

Welcome and Thank You

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I was worried that it would be difficult to articulate how I have changed and what my leadership Calgary experience has been to such a large group of people, most of whom I don't know, and in a way that you would all understand. But then I realized that I was not living up to one of my biggest learnings this year – that the only person that I should worry about disappointing is myself.

I thought that the easiest way for me to articulate how I have grown over the past year would be through sharing a story.

Every year, on my birthday, my parents have encouraged me to reflect on what I have learned over the past year. Last year, just before I started on my Leadership Calgary journey, I shared that my learning was that I can't control other people, only my reaction to them. I thought that this was a pretty deep learning for my 27th birthday. However, that was before my eyes were opened through Leadership Calgary and I became much wiser, and at the same time, much more ignorant.

Since then, I have had a full year of experience with leadership Calgary.

When I signed up for this program I wanted to understand how society influences our decisions, and I wanted to take more risks in my life.

I have learned so much about how our actions are shaped by societal structures this year, but more importantly, how I, and each of us, contribute to the development, maintenance and perpetuation of these systems...the systems that form and inform our world. Therefore, we each have the power, ability and responsibility to influence change in the world around us.

My second goal was to take more risks. I can't say that I have taken more risks as a result of Leadership Calgary...YET. But I have learned about how my actions, and our collective actions contribute to the risks that we face as a species. And that we can't afford to learn by trial and error anymore.

Another big change has been my understanding of leadership. Last September, I described leadership as supporting many people to work together to be able to accomplish something. But I had never thought about what we should be working towards. Leadership Calgary has provided me with a framework and tools to really think

about what most needs doing and to contemplate what it might take to actually do these things.

So, a year later, this April, I sat down on my birthday to reflect on what I had learned in the past year. This is some of what I wrote:

- The world is the best educational experience.
- Reality and what we perceive as reality are most often different.
- You can learn a lot from collaborating with people who are different from you.
- Deciding what most needs doing and doing it is not easy, but very important.
- There are a ton of great, inspiring non-fiction books out there to read.
- Sometimes someone who you don't initially understand turns out to be a great friend and teacher.
- We don't take enough time to explore and develop our own capabilities, capacities and skills through experience anymore.
- Activism comes in many forms.
- And Finally...Our own actions can inspire others.

I would like to speak a bit to my last point. I have met so many amazing, inspiring people this year through my Leadership Calgary experience: my classmates, my guides, the program committee and the staff at Volunteer Calgary. This community has shown me through example that my own actions can serve as an inspiration to others, as they have each, in their own way, inspired me.

No one has been a better teacher of this lesson than Ken.

Ken – Thank you for reaching into the depths of your capacities, caring and potential to do something so meaningful and important. You saw what needed to be done and did it without being told what to do. And, thank you for motivating not only me, but many others to do the same.