

The Association of Certified Fraud Examiners Origins of the Vancouver Chapter

It was one of those happenstance conversations that appears inconsequential in the moment however in hindsight was anything but the case. It was a brief conversation that opened the door to building a valuable professional network and longstanding meaningful relationships that have meant a great deal over the span of my career.

In the early nineties, a colleague from Toronto asked if I had heard of the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners based in Austin Texas. Founded in 1988, he explained at the time, the Association was fast becoming the premier provider of anti-fraud training and education. He stated that the Association was offering memberships to those who were involved in the investigation of fraud and white-collar crime. Given my twenty-six year career with the RCMP, he thought I would qualify for membership. For thirteen years, my attentions centered on a wide range of commercial crime and fraud investigations. Additionally for eight years, I led the Commercial Crime Section in Victoria prior to retirement from the Force in 1983. My private sector career proceeded into Insurance Adjusting specializing in the field of fidelity and surety bond claims for major insurance companies across Canada.

Following initial research stemming from my colleague's simple question that opened my eyes towards the Association, I obtained and submitted an application for membership and by late December 1993 I received the prestigious CFE designation. At the time, the Association had a number of chapters available in the United States and Canada but not Vancouver. Coming from the Force, I recognized the value of continued learning and being a part of a professional network, so I began to make enquiries to gauge interest locally believing Vancouver would have enough base to support a chapter. Establishing a local chapter in the greater Vancouver area would give access to a professional network, regular meetings and in-person seminars for continued learning and development. It would also minimize the travel costs for members to engage in one of the chapters already established.

With background outlining how to start a local chapter in hand, I personally contacted leaders of existing chapters in Toronto, Edmonton and Calgary to understand from their experience the opportunities and challenges related to formation and operation of a chapter. They were very encouraging and felt strongly that a Vancouver chapter would be both viable and welcomed into the network.

While attending the Association's Fraud Symposium seminar in Austin in December 1994 I sought out the Manager of Member Services, **Malcolm Mills** to obtain further information and the supporting documentation required to initiate a chapter in Vancouver. One of the necessary requirements to establish a chapter was obtaining petition signatures from 10

accredited CFE's seeking approval for the formation of a local chapter. Mr. Mills was extremely helpful providing origination materials necessary to establish our new chapter on the west coast and fortunately as the early 90's were of the pre-'privacy' era, he also provided contact information of accredited CFE's residing in the Vancouver area. One by one, I personally contacted each to discuss the Association at large in order to confirm their potential interest and levels of engagement for a newly established chapter.

The personal calls were a success. Each accredited CFE voiced their full support for the formation of a chapter as it would provide them with a valuable resource outlet currently not readily available to them. They were eager for a forum within which to network with others having the same interests and also interested in direct access to continuing education. It goes without saying that the greatest learning opportunities come from sharing knowledge amongst peers in the profession. In support of our efforts to move forward, the Association provided \$500.00 in start-up funding – we were rich.

During the early start-up phase, I connected with **Alan Langley**, President of the Toronto Chapter, to discuss further information on forming and operation of a chapter. Mr. Langley was very helpful in providing insight from his experience and assistance during these important early stages of forming the chapter. As a matter of fact Mr. Langley advised of his pending plans to visit Vancouver and offered to personally meet with individuals who expressed an interest in forming a local chapter. In preparation to assure a warm west coast welcome, I contacted the 10 petitioning individuals who had expressed interest in forming our chapter and a dinner meeting was arranged to welcome Mr. Langley to Vancouver.

During early April 1995, the team of ten founding members convened at Hy's Steak House for further discussions to form the Vancouver Chapter. Chapter pioneers attending were: **Jim Blatchford; Ronald Parks; Tim Howley; William Little; David Connop; William Prebushewski; Michael T. Cheevers; Stephen Hume; Robert Gourley; Rick Wilson; Allan Langley** and myself. The meeting resulted in our unanimous agreement to form a local chapter and I was assigned the task of preparing all the necessary documents for submission to the Association's headquarters in Austin.

On April 20, 1995 the noted CFE members attended at the offices of Deloitte & Touche to complete the petition to form a local chapter. By way of correspondence on April 25, 1995 the documents were forwarded to Austin for approval. In our correspondence with the Association we indicated our hope to convene our first official chapter meeting in mid-September 1995 for the purposes of electing officers and the acceptance of by-laws.

In correspondence dated May 5, 1995 from Mr. Mills we were advised that the Board of Regents had approved our application to form the local chapter of the Association to be known formally as the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners, Vancouver Chapter. As the Association assigns each chapter a number upon official application, the Vancouver was designated number 66.

