



Champions Career Centre

"Connecting Employers and People with Disabilities"

Newsletter of Champions

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What is a Champion?

Oxford defines a champion as follows: - "person or thing that has defeated or surpassed all rivals"; "person who fights or argues for a cause or another person". - "to support the cause of - defend"

Webster's and Winston's weigh in as well: "a valiant fighter"; "a winner of first place or first prize in a competition"; "winner or capable of winning first place - excelling over all others"; "to fight for, defend, support. To challenge to a fight"; "a successful competitor against all rivals" - "person who defends another or fights for a cause".

Corporate Calgary as Champion

We are all aware of Calgary's independent and competitive environment. This is ingrained in our corporate culture. As a centre for Business and Industry and as a leader in sheer numbers of head offices, corporate Calgary can claim champion status. As potential workers flock to this city, Corporate Calgary can claim winning status in the competition to attract talent. Including our City's natural amenities, arguably one of the world's best back yard playgrounds, the lure for people to make this a place for work as well as home bodes well for our corporate world.

The independent spirit in this city that originated out of our frontier being is still highly evident in our home grown businesses. With that comes the champion spirit of supporting a cause as no other city does. We are partially identified by the style and panache of industry leaders who blaze a trail and defend their right to freedoms of choice, direction and decision making of their particular businesses. Corporate Calgary has fought to win many business battles which is just why this city bustles and continues to attract like-minded individuals and be considered an Employer of choice. As a corporate entity, Calgary has the heart of a Champion.

Disabled Job Seekers as Champions

The word fighter may well have been coined after the spirit of a disabled person had it not already been taken. There are those with disabilities that work that much harder to prove to themselves and to the world that they also have abilities. Not just abilities but in some cases championship abilities borne out of their disabilities. In the realm of possibility, if you think that something isn't possible, you may be relenting to your disability. Dream a little to see possibilities and you have a case for fighting to win the battle of abilities over disabilities. This is what those with disabilities do daily.

With the hurdle of a visible disability, those who are seeking work first fight the disability then the impression that those they wish to ask for employment can have. Finally the stereotypical "compartmentalization" that one finds themselves assigned to even after being employed continues the ability over disability crusade. With that being the case, the fighter within all of us, especially if you are disadvantaged emerges to defend and ultimately champion our abilities.

With the employable skill sets that many with disabilities possess, their fight is to be recognized individually for their abilities not disabilities. As one can imagine, that is not any easy fight. Those who win that fight are clearly Champions.

Champions Career Centre as Champion

"To take up the cause". On behalf of the many men and women who have come through our doors, we wish to lead the charge towards meaningful employment for all. Based on the view of abilities over disabilities we share the dream of skilled employees being gainfully employed and that the only real disability is a collective understanding of how to make that happen. The support within this centre is all based on the job seeker being supported in what ever way necessary in order gain meaningful employment.

The Job Development team supports the cause of those who are "Ready, Willing and Able" by helping to tailor an individual job search with individual needs including contacts, feedback, targets, moral support and with respect for the individual. We call on Corporate Calgary as well as Job Seekers to open doors, open minds and open the realm of possibility available to all skilled workers. We work to support the cause each day in order to be considered amongst the Champions.

Champion + Champion + Champion = Championship

Without the Job Seeker there wouldn't be a need. Without the Employer, there wouldn't be an opportunity. Without our Career Centre there wouldn't be a bridge. Three interests working together to fight for the cause and ensure meaningful employment for all those with disabilities. Sounds like Champions to me.

Jim McDonagh

Job Developer

www.championscareercentre.org



President's Message



As Champions Career Centre has evolved over the last several years, I've asked myself on numerous occasions: "What does it mean to be a shareholder in a not-for-profit company like Champions? What are the rights and responsibilities of these

shareholders? Are these any different than those which a shareholder in a for-profit company would have?

These are certainly not new questions. In fact, some of them were talked about amongst community agencies as far back as the earliest days of Champions' emergence as a new model of service delivery. As I recall, there was considerable discussion amongst community service providers about how such an organization would be best incorporated – that is, whether it should be structured under the Societies Act, or under the Companies Act. But perhaps even more important than this discussion, was the considerable debate, and even heated difference of opinion, about how different stakeholders could be effectively and properly represented within a shareholder model.

