

January / February 2003

Feature Article

Lessons learned: Lynnview Ridge and the Imperial Oil refinery issue

By Sean French

A capacity crowd launched 2003 by attending the January 30th CPRS event *People, Politics and Property*. Imperial Oil External Relations – West Manager Hart Searle and External Relations – West Advisor Shawn Howard gave a presentation about the ongoing saga of the Lynnview Ridge-Imperial Oil refinery issue. Many CPRS members and public relations practitioners from the oil and gas sector attended the event, as did a couple of Lynnview Ridge residents.

The presentation began with an explanation of how the story broke, and how first Searle, and then

Howard took the point for Imperial Oil on this issue. When the story emerged, Searle was in charge of the issue while Howard did the community relations. After showing initiative and leading the charge while Searle was on vacation, Howard became more involved in the response and communications aspects.

Searle and Howard then stepped back and provided some context. Imperial Oil operated a refinery in the Lynnview Ridge area from 1923 to 1975. When it was shut down in 1975, the refinery was dismantled according to industry standards and practices and in keeping with existing legislation.

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CPRS Member Profile

Lisa Homer, APR



Some people have a clear idea of the career they want and plot their education to pursue it. Lisa Homer, APR, was not one of them. Lisa Homer has been a Calgary public relations practitioner since graduating from Mount Royal College's Communications Diploma program in 1988. But her route there was anything but planned. "When I graduated (from high school), I had no idea what I wanted to do. I was looking at speech pathology or veterinary medicine. I worked for a few years and saw an ad in the paper for the PR program at Mount Royal College," she says.

She applied, and was accepted. It didn't hurt that among her strengths were English and psychology. After graduation, Lisa joined Maureen Payne just after Maureen launched her own public relations consulting company. Since then, Lisa has gained a wealth of experience based on exposure to many sectors. She worked for the Centre for Performing Arts, the Red Cross, the City of Calgary, for a private public relations agency, and for Nova Gas before founding her own company.

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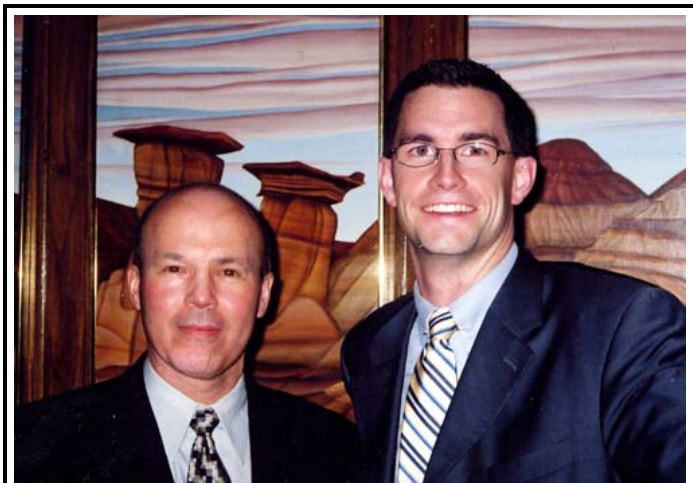
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From 1987 to 1990, a multi-stakeholder task force found resident blood lead levels normal. The City of Calgary subsequently conducted a due diligence review from 1999 to 2001, and a new task force was struck. As the task force finalized communication on the issue, and literally hours before an announcement was issued, the media got hold of the story and the issue became inflammatory.

At this time, Searle and Howard showed vintage video footage of upset and frightened residents clamouring for answers, and Searle stressed the need for communications based upon company principles. Both Searle and Howard said they focused on responsible, timely, public communication that was consistent with the best science while being protective of health and the environment. But they cautioned that what sounds good in theory can be difficult in practice.

Knowing that it was critical to understand the real health and environmental issues as quickly as possible, Imperial first gained that understanding, then worked with regulators to develop an action plan, and then communicated to residents. Through public consultation, they attempted to build residents' concerns into remediation plans. They tried to keep the public consultation processes and the legal processes separate, and they managed to do so for roughly 18 months after the story broke.

After the presentation, the audience had a number of tough questions for Searle and Howard. One person asked if they could have been more proactive in anticipating a leak. Searle replied that with the benefit of hindsight perhaps they should have anticipated a leak. But because they were working together in good faith with other stakeholders, they were somewhat blindsided.



