

The Jungle Times Podcast

# 4.5 BILLION YEARS OF SUCCESS

**JUNE 25 2020**

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Music

## TRANSCRIPT

### Episode #1. “4.5 Billion Years of Success...”

Hello and welcome to *The Jungle Times* Podcast... My name is Lawrence Poole and I'm your host. This is the 1st Episode – and it's called “*4.5 Billion Years of Success*”. With that number, I'm referring to the time it took for cosmic dust to amass and solidify into this incredible Planet we all live on.

Throughout this presentation I'll explain how Nature's success is based on a process wherein creative leaders emerge and show the way forward. I'll tell you how this emergence is favoured by Nature rules and laws, and I'll share some of the *deep wisdom* I learned in the jungles of Central America.

This wisdom can benefit both our life in the social jungle – that is the industrialized cities where most of us maintain our relationships – and of course in the business jungle. Whether you run a start-up, a Mom & Pop shop, or you're slaving for a corporate giant like IBM, you are a part of the global marketplace - and it's a jungle out there.

A successful life requires conscious participation, even a concentrated leadership. When I started thinking about Nature's success, I looked for conditions that contribute to it. Nature's management laws are universal - that is to say - they apply to everything and everyone - all the time: **THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS...**

I thought that processes that are particularly well managed in the tropical jungles can easily serve as models in the social and business jungles. I figured that it is in my own best interest to learn Nature's laws, to then incorporate them into my life. Let me share 10 conditions I found that apply to all of us, and that we can profit from managing Nature's way.

The first condition is that Nature manages a transformation process that has lasted for billions of years and it isn't done yet. In this expanding universe, even if individuals might enjoy a very short

lifespan, continuous change replaces every piece so that the whole of Nature is continuous. In this sense Nature is the world's best management school ...when we consider that it manages a very complex process – made up of infinite numbers - as a single continuum of change.

Change is a constant. How people react to it marks the differences between us. Do you champion change as an adventure or do see it with fear and loathing?

Successfully managing change happens to be a major human failing. At best, statistics reveal, a company's chance of reaching its intended results in a planned change - like a merger or an acquisition for example - is, at best, 50-50. Study after study show us the failure rate is closer to 70-90%.

Change is the only constant. Species live and die. Businesses are acquired and sold. Employees come and go. Technology, procedures, systems and processes, laws, these are constantly being reinvented. All of this change brings disruption to the way in which people live and work. So why is our failure rate at managing change so high? Well research tells us the *human factor* is the leading cause of failure.

Nature offers a huge repository of lessons on how it manages change for us to learn from. If we look carefully, there is a lot to learn from a jungle. For example, leaders in the jungle see change as an opportunity.

In science, the principle of "*Horror Vacui*" explains that Nature hates a vacuum. This observation is first attributed to Aristotle who noted that Nature immediately fills the rarity of any void with something new. He saw that Nature is managing a process of continuous transformation by adapting to every change in condition. And Nature uses every opportunity to improve itself.

Most people would profit from learning to see change as an opportunity. I'll share with you how I greeted very drastic changes in my life that way. I forced myself to look for opportunities where I

could refocus my energy so as to experience joy and passion. That is the best choice I ever made.

I made dozens of small changes that added up to something larger. For example, before the accident I was a fervent Squash player; after, I got into Wheelchair Basketball instead. The sporting aspect was the same, both gave me camaraderie, exercise, sweat, and competition... All of it was fun. I didn't compare them, I just replaced one for the other.

I didn't give any thought to what I'd lost or could no longer do. Instead I focused my energy on doing my best with what I had...

A second of the 10 conditions I explored in the jungle is that Nature favours diversity. I mentioned in the Intro to the Podcast that an estimated 10 million species of Flora and Fauna exist on this planet right now. Many, many others have roamed the Earth before now.

Nature favours diversity for a very good reason. Simply put, if every tree in the forest was an apple tree, any apple tree disease could wipe them all out. As we have about 60,000 species of tree on Earth, if apple trees are ever in danger, a great many other kinds of tree will survive. One of them might even know the cure for ailing apples. And, as there are about 7500 species of apple tree, maybe all the apples won't be wiped out.

Diversity is strength so whenever I hear some racist rant or see xenophobic attitudes or intolerances, I just don't get it. Nowadays, because they must deal in a global marketplace, Nations and Corporations have embraced social diversity. So... we'd all profit to learn how Nature manages it. The idea is not to ignore or erase the differences between us, but rather to understand and celebrate them. We can profit from our differences.

I also learned that the jungle succeeds by managing a ferocious competition. Imagine a tiny country like Costa Rica – you can drive clear across it in a few hours - has a 1/2 million species of flora and fauna competing for the same territory, often for the same resources. What lessons can we learn that apply to our social jungles – where we

compete for housing, food, jobs, mates; what lessons apply to the business jungle – where market positions, perks and power are all up for grabs.

In a future Episode, I explain 9 management principles that govern Nature's complex systems. In short, they compel individuals to empower themselves to obey its «Survive & Prosper» law.

