

CREATING A National Identity OF Career Counsellors



CHAPTER 8

In the 1970s, reflecting the country's regional diversity, the often contentious relationship between Ottawa and the provinces and the various degrees of commitment by individual provinces to career development, different approaches and infrastructure began appearing in different parts of the country.

Increasingly, career counsellors were able to offer their clients opportunities for hands-on exposure to possible career choices through programs such as cooperative education programs, which became increasingly popular at the secondary and post-secondary levels in the 1970s and 1980s. Co-ops were the result of the productive marriage of two consequent needs: students uninterested or less inclined to be confined to traditional forms of learning in favour of learning by doing; and a growing awareness on the part of employers that providing co-op placements was an effective way of identifying potential full-time employees. Along similar lines were apprenticeship programs, offered primarily through trade unions where the tradition of the guild system had carried on at least in this way of introducing younger trainees to the trade.

A local Youth Employment Services program created in response to the special needs of young people in Toronto blossomed with the help of federal and provincial funding. Provincial funding nurtured the development of an Ontario wide network of Youth Employment Counselling Centres. These centres quickly became community focal points during the 70s and 80s when youth employment reached all time double digit highs. It was in fact these community based centres that

were able to reach out-of-school youth, who had become, with the social trends of these decades, increasingly marginalized from society.

Much innovation in the field emanated from this network of youth centres, which was found to be applicable to youth in schools, as well as school-leavers. Similar types of youth-focused centres formed across the country—in Alberta, for instance, Career Centres were developed by the Alberta Department of Career Development. Governments worked in partnership with these non-profit centres and recognized their unique ability to respond quickly and adapt to young people's changing employment counselling needs. It is these early partnership arrangements that paved the way for the eventual development of joint initiatives between governments, labour and community organizations in all sorts of other fields including health care and cultural development.



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Primary resource industries, like oil extraction, were the mainstay of the western economy in Canada late into the twentieth century

New directions in the oil patch

Playing a theme politically popular in the west, Alberta's new premier, Peter Lougheed, accused the federal government of pursuing policies that supported growth in central Canada at the expense of provincial development strategies. After thirty-six years of Social Credit rule, Lougheed had won an upset victory in 1971 by promising to establish policies to develop and diversify Alberta's economy. Part of the plan was the development of an active manpower policy.

The oil patch was booming. The very crisis that would soon hold the rest of the country to high interest rate ransom had fuelled unprecedented growth in Canada's major oil producing province. The oil sands north of Edmonton in Fort McMurray and Cold Lake were being developed. Across the province, exploration crews and drilling rigs were working at full capacity. And in both Edmonton and Calgary, construction cranes dotted the cityscape.

Severe shortages of skilled workers hampered industry's ability to keep pace with the boom however, and the province's employers were complaining. More and better training was needed to provide workers with the right skills for the work that needed to be done. At the same time, the demographics were worrisome, according to Dave Chabillon, who became the Deputy Minister of Field Services for the province's labour ministry, called Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development. He felt many of the province's skilled workers were nearing retirement age and no provisions had been made to replace them.

The notion of career development was barely understood at the time, even within government circles. "I had one of my bosses ask me, 'What is this career development? Is it a personnel shop for the government?'" Chabillon recalls. He responded, "Personnel shops take care of selection, recruitment and placement. A labour market ministry has a lot more on its plate.

"You need to do a fair amount of analytical work in the sense of demographics associated with the labour market. You need to look at those people who, in fact, are outside the labour market looking in and

wanting in. The indigenous people, women, handicapped, visible minorities. The federal government didn't even count aboriginal people into their labour force statistics. But they're Albertans, they're Canadians, they have to be folded into the labour market."

Alberta Career Centres were opened throughout the province, becoming local repositories for training and employment information and career counselling. A Career Resources division was established to produce relevant labour market information and career planning and job search materials for the range of clients that passed through the Centres' doors.

Adults, unemployed or not, could access career information and advice. Employers could find information about government training initiatives and employment programs. And Alberta's educators could gather current data and find career planning information for their students, to help them make solid career decisions.

Among those specifically targeted were teachers, says Chabillion, a provincial park warden turned public servant. "There was a need for educational institutions to start thinking in terms of the labour market," he says. "The attitude of a lot of educators at that time, and I hope it has changed, was if you give an individual a broad educational background, they'll be well set to move into whatever walk of life they choose. A lot of the training and education people were receiving in post secondary education wasn't labour market oriented."

