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The NSCDA Newsletter is published by the the Nova Scotia Career Development Association, an inclusive not-for-profit organization that provides strategic leadership to Nova Scotia professionals in career development.

We welcome story ideas and submissions. We do not offer monetary compensation for articles, but provide a biography for contributors. We cannot guarantee articles will run, even with previous agreement. All submissions are subject to editing for style and space.

Editorial Inquiries: Cathi Stevenson:
communications@nscda.ca

Advertising Information: Paulina Alfaro:
info@nscda.ca

Office Location: Sunnyside Place 1600
Bedford Highway Suite 420 Bedford, Nova Scotia

Mailing Address:
PO BOX 44114 Bedford Place Mall
Bedford, Nova Scotia, B4A 3X5
Fax: 902-832-9901

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Message from the Executive Director & Board Chair

It's hard to believe that we're at year's end already. It is the season of celebrating the light, and enjoying the company of family and friends. It's also the time of New Year's Resolutions and the opportunity to begin 2016 with new ways of doing things. Change is in the air!

Mind you, most of us are not fond of change . . . too often we view it with trepidation. Yet while change can be difficult, it can also be the doorway to new, and better opportunities.

At the end of last month, the Nova Scotia Government announced many changes to the way the career development services that fall under its umbrella are going to be done. This is in keeping with the government's mandate to keep our province in the forefront nationally in the delivery of these services. They are looking to us to develop world class, innovative methods to help Nova Scotians make the best choices they can for enhancing their lives through employment and other life skills. The aim is to standardize service across the province; this means that certification is now enshrined in policy as a standard for centres (more on this in the Certification Update on page 11).

So what does that mean to you, our members? Over 90 per cent of you work in Career Nova Scotia Centres. While we are trying to broaden our membership base this year, we must acknowledge the reality of who our members are right now, and how we're going to help you deal with these changes. The first of these is, as mentioned above, the expansion of the Certification Program. The province is also partnering with the NSCDA to create the go-to hub for career development training in Nova Scotia. Over the next few months we will be developing a professional development (PD) concept that will include multiple modes of delivery to meet the needs of all members, including executive, management and front-line service staff. The four categories that PD will fall under are: Certification, Practice, Management, and Self-Care. There will be many interesting PD opportunities introduced over the next few months, so stay tuned! If you have any thoughts on a specific PD that you would like to see us offer, please e-mail Paulina Alfaro, Membership / Professional Development Co-ordinator, at info@nscda.ca.

As we journey together into 2016, we hope you have a wonderful and peaceful holiday season. And a toast to all that the new year brings!

Paula Romanow, Executive Director
Kathy McKee, Board Chair

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CANSA

15 Years Proud

By BERNICE VANCE

Amherst's Victoria Square was the place to be on October 9th of this year, when the Cumberland African Nova Scotian Association (CANSA) celebrated its 15th Anniversary. Generous sponsorship from local businesses, agencies and organizations helped offset the cost of an all-day event that included a free BBQ and outstanding local musical entertainment. The day's activities also included site tours and of course cake, across the street at the CANSA office. CANSA Board and staff were thrilled with the show of support from citizens, businesses and organizations.

Visitors came from all around the County, as well as from other areas of the province to help CANSA celebrate this milestone. One former client, who was assisted by CANSA in 2006, heard of the event via Facebook and drove all the way from Moncton to take part in the celebration.

The community has had a lot to do with the success of CANSA growing from an organization with two staff in 2000 serving the African Nova Scotian community, to one with 10 staff meeting the employment needs of the entire County as a



People line up for the BBQ that was part of the festivities celebrating CANSA's 15th anniversary.

Career Nova Scotia Centre. In 2015, five CANSA staff met the requirements of the NSCDA Certification Program, They are now entitled to use the designation CCDP (Certified Career Development Practitioner), after their names. Three other staff members are currently going through the certification process and expect to be certified in 2016.

