

EXPLORING LEADER LEARNING NEEDS AT  
THE PUBLIC SERVICE ALLIANCE OF CANADA

By

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## ABSTRACT

Labour unions as organizations are responding to external and internal challenges such as union renewal and the approaching changes in their workforce. Strong organizations capable of navigating these changes require leaders with the capacity for leading organizational change. This study examined the learning needs and organizational supports union leaders require in order to lead significant organizational change. Using information gathered from elected officers and staff leaders within the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), this study identified the elements of leadership development, management development and succession planning that are of interest to working leaders. The study found that leaders would like to access training and situational learning opportunities that use a combination of group and individual learning methods. Opportunities for participating in mentoring and coaching are desired. The learning situations and materials must reflect the values of the labour movement, including a commitment to equity.

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## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis:

To the women and men who practice leadership every day in bringing dignity and justice to our working lives.

## TABLE of CONTENTS

Abstract .....	ii
Acknowledgements .....	iii
Dedication .....	iv
Chapter One – Focus and Framing .....	1
<i>Introduction</i> .....	1
<i>The Opportunity and Its Significance</i> .....	3
<i>Systems Analysis of the Opportunity</i> .....	6
<i>Organizational Context</i> .....	9
Chapter Two – Literature Review .....	12
<i>Leadership and Change</i> .....	12
<i>Leadership Challenges</i> .....	23
<i>Methods for Leadership Learning</i> .....	40
Chapter Three – Conduct of Action Research Project .....	63
<i>Research Approach</i> .....	63
<i>Information Gathering Tools</i> .....	66
<i>Project Participants</i> .....	74
<i>Study Conduct</i> .....	78
<i>Information Analysis Procedures</i> .....	81
<i>Ethical Issues</i> .....	85
Chapter Four – Action Research Project Results and Conclusions .....	93
<i>Study Findings</i> .....	93
<i>Study Conclusions</i> .....	117

<i>Scope and Limitations of the Research</i> .....	119
Chapter Five – Research Implications .....	120
<i>Study Recommendations</i> .....	120
<i>Organizational Implications</i> .....	131
<i>Implications for Future Research</i> .....	132
Chapter Six – Lessons Learned .....	134
References.....	143
Appendix A .....	150
Appendix B.....	152
Appendix C.....	153
Appendix D.....	157

## Chapter One Focus and Framing

### *Introduction*

This report describes the implementation process and results of assessing the learning needs and interests of a sample of women and men in leadership roles within the Public Service Alliance of Canada. The research was carried out as an action research project as part of my program of study towards a Master of Arts in Leadership and Training degree within the School of Leadership Studies at Royal Roads University. This paper describes the setting of the research, the literature reviewed, methodology, conclusions and implications drawn from the research. The closing chapter provides my reflections as a practitioner-researcher on my own learning throughout the process.

This chapter begins with background on my research interest and how I came to be interested in unions as organizational entities. I pose the research questions, discuss the opportunity presented by the research and describe this opportunity's significance from a leadership studies perspective, and I present an overview of the system factors present in the research setting. The chapter closes with a description of the organizational context within which the inquiry was situated.

The labour community is engaged in a lively discussion of how organized labour can best respond to the various pressures and trends affecting workers and the organizations that represent them. The size and organizational complexity of unions means that unions are a rich site for building an understanding of how positive change can be initiated and sustained in organizations. As an indicator of this complexity, the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) staffs and manages twenty-three regional offices located in seven geographic regions across Canada (PSAC, 2005). Orfald (2006) estimated that unions and labour organizations in Canada employ

18,000 people in occupations such as “managers, executive assistants, field staff representatives, negotiators, organizers, researchers, educators, administrative staff, and internal human resource and financial and membership administration staff,” while administering “budgets of tens of millions of dollars per year” (p. 7 and p. 8). He further calculated that “the total amount of dues collected by Canadian unions numbers somewhere in the order of \$2-3 billion per year” (p. 8). Internally, labour organizations are responding to challenges including the demographics of the workforce and a tight labour market for qualified staff.

In many respects, unions could be expected to share the characteristics and challenges of all organizations of similar size and complexity in initiating and sustaining organizational change. I became curious about how unions differ from other comparable organizations through my role as an external consultant to several unions. As an adult educator and organization development practitioner, I have been privileged to work with several public sector labour organizations on a variety of planning, team building and staff development initiatives.

I became familiar with the PSAC through facilitating planning and development activities for leaders, including both elected officers and members of senior staff. At its broadest, my research interest was shaped by a desire to understand how I could facilitate the organizational change initiatives of these clients through my consulting work. I wanted to respect the unique dimensions of unions as organizations and build on these differences as strengths. The research project allowed me to explore how a specific union, the PSAC, could enhance their capacity to lead organizational change. By exploring the needs of the people charged with the responsibility for leading change, the study articulated the kinds of support needed by leaders to lead organizational change inside a large public sector union. I was curious to know what leaders would say in their own words about their leadership experiences. I wondered what organizational

policies and practices hindered or facilitated leadership learning. In view of the values articulated by the labour movement to pursue workplace and social change for the purpose of building a just and inclusive world, how could these values inform learning about leadership and leading organizational change? The central research question became:

What are the learning needs of PSAC leaders who are responsible for implementing significant organizational change?

The sub-questions I incorporated were:

What types of support do leaders within PSAC require in order to lead organizational change?

How can PSAC use shared values to support positive organizational change?

### *The Opportunity and its Significance*

The PSAC is an example of a labour organization facing the challenge of multiple internal and external changes. The 2006 federal election produced a new governmental administration and announced a new regime for public sector negotiations and collective bargaining with public sector employees. The PSAC has diversified their membership base (PSAC, 2005), creating a less homogenous workforce and expanding the number of collective agreements to be administered. In May of 2006, delegates to the PSAC convention elected new national leaders, including a new president. The past few years have also brought turnover in internal staff leadership positions (J. Leduc, personal communication, January 17, 2006). These environmental, membership, leadership and staffing changes are indicators that multiple and overlapping change is already upon the organization.

The opportunity to carry out an assessment of leadership's learning needs regarding organizational change was significant in several ways. The study contributed to two inter-related

organizational priorities: succession planning and human resource development. The PSAC has made succession planning a key component of organizational planning for the next three years in order to address the high proportion of staff who will become eligible for retirement in the next decade (PSAC, 2006a, p. E-9). The rationale for this initiative states that it is necessary to manage recruitment,

to ensure that the institutional memory, knowledge and skills of our existing workforce are transferred to new hires, and that new hires are mentored and trained. Failure to do this at this stage will result in an increasing amount of the PSAC's resources going to internal human resources on a go forward basis (PSAC, 2006a, p. E-9).

Associated with the succession planning initiative is a program “to have new employees shadow their predecessor for a few weeks/months in critical areas of the organization, and to provide development opportunities for existing staff” (PSAC, 2006a, p. E-9). Over the same time period, the Human Resources Section is to “review the organization's and the staff training and development needs” (PSAC, 2006b, p. 9). These organizational priorities shaped the research towards a training and development assessment that would consider leader learning needs. With the sponsor, I determined that carrying out a learning needs assessment for people responsible for leading organizational change would provide the organization with a tangible outcome that addressed the training needs mandate, made a contribution towards the succession planning priority and would benefit from by being informed by the perspective of leadership studies.

In addition to addressing two organizational interests, the study provided an opportunity to place these priorities within the context of wider organizational change facing labour unions. In Orfald's assessment of intentional change in Canadian unions, he noted, “There remains a significant danger that unions in Canada are more likely to be the victims of change that happens to them, rather than mastering a process of change that influences the external environment”

(2006, p. 6). Through stimulating discussion and reflection on leadership and learning, the study could aid in developing a proactive stance towards organizational change.

The research project provided individual participants with an opportunity to reflect on leadership challenges and factors that interact with leadership roles, such as organizational culture. Managing organizational culture is seen as an important leadership responsibility and an effective tool in supporting positive organizational change (RRU, Course Notes LT 516, p. 5-7; Yukl, 2002, p. 156). The study provided participants with an opportunity to reflect on this important linkage. This is of particular significance in a labour context. Regarding the promotion of organizational effectiveness, Clark (2000) noted that union leaders should be able to assess and intervene into their union culture in order to promote congruency between organizational culture and values (p. 156). The PSAC as a labour organization and employer walks a difficult path in this regard. They must simultaneously fulfill their roles as agents of change on behalf of federal employees and as employers who must be effective stewards of the organization's resources in an overtly political context. These tensions have been described as

“The tensions that arise in the context of the employer/employee (or capital/labour) relationship necessarily involves tensions inherent in the individual and group/organizational relationships, but provide a distinct set of additional tensions more or less unique to life under capitalism. These tensions revolve around a specific class-based form of what could be called a ‘vertical’ tension within specific work organizations and in society in general. This set of relationships and tensions is rooted in the process of ‘appropriation’ where capital accumulation requires control over surplus value be placed in private hands mediated by market exchange, technological development and inter-capitalist competition, rather than direct human need (Bratton, Helms Mills, Pynch & Sawchuk, 2004).

Many of the leaders participating in this study have a managerial or supervisory aspect to their organizational role. These leaders are keenly aware of how the tensions described above are manifested in their multiple roles. The research opportunity allowed for some exploration of

leadership learning that takes into account the contradictions raised by this particular setting and culture.

This research contributed to positive change by using the views of the participants to inform the development of leadership learning opportunities that would meet their real needs within their unique context.

### *Systems Analysis of the Opportunity*

As an open system, the PSAC is influencing, and being influenced by, a variety of factors in several domains. Environmental trends related to structural change and globalization are being discussed within the labour movement. Discussion and research regarding a response to these trends has been taking place under the label of union renewal. Two other trends emanate from the relationship PSAC has with the Government of Canada as an employer. The PSAC must interact with the ideology inherent in the ruling Conservative Party's passage of the Federal Accountability Act. The administration is also pursuing changes to human resource practices in the public sector. I discuss each of these system trends in more detail below.

Union membership and the context of collective bargaining have been influenced over the past decades by the pressures of globalization. If trade union membership should decline worldwide, worker representation and ability to influence matters that affect working life could also decline. Union density, meaning "the proportion of paid workers whose terms of employment are covered by a collective agreement" (Jackson, 2004, p. 128), is holding steady in Canada at this time.

Differing analyses are put forward about whether this trend is likely to continue. Some argue the labour relations climate in Canada is more conducive to the maintenance of current union density, while others anticipate a decline in Canadian density lagging in time behind a

similar decline in the USA. In analyzing the meaning of the density trend, Jackson identified several factors influencing change and noted that the “the growth of union membership will be strongly influenced by structural change in the economy which influences the relative growth of employment by industrial sector, occupation, establishment size and form of employment” (2004, p. 128). He also included “the changing composition of the workforce- especially by age, gender and race...” (2004, p. 129) as factors. With the wide range of occupational groups and industries represented under the common employer of the Government of Canada, these external factors can all be anticipated to affect the drivers of change surrounding the PSAC.

Commentators have noted that “to be effective as an institution of, for and by the workers, they [unions] have to continually take stock of their situation, identify the challenges, and adapt and modify their approaches, strategies and structures” (Kumar & Schenk, 2006, p. 29).

Responding to these forces has come to be known by the overall term *union renewal*, described by these authors as “the process of change, underway or desired to ‘put new life and vigour’ in the labour movement to rebuild its organizational and institutional strength” (p. 30).

Organizational and leadership challenges grouped under this heading include:

...changes in organizational culture to promote rank-and-file activism and greater participation and involvement of members in union activities, new leadership, increased resources and new strategies for organizing, collective bargaining and political action, developing competencies to participate in workplace change, broadening the range of services, and building coalitions and networks with social and community groups for wide spread mobilization of workers to effect progressive social, economic and legislative change (p. 30).

Union renewal is intended to increase union effectiveness in the kind of complex environment noted above by addressing such issues as “membership density, bargaining power, political power and institutional vitality (Kumar & Schenk, 2006, p. 31). Institutional vitality, defined as

“union innovation and openness to substantial change” (p. 31), was the stream of union renewal this research pursued.

A third factor in the PSAC environment is the development of change initiatives designed to renew the public sector itself. As a bargaining agent, the PSAC has a constant relationship with the Government of Canada and is impacted by the government’s own internal efforts to reform the public sector. Human resource management within the public service of Canada is changing in order to ensure Canada can “compete successfully in the global economy [depending on] the quality of its public services and the competence and professionalism of public service employees” (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, n.d., p. 2).

Changes to human resources management practices within the federal public service are underway. The Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada has “put in place a new human resources management regime in the Public Service of Canada” (Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada [PSHRMAC] 2005, ¶ 1). This agency is charged with implementing the Public Service Modernization Act, the goals of which include modernizing staffing and fostering collaborative labour-management relations (PSHRMAC, 2004, ¶ 4). Both staffing and labour relations approaches have direct relevance for the PSAC and could be expected to influence collective bargaining efforts in matters such as job classification, pay scales and equity.

At the union’s 2006 convention, new fulltime officers were elected including a new National President and National Executive Vice-President. Relationships between and among leaders, members, the government and the public provide a set of dynamic variables that make up the context for the research project.

### *Organizational Context*

The PSAC was founded in 1966, although various forerunners of the organization existed as early as the late 1800's (Warskett, 1997, p. 133 to p. 149). The PSAC is the bargaining agent for 160,000 members working in federal government departments and agencies as well as the territorial governments of Yukon, Nunavut, the North West Territories and some municipalities (PSAC, 2005). The Objects of the Constitution of the Public Service Alliance of Canada describe its purpose as working "to unite all workers in a single democratic organization; to obtain for all workers the best standards of compensation and other conditions of employment and to protect the rights and interests of all workers; and to maintain and defend the right to strike" (PSAC, 2006, p. 1).

The structure of the PSAC is that of a federation composed of seventeen components as well as some units referred to as directly chartered locals. Components "are organized to bring together members working for the same government department, territory or agency" (PSAC, 2005, p. 1). Each Component is made up of Locals, with each Component "having their own decision making structure, holding their own conventions and electing their own leadership" (PSAC, 2005, p.1). In recent years, the PSAC has also developed a regional structure. The seven regions each elect their own Regional Executive Vice-President, and members to Regional Councils and other regional bodies.

Every three years, the PSAC holds a convention that brings together delegates from Components, regions and directly chartered locals, to "establish the policies that guide the union, allocate its financial resources and elect its fulltime officers" (PSAC, 2005, p. 1). A nine member Alliance Executive Committee (AEC) manages the affairs of the organization on a day to day basis between conventions. A wider National Board of Directors consisting of the AEC and all

Component Presidents meets four times per year as a decision making body between conventions (PSAC, 2005, p. 1; PSAC, 2006, p. 7 to p. 15).

The PSAC is active in national and international labour movements through affiliation to the Canadian Labour Congress and Public Services International (PSAC, 2005, p. 1).

A considerable administrative infrastructure has evolved to provide support to the organizational tasks required to represent the PSAC membership. In total, the PSAC employs 340 people, with approximately half working in the national office located in Ottawa, and the other half working in regional offices located across Canada. The staff are organized into six branches that support the work of the organization, covering essential areas such as negotiations, research, grievance representation, member education, union organizing initiatives, organizational planning, finance and administration.

The research project viewed both elected leaders and senior staff as important contributors to the area of study. Both sets of leaders have significant responsibilities for leading organizational change. This is an important characteristic of leadership in this setting. Leaders from either track can have difficulties finding learning opportunities or material that addresses their particular leadership challenges in light of the practices and culture that exists within union organizations. Orfald found that union staff may not have adequate orientation and training for their roles, while elected officials may have strengths in some, but not all areas for which they become responsible upon assuming their elected duties (2006, p. 48 - 49; p. 52).

As political organizations with political aims, unions draw their practices for selecting elected leaders from a democratic model. Leaders are selected through various forms of participatory democracy, with senior leadership elected into their positions rather than hired through the more typical recruitment and selection methods used in the public and private

sectors. The position descriptions and roles for senior officers are generally authorized in the organization's constitutional documents rather than human resource policies. The executive team works with the senior operational team to carry out organizational leadership responsibilities.

Chapter One has reviewed my interest in researching leadership and the unique challenges posed to leaders working in a labour union setting. I have described the focus of the research question on leader learning needs and noted the significant features of the opportunity. The chapter continued with an analysis of system factors surrounding the organization and concluded with an overview of the organizational structure and context, including some cultural characteristics specific to labour organizations.

## Chapter Two – Literature Review

This study was undertaken to assess the learning needs of working leaders responsible for organizational change in a unique setting, a Canadian public sector labour organization. Literature related to leadership and organizational change was reviewed to identify the knowledge and skills associated with leading significant change. The chapter includes examples of three organizational challenges that leaders within the PSAC will need to be prepared to address. These are union renewal, succession planning and promoting equity. The chapter includes recommended methods for learning leadership skills. The chapter also identifies the leader as a learner and discusses adult learning principles applied to the leader's role. Labour education, management education, situational learning are discussed. Current practices of learning through mentorships or coaching are reviewed. The chapter closes with a discussion of the role of the organization in supporting learning as a collective endeavour as well as an individual one.

### *Leadership and change*

This section of the literature review defines leadership, presents key concepts in organizational change and identifies the leadership skills associated with successful organizational change.

#### *What is leadership?*

Contemporary leadership scholarship distinguishes between leadership and management skills. Leadership is seen as somewhat different than management in the dimensions that leaders and managers focus on. Yukl (2002) called this distinction “controversial” (p. 5), as scholars and practitioners have debated to what degree these roles overlap or are present in the same position. This distinction acknowledges that leadership can be formal or informal and does not rely on

whether the person holds a management position in an organization. For Kotter (1996), leadership focuses on change through establishing a vision for direction while aligning and energizing people towards the change; management focuses on order and predictability through attending to functions such as budgeting, staffing, and monitoring results (p. 26). Kouzes and Posner (2002) agreed when they stated “the domain of leaders is the future” (p. xxviii).

According to Yukl, “leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how it can be done effectively, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish the shared objectives” (p. 7). Groysberg and Cowen (2006) observed,

in practice, this distinction between leadership and management can be somewhat artificial. Rarely are leaders not required to do some of the tasks of managers. Therefore, the goals of leadership development in most organizations are likely to target a blend of Kotter’s ‘management’ and ‘leadership’ responsibilities (p. 2).

Lambert (2002) has proposed a view of leadership with an emphasis on learning. She advocated a definition of leadership that acknowledged, “learning and leading are intertwined because these conceptions arise from our understandings of what it is to be human. To be human is to learn, and to construct meaning and knowledge about the world” (p. 34). Using the concepts of meaning making and knowledge construction rooted in a constructivist epistemology, and applied to her work in school communities, she has defined “constructivist leadership as the reciprocal processes that enable participants in an educational community to construct meanings that lead toward a shared purpose of schooling” (p. 36). Walker (2002) says more simply constructivist leadership is “leading for meaning” (p.4). Constructivist leadership highlights the concept that an important role for the leader is to work with the community, in this case, the PSAC community, to develop a shared understanding of purpose and goals of the union.

Knowles (2007) writing from the perspective of historical biographical studies about

labour leadership has stated that there is a distinct lack of material that focuses on leadership theory applied to trade union leaders (p. 195). He offered several reasons for this exclusion, including

Trade union leaders are far less likely than politicians to keep diaries which might record details of their work or to write and publish memoirs based on their period of incumbency. Neither are we likely to find the collections of archived private papers deposited on behalf of labour politicians. Trade union leaders often lacked the administrative support afforded their comrades in politics (p. 195).

Leadership theory asserts that leadership is a relationship. Kouzes and Posner (2002) have found the importance of leadership as a relationship with those who choose to follow as a central theme in their studies of leadership and have stated that “success in leading will be wholly dependent upon the capacity to build and sustain those human relationships that enable people to get extra-ordinary things done on a regular basis (p. 21). O’Toole (1995) agreed with this assessment and stated,

It is now better understood that the role of a leader is to create followers; the task of a leader is to bring about constructive and necessary change; the responsibility of a leader is to bring about that change in a way that is responsive to the true and long-term needs of all constituencies; and the greatest source of power available to the leader is the trust that derives from faithfully serving followers (p. xi).

Knowles (2007) situated his historical biographical study by comparing trade union leadership with public sector leadership and noted that union leaders

need to be more responsive to government and the general community as well as committed to preserving the integrity of the union. Like public officials, when union leaders take an oath they are making a moral commitment to the preservation of constitutional processes which are manifested particular values, beliefs and interests (p. 198 to p. 199).

Leadership theory distinguishes between transactional and transformational leadership. Transformational leaders exert influence with constituents through creating an emotional connection or identification with the leader, stimulating intellectual engagement with

organizational problems, and supporting followers by providing encouragement and coaching (Yukl, 2002, p. 132). Transactional leadership uses incentives and rewards or punishment and corrective action to influence the worker behaviour towards desired standards (Yukl, 2002, p. 132). While leader qualities associated with transformational leadership are seen to be much more human than a transactional approach to leadership, they are not without their detractors, especially within the labour movement. In critiquing workplace learning practices associated with newer forms of management, “a participative leadership style [is] designed to encourage informal learning in order to coax the best performance from workers... and encourages workers to perform beyond their contract (Bratton, Helms Mills, Pynch & Sawchuk, p. 53). Gabriel (1999) also expressed concern with “new, more sophisticated forms [of control] which turn the employee into an agent of his or her own regulation” (p. 104).

This concern with the potential for manipulating others explains the attention to values and ethics that runs through the transformational leadership literature. Kouzes and Posner (2002) have suggested that individuals need to take time to reflect on personal values and ask, “do I freely choose this value? If it is an organizational value, do I freely choose to accept it?” (p. 70). O’Toole (1995) reminded readers that leadership involves a relationship with others based on respect, not manipulation, and stated “moral and effective leaders listen to their followers *because* they respect them and *because* they honestly believe that the welfare of followers is the end of leadership (and not that followers are the means to the leader’s goals)” (p. 9). Eaton (1995) proposed a definition of leadership for union leaders based on the values of empowerment and transformation, that “leadership is a relationship, that leadership is transformational to both leaders and followers, and that leadership is empowering rather than dominating (§ 8). Clark (2000) noted that transactional and transformational leadership approaches are not necessarily

mutually exclusive and can exist in labour movement leadership but concluded, “transformational leadership appears to be the most effective leadership approach for organizations facing significant changes and challenges” (p. 175).

Lambert agreed that transformational leadership has been positively evaluated, and offered a differentiation between transformational and constructivist leadership. She affirmed that many of the concepts related to growth and change are similar in the two schemas, however she believed the language of transformational leadership

situates responsibility for the growth of others in the designated leader. It becomes paternal, although well meaning, with such concepts as help, assist, and foster. Constructivist leadership separates leadership from leader and situates it in the patterns of relationships among participants. Reciprocity requires that the formal leader is growing and changing in concert with others. Relationships are dynamic rather than directional. Further, in constructivist leadership, the learning that is transformational is anchored in constructivism and community (p. 39 and p. 40).

This definition of leadership supplements the transformational definition of leadership by highlighting the shared or collective aspects of leadership and could be of use to labour leaders in linking leadership to growing shared leadership across labour organizations.

### *Leadership skills*

Based on these newer definitions of leadership, the essential skills for leaders are the skills of acting ethically and thereby building trust and credibility; facilitating learning and shared meaning within a community; understanding human development and change; redistributing power and encouraging others to act and building one’s own self awareness, interpersonal skills and technical skills (Lambert, 2002, p. 57 to p. 58; O’Toole, 1995, p. xvii; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Eaton, 1995,¶ 2; Groysberg & Cowen, 2006, p. 14)..

Groysberg and Cowen (2006) recommended that leadership development be provided through a combination of assessment, challenge and support (p. 3 to p. 4). Assessment provides

information that allows the person to identify areas where they would like to concentrate their development efforts. They note that assessment can be formal, as in 360-degree reviews or can be informal, such as through conversations (p. 3). Challenge occurs through learning situations that are out of the usual experience for the leader, where they learn and try out new things (p. 3 to p. 4). The element of support ensures that the stress of learning new complex skills does not become overwhelming. They wrote that “support of one’s immediate superior is critical....Superiors play an important role in creating a psychologically safe environment...” (p.4). Eaton recommended many of the same features applied in a union context when she stated, “formal training is most helpful if it is tied to a real work assignment, if it is prepared for and followed up, and if it incorporates the experience of those being trained. Good supervision is essential” (¶ 75).

A repeated theme in the literature pointed to the need to develop the specific skills and competencies for leaders based on the organization’s anticipated needs. Groysberg and Cowen (2006) summarized that

Unfortunately, there is no exhaustive list of leadership skills. While many are common across organizations, some may be more or less important depending on context. Therefore, an understanding of what skills are relevant in a given organizational setting is essential when establishing and prioritizing developmental goals (p. 2).

Knowledge of organizational needs can then inform the selection of learning and developmental opportunities tailored to groups and individuals. This connects leadership development to organizational strategy and succession planning (Groysberg & Cowen, 2006, p. 10; Groves, 2007, p. 244).

Bolden and Gosling (2006) have put forward a stinging critique of the use of competencies when applied to both leadership and management and suggested “leadership occurs in situation and cannot be distilled into a number of constituent elements” (p. 151). They

believe that the evidence demonstrating that competency frameworks influence organizational performance is lacking and question whether any improvements noted are the result of “the measurement framework they provide or the discourse they invoke” (p. 153). Their research of competency frameworks noted an absence of “consideration of many aspects of the leadership role as identified by practicing managers, especially the moral, emotional and relational dimensions of leadership” (p. 158).

This review of the literature describing leadership concepts suggested that there are a variety of leadership skills for PSAC leaders to draw upon and that newer concepts of leadership include relationship and situational considerations in addition to the individual concepts of leadership emphasised in many competency frameworks.

#### *Leading organizational change*

The leadership definitions reviewed have proposed that leaders must look to the future and facilitate moving the organization towards a desired future state. The research question posed at the beginning of this study sought to identify the learning needs of those responsible for leading significant organizational change.