Nor were high-school guidance teachers and counsellors helping students gain a broad perspective of their options, says Barry Day, who was recruited in 1979 out of the educational system and who became Director of the Career Resources branch in Alberta.

Day is one of many people who entered the field from a background in guidance counselling. He "fell into it," as he puts it, in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan in the '60s when he taught physical education and coached the school's athletic teams.

Although he enjoyed teaching and coaching, it was the guidance counselling that really "lit me up," Day recalls, the enthusiasm still evident more than thirty years later. "Most of the kids we had in the technical stream had failed at least once before they got to us. And it was our job to find a way to help them build a foundation for the future.

"One of the things we did was convince business students to take a technical class and technical students to take a business class," he recalls. "They got a better perspective. So it broadened their horizons rather than narrowed them. And that's what made sense from a career development perspective. We didn't call it career development at the time. We simply called it teaching kids, or influencing kids to learn through a variety of ways."

Day had moved to the Edmonton area in the mid-1970s to become

From self-help to support groups

In 1973, psychologist Nathan Azrin started job clubs in the United States. These didn't start formally in Canada until 1982, when the Employment Support Services Branch of the CEIC conducted a pilot study at the Peterborough Youth Employment Centre in Ontario. Within three weeks, 90 percent of the participants found employment and clubs were set up at sixty centres across Canada. Groups of ten to twelve job seekers, under the supervision of trained employment counsellors, met every day for about four hours until jobs were obtained. The strategy was to create an intensive and structured learning experience, using the techniques of behaviourism such as positive reinforcement, multiple reinforcers, behavioural contracting and other procedures. The idea was for participants to learn how to conduct a job search by performing all the elements of job-seeking in a controlled environment.

assistant superintendent of a county school district. At the time, guidance in most high schools tended to be “test and tell them” supplemented with academic planning for university bound studies.

Teachers and students alike needed a broader perspective on career development, Day says. And the exciting part of his new job as Director of the province’s Career Resources branch would be coming up with products and materials to provide just that.

Innovation in Quebec

Throughout the country, in the years to come, there would be many stories like those of Dave Chabillon and Barry Day, as career counselling principles and techniques developed in one context were reworked and combined to fill the requirements of another. The commitment and vision of the field’s pioneers had given rise to something of practical value and the more pressing and varied the need, the greater the potential for response.

Canada’s geographic and cultural diversity exercised an enormous influence on the nature of work and the requirements of the workplace. The potential variations for effective career counselling were virtually limitless. Every job was different, as was every job applicant. The challenge of fitting the one to the other would create a complex, multi-branched industry before the century was out.

Nowhere, perhaps, were the challenges more pronounced than in the province of Quebec. And nowhere was the provincial government more likely to resist intervention by its counterpart in Ottawa.

Language and culture are of supreme importance to the people of North America’s only formally constituted French-speaking region. It is not surprising, therefore, that the career counselling industry which took root in that province was not so much a branch of something begun elsewhere as it was an entirely different organism.

Quebec’s educational system prior to the 1960s was a complicated mix of insular subsystems, organized along denominational and linguistic fault lines. They all functioned to provide education to Quebec’s youth but without a common purpose or mandate. Vocational guidance had been available to some students in some private schools in the province as early as the 1930s. In Quebec’s public school system, some counselling services had been offered since the 1940s.

But counsellors’ duties were poorly defined and those asked to fulfill them were often mistrusted by other school employees.

Not until secular educational reform began redesigning Quebec’s school system did the profession gain a firm foothold in the province’s education system. The election of Liberal Premier Jean Lesage in 1960 had heralded a time of dramatic change, the so-called “Quiet

Société GRICS

As a private, not-for-profit corporation, Société GRICS has been meeting the information technology needs of Quebec school boards since 1985. The vast majority of school boards enjoy many diversified GRICS products and services for administrative management, school management, telecommunication and, of course, those services most directly related to career and educational needs – BIM, la banque d’instruments de mesure (a database of questions and exams) and REPÈRES (a computerized databank of educational and vocational services). Francophone Canadian educational planning counsellors, employment counsellors and career development practitioners continue to have access to relevant and up-to-date resources through Société GRICS.

Revolution.” A Royal Commission of Inquiry on Education was established and Alphonse Parent, the Vice Rector of Laval University, was appointed chair. The Parent Committee’s report, released in 1964, articulated a need to “restructure the province’s educational facilities to meet the needs of modern society with its increased pluralism and greater concentration in urban and industrial centres.”