CANSA's career development practitioners work effortlessly to share their knowledge, skills and abilities with Cumberland County citizens, employers and organizations. This ensures opportunities in employment, education, technology, art, and culture meet the needs of persons facing barriers to employment and the business community. The organization's bookkeeper, administrative assistant and Board of Directors also provide support and insight to ensure things run smoothly.

CANSA's office is frequented by job seekers from throughout the County. Some take advantage of our self-serve features,

such as public computers, which enable them to look for work, write cover letters and create or update résumés. Many clients meet with case managers, job developers, career counsellors or employment maintenance counsellors to assist them in their search for employment. Between April 1st, 2014 and March 31st, 2015, 242 CANSA clients found employment, while 75 went through skills enhancement programs. At least 150 people participated in workshops that enhanced their employability skills.

CANSA thanks the citizens, employers, organizations, all levels of government and those who visit us for services. We want our community to know that partnerships are vital to CANSA's success.

We are proud to say that for 15 years, CANSA has been a part of the community and we look forward to many more years of service. 🇨🇦



Left: A band plays in the gazebo at Victoria Square during CANSA's anniversary celebrations.

Right: From left to right, Brian Martin, CANSA Board Chair; Elizabeth Cooke-Sumbu, Executive Director; and Terry Farrell MLA, Cumberland North, cut the cake in celebration of the organization's 15th anniversary.

Member Profile

Elizabeth Cooke-Sumbu

Executive Director, CANSA



For the last 15 years Elizabeth “Liz” Cooke-Sumbu has been a familiar face to those visiting the Cumberland African Nova Scotian Association, better known as CANSA.

The community-minded Executive Director began her career with CANSA as a project manager, a position that developed into Executive Director in 2002. Since then, she’s navigated through challenges few people in her position ever have to face, including a fire that completely destroyed the CANSA offices. “We were only out of business for two days,” she says, crediting staff with the ability to work under some pretty unique conditions, as well as the CANSA Board of Directors, and the community for pulling together to help them find temporary accommodations before they moved to their current location. “We didn’t miss a beat,” Liz says proudly. Since CANSA is the only job resource centre for all of Cumberland County, even a short downtime would be felt by the community. “We cover a large territory, and have 3,000 visitors a year,” she says. Quite an achievement when you consider that when CANSA was formed in 2000, its primary goal was to provide services for local African Nova Scotians. Today, it’s a landmark in the community, serving people with very diverse backgrounds, from all walks of life.

The staff at CANSA work hard to build networks with potential employers, and assist people seeking employment as well as providing case-management services for those who need help developing and learning marketable skills before entering the workforce.

Under Liz’s guidance, CANSA has grown considerably. They now have a staff of 10, where they once operated with only two, and the organization has recently taken over the storefront in their building to expand office space. She’s confident that certification is going to mean even more good things on the horizon. “I was really pleased when certification finally came to fruition. It’s really strengthened our staff. Certification is a very strong asset in defining who we are and what we do.”

Liz also has high praise for the NSCDA, advising anyone interested in expanding their role as a Career Development Practitioner or in entering the field, to look to the organization for guidance. “Everything is there on the website,” she notes.

When CANSA was formed in 2000, its primary goal was to provide services for local African Nova Scotians. Today, it’s a landmark in the community, serving people with very diverse backgrounds, from all walks of life.

decisions, but as Executive Director, suddenly I was making decisions. It was a challenge, but I think I’ve been able to affect positive change,” she says. Again, she credits the support of others and said working closely with vested partners here and across the province really made the difference.

Liz has held several administrative and support positions throughout the years, including 10 years as a Senior Pension Plan Examiner for the Superannuation Directorate in

To anyone who knows or works with Liz, it’s obvious she was born to lead, but she confesses that her first few months as Executive Director were especially challenging. “In my previous roles with the government, I was used to other people making the

Shediac, NB, and five years as the Supervisor of El Cheque Distribution for Atlantic Canada in Moncton, NB, but she'd never worked in the not-for-profit sector prior to joining CANSA. "I sat on a number of committees, but never really considered it as a career." Accepting the position with CANSA was more about practicality anything else. "I needed a job," she says."