As simple as that law might seem, I'll share with you that 99.99% of the species that have existed on this Earth are extinct today because they couldn't do it, they couldn't adapt to new conditions. They faltered because of...well – *continuous change, awesome diversity and ferocious competition to mention a few conditions.*

The survivors are us... today's leaders. To understand this, you have to know that - in the jungle - leadership is fundamentally different than it is in human society or business circles – and this for a simple reason: *In the jungle, there are no followers.*

In Nature, management doesn't work in a Boss/Employee kind of way.

So then - what is leadership? Where do leaders come from? Are leaders born or do we learn how to do it?

Well in Nature, leaders are the first to adapt to new conditions. If their adaptation works, if it is successful, then others will copy whatever it. Leaders then are they who influence others *to do the right thing.* Leadership is situational. If an individual makes the right choice, he or she leads. Guess wrong and you are lunch!

Nature's law is simple: *Survive & Prosper* – and so its judgement is easy enough to understand: Pass/Pass not! In other words, Adapt or Die.

At one point in my research I wanted to learn how societies succeed so I studied the world of Ants for a time. Thanks to Biologist and Pulitzer Prize-winner Edward O. Wilson, there are many scholarly papers to draw from. I appreciate that without their labour over the last 150 million years or so, the soil we need to grow our veggies

would not exist. Because of the spin of the Planet and force like gravity and such, dust, decay and debris would be compacted as dense as concrete. Ants dig into the mass, turn and aerate the soil. That allows water and oxygen to reach deep where plants can root.

Also, ants eat a wide variety of organic material and then scatter seeds... that sprout and grow into new plants. Thanks to their seed dispersal, they provide food to a great many other organisms. And as if that isn't enough, I was amazed to discover how ant cooperation comes from their superior communication skills.

Ants live in colonies that can range in size from a few dozen individuals who might take residence in a small cavity in a wall somewhere, to highly organised groups consisting of millions of individuals in large territories.

The larger colonies will have a wide variety of ant kinds - from wingless female workers to male soldiers, to specialised sorts – like leaf cutters, toxin-tasters, aphid-farmers and fighter pilots.

No one tells individual ants what to do. An ant colony is described as *a superorganism* because it thinks as a unified whole – i.e. individual members communicate in support the whole colony.

The term superorganism describes any social unit where members come together as a larger entity because individuals are not able to survive alone for any extended period of time. The larger entity communicates group needs and defines skilled labour. We can extend our notion of superorganism to include societies, job sites, factories, gangs, and such, and then learn how to successfully manage the dynamic.

Ant colonies communicate needs by secreting pheromones – i.e. chemical scents that trigger a response in the recipients. Ants secrete scent messages that are received as *alarm pheromones*, or *food trail pheromones*, or *sex pheromones* or several other kinds. This form of communication allows a colony to influence the behaviour of individuals. It will track members, communicate needs and invite individuals to adapt.

Organizations like Federal Express and the Post Office now use the same approach to track packages for delivery. Instead of pheromones, they use electronic devices - but they know where a package is every instant that it's in their care. Ant society has survived millions of years because of what they know about collective thinking, communications and cooperation. There much human that collectives can learn from them

Another condition I found is stunning amounts of creativity and innovation in the jungle, so I know that they're component parts of Nature's success. Species can access a larger *collective intelligence*. I can give you hundreds of examples but let me tell you about one – called *the Fly Orchid*.

If you do a Google search, you can find images that will show where that name comes from. This plant's flower looks like a housefly. I don't mean a little bit; I mean the flower looks exactly like a common fly. Not only that, but it smells like a female fly in heat. The plant uses *floral mimicry* in a remarkably creative strategy called *sexually deceptive pollination*.

The Fly Orchid developed a relationship with two kinds of insect who have become the plant's pollinators. The scent that is released by this flower exactly mimic the sexual pheromones of the female insects.

That orchid uses its aroma to attract males who jump the flower ... and pollinate it in an attempt to mate. I mean – wow – that plant was thinking outside the box. Imagine the creativity involved for a plant to discover that it can't depend to the wind to propagate its pollen, and to then decide to totally transform itself – its look and even its smell - in order to obey Nature's «Survive & Prosper» law. Where do you suppose it got that idea? What can we learn here?

Another condition for success is the incredible tenacity displayed by so many species. I have a picture Suzy took of me sitting at the very edge of the crater of *Irazu Volcano*. We were at 3700 metres altitude and it was freezing up there – even if Irazu is in Costa Rica. I felt like I was on a moonscape; it's covered in grey ash and we could smell sulphur fumes rising out of the hole.

After Suzy snapped the picture, I moved away from the crater and then saw a single yellow flower growing near the volcano's rim. I wheeled over to get close and was amazed to see a very thin, green stem growing out of the ash. Delicate, frail... it was holding its flowers petals, and resisting the cold, harsh wind.

“Wow” – I thought – *“It really ain't over 'til it's over!”* I was very impressed with something that fragile with so much strength and tenacity. I realized then that answering Nature's law has less to do with how we think or what we believe. It's largely about tenacity. It's about the *“Doings and Not-doings”* needed to Survive & Prosper. Nature expects every individual to make the effort... Success requires a lot more “Can do” than “IQ”.

I also found that there's a tremendous amount of team spirit involved Nature's success. There are so many examples of very different species coming together to work as teams. You've seen those small white birds that perch on large animals grazing in fields. They always seem at risk of being trampled under cattle hooves. Egrets and Cattle are such different animals that they should not be partners... but they have bonded in a mutual care relationship.