*Hart Searle (left) and Shawn Howard (right),
Imperial Oil External Relations practitioners*

Another person asked about the go forward plan. Howard said he could not speak to that because legal process will guide how Imperial goes forward. Answering a follow-up question regarding reputation, Searle said Imperial needs to keep communication open with the Calgary Health Region and Alberta Environment. He added internal Imperial Oil communication might also need attention, noting his company did not know at the outset it had several employees living in the Lynnwood area (the neighbourhood immediately adjacent Lynnview Ridge). Searle said it is hard to gauge, but anecdotal input suggests there have been negative as well as positive aspects with respect to reputation management.

Appreciative audience members took what they could away from the event, including lessons in reputation management, ongoing crisis communication, public consultation, and government and media relations. There was general recognition of the tremendous challenges Searle and Howard faced. Howard confirmed this when he said the issue was a career maker or breaker. He said his involvement in the long-term crisis situation and how he helped manage it has given him invaluable experience.

This event offered value for any public relations practitioner faced with difficult communications challenges. One audience member summed it up, saying, "There but for the grace of God go I." Indeed, though we all hope for the best in our public relations practice, it is wise to prepare for the worst. Events such as *People, Politics and Property* help us do just that.

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Lisa Homer, APR

Lisa enjoys communications strategizing and synthesizing information into a message that anyone can understand, no matter the topic. "When you're sitting at the big table with MBAs, lawyers, accountants and planners, you have to speak about the importance of communications and its potential impact in the terminology and language they're prepared to hear, or you're not going to make any progress," she adds.

Lisa made the move from the corporate world to her own company when Nova and TransCanada Pipelines merged. Several packages were offered to departing employees. Although one was targeted at those planning to start a business, Lisa didn't jump at it. Instead, she accepted a community service package. Contract work came along, and she eventually moved into consulting.

So what does it take to make it as a consultant? Lisa says you have to have a strong belief in yourself and your abilities. "Your reputation is what you're selling. You need to be flexible, able to live with constant change, and you need to be firm in the kinds of work you want to do. You have to be prepared to not be paid every two weeks and for the highs and lows of having nothing for a month."

She observes that the biggest change she's seen in the public relations industry is the influence of electronic communication such as e-mail, video conferencing and the Internet. But she believes the underlying role of public relations itself hasn't changed. "Our role is still to serve as the conscience of the organization and to understand its stakeholders, and that hasn't changed," says Lisa. "If anything, it's become even more important."

Lisa assumes the mantle of national president of the Canadian Public Relations Society in June 2003. As she prepares to begin her term, Lisa says she's set some ambitious goals. "What I'd really like to see is public relations as a profession really promoted and better understood among the groups we work with--human resources professionals, engineers, accountants, and lawyers." She adds she would especially like to help people understand the role communication plays, and the impact it has on the organization and the bottom line.



CPRS chapter research nets tremendous feedback

By Alison Pidskalny

Thank you to CPRS members who participated in the recent Town Crier Awards survey and focus groups. The results are in, and awards & recognition committee co-chairs Jennifer Meads and Alison Pidskalny are reviewing what people had to say. Over the next month, they will make recommendations based on the feedback and present them to the CPRS Calgary board.

"We had good response to the survey and feel confident making recommendations based on this research," says Jennifer. Mount Royal

College students Lara Hamnett, Jeff Nish, Allison Tooton, and Amber Wecker conducted the research under the guidance of instructor Jim Wood.

All surveys were entered in a draw for a trip for two to the Delta Lodge at Kananaskis. Congratulations to lucky prizewinner Ginger Rozmus. Watch for a summary of the findings and learn what the awards & recognition committee has in store in the next issue of *Maxim*.

A winning accreditation work sample starts with the basics

By Melissa Rolfe, APR

Experienced CPRS members who've chosen not to pursue their accreditation often cite the required work sample as the main barrier, saying they're unsure of what's expected or doubt they have a project that meets the criteria. In fact, a successful work sample is one that's built on the basics, which includes the RACE formula of research, analysis, communication, and evaluation.

