

RAPPORTEUR'S PRESENTATION – LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP FORUM

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Introduction

- It has been a treat for me to be with you for the last couple of days and to see you helping each other and learning from each other as well as from the many practical presentations.
- My nephew, Dr. Max Cameron, is the head of the Institute for the Study of Democratic Institutions at UBC, and has become interested in how elected people and those who aspire to elected office get the training they need to be successful. I introduced him to the Local Government Leadership Academy, and we concluded that there is nothing equivalent for federal or provincial elected people.
- Can you imagine how different our provincial and federal governments would be if their members had the opportunity you have had during the past few days, discovering the revealing candour of the remarks we heard last night such as:
 - “I was petrified at my first meeting;”
 - “This is all I ever wanted to do and I’ll be sorry when it’s over;” or
 - “Take the high road because there’s less traffic up there. You don’t get anywhere by throwing rocks.”

The rest of my presentation is in three sections:

1. Three **challenges** that are transforming political life – things that you may not welcome or want to deal with but you can’t avoid;
2. What **qualities** you will need in order to cope with these challenges; and
3. What **tools** the Forum has provided to help you cope.

Challenge # 1: Social Media

I don't recall being asked if I wanted to interact with all my friends and associates on the internet. I wasn't aware of that need until about six or seven years ago when my then-teenaged daughter started showing an interest in the computer.

Now at this forum we have learned about the main platforms of social media – Facebook, Twitter and YouTube – and the role they can play in the relationship between you and your constituents.

Social media have some important pluses:

- They are instant and provide availability 24/7; and
- They are interactive and allow continuing conversation.

Their chief minuses are:

- They are instant and provide availability 24/7; and
- They are interactive and allow continuing conversation.

In other words, the use of social media in politics is a two-edged sword. From observing your conversations, I have the impression social media are changing your role as the elected representatives, not only in your constituency role of helping people deal with government but also in your legislative role, in which the information informing decisions is more readily available to citizens and the elected representative becomes more of a facilitator of a dialogue between the community and a policy body.

In any event, don't lull yourself into thinking that you have a choice about whether or not to use social media – it's the way of the future and if you don't like it, it's time to retire.

You have also been introduced to PlaceSpeak, the online consultation platform developed by Colleen Hardwick. Full disclosure here: I am a director and investor in PlaceSpeak. PlaceSpeak has the potential to transform the relationship between citizens and local government by creating a multi-faceted and interactive dialogue on matters of mutual interest. I believe it can become to spatial networking what Facebook is to social networking. I don't believe that because I

am a director and an investor; I am a director and an investor because I believe that.

Challenge #2: Relations between First Nations and Local Governments

I have to express my admiration to the LGLA for having the guts to present a work in progress in relationship building as well as an example of an emerging post-treaty success. As I learned about the many attempts, some successful and some not so successful, to establish new relationships, I kept thinking of the last line of the *Delgamuukw* decision, which was "*Let us face it, we are all here to stay.*" We are only beginning to discover the meaning of those words.

I was struck by the change in attitudes on this issue since I was involved in the Lower Mainland Treaty Advisory Committee nearly a decade ago. Local government's attitude has gone from "Are we going to get screwed in treaty negotiations?" to "How can we live together to pursue a more sustainable future?"

We now seem to be developing a better understanding of the foundational elements of a new relationship, such as:

- The diversity within First Nations;
- Their long-term perspective;
- The mutual interests we have with them; and
- The need for respect on all sides.

Which leads us to...

Challenge #3: Achieving sustainable, inclusive communities in a sustainable, inclusive society.

Our recent past history has entailed conflicts between seemingly opposing forces, such as the economy vs. the environment, urban vs. rural, First Nations vs. other interests, etc. If we think those conflicts were divisive, we ain't seen nothing yet.

The current controversies on issues such as pipeline projects make it clear that these issues will be played out on a provincial, national or even international

scale. The very essence of how we British Columbians define ourselves in economic, environmental and social terms is at stake.

The communities and regions that will thrive in this environment are those that have thought these issues through in the form of plans for sustainability in an inclusive future where the needs of all are met. The future of our beautiful province requires no less.

So those are the three challenges. Of course, they are inter-related. For example:

- Is planning for a sustainable future a way to make a new start with a First Nation?
- How can we use social media tools to build community consensus for a sustainable future?
- Would the members of your community or region be on the same page if a resource development issue went viral on the internet?

The qualities you will need to deal with the challenges

We are never perfectly prepared nor perfectly unprepared to confront challenges such as these; each of us is a work in progress. But I think we learned a bit about the qualities we need to develop better if we are to function more effectively. To achieve its goals, the British Navy needed ships. We need ships to, but ships of a different type.

The most important ship we need is **leadership**, the ability to engage others in achieving a common goal. Note that the willing cooperation of others is integral to the concept of leadership. This leads us to the smaller frigates in our fleet:

- **Followership**, which involves knowing when your objective will be advanced by supporting the work of someone else. Many commentators have noted that a lot can be achieved if it doesn't matter who gets the credit; and

- **Mentorship**, in which you get to ensure that your ideas and causes are carried on by a generation of people who will be there when you are gone.

But the biggest ship of all is **relationship**, which is the central focus of this forum and was explored in many dimensions. Two of our speakers offered separate but similar statements of the requirements of a good relationship. Julian Payne said they were shared history, empathy and understanding, and having or developing common interests. I thought these were particularly challenging concepts in respect to the relationship between First Nations and local governments. Jamie Chicanot's three requirements for a relationship were trust, respect (which he said was not the absence of disrespect) and awareness and familiarity. These are just examples of the deep concepts we have been exploring in our discussions. And in the presentation on the Hailsa Nation and the District of Kitimat, we got to see a relationship under construction, which a good way to learn about anything.

What tools the forum provided to help you cope

It is not the rapporteur's job to list everything that happened at an event like this, and that would not be very useful to you even if I could. So here is a list of some practical suggestions for how to lead through relationships that I thought were of particular interest:

- Mayor Tom Hughes' articulation of how to lead at a regional level through influence rather than authority;
- The war stories of how three people – Graham Bruce, Darlene Marzari and Josh Smienk - achieved the apparently impossible;
- The value of leverage in unlocking a big problem – get a small piece of the puzzle working and build on that;
- The techniques of Board/Council-staff collaboration;
- How to attack difficult decisions, and recognizing that in local government, as Tracey Lee Lorensen said, "You are in the business of disappointment;"
- How to unpack conflict, to understand what is going on mentally and physically, in a conflict situation and strategies for breaking it down;

- And finally, the “speed dating” sessions we have just finished this morning, which allowed you to consider how the insights you have attained apply to:
 - Youth;
 - Angry constituents;
 - Your CAO (not the same approach as with angry constituents);
 - Seniors;
 - Family; and
 - The library.

One final take-away is a new acronym we learned – RUPPIES – Retired Urban Professionals. As someone born in 1945, I am surfing on the front wave of the baby boomers, the best-educated generation ever who experienced (and caused) much of the turmoil of the 1960s. Well, now we’re retiring, we’ve got time on our hands, and we’re coming to get you!

Thank you.

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