

Leveraging Pandemic Learnings (Part 3)

The Future: Blueprint for Sustainable Success

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Building Capacity

A blueprint for the future is beginning to emerge: one that will involve greater use of interactive technology, system-wide collaboration, widespread innovation, improved systems thinking capacity, and stronger recognition and appreciation of the female leadership brand.

Interactive Technology

‘Necessity is the mother of invention’, declared Greek philosopher Plato, in Dialogue Republic, and COVID-19 proves him right. Inventive technology applications are emerging in droves. Here are examples from various sectors.

Libraries

Seeking to find alternatives to *Storytime*, a popular activity for children & care givers, the Oakville Library launched a number of innovative tech formats:

Stories by Phone: pre-recorded stories available any time of the day, *Family Storytime* on Instagram Live and You Tube, as well as a *Kids’ Library Club!*

As for the crafting community used to regular encounters, they can join *Crafty Bees Meetup* to “share what they are working on and gather inspiration from fellow craft enthusiasts!”



Educational Institutions

When COVID-19 began, universities had to quickly convert courses to online learning, so students could complete their academic year studies. In certain cases, the conversion, so close to year end, proved challenging.

In an innovative move, Ottawa University called upon Athabasca University, the #1 online university in Canada,² which has an extensive program repertory and was happy to help. This partnership delighted both parties, not to mention students who could continue learning with

¹ Oakville Public Library. (n.d.). Events. Retrieved May 23, 2020, from <https://attend.opl.on.ca/events?r=thismonth&v=list>. Image retrieved from Oakville Public Library [@OakvilleLibrary] (2020, May 07). Crafters of all stripes, unite! Retrieved May 23, 2020, from <https://twitter.com/OakvilleLibrary/status/1258456584524529665>.

² Dimon, M. (2018, May 13). The best online universities in Canada. University Magazine. Retrieved May 23, 2020, from <https://www.universitymagazine.ca/best-online-universities-canada-2018/>

minimal disruption and, in some cases, graduate! Could that experiment lead to a new model for the future?

System-Wide Collaboration

Governments

We are witnessing unprecedented collaboration between levels of government as per this statement of principle:

All levels of government and stakeholders need to work in partnership to produce an effective and coordinated response. The Government of Canada is working closely with provinces and territories to ensure that all necessary and appropriate supports are available, to ensure a comprehensive & coordinated response to COVID-19. As the outbreak evolves, the Government of Canada will enhance its coordination efforts to support a larger-scale, harmonized response. This will include working together across jurisdictions to ensure consistent implementation of pandemic responses in the health system.³

This statement not only demonstrates a strong commitment to systems thinking and action but to effective, collective leadership.

Politicians

Politicians are also getting into Collabor-Action: in the Ontario North Oakville/Burlington riding, MP Pam Damoff set up a partnership with MPP Effie Triantafilopoulos and Mayor Rob Burton, in order to provide an integrated 'info destination'. This blended platform⁴ informs citizens on a variety of topics ranging from financial to government and community supports, mental health issues, business innovation etc. It also provides volunteering opportunities, celebrates best practices and local heroes.

The multi-level partnership is a ground-breaking initiative, enabling dedicated politicians to collaborate, regardless of political affiliation: a clear demonstration of stewardship. Together, they are acting for the greater good of the people under their care. Overall, the diversity and

³ Government of Canada. (2020, March 13). Government of Canada takes action on COVID 19. Retrieved May 23, 2020 from <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/canadas-reponse/government-canada-takes-action-covid-19.html>

⁴ Damoff, P. & Triantafilopoulos, E. (2020, April 17). Joint ONB Weekly Update: April 13-17. Retrieved May 23, 2020, from <https://mailchi.mp/parl/joint-onb-weekly-update-april-17th?e=e65c980c03>

intensity of partnerships is staggering: people & organizations who had little to do with each other in the past, are now working together daily. There are a couple of examples of this below.

Scotiabank Arena... turned into a giant kitchen

The same arena floor that saw Kawhi Leonard...propel the Raptors past the Philadelphia 76ers last May, now houses one big food production line. Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment, in conjunction with its partners, is looking to prepare 10,000 meals a day to go to Toronto's front-line health-care workers and their families as well as the city's most vulnerable, via community agencies and shelters.⁵

Partners are providing funding and involving others.