The deadline for this year's accreditation candidates to submit their work samples to the CPRS national office is approaching, and CPRS Toronto offers these suggestions to help current candidates prepare—and prospective applicants plan ahead.

- ✓ Read the CPRS Accreditation Handbook, paying careful attention to the RACE formula. Examiners are judging less on layout than on the content you provide.
- ✓ Specify objectives and identify ways to measure performance. Refer to the objectives in your evaluation.
- ✓ Review at least two samples of recently successful work samples, available through the CPRS national library housed at Mount Royal College in Calgary.
- ✓ Choose your sample carefully. It doesn't need to be a high-profile event. Examiners want to know your ability to strategize, plan, execute, and analyze as a senior practitioner.
- ✓ Select a manageable topic. If it was one segment of a larger initiative, briefly explain it in context in the introduction and focus on what you were responsible for.
- ✓ Choose a project that's as current as possible, in the unlikely event you have to defer a year.
- ✓ Prepare an outline first and review it with an accredited mentor.
- ✓ Ask one or more accredited practitioners to review your work sample before submitting it.
- ✓ In your evaluation, include recommendations. No matter how successful the event or campaign, there must have been things that could have been improved and you should comment on what changes you would make and why.
- ✓ You must include a budget (percentages or actual figures) and indicate whether you kept to it.

If preparing a good work sample is relatively straightforward, why are some failed or disqualified? Even accomplished practitioners can miss or err in some of the requirements. The CPRS national office instructs examiners to follow strictly the criteria set out for candidates and to disqualify candidates for any of the following:

- Failing to follow the guidelines for the submission, such as omitting an abstract or exceeding the word limit.
- Having an insufficient role in the chosen project, or failing to be significantly involved at every stage.
- Missing any component of the RACE formula.

Low scores should be expected for infractions such as:

- ✗ Providing inadequate budget information; for example, saying simply that sufficient resources were provided or that money was requested on an as-needed basis during the course of the project.
- ✗ Showing inappropriate or insufficient research or evaluation methods.
- ✗ Failing to show coherence or a strong connection between the results of the research performed, the objectives set, the approach taken, the vehicles used, and the outcomes obtained.
- ✗ Failing to relate the evaluation with the project's objectives.

The Calgary chapter of CPRS offers members who are enrolled in or considering the accreditation program a number of supports as they prepare for the process. These include a general information session that explains what's required overall, a work sample workshop, and the help of mentors. For more information, contact any member of the local accreditation committee: Co-chairs Diane Rennie, APR or Lorelei Piotto, APR; Pam Brandt, APR; Sneh Seetal, or Melissa Rolfe, APR.

The Countdown is on to 2005

By Monique Chenier and Henry Stevens, APR

The wheels have begun to turn as CPRS Calgary begins the countdown to hosting public relations professionals from across Canada at the 2005 CPRS National Conference.

The committees needed to organize this prestigious national event are taking shape, with CPRS Calgary members stepping up to serve as committee chairs or co-chairs. "Seasoned professionals with a range of backgrounds have stepped forward to lead the conference planning effort over the next two years," says conference co-chair Henry Stevens, APR. This diversity will ensure the Calgary conference meets and exceeds attendees' expectations on both professional and personal satisfaction levels.

Although targeting CPRS members first for volunteer opportunities, outside expertise can also come in handy. "Since many public relations professionals, myself included, admit to being numerically challenged, CMA Deanna Hansuk is a welcome addition to the committee," says conference co-chair Monique Chenier. Deanna has joined the team as treasurer/secretary, responsible for budgeting, tracking income and expenses, and recording the minutes of the committee meetings. Deanna is excited to be part of the team and will use this volunteer experience to maintain her own CMA accreditation.

Five key committees will handle all conference-planning responsibilities. Each committee, headed by two co-chairs, is now looking for dedicated and excited volunteers to ensure a successful conference. All conference committees have a lot to accomplish, so interested CPRS members and student members are invited to contact the committee chairs (listed below) to volunteer their expertise and benefit from this career-building opportunity.

PROGRAM: The program committee is charged with ensuring a world-class learning opportunity for attendees. Committee responsibilities include: program criteria and development; selecting facilitators and speakers; providing program content description for marketing materials; onsite speaker coordination; and speaker recognition.

