

Final Board/Staff Report and Briefing Notes for Leadership Transition April 2014

Since my last Report for the January 20, 2014 Board Meeting, I have again more than adequately fulfilled the requirements of my Job Description (updated January 2014, and attached.)

Following are Briefing Notes to suggest how to move this agency forward.

Most of my work since the last Report for the January 20, 2014 Board Meeting (received but not shared with the Board by Darrel Schultz on that date), has been:

- to help care for hurting Staff;
- to encourage that all the necessary work of the agency continues to be done;
- to take a “step back” from the day-to-day, and write “Briefing Notes” about the Big Picture into the future of the agency.

1. *Prison Visitation (M2/W2)*

Prison visitation has been the core program since the agency’s founding in 1966. Most provincial funding for this dried up 13 years ago with the election of the Liberal government. Federal funding dried up three years ago under the Conservative government (sadly so alike in social justice policy to the provincial government), except for CoSA. Our other programs bring in their own funding (*Hidden Treasures*), or are close to adequately funded (*CoSA* – fully), (*NOLA* – two thirds) this fiscal year.

At the same time prison visitation (*M2/W2*) funding evaporated, we reduced Staff provincially and federally. But we did not reduce any prisons receiving services, unless they closed, or refused our voluntary services.

Prison visitation Staff are consequently stretched to the maximum, and volunteers perform services at Kamloops Regional Correctional Centre (KRCC) and at Surrey Pre-Trial Services Centre (SPSC).

Pascal Adam took on coordination of two additional prisons since July 2012. I began coordination at two federal institutions since July 2012. There was great managerial assistance from our Office Manager, Lumintsa Dudas; and it has “worked out.” But our contributions have been through mainly or largely volunteer overtime hours. It is untenable for an incoming Executive Director to take on this role. Federal coordination is inadequate to the needs, but routinely elicits excessive volunteer hours from all three federal coordinators.

Specific to the two institutions I coordinate, since I am retiring: all coordination at PI/RTC must be negotiated through SPO Lavanda Belanger. All coordination at RRAC must be negotiated through Chaplain Tim Morris. As of December 2013, there are no volunteers available at RRAC. The new temporary Protestant Chaplain should be contacted too. RRAC needs – again – a kick-start.

The three provincial institutions have one paid coordinator at ACCW. Linnea Groom also puts in excessive volunteer hours. Several unpaid volunteer coordinators assist at most institutions. *There is an unjust and untenable coordination element at all prison institutions that urgently needs addressing.*

Lumintsa, since November has been the FVI co-ordinator as a volunteer, continuing the work of a previous volunteer co-ordinator since July 2012.

2. *Staff Well-Being*

Since Barry Neufeld became Board Chairperson June 2010, *no Staff person would claim that Staff well-being has been his concern, or by extension that of the Board.* The contractor may so claim now. If so, it is a different tune only very recently played.

On the contrary, in 2012 three Staff persons were summarily fired, one reduced to half time, then demoted. The fall-out caused such immense turmoil and stress with agency Staff that a mediator was of necessity contracted. The Board Chairperson and Board never showed commitment to reconciliation with Staff and to moving on.

Over the years, profound Staff hurt, demotivation, and ministry disincentive, etc., etc., have been the Board's impact; and for me since I'm leaving, its legacy. The Board has felt mostly like a marauding animal to defend against, which one never knows when it might try to strike again. Consequently, though energies and time are invariably taxed well beyond expected in the performance of our regular duties, rearguard defence vigilance and action were further constantly elicited by the Board. Staff consequently quit in 2012, or threatened to quit off and on these past three and a half years, with much related *angst*. *The grand tragedy is: non-profit Boards and their Chairs generally, this one specifically according to the Board Manual, are to be the inverse – supportive of Staff above all!*

This led in 2012 to my taking off five weeks on stress leave. Though my doctor wanted me to stay off work an additional six weeks. He has since regularly monitored my stress level, and has offered at any time to write another note to give me additional stress leave, given its external chronic source in the Board. It is a grace that I leave psychologically healthy☺, when Board action over the past three and a half years militated against this. We know how pearls in oysters grow... Father [Richard Rohr](#) calls this “second half of life” learning.

