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women

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## ***Excerpts From Moments of Truth Top 100 Most Powerful Women Summit***

The closing session at the Summit was entitled Moments of Truth. This plenary presentation was conducted as a series of intimate interviews, hosted by Patricia Lovett-Reid, Senior Vice President of TD Waterhouse and the host of Canada's only national live, prime-time call-in television program on personal finance, MoneyTalk. Three women took the stage (individually with Patricia) for this session –

- Sylvia D. Chrominska - Executive Vice-President – Scotiabank
- Dee Parkinson-Marcoux - Director for four publicly traded companies and two private companies. She also serves as a consultant and strategic advisor to Southern Pacific Petroleum and Ensyn Petroleum Inc.
- Myself

I came on stage last. I quickly realized that this had been intentional since my story would encompass success and failure, work and home, children and business. After all the title of the session was - *Moments of Truth*.

My greatest moment of truth came in 1995 when I realized that I had traded off "mummy I'm home" for "not in my backyard" and "let's do lunch".

I realized that I had spent the previous 15 years struggling to facilitate large-scale change throughout large corporate and public bodies – only to discover that that the outcomes were only skin deep. The IT sector was more interested in identifying the next "killer application" than in collaborating in technology enablement; while, the health care system was being held hostage by self-interest. To have realized that dedicated efforts, along with those of my many colleagues, had produced such futile deliverables forced me to truly question my priorities.

This is where my journey really began. As my questioning increased, so did my awareness of the environment around me – my home, my children, my marriage. I came face-to-face with a stark reality. Two of my children were struggling with drug and alcohol afflictions and addiction. The slippery slope of sanity gave way as I experienced the nightmare of suicide watch. As those moments gripped me, I realized that the only real accomplishment that would define me at the end of the day was the well being of my children and the enduring fabric of our family. As the weeks and months followed, I participated in the greatest and most rewarding change process of which I have ever been a part – that of my sons and their family support system. (I quip that my sons went into recovery, and I stopped drinking.) As their recovery found root, so did the support of our daughters and other son.

We have endured many other challenges since that dark night of the soul – from business failures to untimely departures of close family members and friends. And yet, my understanding and practice of change and transformational mastery has forever been sealed in this experience. I have learned that one cannot change the world (nor a business, nor a policy nor anything) until one is in transformation oneself – the deeper the change – the greater the potential for external impact. Our outer world is merely a mirror of our inner sanctum. If what one is experiencing is anything less than magnificent...then look inside – the answer is right there.

My work is no longer work. It is a labour of love. I take on hard and complex problems facing organizations of all stripes and sectors because I believe there is always a solution – not necessarily the one that is staring you in the face – but one that will have enduring impact. Corporate and societal innovation emerges from individuals who are embarking on vital and vulnerable journeys of personal transformation, who are enriched and supported by a strong family fabric – knowing full well that the definition of family is “heat bond” rather than simply a “blood bond”. We live in a time of microcosms – the individual is the microcosm of the society he or she is wishing to shape. My favourite quote by Gandhi masterfully reflects this thinking – “We must be the Change we wish to see in the world.”

I am tremendously proud of the places I am invited into and the nature of the work I am asked to perform. I also have not strayed from the epiphany related to my family. Patricia Lovett-Reid asked how my children are today. Nikki, Rob and Terralynn are all well. Graham is a work in progress. Reid my youngest son is my role model of transformation. Today he is on the President’s List of Dalhousie University. He is studying to become a journalist. This is the poem he wrote for me on Mothers Day that reflects the relationship we have developed –

Encompassed in the playground of childhood  
And nurtured by the breast of love’s way,  
As mother’s milk tasted of wisdom  
Her grace offered strength to each day.

To celebrate her influence, her guidance  
And the torch she passed down to her seeds,  
The legacy of everlasting brilliance  
And the courage and bravery to lead.

I couldn’t say it better.

Lesley