Mutualism describes the interaction between two or more species where each receives a net benefit from the relationship. Egrets clean parasites off of Cattle bodies and warn them about predators. In return, Cattle shake up the grass and dirt, and raise insects for Egrets to feed on.

We'd all profit from this kind of help from teammates, of real cooperation between departments, or devotion from business and life partners. Well you can foster success by building mutualistic relationships with others.

Bees give us a good example of this. A hive might consist of up to 60,000 bees but did you know that each of them is valued for doing an important job that contributes to the overall success of the hive.

Bees don't play politics. They see the hive as a single unit. Their organizational structure is a very simple and effective way to delegate work – that's all. There is no management hierarchy involved... no



Boss/Employee structure. Bees are self-empowered, and this is critical to their high productivity and success.

*Lesson learned:* Whether it's a family business or a giant corporation, make sure the work is delegated honestly and efficiently among all the team members, according to their skills, training and abilities. Make sure everyone knows how important of his contribution is and how much he is appreciated.

Consider that wolves are good team players. Quite different from the bees who “hive-think”, wolves are - above all else - individuals who live in tightly knit packs with a strict control of social ranks. Wolf populations consist of family packs with some lone wolves who temporarily live in the pack's periphery until they can form their own family pack.

To label a wolf *an alpha* emphasizes a dominance hierarchy that is a myth. In wolf packs, alpha males and females are merely the parents of the pack, it's guides. Dominance contests with other wolves are also very rare, if they exist at all.

In order to Survive & Prosper, wolf teams communicate to solve 2 kinds of problem – *How to find prey and how to confront it*. During times of abundance when their prey is birthing or migrating, different packs may join together and temporarily work as a larger team. This sees wolves become expert communicators as they must describe strategy – *What prey might do next, and how to respond*.

Their communication includes vocal sounds, body postures, scent, touch, nips and bites. Leaders also use *gazing and nodding* to focus the team's attention on where and how to look at prey, and how to move towards it.

That's an important skill because wolves don't use vocal sounds when they are hunting. This silent form of communications gives them the appearance of having intuition. In fact, laboratory tests show that wolves do exhibit both insight and foresight. They also have the ability to plan and efficiently communicate their plans to others.

We humans have a lot to learn about team communications. We know that friendship and good humour work when solving problems, that encouraging employees to know each other better and creating strong social bonds contribute to successful teams, yet this isn't always a natural part of management culture.

Another condition I explored is how Nature's success stems from a very efficient use of resources. In the jungle, nothing is wasted - even plants scraps are composted. Mother Nature has lessons for us on how she favours the 3 Rs – Reduce, Re-use, Recycle.

Whether we're building a home, launching a high-tech company or looking for a new car, Nature tells us to tap into the financial benefits of good management. An example can be found with the recycling practices of the Hermit Crab. This tiny crustacean has a long, soft, but so delicious a body that it has many predators. To protect itself, it salvages empty snail shells, crawls inside of them to where its body can retract safe and sound. And, as it grows, it upgrades his armour by moving into larger ever shells.

Have you outgrown a dress or a jacket like the one you wore to prom? Well that doesn't mean someone else can't benefit from your used clothes. Consider how we reduce financial stress by practicing "voluntary simplicity" – this as opposed to being prey to a mindless consumerism.

Not to say you shouldn't enjoy nice things... In the animal kingdom, many species - like the Bowerbird - decorate their home in very creative ways. Bowerbirds intend to lure a mate and having a flashy home increases their likelihood of being selected as a mate and partner.

A male Bowerbird will create a very attractive and very elaborate nest. He'll decorate it by recycling objects like brightly coloured plastics, tinfoil, coins, buttons, shiny rocks and shells. If the decor attracts a female to his crib - and if he can entice her to stay awhile – well... then he can mate with her... and thereby *Prosper*.

By showcasing his recycling skills, he demonstrates good personal values... an attractive feature. Mother Nature is thus telling us to

explore our immediate surroundings and to efficiently use its resources.

This parsimony shows us how to save energy in several ways: 1. New resources are not depleted; 2. Energy is not wasted to produce new products; and 3. The energy footprint caused by transport and distribution is minimized.

Caring for your immediate surroundings means learning to value beneficial relationships that will assure your ongoing success. Also, by being dedicated to smart ideas, much like Bowerbirds, you show others that you can be smart and sexy— and who doesn't want a reputation like that?

The most exciting idea I found so far though, that most significantly contributes to Nature's success, is called *biomimicry*. In the jungle, species learn by observing others and copying them.

In business circles this is called this “best practices”.

The lesson is that before looking to re-invent the wheel – we should do a quick Google search to see what the best wheel looks like right now. If we start with the best ideas... then we can work to make it better.

I think that's our saving grace. We can improve. We can change for the better. In order to have better lives, we need start with the very best ideas... and then do better.

I learned the lesson about doing better when I needed it most. Trekking jungles in a wheelchair is not an obvious career choice, so let me tell you a little about what led me to make that decision.

In August 1977 I was forced to change my way of thinking. An instant after I hit a pole, I was faced with seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Let me back up – I had a tragic car accident when I was 29 years old – and it crippled me.