#### *Scope of organizational change.*

Creating and maintaining movement towards significant change can be a challenging task. One way scholars have identified the magnitude of organizational change required is to consider the extent to which major transformation is needed in order to move to the desired state. Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (2001) classified change as developmental, transitional or transformational (p. 32), while Daft (1998) suggested the scope of change be viewed along a continuum from incremental to radical (p. 287). Yukl agreed, stating that “major change in organizations can take different forms” (p. 154). He indicated change initiatives could be

targeted at “changing attitudes and skills, changing work roles, changing technology, or changing the competitive strategy” (p. 154).

Developmental change is the least disruptive, motivated by a desire to improve a current state and is amenable to change through skill development or process improvements (Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2001, p. 33). Transitional change is required to address a problem, which can be resolved through changing structure or work practices by replacing an existing state with a new one, and can evoke some sense of threat (p. 33).

Transformational change is the most complex, “so significant that it requires a shift of culture, behaviour and mindset to implement successfully and sustain over time” and is therefore the most disruptive to the status quo (p. 39). Transformational change is also undertaken as an emergent process, as “[the result] is largely uncertain at the beginning of the change process and emerges as a product of the change effort itself” (p. 39). Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (2001) suggested transformational change is required to revive an organization when, following an extended period of success, a bureaucracy has become established and symptoms of organizational decline such as lack of creativity, poor morale, obsolescence, competitive threats or loss of market share, have set in (p. 40).

#### *Dimensions of organizational change.*

There are a variety of models that have been proposed to help leaders understand where organizational change can be initiated. From an organization theory perspective, Daft (1998) identified multiple factors external to an organization that can be analysed for their influence on the organizational situation; these are: “industry, raw materials, human resources, financial resources, market, technology, economic conditions, government, socio-cultural and international” (p. 82). He suggested that these dimensions build a picture of the degree of

uncertainty present in the organization's environment and that the assessment can be further refined by examining the extent of complexity and stability present (p. 87 to p. 90).

Turning to factors within the organizational boundary, Daft (1998) suggested the technology, or work process, at the organizational and departmental levels be examined in order to select a structure that best responds to facilitating the production process (p. 119 to p. 120). According to this schema, the PSAC would be classified as a service technology because the output of the organization is the service to PSAC members.

Using this view, service technologies have five defining characteristics, namely, they engage in simultaneous production and consumption, the output is customized, customers participate in the process, the outputs are intangible in that they are knowledge, rather than a concrete product and these outputs are labour intensive (Daft, 1998, p. 130 and p. 131). Service organizations would then have the option of changing products and services, strategy and structure, people and culture and / or technology in order to better meet strategic goals (p. 289). He also noted that changes in any of these “are inter-dependent—a change in one often means a change in another” (p. 290).

Burke and Litwin (1992) proposed a model of organizational performance and change that linked organizational variables in such a way that patterns and causal elements between them could be identified. Burke and Litwin (1992) stated they proposed their model to bring some clarity to the patterns of change that appeared chaotic in organizational change by integrating both change process with implementation activities (p. 523; p. 525). Orfald (2006) used the Burke-Litwin model to consider union renewal and found it helpful in identifying various drivers of change, the location of inter-related factors and where resistance could be anticipated (p. 71).

Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (2001) take up the matter of multiple dimensions and the role of the transformational leader in their change model. They agree with Daft regarding interdependence and stated,

Shifts in any one dimension can create related shifts in any or all of the others. For example, shifts in the marketplace requirements for success can cause an organization to redesign its structure or re-engineer its business processes, which in turn can impact employee morale, alter cultural norms, cause teams to change their membership, trigger anxiety in individuals, shift the collective agreements about how work gets done, break up longstanding working relationships, cause individual employees to lose their jobs, and so on (p. 69).

Although they identified twenty-one possible dimensions that could be interacting in a change process, they noted that “three general areas are most critical: *marketplace* dynamics, *people* dynamics and *process* dynamics (p. 69). They stated that the purpose of highlighting these multiple perspectives is to allow leaders to bring into conscious awareness the variety of factors set in motion when making higher order changes.

Senge (1990) sounded a cautionary note regarding overly detailed systems analyses at the expense of understanding systems dynamics. He stated, “unfortunately, most ‘systems analyses’ focus on detail complexity not dynamic complexity. Simulations with thousands of variables and complex arrays of details can actually distract us from seeing patterns and major interrelationships (p. 72). To counter-act this tendency, he advocated systems thinking that emphasizes “seeing interrelationships rather than linear cause-effect chains, and seeing processes of change rather than snapshots” (p. 73).

Again emphasizing the need for multiple perspectives when assessing or diagnosing where change may be required, Bolman and Deal (2003) proposed four lenses for viewing organizations, with the rationale that limited views are a source of distortion in understanding organizational situations or problems (p. 6). They observed the multitude of books and schools of

thought emerging in the organizational literature and have categorized these into four major groupings they refer to as frames, with each frame representing a “set of ideas or assumptions you carry in your head. It helps you understand and negotiate a particular ‘territory’” (p. 12).

They described the four frames as

The *structural frame* focuses on the architecture of organization—the design of units and subunits, rules and roles, goals and policies—that shape and channel decisions and activities. The *human resource frame* emphasizes an understanding of people, with their strengths and foibles, reason and emotion, desires and fears. The *political frame* sees organizations as competitive arenas characterized by scarce resources, competing interests and struggles for power and advantage. Finally, the *symbolic frame* focuses on issues of meaning and faith. It puts ritual, ceremony, story, play, and culture at the heart of organizational life (p. 18 and p. 19).

Bolman and Deal (2003) advised that their four frames work well with Kotter’s model of the change process, and provided examples of how each stage of the change process can be enriched by using concepts from each frame to craft a holistic approach to leading change (p. 383 and p. 384; p. 386 and p. 387).

*The change process.*

The model developed by Kotter (1996) proposed that leaders view any change process as moving through eight stages, proceeding from “establishing a sense of urgency, creating the guiding coalition, developing a vision and strategy, communicating the change vision, empowering a broad base of people to take action, generating short-term wins, consolidating gains and producing even more change, and institutionalizing new approaches in the culture” (p. 20 to p. 23). He goes on to caution that

successful change of any magnitude goes through all eight stages, usually in the sequence.... Although one normally operates in multiple phases at once, skipping even a single step or getting too far ahead without a solid base almost always creates problems (p. 23).

*Leaders have choices*

The variety of elements and variables mentioned in the models of change demonstrate that organizations and organizational changes are complex. Leaders who are embarking on significant organizational change initiatives will benefit from an awareness of the choices suggested by these models in order to consider where their efforts will have the greatest impact.

This section of the literature review has provided an outline of the leadership skills leaders require. Transformational and constructivist leadership concepts provide leaders with alternatives to older paternalistic and hierarchical models of leadership. The literature recommends leaders choose transformational and empowering relationships with constituents and suggested that these are more in keeping with labour movement values of democracy and solidarity.

*Leadership challenges*

In the previous section, the literature reviewed defined leadership as mobilizing people towards a desired state and provided an overview of the factors, dimensions or models that are available to help leaders when engaged in significant change. In this section, I review three specific leadership challenges that imply an organizational change response from the PSAC. Union renewal is an example of the systems nature of the challenges the labour movement and the PSAC are facing. Succession planning and promoting equity are examples of two specific leadership challenges that affect the internal vitality of the union. Taken together these three examples provide a good illustration of interdependency, as change in one area will affect change in the others. These three examples do not represent all the issues that the PSAC leaders are facing; rather, they represent the kinds of issues that leaders are actively engaged with and are therefore useful to consider from the perspective of leadership development. Each has the

potential to provoke significant transformational change and each requires attention from both elected officers and staff members. The previous chapter noted that leadership development in organizations takes place in the context of the strategies leaders will be expected to provide leadership to. How will the PSAC prepare leaders to respond to these issues effectively?

### *Union Renewal*

A particular organizational change underway in the labour movement has come to be known as *union renewal*. Union renewal “describes the process of change, underway or desired, ‘to put new life and vigour’ in the labour movement to rebuild its organizational and institutional strength (Kumar and Schenk, 2006, p. 30). It is an international phenomenon with initiatives underway in labour organizations in many countries. This international interest is fuelled by the broad nature of the external forces that labour organizations must respond to in order to address the globalized challenges evident in changing working relationships. In their review of the literature setting the context for seven case studies on union renewal in Canada, Kumar and Schenk (2006) define union renewal in the context of change. They quote Onley (1996) as positioning union renewal as an adaptive response “to a host of interrelated changes in economic, political, social, and labour market factors, including the far-reaching impacts of globalization and associated neo-liberal market emphasis in public policy” (Kumar and Schenck, 2006, p. 29). This adaptation is intended to respond to the questions posed by this changing environment such as how unions can restore their strength and how they can flourish within their own organizational and environmental context (Kumar & Schenk, 2006, p. 29). Murray and Waddington agreed with the factors noted by Kumar and Schenk. They suggested that union renewal is stimulated by a need to examine how labour responds to globalized production methods and the presence of multinational corporations as employers through mechanisms such

as international trade agreements that allow corporations to work across jurisdictions. They stated:

The reconfiguration of global production systems is certainly one of the most visible faces of the restructuring of work and employment with which trade unions now have to contend. Previously fixed boundaries of firms and their spatial location are much more malleable as new technologies modify the nature of relationships with and between firms and permit the kind of extensive integration of production activities which were only previously imaginable in vertically integrated firms (2005, p. 495).

The possibilities of this of kind of reconfiguration set the stage for labour organizations to rise to the challenge of remaining or becoming relevant to this new world of work.

In what Murray and Waddington (2005) described as a “burgeoning literature”, renewal activity is categorized as occurring at various levels, such as global, national, and regional or workplace; and within different fields of operation such as new social movements or with various categories of workers (2005, p. 490 to p. 491). Orfald agreed, noting “a fairly extensive literature has been building up around the concept of ‘union renewal,’ in particular within the traditions of political economy and industrial relations” (2006, p. 14). Kumar and Schenk ground this in organizational change language by pointing out that union renewal is a “response to a fundamentally different external and internal environment. It entails developing a culture of learning and change to undertake innovations and modifications in organizational structures, leadership, policies and practices, with a view to becoming a more effective organization for advancing membership interests” (2006, p. 30). This analysis is consistent with the multiple factors Andersen and Ackerman Andersen recommended for attention in their model; namely environment, marketplace requirements, business imperatives, organizational imperatives, cultural imperatives, leader and employee behaviour and leader and behaviour mindset (2001, p. 16 – p. 19).

*Streams of union renewal.*

This broad scope and acknowledgment of levels explains why the literature on union renewal is often separated into streams, “reflected in one or more measures of union effectiveness: membership density, bargaining power, political power and institutional vitality...” (Kumar & Schenk, 2006, p. 31).

While the literature noted above documents a consensus regarding the need to revitalize unions and the broad drivers of change in the external or internal environment, there are very different views about how revitalization is best achieved. Renewal strategies advocated by various approaches and schools of thought were enumerated. These include (a) greater partnerships with employers to achieve mutual gains, (b) increased mobilization and militancy of workers to contain the excesses of increased stresses brought about by new management systems, (c) greater rank-and-file involvement to challenge ineffective representation from a status quo leadership, (d) changes in the way unions are managed in order to better facilitate union activities, (e) international alliances to strengthen solidarity and respond to relocation and (f) increased capacity building (Kumar & Schenk, 2006, p. 31 – 32; Murray & Waddington, 2005, p. 492; Haiven, Le Queux, Levesque & Murray, 2005).

*Union leader preparation.*

While the various views and considerations about renewal strategies continue to be debated, the importance of the leadership role in advancing change is woven through the literature. Strategies for inclusion of, and reducing barriers for, young workers, racially visible workers and women are proposed as methods that will renew unions by making them more representative of the changing demographics of membership. It will also be from these cohorts that the next generation of leaders is drawn.

There are many challenges for developing leaders with a strong capacity for managing the internal changes needed to support institutional vitality. According to Eaton, “the most time honoured method of union leadership advancement is climbing the ladder from worksite leader to local officer and/or staff, then to regional, provincial, or district officer and finally to the national leadership” (1995, p. 6). Clark, Gray and Solomon observed “union leaders traditionally have risen to the top of their organizations based on some combination of political skills within the union and performance vis-à-vis employers. Rarely is administrative proficiency a major issue...” (1996, p. 2). Nesbit contributed, “...union officials have an ever-widening range of responsibilities, which fall mainly into three broad functions: servicing and representing union members, organizing and recruiting new members, and representing and promoting the policies of the union” (2001, p. 677).

*Staff leader preparation.*

Nesbit (2003) has noted that Canadian unions assume that staff are coming into union work with significant experience and that “most Canadian unions choose to direct their limited resources toward the educational needs of lay representatives” (p. 113). Clark and Gray (in press) have documented a continuing trend within American unions towards increased professionalization of staff roles as unions require people with “the ability to use new information and communication technologies and the written, verbal, and analytical skills associated with higher education appear to be qualities unions increasingly need” (p. 7). In her study, Eaton (1995) found “very often there is no formal orientation program for staff, or they are sent to training program months after arriving on the job” (¶ 52).

These observations of the lack of support to officers and staff indicate that training and development for their roles could assist them to meet some of the challenges presented by

keeping the union as an organization responsive to the challenges of renewal. In discussing the relationship of institutional vitality to the other streams, Kumar and Schenk stated, “while priorities on organizing, bargaining, and political action vary from union to union, depending on environmental pressures, institutional vitality is considered a pre-requisite to union renewal” (2006, p. 31).

In addition to the gaps in knowledge individual leaders may experience, there is a lack of contemporary study of Canadian labour unions as organizations and of leaders, whether staff or elected (Orfald, 2006, p. 43). Orfald drew attention to “the *organizational* challenges that renewal poses” (2006, p. 15). He proposed that a comprehensive view of unions as organizations undertaking internal change in support of renewal efforts would need to consider:

the kinds of changes needing to be made in what elected officers, activists, and staff actually do, and how resources are assigned to staff, programs, services and campaigns. It would look closely at the kinds of supports given to elected officers, staff and members in the process of organizational change, how change is affecting the working relations between elected officers, members and staff and at internal systems for managing and coordinating the work of the union (2006, p. 15).

This literature sets out the challenges for leaders, whether elected officers or staff, who share responsibilities for managing large scale transformational change in aid of renewal efforts. The authors reviewed have indicated that elected officers and staff may have little preparation or ongoing training for their work in leading organizational change.

### *Succession Planning*

Human resource planning is “the process of forecasting human resource needs of the organization so that steps can be taken to ensure that those needs are met” (Stone and Meltz, 1993, p. 134). These authors noted that “planning future human resource needs is difficult, especially for jobs held by executives, professionals, skilled and technical workers, and tradespersons, that is, jobs that require lengthy training or the acquisition of considerable

relevant experience” (p. 134). Succession planning is “a systematic process whereby professional and personal development is blended with a strategic plan to ensure that the organization is prepared to fill any position that becomes vacant, with the right person who possesses the right skills and attitudes, at the right time” (Carrol, as cited by Christie, p. 23). Succession planning is often used to refer to the need to replace senior leaders and managers. Cantor reported his preferred definition as “developing a management group with the leadership competencies needed to achieve the strategic plan...” (p. 1). Houde and Hamilton (2005) connect leadership to succession planning in their definition by stating “leadership succession planning consists of an integrative form of succession planning intended at replacing key leadership position(s), characterized by an ongoing process of systematically: (a) identifying, assessing, and developing/recruiting organizational leadership, and (b) identifying and assessing individual, organizational, and cultural variables likely to affect leadership succession” (p. 1).

As noted in the literature on union renewal, elected leaders generally build their leadership capabilities through experience by holding office in successive levels within the union structure. Staff members with significant leadership responsibilities also gain competence and confidence through a progression of leadership experiences. These processes can be expected to take many years. Awareness of the length of time required to achieve proficiency in the range of skills required to successfully manage large organizations and organizational change has led to a strong interest in understanding the tasks and timeline for preparing leaders. The well publicized issues of mass retirements anticipated in the workforce as generational change takes place over the next decade are a concern for unions. Browne and Waghorne (2005) identified three effects specific to unions as the demographic shifts take place, these being loss of experienced officers, loss of experienced staff and loss of collective memory (p. 4). While losses like this could be

expected to affect any organization, they suggested these factors may hit unions harder than other organizations as

We [unions] don't have external sources to reinforce our collective memory; the history books don't tell us much about how unions developed, why they evolved as they did. Certainly, we don't have external sources to tell future leaders about the reasons why our components/branches/affiliates operate as they do (p. 4).

Clark (2000) connected a transformational leadership approach and succession in union leadership when he wrote that

Good [union] leaders are not only concerned about the state of their union today or tomorrow; they are also concerned about its long-term success. They look beyond their own time in office and work to ensure the viability of the organization after they are gone. One important way to do this is to make sure that the organization has a cadre of people ready and willing to assume future leadership positions (p. 180).

Further, he recommended that current "leaders need to see the identification and development of future leaders as part of the responsibilities they take on when they assume office (p. 180).

#### *Risks without succession planning*

Eaton (1995) commented on the political context of union leadership and noted that because they are elected, union leaders face problems that are very different from those that confront corporate executives and managers. Union leaders arise and must maintain their influence through a political process. Consequently, they must deal with challenges to their position from within their own organizations (§ 29).

Effective succession plans minimize risk to organizations and facilitate continuity.

Speaking directly to union leaders who may be concerned that they may be nurturing the very people who may choose to run against them, Clark (2000) pointed out,

It would be naïve to suggest that developing potential leaders does not include some risk to the mentor's [incumbent's] position, but it also must be recognized that a failure to develop competent leaders also carries significant risk. Except in the smallest of local

unions, one person cannot alone provide the leadership necessary to ensure the success of the organization. A key part of leadership is identifying and involving capable people in the work of the group. A failure to do so will ultimately be reflected in the ineffectiveness of the organization. Ineffectiveness is an equally, if not, a greater, danger to tenure in office than competent rivals (p. 180).

Eaton (1995) stated that “for current union leaders to create and support programs for new leadership development at a time when they have extremely pressing demands on them will be a difficult and courageous choice” (¶ 91).

Ineffective organizations will be hard pressed to respond to the challenges of union renewal and to the specific challenge Brown and Waghorne (2005) identified when they noted that existing workplaces currently represented by unions face the same transition of workers through retirement that unions face, which will precipitate a need for more organizing, to “organize the unorganized and energize the organized” (p. 5) as new members arrive into the workplace.

Cantor (2005) also commented on the theme of risk related to inadequate response to succession issues when he advocated that organizations use a series of steps in leader selection that included assessment of both leadership and technical skills (p. 5 to p. 6). He endorsed the development of competencies to create a measure of objectivity to counter reliance on intuition that could be distorted by error, noting that

... in the absence of concrete criteria, people tend to recruit in their own image. Thus, the benefits of recruiting from gender, racial, age, and other diversity sources are at risk. It deepens the experience base for decision-making when diverse candidates are recruited to the leadership pool (p. 6).

Eaton (1995) noted that unions must ensure that their recruitment and training strategies are non-discriminatory as “apprenticeship-based promotion patterns may have a discriminatory effect by mirroring employer discrimination. (¶ 47). Groves (2007) noted the responding organizations in

his research “resist the tendency to designate an heir apparent and focus on identifying and developing multiple potential successors for a range of positions” (p. 248). This approach protects the organization from the risk that any one individual who may leave the organization is putting replacement in jeopardy and reduces the potential for “severely damaged morale and potential turnover of leadership talent not targeted for succession” (p. 248). He suggested that encouraging widespread leadership development rather than a replacement planning approach is more successful in bringing candidates from diverse backgrounds into consideration. This distinction between the leadership development approach and the replacement approach to succession planning is an important consideration for the PSAC to discuss for possible impact on employment equity goals internally and the democratic practices used for selecting elected officers.

*Succession plan elements.*

The components of the strategy for staff succession planning proposed by the PSAC included recruitment planning, competency profiling, staff training and development, knowledge transfer and coaching and mentoring (PSAC, 2007, p. 7). Cantor (2005) recommended candidate selection, experience, leadership training and visibility as important elements of a formal succession plan (p. 7), while Groves (2007) has developed a model that integrates leadership development with succession planning by encouraging 360-degree feedback, executive coaching, mentoring, encouraging participants to establish networks, providing a variety of job assignments and making use of action learning. These components are very similar to the assessment, challenge and support activities Groysberg and Cowen (2006) advocated in their leadership development model (p. 3 to p. 4).

Morton (2004) reviewed the talent management practices of thirty-five private sector

corporations and found that there was no common definition of the talent, meaning “individuals who have the capability to make a significant difference to the current and future performance of the company” (p. 6); nor was there a common approach to the activities to be pursued as some companies pursued “an egalitarian definition, while others look at individuals whose positions are at the top of the organization” (p. 33). She indicated that important factors to weigh were the culture of the organization and the connection of the initiatives to the strategic plan of the organization (p. 33). This would appear to be a discussion point for the PSAC. Some of the approaches advocated in the private sector are clearly embedded in a competitive mindset and would need to be examined in light of PSAC values as well as the resources available for leadership development and succession planning.

### *Equity*

Promoting equity is the third example of a leadership challenge that requires the engagement of both elected and staff leaders. According to Stone and Meltz (1993), “the goal of *employment equity* policies is for employers to have a representation in their internal workforce that is comparable to that which exists in the externally available labour market” (p. 108). The PSAC is a leader in promoting employment equity within the workforce of the public sector in Canada. The PSAC is committed to the principles of employment equity in its role as an employer and to promoting leadership that is inclusive and representative of members. For example, the policy on anti-racism stated that the “PSAC recommits to the struggle for meaningful Employment Equity, both in workplaces within which we represent and as an employer” (PSAC, 1999, ¶18).

The PSAC has ratified a number of policies and declarations related to equal opportunity and employment equity, human rights, anti-racism, women in the PSAC, persons with

disabilities, Racially Visible and Aboriginal persons, anti-harassment, and sexual orientation. The policies direct members, officers and staff to work towards achieving social and economic equality for all members and eliminating discrimination and bias through mechanisms such as collective bargaining with employers, collaborating on joint initiatives where appropriate and establishing equitable practices within the union as an employer. This commitment is extended to leadership development through clauses such as “PSAC will facilitate the development of Racially Visible and Aboriginal leadership at all levels” (§ 13). There is a strong connection between the challenge of succession planning and the challenge of equity. As noted above, without attention to equity in the development of succession plans, organizations can put achieving their equity goals at risk (Cantor, 2005, p. 6).

The Human Resources Section provides support to the implementation of employment equity within the organization and encourages members of equity seeking groups within the union to identify themselves as such when seeking employment with the PSAC. The equity seeking groups the PSAC currently recognizes are women, Aboriginal people, Racially Visible people, people with disabilities, and lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgendered people. The PSAC is also encouraging young workers to become involved with the union both as members and as staff. The governing structures of the PSAC incorporate policies and practices to remove barriers and promote the equitable inclusion of people representative of the whole of the PSAC membership in the leadership of the union. Employment practices are aimed at ensuring the PSAC workforce is also representative of the membership. In the remainder of this section, I review recommended practices or specific considerations put forward by the literature related to leadership development and equity seeking groups.

*People who are racially visible.*

Lopes and Thomas (2006) developed a sample checklist to assess various organizational processes that support organizational change for racial equity. They recommended that organizations assess their overall racial equity policy and plan as well as employment systems, management practices, complaints processes, communication practices, program areas, education and professional development policies and practices and mechanisms used for monitoring the organization's equity plan, all with a view to ensuring these practice areas are free from barriers that prevent racially visible people from full inclusion in organizations (p. 245 to p. 253). In the specific area of education and professional development, they recommended practices to be considered to ensure that "all education and professional development offered by the organization incorporates racial equity and other areas of equity work" (p. 252). Incorporating these recommendations would be way of integrating leadership development with the PSAC goals related to promoting employment equity; progress in one area would help to achieve progress in the other.

In considering the effectiveness of organizational change efforts towards equity, the authors defined success by stating

We measure the success of our efforts to bring about organizational change through the positive results experienced by those with the least power within an organization. If we have been successful in the process, people with the least power will have a healthier work environment, their contributions will be properly assessed and valued, and they will be able to actively transform their organization rather than be assimilated into it. If this type of transformation is allowed to occur the organization benefits immensely from increased productivity, reduced absenteeism and conflict, improved staff morale and having greater relevance to diverse communities (p. 9).

Reviewing these documents suggested that using policies such as the *PSAC Policy Papers and Resolutions of Record* and internal human resource policies, identifying indicators of success and avoiding organizational barriers could be used to create leadership development and

succession planning processes that also support equity.

*People with disabilities.*

The PSAC has a number of policies that direct the union to address the workplace discrimination experienced by people with disabilities, to enable members with disabilities to participate in union education events and leadership training and to have access to union communications in their preferred media. (Section E of Policy 43; Policy 35, Policy 36; Policy 37). Internally, the PSAC as an employer considers persons with disabilities an equity seeking group.

Literature regarding leadership development and people with disabilities was lacking in the sources I searched and led me to question whether there is a lack of inclusion of people with disabilities in leadership development. My searches for best practice literature related to disability and leadership provided a limited response; in fact the query ‘leadership + disability’ produced no hits in a large database of academic journals. In another database, my perception was that the titles were concentrated in the area of employer obligations rather than celebrating or promoting advancements in inclusive practice.

In his review of the legal obligations of employers in the United States, Clardy (2003) noted that employers, whether using their own staff or vendors, are required “to provide reasonable accommodations to disabled employees so that he or she may attend and participate in training’ (p. 137). Including disability in a range of diversity issues, Ross-Gordon and Brooks (2004) recommended practices for fostering greater attention to diversity when developing continuing professional education, including self-assessment [as a teacher or facilitator] through “critical reflection on one’s own position (p. 79); attention to power dynamics in the learning setting “within the teacher-learner, trainer-trainee relationship” (p. 79) and analysis of how

issues of interests and power are considered in program planning, in order “to illuminate who is and who is not at the planning table” (p. 80).

*Lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgendered and queer (LGBTQ) people.*

The PSAC policy on Sexual Orientation stated that the PSAC “deplores discrimination against lesbians, gay men and bi-sexuals, and urges all levels of government not only to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, but also to recognize and protect lesbian and gay relationships and families (1994, PSAC Policy 31, ¶ 1). Several of the procedures within Policy 31 have implications for ensuring homophobic and heterosexist assumptions are removed from PSAC courses and that

educational and communication materials [are developed] which address the experience of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals, and which integrate the concept of multiplicity of experience. This would mean incorporating the diversity and multiplicity of experience of all Alliance members into the regular content of all Alliance courses (Policy 31, ¶13).

This policy would suggest that leadership development programs take into consideration this integration of experience in program design and learning materials, through the program planning practice noted by Ross-Gordon and Brooks (2004) and mentioned above.

Munõz and Thomas (2006) wrote about overt and covert mechanisms that exist within organizations that can affect the well being and inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer workers. Of particular relevance to leadership development is their attention to a type of discrimination they refer to as social distance, the “variety of ways in which heterosexuals create distance between themselves and the LGBTQ community, physically as well as psychologically” (p. 87). This distancing results in heterosexual co-workers limiting their interactions with or being “less willing to disclose and seek out information from a sexual minority coworker” (p. 87). These actions can affect the professional development of the LGBTQ worker by denying access to the social networks, mentoring and developmental

opportunities needed for promotion (p. 87). In order to counter the invisibility of and resistance to dealing with homophobia and heterosexism, management teams need skills to deal with resistance (p. 89). The authors also identified support to affinity groups within the organization as an important mechanism for facilitating change, as these groups “provide safe spaces to discuss their identity and it’s role in their work lives (p. 90).

Recommended human resource actions classified as best practices by Munõz and Thomas (2006) were

Setting the context for learning inclusion and diversity within an organization, being proactive by preparing for resistance that often is associated with the diversity change process, gaining leadership commitment by holding managers accountable for their workplace climate, establishing affinity or employee resource groups to help establish a support structure for LGBTQ employees, and creating a continuous learning environment by the inclusion of diversity training (p. 93).

#### *Women.*

The PSAC earned a place in Canadian labour history with its success in mobilizing a ground breaking strike in 1980 of fifty thousand federal clerks, when “until that time women had been regarded as passive members of the Alliance and of other unions. Very few of our brothers suspected that we were capable of sustaining militant action and very few women really felt themselves to be trade unionists” (1997, Policy 34, ¶ 3). The PSAC then mobilized and maintained a bargaining and legal strategy that led to an historic pay equity settlement in Canada. The PSAC has a number of provisions in Policy 34, *Women and the Alliance: From the Margins to the Mainstream*, that support the inclusion of women in leadership roles. There are provisions and procedures throughout Policy 34 that direct attention to the inter-relatedness between various forms of discrimination and provide procedures intended to encourage women’s active involvement in union and community affairs. The commitment to women’s issues within the PSAC has resulted in strong representation of women in leadership positions in some areas of the

union. The visibility of women in leadership position provides encouragement and role models for other women.

Kellerman and Rhode (2004) found indicators that identified that progress has been made by women in corporate and academic environments in the past forty years, yet they concluded this “progress has been partial and painfully slow. With respect to leadership, in particular, women still have a long way to go” (p. 15). In the workforce overall, they stated, “women are overrepresented at the bottom and underrepresented at the top, even controlling for educational qualifications” (p. 15). Recent studies in Canada from the private sector and from a feminist standpoint are in agreement in this regard. Brady and McLean (2002) reported that “women executives are still the exception rather than the rule, and indications are that women receive fewer opportunities to benefit from valuable career development practices” (p. 3). Writing of all equity seeking groups within unions, including women, Briskin noted “despite some gains in numerical representation, a growing consciousness that members of equity-seeking groups are prepared and competent to take on leadership positions, and the development of creative strategies to encourage this participation, under-representation continues (p. 3).

Fletcher (2001) commented on early efforts to distinguish a female leadership style based on stereotypical feminine traits termed ‘the female advantage’ (p. 12). She noted that while the traits ascribed to women were being promoted as positive for organizations, feminists critiqued the concept for contributing to stereotypes, making universal claims about women or that the concept was being used to co-opt women (p. 12). She stated that her own view at the time was that while the ‘female advantage’ had some promise in challenging masculine standards, it did so from an “instrumental, masculine perspective” (p. 14) and would be unlikely to challenge the status quo (p. 14). She continued her research to identify the ways that women’s relational skills

and power relations in the workplace were acting on women and concluded that the relational approach used by many women is misattributed and absorbed into organizations, making women's strategic skills disappear (p. 6.; p. 91, p. 95).

Brady and McLean (2002) reported four practices "commonly used or critical to development" (p. 13) identified by Canadian women in leadership positions. These were: providing stretch assignments that allow the participant to "gain incremental experience in complex management styles and structures" (p. 13); access to informal and formal developmental relationships such as networking and mentoring; access to formal learning through courses, whether in-house or academic; and support for continuing education such as subsidies for tuition in academic programs (p. 13).

Through the coming decade, the PSAC will be preparing officers and staff members for providing leadership to the significant challenges of navigating the trends of union renewal, developing and maintaining succession strategies and continuing to promote employment equity at all levels of the union. It is noticeable that many of the recommendations in the literature overlap such as the need for networking and mentoring and that several of the recommended practices from the various literature streams are present in the PSAC proposal for succession planning activities. This indicates that by drawing on a range of recommended practices for leadership development, the PSAC will be able to make progress on succession and equity issues as well.

#### *Methods for leadership learning*

Leaders in the labour movement, including those within the PSAC will be called upon to provide leadership to address important and complex internal and external issues such as succession planning, building equity towards an inclusive and representative leadership and

addressing the challenges of union renewal. In this section, I discuss the literature that identified the learning methods and processes that prepares leaders for working with significant change and complexity. I viewed the leader as an experienced activist and social change leader, as someone who likely had managerial or supervisory responsibilities in their union work and as someone who would be undertaking leadership development as a working adult. This led me to examine the literature from labour education, management and executive education and adult education and learning theory.

### *Labour education*

I reviewed selected literature related to learning programs designed for trade union leaders. A considerable amount of labour education is provided at the local and regional level and most unions make use of participation in partnerships with provincial labour federations and national organizations to provide education to members and officers. Many unions have designed their own in-depth programs for training activists to be effective workplace leaders. It was beyond the scope of this review to examine all of the programs aimed at this audience. I sought out the literature that considered the role of the labour leader in significant organizational change or those that commented on managerial skills training requested by labour leaders.

Labour education is a leading source of education for labour officials. Brookfield stated, “*labor education* is generally used to refer to educational programs designed to help union representatives and members perform their union-related functions more effectively” (1986, p. 179). Labour education in Canada has been found to be “related to the concrete demands stewards, officers, and other union members face in the workplace, their union and the community... (Athabasca University (AU), 2001, p. 184). The importance of educating members for the steward role is emphasized, as

this mandate is more clearly illustrated in the case of Steward Training, as this worksite representative of the union is expected to fulfill some of the most serious and even onerous responsibilities face a certified bargaining agent. The Stewards' ability to function effectively largely determines the Union's ability to fulfill its legal obligations and failure to fulfill these competently could even be fatal to the organization (p. 184 and p. 185).

Labour education is also not the same as workplace education, as labour education is considered to "include all union and independently provided education designed to support and build union activity and culture. ... not to be confused with 'workplace learning', which is essentially aimed at producing workers as human resources" (Athabasca University, 2001, p. 17).

The regional and national education programs of the PSAC focus on building local activist capacity, informal and formal leadership development, mobilizing members on issues of concern, and skills in representing members and handling grievances (J. Labine, personal communication, March 5, 2007). The audiences for these programs are primarily leaders of locals and active committee members as well as rank-and-file members. Several unions also conduct intensive leadership development programs with a residential component for activists to encourage their development as worksite leaders. The content and format of many union leadership development programs is reviewed in *Labour Education in Canada Today* prepared for Athabasca University. The PSAC has a leadership development program for members called the Union Development Program, which is organized around themes of the role of the union in the workplace, labour's role in society, and leadership skills values and challenges (J. Labine, personal communication, March 5, 2007).

The Canadian Labour Congress administers the Labour College of Canada. At this time, the Labour College of Canada is conducting a review of its mandate. Prior to any forthcoming

revisions, graduates of the Labour College completed course work in economics, labour history, labour sociology, political science and labour law (2007, Canadian Labour Congress, p. 5). The Federation des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec (FTQ) offers programs inside Québec with the goal of “developing capacity to influence the social, economic and political changes underway in Quebec” (FTQ, n.d.).

The Harvard Trade Union Program is international in scope and has accepted Canadian labour leaders from time to time. The curriculum is designed as a six week intensive experience using seminars and the case method. (Harvard Trade Union Program, n.d. Curriculum Summary p. 1). The curriculum for the program included leadership and organizational change, equity and inequality, labour history, public sector labor relations, labor role in advocating for family policies, strategic planning and strategic choices (Harvard Trade Union Program, n.d., p. 2 to p. 7).

Different than union and labour education, “*labour studies* is a term that describes a new curricular area and field of academic specialization that is offered as a degree option in university programs. Subjects included in the broad areas of labour studies include sociology, social psychology of the workplace, organizational psychology, group dynamics in the workplace, leadership styles, management theory as related to negotiation, collective bargaining and the law, and political science” (Brookfield, 1986, p. 170). There are several programs and partnerships of this type in Canada, including between the Labour College of Canada and Athabasca University and the Canadian Auto Workers with McMaster University.

Eaton (1995) noted that union leaders are expected to be familiar with a wide range of skills such as “administrative, entrepreneurial, financial, participatory, legal, and political. It is difficult, if not impossible, to capture all of these skills in a formal training program (§ 78). She

also reported that “it is rare for anyone in the labor movement to have extensive experience with contemporary management practices or supervisory skills” (¶ 79). Clark and Gray (in press) compared administration practices in unions between 1990 and 2000 and found an increase in the adoption of systematic administrative practices (p. 11). They attribute this not to the increasing bureaucracy of union organizations, but as a response to the many pressures unions experienced over that time to provide good value to members and make the best use of member resources (p. 11 and p. 12). The Trades Union Congress in the United Kingdom has reported on a review of the learning needs of union officers and staff that found that management skills were a strong first preference for many of the respondents, ranked highly along with employment law, organizing methods, negotiating skills, communication techniques and equality in their training priorities (Trades Union Congress (TUC), 2005, p. 19). This literature suggested that for those working inside unions, there is a need for more learning related to management and administration practices that contribute to effective leadership.

This review of the range and focus of programs and types of courses has identified learning resources designed specifically for the needs of labour, available to staff and elected officers. This overview of programs and curricula has revealed that while leadership learning is a part of the course offerings in labour education, the focus is not on organizational change or management development for labour leaders.

#### *Management and executive education*

It was anticipated that management skills might emerge as an area of interest for the participants in the study. Management and executive education literature was reviewed to identify the topics and methods that are currently being used in these fields and to determine whether these techniques and programs would be of assistance in meeting the learning needs of

the study population.

*Managerial skills union leaders want to learn more about.*

At the individual level, many people come to management positions within their organization with no formal training in management practice. It is not uncommon that the person who shows informal leadership or is strong in the technical aspects of their skill or trade will come to take on co-ordinator, supervisor or management roles. This can occur when union officers assume management responsibilities when elected. Eaton (1995) stated “the most common approach to mastering a union role is to learn by doing, without much help or encouragement from anyone, and without formal training” (¶ 74). Clark, Gray and Solomon (1996) have observed “once in office, elected union officials may find that the skills and experiences that helped them achieve their positions had not prepared them to deal with the administrative challenges they face” (p. 489). Officers may find that while they were well versed in handling grievances or managing the affairs of smaller locals, they need support to learn some supervisory skills or to use the tools and techniques for monitoring projects they are responsible for. Eaton (1995) found that her participants “made many emphatic requests for more training for themselves, particularly in planning, communication, motivating people, time management and interpersonal relations” (¶ 90).

*Need for better models.*

Orfald noted that weak management systems have been identified as a phenomenon within the labour movement (2006, p. 53). He reported on research that found unions were “having trouble developing internal management capacity consistent with union values...” (p. 53). One reason offered for this difficulty is that union leaders can be uncomfortable with being managers as it is too closely associated with the employers they have been fighting (p. 53). Clark

and Gray (in press) noted that some unions have adopted the administrative practices of private or public sectors employers, partly through acting on the advice of outside consultants or because “for some officers and staff, the employers with whom they bargain and by whom many were formerly employed, served as models” (p. 12). The studies noted above by Eaton (1995); TUC (2004); and Clark and Gray (in press) all indicate union leaders are interested in learning management skills in the service of their organizational responsibilities.

*Wariness of management theory*

The history of management practice and preoccupation with production has been well documented (Bratton, Helms Mills, Pyrch & Sawchuk, p. 11 to p. 41; Daft, 1998, p. 21). Many unionists share a critical stance and scepticism of management theory having learned well through experience and effective labour education how these ideas are used against the interests of working people. Clark and Gray (in press) have noted that “critics of the trend toward more ‘business-like’ administrative practices may also see this as ‘corporatization’ of unions and may fear that union leaders will emulate other aspects of business organizations and, in the process, lose touch with their members” (p. 15).

*Alternative views of the role of management.*

There are some critical trends within management and organizational studies that call for a reflection on the purpose of managing. Gosling and Mintzberg (2006) have stated that “business is not management, even if many managers manage businesses” (p. 424). Alvesson (1985) articulated an alternative way of looking at organizations and their underlying assumptions (p. 129). He suggested in this different view that “the maximizing of efficacy, productivity and profit would not be a decisive criterion” (p. 129). He proposed instead that organizations could pay attention to

- Participation and democracy are central values.
- The value inherent in the work itself is at least as important as the work in its capacity of an instrumental action. In other words, learning, development, meaningfulness, and satisfaction are certainly no less vital ideals than high productivity ratings and consumer - oriented leisure characterized by a large supply of goods.
- The labour process is designed in a way that allows for personal decisions and variegated, well-qualified job content for all employees (p. 129).

This literature points to the existence of alternative views to mainstream management thinking that could provide union managers with a source of ideas for reflecting on their management practice and deepening approaches that are consistent with union values and beliefs.

*What management and executive education covers.*

Preparing people to manage organizations has generally been the domain of business and administration programs in colleges and universities, with business faculties in recent years offering a range of credit and non-credit courses designed to develop learner competencies in various administrative or managerial functions.

The goals and areas of study included in the curricula of several business and executive development programs and schools were reviewed. The schools included community college, baccalaureate and master level programs as well some continuing education offerings aimed at executives. A variety of full-time, part-time and distance delivery formats were available. Most programs of study included courses in financial management skills such as commerce, finance or accounting; economics and marketing as core courses and had elective courses or concentrations such as human resources management, project management, policy analysis and governance, benefit cost analysis, ethics in business or the public sector, business or contract law, research methods, strategic management, organizational behaviour, use of technology or information systems, program evaluation, leadership and change or change management, and

entrepreneurship (Algonquin College, 2007; Athabasca University 2007; Carleton University, 2007; la Cité Collegiale, 2007; Harvard Business School, 2007; Queen's University 2007; Royal Roads University, 2007; University of Ottawa, 2007; York University, 2007). The learning methods emphasized application to organizational problems and included case study, problem-based learning, working in small groups and teams and developing strategic thinking. Although some of the programs indicated they offered concentrations for those working in health services or the not-for-profit and public sectors, the overall impression I gained was one of preparing participants for competition.

Groysberg and Cowen (2006) connected management learning to leadership development and succession planning and suggested that leadership development should concentrate on strengthening participants understanding of the technical skills associated with managerial and leadership responsibilities (p. 2). This would include planning, organizing and problem solving for managers, and direction setting and aligning people with these directions for leaders. They proposed “in addition to the relevant technical knowledge, leaders must build skills in three key areas: interpersonal judgement, self-awareness, and learning ability” (p. 2).

### *Learning and teaching methods*

Management educators have utilized a range of learning experiences to build strengths in the areas noted above. Kilmann (1996) reported on his efforts in creating *management learning organizations* with a cohort of business students in order to have them learn through experience “the essential problems, challenges, and dynamics of real-world organizations” (p. 210). Smith (2003) provided recommendations for improving the critical thinking skills of business students through teaching thinking skills in four categories he referred to as fundamentals, critical thinking, managerial thinking, and problem-solving, which included the sub-topics of decision-

making and negotiation in addition to different aspects of problem-solving (p. 37). He also commented on the methods he considered to be useful in promoting critical thinking, including analyzing written texts, analyzing case studies and working through problem-based learning (p. 46).

This review of the literature related to management development has described the content in the technical or functional areas of management practice such as finance, planning or evaluation practices. The review included the recommendations from management educators that self-awareness and inter-personal skills be included to enhance the manager's ability to deal with the complexities of the management role. The review highlighted the learning techniques or methods that facilitate learning these complex skills such as analysing case studies, problem-based learning and working in groups or teams. The review noted that union leaders have learning needs in the area of management and administrative practice and that ambivalence about acquiring these skills exists due to the association with employer practices. This suggests that effective learning situations for union managers would need to use the methods that have proved effective while incorporating case and problem material derived from union settings. The review found a stream of critical theory that has been applied to organization and management studies that could assist union managers in developing a management and leadership practice that is informed by alternative assumptions from more mainstream practice.

#### *Adult education*

There is a clear connection between leadership and learning. Kouzes and Posner have stated "leaders are simply great learners" (p. 216). They also found that "leaders approach each new and unfamiliar experience with a willingness to learn, an appreciation for the importance of learning and a recognition that learning necessarily involves making some mistakes" (p. 218).

Brown and Posner (2001) stated that, “applying adult learning principles and creating conditions that foster transformational learning are essential in the design and delivery of leadership development efforts” (p. 279).

There is controversy and contradiction associated with practicing adult education in organizations, such as is required when developing programs for leadership training or management development. Laiken (2001) described the contributions that the disciplines of adult education and organizational development make to the leadership of change and drew attention to the political nature of assumptions generally shared by practitioners when she wrote, “although OD is rarely acknowledged in it’s own literature as having a political agenda, its emphasis on collaboration as both a process and an outcome of intervention strategies challenges the very structure of most organizations” (2001, p. 294). Regarding leadership development, she noted that those who choose to practice inside organizations are “helping organizational leaders to develop leadership approaches that are facilitative, collaborative, and respectful, rather than controlling, coercive, and disempowering” (2001, p. 295). In an interview she carried out with Brookfield, she reported his view that “adult education has, at it’s core, the fostering of democratic values and practices, and contains an implicit critique of capitalism and organizational control” (2006, Brookfield, Kalliath & Laiken, p. 829).

As noted in the review of management education, these assumptions are not shared by all program planners and facilitators. Many organizations have incorporated learning agendas driven by a desire to maximise productivity (Bratton, Helms Mills, Pynch & Sawchuk. p. 25).

Brookfield, Kalliath and Laiken (2006) discussed the tensions between adult education and management education. They noted that “many adult educators...see themselves as part of a broader social movement for democracy, .... For them, management as a term has all kinds of

Taylor-esque connotations whereby people are trained and developed to manage other people to achieve maximum productivity” (p. 829).

Martin (1995) has written about a set of polarities he has identified as active in union culture, including one he called passionate / bureaucratized and another he labelled voluntary / professional (p. 30 to p. 45). He noted that “[union] administration is necessary and important. It is central not just to a union’s day to day work but also to monitoring the integrity of union leadership and effectiveness of union representation” (p. 35). He also commented on the ambivalence within the labour movement when relying on professionals and suggested “unions wanting to be effective need to support activists in developing special areas of skill and knowledge. It [supporting specialized skills] also asserts the legitimacy of contributions by radical professionals, committed craftspeople” (p. 41). These polarities are very much present in considering how to create leadership and management development processes inside unions that honour and can work with the uniqueness of unions, remain critical of leadership and management ideology that is not consistent with union values or interests and bring in the knowledge and specialized skills that unions as organizations need in order to be effective and careful stewards of the member’s resources.

Writers from across the spectrum of leadership development, management learning and labour education all assert some connection to adult learning. Union and labour education, workplace learning, human resource development, leadership and management development all share the commonality of working with adults as learners and all make attempts to incorporate principles of adult learning into their practice, although they may have different aims. Referring to teaching methods, the authors writing for Athabasca University stated, “... many labour educators are highly trained and aware of the latest principles and developments in adult

education, and are capable of explaining their practices in theoretical terms that relate to both their unions and their education programs” (p. 186).

Union leaders are not only familiar with adult education principles through their participation in learning for their leadership roles; they are also developing the newer and next generation of leaders as an important responsibility. Eaton, (1995); Clark, (2000) and the TUC (2005) all reported an important role for union leaders in facilitating the training of the next generation of leaders. This suggests that union leaders would benefit from being familiar with the principles adult education in order to enhance their own ability to learn in novel situations and to facilitate the growth and development of other leaders.

*Foundations of adult education.*

Mackeracher (2004) reviewed the philosophies of an array of adult education approaches, summarizing them as four orientations across a continuum (p. 22). One pole of the continuum represented the technical-rational paradigm, where the focus is to prepare learners for work that will result in “vocational competence and economic productivity” (p. 22). The other pole represented the participatory-liberatory paradigm, where critical thinking and political awareness are emphasized with the aim of “achieving social equity and justice; inclusion and diversity” (p. 22). Along the continuum she classified varying degrees of vocational, liberal, humanist or liberatory orientation based on the emphasis each approach places on the role of the learner, the educator and the main purpose of the education (p. 22). Much workplace learning would fall into the vocational orientation while the liberatory orientation is represented within the labour movement through the popular education tradition which is often used in member education.

Merriam (2001) identified three foundational concepts in the contemporary practice of adult learning which included andragogy, self-directed learning, and transformational learning

(p. 93). Andragogy is the body of theory and practice that distinguishes adult learning from the techniques associated with working with children (p. 93). Self-directed learning recognizes the autonomy of the learner in planning, carrying out, and evaluating their own learning (Brookfield, 1986, p. 40). The third foundation, incorporating the work of Freire and later, Mezirow, articulated the transformational potential of much adult learning (Merriam, 2001, p. 94). According to Mackeracher (2004), transformational in this sense, means the learning “has the potential to lead to change. Personal meanings and one’s personal model of reality can be changed...” (p. 10).

Merriam (2001) stated that in addition to the three concepts already named, a comprehensive view of adult education now would also include attention to informal and incidental learning, the particularities of gender, race, and class on learning and applying newer understandings of neurobiology and cognition to learning (p. 93). Mackeracher (2004) noted that many of the foundational concepts in adult learning were put forward by “well-educated, white, male adult educators” (p. 200). Similarly to the comments offered by Merriam (2001) above, she noted that a more diverse set of adult education practitioners have introduced ideas such as the role of emotion, relationship, spirit, and the group or community in learning (p. 200).

Brookfield (1986) reviewed a range of principles and propositions that have been put forward about adult learning, including

learning must be problem centered, learning must be experience centered, experience must be meaningful to the learner, the learner must be free to look at experience, goals must be set and pursued by the learner, and the learner must have feedback about progress towards goals (p. 26).

### *Situated learning.*

Another idea receiving attention in adult learning and in particular, learning in

organizations, is the concept of situated cognition. In this view, learning is ‘fundamentally influenced by the activity, context and culture in which it is developed and used’ (Mackeracher, 2004, p. 201). Eaton (1995) reported that “the most common union approach to mastering a union role is to learn by doing, without much help and encouragement from anyone and without formal training” (§ 74). She also noted that many union leaders “remember someone who taught them the ropes...” (§ 86). These provide illustrations of negative and positive examples of learning in context.

Adult educators are also exploring what happens when the context is constant change and the demands of the current workplace. Beckett (2001) has said time and space are “squashing up” (p. 73) with effects on learning in the workplace. He stated that “while at work, adults can learn powerfully through experiences that are intense, dynamic, uncertain, and decisional (p. 74). He has named “hot action ... [those] workplace experiences when, moment by moment, decisions are taken on the run, case by case, and with nagging doubt that action might be inadequate,-- superficial, hasty and inappropriate” (p. 74). He goes on to prescribe a type of learner directed process of training that he described as just-in-time, based on “authentic workplace needs (such as the workers’ intentions to solve a problem or complete a task)” (p. 81).

#### *Leadership learning using adult education*

Leadership learning in unions that attended to the principles of adult education would be built on respect for the leader as a learner. Leadership learning is personal, and would provide time for the leader to gain self-awareness and be built around the leader’s own goals for learning. The influences of learning style, culture, gender, and any other dimensions the learner finds relevant are therefore welcomed. Leadership learning is situated, social and relational. Attending to this dimension would suggest that leadership development would incorporate opportunities for

learners to work and reflect together, to explore group and team experiences. The complexity of leading change and managing organizations would be attended to by using case studies, problem-based learning, role-plays, journal writing or other techniques that incorporate problems that are real to the participants. The leader would have mechanisms for feedback that would allow the leader to assess their progress towards their own goals. Learning would be understood to be emergent and growing out experimentation in times of hot action.

This review of literature related to leadership development, the challenges of succession planning and promoting equity as well as management and adult learning have all mentioned the importance of coaching and mentoring as methods that contribute to building leadership capacity.

