

Read, Write and Lead – CDS Thoughts on Leadership  
Professional Development Program Facilitator Notes by Maj Alex Buck, CACSC

People (Relationships, Recognition, Being a Sensor for the Commander)

- Key moments in the episode: 5:06-9:14
- Hip Pocket:
  - What relationships are important to our success as a unit? How do we build and maintain those relationships?
    - “Relationships – super, super, important” – Gen Eyre at 5:36
    - Gen Eyre references that developing great relationships with American officers early in his career paid dividends later in his career.
    - Discuss with the group what relationships are important for your organization’s success. At the section level this may be the Section 2IC’s relationship with the Company CQ, at the platoon level the Pl WO’s relationship with the Unit RSM, etc.
    - Explore why these relationships are important for your organization’s success.
    - [The CAF Ethos: Trusted to Serve](#) states that “These cohesive relationships make our military teams at all levels powerful in the face of adversity and resilient to overcoming fear and obstacles.”
    - Discuss methods that people in your organization use to build and maintain relationships. An important perspective to examine is doing this through a compassionate lens. The more someone is able to understand what others face on a day-to-day basis, the more they are able to build strong, resilient, relationships. Communication and understanding are critical.
  - Do we recognize soldiers effectively in our unit? Is H&A the only way to recognize soldiers? (A recommended reading related to this is [The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace](#))
    - “The US Army approach to recognition was definitely a positive that I’ve strived to bring back here to Canada” – Gen Eyre at 5:59
    - CANFORGEN 122/23 released on 8 August 2023 recognized Cpl F.J. Cormier with a CDS commendation for performing first aid to a civilian person on 6 November 2019. Use this as an example to discuss the timelines associated with formal recognition. Tie in the importance of submitting awards and recognition paperwork when an action happens.
    - Discuss recent examples within your unit that are similar. Has an action that occurred within your unit been recognized recently? Did it occur in a timely manner? What level did the recognition come from?
    - Discuss methods to recognize soldiers for their good work. From very formal L0/L1 recognition (MSM, CDS/L1 commendations, etc), formation level commendations (Brigade Commander commendations), CO’s coins, a shout out at a unit function, handshake from the CO in the platoon lines, email from their first line supervisor thanking them, etc. Discuss what people participating in the PD session have received in the past as

recognition, how they felt about it and what they may prefer to receive as recognition.

- Everyone has different ways that they prefer to receive appreciation for their hard work. This is clearly articulated in the CAF's Depart with Dignity policies as "When organizing a DWD program activity or a Recognition of Service ceremony, the DWDC must engage the member to confirm their actual wishes and proceed accordingly." Whether recognizing people for their career contributions to the CAF or for doing a great job at a small but important task, taking into consideration how people prefer to be appreciated is critical to building solid teams. Consider amongst the participants, if a soldier wanted to receive a medal or commendation privately, would you demand that they receive it on parade or in front of an audience?
- Consider the impact that appreciation might have on members of your organization, particularly if it is given in a way that each individual values. Think about words of affirmation – leaving a note or telling someone that you value them, quality time – giving your focused attention for a period of time to check in, acts of service – asking someone how you can help them out for a specific period of time, tangible gifts – buying them something like a coffee, and physical touch – giving a celebratory high five, fist bump or congratulatory hand shake. How can you integrate these into your personal methods of appreciating people in your organization? Would it make a difference in the way your organization functions?

- Next-Level:

- Building on the hip-pocket questions, what can we do better as a unit, and an institution, to recognize our soldiers?
  - Think about methods that were brainstormed in the last discussion. Can we implement these methods as an institutional process or are they simply part of a personal leadership style of the leaders within an organization?
  - Discuss how to build less formal recognition into the routine in your unit.
  - [The CAF Ethos: Trusted to Serve](#) states that "The poor performance that you walk past and do not correct is the standard that you accept within the Profession of Arms." We all have a responsibility to increase the level of performance of soldiers that are not meeting the standard.
- On the flip side, if a soldier is not performing to the standard how do we build up soldiers that are not performing as well as the others? Is that what we should be doing, or are there alternative methods we can use to ensure they achieve the standard?
  - There are many ways to do this. It can vary from an NCO delivering corrective feedback on the spot, writing a feedback note and debriefing the member on their performance with an action plan to correct it, informal mentoring, formal counselling, administrative action, etc. Brainstorm other methods with the participants. Discuss these methods and think about how they can be implemented within your organization.