At the time I was married and a father; I had a great career in sales and marketing - but my life changed in an instant one night when I

hydroplaned my car and hit a pole on the TransCanada highway at 70 mph – 110 KPH.

Very badly broken, I was brought to a local hospital DOA – dead on arrival... Later... and now alive, I was transferred to the Montreal Neurological Institute trauma centre where they are best equipped to handle my case. Still, in the ordeal I was thought dead 4 times, spent 6 weeks in the ICU on a respirator, was in hospital for 11 months and was totally paralyzed from the chest down.

I'll admit that when I first learned I was to spend the rest of my life in a wheelchair, I cried.

At 6'4" tall and 200 pounds, I was a fervent sportsman and I loved life. Left with my tears by my nurses, from deep within, I heard my father's voice say: "*We don't cry over spilled milk. We clean it up and carry on.*"

He had often said that, and it now helped me. I stopped crying and decided... to carry on.

My convalescence took me a few years. I had to overcome all kinds of damage and hardship – including being jobless and financially destitute. It was a hell of a ride. But - having been dead, I was now back to talk about it, but you can imagine that was a huge game-changer.

Later, out of Intensive Care, I remembered something else my father often repeated. At one point in his career he was in law enforcement with a Federal Government Agency and he often faced risk and danger. We worried about him and if one of us said anything about it, he'd smile and say: "*Don't you worry... God's my friend.*"

He repeated it often enough that one day, still very young, I asked him: "*Is God my friend too?*"

He got very serious and answered me in no uncertain terms: "*Yes. Yes - He most certainly is. God is your friend and you can be sure of*

*it by being God's friend too! If you act with «the idea of good» you'll always have a friend to help you, to rely on, to sort things out.”*

I liked his answer and accepted it totally. In all the years of my life, I've never had occasion to doubt it. When I questioned him about his views about God though, he'd good-naturedly answer: “*If you want to know more about God, study the laws of Nature.*”

So there, in my room at the Neurological Institute, I decided to study Nature. I had no idea where to start - but I made an appointment with destiny.

In this series of Podcasts, woven into my springboard stories from Nature, I'll tell you about my travels to incredible wilderness areas - from Gander Newfoundland to Victoria BC, from the Great White North in Québec's James Bay and the Peace River near Alaska all the way South to Panama – and I'll recount my adventures in the political and the business jungles of Canada, to tell what I learned about living an empowered life...

I discovered that Nature's *4.5 billion years of success* is based on the emergence of creative leaders. The number is the time it took for this Biosphere to emerge, and for all of life as we know it to evolve.

About 4 billion years ago a sort of *algae* appeared and then various soft bodied creatures follow it out of the primordial soup, as organic molecules that bubbled up from Earth's core and joined together. About 3 billion years passed and the first vertebrate species were formed, and another 300 million years went by before reptiles and dinosaurs appeared.

100 million years after that, in a time we name the *Cainozoic Age*, warm-blooded mammals appeared. And then, about 65 million years ago, a first hominid. Jump all those millions of years to the time named the *Holocene Era* to greet *Homo Sapiens*... us, our ancestors.

We are called *Wise Man*. We are a new species and we first began to organize and civilize the Earth about 450,000-500,000 years ago.

We may be new to this Earth... but we've had quite an impact since our appearance.

In our race to get ahead, I think we fell away from Nature's plan.

Well folks, let me say that we can vote politically in any way we want *but we can't break Nature's laws...* even if we can break ourselves against them.

You may think that you are free to act as your ego suggests, but in the jungle there's a name for individuals who work against the general good. We call 'em... *LUNCH*.

Some of Nature's rules deal with the jungle as a Predator/Prey environment. We can try to feel secure by imagining we are protected by our leaders and the government... but we're only kidding ourselves.

Any thought that man might be an ultimate predator on this Planet vanishes quick when you're in the jungle. There is a great show produced by the Discovery Channel called "Naked & Afraid" that will show you that even the bravest are humbled. The idea that is a super-predator is just plain wrong... as our reaction to a near invisible Corona Virus shows.

We are a fragile part of Nature's fabric and we easily fall prey to a whole slew of invisible predators. Nature recognizes 4 types of predation in the jungle. We call them (1) Carnivory, (2) Herbivory, (3) Parasitic, and (4) Mutualist.

These define the flow of energy between predator and prey. In the interaction, the Prey loses energy and the Predator gains energy. The first 3 - Carnivore, (2) Herbivore, and (3) Parasite - are relationships wherein the interaction can result in the death of the Prey. Before taking sides, you should know that it is Nature's intent that both Predator and Prey should benefit from the relationship. Prey has to become more creative in order to survive predation. Predators have to be more creative to assure they continue to have prey.

Also - Predators cull the old, the injured, the sick and the very young. This leaves more resources for healthy animals. Nature's strategy is to control the size of populations and slow the spread of disease to thus keep whole system healthy. Mutualist relationships are those interactions where the result has a beneficial effect on the both the Predator and the Prey.

In future podcasts, I'll explain how Nature expects individuals and organizations to thrive... in spite of our many challenges, difficulties or disabilities. I'll explain the jungle's key management strategy as *altruistic self-interest*.