And restructure they did. A provincial Ministry of Education was established. The Minister of Youth, Paul Gerin-Lajoie, was named the province’s first Minister of Education since 1875. Comprehensive reform moved through the province’s educational system at an incredible rate. Within a matter of a few years, a highly centralized, lay-controlled system of secondary schools and a network of junior colleges had been established. The response from the population was equally astonishing. Between 1960 and 1970 alone, enrollment in the province’s secondary schools more than doubled. College enrollments increased by 82 percent in the same time frame and university enrollments by 162 percent.

State intervention in education had also had a positive impact on the position of guidance counsellors in Quebec’s schools. During the ’60s and ’70s the government institutionalized the counsellors’ professional activity. And the educational theory of vocational guidance strongly influenced the practice of career guidance in the schools.

By the 1970s, career counselling in the province was professionally designated and regulated: In order to work as a career counsellor in the province’s schools or other settings, a candidate was required to be a member of either the Corporation of Counsellors or the Corporation of Psychologists. Post-graduate studies to at least a master’s level were essential in both cases. Most educational programs in psychology in Quebec’s universities included some consideration of guidance as required instruction. At Laval University, the program was especially designed and organized for counsellors.

A key goal of the Quiet Revolution was “rattrapage,” a concerted effort to bring Quebec’s economic standards in line with the rest of North America and to bring francophone incomes in line with anglophone incomes. Economic parity was one thing, a learned respect for language and culture was another. In both instances, professional guidance for students was seen as essential. As programs were developed to meet the province’s unique set of needs, Quebec set a standard unparalleled and unrecognized by most of the country at the time.

Gerald Cosgrave, as the Director of The Counselling Foundation of Canada, once asked Aurele Gagnon, the Director of Guidance in the Quebec Department of Education, why the state of the counselling field in Quebec had become so advanced. Gagnon attributed its evolved state to differences in attitudes and outlook between the French and the English.

“English Canadians tend to be very practical,” Cosgrave recalled Gagnon explaining. “When they recognize a need, they are eager to do something about it right away, even if it is only a matter of giving would-be counsellors a few summer courses. The French are more philosophical and rational. When it is decided that guidance is needed, they tend to think of the full implications and decide what knowledge and skills a counsellor should have. They feel it is better not to do the

job at all, than to do it with less than the required knowledge and skills.”

Long term planning of this kind was complemented by Quebec’s single-minded efforts to control, as much as possible, the province’s educational, training and employment services. For example, the Parti Quebecois government, elected in 1976, established a number of manpower offices that provided essentially the same services as Canada Manpower. The PQ tried but failed to dislodge the federal government from playing a role in manpower training in the province. This determination to become masters in its own career development house would become ever more pronounced in the years ahead.

The federal government as referral agent and worker provider

At the beginning of the ’70s, Canadian industrial incomes ranked second highest in the world. Nine years later, they had fallen to seventh place. Average individual purchasing power had shrunk significantly, but still economists wanted wages squeezed more. Tight money policies continued, and the combination of high interest rates and spending cuts virtually guaranteed continued unemployment.

Labour market officials now had an astonishing range of tools available to them with which to intervene in the labour market but there was

CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION

Russian cosmonauts headed into space, trailing clouds of technological glory and the countries left on the ground wondered if they had missed the boat or, in this case, the satellite.

Technology, engineering and scientific expertise were much on the minds of the populations of Canada and the U.S. as universities and schools scrambled to catch up to Russia’s perceived scientific superiority.

It was the button-down 1950s, but a group of Ontario businessmen had a bold idea for ratcheting up Canada’s technological and scientific acumen: A technology-oriented university, the centrepiece of which would be an engineering program based on the concept of co-operative education.

Thus, co-op education, an idea that had taken firm root in the U.S. at the University of Cincinnati some fifty years earlier, finally found fertile ground in Canada.

Waterloo College, which would go on to become the University of Waterloo, was expanding in the 1950s and in the newly founded faculty of science the seed was planted. Pragmatic business people like the founders of Waterloo’s early program may have thought the alliance between the eventual employers of students and their educators was natural and fitting, but there were early detractors. According to Bruce McCallum and James Wilson, authors of *They Said It Wouldn’t Work - A History of Cooperative Education in Canada*, “Waterloo was visited by representatives from other institutions who only wanted to criticize the process.”

Academic purists predicted that the co-op education idea would dilute education, damage the educational procedure and, at any rate, would not be supported by the business community. History would prove them wrong.

no coherent strategy in place as to when, where, how or why they should be applied. Critics pointed to areas of overlap and duplication between programs and worried that clients with special needs could still fall through the cracks.