- Advanced:

- Read Chapter 4 of [Fearless Organization](#).

- What is the current culture of our unit?
  - A unit's culture is the relationship between critical characteristics that affect the way members behave and units accomplish tasks. Culture refers to a shared and often stable pattern of beliefs, values, and assumptions that a group has learned over time as an effective means of maintaining internal social stability within its environment, and that are transmitted to new members as the correct ways to perceive, think and act in relation to situations. Climate refers to the way members feel about various aspects of the organization in general, and their immediate unit. Major shifts in organizational mission and transformation of organizational procedures can impact culture in significant ways. Because culture and climate have such a strong influence on the way people perform, leaders need to be cognizant of their organization's culture.
  - As a group, brainstorm the values, beliefs, and assumptions, that are commonly held by members of your organization. Something to consider is that an organization's culture can often be identified by the worst behaviour that is tolerated, or accepted, by the members of the organization.
  - Discuss the thoughts that were brought up in brainstorming and dig in to whether these are positive or negative for the organization's culture.
- Does our current culture promote speaking truth to power? What changes do we need to make to work towards a culture that is more conducive to speaking truth to power?
  - "It's all about creating a command climate where subordinates or somebody is willing to bring you ground truth ... Commanders absolutely need that" – Gen Eyre at 6:41
  - In Fearless Organization the author states "A culture of silence can thus be understood as a culture in which the prevailing winds favor going along rather than offering one's concerns. It is based on the assumption that most people's voices do not offer value and thus will not be valued". As the Daiichi plant Chairman articulates, cultures that are based on reflexive obedience, reluctance to question authority, devotion to the plan, group think, and insular thinking, lead to eventual disaster.
  - Poll the group. Is the culture in your organization similar to the culture that caused the Daiichi plant disaster? Or does it have a culture that would have accepted recommendations to change course when necessary?
  - Ask the group of participants to examine the culture of your organization. They should consider times that speaking truth to power was accepted and times that it wasn't.
- Writing prompt: what methods have you noticed units successfully (or unsuccessfully) use to cultivate cultures that enable psychologically safe workplaces? Reflect on and write about one of those methods.

#### Professional Development

- Key moments in the episode: 9:14-17:14
- Hip Pocket:

- How does our unit's professional development program build on the knowledge we gain through the training system? What can we do better at the unit level to develop ourselves?
  - “If you take a look at our Professional Military Education its episodic, once every several years you go away to the schoolhouse, you learn, you immerse yourself in the profession, but the world situation is changing so fast, that pace of acceleration has picked up, and we cant afford to only rely on that as our developmental tool. It's got to be continuous” – Gen Eyre at 9:22
  - Infantry soldiers learn how to conduct a section attack during the Infantry Section Commander Course. At the unit, section commanders then practice and are tested on their ability to conduct a section attack during regular unit training. Section tactics may be discussed during unit PD sessions, tactical decision games, virtual simulations, etc.
  - Apply the above thought process to activities in your unit that build on the skills learning in the training system.
  - Discuss how your unit does this well, and where it could improve. How could these improvements be integrated into your unit's current training plan.
- Next-Level:
  - What are your thoughts on Gen Eyre's assessment that today's platoon or company commander requires the same understanding of history and the broader geopolitical context of their operations as a division or corps commander of World War 2?
    - “Short-range planning has traditionally been performed by the operations officer (who is the chief staff officer within the BG staff). Mid- and long-range planning has been traditionally performed by the deputy commanding officer (DCO). The complexity of the operating environment has placed a greater burden upon these two individuals due to the increased number of factors affecting the conduct of a mission or operation. Consequently, a specific plans cell in the BG HQ has been established and is led by the DCO to perform all levels and horizons of planning.” – [Battle Group in Operations](#)
    - “Both the complexity of the Future Land Operating Environment and, in turn, the challenges it presents to land forces arise from a variety of destabilizing factors. Those factors include the availability of the Internet and social media as means of mobilizing and empowering groups harbouring grievances and radical ideas; resource scarcities; the impacts of climate change; shifts in the balance of political, economic and military power; rapid and sometimes unsustainable population growth; economic inequality and youth unemployment; the presence of weak states and ungoverned spaces in the developing world; and the proliferation of sophisticated and lethal technologies among an ever wider range of state and non-state actors. The rise of global migration and resultant diasporas contributes to potential disruption. The effects of these challenges will be amplified by the rapidly increasing concentration of people in vast urban

areas. In contrast to historical urbanization trends, the continuation of current trends will result in ever larger cities that are exponentially more congested, cluttered, contested, connected, and constrained.” - [Close Engagement](#)

- The two quotes above speak to the increasingly complex operating environment that Gen Eyre referred to and the burden that places on junior officers and other leaders in the Army. Brainstorm with the participants what factors may have caused the operating environment to become more complex and discuss how this has changed the requirements placed on Army leaders. As mentioned in Battle Group in Operations, additional cells of people have been added to Battle Group organizations to do the job previously done by one person.