CANSA plays an important role in the community — she and her staff sit on more than 10 local associations, ensuring they stay connected to the people with whom they live and work. And community is important to Liz, whose own African Nova Scotian roots go back eight generations in the County.

During her 20 years in Moncton, Liz was an active part of the Multicultural community, sitting on the Board of MAGMA, and serving as a committee member for the African / Caribbean Group as well as the Moncton Police Multicultural Committee.

Liz is also very active regionally, sitting on advisory boards and committees to represent the interest of Black Nova

Scotians in Cumberland County. She provides her time, experience, and skills to the RCMP Advisory Committee, Nova Scotia Community College Advisory Committee, Correctional Services of Canada Regional Ethno Cultural Association, Employment Nova Scotia Employability Table, and African Nova Scotian Affairs, and the African Heritage Month Network, to name a few.

Education has always been part of the plan for Liz, both professionally and personally. In addition to Studying French at the University of Moncton, she has also studied Executive Business Management at St. Mary's University, holds a Diploma in Adult Education from St. Francis Xavier University, and has both Counseling Certification and Non-Profit Board Governance Certification from Dalhousie University.

Liz has passed down her philosophy for success to her family, frequently reminding them that "to be more you have to do more." 🌈

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Turning Office Politics Into Positive Energy

By MARK COHAN

Office politics! How often have you heard the term? More significantly, how often have you heard people tell you how they hate workplace politics? Almost daily, people tell me they are looking for a work environment where there are no politics. However, office politics, regardless of how you define or label it, is a reality of life we cannot escape.

Office politics is how we as individuals interact with each other. The problem is that “office politics” is generally defined as the pursuit of a personal agenda / goals/ self-interest that more often than not comes at the expense of others, and is thus negative to say the least. It is a strategy that by its very nature means there are winners and losers.

There are individuals who spend each day honing their battle skills for personal gain with little or no regard for the casualties. The rise to the top, and desire to shine and advance in their career, is usually accompanied by a need to step on others. In many environments, the underlying culture is not how hard you work or how well you do your job, but rather how well you “play the game.” That is what determines your success. Tremendous energy is expended getting your ideas, your agenda and your profile to the top, and is defined by a “win at all costs / eat or be eaten” mentality. Even though people you interact with dislike office politics, they feel they have no choice but to partake as a tool of survival. All this negative energy consumes time, is a physical and mental drain and ultimately becomes a detriment to the bottom line.

Ironically, we are living in a world where we are fixated on converting waste into positive energy. Do we spend enough

time thinking about turning the wasted energy of “people politics” into a positive and productive resource? The answer is easy: NO.

To do so, we must face several realities. Interacting with people is challenging, as we all have strengths, shortcomings, quirks and idiosyncrasies. We are generally not very good

judges of our own shortcomings. I recently observed a training session, where the format involved participants presenting to their group. The video-taped presentations were then played back and critiqued. I was particularly intrigued by the reaction of those participants, who by nature thought they were “so perfect and opinionated.” Having now viewed themselves on screen, their perspectives were very different. This issue is further magnified by what I call the “hide behind the rock syndrome” or in other words, “it’s not my fault.” In the workplace, taking responsibility and acknowledging room for improvement is not always seen as a wise career move. However, correcting this perception pays big dividends for the organization and is a first step toward

positive employee interaction.

To grow, improve and by implication achieve our own self-interest, it is imperative that both management and employees identify strengths and weaknesses in the work environment, without leaving casualties on the sidelines. If we concede to sports analogies in discussing office politics (winning / losing / team), then let’s use football as a case study. Blockers tend to be large powerful dominating figures that are ideal for protecting their quarterback- offensively. The blocker can also be a vital defensive player who can use his power and size against the opposing quarterback. The receiver tends to be lighter, faster and more agile to catch the



ball and run the touchdown. Both are key members of the team and have an incentive to work together. If the quarterback gets sacked, the receiver does not get a chance to score a touchdown and the entire team loses.