#### *Coaching.*

According to the International Coaching Federation, a professional development and voluntary certification organization working to establish standards for professional coaches, “coaching is partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential (ICF, n.d., ¶ 1). Coaching has roots in sports and sports psychology (Whitmore, 2002, p. 7-10; Grant & Greene, 2001, p. 11 and p. 12). The field has grown to include applications in personal and professional development such as “work/life balance, dealing with conflict, increasing productivity, effective leadership, working as part of a team, communication skills, relationships [and] parenting skills (Grant & Greene, 2001, p. 11). The purpose of a coaching relationship is to assist the client in improving performance. Whitmore stated the connection to learning when he wrote, “coaching is unlocking a person’s potential to maximize their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them” (2002, p. 8). Bluckert (2005) agreed, offering his definition as “coaching is the

facilitation of learning and development with the purpose of improving performance and enhancing effective action, goal achievement and personal satisfaction. It invariably involves growth and change, whether that is in perspective, attitude or behaviour” (p. 173).

Whitmore (2002) made a case for coaching as a management skill when he stated, “coaching is a management behaviour that lies at the opposite end of the spectrum to command and control” (p. 2). He advocated that managers become coaches in order to give greater emphasis to providing time, ensuring quality and maximizing learning with employees, connecting a coaching approach to providing staff development on a daily basis (p. 25). The coaching field has emphasised that it is different from counselling or therapy in that coaching does not seek to find deep-seated motivations for current behaviour or deal with clinical illness such as anxiety or depression (Grant & Green, 2001, p. 13).

#### *Executive coaching.*

There is a specific form of coaching referred to as executive coaching. Bluckert (2005) reviewed definitions of executive coaching and found the elements of learning, development, and performance are commonly linked (p. 173). As a working definition, he offered “executive coaching is an action-learning process to enhance effective action and learning agility (Witherspoon and White, as cited by Bluckert, 2005). Executive coaching may be offered to individuals or to senior management teams (du Toit, 2005, p. 11; Kets de Vries, 2005, p. 61 to p.75). du Toit (2005) reported that

a consistent theme as to the benefits of coaching is its ability to support senior managers with the sense of isolation they experience as well as the lack of opportunities to discuss areas of concern with others or explore opportunities for growth (p. 11).

The literature indicated that coaching and executive coaching provide a non-directive and supportive atmosphere grounded in the work role.

### *Mentoring.*

Mentoring “is seen as an intense personal exchange between a senior experienced colleague and a less experienced junior colleague” (Davies, 2005, p. 1). Higgins and Kram (2001) stated that mentoring has been viewed as “the developmental assistance provided by a more senior individual within a protégé’s organization—that is a single dyadic relationship” (p. 264). An important role for mentors is to assist mentees in finding developmental experiences such as “important projects, teams and into challenging jobs” (2006, Harvard Business School, p. 3).

Mentoring processes can be informal or formal and facilitated by the organization or left to individuals to create. Recommended steps included that the participants develop mutually agreed goals, keep the focus on the professional development of the mentee or protégé whether on a workplace problem or individual strength development, and have an awareness of when to dissolve or change the nature of the relationship when the learning needs of the mentee have been met (Conference Board of Canada, 2003; Harvard Business School, 2006).

Mentoring has been found to be effective in exposing participants to breadth across all parts of an organization, enhancing career growth and providing a sense of satisfaction to both the mentor and mentee that can increase staff retention (Conference Board of Canada, 2003, p. 4).

Eaton (1995) has noted the strong history of apprenticeship in the union movement and stated that apprenticeships can be very effective in learning “certain complex skills” (¶ 78) such as the varied responsibilities of the union leader (¶ 78).

The literature indicated some cautions need to be attended to in implementing mentoring in order to reduce gossip and negative repercussions related to cross-gender matches and to be

sure that equity representation is strong in order to prevent old patterns of exclusion from being reinforced (Blake-Beard, 2001, p. 341; McCarty Kilian & Hukai, 2005, p. 156).

Coaching and mentoring appear to have assumed significant popularity in organizations as they follow several principles of adult learning by allowing the learner to create their own learning goals, situate learning in the organizational context and allow participants to seek feedback their progress.

The review of the literature related to adult education principles has indicated that familiarity with adult education can provide support to the union leader as a learner, as a person learning complex work in a particular context influenced by their individual characteristics as a learner. The review also provided the leaders in a union setting with considerations to aid them in their role as facilitators in the growth and development of newer leaders, whether officers or staff. The review indicated that coaching and mentoring can assist individuals in their leadership learning and can be beneficial in meeting organizational goals by contributing to succession planning and achieving employment equity.

#### *Organizational culture and support*

Organizational culture has been described as “the basic pattern of shared assumptions, values and beliefs considered to be the correct way of thinking about and acting on problems and opportunities facing the organization” (McShane, 2001, p. 506). Understanding organizational culture is seen as essential to both leadership and organizational change as “some organizational scholars conclude that the only way to ensure any lasting change is to realign cultural values with those changes. In other words, changes ‘stick’ when they become ‘the way we do things around here’ (McShane, 2001, p. 518). McShane also noted “we cannot determine an organization’s cultural values just by asking employees and other people about them. Values are socially

desirable, so what people say they value (called espoused values) may differ from what they truly value (enacted values)” (p. 506). Giving an example, Yukl noted, “a company may espouse open communication, but the underlying belief may be that any criticism or disagreement is detrimental and should be avoided. It is difficult to discover the underlying beliefs and assumptions, some of which may be unconscious” (p. 156 to p. 157). This example points to the observation that organizational culture has both observable and hidden aspects. McShane (2001) used the analogy that organizational culture is like an iceberg with observable behaviours such as rituals, stories and language protruding above the waterline, while the underlying values, beliefs and assumptions can remain unseen, submerged below the waterline (p. 506).

Clark (2000) noted that there are many examples of observable artefacts of union culture present ranging from day-to-day behaviours such as handshakes, symbols such as shirts and logos, or the telling of stories and the accomplishments of labour movement heroes (p. 148 to p. 156). Bolman and Deal (2003) asserted leaders are acting from the symbolic frame when “leaders lead through both their actions and their words as they *interpret and reinterpret experience*” (p. 360).

Schein (1996) highlighted the complexity and layers of organizational culture when he pointed out that different managerial or occupational cultures exist within a workplace (p. 235 to p. 237). Clark (2000) made a similar observation when he noted the presence of different cultures within the union movement when he observed that “unions might also have an ‘organizing’ culture, a ‘servicing’ culture, or a culture encompassing elements of both” (p. 150). Martin agreed, noting “a sweeping concept like union culture needs to be used cautiously... we may have to talk of ‘union cultures’ in the same way that many people speak of ‘feminisms’” (p. 30).

Authors such Gabriel (1999); Hirschhorn and Barnett (1993) and Stapley (1996), have suggested that due to the hidden nature of organizational culture, the use of psychodynamic interpretations can prove helpful in illuminating the unconscious aspects of organizational culture. Gabriel suggested that the usefulness of applying psychodynamic concepts is that these can “qualify, extend and complement some of the insights of mainstream organizational theory by coupling it with a psychological tradition which does justice to the full complexities, ambiguities and conflicts of human beings” (1999, p. 2). Turnbull James and Arroba (2005) reported on their design of a leadership development program that familiarized participants with some of the basic concepts of psychodynamics as a way of working with emotions in organizations and noted this approach

provided a totally different frame of reference for leaders. They acquire a leadership map that includes the idea that leadership roles are taken up in a context that exerts influence on the leader just as much as they influence the context. An understanding of leadership behaviour as emerging from the inter-action of the individual personal characteristics of the leader, the group and the organization dynamics that he or she enters into on taking up a leadership role can help managers develop a more fine-grained approach to intervening in their organizations (p. 304).

Two leader actions that are repeatedly associated with organizational culture are the leader’s role in articulating organizational vision and the need for leaders to demonstrate through their own behaviour, a commitment to the values and culture they are seeking to build. Kouzes and Posner (2002) reported that building organizational culture through articulating shared values is an essential practice for leaders, as “compelling words may be essential to lifting people’s spirits, but leaders know that constituents are more deeply moved by deeds. ... It’s how they provide the *evidence* that they’re personally committed” (p. 77). They noted that it is through this evidence that leaders are seen to be “deeply committed to the values and aspirations they espouse” (p.77).

Union vision is demonstrated through some of the positive aspects of union culture that support leadership development. Briskin (2006) has asserted that “embedded in equity initiatives on representation, leadership practices and constituency organizing is a vision of union democracy that emphasizes participation and inclusivity rather than simply representation” (p. 36). This is evidenced in the strong organizational commitment unions have made to their education programs. Briskin (2006) has stated, “since union education is one of the stepping stones to union leadership, increasing inclusivity in union education may improve representation [of marginalized workers] in the future” (p. 15). Organizational support for constituencies and caucuses also demonstrates support for participation in development activities.

Aspects of union culture have also been identified as inhibiting leadership development, especially from members of equity seeking groups. Four significant barriers have been identified as “family responsibilities; job segregation; masculine union cultures and traditional stereotypes” (2006, p. 4, Braithwaite & Byrne as cited by Briskin). Paavo (2003) has written on the effect of overwork in the union movement and its effect on inhibiting women’s leadership and has documented a number of alternatives that could challenge current union practices and create a more supportive culture for pursuing leadership. She suggested a range of measures unions could consider including leadership sharing models, limits on holding union office and flexibility to allow for times of greater or lesser intensity of involvement (p. 100 to p. 105).

Eaton (1995) has noted that

unless one has a culture in which education and training are prized, admired, and respected as activities at the core of the union’s work, education will often be unrecognized, unrewarded, and undervalued. Learning will occur whether or not it is planned, but it may not be in accord with union goals and values (§ 73).

A significant development in organizational literature has been the emergence and growth of the concept of learning organization. Senge (1990) has advocated a set of disciplines

that he stated are for people “interested in the art and practice of collective learning” (p. 16.) This concept encouraged organizations to consider their culture and practices in terms of how they encourage learning. Senge (1990) advocated building a culture of inquiry in organization through the use of the disciplines such as working in teams and learning to identify patterns of complexity.

Practices within an organization that demonstrate commitment to leadership development and learning include providing tuition or scholarship support, assisting with building forums for constituencies and networks, supporting the establishment of internships, apprenticeships and mentoring, seeing the senior leaders actively participate in their own leadership learning as well as facilitating the development of others.

The literature has indicated that neither leadership nor learning are only individual acts. Supporting a culture of learning and mechanisms for collective learning such as conferences and workshops that provide opportunities to share and make meaning with others are also recommended practices.

This literature review has identified the elements of leadership development programs, including the knowledge, skills and attitudes recommended by research in a variety of disciplines. The review has noted some considerations unique to leading organizational change within a labour union, and reviewed the particular challenges of leading initiatives in union renewal, succession planning and equity. Recent literature from the field of adult education placing the leader in the position as learner and as the facilitator of other’s learning was included. The role of organizations in supporting leadership learning through their values and culture was also reviewed. This chapter contributed to a needs assessment by enumerating the knowledge and skills required by people leading significant change in unions.

### Chapter Three Conduct of Action Research Project

This chapter provides the rationale for the research approach selected to assess leader's learning needs at the PSAC. This chapter includes a description of the development and use of the interview and questionnaire tools used in the study, the procedures of thematic analysis used to process and interpret the information gathered and the ethical considerations attended to throughout the research project.

#### *Research Approach*

Action research has a history of application in organizational research, with early investigations using action research credited to Lewin in developing business efficiency or change in personal behaviour (Glesne, 2006, p. 17; Merriam & Simpson 1995, p. 122). Action research is now used in many disciplines and domains where researchers engage with participants in a collaborative investigation, rather than one of separation and objectivity (Glesne, p. 13- 14; Kirby, Greaves & Reid, 2006, p. 31; Merriam & Simpson, 1995, p. 121).

Action research begins “with an interest in the problems of a group, a community, or an organization. Its purpose is to assist people in extending their understanding of their situation and thus in resolving problems that confront them” (Stringer, 1999, p. 10). This focus on practical problem solving allowed the PSAC to develop a deeper understanding of leadership development and succession planning as articulated by the people who will both participate in, and foster, development and succession activities. The philosophical roots of action research make it compatible with the values espoused by the PSAC. The flexibility of action research meant the approach could incorporate the questions that a learning needs assessment would require.

Using an action research approach, problems or interests of organizational members can be explored. Solutions are more likely to be relevant by including members of the organization in

the inquiry. The process of working together contributes to the building of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that underpin the development of personal and organizational learning. In this way, action research is both a research approach and an intervention into the process of the organization.

The idea of working together implies a social relationship between and among the various members of a research team. The concept of leadership also implies a social relationship, in that leadership is somewhat limited if one is leading only oneself. Glesne stated that, “Qualitative research methods are used to understand some social phenomena from the perspectives of those involved, to contextualize issues in the particular socio-cultural-political milieu, and sometimes to transform or change social conditions” (2006, p. 4). Using an action research approach emphasising qualitative methods was consistent with the focus of this study, which was to hear directly from those with the experience of leadership in order to define their own learning interests.

Several authors have commented on the ontological and epistemological beliefs shared in critical theory, feminist research and action research, in that these methodologies share the belief that participation in research can either reinforce oppressive and inequitable power relations or can seek to address these inequities through the way that the research is conducted (Malhotra Bentz & Shapiro, p. 54; Glesne, 2006, p. 170; Stringer, 1999, p. 21; Kirby, Greaves & Reid, p. 34). As a practitioner, my thinking has been informed by all of these approaches. As a researcher, I was committed to making the research process an opportunity for exploring organizational change and leadership learning for those involved. I believed that the values in action research and the values of the PSAC would be compatible.

The procedures of action research “are likely to be ineffective, however, unless enacted

in ways that take into account the social, cultural, interactional and emotional factors that affect all human activity (Stringer, 1999, p. 20). I anticipated that underlying values of democracy, participation and the building of positive working relationships would be familiar to, and judged worthwhile, by stakeholders in this research. I viewed the organizational commitments the PSAC has made to, and participated in, workplace and social change initiatives as compatible with these values.

Action research has a values base which assumes that democracy, participation, liberation and life-enhancement are facilitated through collaboration, cooperation and consensus making as part of the research strategy (Stringer, 1999, p. 10 and p. 20 to p. 21). The PSAC aims to advance democratic participation in workplace and civic life (2003, Policy 26). By using action research in the union setting, I hoped that the research situation becomes a place to build positive working relationships, interactions and communication where the well-being of participants is enhanced (Stringer, 1999, p. 21).

The outcome of the study is intended to provide the PSAC with information that could inform decisions about leadership development programs. Needs assessment is a recommended first step in developing an effective learning program. In describing recommended steps of training program development, Caffarella (1988) noted,

Learning programs should build on the accumulated knowledge and experience of the adult, and should also be practical, whenever appropriate. The learner should be involved in all stages of planning. These principles should be part of the basic philosophy and practice of the organization and program planner.

Adults have their own learning agendas, .... It is therefore important to include the viewpoints of both individual learners and ideas from the systems... (p. 31).

In reviewing program development frameworks such as that proposed by Caffarella (1988), I found that her recommended steps of including both system and individual

perspectives (p. 31) in assessing training needs were compatible with the action research approach used in this study. Using action research to carry out a learning needs assessment created an opportunity for action team members and study participants to be involved in the earliest stages of considering program planning for leadership development.

I believed by connecting the research approach, organizational values and the pragmatic outcome intended for the study, the research process and results would produce a useful outcome for the organization and for future learners.

#### *Information gathering tools*

The research project gathered information through two qualitative methods, in-person interviews and an anonymous written questionnaire in electronic format. Both tools are interactive mechanisms for asking questions which allowed me to hear directly from participants about their experiences and needs.

In the spirit of action research, I viewed the draft tools approved through the Royal Roads University Ethical Review Board as provisional until also reviewed by the project action team. The proposed instruments were circulated to action team members to review for any organizational sensitivity I may not have been aware of as an outsider or to suggest new or modified questions that would address their interests.

Through the interview method, I was able to hear about respondent's depth of experience and had the opportunity to ask for clarification. The anonymous questionnaire method allowed for input from a broader range of respondents and to reach those from a variety of geographic locations within the organization, while offering a measure of privacy lost in the interview process.

I considered elements of appreciative inquiry in formulating the questions, being mindful that a question is an intervention in itself. This is most in evidence in the question I posed regarding leadership challenges. In describing how appreciative inquiry complements action research, Bushe stated, “The emphasis in my approach is on designing inquiry methods that amplify the values the system is seeking to actualize during the all phases of the inquiry process” (1995, ¶ 9). I decided that I would ask about challenges, which implies that the leader has overcome or learned from early challenges, rather than ask about barriers. I did not do this to ignore the significant structural barriers people face in coming to leadership, but rather to amplify the positive qualities of strength and creativity implied in overcoming a challenge. I also hoped that in asking leaders of varied backgrounds and experiences what their challenges had been, I might observe commonalities in the replies that could inform the content of leadership development programs at a later date.

I emphasized open questions in both tools. From both methods, I wanted to hear how the respondents would describe their own learning needs. I was concerned that using a set of predetermined topics would not reveal much about the uniqueness of leadership tasks in the union setting. I also wanted to avoid introducing my own bias into the study by selecting categories for responses. I viewed this research as exploratory, a first step in learning about leader’s interests in a union setting and a first step if the results were to be followed up with other program planning steps. Palys affirmed that open-ended questions are suited to this stage of inquiry when he commented, “Open-ended questions are clearly superior if the researcher is interested in hearing respondents’ opinions in their own words, particularly in exploratory research where the researcher isn’t entirely clear about what range of responses might be anticipated” (p. 176). I was genuinely curious about what this group of very experienced leaders

would view as their specific and unique needs and did not want to impose a schema or framework on their views.

### *Pilot studies*

I conducted pilot tests of both methods before proceeding to gather the information from the study population. The pilot testing allowed me to ensure that the materials were accessible and that they would elicit the raw material anticipated.

Two members of the action research team provided feedback on the interview process. This allowed me to gain experience prior to scheduling interviews with all participants, to develop a sense of how the questions flowed with respondents, to hear how the questions were experienced by respondents and to gauge the approximate length of time required for the interviews. This feedback was helpful in scheduling and conducting the remaining interviews.

I circulated the questionnaire to all members of the project team and received a few comments about revisions concerning improved reflection of the PSAC organizational structure in the phrasing of the questions. I established a pilot site for the questionnaire and had a member of the project team access the site and provide feedback. I also recruited two colleagues not associated with the study in any way to access the pilot site and provide suggestions to me concerning ease of access, readability and any difficulties they encountered with the questions. This trial ensured that the questionnaire elicited the intended material and that opportunities to misinterpret questions were minimized. The pilot identified some small difficulties in wording and the display of the web site links for ease of access that were important to address before sending to the wider population.

*Interview as a tool*

Interviews are particularly suited to inquiry when in-depth information is sought, where attitudes or perceptions towards a topic are to be explored or when seeking insight into complex processes (University of Texas at Austin, n.d.; Glesne, 2003, p. 80). Given the complexity involved in becoming a skillful leader and the range of personal and external factors that inform effective leadership, closed or highly-structured methods would be unlikely to capture the range and depth of information sought. By using semi-structured face-to-face interviews, I expected to elicit respondent reflections on a variety of leadership themes to be considered in the later design of learning interventions. Semi-structured interviews allowed for some interaction between interviewee and interviewer, “with some variation in the order and format of the questions” (Kirby, Greaves & Reid, 2006, p. 134).

*Questionnaire as a tool*

I selected an electronic questionnaire as a second method to complement the information gathered through the interviews. In this study, the questionnaire provided an anonymous method for responding. I expected that the anonymity would allow respondents to comment on matters that they may be reluctant to raise in the presence of the researcher and would reduce the sense of being observed or judged, if the respondent was under the impression that the researcher would be looking for a correct answer. The questionnaire method also allowed me to reach a greater diversity of organizational members and increase the validity of the study findings.

The questionnaire wording was very similar to the interview questions to aid identification of qualitative themes. Minor modifications to questionnaire wording were made after the interviews had been completed in order to ensure that the questions would be easy to understand without prompting from the interviewer. The questions were also modified slightly to

conform to the formatting requirements associated with the computer program used to administer the questionnaire.

The invitation and consent letters were modified slightly as well. I was concerned that extra steps, such as requiring respondents to open an e-mail attachment to find instructions, would reduce participation. The Introduction and Letter of Consent were adapted to fit in the body of an e-mail, with the links to the reply site readily accessible at the end of the message. The Introduction to Questionnaire and Questionnaire are included here as Appendix C and Appendix D respectively.

The questionnaire also differed slightly from the interviews in that a small amount of demographic information was requested from the participants. Four categorical response items were used to ask about gender, age category, status as an elected officer or staff member and years of experience. Respondents were advised that this information would not be connected with any information in the Human Resources section. This information was not required; each category included an option for opting out. Respondents were advised that the categories would be used only to make some observations about similarities and differences in learning needs between groups.

### *Validity*

Merriam and Simpson (1995) classify action, participatory, critical and feminist research as “less conventional paradigms” (p. 121) and noted that these research paradigms share an understanding that “valid knowledge is defined in terms of those ‘doing’ the knowing (p. 121). Measures of validity and reliability build trustworthiness in the research outcomes and are defined differently in these traditions than in methods flowing from the quantitative, experimental or scientific traditions. Within the qualitative paradigm, a body of researcher

practices has built up to ensure that methods have rigour. Qualitative researchers use practices such as triangulation, member or participant checks, scrutiny by peers, creation of researcher teams, monitoring researcher subjectivity, immersion in the research situation, seeking findings of other research, thick description and searching out negative cases to strengthen validity (Merriam & Simpson, 1995, p. 101 to p.103; Glesne, 2006, p. 37 and p. 38; Kirby, Greaves & Reid, 2006, p. 241 and p. 242). In this study, I applied triangulation, thick description, monitoring of subjectivity and member checks to strengthen validity.

Glesne stated using a variety of methods in qualitative research “contributes to the trustworthiness of the data” (2006, p. 36). Triangulation requires that “multiple investigators, multiple sources of data or multiple methods” be utilized (Merriam & Simpson, 1995, p. 102). The research practices that were part of my triangulation strategy were using three data sources, namely, the in person interviews, the written questionnaires, and the literature review. The interviews were designed to provide in depth replies, while the questionnaires elicited the same information in an anonymous format while enabling me to reach a wider, more heterogenous group of participants. The interview notes and questionnaire replies resonated with many of the themes I read in the scholarly literature. This consistency is considered to be measure of validity (Merriam & Simpson, 1995, p. 102).

A second measure I incorporated to increase trustworthiness was the use of thick description. Thick description “involves providing enough information / description so that readers will be able to determine how closely their situations match the research situation, and hence, whether findings can be transferred” (Merriam & Simpson, 1995, p. 103). I have provided a detailed account of my actions in conducting the research and included thorough descriptions of the themes identified. I have incorporated many illustrative quotes from

respondents, in order to allow readers to make judgements about the generalizability of the results.

Member checks are actions taken to verify contributions with members of the participating groups, such as circulating transcriptions of interview material and asking participants to verify the accuracy of the transcription (Kirby, Greaves, & Reid, 2006, p. 207). As each interview was drawing to a close, I repeated key points from my notes for the participant to verify. This allowed me to validate my notes with the respondent and created an opportunity for participants to correct me or to provide a further nuance or emphasis to their contributions.

I also provided interview participants with my contact information and encouraged them to contact me if they wished to change or make additions to their contribution. These steps were more than a courtesy. I knew from the outset of the research that time and financial resources would constrain transcription. I did not expect that I would be able to have interviews professionally transcribed and checked in their written form by the participants. I provided as complete as possible verbal summary in order to assure the participant I had been listening deeply and taking accurate notes. I also wanted to model reflective practice in a small way with each person. By inviting further comments, I was suggesting that our time together was a dialogue rather than an extraction of knowledge and that I remained open to any revisions of their thinking as they reflected further, even after the end of the session.

The fourth strategy I incorporated to ensure the credibility of the research findings was the practice of monitoring my own subjectivity throughout the research process. Glesne stated that the researcher can “monitor those perspectives that might, as you analyse and write up your data, shape, skew, distort, construe and misconstrue what you make of what you see and hear (2006, p. 123). It was important for me to be aware of the professional and personal experiences

that informed my interest in the research questions. Research questions can grow from personal experience with the understanding that "...concurrently, the researcher engages in a process of self-reflection as one of the participants in the process of creating knowledge" (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p. 44).

My previous work with labour organizations had led me to form some opinions about the nature and challenges of organizational change in unions. I was interested in working with the PSAC as this research project allowed me to examine some of these views.

I expected to have feelings and opinions that informed my experience of the research process. By acknowledging that these are part of the process and that they are my own responsibility to address, I was able to make use of, rather than suppress, subjective impressions. I noted ideas and reactions in my notes as the research proceeded, as recommended by Glesne (2006, p. 129). These reflections helped me to learn about my own reactions to change and to the research process.

By convening an action research team, I also entered a dynamic situation that included the subjectivities of all the participants. "*Intersubjectivity* is the term used to highlight the fact that the subjectivities that help to shape research are not those of the researcher alone" (Glesne, 2006, p. 124). The author also noted that these relationships are active at the information gathering and interpretive steps (p. 125). In order to manage these stages as an ethical researcher, I monitored subjectivity through the practice of "*reflexivity* mean[ing] that you are as concerned with the research process as you are with the data you are obtaining" (Glesne, 2006, p. 125). This is an ethical practice that I observed by carefully maintaining my field notes and making myself accountable to my Faculty Project Supervisor who could challenge my blind spots or rationalizations.

Merriam and Simpson contend that qualitative research results in “*working hypotheses--* hypotheses that reflect the situation-specific conditions in a particular context” (1995, p. 103).

An essential verification of this research is the perception of the action research team and participants and their view of the working hypothesis proposed as Results in Chapter Four.

### *Project participants*

#### *The action research team*

Action research builds momentum for action or problem solving by establishing involvement of organizational stakeholders in all phases of the research. In order to ensure that the research responded to organizational needs and the interests of the current participants, as well as future users of leadership development activities, I requested that an action research team for the project be established. The project sponsor recruited six interested individuals to participate through this mechanism. The members of the team were diverse in terms of organizational level and function, gender, geographic location across the country, and status as elected official or staff. This diversity reflected some of the dimensions we intended to explore with the study.

