Governing in divisive times

FALL PD DAY 2023

MANITOBA
School Boards
ASSOCIATION

# First, some basic definitions: leadership; trust

Let's start out with some basic definitions of what leadership, and the public trust, actually are.

What is leadership?

Those who wear "The Crown"? Those who "make a difference" in the world? Those who fight for the cause? Those who take a stand? Those who confront or challenge the "system"?

So, what is leadership? Some feel that it belongs to those who wear the crown. Some feel that it's those who challenge the system, those who stand up for their cause, those who fulfill some type of authority role. And here's some examples of those who tend to fit that bill.

The problem with such definitions
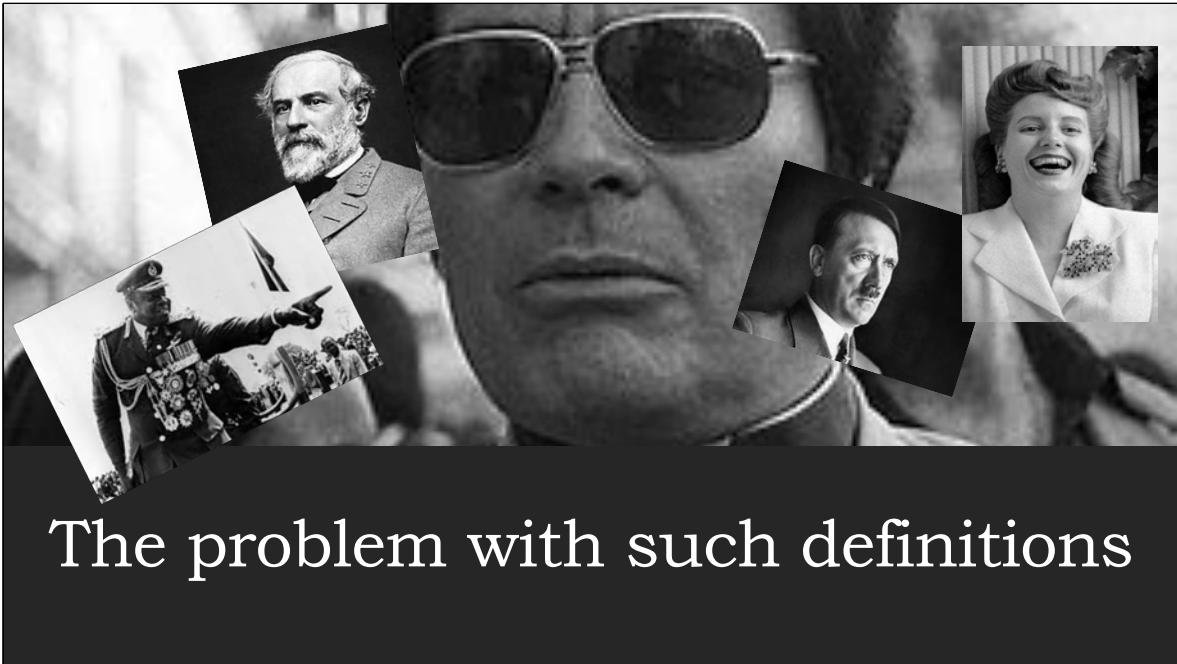
But the problem is, there's also others that fit this bill, if you use those same definitions, as these definitions would equally apply to the things that they did.

MAYBELLINE
MAYBE IT'S PHOTOSHOP.

"I was ashamed of myself when I realized life was a costume party; and I attended with my real face."

Maybe you're born with it… or maybe…

Some believe that leadership is something that you're born with. Maybe you have charisma as a leader. Maybe it's something that's innate to you, that is to say, that just comes "naturally" on a daily basis.

Nope, none of those things...

Although they are important characteristics and functions of what being a leader is all about

And some people believe that if you have or demonstrate any of these qualities, you're a leader, and potentially an authority figure. But leadership is none of those things.

and the quest for a unified theory of leadership

Over the last few decades, researchers have been on a quest to find the definition of what genuine leadership actually means. And there's been a lot of research invested in this subject by way of answering that question.

Some have been searching for this theory a very long time…

Some have been at it for a very, very long time!

> *True love never fails.*

So, let's find out what the gurus have discovered. A letter was written back in '68. To be more precise, that's 1,968 years ago! One guru in particular has cited the contents of this letter as defining what leadership is truly all about. It is found in the first letter to the Corinthians. "Love is patient and is kind. It does not envy and does not boast. It is not proud, it does not dishonour others. It is not self seeking, it is not easily angered and keeps no record of wrongs. Love

does not delight in the evils of the world, but rejoices in the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres.

True love never fails.

The grand unified theory of leadership is:

True leaders practice true LOVE!

So the one person who has made it his life's work to discover this definition of authentic leadership, John Maxwell-- who I'm sure most of you have heard of, because he's written nearly 100 books on the art of leadership-- has defined the practice of leadership in terms of the kind of genuine and true love as described in that first letter to the Corinthians. Regardless of your own persuasion, the point is that, at the heart of what being a leader is all about, is love. If you don't have that,

you're not going to be an effective
leader in today's society.

What did they love and how did they show it? What impact did it make?

So if we return to look at the examples of leadership that I provided earlier, you can ask, "what did they love?" And "how did they show it?" "What impact did it make in the world and for those around them?" And you can evaluate the legacies left by these leaders in a very different frame when you ask those simple questions. Those questions are probably the best barometer that you have, to see whether somebody exercised authentic leadership for their community or whether they didn't.

By contrast

And for these folks you can ask those same questions, and you can answer them pretty quickly, to know whether they actually exemplified love to those in their community, or whether they did not.