In hockey, the players who shoot right or left, bring particular strengths to the team and offset the shooter on the opposite wing. Both can learn from each other with the common goal of scoring. They obviously want to excel, but doing so at the expense of the team is self-defeating. Continuing with the sports analogy, communication is also a key to turning self-interest/politics into a positive resource. The left-winger must communicate to the right-winger that they are open to pass the puck. Together, they can score and they both get credit and win the game.

You cannot succeed as a team unless everyone communicates. Just ask the America's Cup sailing team, where turning the rudder and moving the sails in unison means the difference between a disaster and winning the America's Cup. Both managers and co-workers must do a better job in identifying each other's strengths and weakness to harness their individual strengths and offset weakness. For many years I worked with someone who was masterful at calming irate, difficult clients. I was in awe of her skill at making difficult people love her. I was the more strategic/creative thinker, and as a team we worked well together and had countless wins.

Lastly, culture is key. The days where managers saw merit in letting people compete like the Gladiators in the arena can only result in casualties. The casualties have real costs, and adversely impact the total organization, but also raise the question as to whether the victors are the kind of people you want long term. Their goal is their own personal success, not that of your total organization. The tone of the "right" culture must be set from the start. To quote noted psychologist, Benjamin Spock, "You don't instill discipline once the child is spoiled. You end up with a rebellious child, who will forever be a problem." Again, using the sports analogy, successful rowing teams decide from day one whether they want to work solo or as a team.

The adage of "how we do it better and smarter" will work if you want the engineer on your team to help you build the bridge over the swamp filled with alligators and snakes. Only when organizations recognize the by-product of office politics can it then be converted to a positive resource that helps us advance and succeed. 🦄

MARK COHAN is a Managing Partner at Resonate Search Group. He can be reached at: mark@resonatesearchgroup.com www.resonatesearchgroup.com Article first published by CSAE.com

Why do you want to be a member of the NSCDA?

- ✓ To Save 50% on the Conference Registration Fee
- ✓ For the \$250 Discount on Certification Fees
- ✓ To Take Advantage of Networking Opportunities
- ✓ To Enhance Your Professional Development
- ✓ To Receive Discounts and Benefits from community Supporters
- ✓ To Borrow Books From Our Library
- ✓ So You Can Become a Volunteer
- ✓ To Stay Connected With the National Picture



What is a Competency?

*The NSCDA's certification process is a competency-based Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) model.
what exactly does this mean?*

By CHERYL LASSE

An easy definition of competency is that it is something you need to be able to do well in a specific job role.

The term "competence" came into vogue following R.W. White's 1959 *Psychological Review* article, *Motivation Reconsidered: The Concept of Competence*. White explains that because people are intrinsically motivated to achieve competence, having competency models enables organizations to tap into our own desire to achieve proficiency.

In order to demonstrate competence, workers must be able to perform certain tasks or skills with a required level of proficiency. A competency is broken down into specific skills or tasks. Next, each skill or task can be described in terms of what it looks like — specific behaviors at different levels of proficiency. To achieve competence in a particular job, a person should be able to perform various tasks or skills at a target proficiency level. (see figure below.)

A competency model encompasses all the competencies, tasks and skills, behavioral examples, and proficiency requirements for a particular job. It focuses on factors the organization has marked "critical" to achieving the corporate strategy.

While all of this seems obvious to Talent Development and L&D professionals, it is often difficult to explain to those outside of our field. In other words, when I ask a group of salespeople or supply chain managers about the required competencies for their roles, I typically get blank stares.

A Different Approach: Categories


Let's consider a different way to describe "competency." I ask people to describe the "categories" of things that employees need to be able to do. Suddenly, the intangible seems tangible, and everyone can articulate what they need to do.