CO-CHAIRS

Janice Robertson, APR Office: (403) 240-6118
Email: jlrobertson@mtroyal.ab.ca
Sheridan McVean, APR Office: (403) 531-2777
Email: sheridan.mcvean@mcvean.net

LOGISTICS & HOSPITALITY: The logistics & hospitality committee will coordinate the many logistical requirements. They are responsible for planning and implementing all networking and social events, and will be responsible for the following: meeting room arrangements; audio-visual delivery; food and beverage; signage; planning the National Awards gala; opening and closing events; networking opportunities; field trips; spousal/family program; and concierge service.

CO-CHAIRS

Sari Shernofsky, APR Office: (403) 251-6507
Email: sari.shernofsky@shaw.ca
Mika Madunicky Office: (403) 297-8172
Email: mika.madunicky@gov.ab.ca

SPONSORSHIP: The sponsorship committee has the high-profile responsibility of securing sponsorship to contribute to a financially successful conference. Responsibilities include sponsor recruitment, management, and recognition as well as sponsor exhibit arrangements. You'll note this committee still needs co-chairs. Any volunteers?

CO-CHAIRS

Monique Chenier Office: (403) 280-0575
Email: mpchenier@shaw.ca
Henry Stevens, APR Office: (403) 531-0331
Email: hstevens@national.ca

MARKETING & PROMOTION: The marketing & promotion committee will ultimately be charged with attracting attendees locally, nationally and internationally through media relations, Web site and printed collateral.

CO-CHAIRS

Mona Gauvreau, APR Office: (403) 269-5957
Email: mona@prworkscanada.com
Lisa Falkowsky, APR Office: (403) 294-9592
Email: lfalkowsky@webershandwick.com

VOLUNTEERS: The volunteer committee will work to ensure maximum volunteer involvement. Responsibilities include volunteer recruitment, management and recognition; scheduling on-site volunteers; compiling registration kits; staffing the registration centre; and moderating sessions.

CO-CHAIR

Alison Pidskalny Office: (403) 294-9592
Email: apidskalny@webershandwick.com

Mark the dates in your calendar – June 14 to 18, 2005 – and be prepared to give your career a jump-start!

Ruth Hammond Scholarship winner announced

Denise Antle, a native of Burin, Newfoundland, is the 2002 winner of the Ruth Hammond Scholarship awarded to a public relations student in the final year of the Bachelor of Public Relations program at Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU), Halifax, Nova Scotia.

The Ruth Hammond Scholarship was established by Ruth's friends and colleagues in the Canadian Public Relations Society (Toronto) to honour her lifetime commitment to public relations education in Canada. The scholarship, currently awarded by MSVU, acknowledges a student who has completed at least two public relations co-op work terms and who has demonstrated outstanding academic achievement, leadership abilities and dedication to establishing a career in the public relations field.

Denise Antle began her studies in 1999 and has consistently earned an overall A average. She has just completed her third co-op work term at the City of Kitchener in Ontario where her strong organizational and editing skills are being put to excellent use. In a work term with the federal government, she brought exceptional intelligence and a strong willingness to learn to her assignment. A corporate placement demonstrated her ability to contribute in a team environment. Denise graduates this summer and is already being courted by employers.

Ruth Hammond, APR, is a life member of the Canadian Public Relations Society, Inc., an honorary fellow of CPRS, and holds an honorary doctorate from Mount Saint Vincent University.

The Ruth Hammond Scholarship Fund is managed by the Communications and Public Relations Foundation, which promotes the advancement of communications and public relations as vital functions in society, is dedicated to the public interest and increasing public knowledge and awareness of the role of communications and public relations in daily life. The foundation accepts individual and corporate contributions towards educational initiatives nationwide.

For more information about the foundation and its public relations education initiatives, contact Barbara Sheffield, Chair, Communications and Public Relations Foundation, Suite 1515, 73 Widdicombe Hill Blvd, Toronto, Ontario, M9R 4B3, or phone 416 242-7009 or email b.sheffield@prmediaconnection.com

A Note from the Chair

I hope you enjoy our first newsletter of 2003! We've been receiving some great member feedback on our editorial content and will continue to strive to incorporate your suggestions in our upcoming issues. I would also like to welcome Larry Lalonde to the position of Maxim Co-Chair. Larry will be assuming the duties of Chair while I am away on maternity leave and is a strong asset to our committee. Please feel free to contact Larry at larry.lalonde@sait.ab.ca if you have suggestions or comments regarding Maxim.