> *As school trustees, these three remain important:*
>
> *yourself, your school division and your community*
>
> *But the greatest duty towards these, is love.*

So I'm going to reframe the contents of that first letter to the Corinthians for you as school trustees. Now these three remain important: yourself, your school division and your community. And the greatest duty that you have, towards each of these, is love.

Do you love your school division?

So I'm going to ask-- how many of you love your school division?

Do you love your community?

ONLY SOME OF THE COMMUNITY?   OR ALL OF THE COMMUNITY?

Do you love your community? And, in keeping with that, do you love only a part of your community? Or do you love all of the people in your community?

Do you love yourself?

Now, best of all. Do you love yourself?

Do you love yourself...

enough?

Do you love yourself enough? This last question might be completely disconnected for you, in terms of what leadership is. But I'm going to tell you that if you don't do a lot of self work you're not going to be effective as a leader, because an important part of what leadership comes with, is confronting your fears, your anxieties, your hangups, your hurts, your pains, your joys in life. You need to know and love yourself in order to make sure that you steer the core essence of who

you can and should be, into what being a leader is all about. As we will see later in the presentation, this self-love and doing the work needed to get you to a healthy place will help in avoiding some of the pitfalls that can interfere with your leadership and practice of love-based leadership, all because of your own lived experience.

How many are cringing already?

So I'm sure all of you agree with all of this, right? How many are cringing already? ☺

What does it mean to exercise public trust?

What does it mean to exercise the public trust as a trustee? You're the only elected officials in this province who actually have the word "trust" in your title. So it was pretty important to the founders of this province that you live up to that word.

Exercising public trust

"I represent the people who elected me to office"

"I need to do what is right for my community"

"I must hold the system accountable"

"I must fight for the rights of all students"

"I must balance the books"

"I will do my best for the community"

"I will do what is best for the community"

So these are some statements that are commonly made when people tend answer the question "what does public trust mean?" They sound good, right? They're what you're supposed to say?

Exorcising public trust

"I **must** represent **every elector**"

"I need to do what is right for **every person in** my community"

"I must hold **myself** accountable **by working with others to build better tomorrows**"

"I must fight for the rights of **every student**"

"I must **exercise balance**"

"I will **bring my best self** for the sake of my community"

"**In love**, I will **promote the good of** the **entire** community"

But there's a problem with a lot of those statements. So let's exorcise those standard definitions of what the public trust means. Compare the two slides. Reflect on each statement and see how the subtle changes made between "exercising" and "exorcising" the public trust actually have subtle, yet far-reaching and important differences, when it comes to your practice of this sacred trust that you have been elected to fulfill. Note very carefully that there is an impactful difference

between "all" and "every". It becomes key to how you demonstrate love and leadership for the benefit of your community and every person who lives in that community.

Are we really living in divided times?

So how many believe that we're really living in divided times?
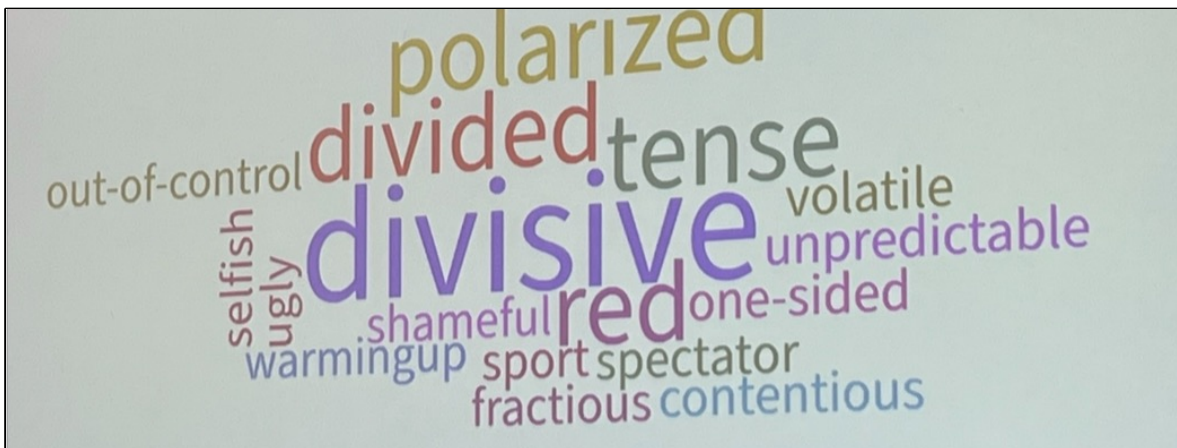
If you feel we are, you are not alone

If you do feel that you are living in divided times. You're not alone. This is a screen capture that I took when attending the summer institute of the US Executive Directors of State School Board Associations last year. The question was asked "please use one word to describe the times that we are living in". These were the answers that were most commonly identified.

In context

Now there are some who might believe that things aren't really as bad as they have been at other points in our history. The logic would run thus: if we were really living in divided times, let's not forget our shared history as humanity– it could really be much, much worse. Let's face it, we're even "divided" on whether we are living in "divided" times!

THE CAPTURE OF BATOCHE,

THAT

Caption: 1885 Lithograph of the Battle of Batoche, culmination of the Northwest Rebellion/Resistance. The very ongoing discussion as to whether it was a "Rebellion" or a "Resistance" serves as a reminder that the racial divide and perceptions of community rights which distinguished this period in our history continues to have enduring impacts and effects to this very day.

DOESN'T

Caption: early struggles for the right to vote by the first women to achieve voting rights in Canada, a period characterizing intense dialogue and debates around gender divides

MAKE

Caption: iconic image of the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike, one of the most historic events relating to economic divisions within society

DIVISION

Caption: A caricature from the 1 July 1983 edition of La Liberté, community newspaper of Manitoba's Francophone community, depicting political and cultural divisions regarding Manitoba's largest minority language community, following the firebombing of the headquarters of the Société Franco-manitobaine du Manitoba that year.

