

Interview: Shelle Rose Charvet, President of the Canadian Association for NLP

By Judith E. Pearson, Ph.D.

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Shelle Rose Charvet owns Success Strategies, a consulting and training firm in Ontario. She speaks, trains, and consults throughout North America, Europe, and Asia. An NLP trainer, she is best known for her work with meta-programs and her book, Words That Change Minds, Mastering the Language of Influence. She is the newly elected president of the recently founded Canadian Association for NLP (CANLP).

We talked for over an hour by phone, and she followed up with faxes for the purposes of correct spelling of names, and detailed information on association goals and priorities. She impressed me as an engaging personality, an energetic, animated, witty, and savvy business person. She conveyed to me her excitement about the direction and growth potential for CANLP. In talking with her, I concluded that she and her colleagues have founded an organization, not for the advancement of NLP, but for the advancement of NLP practitioners.

We began with some small talk, and she told me right away that she frequently speaks in modal operators of necessity "because that's the way to get things done." Here are some of the things we discussed.

- J. Shelle, first let's talk about the CANLP in general. When and how did it come about?
- S. Every year or so we have a Canadian NLP conference somewhere in the country. Canada used to have two regional representatives in IANLP, East and West. So when that organization disbanded, we continued our contacts. About three years ago we held a conference in Ottawa, Ontario, the capital city of Canada. We talked about a Canadian NLP association. We got excited about the idea, but it didn't happen. Everyone was busy. In 1996 we got together again and the idea arose again. Lots of enthusiasm, but then everyone went back to their real lives. We didn't have a structure in place. We weren't sufficiently committed to making it happen. Then, in January of this year, several of us decided to organize another conference. We decided to make the Association happen. We did all the work before the conference and put the structure in place so that people could just vote on it. This is the miracle of deadlines. We said we were going to have a Canadian NLP association and that made it compelling. Our personal reputations were on the line. There was no way it wasn't going to happen.

I thought "I do a lot of volunteer work. I'm active in my synagogue. I'm a single

Mum. I don't run an NLP institute, so I'm not competing with anyone else who is running institutes. I run a corporate training and consulting business, so I understand how to set up an organization. I'm bilingual, which is important in Canada. - I'm the person to lead a team of people to do this!" So I volunteered to run for president. The conference was April 4 and 5, of this year. Eighty to ninety people attended. That's significant because Canadians are really spread out geographically. That was the beginning of the CANLP.

J. Who are the officers and what is the organizational structure?

S. The officers are the people who did all the work to set up the conference and the organization.

Lorraine Bourque, Vice President, is a French speaking NLP'er from Moncton, New Brunswick. She is an NLP Master Practitioner and Core Transformation Trainer and former university professor.

Robert Knowlton, Secretary, got his NLP training in California. He has a coaching business in Eastern Ontario.

Deanna Sager, Treasurer, is the head of Georgian Bay NLP, an NLP institute, book and tape store. She is from Meaford, Ontario.

Pat Milland is Membership Chair, and Russ Milland is our Webmaster. They are NLP Master Practitioners from Oakville, Ontario. Patricia will be in charge of membership and networking. Russ is a computer consultant and the creator of our Website and list servers.

Janice Gray is a Member at Large, directing NLP Centres of Canada in Ottawa, Ontario.

Françoise Legrand is a Member at Large. She is a Human Resources Director in Montreal and President of the Quebec Association of NLP, helping to link us to that organization.

John Wyne of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Member at Large, is an NLP Master Practitioner and president of Avista Creative Communications, an audio-visual event production company.

Pat O'Reilly, owner of Metamorph'Us, an NLP institute in Ottawa, organized the conference program and communicated with all the presenters. She declined to sit on the executive, but we know that we can get her involved in many other ways.

Do you want to know our criteria for the executive committee? They have to be good team members, and they have to have e-mail. That way we can stay in touch, since we are so spread out geographically in Canada. We are looking for

more Members at Large from further west in the country. They will head up projects. We plan to work with subcommittees for projects such as a directory, a newsletter, and a webpage. We already have a chat group up and going through our list server.

J. What is the mission for CANLP?

S. Very simple: "Helping create a world in which we want to belong." "CANLP is a dynamic, caring and growing association of people who:

1. are committed to giving back to our communities
2. are models of personal and professional excellence and integrity
3. demonstrate a commitment to the ethical and skilled practice of NLP
4. embody the presuppositions of NLP
5. walk our talk
6. manage our affairs in a fiscally responsible manner
7. support one another, and
8. promote the use of NLP within the wider communities."

Let me talk about priorities. In the first year, we want to put out a newsletter twice during the year. We want to have a directory of who does what across the country. We want to create a website. In the second year, 1999, we want to hold a national conference, and prepare regional conferences for the year 2000. We want to update the directory and continue the newsletter, and put it on-line at the website. We have two years to do the set up and then we want to make many more things happen. Eventually we want to have regional chapters because of the geography issue.

