

2019 Valedictorian Speech The Association Leadership Puzzle

Association leaders don't have easy jobs. But I love what I do, & I know that I am a better CEO of my professional association because of the CAE program.

I'll admit that I'm what you might describe as the opposite of complacent. Admit it – most of us are! I now think of us a bit like puzzle aficionados. And, for me, the CAE process is reminiscent of a jigsaw puzzle that comes in a CSAE box with a clear description but no final image of what it will look like for each student.

The middle of the puzzle is often the hardest where were struggling to get those pieces to fit together. That's when people made the biggest difference for me. Even those who liked to tease. Like my staff, who literally begged me to stop taking courses due to the pace of change they inspired in our organization. Or my family, who would point out how each of my degrees & certifications meant less time at the crokinole board together.

Those essential border pieces of the puzzle are what kept me going & I thank each of those people. Eve Mechici, CAE Program Manager, who has a welcoming, bright smile, & always insisted that my constant questions were a pleasure to deal with. Tracey Folkes Hanson, CSAE CEO, who is as friendly & accessible as she is visionary. The CAE instructors, especially Doris Lavoie, who gave clear feedback & tireless tutoring throughout his courses.

My fellow students were the most colorful & fun puzzle pieces! I appreciated my CAE 500 prep group -- especially Seamus Gearin & Donnalyne Thorsteinson who managed the group process like professional coaches. And, I was inspired by fellow student Desarae Davidson who changed jobs, built a new home, & welcomed a most handsome new grandson during the journey!

The end is when we really get to see the picture come together. It's not easy – when we are so close to completing & yet have all the competing demands of our families, busy careers, along with the exhaustion that comes from taking on a challenge through to the end. That requires persistence, tenacity, & dedication! Steve Jobs said, "I'm convinced that about half of what separates successful entrepreneurs from the non-successful ones is pure perseverance." True not only for this program but certainly for the marathon of the final exam process! And, yet, completing the puzzle, getting my CAE designation, only left me with that desire to continue to persevere further!

Our associations are evolving, leading, & meeting the needs of our constituents in significant ways. We do that so much more effectively together. CSAE is our bridge to that collaborative strength – I'm thankful to CSAE leadership & the CAE program for this support & for continuing to champion profession associations in Canada. Together, we are the CSAE.