ANY

Caption: 1980s rally held at the Manitoba Legislative Building in support of the ending of employment-related discrimination in relation to LGBTQ2SIA* community members.
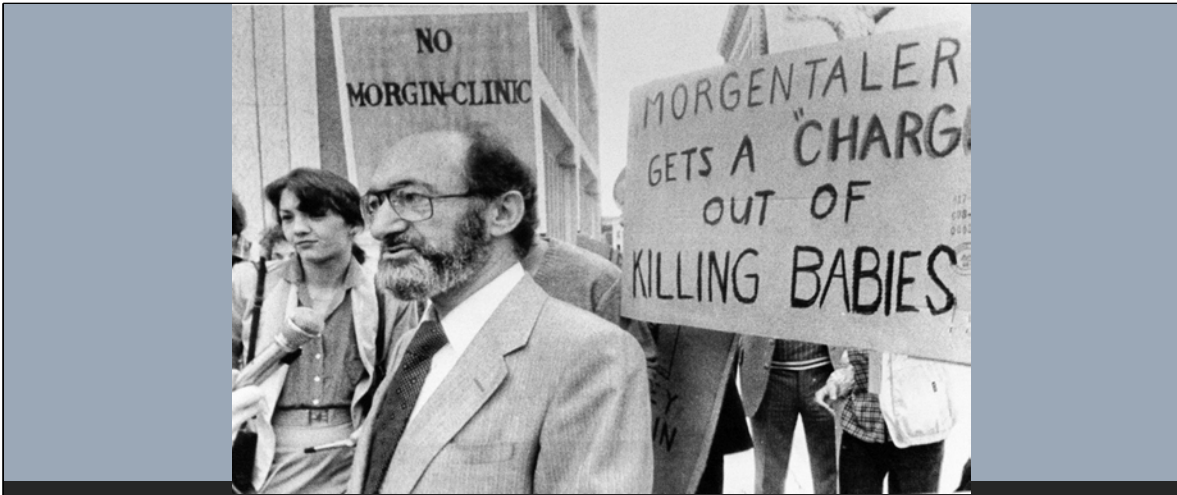
LESS

Caption: the medical practice of Dr. Henry Morgentaler in Winnipeg and Montreal became a flashpoint for considerable and enduring moral, religious and ethical division around pro-choice and pro-life divides within society.

INTENSE

Caption: the 2021 toppling of the statue of Queen Victoria before the Manitoba Legislative Building came to symbolize divisions arising from historical interpretation and experiences, while also marking ongoing racial, ethnic and cultural divisions in Manitoba society.

OR

Caption: the September 2023 protests and counterprotests across cities in Manitoba and Canada, often involving significant expressions around religious, cultural, sexual and gender rights and protections, in respect of public education of children.

CHALLENGING!

Caption: the November 2023 rallies in support of Israel and Palestine in the wake of conflicts occurring in those territories, the most recent in a series of political, cultural, ethnic and religious divisions that have persisted across several millennia, since the times of Isaac and Ishmael, Judea and Philistia.

Top 15 Things That Tend to Divide Us From One Another

- History and collective memory
- Race, culture and ethnicity
- Religion and spirituality
- Sexuality and gender identity
- Philosophy, ideology and politics
- Wealth and economics
- Opinions

As seen from the preceding photos, each represents a select piece of Manitoba's history as a birthplace for division. From the founding of this province, all the way through to the present day we have been a hotbed of cultural, social, religious and sexual divisions. So being a leader in Manitoba is about exercising the ability to navigate through division, for they've always been a part of the very fabric of what Manitoba has been about.

What are some of the things that tend to divide us? Well, here's the top 15. While I won't go through all of them, what I do wish to note is that for each dimension, they represent important parts of a person's identity. What you identify as, what you are, who you are.

Morality: the catalyst for cataclysm

Why is it so difficult for opposing groups to talk to each other? Why do debates quickly descend into arguments and name-calling?

Jonathan Haidt identifies five categories of moral values as a way to get to the root of what unites or binds communities together.

Care/Harm

Fairness/Cheating

Loyalty/Betrayal

Authority/Subversion

Sanctity/Degradation

Now, those factors, race, culture, ethnicity, religion, politics, ideology, etc., they don't cause division in and of themselves. They do define what people are and who they identify as,but what tends to cause the division is people's morality and moral interpretation of these many identities. You must know that in this context, morality can be a secular way of seeing as well as a religious one.

One author, Jonathan Haidt, identified

5 categories of moral values that we
all tend to hold and these are
important to know and recognize. When
somebody perceives that one person's
identity is conflicting with their own,
or that somebody hasn't acted in a way
that either shows care, fairness,
loyalty, authority, or sanctity to the
identity that someone holds, conflicts
can arise, creating division. This is
particularly true if, instead, one side
of the interaction perceives that
you're demonstrating harm, cheating,
betrayal, subversion, or that you're
degrading what they hold to be "holy".
That's where the division comes from,
and that is what you need to navigate
through. Recognizing your own, as well
as others' "moral" interpretation of
who you are, what you stand for, or
what you do, can go a long way to
understanding what causes division in
community.

The changing face of Canada
According to Statistics Canada, 2021

Now again, these divisions don't exist in and of themselves. Moral flashpoints are often triggered because of changes. Change is a part of everybody's life, and we often know what the change is and where it is happening.

At the societal level as a whole, change is constant.

So let's look at some of the important changes that are taking place in this country that will often lead to the

fraction and the friction that you may
be encountering as school boards, or,
if you haven't already, that you may
encounter in the future.