3. *Promotions: General*

Other than stating the obvious – fundraising and volunteer recruitment are of the essence! – the agency continues to be in chronic need of doing fundraising and volunteer recruitment☺. Though significant funding may be made available for the next three years by National Crime Prevention Centre (NCPC) for NOLA; as with multi-million dollar NCPC CoSA funding; as with CSC multi-hundreds of thousands of dollars funding of M2/W2 over about thirty years, and multi-hundreds of thousands of dollars BC Corrections funding over about 40 years, government funding invariably comes to an end, or is often drastically without warning reduced.

Further: some on the CoSA Advisory Board believe that the NCPC multi-million dollar funding for CoSA, in relation to services rendered, involves something approaching criminal negligence in (mis)use of funding. Integrity at least seemed compromised by some CoSA's across the country. Similarly, the “promises” on projections made to secure NOLA funding need to show integrity. Also, twice as much per client is being asked for NOLA compared to CoSA.

4. *Promotions: Newsletter*

The newsletter has been produced usually four times a year, except when funds were unavailable. There is ambivalence about moving entirely to an e-newsletter which is far less expensive. Some combination, perhaps at least once a year, should be used. Luminitsa and I have been editors.

When I became Executive Director in 1998, we changed the name and look of the newsletter...

5. *Promotions: Website/Facebook/Twitter*

Stats for our website are kept by the server. You may ask for a copy at any time. Keeping up the website is worth the time investment. If there is a website, it must be kept current! I have done this for the most part on my own volunteer time involving hundreds of donated hours. An upgraded “WordPress” for back door website management offers something called “Visual”. It performs not unlike a word processor. But there is still invariably HTML code, and there are many learning curves... A professional webmaster’s services is not viable financially, and also precludes personal touch creativity by an insider.

Kristina Kobes has kept up Facebook and Twitter, and is competent enough in WordPress.

The “Success Stories” page should be updated with current stories. Video updates of Staff activities can be uploaded quickly, and keep stories very current. “Success” is not a biblical category: *“faithfulness”* is, and may be the preferred alternative.

6. *Donor Thank-You Letters*

These have been sent out mostly monthly, and usually at mid- and end-months. Receipts are not sent with them unless requested (very rare). Some have requested that they receive no Thank-You letters (Luminita keeps track), only one with the year-end receipt – which is always done. I personally sign and invariably add a personal note to every monthly letter. I have had many positive comments for this simple heart-felt action, one with a decades-long pedigree in this ministry.

I also get Luminita to check the donation history. The longevity and faithfulness of so many donors is a genuine wonder.

7. *Hidden Treasures Thrift Store*

From its conception and inception, *Hidden Treasures* has been a gem. Arnie Melissen and Jose Goedbloed are to be thanked, together with a host of devoted volunteers!

Since it is “the goose that keeps laying golden eggs”, the voices of “The Golden Egg Committee” should be carefully heeded. From personal experience in this agency: *voicelessness* is harmful.

There is an outstanding Staffing justice issue that has been for months left “hanging” by current Board Co-Chair Darrel Schultz. I hope it will be addressed justly.

8. *Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA)*

This program has been capably guided under the leadership of Catholic Charities Staff person Maureen Donegan as Director of Vancouver/Fraser Valley CoSA, and M2/W2 Staff person Linnea Groom as CoSA Manager. NCPC funding will terminate September 30, 2014. At that time, management of CoSA is projected to fully turn over to Catholic Charities. I believe this is best for CoSA’s future. If funding is found beyond the current NCPC Grant, and possibly through federal Corrections, V/FV CoSA is well positioned to continue.

I strongly recommend against working with Long-Term Supervision Offenders (LTSO’s) under Parole Board of Canada, after the end of the current NCPC contract. LTSO’s appear set up for failure, and skew CoSA work.

I propose finally that CoSA look at extending its work and possibly funding sources to BC Corrections.