The federal government role appeared to have been reduced to a modus operandi of quick referrals and quick placements.

During the 1970s, world oil prices tripled and stagflation became the bane of governments throughout the industrialized world. In heightened concerns about the economy, an increasingly conservative mood settled over the smoky inner chambers of ministers and corporate presidents alike. Monetarists argued that keeping interest rates high would shrink the money supply, which had been inflated by excessive credit. “Supply-siders” insisted that lowering taxes for the wealthy would act as an incentive for greater investment in the economy.

Both sides agreed that money spent by governments was unproductive. Government intervention was responsible, the thinking went, for many of the malfunctions in western economies.

By 1978, Ottawa’s comfortable budgetary surpluses had metamorphosed to an annual deficit of nearly \$12 billion. That same year, after attending a summit of western industrial leaders, Prime Minister Trudeau read the writing on the wall, returned home and disbanded the Anti Inflation Board, cutting taxes, spending and programs.

The decades of federal government investment in the labour market had laid the groundwork for the career counselling and development

During the 1970s, government helped to further the reputation of co-op education by making money available to both secondary and post-secondary institutions keen to explore the benefits of this education model.

By the end of the century, thousands of companies nationwide would employ nearly 68,000 co-op education students. Many of these organizations would make co-op students their preferred choice for permanent hire. And nearly 60 percent of co-op students would continue to work with their placement employer after graduation.

Fundamental to the success of co-operative education was the founding in 1973 of the Canadian Association for Co-operative Education (CAFCE). Firmly established by 1977, CAFCE redefined its mandate and invited employers to become members. By the end of the century, combining the efforts of more than four hundred educators, employers and government officials, the national organization would become one of the world’s most widely developed co-op education models.

With post-secondary cooperative education programs ultimately available in fields from arts administration to international development and the recognition by many secondary schools of the value of early “real world” experience, the demand for and appreciation of the concept would continue to expand.

Launched at mid-century with the express purpose of boosting the country’s technological abilities, cooperative education would, by the century’s close, prove to be a remarkably down-to-earth way of melding academic education and hands-on experience; preparing a new workforce with not just knowledge, but with skills.

field and, although Ottawa would continue to play a significant leading role, cost-cutting was on the way.

The impact of public spending cuts affected every sector. Union policies began to change as well. In the industrial sector in particular, growing numbers of union members were losing jobs with little chance of recall. Concerns about foreign ownership and the branch plant economy sparked demands for a Canadian industrial strategy. Externally controlled, multi-national corporations made employer/employee relations more remote, while central management from afar was seen to facilitate arbitrary shutdowns and layoffs.

Labour increasingly Made-in-Canada

The growth of the self-help movement

During the sixties and seventies a number of books appeared and remained on the best seller lists, which provided advice to job seekers and insight about the career development process. Reflecting the shift from matching a person to the job, to providing the job seeker with more personal choice, mass-market books encouraged individuals to target a desired job and acquire more job-search skills. By far the most popular of these was Richard Bolles' *What Color is Your Parachute*, first commercially published in 1972 and still updated annually.

Since the earliest days of the century, the central Canadian trade union movement had been dominated by American-based unions. Beginning in the mid-1970s, however, that had started to change, as "breakaways" began to form national unions.

In search of new members, union organizers had shifted their focus to Canada's growing service industry, in particular to workers in the public sector. A national postal strike in 1965 had captured the attention of civil servants across the country. With salaries lagging a couple of years behind the private sector, government workers recognized considerable value in collective bargaining rights. By the end of the 1960s, most public sector employees across Canada had been unionized.

Labour policies were also influenced by the growing numbers of women on union membership rolls. For most of the century, the labour movement had largely ignored the needs of female workers, frequently among the most exploited members of the workforce. In the changing workplace of the '70s, women were heavily concentrated on the lower rungs of the public service and, as the organization of the expanding government sector continued, the majority of new "brothers" were sisters.

Higher levels of education were also having an impact. A technologically more sophisticated workplace required better-educated workers who in turn were better informed about their rights. The '60s and '70s had been stormy years on labour fronts, as union negotiators pressed demands for a bigger slice of the economic pie.

"It's completely impossible to give these young people the old hogwash," said a "veteran union man" quoted in *Saturday Night* magazine. "They know too much. For years the companies have been using the educational system as a filter, to save them doing their own thinking about personnel. And now the results are coming in. Now they've got young people working for them who are better educated than the boss."¹

For the most part, such changes notwithstanding, unions had con-

tinued to represent their new members in much the same way as they had their core group in manufacturing, focusing on collective wages, security and working conditions. Generally, throughout Canada's labour history, the career and working-life needs of individual members had been given little consideration. Nor had there been union-sponsored counselling programs or training initiatives to help union members enhance their working skills and potential.