On August 11, 1995 correspondence was distributed to CFE members in the greater Vancouver area advising of the first official chapter meeting to be held on September 27, 1995 and encouraging attendance. Due to the generosity of **David Connop** the meeting was held in the main boardroom of Deloitte & Touche located on Dunsmuir Street in downtown Vancouver. The notice advised that **David Connop; Ronald Parks; William Little; William Prebushewski** and I had agreed to stand for election as directors.

During the meeting, six officers and directors were elected for the 1995/1996 term; **Steve Holotuk** – President; **David Connop** – Vice President; **William Little** – Secretary/Treasurer; **Ronald Parks** – Director & chairman of the Professional Development Committee & **William Prebushewski** – Director & chairman of the Membership Committee. A total of 22 people were in attendance at what was recognized as the first official meeting of the chapter.

Over the next few months the Vancouver Chapter Board of Directors met independently to establish policies and procedures. These included by-laws, establishing a bank account, membership applications and registration of the Chapter under the Societies Act of British Columbia. The law firm of Lindsey Kinney was approached to take the necessary steps for the registration of the Chapter. Due to legal complications with registration under the Societies Act of British Columbia, Lindsey Kenney advised that they would incorporate under the Canada Business Corporations Act. The necessary documentation was completed and on February 12, 1996 Letters Patent were issued under the Canada Corporations Act. The Chapter received the necessary Association consent from **Joseph Wells** in Austin to use the name “Vancouver Chapter of the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners” on March 12, 1996. The letter of consent was filed with the Canada Corporations Act and September 30th was set as the year end for the Chapter.

The Chapter held monthly meetings which featured guest speakers addressing various topics of interest to the membership. In the beginning our meetings were held in boardrooms of either Deloitte & Touche or the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce. Luncheon arrangements were made to ensure sandwiches; desert and coffee were provided for those in attendance at a cost of \$10.00 per person. Over the early years the membership grew and attendance also increased to a point where other venues were necessary to host the meetings. In November 1998 the Chapter established that future meetings would be held on the first Tuesday of each month commencing at noon and would be 60 – 90 minutes in duration. Having outgrown the boardrooms, meetings were held at the Keg Ceasers 3rd Floor in the Hornby Banquet Room located on Hornby Street. Chapter meetings have since relocated to the Terminal City Club on West Hastings Street.

By January 1996, the Chapter membership had grown to 40 members. Directors were using different channels to promote and raise awareness to the Vancouver Chapter and its inherent benefits wherever possible. **John Crawford** volunteered to publish a newsletter to the members. We thought members would have interest in a variety of articles including membership and director profiles; reports from luncheon meetings; examination waivers; and various professional areas of interest. The newsletter has continued over the years and

impressively in 2007 and 2009 the Chapter received the Newsletter of the Year Award from the Association.

In 1996 **Alan Langley** was appointed Canadian Regent. As Regent, he arranged a national conference call with all Canadian Chapter Presidents to discuss issues of concern to the Chapters and members. Following that, on August 11, 1996 a meeting of all Chapter Presidents and the Board of Regents was held in Seattle. As a participant of the contingent that attended, our biggest concern was the completion of the Canadian Supplement to the CFE Manual.

The Chapter held its first two day seminar entitled “Forum On Fraud” at the Landmark Hotel & Conference Centre located on Robson Street in Vancouver September 30 and October 1, 1996. We were thrilled with the uptake noting a total of 57 professionals registered to attend. Guest speakers included **Courtenay Thompson** – Courtenay Thompson & Associates; **Alan Langley** – Langley & Associates; **Monty Carstairs** – Regional Crown Counsel; **Paul McDonnell** – Lindsey Kinney Barristers & Solicitors; **Ronald Parks** – Lindquist Avey; **Timothy Howley** – KPMG; **Earl Moulton** – RCMP Coquitlam Detachment and **Chris O’Connor** – Ladner Downs. All of the speakers took part in a panel discussion at the end of the conference. Well received by those in attendance, the “Forum on Fraud” received high marks and positive comments.

On October 22, 1996 the first Annual General Meeting of the Chapter took place at the CIBC Seminar Room located on West Hastings Street. A new slate of officers was elected for the 1996/97 term. The by-laws were amended to include different classes of membership to the Chapter which would help grow a diverse membership going forward.

In order to comply with the Business Corporations Act on March 31, 1998 **Janet E. Helm** CGA, of Janet E. Helm & Co. Inc. was appointed as auditor for the Chapter and remarkably she still holds that appointment today. Janet has been a tireless contributor and active member of the Chapter since its inception.

In 1998, Chapter member **Bud Cramm**, was elected by certified members to serve a two-year term as a member of the Board of Regents of the Association. This Board is responsible for setting membership standards that promote professionalism and ensure the future of the organization as a whole.

Remarkably in 2005, our current Chapter President **Carmen Wiechers** received the Walker Award from the Association scoring the highest CFE certification exam results of that year.