**All the best...See you in September!
Bonnie Elgie, APR**

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Unmask the Future

Legacy Gala continues a winning tradition

By Desiree Magnus

The Legacy continues. On March 28, 2003, second-year students of the Mount Royal College public relations program invite you to help *Unmask the Future* at the 6th annual Legacy Gala. Still serving its original purpose, the gala continues to promote the MRC program and raise money for the Legacy Scholarship Fund. Each year, one full-time student is awarded the scholarship based on a demonstrated involvement in extra-curricular activities in the public relations field and financial need.

Students benefit from the chance to meet the variety of communications professionals who attend the gala. It's also a great opportunity for students to showcase their talents to future employers. In turn, practitioners can see firsthand the wealth of student talent available for work-term placements and as future full-time employees.

By moving this year's event to a Friday evening, the planning committee hopes to foster an environment that appeals to both communications practitioners and their respective spouses and dates. With dinner, dancing, live entertainment and a silent auction, the evening celebrates the communications community and its future. A multi-media presentation showcasing the profession is in the works, and practitioners should be prepared for MRC students to contact them for contributions.

Watch for your invitation and please join us as we *Unmask the Future*. If you have any questions, please contact legacy2003@hotmail.com.

CPRS Calgary Board

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Members on the Move

Ann Mallory, APR, now works on contract part time for Imperial Oil Resources on the MacKenzie Gas Project. For the past two years she has been on a part-time contract with the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers.

Brent Shervey has left Korn/Ferry International to buy an interest in the local office of Boyden Global Executive Search. Boyden is one of the top 10 executive search firms in the world, with offices in over 40 countries. The Calgary office is the only Canadian office (for now!), and has been up and running for over five years. Brent will continue to conduct executive searches in a variety of areas including communications, public relations, investor relations, and government relations.

Susan Elford, APR, has left her position as a senior communications representative at TransCanada PipeLines to start Elford Communications. She has a special interest in writing, publications and strategic communications counsel.

Have you made a job change? Let your colleagues know by sending us your new job details.

E-mail larry.lalonde@sait.ab.ca with the information.

Volunteer Opportunities

Co-Chair for CPRS Calgary Membership Committee

Are you interested in taking a more active role in CPRS? Would you like to have a positive impact on the direction of your Calgary Member Society?

The Membership Director is looking for a CPRS full member who is interested in the volunteer position of Co-Chair for the Membership Committee. The time commitment for this position is approximately five or more hours per week. This position involves sharing the Director's responsibilities in the following areas:

- Recruiting members and providing information for prospective members;
- Implementing strategies to improve benefits of membership;
- Recruiting volunteers to fill positions;
- Coordinating annual follow-up for membership renewals;
- Coordinating member communication;
- Attending board meetings when the Director is unavailable;
- Ensuring the membership list is maintained.

The Co-Chair will also be given the opportunity to join the Board as the Membership Director at the end of the current Director's term in July 2003. Any members interested in becoming involved with the Board of Directors by playing an integral role in the Membership Portfolio, please contact Shawn Kelly at shawnkelly@shaw.ca.

Other CPRS Calgary Volunteer Opportunities

If you are interested in volunteering for CPRS Calgary, please contact the appropriate committee chair listed on the CPRS Calgary Web site. Please note you must be a member of CPRS Calgary to volunteer on any committees.

Readers Respond

Maxim is moving to become a more engaging and vital publication. Part of this initiative is a "Readers Respond" section. We welcome your comments on any of the stories in this issue. Please forward your insights to sean@thecomunicators.net.

Re: December Maxim article *More than one mistake made in "moron" affair*

I enjoyed your story and insight, but offer a slightly different view than Daryl's: I have a hunch Bob Fife will do just fine, and suspect his actions were not only well thought out but quite deliberate. He now has a direct line into Martin's camp, and any reputational hit will fade long before Chretien is succeeded. It's also important to note that Toronto - and in this case most certainly Winnipeg - would have made the call re: the story and its placement. By that point Fife was a footnote in a much larger political imbroglio.

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