A changing workplace

Labour was by no means oblivious to the changing skill needs of individual workers. As early as the 1930s, labour made some provision for literacy training for members in need of it. In their gathering awareness of their members' needs for "a more satisfying work experience" unions were also being pushed, along with the rest of society, toward "a more elevated conception of the human potential."² In the 1970s, the Canadian Labour Congress' Labour College was established in Regina, Saskatchewan. And some unions, notably the Canadian branch of the United Auto Workers, provided university scholarships to some members and their families.

In 1973, in the automotive hub of Windsor, Ontario, the first Union Counsellor Program was developed. Volunteers were trained to provide union members with assistance to help them define their own needs and to refer them onward to other services available in the community.

Help of this kind soon became necessary, not just in specific pockets but throughout the Canadian workplace, as unemployment figures continued to inch upwards. Some union leaders began to push for centres that would help members who had lost their jobs or were temporarily laid off. By 1977, also in Windsor, the first union-run Unemployed Help Centre was up and running. Within a year, another was established in Toronto.

Commencing in the 1960s, employers had begun to pay more attention to fair and equitable treatment of their employees, in large part because of the growing body of labour law. Provincial employment standards legislation had been established, and human rights and occupational health and safety laws implemented. Gradually, a full range of employer obligations and responsibilities would be legislated, including minimum wages, hours of work, overtime, daily and weekly rest times, statutory holidays, vacations and vacation pay, maternity leave and even time off to vote.

Career transition services, including career assessment and job search counselling, were made available, though at first only to a small, elite management group. For a few valued employees, career counselling was also made available. Demographic projections for the corporate workforce had begun to predict a decline in the supply of senior managers. Some major employers, looking for a strategy to ensure their supply of competent executives, established internal career management programs, reminiscent of the career counselling provided employees of large organizations like Canadian General Electric in the 1950s.

Counselling of this kind became a management perk in a few public and private sector organizations during the '70s. Often it was part of employer-sponsored management training initiatives.

National Consultation on Career Development (NATCON)

Founded in 1975, the National Consultation on Career Development, or NATCON, as it is widely known, is held each January in Ottawa's Conference Centre. It is the country's most comprehensive professional development opportunity for career counselling practitioners. Bringing together counselling professionals from diverse environments—secondary schools, training colleges, universities, outplacement services, all levels of government and employee assistance providers—NATCON provides a forum for state-of-the-art information on career counselling and placement in Canada and around the world.

Kathie Swenson, a Nova Scotia guidance counsellor turned provincial government bureaucrat, attended the first NATCON conference and almost every one thereafter, until she retired in the early '90s. "They were tremendously valuable," she recalled. "The support of the federal government enabled people across the country to come together who never in the world would have known each other otherwise. To come together and exchange ideas and information. I wouldn't have known what was going on in Alberta, or elsewhere in the country. It meant that we all didn't have to reinvent the wheel, that we could build on each other's work."

According to Stuart Conger, who initiated the first conference, building on each other's work was what NATCON was all about. "It was really a campaign to try to bring people together, to give them ideas, information and resources." Twenty people attended in 1975.

Until 1985, NATCON was sponsored exclusively by the federal department of Employment and Immigration Canada. However, the mood of fiscal restraint that gripped Mulroney's Conservative government in the '80s soon reached even into this specialized corner, and for a time the national gathering was threatened by budgetary cutbacks. In 1987, NATCON became the responsibility of a partnership of The Counselling Foundation of Canada, HRDC and the University of Toronto Career Centre. The Counselling Foundation of Canada was to provide the funding; HRDC, the facilities, translation equipment and interpretation personnel; and the University of Toronto Career Centre, the organization, administration and program.

Under the new partnership, NATCON became the largest bilingual conference in the world. Delegates came from all sectors delivering career development. The number of sessions expanded to include over 150 per conference with over 200 presenters. NATCON began attracting delegates from the United States, Asia, Australia and Europe. Participants numbered over 1200 in 2000.

NATCON has played a fundamental role in providing a national forum for sharing and disseminating information on emerging trends, cutting edge practices, and state-of-the-art theories and approaches.

¹ "Labour Lays it on the Line" by Mungo James, *Saturday Night*, December 1966.

² Steven Langdon, "Review of Industrial Democracy & Canadian Labour" in *Canadian Forum*, September 197