

Dr. Evan Simpson

In Plato's *Republic* (380BC), Socrates argues, "Until philosophers rule as kings, or those who are now called kings genuinely and adequately philosophize, that is, until political power and philosophy entirely coincide...cities [or universities] will have no rest from evils". Let it be formally pronounced at this illustrious gathering that Memorial University is claiming its very own 'philosopher-king,' a fortuitous combination of wisdom and leadership capacity in the personhood of Dr. Evan Simpson.

Though a quiet man to a superlative degree, Evan Simpson, both during his career at Memorial and in post-retirement, has proven himself an outstanding leader. Inside the frenzied spectrum of current dynamic leadership theories, however, his success is puzzling – how does a thoughtful, deliberative, soft-spoken philosopher achieve positive change within a garrulous multi-voiced behemoth of a university? The answer may not be immediately apparent but it does lie within a behavioral analysis of the characteristics of an introverted leader: They think before they speak; they focus on depth over breadth; they ask probing questions; they exude calm; they write as a form of thinking; they embrace solitude as a method of personal renewal. Evan Simpson is such a leader- one who understands and engages in leadership as service and an opportunity for reflective learning. Douglas MacArthur would have described him as, "A true leader [who did] not set out to be a leader, but became one by the equality of his actions and the integrity of his intent."

It is because of these demonstrated qualities of character that even in retirement Evan has been invited to lead a number of significant initiatives for Memorial University. In 2008, he was appointed Chair of the Aboriginal Initiatives Task Force and brought together representatives from the different Aboriginal constituencies in the province to examine the ways in which the university could adopt enhancements to the recruitment and success of aboriginal students. He released the Task Force Report in 2009 with a series of recommendations that were adopted by the university, including the appointment of a Special Advisor for Aboriginal Affairs to the President. He has also chaired a number of academic review committees; offered presentations to the Academic Leadership Development program; and acted as consultant to the university on several challenging issues, both internal and external. He co-chaired the family campaign aspect of the 2009 Capital Campaign and in 2012 chaired the Reunion College Committee, organizing a series of talks by Memorial experts that were very well received.

Evan served as the President of Memorial's Pensioners' Association (MUNPA) for two years, followed by two years as Past-President. In these positions, he is credited with giving the organization a much stronger voice within the institution and raising MUNPA's profile within the university.

Re-assuming the position of VPA (pro tem) and Pro Vice-Chancellor in 2010 at the request of the President, Evan maintained a steady hand on the rudder while the university moved through some challenging times. During his interim tenure as VPA, he promoted the Teaching and Learning Framework that initiated a pan-university review of the practice and support of teaching. For the first time in Memorial's history, teaching was accorded the same standing as research.

Appointed an Honorary Research Professor, Evan has stayed actively involved in the academic life of the Department of Philosophy, participating in seminars, publishing research articles and working on a book.

In the wider community, he volunteers with the East Coast Trail Association; supports Writers at Woody Point, the St. John's School Lunch Program and the annual Tely 10. He finds his solitude in his bounteous garden.

A modern educational philosopher has coined the concept of *servant leadership* – a leadership style in which the leader understands that while serving others is important, the transcendent goal is to serve the values and ideals that help shape the organization as a community*. ...Sounds a bit like Socrates. ...Sounds more like Evan Simpson.

*Adapted from Kahnweiler, J. (2013) *The Introverted Leader: Building on Your Quiet Strength*.