It's probably just as well that time has blurred my recollection of the details of the vigorous discussion and debate that took place back then because there was no unanimity about what such an organization should look like or how it should function. However, as time has marched on, various stakeholders and shareholders have come and gone. And, it is clear to me that these agencies and service providers probably engaged (or disengaged) themselves with Champions in different ways (for example, as Shareholders, as Service Providers, as bystanders and observers, or as competitors, etc.) depending on how they answered the previous questions to their own satisfaction. Indeed, since Champions did not come with either a pre-existing rule book or a

road map, it was really left up to those who knew that the status quo model of service provision was not an option, to define Champions and their relationship to it. This process continues to evolve to this present day as the entire set of dynamics affecting the employment of persons with disabilities continues to evolve. For example, performance and accountability expectations are different than they were just a few short years ago. Employers have become increasingly knowledgeable and sophisticated relative to disability-related employment issues. Competition amongst service providers has increased.

So what does all this mean relative to the questions posed above? I think that the simple answer is that, as our brief history has already shown us, the various stakeholders will continue to answer the questions to their own satisfaction. There are no definitive answers. Some entities will continue to see Champions as a competitor and actively compete against it. Some will continue to pursue different models of service delivery – some traditionally insular, and some collaborative in nature. Some will view Champions simply one of many potential opportunities that can advance their own business interests and organization viability. Some will see Champions as a model of service delivery that does indeed connect individuals with their employment and career objectives in an effective and efficient manner. Correspondingly, some will understand their primary responsibility to be to demand accountability both of Champions and themselves and to ensure that maximal opportunity and benefit is being provided for persons with disabilities. To the extent that they expect that they can achieve this through Champions will determine the way in which they are involved – as a shareholder, or otherwise.

Gerrit Groeneweg, Ph.D., C. Psych.

Treasurer's Report

As you are aware, Champions fiscal year end is March 31, 2005. This is a very busy time for the Executive Director and the finance staff due to the number of substantial tasks required to be completed at this time of the year.

Firstly, a new budget had to be prepared where a detailed review of operations, costs, and revenues was undertaken. The objective in the 2005-06 budget was to have measurable targets that while a stretch, were considered achievable under the current circumstances. This budget was approved by your Board in April.

Secondly, the annual audit of Champions financial results has been completed. The results of the audit and year end Financial Statements were presented to the Audit Committee and Board where there were approved and will be presented at our Annual General Meeting on June 22.

These tasks were completed concurrently this year with the extension discussion of the AHRE contract. As this contract expires at the end of July 2005, appropriate plans must be made to continue the work of Champions in the community.

Joe Miller

Government Commitment

The Champions Career Centre project is made possible by funding through **Alberta Human Resources and Employment and the Government of Canada**. Recognizing the need for a centralized 'job bank' for individuals with disabilities, Alberta Human Resources and Employment (AHRE) awarded Champions with a two-year contract to develop and provide employment services for Albertans with disabilities. This funding enabled Champions to quickly establish an array of employment, training and placement services for its clients. AHRE addresses workplace issues including training, health and safety, and employment support and services. For information about AHRE, visit the web site at www.gov.ab.ca/hre.

Corporate Commitment

TransAlta Corporation is Canada's largest non-regulated electric generation and marketing company, with more than \$7 billion in assets and 9,000 megawatts of capacity in operation or under construction. As one of North America's lowest cost operators, their growth is focused on developing coal and gas fired generation in Canada, the United States and Mexico. For more information about TransAlta and career opportunities, visit their web site at www.transalta.com.

RBC Royal Bank is one of Canada's premier financial services institutions serving over 12 million individuals and business customers worldwide. With assets of \$362 billion, the organization employs 57,500 full time employees. The company values diversity in the workplace and is committed to employment equity. About 30 percent of all employees work in some form of flexible work arrangement, the highest proportion of any company in Canada. For more information about RBC Royal Bank and career opportunities, visit their web site at www.rbc.com.