No One Leaves Alone (NOLA)

NOLA may have a long uphill struggle to demonstrate viability. This is the case with CoSA still. I propose close consultation between NOLA and CoSA. This has been somewhat resisted by the contractor and does not augur well for NOLA's future. NOLA likewise should cast its eye towards BC Corrections. It may indeed offer much to the plaguing "revolving door" syndrome.

A recent article about Delta Police Chief Cessford, found here on our website ([Ian Mulgrew: Chronic offenders need treatment, not incarceration, police chief says](#)), could lead to an interesting partnership with various police forces.

Staff persons Kristina Kobes and Lesley Harder were to have had Evaluations done by end of December 2013. The NOLA contractor's and Board's actions precluded that, since it was unsafe for me to have done those together with the supervisor, as projected.

9. *Executive Director*

What is needed in an Executive Director?

First, I think that the option of "Co-Directors" should continue to be explored. Perhaps the greatest benefit in Co-Directors is power-sharing that is its own protection against top-down power exercise by anyone, so antithetical to the way of Christ. The other benefit is complementation of strengths and weaknesses in skill-sets, character quality sets, personalities, etc. Even inevitable conflicts that arise can be used as a nurturing grace if well embraced.

Second, I believe M2/W2 leadership should be steeped in, and be known to have significantly internalized, the injunctions of I Corinthians 12:31 and Ephesians 5:1 & 2:

Pursue the greater gifts, and let me tell you of a more excellent way – love (The Voice).

So imitate God. Follow Him like adored children, and live in love as the Anointed One loved you – so much that He gave Himself as a fragrant sacrifice, pleasing God (The Voice).

Such an internalized injunction, based on a fully loving, nonviolent understanding of Atonement, will eventuate in the profound, gentle, harmonious, Wisdom-living out of love as found in I Corinthians 13. Read it again in a fresh translation. The passage ends with (verse 13):

But now faith, hope, and love remain; these three virtues must characterize our lives. The greatest of these is love (The Voice).

That kind of leadership will not go wrong, though it will be imperfect. Such leadership is opposite to externalized professionalization/pomposity/"optics"/show; to self-serving strategic planning or strategic power alliances with others; to projections of invulnerability; to airs of superiority, deserving and being "central"; to lack of self-awareness; to inability to accept critique leading to self-change; to need to be always in the know and in the right; to need to always be the out-front in-the-lime-light leader; etc.

Third, Executive Director leadership must be vulnerable, and have a sense of humour, with great capacity to laugh at him- or herself/selves – and to accept such from others!

Fourth, leadership must follow Jesus' example of service, *which is tricky*:

Jesus (interrupting): ²⁵ *The authority figures of the outsiders play this game, flexing their muscles in competition for power over one another, masking their quest for domination behind words like "benefactor" or "public servant."* ²⁶ *But you must not indulge in this charade. Instead, among you, the greatest must become like the youngest and the leader must become a true servant.* ²⁷ *Who is greater right here as we eat this meal—those of us who sit at the table, or those who serve us? Doesn't everyone normally assume those who are served*

are greater than those who serve? But consider My role among you. I have been with you as a servant (Luke 22:25 – 27, The Voice).

If leadership does not demonstrate a servant heart, servant mind, servant reputation, with qualities of humility, respect, deep relationship-building, trust-building, respectful listening, with an attitude of slow to judge, slow to speak (authoritatively), etc. (James 1:19 & 20), *beware!*

There is an astounding scene in John 13: Jesus takes on the role of a servant towards those he leads. His commentary on that act is gripping:

Jesus: *Do you understand what I have done to you? ¹³ You call Me Teacher and Lord, and truly, that is who I am. ¹⁴ So if your Lord and Teacher washes your feet, then you should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ I am your example; keep doing what I do.* (John 13:12b – 15, *The Voice*).

To dismiss this call to imitation with, “No one is ‘Jesus’ ”, elicits a simple response: “Why not?”