As Chapter membership flourished, members felt strongly it was important to contribute to the community and the profession hosting numerous seminars, instructed fraud courses offered by Kwantlen College and organized professional development days. Over the years, the Chapter was recognized by the Association for this contribution to the community and has received different awards and recognitions for their efforts.

In 2006, the Chapter established a memorial scholarship in honour of **Wayne McIlroy**, a long standing member who had unexpectedly passed away in March, 2005. A well respected member of the Vancouver Chapter Board for seven years and Chair of the newsletter committee, Wayne embodied professionalism and a positive attitude that buoyed everyone he encountered. The Wayne McIlroy Memorial Scholarship was awarded to a fulltime undergrad student of Kwantlen College who is enrolled in fraud education. The scholarship donated \$750 per year over five years to support their educational pursuits in the profession.

At the AGM in 2006, the Vancouver Chapter had the privilege to host Association President **James Ratley** who travelled to Vancouver to present **Jean Michel, David Connop** and myself with Distinguished Achievement Awards for our leadership and commitment to the Association and specifically our work with the Chapter.

The Chapter continued its involvement in the local community and in April 2006, March 2007 and April 2009 they joined with the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) to present a very successful day-long seminar on topic related to both associations. Well attended, these seminars received high marks from members who completed the post seminar feedback surveys.

On two occasions, the Vancouver Chapter tackled the insurmountable task of hosting responsibilities for the Annual ACFE Canadian Conference and Exhibition. The Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre in Vancouver served as our official venue to host both the 14th conference in 2008 followed by the 16th edition in 2010.

During May 4 – 7, 2008 approximately 240 people attended the four day ACFE Conference which consisted of break-out sessions and featured exceptional speakers covering a range of fraud related fields. On May 4th and May 5th the chapter, with the aid of both Saskatoon and Edmonton chapters in addition to various local sponsors, hosted a hospitality suite at the Century Plaza Hotel and Spa located on Burrard Street. In addition the Vancouver Chapter leaders hosted a networking reception on May 6th. It was during the reception on Tuesday evening that the Vancouver Chapter was surprised with the presentation of the Chapter of the Year Award. We all celebrated the achievement as the pinnacle to hosting the national conference. It was a welcomed signal that we must be doing something right.

In May 2010 the Chapter again hosted the Annual ACFE Annual Conference. This conference was an International affair with attendees from Hong Kong, Saudi Arabia, United States and elsewhere -- approximately 155 registrants in all.

Upon reflection as we approach the Chapter's 22nd anniversary in May 2017, it's hard to imagine how far the Vancouver Chapter has come as a professional organization. The ACFE Vancouver Chapter continues to flourish and today consists of over 100 individuals who come from various professions including: auditors, accountants, fraud investigators, loss prevention specialists, attorneys, educators, criminologists and police officers. Success was driven by the

contributions of so many people with a common professional interest that has culminated in an atmosphere of trusted fellowship.

As chapter membership grew over the years, the educational sessions have adapted to the evolving needs of the profession and particular interest was always found in the sharing of ‘war stories’ by various law enforcement officers. Technology and innovation have evolved rapidly, as have the avenues for potential fraud. It remains an important imperative for both the Association and the Chapter keeps us as professionals at the forefront of these challenges.

It’s important to take this opportunity to extend appreciation to those Directors and Officers involved in the Chapter since its inception for their efforts to build community within the profession and continually improve upon the professional development of us all while making our monthly meetings thought provoking, educational and entertaining. Equally important we thank Vancouver Chapter members without which there would be no Chapter.

Having the honor to personally serve our Chapter as President, Vice President, Director and Chair of the Ethics Committee I encourage every member to take the opportunity to serve in some leadership role of the Chapter as it truly is the most rewarding experience. I also encourage our dedicated members to proactively welcome younger professionals from a diverse range of fraud-related occupations to consider the Chapter as a fundamental pillar to the success of their future career. Together, we can support and empower them to serve as future leaders not only of the Chapter but for the profession broadly.

I’d like to extend special recognition to herald the diligent efforts of **Jean Michel** who has served as recording secretary for the Chapter since 1997. While fully employed with Deloitte, Jean gave tirelessly of her time to ensure chapter events were scheduled, member communications were circulated and meeting logistics and facilities were arranged to support every Chapter meeting. After 20 years of dedicated service and contribution to the Chapter, Jean officially retired in February 2017. No doubt our entire membership will miss her.

Authored by ACFE Vancouver Chapter Founding President, Mr. L.F.S. (Steve) Holotuk, C.F.E.-Retired. With contributions from and appreciation to contributors Jean Michel, John Dumfries, Linda Murray, Janet Helm and Margaret Woods who provided necessary background to the development of this historical reflective on the Vancouver Chapter.

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