TransCanada Pipelines Limited is a leading North American energy company, focused on natural gas transmission and power services. Its network of about 38,000 kilometres (23,600 miles) of pipeline transports the majority of western Canada's natural gas production to the fastest growing markets in Canada and the United States. Headquartered in Calgary, Alberta, TransCanada owns, controls, or has under construction about 2,550 megawatts of power - enough to meet the needs of more than two million average households. For more information about TransCanada and career opportunities, visit their web site at www.transcanada.com

From the Desk of the Executive Director



Introductory Comments

This report serves to inform of selected operational activities since the publication of the winter 2005 newsletter. In that edition, I indicated my decision, reported to the Board in November 2004, that I would not renew the ED contract upon expiration July 31, 2005. Therefore, this last written correspondence will both explain recent developments and conclude with a review of perceived ED contributions made during the five year history accumulated since the founding year 2000.

Contract #09511591 Year 3 Extension Process

Since April we have been negotiating this extension in meetings with the AHRE Client Service Manager. "Fee for Service/Full Service and Variable Service" schedules were reviewed and recommendations made to retain original contract service delivery levels. The final extension draft, delivered to AHRE on 06/03/05, was being adjudicated at the time of writing.

Financial Accountability

The budget for the 2005-6 fiscal year was approved by the Board after considerable work by the ED/Treasurer. Lease savings gained through the City of Calgary Business Tax Exemption application have been applied. The Audit for the fiscal year 2004-5 was initiated in April under the firm of "Collins Barrow". On May 31, 2005 the final CCC Audit Committee Report and Audited Financial Statements were approved by the Board in preparation for the AGM. Measures to improve financial reporting systems included the integration of internal database and Key Performance Indicator measures. Clarification of the role for external contract accounting services led to the appointment of Robert Finn, CMA, who brings extensive experience in the corporate and not-for-profit communities. The \$5000 donation from Carma Developers marked the only donation request made this fiscal year given pending Board policy decisions regarding disbursement of previous donations.

Staff Support Developments

A new Sun Life Staff Benefits package was developed with the brokerage firm Jardine Lloyd Thompson. Chris Budd, Client Services Coordinator, and Jim McDonagh, Job Developer, have assumed

new assignments. We are reviewing the implications of advice given by a senior corporate HR manager regarding disabled client job seeking processes:

"There needs to be a skills match for professional/technical positions. There is some flexibility in skills match with non-professional positions. Resumes need to be accurate. Marketing one's self is expected, however not being able to perform the job once hired is a wasted process for all."

Continued re-examination of the role of the Contract Management Team insures that contracted staff responsibilities to clients are clarified and accountably completed. Toward this end, Moon and Trono have assumed additional CMT supervisory duties as Senior Program Managers.

Protection of Confidential Information

"The Ministries security policy states the more confidential information is the more protection that is required to keep that information secure. Personal information... is considered confidential information and therefore a higher degree of security is required to protect that information" In response to this recent AHRE directive in March we implemented internal control processes and developed a client data security process with service provider agencies. Further refinements are underway.

Service Provider (Agency Sub- Contractor) Contracts

Sub-Contractor agencies and CCC are legally bound under Contract # 09511591 as quoted: "...that the Services will be provided by various member organizations..."

...that CCC Ltd. guarantees that the Services shall be provided by the subcontractors in accordance with the terms and conditions of the above-noted Contract ... That CCC Ltd. shall continue to be bound by the Contract and responsible to the Minister for the terms, conditions and obligations under the Contract, notwithstanding the subcontracting of the provision of any or all of the Services."

In fulfillment of this obligation we have successfully completed a series of individualized meetings to explain both the revised legal Service Agreement and Services Providers Procedural Manual. Significant changes were made to each document to clarify mutual expectations regarding invoicing and client service quality reporting standards. The signed legal "Service Agreement" and the "Service Providers Procedural Manual" are now jointly filed with CCC and all sub-contracting agencies.

Canadian Plastics Sector Council (CPSC)

CPSC, a national not-for-profit association, reflects the emerging partnerships between employers and employees in the Canadian industry sector and is therefore of interest. These sector partnerships were established by Human Resources Skill Development Canada to address emerging human resources issues including disability employment. Champions has achieved considerable national recognition on the basis of independent reviews completed of our publications and website. As a result, an invitation to attend the Targeted Employment Roundtable Discussions held by CPSC was fulfilled in May, and provided an opportunity to identify practical ways to remove roadblocks that inhibit the disabled from pursuing a career in this field. As CCC was one of four featured agencies presenting our work to this national audience, the job development team will undertake further contacts with this and related sector councils.