One role for the action research team was to facilitate greater involvement of gatekeepers and participants in the research. This allows organizational gatekeepers and potential participants to “engage people directly in formulating solutions to problems they confront in their community or organizational lives (Stringer, 1999, p. 38). The project action team was a mechanism for acting on the principle of inclusion. Inclusion in action research is aimed at ensuring that the participants actually benefit from the research. Inclusion allows for the maximum involvement of relevant individuals, especially those affected by the results of the research, and ensures that all

relevant issues are considered and facilitates cooperation within the different parts of the organization (Stringer, 1999, p. 39).

The action research team brought organizational representatives together who could be affected by the research findings and who had the ability to influence whether or how the findings would be implemented. As a large, politically-oriented organization with complex relationships between program directors, section coordinators and the elected members of the executive leadership team, involving participants required that I attend to the process of gaining access to the organization. Glesne noted that when studying organizations, the researcher:

must first make contact with its *gatekeepers*, the person or persons who must agree to give to their consent before you may enter a research setting, and with whom you must negotiate the conditions of access. Since there may be several different gatekeepers, making contact can be complicated, involving different persons at different times (2006, p. 44).

The project action team members guided the inquiry through different levels of access that the project required. Action team members addressed some of the challenges associated with gaining access to participants in different levels or geographical areas of the organization. They also built trust in the research process and served as knowledgeable resource people about the nature of the research to others inside the organization when I was not present.

As someone external to the organizational system, I remained conscious that the action team members had important working knowledge about the organization's culture and practices into which I had limited insight. Action team members collaborated with me to ensure that the study would be relevant by sharing their experience and knowledge of the organization. They reviewed the research tools and procedures, participated in piloting of the tools, identified criteria for the sample of the population we contacted, identified methods for reaching respondents and facilitated access to organizational communication channels. This role was

valuable in revising wording of the invitations to participants and was essential in refining the criteria for recruiting participants.

In the closing stages of the research, representatives of the project action team reviewed the results and provided feedback that informed the conclusions of the study. This ensured that the recommendations were focused on the study questions and were relevant to the organization.

### *The Study Population*

The potential population for this study could have included all PSAC employees who have responsibilities for leading significant organizational change. In order to maintain a focus on the leadership development needs of those with significant responsibilities for organizational change, the possible population, what Palys (2003) refers to as the “research universe” (p. 129), needed to be refined from any leader or potential leader, at any level of the organization, whether elected or hired into their position. I facilitated a discussion with the action research team to identify criteria and a process for inviting organizational members to participate in the research. We agreed that the principles of inclusion and diversity were important considerations and balanced this with the important qualification of the time that was available to complete data collection and analysis within the academic year.

We specified several categories to ensure that the participant group was heterogenous in terms of gender, age, geographic location, self identification as a member of the organization’s equity seeking groups; and organizational role to reflect the two leadership tracks within the organization, senior professional staff and elected senior leaders.

In this report, one group is referred to as the elected leadership, while the other is labeled the staff leadership. One of the unique characteristics of labour organizations is the two distinct routes to leadership. Governance, policy and some administration duties are the responsibility of

executive officers elected from the wider governing structure of the PSAC. A prerequisite to this leadership is employment in one of the unionized sites represented by the PSAC and active involvement in one of the component unions. Through holding office in a component union local, a leader can participate, and become responsible for, a variety of leadership, team and managerial responsibilities as they take on elected portfolios in any of the union's areas of activity.

Over a period of years, these leaders have been elected by their constituency to serve on the governing body of the PSAC. The most senior of these positions are fulltime positions, with the individual usually on an indefinite leave of absence from their original trade or profession within the federal civil service. Full time officers are responsible for the overall direction and co-ordination of the organization and the supervision of the management team.

The second group of leaders is those who are hired as fulltime employees of the PSAC to carry out the operations of the organization. These "staff" employees report to the governing board and function as senior or middle managers, with responsibilities for directing functional areas, co-ordinating departments and program areas, supervising other staff and ensuring board directions are operationalized. This group would include many people who have brought specialized skills into the organization, such as information technology, communications and human resource functions.

For the purposes of this study, I wanted to include both groups. Both groups have learning needs. Both groups have significant responsibilities for initiating organizational change. Both groups share the impact of succession risks and have responsibilities for addressing succession concerns. There is limited crossover between the groups. On occasion, an elected leader might resign from their federal employment and come to work directly for the PSAC. The

reverse is seldom true, where a PSAC employee would resign their position, gain new employment with the federal civil service and seek leadership through becoming an activist within a component and earning the opportunity to represent workmates.

This study is the first assessment of leadership learning needs for either group. I did not enter with preconceived ideas about whether the two groups would have similar or different needs. I wanted the methods to be open and have the participants define their own interests. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to do an extensive comparison of the two groups, I believed it would be helpful to identify some gross comparisons that could point the way to more refined comparative research at a later time, if needed.

The final study participants to acknowledge are the two Royal Roads University faculty members who served as resource people for me for the duration of the study. Paul F. Clark, Ph.D., my Faculty Project Supervisor, reviewed draft tools and provided comments on the tasks and processes of the study during monthly conversations. Linda Coupal, Ph.D., the Academic Lead for the MALT program within the School of Leadership Studies facilitated my Ethical Review and provided advice on procedural steps while the study was underway.

### *Study Conduct*

After receiving a receptive response and establishing a focus for the research in the scoping and planning phases, the actual study began with the initiation phase. My sponsor reviewed the Request for Ethical Review, my Learning Plan and signed the Letter of Agreement. During this stage, he initiated contact within the organization to introduce the project to gatekeepers and stakeholders and invited interested organizational members to join the project action team. This role of internal contact and ambassador was essential. As someone external to the organization, I needed the collaboration with someone inside the organization to authorize

the work to be undertaken. There were some delays during this time where I felt powerless to move the project along. I felt dependent on the organization and had to manage my observation of boundaries in order not to jump ahead or push for ill advised communication. I felt mildly jealous of MALT colleagues who were carrying out their research where they were employed and had ready access to the channels that would facilitate the start-up of the project. This period provided me with much grist for reflection on power, dependency and collaborative work. I gleaned some insights related to working with a larger organization, which had been one of my learning goals.

A project action team of six members was convened. I had anticipated that I would work with this team in person. Due to the geographic dispersal of the team members and the difficulties scheduling meetings all could attend, there was more electronic contact than I had expected. We held one in person meeting to launch the project, with one member attending via teleconference, then carried our work forward using electronic communication.

The target population was narrowed to a sample selected by non-probabilistic, purposive sampling including an element of intensity sampling (Palys, 2003, p. 142, p. 143 and p. 144). Non-probabilistic purposive sampling “doesn’t aim for formal representativeness. People or locations are intentionally sought because they meet some of the criteria for inclusion in the study” (p. 142). I facilitated a discussion with the action team to generate a list of organizational groups and individuals who had experience and interest in leadership. Intensity calls upon participants “whose interests or vocation makes them ‘experiential experts’ because of their frequent or ongoing exposure to a phenomenon” (p. 144). Using the criteria articulated by the project action team members, participants were nominated and a final list was confirmed.

The interviews were conducted first. The organization provided me with contact information for those on the finalized list. I sent each prospective participant an introduction by e-mail including a short description of the project. Participants were invited to contribute to the study through individual letters describing the aims of the study and types of questions to be explored, along with the ethical considerations relating to anonymity, confidentiality and ability to withdraw without penalty. I attached a Letter of Consent for Interview (Appendix A) and Interview Guide (Appendix B). I indicated that I would call to schedule a convenient time for an interview.

Participants were offered a choice of either in person or telephone interviews. I had anticipated most interviews would be conducted in person in Ottawa, Ontario, where executive officers and staff have their offices. Using the input of the project action team, the sample was developed to include respondents located in other geographic areas. To accommodate more respondents from outside the Ottawa area, more telephone interviews were conducted.

To those in my geographic area, I offered the option of meeting at an off-site location to facilitate privacy, confidentiality and deeper reflection on the part of the participants. Glesne suggested that interviews are best conducted in convenient, quiet, private and physically comfortable locations in order to encourage open discussion. The author cautioned, however, that the researcher must defer to respondent preference and convenience in order to facilitate participation (Glesne, p. 87 and p. 88). I respected participant preferences for in-person, on or off-site locations or telephone, in order to facilitate ease of response and full participation.

Each person provided me with a confirmation of their consent to the interview before I began to ask questions. I received respondent permission to audiotape each interview. The

audiotape served as a permanent record of the interview in order to counteract the potential for me to selectively remember information gathered.

I selected the creation of an interview log as the method of documentation for the interviews. I took notes through each interview. I then listened to the tapes multiple times to fill in any gaps in my note taking and created an interview log of key words. Glesne noted that the interview log can be a cost effective alternative to verbatim transcription of interviews. This method results in a set of notes from which key words and themes are identified in order to create a thematic analysis (Glesne, 2006, p. 90 and p. 147).

I followed a similar process in requesting respondents to complete the questionnaire. The e-mail introduction requested participation in the questionnaire portion of the study in English and French. French and English survey sites were established and arrangements were made to have any French replies translated to English for my notes.

In recording my notes I avoided identifying individuals and labeled notes with a number. The replies downloaded from the questionnaire site were reported to me only by number. These measures maintained anonymity and confidentiality. The information I gathered was stored away from the PSAC, in a locked cabinet.

#### *Information analysis procedures*

I began information analysis as I listened to the interview tapes, reviewed my log and read questionnaire responses. Systematic notes and reflections allow the researcher to engage in the iterative process of refining each stage of the research process. Glesne (2006) stated “Data analysis done simultaneously with data collection enables you to focus and shape the study as it proceeds” (p. 148). I listened for key words and ideas that I thought might reoccur through the study. I balanced this with a commitment to maintaining my own ideas as provisional until I had

heard and read all study comments. This simultaneous approach lent itself to developing a beginning set of analytic headings that I used to inform the coding steps. These provisional ideas allowed me a starting point for staying organized in anticipation of dealing with the large amount of rich data generated by qualitative means (Glesne, 2006, p. 149 to p. 151).

I began to develop themes from grouping same or similar phrases from the respondent's words together. Kirby, Greaves and Reid (2006) described the terms they use in their grounded theory approach to analysis, noting bits "are freestanding portions of data that make sense even when separated from their data gathering context" (p. 225). They described codes as "characteristics of bits. These are themes or identifiers that are located within a bit" (p. 225). They described categories as being "made up of similar bits that have common properties and have an affinity for each other through overlaps or links" (p. 225). Glesne (2006) advised that researchers develop a rudimentary coding scheme to maintain a focus on the research question. (p. 149 to p. 150). I began labelling clusters in my research log. As the identification of bits progressed through the each of the questions, I noticed replies to different questions were resulting in bits with the same ideas embedded in them.

I prepared pages that allowed me to see all the replies to the same question by each different respondent. I reversed the process and re-read each respondent's comments in their entirety to be sure I hadn't taken bits out of context to make them fit the codes and categories.

Kirby, Greaves and Reid (2006) noted that analysis can "consist of the application of existing themes (drawn from the review of literature) to the filed notes..." (p. 221). They also stated that they

see analysis as an iterative or 'back and forth' process in which researchers make sense of new data, information or knowledge and, in the creation of theory, constantly refer back to the data. Each informs the other: data informs theory and in turn, theory informs data (p. 219).

This was helpful to keep in mind as the literature review had sensitized me to some of the ways that leadership learning was conceptualized and I was able to note similarities between the literature and the participant's comments. I wanted to stay focused on answering the research questions in a practical way. I also wanted to avoid an overly simplistic approach to labelling the rich comments from the respondents.

Boyatzis (1998) has stated that thematic analysis is useful in many applications of qualitative research and can range in complexity from "a list of themes, a complex model with themes, indicators and qualifications that are causally related or something in between these two forms" (p. 4). Using the suggestions from Stringer (1999) that a useful interpretive framework in action research could revolve around the questions of why, what, how, who, where and when (p. 93 to p. 95), I focused on simple themes that could answer questions such as what needs did I see articulated? How did the participants want these needs to be met?

I used Palys' (2003) observation that there is a role for counting the frequency of comments in qualitative data (p. 317). He explained that counting can assist with categorization and counteract bias (p. 317). I was concerned that I might be overly influenced by the established categories in the literature and therefore move too quickly to label bits as fitting into my preliminary themes. He documented a number of ways bias could come into the analysis, including "selectivity, overconfidence in some data, especially when trying to confirm a key finding" (p. 317). I counted the number of bits I had grouped into themes to ensure that I could be accurate in my descriptions. This step also allowed me to identify comments that stood alone. I returned to my notes to review the comments and context to be sure I was placing the bit in a relevant theme. This practice allowed me to question whether a new or different theme would be more appropriate.

As a next step in the analysis, I prepared a feedback report to review with members of the project action team. As Stringer (1999) suggested, “in this phase of the investigation, researchers assist participants to engage in discussion and dialogue - hermeneutic dialectic processes- with the intent of developing mutually acceptable accounts that extend their understanding of the issues and problems they are investigating” (p. 103). Sharing the information and preliminary analysis was important for positioning the action team as enquirers, rather than passive recipients of a report. It was also a further step in validating the work.

At the outset of the project, I anticipated that all members of the action team would participate in verifying the analysis through this meeting. I would have liked to include a wider group of stakeholders in this meeting and proposed conducting this meeting as a workshop or series of meetings where stakeholders could review the findings to date and actively make meaning of the findings by creating themes together. Unfortunately, it was not possible to find dates that would bring the whole group together. Stringer noted that in this step, researchers must remain open to involvement by all stakeholders and not prematurely close the process by “confining it [involvement] to a small inner circle or by omitting ‘troublesome’ stakeholders” (p. 112). I recommended that a further discussion take place at a later date to ensure more stakeholders are engaged in validating the findings and building interest and motivation in follow up steps.

Stringer (1999) stated that gathering information, describing the situation, developing an explanation and following up by planning, implementing or evaluating the action the “basic action research routine” (p. 18). I have described the procedures I followed to carry out an action research inquiry to gather relevant information using interviews and questionnaires, to identify themes from the data and to bring knowledge for action back to the stakeholding group.

### *Ethical Issues*

This section begins with a discussion of the specific ethical issues related to the use of the interview and questionnaire methods. The remainder of the chapter describes how I addressed the humanistic ethical obligations that guided the research.

#### *Ethical Issues in Interviews*

In-person interviews create human connections between the interviewee and interviewer. Palys (2003) noted several advantages to face-to-face interviews, including that close interaction can “enhance the quality of data gathered” (p. 159). This strength can also create the potential for greater bias as the interviewer or interviewee may unconsciously influence the direction or content of the interview (Palys, 2003, p. 160). The respondent may try to please the interviewer by providing answers that the interviewee believes are expected, a source of reactive bias (p. 160). In order to address this tendency, I sought to create trust and provide information at the outset of the interview that could surface the participant’s thoughts in this regard. I ensured that each respondent indicated their agreement with the confidentiality and consent mechanisms for the study before proceeding.

Palys (2003) noted that with the loss of anonymity in the interview method, extra care is needed in reducing any real or perceived threats to the participant or their workgroup that could be a result of the research conclusions (p. 161). Due to the extremely personal nature of interviews, participants may need particularly explicit information about the protection of the information they provide. I sought to reduce any threats to the best of my ability and to be honest about any limitations that may surface. I provided information that allowed respondents to make informed decisions about the information they chose to share with me by providing the interview letter and outline of the questions in advance. I also described how I was recording the

interviews, the purpose of the recordings and my commitment to protecting the information gathered.

### *Ethical issues in questionnaires*

Selecting a questionnaire as a second method of gathering information required me to consider some ethical issues particular to this tool. Confidentiality and anonymity must be addressed in the introduction to questionnaires. Palys (2003) advised that questionnaire introductions should offer clear direction on whether respondents should include their name and on how researchers will safeguard the information collected. In this questionnaire, the respondent screen clearly indicated that the questionnaire was anonymous and no field was created for names.

When the action team was convened, I reviewed the options of using the PSAC server and software, the Royal Roads University Survey Editor service, and the commercial options for questionnaire administration. The PSAC resource was initially chosen for ease of use, ready access and a familiar interface for organizational members. It would also facilitate the translation and accessibility of questions in both official languages, an essential standard for the sponsoring organization.

As time drew near to post the questionnaire, the organization was experiencing some technical difficulties. The sponsor was not confident that e-mail replies to the questionnaire would be forwarded as we anticipated. For this reason, I proposed the Survey Editor service through the Royal Roads University Computer Services department as an alternative. There were some advantages to this selection. It provided a stronger perception that material was not being filtered through the sponsor. Using the Royal Roads utility also avoided the ethical issues associated with sending information to a system where security could not be guaranteed, as noted

in the critique of commercial sites such as Survey Monkey (Personal communication, in class discussion, July 25, 2006).

In addition to the specific considerations attached to the use of each research tool, my actions were also governed by the Royal Roads University Policy on Integrity and Misconduct in Research and Scholarship, the Royal Roads Ethics Policy (2004) and the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (1998), to which Royal Roads University subscribes. These documents established the standards and rigour that I followed in carrying out my responsibilities as the research facilitator. I drew on the concept of respect for human dignity as an overarching consideration. Within this framework, I describe how I applied principles of humanistic and scientific obligations to the study conduct.

As a researcher, I must negotiate the relationship with research collaborators in order to fall within the parameters established by the Integrity policy. This was discussed with the sponsor in completing the sponsorship agreement. We agreed that the consent letter would draw attention to the possibility that summaries or findings from the study could be shared with other organizations or submitted for publication.

In addition, by including an action research team, I established working relationships with members of the project action team. Glesne noted that researchers who work from the collaborative stance, as implied in action research, must manage a set of expectations and relationships throughout the duration of the research project (2006, p. 138 – p. 140).

#### *Free and informed consent*

According to the Tri-Council Policy Statement,

Consent is not required from organizations such as corporations or governments for research about their institutions. However, individuals who are approached to participate in a research project about their organization have the right to give free and informed consent. In particular, they should be fully informed about the views of the organization's

authorities, if these are known, and of the possible consequences of participation (1998, p. 2.2).

In order to meet the criteria of being fully informed and able to give free and informed consent to participate in the study, I provided potential participants with a plain language invitation with information about the research initiative and my background. The invitation included a description of the research purpose to assist readers in assessing the harms or benefits of participation. All those contacted to consider participating were advised that there would be no penalty for non-participation. The invitations included a statement regarding the possibilities for future use of the material.

#### *Privacy, confidentiality and respect for vulnerable persons*

Some of the research questions asked participants to reflect on areas where they felt less knowledgeable or competent. In order to reduce a sense of personal or organizational vulnerability that this might provoke, I aimed to increase the security of participants by sharing knowledge of how the information they provided was going to be used and protected. The PSAC prepared a Non-Disclosure Agreement defining their expectations of confidentiality for information I acquired through the project. This agreement, combined with the Royal Roads Letter of Agreement, addressed three criteria identified for maintaining confidentiality of research materials. These criteria are: establishing a shared understanding of confidence, establishing that the confidence is essential and establishing that the community values the relationship (Palys, 2003, p. 96 to p. 98.). I respected personal and organizational confidentiality and privacy by following accepted procedures for protection and care of data. I followed procedures for anonymizing records. I provided locked storage. I acknowledged any limitations of confidentiality where this arose (Palys, 2003, p. 92; TCPS, 1998, p. 3.2).

I was conscious that in asking people to consider their previous experiences with leadership challenges, I might be asking respondents about deeply felt experiences that could be infused with workplace stress. In the event that these recollections touched on unmetabolized feelings, I was prepared to accept that researcher “obligations accompany the therapeutic nature of the interview. Self-reflections can produce pain where least expected...” Glesne advised that researchers be prepared to follow up with participants in this situation by providing other resources or a subsequent conversation to achieve “comfort with their degree of self disclosure” (2006, p. 144).

#### *Harms and benefits*

This research benefited the organization by acting on current sponsor priorities in human resource practices, especially training and development and succession planning. Positioning the research in the wider context of the situation analysis research allowed the organization to benefit from connecting these learning needs to desired organizational change. Individual participants could benefit from reflecting on their leadership experiences. I hoped, but could not guarantee, that the research would influence the learning and developmental supports that will be available to leaders in the future. In bearing in mind the subject-centred perspective adopted, I was cautious in presenting this potential organizational benefit so as not to create unrealistic hopes in participants regarding the influence this research could have in their work life (TCPS, 1998, 1.7).

The possible harms I considered were related to organizational or personal vulnerability. Participants may have concerns that information gathered under the auspices of their employer may have implications for future development opportunities. Individuals or the organization as a whole may be concerned that identifying areas that require change could provide adversaries

with signals of weakness. This turned out to be the case. To address these concerns, I carried out the privacy and confidentiality practices noted above and reiterated these actions to those who expressed concerns. I emphasized that their participation was voluntary and could be withdrawn.

*Conflict of interest and possible sources of bias*

Glesne described subjectivity of the researcher as a virtue and a potentially productive basis for the work of the researcher provided the researcher monitors sources of distortion in observations and avoids subjectivism (2006, p. 123). Reflexivity, the practice of examining the research process as well as the data obtained, is recommended as a method for monitoring researcher subjectivity (Glesne, 2006, p. 125). Reflexivity encompasses self awareness, political or cultural consciousness and a sense of personal ownership of the researcher's own perspective (Patton, as cited by Glesne, 2006, p. 125). By engaging in this level of reflection, I anticipated researcher roles or participant perceptions that could contribute to distortion, bias or conflict of interest affecting the study. I identified opportunities and actions where my subjectivity and personal experiences that could be construed as a source of bias. The two areas I focused on monitoring were avoiding the perception of conflict of interest and examining my own subjectivity related to the study.

*Conflict of interest.*

I have formed working relationships with some members of the organizational community through previous work. For the duration of the study I performed no consulting work with PSAC departments. I observed a boundary between my academic work and the Human Resources Section as the project sponsor to reduce the perception that as a researcher I would be biased in favour of the positions of this Section, either because of the existing relationship or because this department had been a source of income for my consulting practice.

My opinions are also informed by my ongoing personal relationship with a former elected leader with another public sector union. The labour community is relatively small in Ottawa and I was concerned that this relationship might be a source of perceived bias. I raised the nature of this relationship during the first meeting of the action team in an effort to be as transparent as possible. While I do not view the relationship as a source of ethical conflict, omitting acknowledgement would cast some doubt on my ability to model exploration of subjectivity in the research process. I was then able to continue examining subjectivity through reflective practices such as maintaining my research journal, and raising matters of subjectivity and reflexivity with my Faculty Project Supervisor.

These relationships also highlight my outsider role and the subjectivity I must manage as the research facilitator. As someone known to some organizational members through my consulting practice, I must ensure that the research project is not perceived as being done to seek favour with the organization as a type of reciprocity (Glesne, 2006, p. 118).

I also managed perceptions of friendship. Glesne distinguished between friendship and rapport in social research and also noted that this distinction has been critiqued from the perspective of feminist and critical researchers (2006, p. 116 and p. 117). I worked to build a rapport with organizational members that facilitated access to the organization; I sought to avoid becoming overfriendly. I utilised a stance that I intended to be a professional, yet friendly, role where I observed boundaries between myself and the organization in the service of our work together.

In this chapter I have reviewed the research approach, the interview and questionnaire tools used the information analysis procedures and the ethical considerations I addressed throughout the study. I have reported on the action research orientation of the study and

distinguished the qualitative and quantitative elements that were included. I have described how I observed the ethical principles in working with people in organizational settings. I have also discussed how I managed my subjectivity as a researcher through the process by using reflective practices to reduce researcher bias.

## Chapter Four Action Research Project Results and Conclusions

### *Study Findings*

This chapter reports the results of the action research inquiry into the learning needs of the PSAC leaders responsible for implementing significant organizational change. Based on 27 replies, gathered from 11 in-depth interviews and 16 anonymous questionnaires, this chapter describes the learning interests of leaders within this public sector labour union. The findings describe the learning methods favoured by these participants. The findings also describe the organizational supports that enable leadership learning experiences that are desired by the participants. This chapter begins with the results of demographic data requested from participants and then moves to the identification of learning themes revealed through qualitative analysis. The results of the study can be used to inform decision making regarding leadership development and succession planning within the PSAC.

### *Reporting qualitative research findings*

The purpose of qualitative research is to explore “social phenomena from the perspectives of those involved, to contextualize issues in their particular socio-cultural political milieu, and sometimes to transform or change social conditions” (Glesne, 2006, p. 4). This means that reports of qualitative research describe and interpret what the researcher has heard or observed, corroborated by including the participant’s own words.

Using the descriptions of the participants, this section describes the content and learning methods for leadership learning opportunities that are desired by the study participants in the specific milieu of leadership within a labour organization. I have used words such as few, many, majority, seldom or other such descriptive words to indicate the strength and intensity of the themes I have identified. In some descriptions, I have included contrasting views in order to

provide a full picture of all that I heard. I have also included comments mentioned by only one person. Although the comment may not have been frequent, in this type of research, all comments are viewed as important in building a complete account of participant views (Kirby, Greaves & Reid, 2006, p. 241 and p. 248).

Palys (2003) noted that counting the frequency of comments in qualitative research is used to assist with the categorization of the information and serves as a check on bias, not as the information itself (Palys, 2003, p. 317). Boyatzis (1998) stated that using thematic analysis can allow qualitative researchers to communicate more readily with those familiar with other research traditions (p. 5 to p. 7). The validity or reliability of the information reported in this chapter lies in how well it describes what was reported to me, not in how generalizable it is to other populations of labour leaders. The most meaningful measure of trustworthiness in the data reported here is whether the participants recognize that this chapter describes clearly the kind of leadership learning opportunities they desire in the context of their social, cultural and political milieu. Transformation of the social setting of the workplace would be achieved through revising or implementing leadership learning opportunities in the direction of the descriptions included below.

