

## **BACKGROUND**

When discussing their community, people will talk about the residents, their neighbours, the schools, the services – in short, the quality of life. But more and more, people are realizing they cannot take the quality of life in their communities for granted.

Communities are built through the contributions of committed individuals who have an understanding of how the community works and what opportunities exist. These people – community leaders – help shape the places where they live and work by leveraging resources and helping people work together. Communities benefit when there is a broad group of people prepared to take the lead and help their neighbours see what is possible. And this is where the community leadership movement comes in.

Community leadership programs are about understanding. They expose people to the diversity of thought, cultures, visions, resources and issues that exist in their community. They give people opportunities to take a look at where they live and work from a different perspective. They push people beyond their own experiences and by doing so, create a better environment for working toward broader, collective goals and objectives.

Community leadership programs also allow communities to adapt and respond to change. Even more important, they encourage people to take control – helping them to *direct* change. Whether it be growth, the influx of new Canadians, or the challenge of an economic downturn, Canadian towns and cities face many challenges. By preparing to deal with these challenges, community leadership programs help to galvanize communities around a common vision and create programs and services that assist communities to move forward in the face of change.

Community leadership programs also bring people together. Organized labour, business, not-for-profit organizations, churches and community groups, cultural organizations, governments and other sectors all play a role in how a community works. Leadership programs tap into these sectors creating networks of broad-based, representative groups of people who work and learn together over several months. They encourage participants to look beyond the boundaries of their own, limited perspective to see the community through the viewpoints and experiences of others.

And at the end of the program, participants will have developed friendships and established collaborative partnerships they will draw on as they move out in the community and set to work on the projects the community values and needs.

Finally, community leadership programs are about what is possible. Rather than viewing the community as a series of problems, community programs are about scanning the landscape to define opportunities, to unleash latent resources and talents in order to develop something better.

In communities across the country, people realize the keys to the future rest within. They realize they need to build bridges between community groups and reduce barriers. They realize different groups need to understand one another if people are to live, grow and prosper in the places they share as home.

**And well-trained, effective community leaders can help make it happen!**

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## *COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS*

Community leadership programs:

- expose emerging leaders to diversity of thought, cultures, visions and issues;
- allow communities to adapt, respond to and direct change;
- bring labour, business, community groups, government, non-profit groups, churches and other sectors of the community together;
- build on latent talents and resources that currently exist in the community; and,
- look for opportunities to share and build.

What a community leadership program can do:

- empower individuals to take action and become involved;
- build a team of leaders with the ability to turn community vision into reality;
- help the community respond to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century;
- create a network of people with the skills to respond to and direct change;
- galvanize the community in the face of change;
- expose people to divergent thought, cultures and issues;
- build networks and bridges;
- encourage the community to work together based on common goals;
- allow participants to meet and learn with an energetic group of people; and,
- complement other community initiatives or activities.

What a community leadership program cannot do:

- Provide a quick fix. Leadership programs are an investment in the future; you have to be in it for the long term.
- Be project specific. If designed to meet one specific community issue, the program will cease to be relevant beyond that one issue.
- Meet unrealistic needs. Research must be done, and a program must appeal to and address broad-based community issues, not those identified by a few people or groups.
- Replace other community initiatives.

Community leadership programs are unique education programs for rising decision-makers in any community. While each program bears the stamp of issues and concerns facing the individual city or region, the majority of leadership programs try to meet three fundamental objectives:

- to identify and nurture potential leaders;
- to develop networks of people who can work together to solve community problems; and,
- to instill a sense of community trusteeship among potential leaders.

The programs expose participants to the history and make-up of their communities so that when armed with this community insight, they will be able to act in the community's best interests.

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They give participants hands-on training in community leadership knowledge, skills and attitudes so they gain experience in ways to mobilize people, cultivate common ground and build teams. And they instill a philosophy of community trusteeship that acts as the foundation of all the participants do and learn.

By meeting these objectives, community leadership programs help to nurture a sense of commitment, ownership and responsibility within the program participants to strengthen and define their relationships with their communities.

## **LEADERSHIP SASKATOON**

Every urban community is unique regarding its leadership circumstances and needs. A challenge to Leadership Saskatoon is to create our program so that there is an optimum fit between the program and our particular wants, needs and opportunities.

Saskatoon has been and indeed is a fortunate community. We have had generations of fine city leadership. Past leaders have built a city of which they can all be proud. All citizens have benefited from their example and share their pride in our community.

Many communities appear to agree that the scarce resource for the 21<sup>st</sup> century is leadership. Even where present leadership seems adequate, it is risky for us to take effective leadership for granted in the years ahead.

One can make quite safe assumptions about problems arising from inadequate leadership. Businesses, governments, voluntary organizations and the community generally require experienced and committed leaders to thrive and prosper. The quality of leadership can change as the nature of our society and community changes. Leadership is not an innate quality. It is an element of community that needs to be developed and learned. It requires experience. Leaders need to be involved in the challenges of leadership in a variety of settings. They need practice.