"Accommodation in the Workplace" Seminar

Positive feedback received from the 50+ attendees reflected well on Champions' professional community outreach efforts in sponsoring Dr. Kelly Williams. She presented research related to social and personality factors which affect the success of disabled individuals in the workplace environment on 02/08/05 at the TransAlta auditorium.

Database

Improvements to CCC database system continue systematically enabling the delivery of accurate and timely client service impact reports to government and to the Board.

CCC Website Access Statistics

We have obtained detailed information about demographic profiles and significant data regarding the "hits" which our revised website has received. Since modifying the website by gaining "Bobby approval" it is now clear that this has become our primary communication vehicle.

Professional Upgrading and Affiliated Relationships

To date, six staff members benefit from the Professional Development program initiated in 2002 to support improvements in professional CCC role assignments. Two examples: Moon has almost completed the U of C Certificate program in Strategic Management while Trono is in the final stages of the U of A Master of Arts in Communications and Technology.

Champions Career Centre:

An analysis of becoming a learning organization

(Views expressed here are those of the author.)

This article will define the concept of a learning organization and will apply it to the emerging role of Champions Career Centre.

The Organization

Champions Career Centre is a not-for-profit agency delivering employment-related services to adults with disabilities in Calgary. Any disabled adult who is unemployed, underemployed, or in danger of losing a job is served under the 'pan-disability' mandate of the organization. Since opening its doors in October 2000, Champions has faced many challenges related both to its development as an organization and its efforts to address the needs of people dealing with single and multi-barrier issues securing employment.

The original vision for Champions was that it be a Consortium, whereby community agencies collaborate to deliver services to clients. This means that while a Champions' Client Services Coordinator may begin service with a client through completing a Workability Assessment and developing an Action Plan, a contracted community agency actually delivers the Action Plan through one-to-one or workshop services. The contracted community agencies, or Service Providers, receive monetary compensation for the delivery of selected services.

The Challenge

From the outset, Champions has faced the dual challenge of establishing itself as an agency and defining its mandate. It has often appeared that outsiders' views of what the organization's mandate is, and what can actually be accomplished given resources of time, money, staff, and the very nature of the issues presented by the client population served, varied. Outsiders are defined as those proximate to the agency by status of board member, government, shareholder, employer, service provider and client. The challenge has always been to clearly articulate the role of

the agency (what it does) and the rights and responsibilities either assigned or assumed by the many stakeholders (who is responsible).

Concepts from organizational communication literature may serve to provide solution-focused applications to current organizational challenges. It is proposed that a new approach to organizational life may be the impetus to overcoming these challenges.

Becoming a Learning Organization

Lowry states that organizations must have the strength to sustain themselves as partners in learning and in other enterprises (Lowry, 2005, p. 1). Every staff member must, in some measure, become a manager and a leader (Lowry, 2005, p. 1). For continuous organizational leadership, key features include teamwork, learning, leadership, and measurement, and the people to execute this effort through activities such as planning, systems design, process re-engineering, assessment, facilitation, skills training, and performance reviews.

For Lowry, organizational structure is no assurance that work is done any differently. Instead, teamwork is supported through training, and training is 'learning'. Thus, to fulfill organizational goals, people must be committed to a team-based learning organization. Lowry quotes Peter Senge's definition of learning organizations:

'organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to learn together'. (Lowry, 2005, p. 4)

It may serve Champions well for its staff, directors and shareholders all to view themselves and to act as if they were part of a learning organization. Halligan quotes organizational consultant Meg Wheatly:

... we now speak about strategic

thinking rather than planning... organizations require new skills. Instead of the ability to analyze and predict, we need to know how to stay acutely aware of what's happening now, and we need to be better, faster learners from what just happened. Agility and intelligence are required to respond to the incessant barrage of frequent, unplanned changes. (Halligan, 2004, p. 221).

Rosenberg states that internal influences on an organization relate to 'people' and 'processes' (2003). Rosenberg explains in detail that organizations must create an environment that encourages high performance of people, which requires an understanding of passion, focus, and balance principles. Organizations must also be process-driven, which requires an emphasis on learning and support (Rosenberg, 2003, p. 31). Successful organizations, for Rosenberg, go beyond just having a process, to 'know what to do, how to improve upon what they do, and how to perform it effectively' (2003, p. 33). Reaching this level is the objective of learning and support.