Does the incoming Executive Director have an established reputation of “love, humility, and service (metaphorically *foot washing*)” towards the people worked with; towards fellow Staff he/she works with; towards others? Or does the incoming Executive Director have a reputation of needing to be the one out front, the important one; the one in the know; in charge and making the decisions; a *look-at-me! person* who is not a team player; who handles poorly or eschews criticism; who must be in control?

The above are some of the key leadership characteristics needed for this agency. If they are not the qualities of an incoming Executive Director (or of Board members! – see below), such a one will likely instead be preoccupied with (otherwise) superficialities like:

- professionalism
- connections
- competencies
- externalities
- optics
- presentation
- etc.

Beware such an incoming Executive Director.

The above said: qualifications of an Executive Director indicated in the updated Job Description are also necessary.

10. Board

The essence of what a “Christ-honouring” (mediator Alan Simpson) Board should be and do is contained in the Board (Policy) Manual. It reflects a similar Scripture to that quoted above (namely Luke 22:25 – 27):

²⁴ *The other ten disciples learned what the Zebedee brothers had asked of Jesus, and they were upset. ²⁵ So Jesus called the disciples together.*

Jesus: *Do you want the Kingdom run like the Romans run their kingdom? Their rulers have great power over the people, but God the Father doesn't play by the Romans' rules. ²⁶ This is the Kingdom's logic: whoever wants to become great must first make himself a servant; ²⁷ whoever wants to be first must bind himself as a slave— ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as the ransom for many* (Matthew 20:24 – 28, *The Voice*).

Further: from Peter in I Peter 5:1 – 5, with the Proverbs quotation from chapter 3:34 we read this about leadership:

Now for the elders of the church [one could say “Now for the Board members of M2/W2”]. I want to encourage you. As you know, I am an elder too, like you... When you shepherd the flock God has given you... Don’t lead them as if you were a dictator, but lead your flock by example... All of you should treat each other with humility, for as it says in Proverbs,

*God opposes the proud,
But offers grace to the humble.*

We at M2/W2 have tried to follow Christ’s servant example. Previous Boards and Staff have struggled to be “Jesus” (Matthew 25:36) to those in prison in a caring and compassionate way. Since June 2010, from Staff experience, the Board has played “*by the Romans’ rules*” contrary to “*the Kingdom’s logic*”. Our experience has been: *top-down authority not bottom-up encouragement; authoritarianism not collaborative service; dictatorial lording over not exemplary humility.*

Despite mediator Alan Simpson’s powerful call for mediation; despite repeated pleas to the Board to work issues through with a mediator; despite a signed Memorandum of Understanding between Neufeld and me that called for such, the Board has rejected all this, has refused to hear or to see. *This is immoral.* Jesus’ words are: “*Woe to you who are blind but deign to lead others (Matthew 23:16).*”

Further: I consider the three new “Board members” illegitimately chosen:

- Appointed without consultation with the Executive Director, despite Barry Neufeld’s promise of such to the membership at the AGM, November 14, 2013 which proved empty. In fact, when I informed Co-Chairs Neufeld and Schultz of this, they dismissed the concern both about the lie told, and the lack of consultation. *There is a simple word for this: injustice.*
- Appointed without prior commitment given by each to the Board Manual, the Board’s crucial Policy Manual. One had already rejected it.
- The new “members” performed consequently as expected: contrary to Board Manual Policy, and immediately “took sides” with the other Board members, *without any consultation with the Executive Director, etc. There is a simple word for this: injustice.*

Over the past three and a half years I have felt like “*a voice crying in the wilderness (Mark 1:3, The Voice)*” in relation to the current Board. *But people can change!*

I have simultaneously felt voicelessness in repeated attempts to alert Board members to their own mismanagement practices and injustices under current Board leadership. (I love a new Bible translation title, besides its language, for this reason as well: The Voice!)

Conclusion

There are many complex matters in the M2/W2 agency. I have addressed in broad strokes some of them with an eye to the future.

In the received January 20, 2014 Board letter, the term “disgruntled” was used. Something far more traumatically unjust has been the agency’s experience. Board members have overall steadfastly rejected my voice and those of many Staff. *But people can change!*

And there is always *hope (Romans 5)*...

- Wayne Northey, Executive Director