Manitoba

Chinese Polish
English
Indian (India) Métis Mennonite
German
Filipino British Isles
Cree Ukrainian
Russian
First Nations (North American Indian)
Irish Scottish
Icelandic French Dutch
Canadian

So these are all taken from the latest census. This is a profile of Manitoba by cultural identity, based on what respondents to the last census identified as their cultural heritage. And you can see overwhelmingly, that most people in this room probably fit one or more of these cultural definitions.
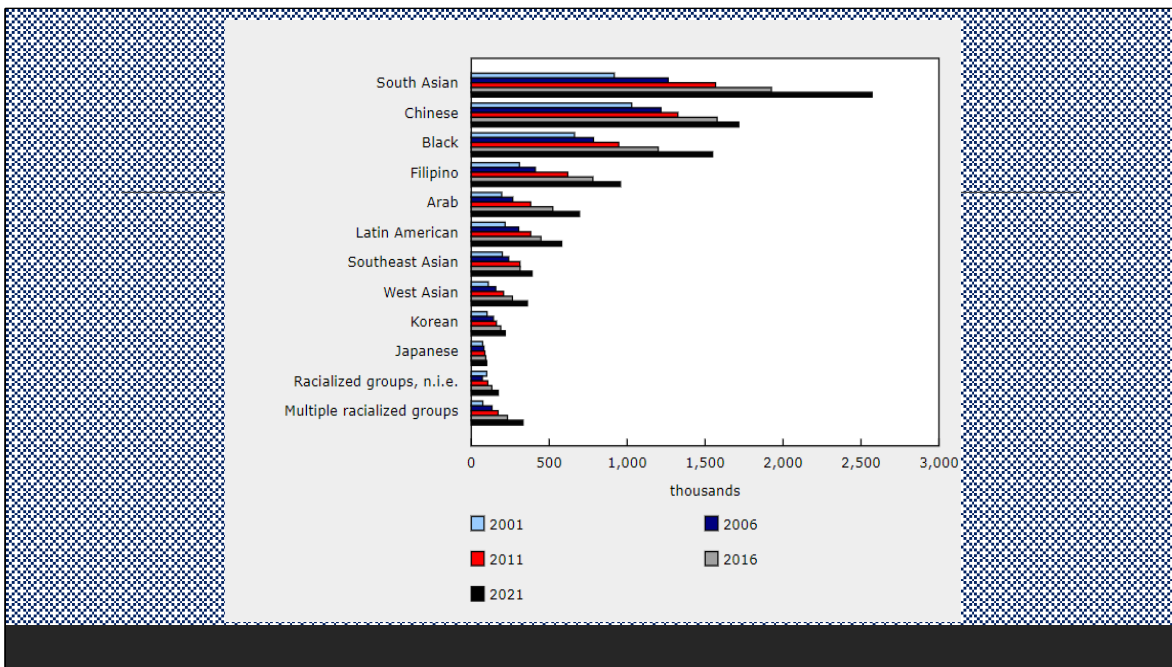
This is Canada as a whole, and we can
see that from 2001 through to 2021-- a
20 year span-- minority groups have
more than doubled in this country over
those two decades.

"Canadian" tops the more than 450 ethnic or cultural origins reported by the population of Canada

Proportion of single responses:
Less than 32.5% | Between 32.5% and 51.7% | More than 51.7%

Note: The size of the bubble is in proportion to the number of total responses for a given ethnic or cultural origin. The colour of the bubble represents the proportion of single responses for a given ethnic or cultural origin grouped into tertiles.
Source: Statistics Canada. Census of Population, 2021 (3901).

Again, at the Canadian level, you can see how respondents to the national census identified culturally and increasingly, what Statistics Canada is reporting, is that people aren't as ready as they once were to identify who they are based on where their grandparents, or their great grandparents may have come from. Instead, they're choosing to identify as Canadian. **It may show a future pattern towards greater unity or it may not. Only time will tell.**

Population distribution by religious affiliation across Canada, 2021

Source: Statistics Canada. Census of Population, 2021 (3901).
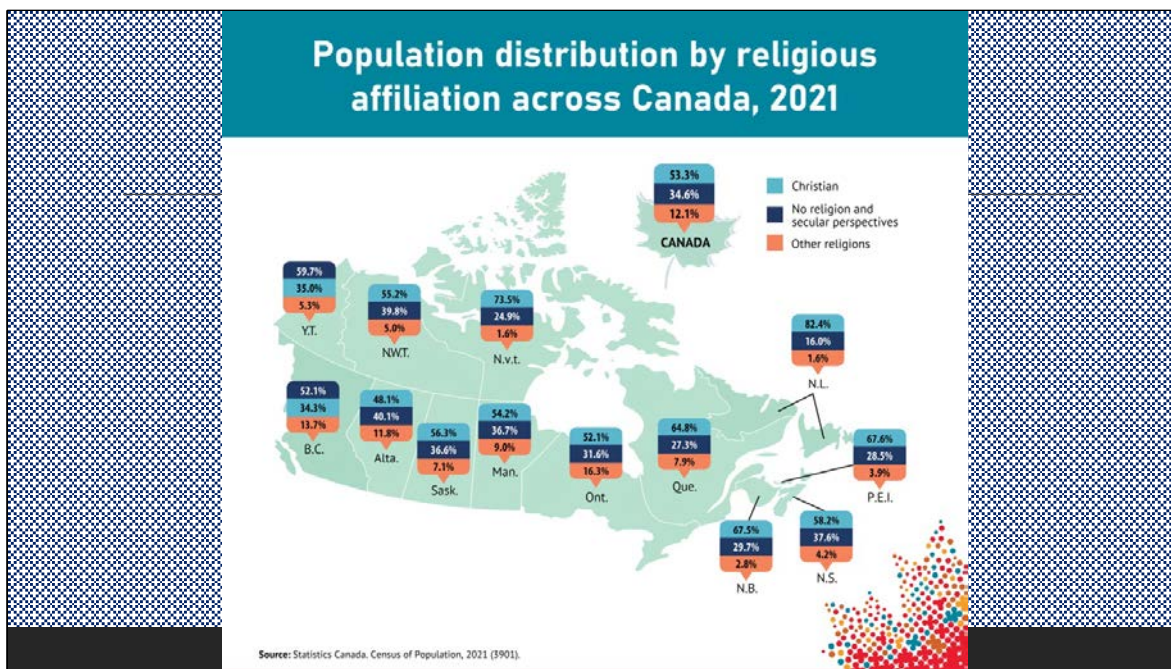
In terms of the religious affiliation of Manitobans, you can see smack dab in the middle of the map, and this is also valid across much of the country, that most provinces still have majority Christian as the identified religious group.