The themes and categories I have included have been supplemented by summaries and paraphrases of participants comments as well as direct quotations. In order to maintain the anonymity of those who replied, names have not been used. As all respondents are from the same organization, I have refrained from reporting any further information that could identify the respondents.

Bolden and Gosling (2006) have argued persuasively that the term *competency*, as it has come into widespread use in the management and leadership literature over the past 30 years, has

confused concepts of managerial, behavioural and organizational competency (p. 149) and that “leadership competencies are being misused in assessment and development (p. 148). They concluded that leadership competency descriptions “miss significant elements...and so inhibit a more subtle appreciation of the complex ethical and relational processes of sense making and collective responsibility within organizations” (p. 148). For this reason, I have generally avoided the term competency and have instead used words such as skills, characteristics, attributes and knowledge interchangeably in describing themes.

I have used quantitative descriptors for presenting the profile of the participants based on the demographic data requested in the questionnaires.

#### *Profile of the respondents*

Replies to demographic categories were requested from questionnaire respondents in order to build a profile of the leaders who participated in the study. Questionnaire participants were provided with the option of not replying to any or all of the demographic categories.

#### *Response rate*

The report is based on 27 replies from in-depth interviews which were conducted with 11 participants, complemented by 16 replies received to the written questionnaire. Participants invited to reply included members of the Alliance Executive Committee, Branch Directors and Coordinators and a sample of staff and internal union representatives.

In comparison to the total number of individuals invited to participate, the combined replies achieved an overall response rate of 46%. According to Palys (2003), response rates for interviews are often high due to the personal contact, while rates for mail-out questionnaires range from 10% to 40% (p. 151; p. 159).

*Representation of officers and staff*

Forty-four percent of the elected officials invited to participate responded as did forty-four percent of staff members. The slight difference between these separate response rates and the combined overall response rate is due to the inclusion of those respondents who preferred not to provide answers to their status as an officer or staff member.

*Participation by gender*

Women comprised 56% of the respondents while men represented 37% of the participants. Respondents who preferred not to provide a response in this category represented 7% of the replies.

*Age*

The single largest category of questionnaire respondents reported their age in the 51-55 years age group. The age categories began with the 36-40 years age group and continued through to the 56-60 years age category.

*Experience*

The questionnaire respondents had an average of 14 years of experience with the PSAC as either officers or staff members. There was a considerable range of experience reported in this category, from less than 5 years to 25 years.

*Representation not requested*

Respondents were not asked to identify themselves by region, as members of an equity-seeking group within the PSAC or to indicate whether they were currently in a managerial role.

In summary, the demographic data provided a picture of the respondents as very experienced women and men in mid to late career. The respondents represent both officers and staff with responsibilities for providing organizational leadership.

### *Defining good leadership*

Participants were asked to describe in their own words what good leadership meant to them. These replies provide an overview of the desirable characteristics and attributes of leadership within the PSAC and could be amplified in leadership development programs.

The study respondents described a good leader as someone who is inspirational, ethical, able to navigate the uniqueness of the union milieu and is aware of emotion in themselves and others. Good leaders are able to provide structure and make decisions using a variety of methods while recognizing the parameters of organizational values. They communicate well and can resolve conflicts.

#### *Inspirational*

Good leaders can articulate and share a vision. Respondents stated that good leadership inspires others with the leader's passion, optimism and hope. Good leaders are courageous and strong, personally and professionally. One respondent stated, "leadership should be bold, as opposed to taking the expedient course", while another reinforced that a leader "has a vision and ideas to work towards it, however, is flexible and open-minded enough to encourage others to initiate ideas/actions to help develop and implement the vision". Another described their intention to be transformative leader.

#### *Ethical and guided by values*

Many respondents commented on the importance of leaders acting from a well developed sense of integrity and personal ethics. Leaders remain humble and stay open to change. They are committed to the union principles of equity and anti-oppression. They are transparent and use democratic processes.

*Make decisions consistent with values*

The ability to make decisions was described as an essential characteristic for good leaders in the PSAC context. Good leaders were described as not only able to make decisions, but willing to use a variety of decision making methods, depending on the situation. In the words of one respondent, “Good leadership does not go off on its own to make decisions in a vacuum. Having consulted, good leadership is courageous and will make a decision that may get mixed reviews”. Good leaders were described as able to distinguish when and how to make decisions and take risks. Decision making is informed by their commitment to PSAC values and consistent with the goals of building a social movement, as one person noted, “all actions/decisions are made based on the greater goal of building the movement, building the union, building the team”.

*In touch with emotion*

A respondent stated good leaders “...understand that primarily she is leading human beings, not objects or data...”. This theme was elaborated by several others who described leaders as open, approachable and compassionate and able to display empathy, trust and respect for others.

*Provide structure and context*

Good leaders were described as people who are able to assess organizational needs and can reconcile the political and administrative roles required in the union setting. Leaders know the resources of their team and are able to empower teams and team members. They provide consistency, follow-up and support, especially in the leading change. A participant stated leaders have “the ability to strategically plan the actions and policies that need to be implemented for the long term success of the union”.

*Strong communicators*

Leaders are effective communicators and resolve conflicts constructively. Leaders “communicate respectfully and effectively while accepting that we may communicate differently too, -- finds a way to bridge any communication gaps”.

*Falling short of the ideal*

The majority of the comments articulated a practice model of leadership to which to aspire. There were occasional references to times when the reality of leadership was perceived as less than the ideal, such as the respondent who observed “the greatest challenge is for the PSAC to develop a style of leadership that is more in keeping with union principles. The current style has become increasingly hierarchical with power and information consolidated in two tight groups- the elected officers and the Director’s team”. Another summarized what good leadership is not, emphasizing, “A good leader should not hold grudges or be vindictive!!”.

These comments suggest that there is a clear picture of the qualities and skills that are needed in a leader and of the style of leadership to which respondents aspire. Although there were very few descriptions in the replies that used the language of leadership models, such as transactional, transformational or constructivist, many of the hallmarks of transformational and constructivist leadership are present in the descriptions such as the desire to inspire and lead through values. This suggests that leadership development that references and amplifies these concepts would be a good match with the leadership approach PSAC leaders are working to implement. The disconfirming comments provide examples of where practice may fall short of the ideal and could therefore be examined for barriers to reaching the ideal.

*What do leaders want to learn more about?*

In order to gather ideas about the challenges union leaders face and the supports that would be of assistance in preparing them for these challenges, leaders were asked to reflect on their early leadership challenges and to identify the kinds of support that could have helped them at that time. Leaders were asked to consider the training or learning opportunities that could assist them in their current positions and to anticipate the training or learning opportunities that could help them prepare for future leadership positions. The respondents views of past, present and future was remarkably similar. The themes and types of preparation required were much the same regardless of how the question was focused. This suggested leadership challenges revolve around a repeating set of themes with the issues of the day or the depth of analysis changing as the context of the leader's practice changes.

*Leadership learning*

The themes reported below represent content or subject matter that was desired by the respondents. These include leading change; interpersonal, team and group skills; managerial and administrative skills; functional or portfolio specific skills and organizational or system skills. Each is discussed in more detail below.

*Leading organizational change.*

Leading and understanding change management was cited by several participants. As one respondent observed,

Leading organizational change should never result in simply adding more. People need to be guided into understanding how the change can be integrated in the work and might replace age-old methods of doing things. In other words, adding work simply adds cynicism. So assisting colleagues/staff to see their way through change and understand it origins and objectives is critical.

*Interpersonal, team and group skills*

Leadership is enacted in relationship with others. Participants noted leaders must work with groups and teams in a variety of settings and were interested to learn more about developing a shared understanding of leadership and leadership models. Skills that participants requested that are associated with working with other people included team leadership and team building, understanding group dynamics and facilitation skills. Participants wanted to know more about facilitating the growth of leadership in others and to develop skills as a coach and mentor. There were requests to assist leaders with integrating equity into their everyday work such as,

Leadership training should include women and equity group members. Leadership training should challenge stereotyping and discriminatory views and practices. It should support sharing leadership roles and term limits. It should support affirmative action positions for women and other marginalized groups. Leadership training should challenge the exclusive hierarchical model of leadership.

There were a number of needs and interests related to working well with people including problem solving, decision making that is adapted to the structure of the union, enhancing creativity as well as managing conflict and mediation skills.

*The big step... a critical time for leadership development*

Respondents commented on the importance of support at the early stages of the leadership role. The Union Development Program (UDP) was described as the “Cadillac” of member education and of being very good in preparing people to “go further”. Still, participants described the move to regional and national responsibilities as “a big step”. More advanced skills are needed for those coming on to regional councils and national committees. More exposure to technical and practical skills at this stage would assist those preparing or considering Regional Executive Vice President positions. There appears to be a significant change for leaders leaving the local and making the transition to wider responsibilities.

*Early experiences*

The need for orientation to new roles was frequently mentioned as an area that seemed to cut across both officers and staff. One respondent observed they experienced “a complete lack of orientation from superiors....When I first started work it would have been highly helpful to attend an orientation session regarding the history of the Union, its structure and mission”.

Another described, “being in the job was very challenging... I was way out on a limb”, while a different participant commented, “I have recently moved into a management position and would benefit from training in general administration and program management. Training on managing people in a union environment, providing feedback and motivating employees would be very helpful”. Another person thought back and stated, “On reflection, I wish I had been given administrative/financial training as well as some training in team building”.

These early leadership situations provided considerable learning through experience, such as the person who recalled an unanticipated challenge,

I think my greatest leadership challenge involved facing a political attack for another politician’s gain that was completely unexpected. I had to demonstrate leadership by being willing to stick it out, instead of turning my back on the Union because of one individual. At this time I had a variety of supporters, but I also had a critical "mentoring moment" that occurred from someone unexpected and quite personal. I will remember that moment for a long time to come. I don't believe people can "train" to avoid political attacks. I believe people learn a lot from the experience, I certainly did.

The study did not seek to separate officer and staff learning needs although there were cautions to remember important differences between the two groups as this person reminded, “I think there is a difference in leadership if you are elected or if you’re employed. Personal politics are always at play but there is an additional stress of ‘losing’ one's position (as elected officers) versus the distant possibility of losing one's position (as staff)”.

Developmental opportunities were also very important at this stage of leadership development with many respondents noting how important it was that someone showed interest, encouraged their development and provided access to development opportunities. A participant emphasized that it is very important that the selection of people for developmental positions be transparent and avoid the pitfalls of favouritism as people can be “victims of politics... who is chosen for assignments determined by politics”.

#### *Incorporating union values*

Although there were numerous comments that demonstrated how interested the participants were in a full range of leadership learning experiences, there were frustrations with the lack of information reflecting a union perspective. As someone said, “Too much of the material I have received over the years has been oriented to business values and a competitive, managerial commercial market. That is not us!”. This indicates that the PSAC will need to consider customizing leadership learning to ensure that the organization’s values and policies are incorporated in the content and learning approaches as this respondent recommended,

I also think that it is important that in choosing training we always consider our organizational culture and values. In the past I have attended training at various PSAC events which had not been adapted to our reality and consequently did not meet the expectations of those in attendance.

#### *Managerial and administrative*

As was noted in the literature review, the distinction between management and leadership responsibilities can be arbitrary. Although respondents were not asked to identify themselves by job function, it is clear from the replies that administrative and managerial work is a significant area of responsibility for many of the respondents. Not surprisingly, many of the participants had learning needs related to their managerial role.

The ability to make decisions was a frequently mentioned theme in the descriptions of good leadership. This theme was reflected in the respondents wish for more orientation to the structure of the organization and how decisions are made. A similar need was noted in the comment that leaders need to learn to reconcile the organizational and administrative responsibilities with the political nature of the organization.

Financial management and budgeting procedures were frequently mentioned in reference to those who were new to administrative roles.

More information on labour relations and managing in a unionized setting from the employer perspective was often requested.

Various aspects of leading, managing or supervising teams and individuals were mentioned including team building, supervising and motivating others and using coaching. This category also included several references to coaching as method of supervision. There appears to be interest in learning more about coaching. A few respondents noted that there has been some organizational investment in professional development related to coaching already. Follow-up, practice and support to implement this approach is desired.

Problem solving and crisis management were mentioned as were the topics noted above in leadership generally, such as conflict resolution and mediation. Communication was also mentioned along with specific human resource skills associated with providing feedback and dealing with difficult people. Participants also identified learning needs regarding program planning and evaluation.

#### *Functional or portfolio specific*

There were some learning needs associated with the technical skills leaders required to be well informed in new areas of responsibility or continuing professional development in specific

assignments. These could be portfolios officers become responsible for or specific areas of expertise where staff wanted continuing professional development. Examples included understanding pensions, negotiating skills, editing skills or research skills to remain current on relevant socio-economic and political trends.

#### *Responding to a bilingual membership*

The PSAC represents workers in a bilingual environment. A respondent stated, “Leaders must be able to communicate with members directly”. Several participants noted their own interest and commitment to developing their English or French language skills as an essential leadership skill. This included responses from Francophone and Anglophone staff and elected officers.

#### *Information technology*

A few respondents mentioned the importance of using and making the most of electronic tools. Two types of needs were expressed. Learning to use the more sophisticated features of software in programs such as spreadsheets and GroupWise were mentioned. Another comment related to the need to update content for websites and to learn more about online interaction and facilitation to connect with members. As one person stated, there is a need for “ongoing learning on electronic tools, like managing your e-mail, but not a rinky dink intro course, something really comprehensive”.

#### *Organizational and systems thinking*

Leaders are also interested in understanding and participating in learning that improves organization wide processes. One respondent commented that one of their greatest leadership challenges was “knowing what the rest of the organization is doing”. A few replies highlighted the importance of connecting leadership learning to organizational needs and that individual

learning plans should be developed with organizational goals and succession planning needs in mind. It was also noted that mechanisms for sharing new learning need to be in place to facilitate the diffusion of new learning across the organization. This includes topics that allow the PSAC to monitor and respond to the wider system and environment. Topics suggested included fostering political literacy and good socio-economic analysis.

There were requests to include further training in strategic thinking, planning and acting. One respondent suggested it would be useful to have “a discussion of various leadership models and practices and organizational structures and include members of other organizations as presenters and or participants”. This highlights interest in learning and exchanging views with other labour organizations and social change partners aimed at movement building.

#### *Individual development*

Many of the replies made the connection between growth in the leader’s own values, passion and self awareness and the ability to lead. Respondents articulated their devotion to the union cause and the work being part of a larger mission of change articulated by one respondent, “I am proud of this union. I have had my heart broken and have also enjoyed huge successes over the years I have worked here. I have felt a part of something very important: social change and making things better for working people”. Another respondent stated that a good leader “believes with every fibre of her being, that this work is more than a job for most of us...”. One respondent who had participated in a leadership development program noted that “self – awareness was also critical”, while another stated “I believe leaders need some time periodically, to go through directed self-reflection but then need group activities to act as a sound board or reality check regarding that reflection”.

A few respondents spoke about the difficulty in reflecting on one's own values of leadership and maintaining integrity in very high stress situations.

### *Self care*

Learning more about stress management or work life balance was often mentioned. Respondents are aware of the demands that leadership places on their inner resources. A participant recalled that scheduling difficulties related to the erratic nature of the work has caused leaders to withdraw from attending fitness classes. A few respondents specifically mentioned yoga practice as something they wanted to learn more about while another mentioned yoga as an example of something the union should definitely not offer, as it is not tied to meeting an organizational priority. This would seem to suggest that there are differences in views regarding the role of the PSAC as an employer in supporting self-care.

### *Time management*

Time management was a frequently requested topic. Respondents were keen to be up to date on aids and techniques that could assist them to handle the volume of their work.

### *Learning methods and strategies*

*Combination of individual and group learning is the most preferred.*

The majority of respondents indicated a clear preference for access to a combination of individual and group learning methods. As one person commented, the “methods that work best for me are a combination of individual and group methods”. Several people commented that within their own learning, a combination of individual and group methods provides the strongest learning for them. “All forms are good. Each individual has a learning style, which could be determined through a needs assessment. In my case, I learn better in a small group setting, in an environment where I can meet people from other horizons and outside the work environment”.

Opportunities to learn together in team, organization or network situations were highly valued as these methods helped to reduce isolation and create venues for sharing knowledge and strategizing with people doing similar work or facing similar challenges. Respondents wanted access to individual methods to supplement the group methods and allow for customizing learning to their particular responsibilities or interests.

*Group or team based learning.*

There is significant interest in creating forums and opportunities for people to learn together. There was a strong preference for group learning opportunities especially when the learning was related to building shared understanding and collective action or related to group phenomena such as group dynamics or facilitation skills. One example was the desire to create opportunities for staff and officers to develop a shared approach to managerial philosophy as noted by this respondent who stated,

Group training should be applied to ensure that we all begin on the same page or have a similar basis of operation and that we are applying consistent standards. It should absolutely be used to ensure that our trade union and equity principles are grounded and in place as soon as possible after (preferably prior to) taking on a leadership role.

Group learning associated with attending conferences and workshops are a preferred method for many respondents as they impose a structure to scheduling learning opportunities that is difficult to maintain in the pace of daily responsibilities. There were several responses that noted advantages to this format. It allows people to plan ahead for blocks of time devoted to learning and development. Events can be scheduled to coincide or be part of existing meetings and conferences which can be cost effective for bringing groups together. Once on site, the format facilitates the development of shared understanding of the content because participants are engaged together in learning.

A few respondents suggested that short workshops over the lunch period would be worth trying. These would have low structure and be accessible to whoever was interested in attending.

There were frequent suggestions that the PSAC plan learning opportunities with reference to the three year cycle related to Triennial convention. It was suggested that orientation and development activities be planned for times so that participants can come together soon after convention and have the benefit of their learning through as much of the mandate as possible. It was also suggested that the middle year between conventions is the most appropriate time for in-depth learning experiences as it is a time of relative quiet allowing participants to more fully engage with the deep learning.

*Adapt to specific populations.*

The literature review has established that equity seeking groups face particular barriers to leadership and that opportunities to network, learn from and strategize together can play an important role in developing confidence in the leadership role. A respondent stated,

It is crucial that the current leadership (both staff and elected) understand that it is their responsibility to promote an equity agenda and to ensure that the PSAC is an inclusive Union for both staff and activists. In many instances both staff and elected leaders have either played a negative role or have not understood their role when issues of equity and diversity have been raised. The PSAC also needs to establish a leadership program specifically for equity seeking groups, which should include some proactive measures such as developmental assignments at the staff level and assigned leadership positions for equity seeking groups.

Addressing the learning needs of specific groups, whether by membership in an equity seeking group or by position or function may be needed to ensure privacy and safety in learning situations. How best to group populations for creating positive learning climates will need to be considered.

*Experiential, emergent or situational learning*

Although respondents mentioned a range of learning needs across the categories reported above, respondents were also very clear on the tremendous importance of learning through experience. A participant stated,

the creation of developmental positions would be key. It would ensure a greater mobility of employees and would allow them to round off their skills. Further more the possibility of participating in special projects would increase the exposure of individuals to the different sectors of the organization.

Many reported that leading a temporary initiative such as a campaign, strike, or assignment to a temporary position had provided them with essential experience. These situations were valued for creating exposure to the real work of the position, for making contact with networks of people already in comparable positions and for building confidence. These respondents often agreed that the trust and faith of someone who had encouraged or given them the opportunities to try new things had been very important to their development.

The negative side of learning in a position was also mentioned. A few respondents cautioned that there is a danger in the ‘sink or swim’ approach. One respondent noted that “it is unconscionable” to put people into high risk, high stress situations without support.

*Mentoring.*

One supportive mechanism that provoked frequent interest from participants was the further development of mentoring, mentioned by both newer and more experienced staff and officers. Newer organizational members are eager to learn from the experience of other leaders, while experienced participants offered their expertise. One person suggested mentoring could make a strong contribution by “building transparency and belief in the system with a properly resourced mentorship program. With that I would be proud to continue to provide leadership and develop new leaders”. Another noted the urgency of building in this method as “we are losing

close to 50% of our current staff within the next decade to retirement and 100% of our regional coordinators. Succession planning and mentoring of selected staff and members is essential”.

The concept of mentoring is seen to fit well with union culture as one respondent stated, “the labour movement has a culture of learning through apprenticeship and experience”.

A concern was expressed that selection and access to mentoring needs to be transparent and equitable to avoid politicizing participation and creating cliques.

#### *Coaching.*

There is strong interest in having access to coaching and in learning coaching techniques to incorporate into supervisory practice. “...I think that a program in coaching skills and leadership development would be a valuable resource”. Coaching others is seen as a valuable skill. Several respondents indicated this method had great potential for their work with staff as it was more in keeping with the type of supervision they would like to practice. “I could use more training in that area for myself”. I learned that some prior investment of time has been made in providing some groups of supervisors with an orientation to coaching as a method of facilitating learning conversations with staff. There were occasional comments that led me to believe that this training had been a useful start, but that participants would benefit from reinforcement to be fully comfortable in this role.

#### *Executive coaching.*

Several respondents indicated interest in having access to executive coaching. Respondents mentioned they were “intrigued” or “curious” about executive coaching as a learning method for themselves. Coaching can be a solution to some of the barriers that have been noted for leaders as they assume greater levels of responsibility. Leaders can become more isolated and have fewer opportunities to exchange views with peers as one respondent already

discovered as they have become one of the more senior people in a position, “mentors are narrowing for me”. Coaching also provides an opportunity to connect with someone outside supervisory or managerial roles and can be an important reality check.

#### *Where there is a will there is a way*

I asked respondents to comment on the availability of time for learning as a particular barrier, as I wondered how leaders could integrate their learning with their other responsibilities. While most respondents confirmed that scheduling time for learning commitments is challenging, a few sounded a counter-point and noted that it can be done, stating that the leader who is committed to learning will find a way.

#### *Assessment*

There were requests to have access to assessment for setting goals and planning for further development, “Leadership and coaching training. This would encourage me to assess my strengths and weaknesses and tackle areas where I could be more effective”. Another respondent noted they were interested in “personal development, learning to identify and overcome own weaknesses”. Another leader agreed, with the suggestion that “I also believe that we need to take the time needed to develop an assessment tool. This tool would assess the individual training needs of each one of us and possibly look at individualized responses to those needs”.

#### *Learning plans*

There was interest in using individual learning plans although there seemed to be different levels of awareness of the existence, access to and use of learning plans for development. While a few respondents mentioned them positively and saw them as a tool for organizing their development plans, there were also a few expressions of frustration that the planning tool was not utilized consistently. I had the impression that learning plans might be

used much more in some regions or headquarters sections than others. A respondent suggested “training opportunities aimed at the senior leadership need to be advertised and shared on an equal basis. Individual leadership plans need to be developed and shared with the senior leadership”.

#### *Knowing what is available*

Another aspect related to facilitating individual learning was the request that a catalogue or compendium be widely available that could indicate the courses and resource material available for people planning their own development. The PSAC leaders who participated in this research were enthusiastic learners, as evidenced in the comment in regard to preferences in learning methods, “I’ll try anything!”, while another person stated, “Everything [is of interest] but not knowing what is out there makes this question hard to answer”.

#### *Outside learning experiences still useful*

There were also comments that brought balance to the heavy emphasis on shared learning inside the PSAC. A few commentators suggested that learning situations outside the PSAC can play an important part in developing new ideas. These respondents highlighted the importance of having access to high quality learning experiences away from the workplace in order to learn about new ideas and to have a place to try out new ideas and behaviours away from peers and scrutiny. As one person reminded, “small group sessions with colleagues, given the size of the organization and the close relationship among many of us, do not promise the independence and open thinking required to achieve personal change”.

#### *Network learning*

The comments reported earlier regarding the lack of peers and opportunities to discuss dilemmas and shared concerns with others suggested that there is an interest in participating in

learning forums across organizations. There were comments indicating that labour leaders are interested in hearing from other labour leaders and social change organizations regarding internal issues, not only shared campaigns and analysis. Examples included sharing information about how other organizations are structured or management and organization development practices that might be adapted.

#### *Least preferred methods*

Self-paced learning methods do not fit well with the demands of the positions for most participants. Several respondents commented that the lack of structure associated with self-paced learning methods would make these unrealistic in light of the demands of leader's schedules, as one person expressed, "I think self-paced just won't get done. You need to get me out of the office, but not too often!".

Structured reading, such as the book club approach had low interest. A few leaders indicated that they would be interested in reading summaries that could highlight concepts that they should be aware of, but thought they would be unlikely to have time to read books in entirety.

Many respondents singled out a weekly format for courses as their least preferred format choice. The nature of the work and scheduling difficulties meant that attendance at weekly sessions was very likely to be interrupted. A few respondents noted they had tried this format in the past and found it unsatisfactory. A minority view suggested that making a commitment to a course such as at a university is possible with planning and commitment.

#### *E-learning not popular*

There was little interest in computer mediated learning. I had wondered if respondents might prefer online learning formats that could be accessed wherever they were. The replies

indicated that computer learning was associated with self-paced methods and therefore presented many of the same problems including a lack of structure needed to encourage participation. There was little detail provided in the replies as to why this was not preferred other than the connection to self-paced. I speculated that participants may be disinclined to spend any more time than they already are attached to technology. The respondents could also be unfamiliar with learning applications and e-learning formats that would be of interest to them. This would be an important area to explore further before the PSAC invested in e-learning to a great extent.

### *Organizational supports*

#### *Using values and developing a learning culture*

There were numerous comments making the link between leading change and creating a supportive culture for learning. A respondent commented,

... there needs to be organizational attitudinal change in terms of support mechanisms within the PSAC. Leadership learning needs to be about analyzing power dynamics and the possibility to share power and still be a leader.

As one participant stated, “We need to create a culture of learning [that] embraces change and doesn’t see change as a scary thing”. There was also an awareness that the existing culture may not be receptive to new ways of doing things, as another respondent commented,

Old boys club atmosphere does not welcome different or new ideas or concepts. Political and elected nature of current leadership does not welcome anyone that may be perceived as a threat. We need to change the culture to welcome the next generation of potential leaders.

