

'Made in Canada Leadership' book

Authors present case for grooming next generation of leaders

AS A GENERATION OF BABY-BOOMER LEADERS PREPARES TO RETIRE, A NEW BOOK SHOWCASES LEADERS AND LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS FROM COAST TO COAST AND ANSWERS FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS ON THE FUTURE OF LEADERSHIP IN CANADA.

According to co-authors Françoise Morissette and Amal Henein, the majority of leaders are definitely made and even the ones born with innate leadership tendencies benefit from development. For their project, the two authors - respectively Faculty and Fellow at the Industrial Relations Centre of Queen's University and long-time human resources practitioner and consultant - interviewed some 295 leaders and 66 leadership development experts from across the country.

Their book, entitled 'Made in Canada Leadership', is published this spring by John Wiley and Sons Canada and showcases leaders and professionals in all sectors of the economy: arts, business, community, co-operatives, public and sports sectors.

HOW LEADERS ARE MADE

"Our project was aimed at answering the following three

questions," says Ms. Morissette. "How can we best develop competent leaders? How can we ensure that Canada has a steady supply of capable leaders? And, finally, how could we further strengthen Canadian leadership?"

Their interviews with leading personalities from all walks of life showed that two-thirds of individuals assumed leadership responsibilities accidentally and, in some cases, reluctantly. Since most leaders come into this role by chance, the book identifies the process by which leaders are made. Then, the authors present what equates to their blueprint for a national program to educate and train an ample supply of new leaders for the country.

"Unfortunately, leadership development is not viewed yet as a national priority. To succeed, Canada needs a concerted, strategic and integrated approach to leadership development," explains Ms. Henein. "It is also

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Reporter



"As Canadians, we all have a role to play in helping new leaders emerge," Ms. Françoise Morissette, Faculty and Fellow at the Industrial Relations Centre of Queen's University. Co-author of 'Made in Canada Leadership'.



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Cooperatives lead the way

Two of the book's chapters are devoted to leadership best practices in cooperative organizations. The authors believe that cooperatives feature many innovative practices that can be transferred to other sectors of society. For example, all members of cooperatives are expected to lead in some way and several such organizations have certification programs for officers. According to the authors, though, the most important trait is ideological. They note that cooperatives seek a balance between social and economic mandates, and have a concern for people, as well as for community stewardship.

not seen as a bona fide academic field, yet it should be taught starting in public schools. It's too late by the time students get to university."

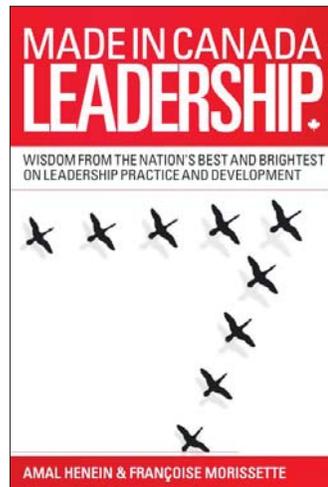
As part of their interviewing process, the authors wanted to reach beyond the usual white men in pin-striped suits. "We found good leaders in all kinds of groups, and their contributions add credibility to our findings," explains Ms. Morissette.

Ms. Henein specified that "Interviewees form a representative sample: leaders with a national profile, such as disabled athlete Chantal Petitclerc, and "local heroes" known in their field or community. "We presented both types, because we believe that readers will be inspired by national figures such as Rick Hansen, while identifying with local personalities, like Marjorie Benz, Executive Director of the Edmonton Food Bank."

One of the book's purposes is also to stir readers into action. "As Canadians, we all have a role to play in helping new leaders emerge," says Ms. Morissette. "Talking about leadership and taking action is our shared responsibility."

GRANNY BRIGADE

Gladys Osmond is a living example of the fact that anyone can make a difference. "Here is an 86-year-old lady from Newfoundland whose leadership could erroneously be dismissed at first glance, yet she is a true beacon of light," says Ms. Morissette. The Newfoundlander is the



founder of the Granny Brigade, a group of elderly women who write letters to members of the military involved in peace-keeping missions around the world.

Her group writes 10,000 letters a year to comfort soldiers who are on duty in far-away countries and in an often unfamiliar – even hostile – environment. "In some cases, the ladies have been corresponding with certain individuals for up to 20 years, long after the end of their military involvement," explains Ms. Henein. She adds that Gladys Osmond was recently awarded the armed forces' Distinguished Service medal in appreciation for her role in this initiative from Canada's top soldier, General Rick Hillier.

GOOD MENTORS, A KEY FACTOR

For their book, the authors sent out questionnaires to both leaders and leadership experts to help them prepare for interviews and ensure data consistency. "We wanted our work to reflect what exceptional leaders and recognized practitioners think about leadership. The book is an aggregate of their collective wisdom," says Ms. Morissette.

**Desjardins supports
'Made in Canada Leadership'**

In addition to supporting the authors' book project, Desjardins Group sponsors a series of conferences on this topic, which will be held soon across Ontario, as well as in Québec and British Columbia.

A key factor in the development of accomplished leaders has been the significant importance of mentoring. "Several leaders expressed that the fact someone had taken them under their wing was really what set them on their course," says Ms. Henein, adding: "It appears that people internalize the guidance of mentors long after they have left their life." Therefore, what would happen if more people had access to good mentors?

The prevailing opinion among leadership experts is that education alone is not sufficient to prepare the leaders of tomorrow. "Good training programs start with education, but they need other key components to come to fruition," says Ms. Morissette. These include numerous practice opportunities through carefully selected and supervised strategic projects. Prospective leaders also have to go within to discover their leadership identity and find their voice. Finally, they require support to stay on the development path and a sense of belonging to a community.

"Leadership development requires a considerable invest-

ment of time, money and effort. For instance most programs last between one and a half to four years," adds Ms Henein.

AN INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

The co-authors asked leaders to define their vision of Canadian leadership. Respondents were remarkably consistent in how they viewed our core leadership brand. "They gave out two essential trademarks, namely our inclusiveness towards others and our ability with process skills," says Ms. Morissette.

The authors believe that Canadians' inclusiveness and strength with process skills may be explained by the fact that ours is a large, diverse country, a federation of provinces where consensus is reached by taking into account different viewpoints. "Canadian leadership is increasingly prized in various forums and organizations around the world," says Ms. Henein. In our increasingly complex, global and interdependent world, the future will belong to integrators like Canadians, not to bullies." ■