For example, if you ask a sales person about the categories of things they do, they will probably say account management, opportunity management, and administrative tasks. Or, if you ask a supply chain manager to outline their categories of tasks or behaviors, they will probably say supply chain management, people management, and coordination with other functions.

Once you have these categories, you can have a conversation with high performers, asking them: "Tell me everything you do in your job that is related to people management." This is where you can start to nail down the requisite skills for that role to succeed.

If one of those skills is related to career development, you can ask, "If you must facilitate career development discussions, what do you think it should look like? How often do you do it? How do you integrate it into your processes?" This is where you begin extracting best practices, which are simply examples of how to demonstrate proficiency in a particular skill.

Putting Competencies to Work for You

If you want to dialogue with leaders or line employees about competencies or generate support for building competency models in your organization, use language that everyone understands. Ask people about the “categories” or big buckets of things they need to do in their job. I believe you’ll find that you can generate more support for your competency initiatives. You can use the table to help you get started. 

Cheryl Lasse is SkillDirector’s managing partner, a role she’s held since 2002. Her goal is helping people and companies achieve their potential. She believes people are intrinsically motivated to excel, if they are given access to personalized learning and the opportunity to identify skill gaps for the job they have or the job they want. This philosophy has been embodied in the Self-Directed Learning Engine, the engine behind the ATD Career Navigator.

FACILITATE CAREER DEVELOPMENT DISCUSSIONS

Critical to success

Instructions: use this list to identify which level of proficiency best describes your behaviour, relative to the task. Italics represent potential specific examples of this behaviour.

Rating	Behavioural Examples
5 EXPERT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have a rhythm and a structure for conducting career development discussions. <i>For example, if I conduct quarterly reviews with a team member, I might ask, “what are you doing this quarter to prepare for your next role?” because it is part of my agenda.</i> Ensure employees understand career development tools. Encourage team members to initiate career discussions any time. Display skilled behaviours.
4 SKILLED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate the use of tools to help team members assess their skills for the job they want. Encourage them to prepare for the job they want next by actively trying to close skill gaps for those jobs. Display applied knowledge behaviours.
3 APPLIED KNOWLEDGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least annually, facilitate a career development discussion with each team member, considering both their short and long-term visions. <i>Believe that part of my role is to help team members reach their career goals and to groom them for the next position.</i>
2 GENERAL AWARENESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate career development discussions for high potentials as part of the succession planning process.
1 LIMITED AWARENESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feel that career development discussions should be led by HR. Facilitate such discussions when prompted by a team member.



Certification Update

Paula Romanow

Registrar, NSCDA




The NSCDA's Certification Program is moving full steam ahead. To date, we have over 80 new candidates at various stages in the process, and more coming in every day. With certification now enshrined in policy as a standard for centres, we are expecting this number to grow rapidly in the coming months.

This is stretching our resources to the limit at the moment, and resulting in some delays in moving candidates through the Structured Interview process (if this is you, please be patient; we're working as fast as we can!). Our assessors are all volunteers who have full time jobs and we appreciate beyond words the amount of time they're currently giving to this. Currently we have five new volunteer assessors almost through their mentorships, which will certainly help to some extent. But we still have a need for more people to become volunteer assessors. We'll be sending out a formal call in the new year; if you're a current CCDP, we'd love to hear from you!

The new policy of having all client-facing staff in Career Nova Scotia Centres holding a CCDP designation means that we're having to make some adjustments to our program, since some of these individuals may not have the minimum

current prerequisite of 5400 hours of full-time employment in the career development field over the last five years. We are currently exploring a number of options around this and will have more to say about them in the next newsletter.

We had hoped to hold an exam session this month, but we only have a few people ready to move forward to that step, so we have decided to wait until mid to late January. We'll keep everyone posted about times, dates and locations early in the new year.