Source(s): Census of Population, 2001 and 2021 (3901), and National Household Survey, 2011 (5178).
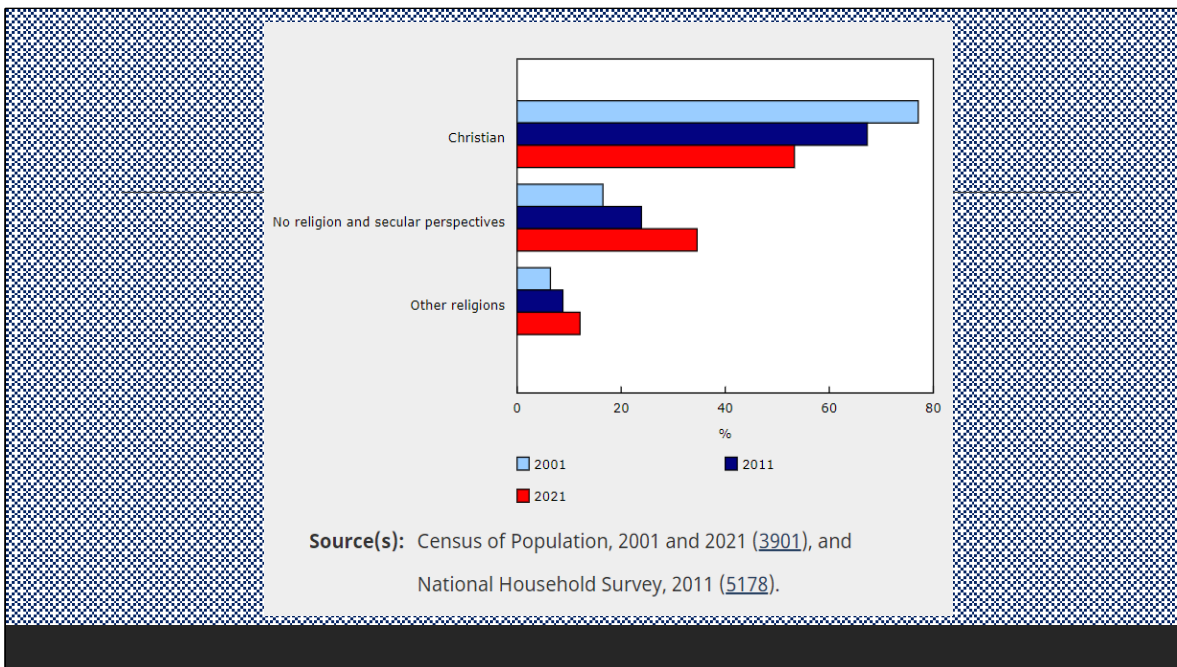
But important changes are taking place when it comes to religious minorities as well. So you can see again that, over the same two decade period, those who subscribe to other religions as well as those who don't have any religion whatsoever, have more than doubled. Even as those who subscribe to Christianity have decreased over that same two decade period of time.

Source(s): Census of Population, 2001 and 2021 (3901), and National Household Survey, 2011 (5178).
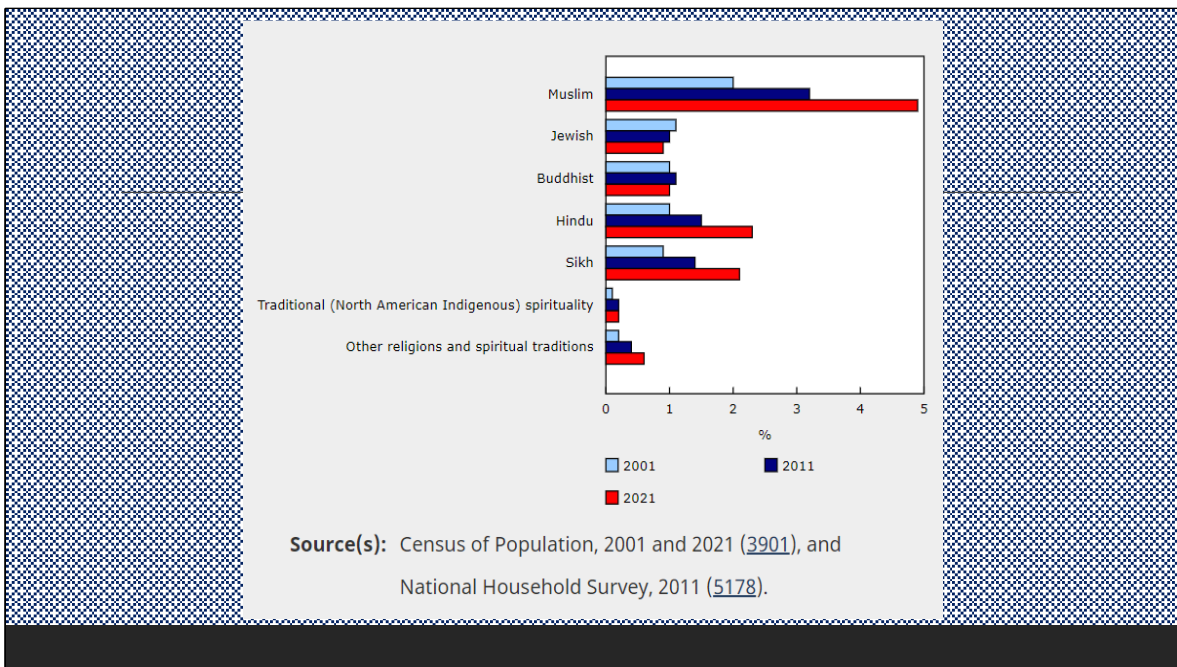
So this is again, just an example of some of the major religions of the world identified by Canadians as representing their religious persuasions, and where changes are taking place in Canadian society.