I learned 3 things by hitting a pole at 70 miles an hour: The 1st thing is that – metal to metal - a car stops quick. In less than a nanosecond, my whole life flash before me. I saw my time on Earth pass in the fraction of an instant.

The 2nd thing I learned is that anything or anyone inside the car does not stop. It gets stopped. In my case I was stopped by the steering wheel. It crushed my chest – fracturing all the ribs on my left side; these tore into my lungs. I also broke my sternum, my clavicle, my spine, my left arm and my right hip. You will imagine that most of my body was covered in cuts, scrapes and bruises... and that I suffered considerable internal damage.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> thing I learned is that human beings are very fragile. We break easily and suffer great pain. Did you know that you can't feel more pain than you can endure? As soon as it's too much, you'll pass out. The brain floods the system with soothing chemicals. How intelligent is that? If you are suffering, it's because you haven't reached your pain limit.

In my case complete paralysis resulted from a spinal cord injury. My spine was crushed at the t-4 level... chest high. And, because of all the inner damage, I left the hospital 11 months later with the prognosis for a life expectancy of 5 to 7 years.

Well they weren't far off. In the 40+ years since, I've been hospitalized so many times I've lost count. There is always one emergency or another. As a recent example, my descending heart valve became completely blocked by bloods platelets that had diligently been trying to repair the damage to it for years. Doctors transplanted a new one but that caused a series of other challenges and took 5 more operations to repair. That meant several years of convalescence.

But I can say that in spite of the huge ordeal - including my death experiences and all the time I spent in hospitals - the prognosis for my early demise was exaggerated. *It ain't over 'til it's over!*

With nothing to do except lie in a hospital bed and think, I needed to create another karma for myself. I ventured within to figure out what had given me the most joy until the moment of impact in that near-fatal accident. What had given me happiness? I seriously thought about it and started a list. Then one day it all came together.

I realized everything that gave me joy in life was related to Nature: I'd been an avid camper and fisherman, I loved to ski and to explore the great Canadian forests as soon as the snows melted. I'm an amateur photographer, herbalist, gardener.

I knew that I had to get myself back into Nature as soon as I could. Of course, you should understand that, back then, it was a bit of a stretch. I couldn't even move. I couldn't sit up by myself - so it was a monumental idea. Severely disabled people were being in extended care institutions, not found running around the North woods.

I entered the rehab hospital to rebuild my strength. I couldn't lift a single pound with my left arm. As it had been shattered, they put it in a cast for six weeks, but it didn't set. So... my arm was cut opened and the bone reinforced with a metal rod and screws. Then they put it in another cast for 6 weeks and, by the time it was removed, my arm had really wasted away.

I was told that they only dealt with emergencies in the first few weeks because there was so much damage. No one had even realized my



arm was broken. So, rehab meant a lot of work. Let me share an anecdote: When I was first sat in a wheelchair, I lasted about twenty minutes before fainting. When I came to, the physiotherapist told me that, because I'd been flat on my back for so long that my, body now vertical, the blood forgot how to circulate back. She pointed to my feet which were now purple.

After a few months in rehab, I moved into an apartment on my own. I needed to be alone. I had to find out who I was – the *me beyond a role I'd been playing*. I was a son, a brother, a husband and father, a friend - but who was I really? I felt that I'd been playing a role, that I'd been playing “fake it ‘til you make it”.

I simplified my life, dividing it in two parts. The first part dealt with *out there*, the real world of people and problems. The second part was managing my “*in here*” - that is to say my quest for joy.

I used God as a consultant as He supplied me with a constant realization: *I have no time to lose*. I have incredible potential and more important, my energy is indivisibly linked to the creative God-energy. I now saw how God is the forces that are maintaining life. There is only ONE ENERGY... in continuum.

From my death experiences I knew that I am both a physical body and a spirit... not either/or... BOTH. I am energy... and so is everyone and everything else. I saw myself as a drop in the ocean... I'm just as wet, just as salty as the whole ocean... but I am not the ocean, I'm a single drop. God is the ocean, the ALL in all. I had seen God as the intelligence that is animating Nature... but I still had to figure out how to integrate that way of seeing into my daily life.

In the meantime, weak as I was, I tried to overcome the challenges of living alone as a severely disabled man. I'll share another example of what that meant - One day, while transferring from the bathtub to my chair, I slipped and fell to the floor. I wasn't hurt but it took every ounce of strength I had to get off the floor and back into the

wheelchair. I tried and failed, again and again. It took me about an hour to finally make it. After, I needed another bath.

Aware that my prognosis was for a very short life... I took what little time I thought I had left very seriously. I noticed a lot of people were wasting so much of their time with petty grievances. Many were caught in all kinds of emotional scenarios and drama that blew everything out of proportion.

My new life strategy required me to give my life some serious thought. In those days, before cell phone and text messages, I decided to manage my availability to others. I bought a telephone answering machine in order to deal with friends and family on my own terms. I'd talk to people when I was up for it, not when the phone rang. I gave my alone time to contemplation and study. I practiced a sort of *disability yoga*.

According to Wikipedia, contemplation means to profoundly think about something, and to think about it often. Because I wanted my inner quest to reveal God's plan in my life, I took every opportunity to find myself alone.