Finally, just a reminder that you can find the answers to most questions about the certification process in the Candidate Information section under the Certification tab on the NSCDA website www.nscda.ca. You'll also find the application form, as well as the Candidate's Guide, and Nova Scotia Career Development Practitioners Core Competencies Profile. As well, you can talk to the NSCDA Registrar, by calling (902) 832-0332 or by e-mail at certification@nscda.ca. I am also happy to come to individual workplaces or other venues to meet with groups of interested CDPs and discuss the NSCDA Certification Program and process. 

Welcome to all our new members!

The response to the NSCDA's fall membership campaign has been wonderful and we've already welcomed 15 new members since October. This brings us up to more than 370 members.



Upcoming Information Sessions

January 18, 6pm - 8pm
February 22, 6pm - 8pm
March 15, 6pm - 8pm

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Looking for Professional Development Opportunities in 2016?

The NSCDA is your go-to place for Career Development Learning!

In support of the Province's new Employment Services Delivery Framework, the NSCDA is very excited about becoming the go-to place for career development training in Nova Scotia. Over the next few months, we'll be working hard developing workshops on a wide range of topics to be delivered in a variety of lengths, from convenient "lunch and learns" to full-day sessions. And everything we deliver can be used for Certification training or go towards your CCDP recertification hours!

We asked you what you wanted to see in your professional development opportunities, and drawing from your responses, the NSCDA has created four main topic streams: Certification; Practice; Management; and Self-care.

These streams go hand-in-hand with the competencies found in the *Nova Scotia Career Development Practitioners Core Competency Profile*, and the relevant profile codes will be identified for every PD session.

But our PD sessions offer more than just great learning! It's also a chance to catch up on what's happening within the profession, to discover new networking opportunities, and to foster an exchange of ideas with others in your field, as well as with our facilitators.



Some of the topics we're working on include:

- **Ethical Decision Making Model**
- **Career Theory Series – Part 3**
- **Employer Engagement Strategies**
- **Outside the Box Thinking on How To Make Programming More Appealing To The Unemployed Public**
- **Client Assessments**
- **Cultural Competencies**
- **Distressed, Disruptive and Unmotivated Clients: What To Do When They Walk Through The Door**
- **Regenerate the Age Advantaged Workforce**
- **Entrepreneurship as a Career Option**
- **Electronic Portfolios**
- **How to Beat the Digital Resume Readers**
- **Immigration Services Explained**
- **Social Media for Networking & Job Search**
- **Creating Work Opportunities with Rural Employers**
- **Diversity & Inclusion**
- **Mental Health**
- **Does Justice Matter" Follow Up Series**

We're always looking for ideas for sessions, as well as suggestions for speakers and facilitators. Have a topic, or know someone you think would be an awesome addition to our facilitator list let us know! You can reach Paulina Alfaro, our PD / Member Co-ordinator at: info@nscda.ca or (902) 832-0335.

Download your free copy at ceric.ca/mentalhealth

CAREER SERVICES GUIDE

SUPPORTING PEOPLE AFFECTED BY MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

NEASA MARTIN AND KATHY MCKEE | CERIC-FUNDED PROJECT

This guide along with supporting videos will help practitioners to consider beliefs that may limit opportunity, build awareness of recovery-oriented practices, and acquire the knowledge needed to better serve the **one in five Canadians** who experience mental health issues.

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- Knowing how peer support can support employment
- Understanding the impact of stigma and discrimination and potential solutions
- Ways to build collaborative partnerships across services to support clients
- Understanding mental illness and its treatment and accessing services
- Best practices in supporting employment and engaging employers

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"Thank you for developing Career Services Guide – Supporting People Affected by Mental Health Issues. More folks with mental health issues need the opportunity to work. Thanks for making your focus something THIS important. I have been in a good mood – for days – having learned that there is this support for those seeking employment and for those wanting to assist those wanting employment."

**– Cheryl Yarek, Case Manager/Specialty Peer Support Worker,
Trillium Health Centre, Mississauga, ON**

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Une version française du guide arrivera sous peu!

SEASON'S GREETINGS

*from the Board of Directors
and staff at*

NSCDA



Photo by Gail Doucette Peach