According to Rosenberg, learning is essential but often overlooked. He states that to encourage learning, organizations have to encourage questions, celebrate failure and learn from it, trust instincts, facilitate organizational learning, and encourage individual learning (2003, p. 34). Support as an internal influence on process means finding ways to incorporate resources, so that the organization is not trying to yield results in a vacuum. Rosenberg argues that valuable information is gained by forming a consortium and finding opportunities for collaboration (2003, p. 34).

Here, Champions' structure begins to work in its favor since, as mentioned earlier, it was established as a consortium, whereby community agencies collaborate to deliver services to clients. The purpose too, of a Board of Directors, is that individuals on the Board have specialized expertise and

Champions Career Centre:

An analysis of becoming a learning organization (Cont'd)

knowledge which can be called upon to address specific issues.

Current literature in organizational development and management claims that organizational learning, knowledge management, intellectual capital and related concepts are more important in today's organizations than traditional assets such as material resources and skilled labour (Rowland, 2004, p. 33). Rowland states that CEOs are now asking questions previously asked by philosophers: What is knowledge? And how do people learn? (Rowland, 2004, p. 33). The answers to these questions are fundamental for those interested in the success of a learning organization. If Champions seeks to become a learning organization, how can it accomplish this task?

Rowland claims that the metaphor of 'dance' is useful for understanding that knowledge and knowing results in new knowledge and new knowing (Rowland, 2004, p. 33). This dance, he states, is not automatic, but the result of human intention, and is therefore 'designed'. Rowland proposes a 'design epistemology' for organizational learning and success. He describes what knowledge is, the nature of the learning process, and how some other contemporary authors emphasize the complementary and mutually enabling interplay (or dance) of knowledge and knowing. What Rowland addresses is how to relate knowledge to action or how to create knowledge, and how these efforts may be supported under organizational umbrellas of knowledge management and organizational learning (Rowland, 2004, p. 38). The 'dance' does not just happen; it is most often a response to outside stimuli (such as music in a social context). Intention then, is the key for

Rowland:

'Intention is not a general force or factor. Rather, it is a context-and-situation-specific support and constraint. Intentions are formed based on a variety of factors: individual, group, and organizational goals; roles, responsibilities, and perceptions of tasks; constraints such as feasibility, authority, resources, and technology; expectations; and so on. They guide action and are continually modified as a result of feedback and reflection. In this way, they serve as a form of 'feed-forward' or 'purpose focused behavior control'. (Rowland, 2004, p. 39)

Rowland also offers twelve core competencies that serve in the design of knowledge: judgement, creativity, composition, mindfulness, tolerance for ambiguity, positive attitude toward error, bias toward service and responsibility, systems thinking, cultural awareness, ethnographic inquiry, dialogue, and evolutionary consciousness (Rowland, 2004, p. 46).

These pose significant challenges then, for an organization that seeks to become a learning organization. It must foster an attitude and build the trust that enables knowledge sharing. It has to 'learn' in ways that are aligned with exterior realities and internal resources, and then develop a way to evaluate the learning.

Learning assumes that the answers are not always known or indefinitely certain. To be open to learning requires a vulnerability and ability to embrace that which is different. It takes courage to face uncertainty and to take

risks on a regular and continual basis.

Conclusion

Successful gains may be secured by a new framework such as is suggested by a learning organization concept. A learning organization strives not to be confined by its structures and processes, but to be active and invigorated by change and the capacity to impact the environment. Champions, therefore, may rotate on a fixed axis and go nowhere, but it also has an option to progress as it turns and moves the axis of its rotation. It is thus not condemned to repeat history, but should instead harness the rotation to its benefit, and progress, and evolve.

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AN ALTERNATE FORMAT?**
Please contact Melissa:
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at the Champions Office
for an electronic or
Braille copy.

On a personal level, since graduating from the Banff Centre Management Excellence program, I have self-financed three additional BCM innovative programs examining the application of innovative research-based leadership practices, including the *4th Invitational Thought Leader Forum* and the intensive *Leading in a Complex World* program. The Calgary Centre for Non-Profit Management has received Muttart Foundation financial support to locally examine "Executive Director Transition and Tenure" issues. I participated in the pilot questionnaire design, which seeks to replicate research evidence which clarified departure rates of senior executives in the non-profit sector. To illustrate, over 70% of executive directors will resign within the next five years; correspondingly almost 90% of surveyed organizations have not developed an acceptable transition plan suggesting the sector will experience a leadership crisis.