I wanted to commune with God's most abundant source of intelligence so, as soon as my strength allowed, I visited nearby Provincial Parks. I'd go two or three times a week, leave my car in the parking lot, unload my wheelchair and ride any trail... until I was arm weary. And there I'd rest before trying to find my way back to my car. Wherever I stopped and rested, I contemplated. Because I had been so very dependent on others, I learned to wait with quiet patience, so here, waiting quietly for my arms to rest, watching nothing at all, I used skills learned in the hospital.

In the forest, I'd scan the goings-on. In those quiet moments, waiting for my aching muscles to release their metabolites, I'd note questions that came to mind to seek out answers later, when I got back into town. Alone in those woods, I watched and wondered.

Often lost in my contemplations, sometimes it took me 3-4 times longer to get back to my car than it took to get to the original

somewhere. --- I can tell you that there's real fun to be had riding down a steep hill in a wheelchair. On a crisp autumn day, the crunch of fresh fallen leaves under my wheels and the wind at my back, there is no better feeling. But remember this - it'll be a hell of a job getting back up that hill at the end of the afternoon, when your arms and shoulders are weary.

It was during one of those solitary treks that my new career path began. Staring mindlessly into a small clearing at the Oka Provincial Park, I noticed an animal – a sort of marmot as far as I could tell. It came to within three feet of me ...which was very unusual. Startled, I thought it strange that this wild bushy-tailed animal was so oblivious to me. Then I got a distinct feeling that it was here to teach me something. So I gave it my full attention and, an instant later, I was stunned to see that it was missing half of a front paw.

It was a disabled animal.

Well that convinced me even more that it had something to show me - and so I tuned all my antennae to watching it. After a few long moments, it suddenly struck me: *I noticed this animal had absolutely no sense of self-pity or resentment because of its handicap.* Quite to the contrary, as it was missing half a paw, it had to work harder than others to fill its needs. And it totally accepted its fate.

That life-lesson from Nature was deeply felt. It was illuminated by it and it filled me with deep understanding. *If I was to have any chance at all for a happy life, I'd have to make every effort myself.*

Soon I was sharing my findings with anyone I met. Because I had such a positive attitude after surviving such a huge ordeal, I was invited to speak here and there to company groups and management teams.

I passed on my good news: *Don't wait until you get stressed and attract a catastrophe. Don't hit a pole at 70 mph. Get into Nature. Relax. Enjoy yourself. Life is short. Invest in yourself!*

People liked my message. The first time I was invited back to speak to a same group for a second time, I was dumfounded. When I asked them if they'd done what I suggested last time - to spend time in Nature and learn to meditate - I was told "...*Err no, not really*".

I came to understand that people don't really do what a coach, or manager or motivator might suggest. The positive response to a message doesn't necessarily translate itself in an action phase. Hearing an inspirational speaker is like taking a Valium. It lets the audience feel good while they think about it - but they'll soon forget, and old habits will come charging.

Frustrated, I didn't want to cheer people up with my skills as a speaker nor did I want to reduce my life-changing experience to a smoke and mirrors show for people to ignore. I stopped accepting invitations to speak and instead concentrated my energy and time on disability issues.

The timing was impeccable. It was the very beginning of a social awakening to the needs of disabled people in Quebec - so I gave the movement my voice. For several years my time was divided between visiting wilderness areas near my home and working on access issues for disabled people.

I worked at local, provincial, national and international levels and a lot of my understanding on the *empowerment* process was shaped by those experiences. Nature's lessons came from my solitary wanderings in nearby forests and I used many of those strategies to defend right to universal access in the political arena.

Lessons like *How Nature favors adaptability* that I learned from the marmot that afternoon, apply to all of us.

Ten years after my accident, in a series of fascinating events, I met Suzy who would become my life-partner. She had recently returned to Canada after spending a couple of years working on an CIDA project in South America. The Canadian International Development

Agency sponsored a project to safeguard a community's watershed in Colombia. She recounted how they taught people to protect the environment by not cutting the trees.

Later I asked her how she got people who are often resistant to learning new things to listen to their ideas, and she told me:  
*“Understanding follows experience so we get them to experience positive alternatives to their harmful agricultural practices.”*

CLICK – My thinking instantly re-aligned itself. Rather than try to motivate people, I'd teach the principles of self-motivation. I'd show people why it's in their interest to do their best at all times. I had to get folks to experience how self-management is in fact self-empowerment.

Over the years, Suzy added her magic touch to my training themes, and together we've become experts in heuristic training. Heurism means *self-discovery*. It's a technique that guides people to learn quickly, deeply and efficiently. Participants are presented with enough theory to engage them in a corresponding series of activities. By spacing theory and experience, both hemispheres of the brain are engaged in the creation of new neural connections.

Expertly animated, the effect of heuristic learning guides participants in a mental shortcut that by-passes resistance and quickens the learning curve.

Our called *“Lessons from the jungle...”* training themes have helped more than 50,000 participants in major corporation, institutions and government discover that Nature is the world's best leadership school.

In this Podcast I described 10 ideas we can learn: 1. That Nature manages continuous change; 2. An incredible diversity; 3. Ferocious competition; 4. Nature favours situational leadership; 5. Amazing cooperation; 6. Stunning creativity; 7. Extra-ordinary tenacity; 8.