Another respondent commented on the paradoxes presented by leading and managing inside a labour union as they observed,

It is interesting to work for an employer that is a union. As such, you would expect, as an employee of their union-employer, to apply to its own employees the principles it defends in the public space. It is unfortunate to observe that that is seldom the case.

Another respondent sees potential for change and stated,

“This is a very good progressive organization but we need to be able to go to our triennial convention with a solid package (including finances) for leadership development over the next ten years”.

Although there may be considerable challenge in initiating and sustaining cultural changes in the PSAC, there are also signs of change as one person stated, “The labour world has evolved a lot in the past 20 years”.

#### *Current policies are viewed positively*

Respondents who commented on the current policies supporting learning felt that the PSAC has good mechanisms in place for supporting learning such as access to leave, tuition or registration subsidies. As this respondent commented, “We already have good policies in place for the training or development of supervisory staff; we just need to recognize this as a priority and put up the money to get it done”. As mentioned earlier in this report, there are cautions that these policies must be applied, and perceived to be applied, in an equitable way.

Another barrier to leadership development to be addressed at the organizational level included the need for financial resources for backfilling positions in order to facilitate the access to developmental assignments. There were a few concerns expressed that developmental opportunities were being lost due to resource considerations.

#### *Mentoring*

Mentoring is seen as having great potential not only as a learning strategy, but also as the type of support that the PSAC can actively encourage across the organization. A participant emphasized the organizational level to this by stating, “I can't stress enough the support mechanism. Given the current make up of our elected leadership in terms of people of colour, leadership building networks and sustained and resourced mentorship programs are critical”.

*Stronger role for Human Resources Section*

A few respondents expressed the need for the Human Resources Section to be more proactive in the area of leadership development. Suggestions included providing more guidance regarding the practices that can be used to encourage developmental leadership opportunities, increasing the credibility of the Section as a resource for managers, and acting as a resource for the use of individual learning plans. A respondent noted, “I was surprised to find that there is no training department within the organization that attends to the needs of staff (at least to my knowledge)”.

*Stress management and work-life balance*

Stress management and work – life balance were mentioned throughout the replies, in acknowledging that these are particular challenges in this kind of work environment. It also emerged from time to time as an impediment to continued leadership development as respondents weigh the personal cost of taking on further leadership responsibilities. A participant noted they would “not [be] looking to move up. Too much stress”. If this sentiment is a pervasive concern, this reaction could have a negative effect on encouraging people to take on leadership roles and management responsibilities.

*Study Conclusions*

This action research project set out to explore the learning needs of officers and staff responsible for significant organizational change at the PSAC. Using interviews and a questionnaire, the study asked leaders to describe their learning needs.

*Leaders have a variety of leadership and managerial learning needs*

The replies have provided a rich description of the leadership qualities PSAC leaders aspire to enact. New and experienced leaders would like to be involved in meaningful leadership

development. This study has identified broad areas of content that are of interest to leaders. The study documents that respondents were interested in learning more about leadership and change management processes. They are interested in training that is designed with the values and unique setting of labour unions in mind. The participants are interested in tools that can help them to assess their leadership and create plans for deeper learning. The participants know that some of their most profound learning has come from the experience of leading. The respondents have described the training settings and situational learning opportunities that will benefit them in preparing to lead positive organizational change.

#### *Organizational support*

Participants have indicated that the PSAC as an organization can support them in their learning efforts by developing a culture where learning is seen to be valued, continuing the current policies that encourage participation in learning and enhancing equitable access to leadership learning.

#### *Values set an important context*

The research also sought insight into how the PSAC could use shared values to support positive organizational change. The literature review documented a number of PSAC policies that articulated organizational commitment to values such as democracy, participation, equity, inclusion and non-discrimination. The participants described their commitment to union values and the importance of incorporating equity into the work of the union, including succession planning. The study suggested that discussing how PSAC values inform learning opportunities, succession planning and promoting equity will be useful reference points as leaders implement changes in these important areas.

This study has confirmed that the participants in this project are learners and facilitators, interested in learning more about their own leadership and how they can develop leadership capacity in others to meet the challenges ahead.

*Scope and limitations of the research*

This research project set out to discover the learning needs of working leaders in one labour organization through qualitative methods. Kirby, Greaves and Reid (2006) have noted that generalizing the results of qualitative research to other settings is not a goal of this type of research (p. 242). As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, this type of research is seen to be valid if it creates an accurate account of the phenomena in the eyes of the participants. An important validation of this research is in the agreement from participants that this report accurately describes their learning needs.

The research included the views of 27 respondents and would be strengthened by including a larger number of participants. It was beyond the scope of this study to compare learning needs between officers and staff, women and men, members of equity seeking groups or members holding specific positions. This study has produced a broad outline of interests that could be verified and deepened with specific constituencies.

## Chapter Five Research Implications

### *Study Recommendations*

This chapter elaborates on the findings of the previous chapter by providing recommendations regarding leadership development for the PSAC to consider. The recommendations include suggestions and ideas from respondent comments and the literature review. The content of development programs, learning methods and organizational supports required by leaders responsible for significant organizational change are discussed. The recommendations include enhancements to leadership development, management development, and coaching and mentoring with a view to integrating these development activities into the organization's proposed succession planning strategy. Additional recommendations include creating learning projects for leadership development, participating in the development of labour movement networks for shared leadership learning opportunities, and strengthening PSAC organizational support to leadership development.

According to the model of needs assessment and training program development advocated by Cafferella (1988), learning needs are synthesized from gathering information from people currently in the positions, investigating organizational changes and priorities, conducting literature reviews and examining any other information that may be available from previous training programs or mandated through legislative requirements (p.32). She also suggests that ideas from colleagues and curricula from other programs can be sources of needs assessment information. This study assessed leader learning needs by asking practicing leaders directly, either via an in-depth interview or an electronic questionnaire, what their past, present and anticipated learning needs were. A particular emphasis was placed on their responsibilities in leading organizational change. The literature review included in Chapter Two of this report

provided a thorough overview of models of organizational change and the change issues leaders need to be prepared to face, including union renewal, succession planning and employment equity. The curricula of mainstream and labour leadership programs were reviewed. The literature review also examined recommended approaches and methods that facilitate learning the complex skills associated with leadership and management. Taken together, these components of the study provide the PSAC with an outline of the learning needs of leaders responsible for significant organizational change and the kinds of methods or approaches that are documented as being effective in facilitating the acquisition of these skills.

Kirby, Greaves and Reid (2006) advocated that in addition to documenting the research process and reporting results, research practitioners should include a plan for action in their reports (p. 243). This is verified in this study by a request from a participant who noted they “need to receive requests for input, such as this survey, but also to see the concrete results and changes to the organization as a result of actions like this”.

The recommendations in this chapter can form the basis of an action plan that integrates leadership learning with PSAC initiatives in leadership and management development, succession planning and employment equity, within the context of an organization that is actively engaged with union renewal.

The recommendations proposed include strengthening leadership development, implementing a management development program, supporting coaching activities, enhancing mentoring, creating leadership learning projects, participating in the development of labour movement wide leadership learning opportunities, and strengthening PSAC organizational support for leadership development.

*Strengthening leadership development*

The study revealed important considerations that an effective leadership development program for elected officers and staff members would address. Such a program must be customized to account for the unique political setting and desire to model movement values and PSAC policies within the union. Respondents commented on the importance of leaders learning to reconcile the political nature of the organization with their other organizational responsibilities. They also communicated their dissatisfaction with the competitive, hierarchical or business oriented philosophies of many external programs. This suggests that designing any programs or learning initiatives should reflect an underlying leadership philosophy that is consistent with PSAC values and policies.

*Leadership content.*

The content of leadership learning would include familiarizing participants with various models of leadership, models of change management and opportunities for enhancing personal development as a leader. These include the ability to articulate a vision and values and ways for leaders to assist people to work together to achieve the desired changes.

Additionally, authors such as Groysberg and Cowen (2006) and Groves (2007) have made explicit connections between leadership development and succession planning activities. Groysberg and Cowen (2006) suggested identifying desired leadership qualities (p. 2) and ensuring leaders have opportunities for developmental assignments that include elements of assessment, challenge and support (p. 2; p. 3 to p. 4). These writers advocated integrating mentoring and coaching into the support mechanisms available to learning leaders (Groysberg & Cowan, 2006, p. 4 and p. 9; Groves, 2007, p. 244 and p. 246). All of the elements mentioned by these authors were also noted by participants in the study. This suggests that leadership

development and succession planning can be customized to the PSAC setting and informed by recommended practices from the development literature. Assessment, access to development opportunities and supports such as coaching and mentoring were requested by the participants in this study, indicating that adapting these mechanisms to PSAC leadership development would meet an articulated need and could be expected to be well received.

*Integrate equity policies through leadership initiatives.*

Equity issues should be integrated across all leadership development initiatives. The roles and styles of women, racialized people and others who have experienced systemic barriers to their leadership need ongoing commitment from the organization to prevent tokenism, isolation and discouragement in the face of the long road ahead. Genge (2002) has written that “feminist trade unionists have seen many gains on the equality front within the labour movement. We, feminist trade unionists, also understand all too clearly that the gains are incredibly fragile” (p. 50). Cantor (2005) has highlighted that without attention to equity in the succession planning process, equity goals are at risk (p. 6).

*Important settings for leadership learning.*

Two important settings for leadership learning were identified. Building leadership training into conferences and workshops will allow leaders to meet with others to build networks and share ideas and dilemmas. Several of the participants suggested that training events be scheduled to take advantage of times when groups will be together for other purposes. This would reduce time lost, as well as providing the structure that is needed to commit time to formal learning activities. Collective sharing and development is important to people throughout any organization. It decreases isolation and helps to build a common understanding of leadership.

The second setting for learning is the workplace, where developmental experiences can be built in to help achieve both leadership learning and succession planning. The preference of participants for this approach is validated by the views of researchers who advocate the importance of situational and emergent learning. Groves (2007) stated that a “hallmark of exemplary succession planning systems is a sharp focus on action-oriented developmental activities designed to enhance leadership competencies aligned with the organization’s strategic goals (p. 249). Groysberg and Cowen (2006) stated “evidence suggests that these on the job experiences are the primary venue for leadership development... succeeding at challenging assignments has been repeatedly linked to later success” (p. 7). The study participants concur, having noted their own experience in growing in leadership ability from taking on challenging assignments.

#### *Succession planning.*

In many ways, leadership development and succession planning are, or can be, the same process. Succession planning in regards to staff leadership can be designed to include the elements of assessment, challenge and support noted above. Challenges for the PSAC in regard to succession planning would include identifying the underlying philosophical orientation of the approach selected. These philosophies can be framed as either a broad view that encourages widespread participation in leadership development, or a more focused replacement oriented approach that places more emphasis on screening and selecting candidates viewed as having high potential for development (Cantor, 2005, p. 7; Groves, 2007, p. 248 to p. 249).

Considerations for PSAC to discuss would include which approach is more consistent with PSAC goals, philosophy and organizational needs as well as any cost implications. Other implications to be discussed include the relative advantages and risks of the two approaches.

A similar discussion of goals, philosophy, advantages and risks regarding succession could also be undertaken by officers with reference to the political selection process. Although it could be assumed that election processes will sort succession out, this approach may not take into account the reminder from Clark (2000) that leaders are better served by having competent rivals rather than an ineffectual organization (p. 180). With the large number of leaders eligible for retirement in the near term, there is a significant opportunity to assist new leaders make the transition to new leadership responsibilities. Officers will want to consider how they can aid the transition of knowledgeable, well prepared leaders while maintaining a commitment to the ethics of democratic participation and equity goals.

*Revitalize the use of individual learning plans*

A few participants expressed interest or curiosity about establishing individual learning plans. I had the impression that there was limited awareness or familiarity with the process for establishing the plans. PSAC could consider revitalizing this process and encouraging their use. There were requests from respondents to have access to assessments that could help them to formulate their own plans. There will be an ongoing need for individuals to address individual learning priorities. Participants have requested that a clear and equitable process is articulated for accessing learning plan resources. This would extend to criteria for attendance at outside leadership development programs such as those offered by the FTQ, Harvard Trade Union Program, or Banff Leadership Centre. It is possible that with renewed attention on leadership development, more people will consider making attendance at these resources part of their learning plans. The PSAC should articulate the level of support they can accommodate.

*Create a management development program*

A significant number of participants in this research had managerial and administrative responsibilities. Clark and Gray (in press) have documented the trend to more well developed administrative practices within unions over the past decade, suggesting that union leaders need to be more familiar with contemporary management practices. The literature review also found authors such Brookfield, Kalliath and Laiken (2006), who have contributed to an approach to management education informed by a critical view. This suggests that it is possible to customize management development that takes into account the values and beliefs of the PSAC and the labour movement and is informed by contemporary management education practices.

*Management content.*

Management development is an ideal place to encourage the exchange of knowledge between experienced and newer managers. The content of management development in the PSAC setting would assist managers to balance the political nature of the organization with their administrative duties, as well as incorporate specific topics from areas such as financial management or human resource practice that are priorities for the participants. There are also exciting possibilities for using current managers and leaders as resource people or facilitators in the delivery of this type of program that would aid in building a community of practice for those interested in further articulating a progressive management practice.

*Enhance mentoring*

The respondents expressed very strong interest in enhancing mentoring within PSAC. Mentoring can help individuals to actively engage in their own learning and development, has tremendous potential as a method of transferring knowledge between newer and more experienced colleagues, and is recommended as an element of succession planning. The PSAC

should consider the philosophy and goals of mentorship and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of various levels of formality with programs. Cooney (2003) has noted that mentor programs need not be highly formalized or costly to be effective. Groves (2007) suggested that as part of succession planning, participants be encouraged to build extensive networks of mentors, rather than a single relationship. The PSAC could design an orientation and training program for mentors and mentees in keeping with the goals and scope agreed.

Formal mentoring has not always been demonstrated to be effective for equity seeking groups, if attention is not paid to the needs and preferences of the participants. The PSAC should consider how to establish mentoring arrangements that are in keeping with the desired future of full participation of all organizational members and avoid the pitfalls that have been identified in other programs, such as the favouritism mentioned by Blake-Beard (200, p. 333).

#### *Support coaching activities*

There was strong interest in participating in coaching. Many managers indicated they would like to enhance their own ability to use coaching approaches in their interactions with others. I understood that there has been training for some organizational members to implement this approach. I developed the impression that follow up was required to ensure that the coaching practices were becoming fully integrated in use.

Accessing executive coaching has interest for several study participants. Executive coaching has advantages such as ensuring leaders with few peers have opportunities for exploration and learning. When executive coaching is selected as a personal, professional development activity, there may be no organizational implications as the people involved would come to their own agreement regarding goals, scope and payment arrangements.

There are additional ethical considerations to discuss when the organization becomes a third party to the coaching arrangement. The PSAC will want to establish clarity regarding the organizational goals for executive coaching, criteria for access and participation as well as payment arrangements. Professional confidentiality practices surround executive coaching arrangements and would need to be clarified and understood by all parties before coaching appointments begin.

*Look for ways to create learning projects*

Each of the four recommendations, enhancing leadership development, strengthening management development, implementing mentoring and implementing coaching, is an example of a new initiative where leadership skills can be learned and applied. Each of these has potential to become learning projects that could be developmental assignments for individuals or teams. The PSAC could consider how to make use of these and other similar opportunities to create learning experiences for leaders. The participants in this study and the literature agreed that developmental assignments are critical for gaining experience. Participants could be coached or mentored through the process of leading or participating on a project team, researching options and bringing recommendations forward to the appropriate decision making body for each of these. Making learning an explicit part of the project would legitimize discussions on the learning and development aspects of the process. Taking this recommendation a step further, these projects can also be leadership capacity building, mentoring or coaching experiences for those wishing to practice these skills and would demonstrate and model organizational steps towards strengthening a learning culture.

*Participate in developing shared networks for learning within the labour movement*

There were a variety of creative suggestions noted by participants for ways to initiate learning experiences. The tendency to isolation and the uniqueness of the labour setting was evidenced in the strong preference for group learning forums. Although many of these could be met within the PSAC, opportunities to meet with other labour leaders, with staff who do similar work in other unions or social change organizations were also desired.

This would suggest that it is timely for the PSAC to continue to participate in the review of the Labour College of Canada and to support the development of other such forums that meet the needs of officers and staff as described in this report. The PSAC may wish to advocate for the inclusion of the types of learning identified in this report through encouraging the Labour College of Canada to offer programs that would meet the needs for leadership or administrative skill development for various levels of PSAC leaders. The PSAC should be alert for opportunities for ways that PSAC leaders could contribute to the Labour College as yet another venue for developing learning projects such as facilitation experience.

PSAC should also discuss how learning opportunities at the staff level can be facilitated such as exchanges between unions or social change partners, networks or communities of practice. Networks such as the forums created by Human Rights, Women, LGBTQ, Racial and Visible Minority, and Aboriginal caucuses have been identified as important venues for gaining experience, finding mentors and strategizing to overcome barriers to leadership. These same strategies can also be useful at the employee level and could be supported across the labour sector by encouraging staff to participate in networks that offer leadership learning opportunities.

*Strengthen organizational support to leadership development*

Leadership development in the PSAC means attending to the development needs of elected leaders and staff members. The Human Resource Section has responsibilities to all elected officers and staff, including, to provide for their professional development in the context of the strategies and resources needed by the PSAC. The Planning and Organization Development program has responsibilities for implementing organizational change. Elected leaders have access to their early training in leadership through the Member Education program. The interconnections between these organizational programs suggest that a close working relationship be maintained between the Human Resource Section and the Planning and Organizational Development Director position. It would also be useful to sustain good communication and co-operation with the Member Education programs. All three program areas share an interest in developing a strong base of members and staff who can be candidates for elected and staff positions as they become available over the next decade. A shared philosophy and working knowledge of concepts common to all three programs would do much to create a common culture and shared understanding of organizational change and leadership concepts.

*Make a learning culture more explicit*

PSAC leaders can be seen to be actively promoting cultural factors and practices that promote learning and working to reduce impediments to learning and leadership. It would be a significant contribution to promoting a learning culture for senior leaders to be seen to be actively engaged in their own learning. Eaton (1995) has stated, “at every stage and level of leadership, unionists can help those a little less far along in their development” (¶ 90).

The literature has also identified factors in union culture that are barriers to leadership. Briskin (2006) has stated “family responsibilities is the barrier most often cited” (p. 4) regarding

barriers to women's leadership in the trade union movement. Paavo (2003) has made a number of recommendations to reduce union workload and create more inclusive leadership practices that would reduce barriers to women's leadership (p. 95 to p. 119). The PSAC can be vigilant about opportunities to reduce the barriers to leadership, such as creating organizational, rather than personal, responses to these barriers. An example that emerged from this study is the theme of stress management and work-life balance.

The health, wellbeing and stamina of leaders are often viewed as a personal resource and therefore a personal matter for individuals to address. It was noticeable that respondents mentioned stress and work-life balance as considerations both in their current positions and their anticipation of future leadership opportunities. In my experience, there is considerable anecdotal discussion of the effect of long hours, lack of support, travel and the adversarial stance that union work requires within the movement. There were also differing views contained in the replies regarding the role of fitness activities as learning needs identified in this study. The PSAC could discuss further the employer's role and organizational expectations regarding the cultural norm that is being expressed regarding stress management and its effect on current and future leaders. Kouzes and Posner (2002) suggest that an important role for leaders is the "responsibility to create an environment that breeds hardiness on a regular, not an occasional, basis" (p. 222 & 223). The PSAC could examine recommended practices in creating supportive environments and policies that mitigate the effects of stress.

#### *Organizational Implications*

The PSAC is one of the unions with dedicated resources attached to human resources and organization development. The recommendations offered above require discussion and

commitment for action. They need not be costly and may be achieved in part with internal resources.

Given the importance of learning initiatives to leadership and management development, succession planning, coaching and mentoring and the need to build employment equity into these initiatives, the PSAC will need to consider how to resource and co-ordinate this work. Currently there is no specialist position within the Human Resources section devoted to training and development. The recommendations for leadership and management development have raised the issue of customizing learning content and generally carrying out program development in support of these initiatives. The PSAC will need to consider how these can be supported.

The PSAC has already documented the risk to the organization if no succession planning were to occur and has already made the commitment to place resources in this area. The recommendations in this chapter can be assessed to identify how they might fit with the directions already outlined in the PSAC succession planning proposal.

The risks associated with not acting on the results of this study have been stated at the outset of this chapter by a participant. There is a need to see action coming from studies such as this, otherwise cynicism grows and new initiatives are met with less enthusiasm. It may be useful to reconvene the action team that participated in this study to consider how the results of this study can be shared and acted upon within the organization.

*Use this report as a needs assessment*

In developing training programs, needs assessment as viewed as one of several steps in a larger schema (Caffarella, 1988, p. 30 to p. 34). This model suggests that the next steps to follow this report would be to further refine the needs by deciding which are to be addressed through training and which are better addressed through other interventions. The training needs should

then be prioritized using criteria such as the organizational purpose, for example, relevance to succession planning; ensuring congruence with the observations of managers or supervisors of likely participants; participant interests and the feasibility of the program (p. 33).

#### *Implications for future research*

This research has indicated that leaders are interested in learning more about leadership and organizational change and have specific learning needs associated with their organizational role. The results of this research could be used to refine the specific learning needs of particular groups, such as managers, new leaders, members of equity seeking groups or other specific populations to ensure that leadership development activities are informed by their priorities. Cafferella (1988) noted that additional steps following the identification of broad needs would include screening and prioritizing the needs before implementing programs (p. 32).

I have included a recommendation that the PSAC remain alert to finding learning situations that can serve as developmental opportunities for leadership development. Many of the suggestions with program implications such as designing leadership and management development to integrate with the organization's succession planning goals, implementing coaching or implementing mentoring create opportunities for conducting action learning within PSAC. These initiatives would also lend themselves to various forms of evaluation research.

There was little Canadian research to draw on in understanding leadership development in labour organizations from the perspective of leadership studies or organization development. It would be helpful to have similar research conducted in other Canadian labour organizations to provide comparisons and learn from other experiences. PSAC may wish to contribute to other research in the labour movement based on the findings of this research.

## Chapter Six Lessons Learned

In this chapter, I offer my reflections on the lessons I have learned throughout the action research process and the insights that I am taking away from leading the Major Project through my perspective as a consultant, leader, project manager, researcher and learner. The purpose of these reflections is to share my observations with others for consideration in their own leadership and learning process.

As I began to consider how I would organize this chapter and decide what I wanted to record here, I realized that I was organizing my preliminary thoughts around the consulting role in working with organizations. I began making notes using descriptions of the consultant's tasks through the various stages of a consulting project as noted in the Major Project / Thesis Handbook (Royal Roads University, 2006, p. 27 to p. 43). As I began to write, I wondered about different or better models that would capture the academic requirements and allow me to record the parts of my learning journey that were suited to this chapter. I realized I was once again spiralling through a learning cycle, this time at a meta-level, as I sought a framework that would help me to make sense of my whole experience in leading the project.

Now that the project was coming to a close, I had tasks and feelings to manage regarding the ending of such a large initiative. I noticed that I was reflecting on the two year period of the whole MALT program and that I needed to re-focus on the research related reflections that I wanted to record here. I suspected that one theory or framework would not adequately address the depth of experience and multiple roles that had manifested through the project. From the beginning of the project through to the end, I have been engaged on many levels simultaneously. I have been a leader, consultant, project manager, researcher and learner. Each of these roles has offered me, and I believe, the project, something different although all are related. Through these

past two years I have learned to see and honour multiple perspectives, including tolerating contradictory perspectives within myself, and to do this with consciousness and intention.

*As a consultant*

As I began to develop ideas for my research, I conceptualized the upcoming Major Project in terms of a consultant-client relationship as well as that of the candidate-sponsor (Course Notes for LT 563, Leading Systematic Inquiry in Organizations p. 3-2). I understood that the project would be conducted as applied research with the learner acting as a consultant, which is similar to my usual way of working.

The cycle of consultant actions, described by Bellman as assessing, generating alternatives, helping clients make decisions and acting (1990, p. 78 to p. 80), is very similar to the routine of looking, thinking and acting, that Stringer described as the basic routine of action research (1999, p. 18). As I began the project, the steps and commonalities between the approaches seemed familiar, comfortable and workable. I could readily identify where I was located in the process and understood, at least from my own perspective, what the tasks associated with the steps were. I also noticed how unsettled I was. There were many similarities to most consulting assignments on one hand, but striking differences when carrying out the work as an unpaid learner. The dynamics of power shifted without the familiar transactions of costing the scope of the work and generating invoices. These seemingly mundane tasks of the consulting world allow the consultant to value her work in a concrete way. I felt as though I was working without an important lever and at times it was difficult to tell if the work was valued by the organization. There were significant gaps in communication during the life of this project. I reminded myself that the lack of response that I experienced at times did not mean the project or my work was not valued.

The motivation of the organization was another aspect of the power relationship that differed from the usual situation in a consulting project. While the project was a stated priority in the mandate of the program areas and addressed real issues, there was a difference when I thought of the urgency and interest that is present when the client is requesting assistance from the consultant. In this case, I approached the sponsor. I believed this setting would provide me with an opportunity to meet some of my own learning goals related to the uniqueness of the labour setting and the size of the organization.

It was easy to articulate several of my own learning needs that would be met through the process and I knew there was receptivity and genuine interest on the part of the sponsor. By approaching the organization, rather than being asked, I was very aware of a dynamic of vulnerability and dependency that is not usually present in my work. These observations led to a productive conversation with the project sponsor. We shared some insights about how the learner and the sponsoring organization could get the most out of future action research projects. We concluded that the importance of engaging authority for the project as high into the organizational hierarchy as possible is essential. We also noted how important the selection and commitment of action team members was to the momentum for the project.