LGBTQ2+ COMMUNITIES IN CANADA: A DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

In terms of what the census finds with those who are willing to self declare that they are part of the LGBTQ2SIA* community, you can see that 1 million people have identified as being part of that community which accounts for 4% of the total population of those 15 or older.

I will say that this statistic is probably underrepresented because people do not want to share whether or not they do belong to that community.

So based on studies that were done, even going back to the 1970s, this statistic is probably more like 10% of the total population.

		ELECT	LEAD	TOTAL	VOTES	SHARE
29 SEATS FOR A MAJORITY		34	0	**34**	221,363	45.5%
		22	0	**22**	204,835	42.1%
		1	0	**1**	51,691	10.6%

Scott Gillingham will be Winnipeg's next mayor after tight race

Gillingham won with 27.5% of vote over Glen Murray's 25.3%

Caitlyn Gowriluk · CBC News · Posted: Oct 26, 2022 7:30 PM CDT | Last Updated: October 27, 2022
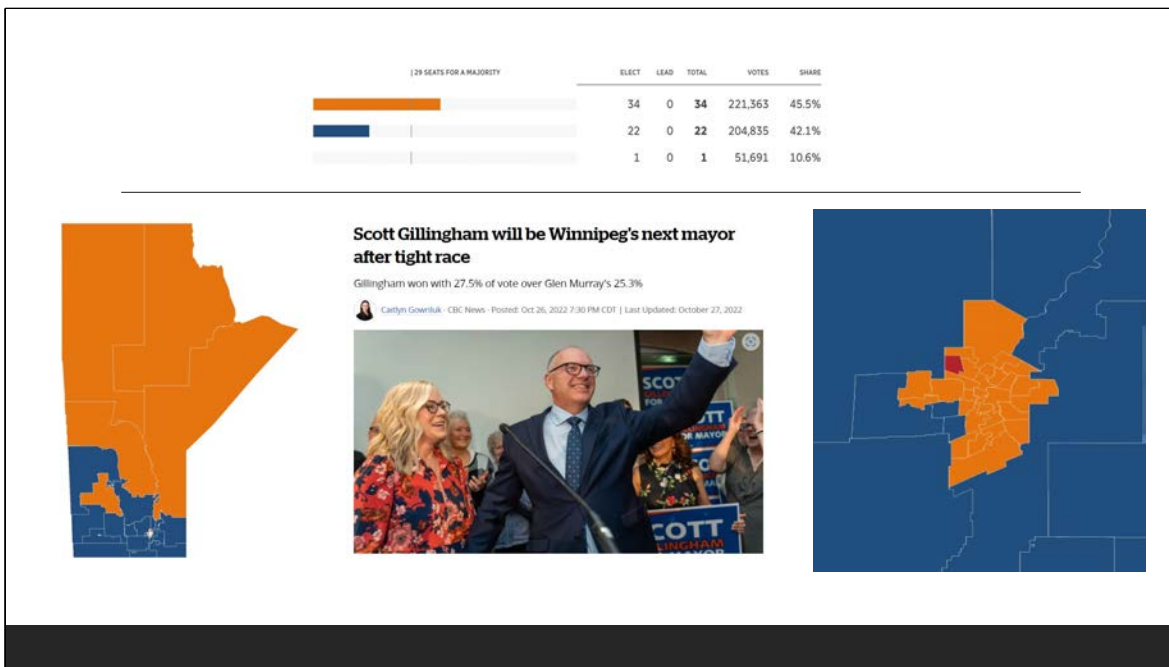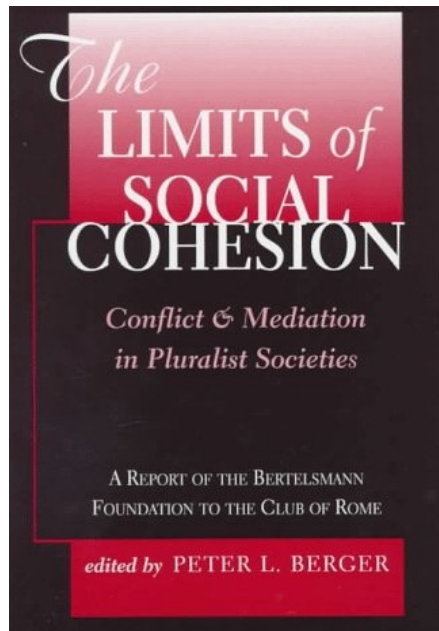
Finally, we arrive at our political divides. And as you can see, we are indeed a divided province. You can see this in the results of the last provincial election, just last month where the NDP had a 45.5% share, and the PCs had 42.1%.

And in Winnipeg as a whole, that nice map to the right, which at the provincial level is predominantly NDP, yet at the same time, the people of Winnipeg, during the last mayoral

election elected Scott Gillingham with 27.5% of the voteshare versus Glen Murray who came in at 25.3%

1997

The LIMITS of SOCIAL COHESION

Conflict & Mediation in Pluralist Societies

A REPORT OF THE BERTELSMANN FOUNDATION TO THE CLUB OF ROME

edited by PETER L. BERGER

Enter 1997. A landmark study was presented to the Club of Rome. Now for those of you who are conspiracy theorists, you might believe that this is the crew that runs the world. They are literally the Presidents, the heads of state, the secretaries of state, the ministers of foreign affairs of every major nation.