Awesome team spirit; 9. A very efficient use of resources; and 10. Bio-mimicry (*or Best practices*).

Nature favours adapt-ability. Ask yourself if your political leaders are managing their daily agenda to reflect this larger truth. If they are not, you had better vote for change.

We are living in times of questionable politics, what I call the Jungle Times. Instead of addressing our common concerns and problems, many leaders are lost in partisan politics, empty-headed ideology and ineffective strategies.

Did you know that we are tracked by trolls every day who try to convince us with some lie or other just to undermine our democracy? Some of them are enemy agents from other countries, others are domestic enemies, still others are partisan believers and some just savvy advertisers who know what strings to pull in order to get us to buy something.

Just so you understand, this is an age of lies and fake news. Not to say that we weren't warned. In 1792 the great statesman Alexander Hamilton wrote: "*The truth unquestionably is, that the only path to subversion of the republican system of the Country is, by flattering the prejudices of the people and exciting their jealousies and apprehensions, to throw affairs into confusion, and bring on civil commotion...*

*When a man undisciplined in private life, desperate in his fortune, bold in his temper, possessed of considerable talents, despotic in his ordinary demeanour--known to have scoffed in private at the principles of liberty--when such a man is seen to mount the hobby horse of popularity--to join the cry of danger to liberty--to take every opportunity of embarrassing the General Government & bringing it under suspicion--to flatter and fall in with all the nonsense of the zealots of the day--it may be justly suspected that his object is to throw things into confusion that he may ride the storm and direct the whirlwind."*

Let me justly say that POTUS - the President of the United States and leader of the free world - Donald J. Trump fits the bill. He was caught lying more than 15,000 times in his first 1000 days in office. Is that good leadership?

Normally I don't pay too much attention to politics South of the 49<sup>th</sup> Parallel, but Canada is America's largest trading partner. The US has 10 times more people than us so strategy suggest that when you're in bed with a gorilla, you should be concerned whenever it decided to roll over.

I say Trump is an example of bad leadership because the man is a predator. He preyed on the fears and anger of a large percentage of the American electorate who were displaced by corporate greed and mismanagement. With no regard for workers, many companies were acquired, gutted and sold, many jobs were shipped away, and most worker wages were frozen.

People were not prepared for the devastation. The US has a poor social safety net, so Trump campaigned on a promise to save them from the changes in their circumstances... *and yet he had absolutely no intention of delivering on his promises.* Remember that Predators often use deceptive practices to lure their prey.

People who might have trouble believing that leaders – both corporate and political – deliberately lie, cheat and usurp power, will benefit from watching an excellent series on Netflix called “Dirty Money”.

Over Two Seasons, you learn all about corruption, fraud and disruptive practices... all part and parcel of our daily landscape. One episode called “*The Con Man*” tells us about the career of Donald Trump while another - “*The Slum Lord*” - is about his son-in-law Jared Kushner.

I'd like Trump supporters to explain how a man who spent the first 72 years of his life putting “me-first” and money as the supreme American value, suddenly has a brain transplant wherein he becomes the champion of the common man. He promised to drain the swamp

but instead unleashed a mean-spirited politic that doesn't bode well for democracy.

In a way that Predator's do, Trump divided America against itself. To fuel his folly, he even denied that foreign agents are meddling in US elections, preferring the word of Russia's Putin over his own Intelligence Services... in spite of the data. He denied real and present dangers like Global climate change... in spite of science, and the Covid19 virus in spite of the Centre for Disease Control and the World Health Organization He is dismantling the EPA, the Consumer Protection Agencies, the Health Care and Education systems, and other protections and cutting taxes to the very rich.

Nature's 4.5 Billion Years of Success is an enviable track record, but it is at risk because the idea of good breaks down with our species. We realize that predators can emerge in every social group. In fact, research shows us that human society is made up of 3 kinds of member: Good people, Bad people and Stupid people.

Professor Carlo Cipolla of the University of Southern California at Davis wrote about what he calls *the greatest threat facing humanity today*: **Human stupidity**.

Cipolla's study explains that 1. Good people are defined *they who will primarily behave with altruistic self-interest*. (i.e. - My brother as myself type of thinking.) 2. Bad people primarily *behave in a predatory manner, putting their own interest above all else ...even if it is to another's detriment*. Me first! 3. And then Stupid people *primarily behave to the detriment of others ...even if it's not in their own interest to do so*. They are like parasites.

A stupid person causes loss to another person, or to a group of people, while gaining nothing for himself, even if incurring personal loss.

Unfortunately, Cipolla's study determined that: "*We are surrounded by more stupid people than we can imagine.*"

Most interestingly he also says this: "*The probability that a person is stupid is independent from any other characteristic. Stupid people*



*can come from the cross-sections of society – from every age group, gender, race, religion, every cultural origin is represented. Stupidity transcends educational and intelligence levels and acquired wealth.”*

Professor Cipolla concludes by stating: *“A stupid person is the most dangerous person in the world.”*

That’s why I’m alarmed about this POTUS – the self-serving Donald Trump. He sees himself as a leadership genius, but he is so far off the mark that he hasn’t yet figured out that no border – not even the 5, 5025 miles of it on his Canadian side – is a barrier against climate, pollution or viruses. Borders are just lines on a map, a way to divide and conquer people, they’re a very old predatory practice.