Transition in Leadership Roles

Significant challenges await the new Board and ED as the agency moves past the June 2005 AGM.

CCC deserves to become a permanent fixture in the Calgary human services environment. It is sincerely hoped that present governance challenges facing the agency will be quickly and permanently resolved such that the achievements of staff and trustees over the past five years will be solidified. Given that the ED and Chair will be vacating complementary roles, appropriate transition activities and revised role definitions have been proceeding and more appears to be required. Obligations assumed by the Board and senior officer under "policy board governance principles" will require review.

Looking Back

June 22, 2005 will conclude personal participation in four Annual General Meetings in this senior management role. I will have attended a total of 23 Board meetings and presented equivalent numbers of ED administrative reports regarding the operational components in support of Board fiduciary and financial obligations.

Given departure in August, this last opportunity will be taken to summarize interpretations of the ED role over four years. Service as a volunteer initiated in the late 1990s with participation in corporate presentations to explain the tri-partite/pan-disability service model. The early 2001 days allowed witness to the legal creation of the Shareholder Consortium Group. Participation in the controversial meeting of CCC founding members held in March 2001 marked a turning point in subsequent agency developments, as critical survival decisions were made by two core volunteer groups dedicated to the continuation of the agency. Gall was co-chair of the Steering Committee. (These early developments were recorded in documentation vetted with the Board and AHRE to identify factors which continue to affect agency success.)

My first appointment as Managing Director was made in August of 2001 under a contract assigned by CPAA as the official agent for Contract #19903. The expanded role included support to the preparation of Alberta Companies Act Certificate of Incorporation in January 2002.

Appointment as Executive Director in March of 2002, facilitated support to gain CCRA Registered Charitable Status in May, the adoption of a Policy Governance model in August, and the successful completion of Contract #19903 in December, which was subsequently successfully extended until February 2004 with Contract #19903A. 2003 was a very busy year, with the Asset Transfer Agreement completed in April, giving the new Board full fiscal and fiduciary independence from CPAA. During the same year we continued to gather extensive corporate donations. Thereafter we successfully competed in the AHRE RFP process to gain Contract #09511591 which was to terminate in February 2006. We are presently negotiating the extension of this contract to January 2007.

While these formal accomplishments are cited, they are balanced by related significant activities successfully undertaken to improve daily operations, including as examples:

- transition of management responsibilities from CPAA;
- creation of a contract management process utilizing supervisory skills of senior staff;
- development of a seamless client flow process from intake through to job placement;
- clarification of client service standards for action plans;
- establishment of "client choice" in selection of service provider assignments;
- creation of unique service provider legal contracts and Service Provider Manual, enforcing accountability for invoicing and client impact standards;
- completion of the CCC Human Resources Manual;
- implementing a staff professional development program;
- reinforcing staff "professionalism" and creation of a professional office atmosphere; and finally
- continuing commitment to hire disabled clients to reflect our moral and ethical obligation and to demonstrate to corporate sectors that CCC can "walk the talk".

In closing, I wish to extend gratitude to:

- Champions clients, who provided inspiration regarding the power of human spirit;
- McLaughlin, who provided consistent positive support as Client Services Manager;
- staff members who have collectively worked to ensure the vision of Champions, and most especially to the Management Team of Moon, Trono and Wood.
- Board Members who have offered wisdom and volunteer time, but most especially Groeneweg, Cowan and Miller with whom I worked most directly.

Robert Gall, Ph.D., C. Psych.



nexen



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Foundation Commitment

The Kahanoff Foundation is a private Canadian foundation active in Canada and Israel. The foundation was established in 1979 from the estate of Sydney Kahanoff, a Calgary oilman. Today its assets are in excess of \$100 million, making it one of the largest foundations in Canada. Located in Calgary, the foundation funds traditional and innovative charitable programs in the areas of health, education, culture, social services, philanthropy, community development and research. For more information about The Kahanoff Foundation, visit their web site at www.kahanoff.com.