This study was called the limits of social cohesion. They conducted analysis of Western democracies to find

out what would cause society to become
less cohesive and keep in mind, this is
now about 30 years ago.

Can anyone guess which factor bears the greatest capacity to divide modern society?

So who can guess which factor the Club of Rome identified as being that which is foremost in terms of the potential to cause division? It is religion. Because religion is, of course, the deeply ingrained and instilled values, norms, beliefs, and ideas that people hold to be sacred. So while religion does not in and of itself create or cause division, it often becomes a catalyst for differences and particularly moral interpretations leading to division, regarding what others do, or how they

identify. And when those differences or divisions do arise, they are often the most intense due to the very strong compass that religion provides when it comes to adherents' perceptions around our very existence on planet Earth, our essential purpose, and the expected and oftentimes very firm norms as prescribed by select faith groups. For yourselves as community leaders, the benefits of understanding religion can therefore provide advantage very significantly in instances where you will need to interpret or translate one set of ideas, norms, morals, and values (as informed by religious foundations) in relation to another.

Artificial interference added

Now when it comes to social divisions, if the factors I have walked you through aren't powerful enough to cause intermittent friction, you may find that there is an increasing array of agents who are funding campaigns specifically to cause division. Whether through mis/disinformation or dark money campaigns, their purpose is to exploit differences within society to create division. Social media trolls, bots, state sponsored actors, corporate funding for alternative forms of

education, the list goes on and on. I highlight this here because as school boards, we must be mindful of the possibility that what may appear as a grassroots community protest or initiative may in fact not spring forth from within your community at all. Delegates who appear before your board may be using scripts prepared by outside actors and are themselves the unknowing tools of other people's agendas. At the end of the day, you must recognize when you need to be responsive to genuine community concerns and when you are facing an artificial form of interference and be prepared to either meet and respond to it face forward or sidestep such engagements entirely given that they are too often intentional diversions from your core work as school boards. Which option you choose depends on the degree of risk involved in terms of the persistence of this artificial interference and whether it risks creating spillover effects for your board, internally or externally.

"The time is at hand when these journalistic scoundrels have got to stop or get out, and I am ready now to do my share to that end. They are absolutely without souls. If decent people would refuse to look at such newspapers the thing would right itself at once. The Journal.

The role of the traditional media is also an important one when it comes to their responsibility for reporting of information, which may alternately mitigate or exacerbate differences within communities. Where media chooses to exacerbate, the differences can transform into outright divisions within society. Certainly, for those who have dealt with divisive issues in your community, you know, sometimes the media can be a huge challenge or a huge ally when working through some of these

issues. **General media training is encouraged to be prepared for meaningful engagement during divisive times.**

This caricature is from 1898, and based on events contemporary to that period, captures what happens when the media engages in sensational coverage, spewing venom, or spitting vitriol and attacks against honest politicians. At this point in time, you may need to appreciate that the American War with Spain was entirely instigated by a media baron who uses the power of the printing press to turn words into bullets and boots on the ground. William Randolph Hearst, later fictionalized as Citizen Kane, remains to this day, the ultimate representation of what happens when the press becomes propaganda, leading to intense conflict within and across societies.

Where, amidst all of these divides, do one person's rights begin and the others end?
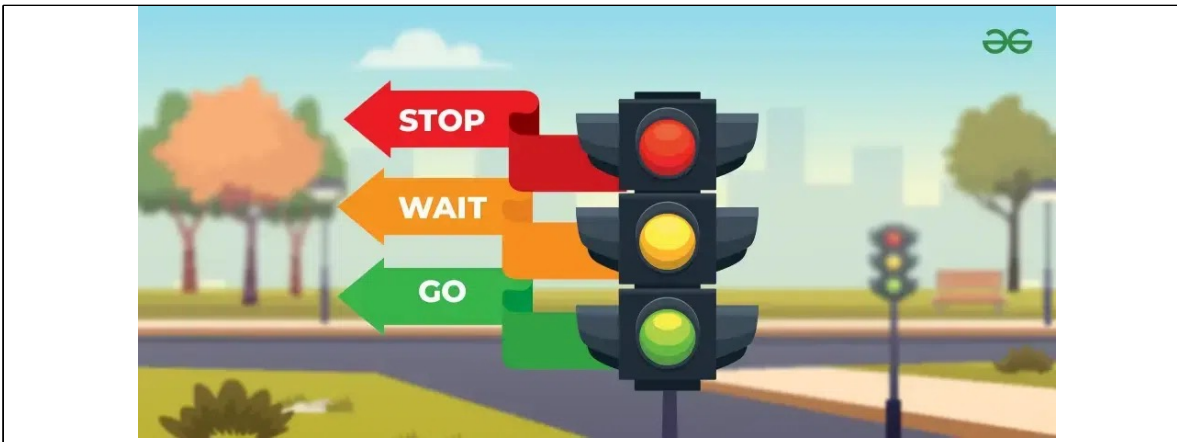
Poli-Sci 101

Let's go back to political science 101!
Where do rights begin, and where do
they end? This is the famous symbol
that intro to poli-sci professors often
use to explain this complex question.
The stop sign! When you are born, your
freedoms are technically limitless.
This applies to most everyone, save
those who may be born into slavery.