Cipolla explained that when a bad person acts to the detriment of another, a value has been traded from one to one, so there is no real debt incurred by society as a whole. But when stupid people act, the result is quite different. Stupid people cause a loss to others with no gain to their own account - so society as a whole is poorer from their acts. There is a net loss.

I think the timing for a discussion on how Nature sees authentic leaders is perfect. Are we meant to be wage slaves who serve the elite few members of society or do you think we should manage ourselves as if we are living in a corner of paradise? Before you answer, consider that monkeys in the jungle will devote no more than 6-hours a day to provide all of their family needs. Most of that time is spent actually gathering and eating food while the rest of their day is used to socialize, mate, groom and rest. And did you know chimps can live for 50 years or more? Happy Days?

Folks – I’m proposing an exciting learning agenda on this show. The jungle is the best management school known because of the immediacy and power of its messages. Deadly snakes, spiders and frogs, poisonous plants and mushrooms, all of them telling us that it’s a jungle out there. But that jungle also provides us with incredible examples of strategy, creativity and leadership.

The next episode of The Jungle Times Podcast is called *The Beautiful Planet: On Good Governance in Nature*. Tune in and I'll share with you the management ideas that apply to complex systems – like people, families and tribes. Discover how Nature gives values to individuals, relationships and good governance.

On that show, I'll explain strategies that are more than philosophical ways of seeing the world. The word *nature* comes from Latin "Natura" which means *essential quality*, or *innate disposition* of an examined system. It's how things are essentially made.

You know – participants in my "*Lessons from the jungle...*" training often mention that they easily accept the ideas I share because they make perfect sense. And, of course they do. Nature's strategies feel natural - even if many of them are mind-blowingly fascinating - because they describe our true creative self. We are a part of Nature. We should not be apart from it.

In fact, if you take away one thing from this podcast it should be that Nature favours your uniqueness. We've all heard that there have never been 2 identical snowflakes, or 2 identical leaves on a tree, or 2 identical blades of grass... in all of creation. Well even identical twins can list their differences

The miracle though is that the principles underlying the uniqueness of each are universal: Everything in Nature is unique! Learning universal rules is like reading our owner's manual.

A reason I call these "the jungle times" is because we live in an age where a very few people exert an awful lot of power over the rest of us. A very few people have acquired more wealth than the rest of us combined.

Billionaires number fewer than 2,500 people but their wealth is growing at a rate of 2 and 1/2 BILLION dollars – or 2, 500 million dollars every single day while the poorest half of the world's population is forced into debt as it sees its own net worth dwindle.

How can we imagine that the playing field is equal when the world's « 25 » richest people had more than one trillion dollars in 2018, which is more than half of the citizens of this Planet – the 3.8 billion poorest people. These figures are from the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in 2019. The report is meant to call attention to the immense gap between the rich and the poor. Similarly, a recent CNN headline screamed “*Billionaires reaching for the stars while the rest of the world suffers*”.

Friends, you’ve got to know that they – the billionaires – are not going to change a single thing in a system that has allowed them to acquire so much wealth --- even if the imbalance forces most people to suffer. For them, the system is perfect.

History shows us that the rich have resisted every proposal to change the system ever made since the iniquities were pointed out. George Orwell wrote all it in his book “Animal Farm”.

Just to show you how the pigs are more equal than the rest of us, Donald J. Trump has restructured the US tax code in favor of the wealthy by giving them the biggest tax break in history, and by changing the inheritance tax so the richest 1% will save trillions of dollars to leave their progeny.

The man whose campaign promise was to “drain the swamp” made things worse. He is not a good leader. He is not working for the common good. If there is a single thing that my 40 years of contemplating Nature tells me it’s this - the way to be a leader is to empower yourself, then manage your environment and its resources... and care for its needs.

I know it works because I did exactly that. In spite of being severely disabled and confined to a wheelchair, I focused the little energy I had to getting to know myself. I wanted to discover what gave me joy. As I sought joy, I found passion from contemplating Nature. After that, I visited wilderness areas, taking notes to then teach others what I learned.

I volunteered all my spare time to disability issues, bringing my voice to the cause and the tools and syntheses I found in Nature to the people I worked with. I partnered with Suzy 10 years after my accident and we decided we could spread Nature's lessons farther and faster together.

Friends, if you want a happy life don't wait for a saviour. Help to fix the wrongs that need fixing right there, in your local environment. And when all our local environments are connected to Nature's *idea of good*, then this whole world becomes paradise ...found.

The world needs creative leaders to emerge - now like never before. Tune into my next Podcast. It's called: *The beautiful Planet: On Good Governance in Nature* – and you'll find out how Nature champions creative people. I'll explain how the ONE becomes the many, and how the many are valued by that ONE.

I'll also tell you a little more about Suzy and my travels, and about Mayamü, a Jungle Reserve we built in a primary rainforest in Southern Costa Rica to do a lot of our research. I look forward to speaking with you next time.

If you liked this presentation, tell your friends and give it a positive review. If you don't, write and tell me. If you would like a written transcript of this presentation, visit my website at [www.TheJungleTimes.com](http://www.TheJungleTimes.com). Thanks... Adios for now.