As one observes leadership patterns in our community, a number of observations relevant to the future may be made. Although perhaps not individually, in combination these observations provide the unique context of our community. It is in the context of these characteristics that Leadership Saskatoon will provide optimum benefits.

As a new century begins, Saskatoon is emerging as a more diverse community economically. Historically known as a regional center for agricultural development, new initiatives in areas such as mining, technology, microbiology, education, the arts and social services are changing our circumstances.

We are experiencing rapid diversification and maturing in many of our community sectors – business, the arts, our various ethnic groups. These circumstances face our leaders with new issues and challenges.

Our complex city has produced highly effective pockets of successful leadership in business, professions, religion, neighbourhoods, education and social services. Each is effective in its own arena; each has a well organized and strongly focused constituency. But our own individual successes must enhance our collective strength. We need the ability to unite the vitality of these sectors to energize the broader community – to create a healthy and vibrant comprehensive community.

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Nor can we overlook the challenges for leadership in the social sector of our city core, involving particularly poverty, hunger, abuse and unemployment. In our city known for its beauty, there is a need to enhance the aesthetics of some of our neighborhoods.

At the same time, our leadership group, as a whole, is aging. We tend to overburden our existing leaders. The new generation of leaders will require broadened perspectives in a globalizing economy and political system.

We would benefit from the preparation and recruitment of new, younger leaders with fresh visions. They will be required to act in a community, provincial, national and global context significantly different from the context we have known in the past. The challenge to Leadership Saskatoon is to provide our community with these future leaders.

Leadership Saskatoon is an action study program designed to identify and motivate aspiring leaders. The Leadership Saskatoon program will help to prepare participants for the challenges of their own lifelong leadership journeys, show how to build foundational skills, and develop and awareness of the rich opportunities for leadership in Saskatoon. It offers participants a challenging new experience, working in teams on projects dealing with real community issues.

Saskatoon needs a leadership program to build understanding and collaboration among diverse people, to help them see the potential that comes with strong, skilled leaders who can leverage scarce resources and take us beyond our current reality.

## ***VISION AND MISSION STATEMENT***

### **Vision:**

Our quality of life is fostered by the efforts of a large and diverse group of competent leaders committed to using effective development processes to encourage citizen participation, collaboration, and innovation. Our community continuously prepares its existing and emerging leaders with the capacity and will to meet contemporary challenges.

### **Mission:**

Our mission is to develop effective collaborative leaders by building awareness, understanding and education to inspire involvement in building an inclusive community.

### ***This Mission is accomplished by:***

- Bringing together a diverse group of emerging leaders, developing their leadership skills and motivating them to effectively serve and enrich Saskatoon.
  - Building relationships characterized by respect, trust and understanding.
  - Developing opportunities for emerging leaders to make a greater commitment to the development of their community.
  - Providing a forum for continued networking, personal development, exchange of ideas and leadership involvement in the community.
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## ***BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY, PARTICIPANTS AND SPONSORS***

### **Benefits to the Community:**

- Communities are energized through the leadership of committed individuals who understand how things work and can take action to do the things that most need doing. Leadership Saskatoon's experiential journey through our city will expose emerging leaders to the diversity of thought, cultures, visions, and issues that make up Saskatoon.
- Leadership Saskatoon will expand the number of experienced leaders throughout the community.
- There will be a deeper understanding of community issues, a greater sensitivity to community diversity, a new commitment to community cohesion and trusteeship, and a new ability to lead and take action on community challenges.
- There will be new connections across business, government, and voluntary organizations and a deeper sense of common ground and common vision for a sustainable, healthy Saskatoon community.

### **Benefits for Participants:**

- Participants examine leadership theory and practice their personal leadership skills. They build on their leadership talents and resources, and find new opportunities to share with the community.
- Participants learn action leadership, connect with networks of action-oriented people and help to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They will become stronger leaders who see 'the big picture' and act on it for the common good.
- Participants will learn how to create a vision, and enable others to set goals to pursue the vision. They will become role models and mentors to encourage the hearts and minds of others.
- Participants will be recognized by their community, employer and acquaintances for their increased leadership capabilities.

### **Benefits for Sponsoring Organizations:**

- By sponsoring a participant to the Leadership Saskatoon program, sponsors will recognize the aspiring leaders in their organizations.
  - Organizations will benefit through increased knowledge and skills that will be shared within their workplace. The new information brought to the organization by the participant will provide a strategic awareness of the community and a larger window to the world outside.
  - The participant will establish new networks of community leaders, increasing the organization's community involvement, and enhancing its public profile.
  - The participant will return with increased connections to community leaders and key stakeholders that open new opportunities for the organization immediately, as well as into the future.
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