But at the theoretical level, if you
choose to live on your own "in the
bush" without any contact with anyone,

you're free to do whatever you want,
when you want, how you want, and to
whom you want. But if you choose to
enter the public realm of activity,
guess what? You have to live with other
people. So the role of governments are
to create rules to help you know what
you can and cannot do. Including formal
rights and freedoms as established by
law, the combination of all these rules
guide you, in what you have to do, in
order to maintain a public sphere which
is accepting and tolerant of everyone.
Generally, these rules are respected--
even for those on rural roads who
regularly come to cross sections with
these types of devices installed. It's
amazing to need to watch how many will
actually stop and then wait for that
light to change, even though there may
not be anyone else around for miles!
It's because we respect the rules and
the laws that have been put in place,
in order to keep the public safe. This
also applies to our collective and
individual rights and freedoms. In
context of divisive times, the answer
to this question is important because

it can help determine what rules apply to whom and how. You may in fact not have options for asserting a certain point of view if the other person's rights or freedoms come into that view and are protected by the rules for "public engagement". One person's rights can be limited by the "red lights" that apply to them in any given situation and another person's rights may be "green lighted" in the same situation. The answer to the question of where one person's rights begin and end must be answered according to each individual instance of division that presents itself. Most important, it is not up to school boards to interpret when a right begins and ends for one person versus that of another in the community, if there are clear laws, rules and legal precedents that inform the answer to this question.

Does inclusion for some mean exclusion for others?

When you're engaging in who gets what, when, where, and how, the question often arises "well does inclusion for some then mean exclusion for others?" It seems increasingly these days some groups may be favoured, while others aren't, in the public sphere of activity. But again, it is not up to school boards to favour one person or group of people over another. Include one group versus another. Exclude one group versus another.

How can we build public schools that
are inclusive for _every_ one?

The real question that you have to ask
as school trustees is, how can we build
public schools that are inclusive for
EVERYONE? Not just one group over the
other. This is the task at hand for all
boards.
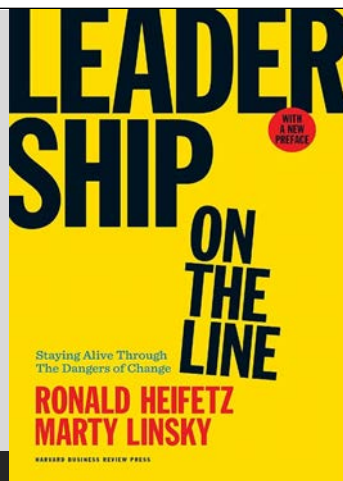
Does anyone here, remember this?

Your Roadmap from Contention to Compromise, Adversity to Adaptation

So for those of you who were present at our Convention in 2020, I presented some of this work of how to engage communities and respond to differences and divisions. The book is called "Leadership on the Line" By Ron Heifetz and Marty Linsky, two professors at Harvard, and basically serves as a "how to" guide for how to engage society as an adaptive leader. A copy of the book was provided to each school board, so you might be able to request a copy to read it for yourself from your Chair

provided it was retained by the board.

**What kind of challenge are you facing?**

Technical versus adaptive approaches in responding to divisiveness

In "Leadership on the Line", the authors describes two different sets of skills that every leader needs: technical skills and adaptive skills.

On the technical side, leadership calls for some form of specialized expertise and authority to "get your job done". This is where many school boards currently reside: you use the technical tools that are at your disposal, to regulate who gets what, where, when, and how.

On the adaptive side of leadership, things become more complex, for it means developing and using the skills needed to engage with community or society when it comes to managing significant change, particularly changes that speak to norms, values, principles, ideas, beliefs, traditions, and deeply held structures and institutions.

So far… your association has provided some technical tips:
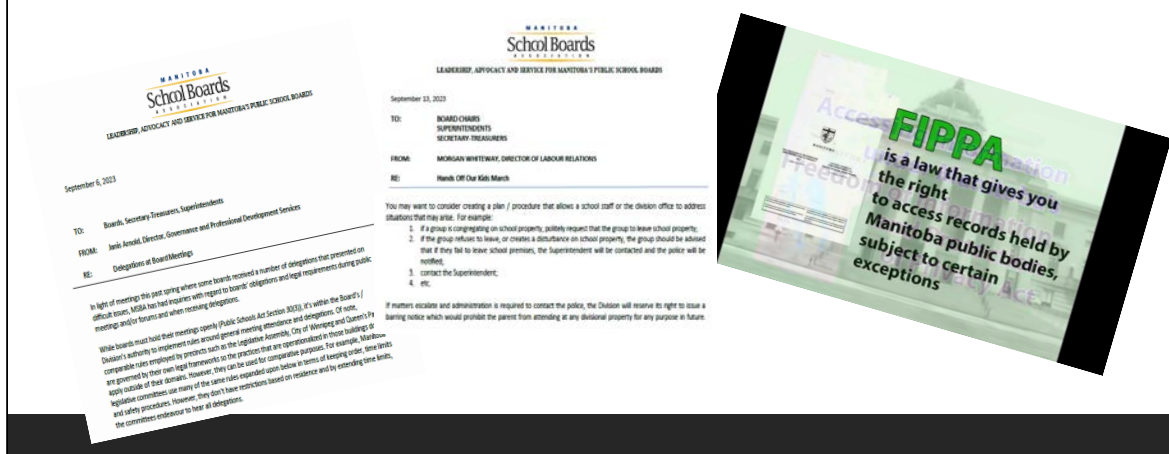
Let's start with the technical side of leadership and governance during divisive times.

When it comes to how to manage some of the situations that have been popping up in this province we have, as an association, issued to you at least three memos, so far, one of which deals with delegations, one of which deals with how to respond if protesters emerge on your school properties, and the other one which talks about reinforcing your Freedom of Information protocols and processes. MSBA provided these technical tools early on during

this current school year because we
know that all three of those pathways
often manifest in terms of how people
choose to create or express division at
the school division level.