencies, government social services and the private sector were consulted. The schedule was designed to thrust the participants beyond what was thought to be the optimum intellectually, physically and emotionally. Through these visits, participants got the opportunity to study best practices, analyze each other and themselves, thus, creating a holistic learning experience.

The following is an outline of the thematic areas that were covered and the presenting operational foci and lessons gleaned.

## Discussion Imperatives

### **Ethics and Good Governance**

During the opening of the CCELD in Ottawa, Shantal Munro Knight, in a response to a question on ethics, stated that one must not lose sight of high ethical standards. Although Canada has strict policies on equality for ethically based hiring practices, two non-profit organizations that practice equity-based hiring policies were visited; hiring in one case, locally based populations and in the other, youth under 30. The group recognizes that as leaders, we must recognize that ethics are contextual, and that we must be open to community dialogues to assure that our ideals

are inclusive. The recurrent foci of ethics witnessed dealt with opening up to bottom-upwards communication and transparency, the environment, and working to the benefit of marginalized populations.

Multiple organizations that were visited used community consultation practices to set their version of ethics within their vision. It was learned that a union-based investment group uses its wealth to fund community start-ups. By having agreed upon terms as to what defined an “ethical business”, they chose to divest of any company that was no longer ethical, even when that meant loss of potential profits. One public university established an international development institute based on the ethics set out by the United Nations (UN). A final practice for good governance was transparency and accountability. In processing funds for impoverished families, a non-governmental organization (NGO) used three interconnected yet individual organizations to provide accountability.

### **Inclusiveness, Diversity, Civic Engagement and Participation**

Inclusiveness in leadership requires conscious evaluation of the voices being heard. In observing who the speaking representatives were during the CCELD visits, it was noticed that there was an absence of female discussants until we arrived in the Dominican Republic, where the representation was equal. We questioned how society listens, to whom, and whether people are taught to hear certain voices over others. Many of the organizations actively seek out the voices of their community members and respond, resulting in one case, in ongoing buy-in from over 16,000 volunteers. In another, it eased the tensions within the labour groups. Examples exist, however, that did not seek guidance in their governance from the marginalized groups that they assist. Though the previously mentioned institution had adopted the UN’s mandate and had

implemented interdisciplinary consultation and research processes, the students were questioning the integrity of the process for being heard on matters such as divestment of oil. The non-profit with equitable hiring processes was not looking to build capacity at a higher level within their own organization for the same marginalized community.

Immigrant population inclusion is a priority to many of those working in the public and labour sector. In Montreal, one union provided funding for a programme that trains newcomers in language and job-readiness. Organizations focused on marginalized communities such as one inner-city school and an NGO realized the empowerment to be had through education, others emphasized the importance of providing quality of life and social capital through entertainment such as theatre and sports.

### **Collaborative Leadership**

Collaborative leadership requires open channels of communication between managers and unions. By collaborating without hierarchy, they empower teams through a shared vision and purpose. Shared ownership of organizational change can be realized by consultation with internal and external stakeholders, strategic organizational impact assessment, and identification of appropriate resources required for success.

A private company was visited that had introduced new automated systems to improve operational efficiency. Though they incurred significant layoffs with this introduction, by collaborating with the union, management was able to ease tensions through their transparency and open dialogues. One NGO was open to sharing best practices with external organizations.

Their mentality of “paying it forward” resulted in lower project initiation costs and a decreased potential for failure for other nations.

### **Globalize & Localize**

The phrase “think global, act local” can be used in a variety of contexts, whether social, environmental, planning, education, business or others. It represents the idea of urging people to consider the health of the entire planet when taking action within their local communities.

Particular institutions observed during the study tours have constructed their buildings in accordance with environmental standards (i.e.: LEED – Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design). These institutions are leading a commitment on a local level in order to achieve the goals of reduced energy consumption and the promotion of green spaces to foster not only plant material but also social cohesiveness through long-term sustainable infrastructure investment.

Climate change is a reality felt across the globe and result in unprecedented environmental challenges. Organizations are now considering tools such as the Index of Vulnerability to Climatic Shocks and the Multidimensional Poverty Index to enable research-based decisions to be made at the planning phase in order to be proactive for impending natural disasters. Diversification of crop selection and genetically modified plant species were two strategies that farmers employed to lessen their risk of vulnerability.

In terms of cultural integration, a non-profit community centre located in a multicultural urban centre acknowledged that their goal was not to create a homogenous culture, but rather to integrate while encouraging differences.

We learned that strengthening Caribbean tourism and collaboration in exporting are key to having a competitive advantage on a global level. However, differentiation is equally important to recognize the cultural uniqueness of each country. Currently, organizations are implementing social media strategies to brand unique local experiences to a borderless audience.

### **Technology and Innovation**

Business markets must evolve technologically in order to remain relevant. The incorporation of technology is of utmost importance regarding the quality of products and services delivered. It plays a key role in cost control and profit maximization. Throughout our dialogues we have seen several companies demonstrate this. We learned that simulation has become a leading way of enhancing education and training in a multiplicity of fields. From flight training to medical procedure simulations, companies are able to reduce training costs by replicating specific scenarios, without significant financial waste during training, a benefit to both the private sector and to public education. In another private sector business, we learned how robots are able to revolutionize the way that distribution of goods is achieved, with processing times being a fraction of that which would obtain with human labour. Other areas that are affected include: inventory listing, production, decrease in human error, and more.

### **Embracing Failure**

Failure is not palatable in any organization, however, based on recent dialogues with successful industry leaders in Canada and the Dominican Republic, it was proven that accepting the responsibility of failure and analyzing its causes will lead to positive changes, growth and success in any organization.

Essential to success is an ongoing review of business models suited to the particular environment, development of a shared responsibility culture, deeper resource and development of niches which makes it harder to fail, , avoidance of recurrence of failed strategies, increased inclusion of stakeholders in problem-solving and forecasting, increased application of best practices, strategic entrance and exit plans upon evaluation of market position and strengths; but most importantly there must be the development of open communication and collaborative leadership styles. We witnessed this as having maximum impact upon recovery from failures and lack-luster business performances.

### **Conclusion**

Team two (2) proved that the CCELD vision holds strong. We faced adversity with humour, and learned to acknowledge and accommodate a variety of leadership styles. Most poignantly, we were faced with our own weaknesses as leaders. Self-awareness is a powerful tool, as we can then evaluate our decisions more honestly, and be open to change. By being open to change, we can listen to the communities who most need to be heard. Important also, is that the team has recognized a deeper sense of responsibility to societal development.

We have developed strategies for going forward, where we can continue to develop our relations between Canada and the Caribbean. To that effect we have reflected on personal and professional recommendations that will serve as our own commitment to lead by example when we head home, with the CCELD experiences to draw from and networks to grow for years to come.

### **Our Commitments Moving Forward**



We commit to:

- initiate bottom-up listening practices in our institutions, and to look towards finding space for representation of all stakeholders in organizational communication.
- maintaining a balanced focus between globalization and technological innovation, and developing strategies for improving local-level community impact.
- strengthening the ties between public, private, and labour, by influencing change and pushing for a non-adversarial approach between the groups
- encourage strategic export partnerships amongst countries of the wider Caribbean – e.g. each country identifies products that will be part of a basket of products to be promoted regionally and extra-regionally.
- Connect with the organizations that we have learned about and continue to share and/or replicate best practices and innovations.
- Learn from our newly acquired mantra “We shouldn’t let our shores define us”, and continue to innovate trade and aid practices through our new Canadian-Caribbean partnerships.