J. What are your membership goals and what do you have to offer members?

S. We've had one meeting since our conference and our priority now is "get members." There are two groups of people we're after: Individual NLP Practitioners and NLP Institutes. What we offer our members are networking, a newsletter, a directory, conferences, and setup and support of regional chapters.. What we want from them are ideas for initiatives and participation. We also offer a lot to NLP Institutes. We give them a special rate for new NLP Practitioner graduates; a one year membership for 20 dollars, Canadian. We will give them a page on our website and link to theirs. On our list server, we will put out NLP institute schedules and activities. They can use our logo on their publicity materials, and they will have a listing in the directory, and access to the directory as a mailing list. We are developing membership packages as we speak.

We are also holding a logo contest and our first directory will be out in October. Our immediate goal is to get members and find out what to do to keep people in. We are calling all NLP institutes and practitioners across the country. We are also calling the largest U.S. institutes to politely ask for the names of their Canadian participants, so we can mail them information and invite them to join.

We will also ask the British association of NLP to make an announcement in their publication, a beautiful magazine called Rapport. Also we are going to solicit in France, because some Canadians study NLP in France.

- J. Shelle, as you know, the IANLP formed in the U.S. some years ago and then disbanded. You were a board member of that organization. What are your insights and lessons learned that you plan to apply to the CANLP?
- S. We could talk about what went wrong and who and when, but my insight is that, for an organization to thrive, everybody needs a good reason to join and to stay a member. We need to provide ways to meet real needs. We need to figure out what we're about, what members want, and meet those needs. Does CANLP want to jump in and start defining what is a practitioner? No. The frame has to be sufficiently broad to include people.

People have to have positive anchors around an association. Our executive committee is committed to making this a fun place to participate in. So we laugh often. We even joke about NLP. I also think it's really important starting out, that the leadership, the president and vice president, don't manage institutes, so we are not in a competitive position with anyone.

- J. What is the future of NLP as we move into the next millennium?
- S. I presented on this topic in my keynote address at the conference that formed CANLP in April. The world is undergoing many technological revolutions. Imagine, computers may soon do what they are supposed to do. You won't have to spend hours on the phone to consult some technical guru. There will be information overload everywhere. The missing piece is how people communicate with each other. NLP has a lot to offer there. NLP is a set of communication approaches and tools that enable people to communicate with themselves and each other effectively.

CANLP isn't really concerned about creating an international alliance of NLPers who get together and schmooze. We're more interested in helping NLP practitioners in Canada earn a living. We are soliciting institutes and we recognize they are businesses which want to make a profit. We want to accommodate that. As I have said at many NLP gatherings, the NLP community needs to drop the sacred vow of poverty, so that success at NLP is not considered a compromise of integrity. We are going to address the issue in our newsletter. We would like to get articles about NLP published in the Canadian mainstream press.

- J. In preparation for this interview you said that you want to "legitimize NLP in the real world." What does that mean?
- S. We need to learn to talk about NLP to non-NLP people. We want CANLP to help do that. How does NLP address real needs? That's the question. The major challenge is rapport. How do we match people's values and needs in the

way we talk to them about NLP? We've been notoriously poor about that. We spend much time criticizing the people we want to help; especially teachers and doctors.

And take the presuppositions, for example. What do they mean to non-NLPers? "The meaning of communication is the response you get." The average Joe just won't get it. We have to sell NLP in plain talk, for real people. People won't want to hear about how to deal with their unconscious minds until they believe their unconscious minds exist.

The question is, how do you sell the presuppositions and NLP techniques in a way that makes sense to your audience? It's a sales challenge. CANLP can help people learn to do it. The Europeans are more successful at this than we are. They had to adapt the American model to their cultures and they made it more understandable. In Europe, if you are a business consultant or trainer and you don't know NLP, you are considered to be out of the loop.

- J. In the U.S., some NLP Practitioners are also clinical hypnotherapists; in some circles NLP and hypnosis have a close association. How do Canadians handle the link between them?
- S. In Canada, it's a non-starter. In Ontario, only medical doctors are qualified to do hypnosis. So we do "relaxation" and "help people to be their best." In America, NLP is still considered to be New Age and flakey. We have got to speak the language that gets people interested in buying NLP. If we don't do this in the next five to ten years, in North America, NLP will just be an elite club of "schmoozers." Those who are successful in selling NLP, like Tony Robbins, will go out there and make money and call it (NLP) something else.

Anyone can use his or her NLP skills to make sure NLP makes sense to non-NLPers. I use analogies, metaphors, meta-programs. But I don't use the language of NLP. Scientists, for example want something that has the benefit of research. You have to show proven methods. And what about "installing" something in someone? If you say that to someone, they'll say "You're going to do what?" I love to get together with other NLPers and speak the language. But the public isn't buying it.

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