- Advanced:

- Read “[Why we Study](#)” by Gen Eyre.
- What do you do in your life to develop yourself? How do you encourage your subordinates to develop themselves?
  - “It’s a way to introduce new ideas, it’s a way to benefit from the experience of others” – Gen Eyre on reading at 9:50
  - Reading isn’t the only medium for self-development. Podcasts, audiobooks, videos, tactical decision games, wargames, virtual tools, and more, are all excellent ways to conduct personal development. Before the session, think about methodologies you have personally used to conduct your own professional development. During the session, brainstorm with the participants what they do on their own time. How do these lists compare?
  - “Given that delivering success in operations is our raison d’être, and as military professionals we do everything we can to enable that success, the excuse that we are too busy to read does not pass muster. We owe it to our soldiers and our country to prepare ourselves as best as we possibly can – and reading is a key component of that long-term readiness. I urge you to weave it into the fabric of your lifestyle.” – [Why we Study](#)
  - Why we Study describes the importance of reading and personal development, but how do we encourage our subordinates to participate in their own development? Brainstorm with the group how you might do this. Some suggestions might be: organizational reading lists, dedicating some work hours to personal development, book clubs, sending a periodic email with suggested resources, etc.
  - Now, think about how these methods that you’ve brainstormed as a group can be integrated into your organization’s culture and operational tempo.
  - “People who embody excellence seek opportunities for personal improvement, are curious, ask questions and seek advice. They embrace valid standards, they are open to experimenting with new concepts and processes, they help others to improve their standards of conduct and performance, they pursue lifelong learning through additional training and education, and they look for ways to improve their workplace, their trade, occupation and profession.” – [The CAF Ethos: Trusted to Serve](#)

- Writing prompt: why is professional development important to you and what methods do you use personally to achieve the geopolitical context Gen Eyre suggests are required as a modern military leader?

#### Personal Development (Values, Power, Ego, Failure)

- Key moments in the episode: 17:14-29:08
- Hip Pocket:
  - o What values are important to us as an organization? In this unit? In the Army? In the CAF? Are the values of different levels of the CAF different?
    - Frame the conversation by first discussing the values of your organization, even at the Section level your team operates daily on a set of values. Have the members of that organization call out the values they think are important to the team and collect them on a whiteboard (or similar).
    - Now discuss what the values of your higher level units might be and how they are different from those of your organization.
    - [Close Engagement](#) states that “A robust Army culture based on **shared values**, a strong ethos, strength in diversity, mutual respect, and trust and confidence in fellow soldiers, leaders and the establishment will be essential aspects of maintaining a resilient, adaptive and agile force”
    - [Canada’s Army](#) states that “Within the Canadian army, the military ethos is further amplified and applied in a manner which recognizes the army’s unique function and role which, in its barest essence, requires soldiers to close with and defeat an enemy in face to face combat.”
    - [The CAF Ethos: Trusted to Serve](#) outlines the CAF’s military values as Loyalty, Integrity, Courage, Excellence, Inclusion, and Accountability, and states that “Canadian values must always form the foundation for Canadian military values. These military values are the critical moral requirements for success in military service. They are also intrinsically aligned with and foundational to the development of character across the profession.”
    - The CAF Ethos differentiates between Canadian values, military values, and personal values, indicating that these may be different. It is important to understand that even though different CAF organizations may amplify values in a variety of ways, at their core they should all be based on Canadian values and CAF military values.
    - What are values? Norms or standards of desirable behaviour that give direction to and set limits on individual and collective behaviour. For Canadian military professionals, conduct values include the civic, legal, ethical and military values embodied in the military ethos.
- Next-Level:
  - o Do you feel comfortable making decisions in the absence of explicit direction as a member of this organization?
    - As Gen Eyre discusses, there are no easy decisions. Decisions are made even more difficult if you are working in an environment that isn’t promoting a culture based on mission command.
    - [Advancing with Purpose](#) states that “This philosophy of ‘mission command’ remains paramount in the development of our most junior

leaders. They must therefore be physically fit, mentally resilient, educated, and most importantly, possess initiative and problem-solving skills that will allow them to execute their higher commanders' intent without having to confirm with superior headquarters."

