

EMPOWERING OTHERS THROUGH THE GIFTS OF EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP

Greetings: Good evening dear friends, colleagues, educators and students!

It is so good to be back here among you in the Education community of New England. I miss you all very much!

I am also very happy to be sharing this annual lecture with Cynthia Briggs – a woman of our Aboriginal People of this area. I cannot tell you how happy I am to learn about her pursuit of education and her accomplishments for the education of our Aboriginal people. I well remember how difficult it was, half a century ago, for those children and families to engage with the (mainly European) culture of the people who had arrived and settled here.

The kind of work Cynthia has done helps, not only Aboriginal people, but it helps to open the eyes of those who have the difficult tasks of education and leadership for both cultures. As you all know, we have in this country, two major cultural backgrounds whose history and patterns of learning and development have been very far apart. That they are coming closer together and becoming more engaged (together) in the educational and leadership challenges of our country is a great development.

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Tonight we, also have, two new awards to present ...focusing on education and leadership. They are, of course two very important (and increasingly complex) components of life in our world and they are closely connected.

We can be grateful for, and to, associations like ACE & ACEL for keeping them before us and for supporting & encouraging us in unfolding, developing and applying these basic elements of our society.

It is the duty of all – especially those whose contribution to our society is by way of education and leadership of various kinds (be it as class leader, teacher, pastoral carer, parent, board member, school representative or in many other ways) to support the strengthening of these two areas of our living and developing.

Firstly, a few thoughts about **education:**

Education is a gift for the mind and spirit (as food is for the body) ...a very important gift! An essential gift! A very rich and abundant gift! Education is a gift beginning at birth and continued with the help of family and community. We say “it takes a village to raise a child”...later a school and, maybe, a university or other place of learning...then whatever opportunities come after that. Education is an essential starting point for what follows in our lives. What we do with that gift will determine how we live our lives and share our gifts with others.

It reminds me of the parable (in the gospel) about the rich man who had an abundant harvest he wondered what he could do to save it for himself. Perhaps he could store it up! But he did not have room to store it all so he thought he would increase his storage space and then he could keep it all for himself and have a good life and no worries! Enjoy his treasure! Then that very night his life came to an end...the question was what would happen to it then!

The moral of the story is - not to store up treasures just for ourselves but to share them with others.

What do we do with the great treasures of education with which we have been gifted? We have to share them with others. Education is not something we should hold on to for our own benefit! I am sure we can all recall wonderful family members, teachers, and friends who have shared their rich harvest with us. There are many people here tonight whose lives give us great inspiration to do just that! Nurture the crop! Share it with others ... pass it on to nourish, inform and develop others. We do not come by education without help from others – WE NEED EACH OTHER and we need the fruits of education to share with others. Our great treasure of education gives us formation and direction.

This brings us to the important partner of education - leadership! It is one thing to have a rich supply of crops in the field but they need to be harvested and used. We need focused and skilled workers and managers to do this well. We can help them in various ways and receive much from our leaders and helpers... provided they have the right direction, intention and skill.

Leadership is a means by which we receive the treasures (both educational and other) and sometimes we can also contribute our skills to the process. When we have a good supply of education we can share it. Sometimes we do this through leadership ... our leadership, or our contribution to the leadership of others. I think we would all agree that strong selfless well educated Leadership is a very important need – especially in today's complicated world!

We long for leaders, who can work with others, keep us informed, show us – and sometimes, take us - where we need to go! It strikes me as being - not necessarily “how important the leader is” - but how well their leadership is developed, organised and administered for the development of others... I am sure we are all weary of the constant news of those seeking leadership in politics (be it Trump and Clinton or our own parliamentarians) who sometimes seem to be listening only to their own ideas and needs and self- aggrandisement. I believe that leadership must hold in view, the needs of all those it serves.

In the days when we thought the world was flat and the sun circled the earth, we sometimes looked upon a leader as the “head of the line” - one who knew all that was needed and knew where to go... someone who was revered not questioned! Things are very different in this modern round spinning world where we are aware that we circle the sun and are learning more and more about ourselves - including why we are here, where we are going and what is needed- and what we can contribute.

So, perhaps, one of the most important characteristics of today's leaders, after education, might be:- the direction in which they are looking, the goals they have, and awareness that they cannot and should not do the job alone. This brings us to another aspect of leadership ... **administration.**

Leadership needs to be supported by appropriate dedicated administration.

We cannot just leave the treasure in the fields to rot there... it must be harvested and put to good use ... others need to be engaged, informed and prepared for the task and accountable for progress.

How much better do organisations work when members are informed and involved? How often we come across those moments when we say ... “I wish I had known that! ... and if I had I would have done...”

So Administration is an important tool ...it is the way to manage and share our harvest... our gifts!

It needs to be done in an orderly and consultative manner but also with focus on the needs of those it serves.

It also needs to be focused in the direction of the leadership goals.

It needs to be caring and friendly.

It also needs to be free of political, financial and personal problems or desire (especially the kind that the rich man had about his great harvest).

All this leads to the Empowerment of others:

I have tried to draw attention to what I see as some of the important aspects of Educational Leadership - a key role in our world today.

Education is a gift - we need to be ready and open to receive it. Then, we need good leadership to help use the gift in our lives. Educational Leaders need to use appropriate administrative structures and those in administration need to be skilled in communication and in helping to join the dots that make it all happen.

The outcome could and should lead to the empowerment of others.

New Award: One of the new Awards to be presented tonight from the Australian Council of Educational Leaders: New England Group, is for an OUTSTANDING EMERGING EDUCATIONAL LEADER.

Award Name: Thank you to ACEL for the invitation to have this new award bear my name and to make the first presentation of the Award tonight.

It is an honour, not just for me but for the many companions I have had and appreciated - on the educational journey: mostly here in the New England – but also in other part of the country and further afield. I am grateful to all those who educated me and walked with me and worked with me. I believe that “Educational Leadership” is not something anyone does alone.

Whatever I have achieved and contributed is very much an outcome of those who have gone before me and some still beside me. I hope we have left some stepping stones to those who follow. .. and that they will be brought to attention by those who are receiving this award now, and others, in the future

I would like to acknowledge and thank the many people and organisations that have helped me in this field, especially the educational institutions here in New England , the Teachers’ College, UNE, other organisations and especially for me, the support and opportunity provided by the Ursuline Order whose members came here to help provide education.

This new Award has been set up to recognise Educational Leadership- in the making.

It is seeking to draw notice to OUTSTANDING EMERGING EDUCATIONAL LEADERS:-

to inspire them, to thank them, to encourage them and to assist them to go forward in this important ministry of education.

Let us have a look at what might characterise these future leaders!

WHAT INDICATIONS POINT TO EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP?

Educational Leadership is not something we do or develop alone – “it is like the raising of a child by a village but the child must be open to learning”. It is not a self- chosen pathway but a path that calls us. It has advantages but it also has its difficulties.

The goal is to serve others and hopefully to have others join in and cooperate in the task. It can help to empower others with whom it is associated. It needs to be about “shepherding” and cooperation rather than “bullying”!

Educational Leaders look to the future ... with inspiration!

They keep their sight on the goal of providing for those they serve!

Believe and trust in what is good!

They are driven, not by positions and rewards... but, by the ability to serve a need... not political (power) not about self but about others.... bring peace!

It is about being prepared, alert and responsible!

It is indeed a service of leadership

Thank you to all who serve in these roles to and encourage & support others - and do your best to improve our communities.