Toronto Libraries... converted into food banks

The City of Toronto...started to convert its closed libraries to food banks to help... vulnerable residents 'in an effort to ensure that the food needs of vulnerable residents continue to be met,' after almost 40 per cent of food bank programs in the city have been closed due to COVID 19. The mayor said companies like Sobeys and Loblaws have also donated food and other supplies.⁶

Widespread Innovation

Innovation abounds, from breweries making hand sanitizers, to "researchers at U of T and McMaster's isolating the virus."⁷

Individuals are also getting involved. For instance, Quinn Callander, a 12 year- old Boy Scout from BC, started to make a product to ease the life of healthcare workers.



⁵ Davidson, N. (2020, April 24). Coronavirus: Scotiabank Arena turns into giant kitchen as MLSE looks to make 10,000 meals daily. Retrieved May 23, 2020 from <https://globalnews.ca/news/6862396/scotiabank-arena-mlse-kitchen-meals-toronto-coronavirus/>

⁶ Patton, J. (2020, April 7). Coronavirus: Toronto libraries being turned into food banks for vulnerable residents. Retrieved May 23, 2020, from <https://globalnews.ca/news/6788083/coronavirus-toronto-libraries-food-banks/>

⁷ Vendeville, G. (2020, March 13). U of T and McMaster researchers at Sunnybrook Hospital isolate virus behind COVID-19. Retrieved May 23, 2020, from <https://www.utoronto.ca/news/u-t-and-mcmaster-researchers-sunnybrook-hospital-isolate-virus-behind-covid-19>

The device, which goes behind the head... has hooks that attach to mask straps and help take the pressure off the backs of the ears... The family has heard from thousands of people who also have 3D printers and have been motivated to take Quinn's lead, and print the 'ear gears' themselves... The best part is that they're donating them to their local hospitals all across Canada, the U.S., the U.K.⁸

"Spurred by the stories of... medical personnel having to make life or death decisions due to lack of equipment such as ventilators, Prime Minister Trudeau called upon industry to step up and help protect our health care workers on March 20th. And did Canadian manufacturers ever step up...

- Portable Electric, a Vancouver-based company, will be producing more of its VolStack power stations to hospitals and emergency service providers to ensure they have uninterrupted battery power supplies.
- Acryl Design in Winnipeg used to produce furniture parts and modular escape rooms, but now it's making plexiglass shields to be installed at grocery store checkouts to protect cashiers, as well as post office and pharmacy counters."⁹

Enhanced Systems and Strategic Thinking Capacity

There is widespread realization that our systems must be aligned to a shared & meaningful purpose, in synch and mutually reinforcing, in order to solve challenges like pandemic, terrorism and the environmental emergency: we are starting to say *Goodbye* to silo thinking, and *Hello* to systems thinking and action.

Instead of breaking down concepts into smaller components, people are showing greater appetite for connecting the dots in a synergistic, powerful, coherent and cohesive whole. This leads to collective decision-making, problem-solving, and innovation:

⁸ Ahearn, V. (2020, April 8). BC boy scout 3D prints 'ear gears' for COVID19 masks. Retrieved May 23, 2020, from <https://bc.ctvnews.ca/b-c-boy-scout-3d-prints-ear-gears-for-covid-19-masks-1.4888110>. Image also retrieved from the same article.

⁹ Thomas, R. (2020, March 27). Canadian Manufacturers mobilize against COVID-19. Retrieved May 23, 2020, from <https://renthomas.ca/canadian-manufacturers-mobilize-against-covid-19/>

Ontario Government

For instance, the Ontario Government, aware that children from low income families may not have computers to continue their home studies through the pandemic, sought a system-wide solution.¹⁰



This new partnership is between the Ontario government, Apple, Rogers, and provincial school boards. These iPads will have free wireless data and will help students from low-income families continue their learning safely at home during this pandemic. As per Ontario's release, the iPads will come loaded with Rogers LTE data, which will be available until June. A Rogers spokesperson clarified... that the free wireless data will come at no cost to the ministry, school boards, or families.¹¹