- We should endeavour to have an environment that allows subordinates to use their own initiative to make decisions that are in line with their commander's intent.
- [Close Engagement](#) posits that "Advanced methods of training and education will need to be fielded that provide more and better opportunities for leaders to make decisions in a stressful and uncertain environment and offer better consolidation and exploitation of those experiences." Discuss methods that your unit uses to develop leaders' decision-making abilities.
- Discuss how your organization has dealt with failure in the past. Dissect the examples that are brought up. Do these examples increase or decrease the likelihood that people feel comfortable making decisions in the absence of direction?

- Advanced:

- Read "[What is Stoicism?](#)" on [dailystoic.com](http://dailystoic.com).
- How is Stoic philosophy similar to the CAF Ethos? Where does it differ?
  - "Not worrying about attacks on your reputation, not worrying about the opinions of others, being guided by your values" – Gen Eyre at 17:38
  - What is Stoicism? Describes the four virtues of stoicism as "Courage, Temperance, Justice and Wisdom". Discuss how these virtues are similar or dissimilar to the [The CAF Ethos: Trusted to Serve](#).
  - Courage is listed in both, so it may seem like an easy one to start the discussion, but do the Stoics think of courage differently than the CAF Ethos describes? The CAF Ethos describes courage as "both physical and moral; it allows us to confront danger such as physical risk to life and limb. It also allows us to confront the moral anguish of taking actions that may cause injury or death to those around us, or the moral courage to do the right thing despite social pressures." Although the article doesn't describe courage as eloquently as the CAF Ethos does it seems that the stoics would likely agree with the CAF Ethos' thoughts on courage.
  - The article describes temperance as "Doing nothing in excess. Doing the right thing in the right amount in the right way. Because 'We are what we repeatedly do', Aristotle also said, 'therefore excellence is not an act, but a habit'." This sounds a lot like the CAF Ethos' thoughts on discipline as a professional expectation "Discipline at its best becomes a constant and considered habit; a lived determination to do our professional duty. Personal discipline at its best means doing the right thing even in the absence of supervision and in the face of peer pressure. Discipline is also the path to courage because it commits us to habituated action in the face of fear."
  - "Being brave. Finding the right balance. These are core Stoic virtues, but in their seriousness, they pale in comparison to what the Stoics

worshipped most highly: Doing the right thing.” The Stoics considered justice one of their most important virtues. The CAF Ethos states that “Integrity is the uncompromising adherence to strong ethical principles. It is a commitment to a principled approach to duty and being accountable for both our action and inaction, and their respective consequences. A person of integrity is honest and has high ethical standards. Integrity means that our decisions and actions are consistent with established codes of conduct, values and ethics.” The Stoic understanding of justice is very similar to the value of integrity as described in the CAF Ethos.

- The Stoics thought that wisdom as “The goal is not just to acquire information, but the right kind of information ... It’s the key facts, standing out from the background noise, that you need to absorb.” This Stoic attitude speaks a lot to the CAF Ethos’ description of Excellence as a military value. “Continuous learning is a requirement of military service that can be achieved by improving our individual and collective professional skills, and by expanding our communications, leadership and interpersonal skills beyond what is required in mandated education and training. Leaders need to set the example when it comes to continuous learning. Additionally, leaders have a responsibility to mentor and coach subordinates in their pursuit of individual and collective excellence.”
- How do you think the CDS has used Stoic philosophy to help him through some of the crises he described in the podcast episode?
  - “Accepting the crises as they come, because they will come, not getting bent out of shape when something bad happens, putting it into context, and then carrying on, remaining calm” – Gen Eyre at 28:38.
  - Gen Eyre describes some of the challenges he faced during his initial tenure as CDS as: two predecessors were under investigation, the COVID-19 Pandemic, the withdrawal from Afghanistan, the invasion of Ukraine, Climate Change, constant Domestic Operations, and recruiting/retention challenges, amongst others. These situations have required him to provide clarity and focus to the CAF. Brainstorm with the participants how the CDS could have implemented the tenants of Stoic philosophy to help him lead the CAF through these crises.
- Writing prompt: Think about a time that you have failed in the Army. How did you react to this failure? How did your chain of command react? What did you learn from that failure and how did it shape your future? Did your Army training prepare you for that failure?