*As a leader*

As I read and wrote about the themes of leadership generally and of women in leadership in the literature review and in respondent comments, I applied these ideas to reviewing my own leadership of the project. I developed further insight into my own leadership style and expanded my repertoire of leadership options in different roles. I had some dark moments when there were long gaps in communication with my contact person at the organization. I floundered as I wondered if these gaps were attributable to my actions or whether they were related to

organizational concerns of which I knew nothing about. I second-guessed my actions and speculated about whether I had been supplying enough structure in the early stages when structure from the leader is so essential to group formation. I puzzled over whether the nurturing and relational aspects of my style were being seen, not as a leadership competency for building relationships, but as being nice, as women's work that was, in Fletcher's phrase, being disappeared, something that happens through women's intentions being misinterpreted (1999, p. 104). As I considered the feedback and evidence I had been given regarding how I had managed the political aspect of the leader's role I knew that I had managed this aspect of leadership well, despite the difficulties that I encountered.

As I moved closer towards writing the findings and moving to the closing stages of the project, a second major rift occurred in the continuity of communication and contact with the sponsor. At this time, the representative of the sponsoring organization changed. There was less time to complete the information analysis and writing than I had ever imagined if I was going to meet the deadlines for submission. The project would have benefited from a meeting of the action team later than I could accommodate. In a consulting intervention, I would be strongly led by the client's view of pacing for key deliverables, such as the timing of the feedback meeting. I felt uncomfortable placing my needs as a learner ahead of the sponsoring organization. I had delayed the project once to accommodate problems that impacted data collection and I decided I could not absorb a second delay. It was difficult for me to preclude full participation of all action team members in order to meet the academic deadline for submission. I made a decision to meet my own learning needs and complete the program within the academic year. I hoped I had made the choice with integrity. I know I learned a great deal about leading an internal initiative in this

environment. I have deepened my understanding of myself as a leader and how I want to engage in leadership practice.

*As a project manager*

A third perspective I viewed the project through was that of a project manager. The MALT Major Project / Thesis Handbook describes deliverables and milestones through several phases of the project (2006, p. 27 to p.29). I experienced this as the least well developed role of the learning project, mainly because there was little coming together of the project action team as a team; consequently there was little for me to coordinate beyond my own work. I anticipated the informational needs of the project action team and organized my time to meet deadlines. I learned to break large writing tasks into smaller, more manageable, sections. I was able to develop a system of writing chapters, seeking feedback and editing for each final draft.

*As a researcher*

My fourth role was that of researcher. In each phase of the study, I learned more about the research process, the methods I had chosen and about myself. Although there were difficulties with the process, I know that through my work with the PSAC I learned much that I would not have been able to in another setting. The dynamics and uniqueness of the organizational system allowed me to struggle with and to clarify my philosophy and research approach. I used some of the appreciative inquiry approach and would have liked to incorporate more. I found I had to double back and research more about program planning and needs assessment than I had expected.

Researching the literature review chapter of the study immersed me in a community of writers and scholarly articles that I would have been unlikely to encounter without the discipline of a research project. The review engaged me as a critical reader and created a space for me to

synthesize a variety of viewpoints on various aspects of leadership and learning that I had wanted to do for some time. I was delighted to discover authors, scholars and journals that were new to me. Several of these turned into goldmines of more authors, scholars and journals that informed my thinking and writing. At times I was delighted to find a new perspective or an author who illuminated something that was fuzzy for me. At other times, I was disheartened as I realized that I had some catching up to do in finding, and becoming familiar with, a well developed body of literature of which I had not been aware.

I had not selected learning outcomes related to the use of technology in my Learner Assessment Plan for the Major Project. Competencies related to the use of technological tools became a welcome, but unanticipated area for great growth through the project. In addition to refining my skills in using and evaluating technological research tools, I learned to use the Survey Editor program to post the electronic questionnaire. It was a high point in self-management when I navigated to the pilot test site and entered my trial reply. I had an even stronger sense of satisfaction when I saw the first replies come in from respondents. I developed much stronger skills with spreadsheet and presentation software to make use of the questionnaire replies.

I had purchased a digital voice recorder for recording the interviews and expected to use audiotapes as my back up. I spent considerable time practising with the digital device, only to be very dissatisfied with its performance in the field. My backup method of micro-cassette audiotapes became my main choice. Without the backup, I would have lost important information in some of the early interviews.

During the analysis step, I developed a deeper appreciation for how time spent working with the data could lead to multiple interpretations. I felt gratitude to the participants for trusting

me with their comments. I wanted to be sure that I had been inclusive in presenting replies and felt the responsibility of portraying their responses in a way that would facilitate action. I found it workable to use the log method and audio-tapes I had chosen for finding quotations from the interview participants. It was much easier to work with the comments from the surveys because they could be searched in electronic format. In future, I would add funding for transcription to the project budget.

*As a learner*

It seems fitting to write about my role as a learner in concluding this chapter. I have a rich set of reflections on my learning style, temperament and philosophy as an educator that have been crystallized through the research process. Undertaking a master's degree as an older student with many years of experience in practice has challenged me at every step. I have had to ask myself again and again, why do I do it this way? What are the assumptions underlying my practice? What were my early choices? Do I still believe that now? I found throughout the research process I unearthed my beliefs and practices related to participatory action research as I had learned it in community practice and as I practice it now. I have filled in gaps in my knowledge and am much more aware of making conscious choices about research goals, methodologies and methods.

I have always found an intellectual home in the theory and practice of adult education. The models, the kinds of questions asked and answered, and the world view of practitioners make sense to me. It helps me understand myself and others and gives me insight into the way that organizations work. Through the various phases and activities of the research project, I understood myself as a learner, using strategies to learn my way through unfamiliar terrain. I understood that when the project slowed down, it was hard to keep momentum going for myself.

My extraverted orientation meant that my own energy would flag when there appeared to be little receptivity or energy within the organization, and this insight allowed me to manage this issue rather than be overwhelmed and discouraged by it.

I appreciated again and again the insights I have had about my own learning processes grounded in the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, cited by Mackeracher, 2004, p.57), Taylor's Model of the Learning Cycle (Mackeracher, 2004, p. 65) and the Taylor Learning Process Model (Taylor, 2007). I experienced the sensations I have come to associate with learning my way through something new. As I worked on the literature review, the writing process and my facilitation of the research stages, I knew I was moving through smaller and larger cycles of experience, meaning making and application, complete with the anxiety, withdrawal and elation noted by Taylor. I practised reflecting on my experiences and reflecting in the moment. I became a reluctant convert to the virtues of keeping a journal. I found growth in my ability as a reflective practitioner and can facilitate that awareness in others.

I learned a tremendous amount about the content and subject matter of the various components of the research. I have added to my repertoire of models that help me to understand leadership, learner needs, program needs assessment, change management and succession planning. I have increased my own knowledge of both the commonalities and the points of divergence between different schools of thought regarding recommended leadership competencies and how these competencies can be learned and facilitated. I have learned more about the barriers to supporting leadership learning and how organizations can address these. I have a much richer understanding of the complexities associated with organizational culture and values. Through all of this I have learned more about where I stand on many of these issues and have a clearer view of myself as an adult educator and organization development practitioner.

This chapter has reviewed the lessons I am taking away from the action research project at the PSAC. I have reviewed what I learned from the roles of consultant, leader, project manager, researcher and learner. I noted that I am a more self aware learner, more experienced consultant, more grounded leader, more alert project manager and a much more informed and confident action research facilitator. I have commented on the aspects of this research that I hope will be signposts for others exploring a similar path.

Just as I found it difficult to find one model or concept that could hold the multiple roles I enacted through the project, I found it difficult to find a concept or a quotation that would adequately sum up all that these lessons represent to me. I realized I was back where I had started with this chapter. For me, no one role, model, theory or concept can hold all that is represented on the pages here.

Many years ago I participated in a learning experience led by Paulo Freire that resulted in transformational change for me. He was an inspiring proponent of emancipatory learning. I was deeply moved not only by his message but also by his loving authenticity. He was uncompromising in his commitment to his values and his striving for a more just world. He practiced the deep dialogue that he advocated and was determined to have us experience for ourselves the liberation and emancipation that comes from transformational learning. He reminded us that the way to begin a journey is to take the first step. He summed up his encouragement to us by saying, “to be is becoming”. The reason this chapter has a summing up, but no end, is because I am still becoming.

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## Appendix A

*Letter of Consent for Interview*

Researcher address

<participant name>  
Public Service Alliance of Canada  
233 Gilmour  
Ottawa, ON K2P 0P1

Date

Dear <participant name>,

I am writing to introduce myself and invite you to participate in a research study called *Exploring Leader Learning Needs at the Public Service Alliance of Canada*. My name is Laurienne Ring. I am carrying out this research project through the Public Service Alliance of Canada as part of my studies towards a Master of Arts in Leadership and Training degree at Royal Roads University. If you would like to verify my credentials with Royal Roads University, please contact Paul F. Clark, PhD, the Faculty Supervisor for my program. Dr. Clark can be reached at <telephone>. If you would like to verify my research permission with PSAC, you can contact Jean-Yves Leduc, Co-ordinator, Human Resources. He can be reached at <telephone>. If you have any questions about the interviews or interview process, you can contact me at <telephone>.

The purpose of the research is to identify the leadership learning needs of people at PSAC along with the organizational supports leaders require in order to carry out their learning. The results of this study will be used to improve leadership development at PSAC.

Your name was given to me as someone with leadership experience who could provide information relevant to this study. Criteria such as diversity in terms of gender, PSAC equity goals and geographic representation as well as status as an elected or staff leader were considered by the project action team in selecting participants for the interviews. Your contact information was provided to me by Jean-Yves Leduc of the Human Resource Branch.

I would like to interview you in-person at a time convenient to you. I anticipate the interview will last approximately one hour, with the option of scheduling more time if you find you would like to contribute further. We can arrange to meet in your office or off-site in the Ottawa area or by telephone if you are located outside Ottawa. The kinds of questions I will be asking you include your experiences in leading change and your opinions about the topics leaders need to learn about in training and development initiatives. I will also be asking you about your preferences for learning suited to your other responsibilities and schedule.

The information you give to me will be recorded in my hand-written notes and audio-taped. I will summarize comments in an anonymous format in the final report. I will not attribute specific comments to you individually unless I have received your specific permission to do so. I will keep all documentation strictly confidential, stored in a secure location away from PSAC.

I will submit a final report to Royal Roads University as part of the degree requirements in Master of Arts in Leadership and Training program. Electronic access to the final report will be publicly available from the Royal Roads University Library and from Library and Archives Canada.

I will also be sharing my research findings with the PSAC, in particular the Human Resource Branch. It is possible that the research results could be shared with other unions interested in leadership development and that a journal article could be written using this material.

As a PSAC employee, you are not required to participate in this research project. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. Whether you choose to participate or not will have no effect on your employment or advancement. If you decide not to participate in this research project, this information will also be confidential.

Signing this letter represents your agreement to participate in the research project. By signing this letter, you give free and informed consent to participate in this project.

Name: (Please Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Respectfully submitted,

Laurienne Ring

## Appendix B

### *Interview Guide*

1. What interested you about completing an interview?
2. Tell me a little about yourself and your background in leadership at PSAC.
3. What, to you, is good leadership?
4. Tell me about your experiences in learning to be a leader at PSAC.
5. What type of training or learning opportunities would benefit you now in your present position?
6. What training or learning opportunities do you need in order to move to another level of leadership?
7. In your opinion, what is the greatest challenge facing PSAC in leadership development?
8. One of the biggest challenges to working leaders is finding time for planned learning when you are already so stretched. Given your reality, what methods are most likely to work for you?
9. We have been focussing on your specific needs and interests. Thinking now about PSAC, what does the organization need to do to support leadership learning for people like you?
10. Of all the needs we discussed, which is the most important to you?

## Appendix C

*Introduction to Questionnaire*

**From:** Laurienne Ring <e-mail>

**Sent:** April 12, 2007 5:36 PM

**To:** <participant> via e-mail

**Subject:** Introduction to Leadership and Learning Survey test

***Exploring Leader Learning Needs at the  
Public Service Alliance of Canada.***

***Analyse des besoins en apprentissage des  
leaders à l'Alliance de la Fonction publique  
du Canada***

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

My name is Laurienne Ring. I am writing to introduce you to a research project I am carrying out at the Public Service Alliance of Canada as part of the requirements for a Master of Arts in Leadership and Training degree at Royal Roads University. The study is called *Exploring Leader Learning Needs at the Public Service Alliance of Canada*. If you would like to verify my credentials with Royal Roads University, please contact Paul F. Clark, PhD, the Faculty Supervisor for my program. Dr. Clark can be reached at <telephone>. If you would like to verify my research permission with PSAC, you can contact Jean-Yves Leduc, Co-ordinator, Human Resources section. He can be reached at <telephone>.

You have been identified by the PSAC project team as someone with significant leadership responsibilities and/or interest in leadership development. Your contact information was provided to me by Jean-Yves Leduc, Human Resources Section. I would like to draw on your experience and opinions by inviting you

Consoeurs et confrères,

Je m'appelle Laurienne Ring et je vous invite, par la présente, à participer au projet de recherche que je dois entreprendre dans le cadre de mes études à l'université Royal Roads (Colombie-Britannique) menant à une maîtrise en leadership et formation. Le projet de recherche s'intitule *Exploring Leader Learning Needs at the Public Service Alliance of Canada* [Analyse des besoins en apprentissage des leaders à l'Alliance de la Fonction publique du Canada]. Si vous désirez confirmer mon inscription à l'université Royal Roads, veuillez contacter le superviseur du programme d'études à la faculté des sciences sociales et appliquées, le professeur Paul F. Clark, au <telephone>. Avant d'entreprendre ce projet, j'ai obtenu la permission de l'AFPC, ce que pourra confirmer le coordonnateur des Ressources humaines, monsieur Jean-Yves Leduc. Vous pouvez le joindre par <telephone> .

Selon l'équipe consultative du projet, vous exercez des fonctions importantes à titre de leader au sein de l'AFPC ou manifestez de l'intérêt pour un programme de perfectionnement en leadership. M. Leduc, de la Section des ressources humaines, a eu l'amabilité de me transmettre vos coordonnées.

to complete an anonymous online survey, in either English or French, as part of this study. The purpose of the research is to identify the leadership learning needs of people at PSAC along with the organizational supports leaders require in order to carry out their learning. By completing the questionnaire, your views will inform how leadership development is carried out at PSAC. The questionnaire will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

The questions ask you to reflect on your experiences in leading change and your opinions about the topics leaders need to learn about in leadership training and development initiatives. There are also questions about your preferences for learning methods suited to your other responsibilities and schedule.

### **What will happen to the information you provide?**

I will submit a final report to Royal Roads University as part of the Master of Arts in Leadership and Training requirements. Electronic access to the final report will be publicly available from the Royal Roads University Library and from Library and Archives Canada.

I will also share my research findings with PSAC, in particular, the Human Resources section and members of the PSAC action research team that has been guiding this study. It is possible that the research results could be shared with other unions interested in

Je vous serais très reconnaissante si vous preniez le temps de répondre au questionnaire en ligne, en français ou en anglais, qui fait partie de mon projet de recherche. Vos opinions et votre expérience enrichiront grandement mon enquête, qui a pour but de préciser les besoins en apprentissage des membres du personnel de l'AFPC et le soutien que doit offrir le syndicat pour faciliter l'apprentissage des dirigeantes et dirigeants. En répondant au questionnaire, vous contribuerez à l'élaboration des programmes de perfectionnement professionnel offerts par l'AFPC à ses dirigeantes et dirigeants. Il faut compter environ 30 minutes pour y répondre.

Les questions portent sur deux thèmes : votre expérience en tant qu'instigateur de changements et les sujets qui, à votre avis, devraient être au cœur des programmes de formation et de perfectionnement professionnel offerts aux dirigeantes et dirigeants. Il y a aussi quelques questions sur les méthodes d'apprentissage qui, compte tenu de vos autres tâches et de votre horaire, vous conviendraient le mieux.

### **Qu'advient-il des renseignements que vous fournissez?**

Je soumettrai un rapport final à l'université Royal Roads, conformément aux exigences du programme de maîtrise en leadership et formation. Les personnes intéressées pourront consulter le document sur les sites Internet de la bibliothèque de l'université Royal Roads et de Bibliothèque et Archives Canada.

Je partagerai aussi les résultats de mon enquête avec l'AFPC et, plus particulièrement, la Section des ressources humaines et les membres de l'équipe de recherche-action de l'AFPC qui a guidé ce projet de recherche. Ces renseignements pourraient aussi être communiqués à d'autres syndicats qui s'intéressent à la formation et au perfectionnement professionnel des leaders.

leadership training and development and that a journal article could be written using this material.

**No identifying Information will be reported.**

The information you provide in your reply will be summarized in an anonymous format in these reports. I will not attribute any specific comments to questionnaire participants because this site has been set up to allow you to contribute without any mechanism for me to identify you personally. I will keep all of the results of the completed questionnaires strictly confidential, stored in a secure location away from PSAC. The questionnaire site will be taken down at the end of the information gathering phase, by June 30, 2007.

As a PSAC elected officer or employee, you are not required to participate in this research project. If you do decide to participate, you can withdraw at any time. Whether you choose to participate or not will have no effect on your employment or advancement. If you decide not to participate in this research project, this information will also be maintained in confidence.

**Your completion of this survey will constitute your informed consent**

I hope completing the survey allows you an opportunity to reflect on your own journey in learning to lead change and become an effective leader. Your consideration of your past, present and future needs will help improve leadership development. I am looking forward to reading your replies and thank you for your contribution to the study.

Sincerely,

Laurienne Ring

Enfin, il se peut que je rédige un article pour une revue savante à partir de ces données.

**Aucune information ne permettra de vous identifier.**

Je tiens à préciser, cependant, que l'information présentée dans ces rapports sera anonyme. En effet, le présent site a été construit de telle façon que je ne puisse identifier les personnes qui répondent au questionnaire. Il me sera donc impossible de préciser qui a écrit tel ou tel commentaire. Les résultats et les questionnaires demeureront strictement confidentiels et seront conservés dans un endroit sûr, mais pas à l'AFPC. Le site sera désactivé aussitôt que l'étape de la collecte d'informations sera terminée, soit le pour le 30 juin 2007.

Aucun membre du personnel de l'AFPC n'est obligé de participer à ce projet de recherche. Si vous décidez d'y participer, vous pourrez vous en retirer en tout temps. Quelle que soit votre décision, cela n'aura aucun impact sur votre emploi ou vos chances d'avancement. Cette information demeurera confidentielle.

**Le fait de répondre au questionnaire sera considéré comme votre consentement éclairé.**

J'espère que le sondage sera pour vous l'occasion de réfléchir à votre propre cheminement en vue d'apprendre à amorcer les changements et à devenir un leader efficace. En évaluant vos besoins passés, présents et futurs, vous aiderez à améliorer le programme de perfectionnement en leadership. Je suis impatiente de lire vos réponses et vous remercie de votre collaboration à cette étude.

Laurienne Ring

To access the anonymous survey in English:

<http://learn.royalroads.ca/DLOpenQuestions/Questions.asp?intContainerID=8071&StyleSheet=admin.css>

*(It is very important that the whole string, from “http through to .css” appears in your browser. If you are having difficulty connecting to the site, type the coordinates exactly as they appear above in your browser window.)*

en français

Veillez cliquer ici

<http://learn.royalroads.ca/DLOpenQuestions/Questions.asp?intContainerID=8118&StyleSheet=admin.css>

pour accéder au questionnaire anonyme.

*(Il est bien important que toute la chaîne de caractères – de http à .css – apparaisse dans votre fenêtre d’adresse. Si vous éprouvez des difficultés à accéder au site, tapez les coordonnées exactes de l’adresse dans votre fenêtre de navigation.)*

Reply by Tuesday, May 1, 2007

Réponse pour le 1er mai 2007

## Appendix D

### *Questionnaire*

Questions 1 to 4 ask you to identify yourself using some predefined categories. The categories will only be used to point to similarities and differences in the themes the study will report on. For example, the results might show that different groups within PSAC have different needs that should be taken into account when designing leadership development for them. The categories will not be used to identify you or be linked to any information in the Human Resources section.

#### **1. Gender**

Are you

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to answer

#### **2. Your age is**

- 18 – 23
- 24 – 30
- 31 – 35
- 36 – 40
- 41 – 45
- 46 – 50
- 51 – 55
- 56 – 60
- 61 – 65
- Prefer not to answer

#### **3. Are you:**

- An elected officer
- A staff person

4. How many years have you been an officer or staff member? If you have been both, please answer from your current status.

5. In this study, we are interested in the views of leaders who have responsibilities for leading significant organizational change. With this definition in mind, please describe the characteristics of good leadership.

6. Please reflect on your experiences in learning to be a leader at PSAC.

- For example, what has been your greatest leadership challenge?
- What type of training or development opportunities would have helped you at that time?

7. What type of training or learning opportunities would benefit you now in your present position?

8. When you need information about leadership or change where do you get it?
9. What training or learning opportunities do you need in order to move to another level of leadership?
10. In your opinion, what is the greatest challenge facing PSAC in leadership development?
- What can be done about it?
  - How can this be incorporated into learning about leadership?
11. How can PSAC use leadership development to meet equity goals or increase diversity in leadership positions?
12. One of the biggest challenges to working leaders is finding time for planned learning when you are already so stretched. Given your reality, what methods are most likely to work for you? For example, how would you like to receive training? Where? Would you prefer individual or group methods?
- *Examples of individual methods would include self paced study like working your way through a workbook or computer program, having sessions with an executive coach, having a mentor to discuss things with or reading a book you have chosen.*
  - *Examples of group methods are learning circles or study groups, in-house programs such as workshops or taking courses at a college or university.*
13. The previous questions focused on your specific needs and interests. Thinking now about PSAC, what does the organization need to do to support leadership learning for people like you?
- How can PSAC use it's organizational values or culture to support leadership development?
  - Are there specific programs you would like to see in place?
  - Are there policies that should be developed?
14. Looking back at your replies, of all the needs you wrote about, which is the most important to you?
15. Is there anything else you would like me to know?

Thank you for taking time to complete the questionnaire. The results of this study will be available through the Human Resources section in spring 2007- watch for an announcement of the publication.

### *Questionnaire*

Les questions 1 à 4 visent à obtenir des renseignements personnels à partir de catégories prédéfinies. Ces catégories serviront uniquement à souligner les similarités et les différences entre les thèmes à l'étude. On pourrait découvrir, par exemple, que les besoins ne sont pas les mêmes pour tous les groupes composant l'AFPC, un facteur dont il faudrait tenir compte lorsqu'on élaborera les programmes de perfectionnement en leadership. Ces catégories ne serviront pas à vous identifier personnellement et ne seront pas jumelées aux renseignements que conserve la Section des ressources humaines.

#### 1. Sexe

- Femme
- Homme
- Préfère ne pas répondre

#### 2. Âge

- 18 – 23
- 24 – 30
- 31 – 35
- 36 – 40
- 41 – 45
- 46 – 50
- 51 – 55
- 56 – 60
- 61 – 65
- Préfère ne pas répondre

#### 3. Êtes-vous :

- une dirigeante élue ou un dirigeant élu
- une ou un membre du personnel

4. Depuis combien d'années êtes-vous une dirigeante élue ou un dirigeant élu ou encore une ou un membre du personnel ? Si vous avez rempli des fonctions à ces deux titres, répondez selon votre situation actuelle.

5. Dans cette étude, nous aimerions connaître l'opinion des personnes qui ont un rôle de leadership à jouer dans la réalisation d'importants changements organisationnels. Dans cette optique, quelles sont les caractéristiques d'un leadership efficace?

6. Parlez-moi de votre expérience pour devenir un leader à l'AFPC.

- Quel a été votre plus grand défi?
- Quel genre de formation ou d'activité de perfectionnement professionnel auriez-vous trouvé utile à ce moment-là?

7. Nommez les activités en matière de formation ou d'apprentissage qui vous seraient les plus utiles à l'heure actuelle.

8. Lorsque vous avez besoin d'information sur le leadership ou le changement où l'obtenez-vous?

9. Nommez les activités en matière de formation ou d'apprentissage qui vous permettraient de passer à un niveau de leadership supérieur.

10. Quel est le plus grand obstacle que doit surmonter l'AFPC en matière de perfectionnement en leadership?

- Comment peut-on l'éliminer?
- Comment peut-on intégrer cela à la formation en leadership?

11. Expliquez comment le perfectionnement en leadership permet à l'AFPC d'atteindre ses objectifs en matière d'équité et de diversité au sein du personnel de direction.

12. Votre charge de travail est déjà très lourde, alors trouver le temps nécessaire des activités d'apprentissage planifiées est un immense défi! Quelles méthodes vous conviendraient le mieux, compte tenu de cette réalité?

Par exemple, quelles méthodes d'enseignement préférez-vous? Où aimeriez-vous étudier?

Voulez-vous étudier en solo ou en groupe?

- *Exemples de méthodes en solo : étudier à son rythme à l'aide d'un manuel ou d'un programme informatique; rencontrer une ou un coach en gestion; discuter avec une ou un mentor; lire un livre de votre choix.*
- *Exemples de méthodes en groupe : cercles d'apprentissage ou groupes d'étude; ateliers en milieu de travail; cours au collège ou à l'université.*

13. Les questions précédentes portaient sur vos besoins et vos intérêts. Passons maintenant à l'AFPC. Comment le syndicat pourrait-il vous aider à vous perfectionner en leadership?

- Comment l'AFPC peut-elle intégrer le perfectionnement en leadership à ses valeurs et à sa culture?
- Quels programmes le syndicat devrait-il mettre en place?
- Quelles politiques le syndicat devrait-il élaborer?

14. Parmi tous les besoins que vous avez mentionnés précédemment, lequel est le plus important?

15. Commentaires additionnels, le cas échéant.

Merci d'avoir répondu au questionnaire. Il y aura une annonce officielle pour la parution du rapport final, que vous pourrez obtenir par l'entremise de la Section des ressources humaines au printemps 2007.