Canada Revenue Agency

Implementing the new financial support CERB program was nothing short of pulling a bureaucratic miracle: "It took long hours, nervous nights and a complete rethinking of how government does business to get the program up and running in record time."¹²



For instance:

- "CRA... employees volunteered in the thousands to take on long hours—some of them even doubling their workweeks
- Service Canada's programmers tricked their outdated programming to accept a new, flat-rate payment with a simple application process
- Senior officials...flipped the typically glacial pace of government on its head... The slow-and-steady bureaucracy relented for the sake of expedience."¹³

¹⁰ Nightingale, T. (2020, April 17). Low Income Ontario students can now get fee iPads with WIFI to help them study. Retrieved May 23, 2020, from <https://www.narcity.com/news/ca/on/free-ipads-for-students-in-low-income-families-are-now-being-offered-in-ontario> Image also retrieved from this article.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Taylor-Vaisey, N. (2020, May 4). Pulling off a bureaucratic miracle: how the CERB got done. *Maclean's Magazine*. Retrieved May 23, 2020, from <https://www.macleans.ca/politics/ottawa/pulling-off-a-bureaucratic-miracle-how-the-cerb-got-done/>

¹³ Ibid.

- To avoid crashing the system with too many applicants, “someone came up with the idea of staggering applications by birth month... Everyone loved the idea, and when it filtered up to the PMO, Trudeau ran with it. In one of his morning press conferences, he asked applicants to wait their turn.” And it worked: Canadians clearly listened... even though they were desperate for cash...¹⁴

“The scope and speed of what happened to get the CERB out the door is unparalleled—a truly historic moment for the public service... One of the pandemic’s lessons for how to run a government appears to be that a little risk goes a long way. Millions of Canadians felt relief, at least in the short-term, thanks to billions in fast-tracked aid. But taking on more risk requires politicians, public servants and the public to rethink how government works.”¹⁵

Rise of Female Leadership Brand

Inspiring Confidence

Thanks to our predominantly female Chief Medical Officers, constantly in the public eye, there’s increased awareness that women use a highly effective leadership style during difficult times.

“They all come across as fierce advocates for public health, but they are combining it with calm, expert, compassionate dispositions and that increases their ability to influence change,” said Dr. Clover Hemans, president of the Federation of Medical Women in Canada. ¹⁶

While Canadians seem to be rallying around the entire medical community, it's significant that so many women are guiding the country through this pandemic. I think we are so used to seeing men in these roles. There's never been a time like this, there's never been an experience like this, and we've never had such incredible women at the forefront of something like this.¹⁷

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ansari, A. (2020, April 2). Canada’s Chief Medical Officers put women’s leadership in the spotlight. Policy Options. Retrieved May 23, 2020, from <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/april-2020/canadas-chief-medical-officers-put-womens-leadership-in-spotlight/>

¹⁷ Fitzpatrick, M. (2020, April 2). Chief medical officers are leading Canada through the COVID-19 crisis - and many are women. CBC News. Retrieved May 23, 2020, from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/health/women-chief-medical-officers-canada-1.5518974>

For instance, Dr. Bonnie Henry, B.C. Provincial Health Officer¹⁸ has become a symbol of effective leadership during a crisis.



“When we look back at this time for the rest of our lives, I believe that Henry’s role will forever be connected,” says Clara Huber who interviewed Dr. Henry for the Time Colonist.

“This is the time you need to be calm and kind,” Henry said. “Part of my role is to say that this is going to be hard, take a deep breath. Now is not the time to make assumptions about why people are doing what they are doing. As leaders, we need to make allowances for people right now.”¹⁹

Getting Results

Meanwhile, female country leaders are getting extraordinary results with the Pandemic. Recently, Forbes Magazine published an article entitled: “*What Do Countries with The Best Coronavirus Responses Have in Common? Women Leaders*”²⁰



The article opens with a provocative question:

Looking for examples of true leadership in a crisis? From Iceland to Taiwan and from Germany to New Zealand, women are stepping up to show the world how to manage a messy patch for our human family. Add in Finland, Iceland and Denmark, and this pandemic is revealing that women have what it takes when the heat rises in our Houses of State.²¹

¹⁸ Photo of Dr. Bonnie Henry from the Province of British Columbia. Image retrieved from Takeuchi, C. (2020, April 20). COVID-19 in B.C.: Dr. Bonnie Henry discusses testing expansion, retail and restaurant issues, and more. Retrieved May 23, 2020, from <https://www.straight.com/covid-19-pandemic/april-20-coronavirus-update-vancouver-bc-Dr-Bonnie-Henry-testing-retail-restaurant>

¹⁹ Huber, C. (2020, May 3). Dr. Henry’s leadership extends far beyond health. Retrieved May 3, 2020, from <https://www.timescolonist.com/opinion/columnists/charla-huber-dr-henry-s-leadership-extends-far-beyond-health-1.24128576>

²⁰ Wittenberg-Cox, A. (2020, April 13). What Do Countries with The Best Coronavirus Responses Have in Common? Women Leaders. Retrieved May 23, 2020, from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/avivahwittenbergcox/2020/04/13/what-do-countries-with-the-best-coronavirus-reponses-have-in-common-women-leaders/> Image also retrieved from this site.

²¹ Ibid

Norway's Prime Minister, Erna Solberg, held a dedicated press conference where no adults were allowed. She responded to kids' questions from across the country, taking time to explain why it was OK to feel scared. The originality and obviousness of the idea takes one's breath away. How many other simple, humane innovations would more female leadership unleash? Generally, the empathy and care which all of these female leaders have communicated seems to come from an alternate universe than the one we have gotten used to. It's like their arms are coming out of their videos to hold you close in a heart-felt and loving embrace. Who knew leaders could sound like this? Now we do.^{22 23}

Navigating Turbulence

Meanwhile in Canada, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has officially named Kirsten Hillman, pictured here, as Canada's next ambassador to the United States – the first woman in Canadian history to hold the position at the Washington mission.²⁴



Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland agreed with the Prime Minister's assessment of Hillman as a "brilliant lawyer, skilled diplomat, and gifted team leader... In challenging times, as we battle a pandemic unlike any we have seen in our lifetimes, it is more important than ever that Canada's Ambassador to the United States be steady, calm, competent, and wise."²⁵

This newfound validation of the female leadership brand will serve us well as a country as we seek to expand leadership capacity to build a successful, sustainable and innovative future: All hands on deck!

²² Ibid.

²³ Please also see: Fouche, G. (2020, March 16). Norway PM tells kids: 'It is OK to feel scared' during coronavirus. Retrieved June 1, 2020, from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-norway-children/norway-pm-tells-kids-it-is-ok-to-feel-scared-during-coronavirus-idUSKBN2131NE>

²⁴ McCarten, J. (2020, March 26). Trudeau appoints acting U.S. ambassador Kirsten Hillman as permanent envoy. Retrieved May 23, 2020, from <https://www.bnnbloomberg.ca/trudeau-appoints-acting-u-s-ambassador-kirsten-hillman-as-permanent-envoy-1.1412697> Image also retrieved from the article.

²⁵ Freeland, C. (2020, March 26). Statement by the Deputy Prime Minister on the appointment of Kirsten Hillman as Ambassador to the United States. Retrieved May 23, 2020, from <https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/statements/2020/03/26/statement-deputy-prime-minister-appointment-kirsten-hillman-ambassador>

About the Author



Françoise Morissette, M.Ed., P.C.C., has been a facilitator at Queen's IRC since 1994, and was made a Fellow in 2006. She played a key role in developing and implementing Queen's IRC's Organizational Development curriculum and currently teaches on the *OD Foundations* and *Coaching Skills* programs. Françoise is a Certified Professional Coach, and she leverages coaching in her leadership practice, as well as training leaders and HR professionals on coaching skills.

Françoise is a major contributor to the OD field, with an emphasis on leadership and systems transformation, helping individuals, organizations and communities enhance their leadership capacity for performance and sustainability. In 2016, she certified as a LEADS facilitator. LEADS, a leadership capability framework originally developed in the Canadian health care system, is rapidly spreading to other sectors and countries. Françoise wrote *Made in Canada Leadership*, with Amal Henein. It was the product of a large research project on leadership excellence and development. The book also explores ways to refine and leverage our national leadership brand in the global world.

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