

Murray S. Ritchie

Biography

Developmental Years 1960 - 1976

Murray Ritchie was born in Edmonton Alberta in 1960 and relocated to Selkirk Manitoba just weeks old so his newly single mother and older brother could be closer to family and familiar community support.

Growing up in the traditional territories of the of the Anishinabe (Ojibwe), Ininew (Cree), Oji-Cree, Dene, and Dakota, and Birthplace of the Métis Nation. Murray was mostly raised by his grandfather, a second generation Canadian of Irish decent and respected business man, who taught him to respect elders, his ancestors and those who came before him and to treat all people as he would like to be treated.

He enjoyed the outdoors and spent most of his time exploring the banks of the Red River and the shores of Lake Winnipeg. Growing up in a small town introduced him to a variety of cultures and traditions practiced by the parents of school friends. From Ukrainian dancing to German polka, Métis fiddling to Scottish pipe bands, Cree hoop dance to Ojibwe drumming, Murray quickly developed a passion for all things musical.

Drumming became his greatest passion, and his formal training began by learning Scottish rudiments in a Highland Band which quickly turned to private lessons and shifting from Scottish drumming to the local Sea Cadet marching band. In 1971, age 11 grade 6, Murray met a young guitar player who had been practicing to his older brother's record collection and after recruiting another classmate to sing, play tambourine and dance, The Hitchhikers were formed and played their first show, one song (Proud Mary: CCR) at the school Christmas concert.

It was this pivotal moment that drew Murray's attention away from school and toward all things Rock n' Roll, good and bad.

Military and Public Service 1976 - 1990

Struggling with dyslexia, Murray had a hard time completing school assignments and, at times, retaining written information. This, coupled with his obsession with all things rock n' roll and the opposite sex, started his mind to wonder contemplating a way out of school and his hometown. One option was to drop out and join a rock band but given his age it seemed unlikely that he could pull-off gigs in nightclubs and bars.

One fateful spring morning, while walking to school with a head full of spring fever, he ran into a school friend's brother who was heading to Winnipeg on the bus to join the Navy. Murray tagged along. Armed with a new fake ID purchased from an ad in Rolling Stone magazine, he

thought it would be a good opportunity to try it out as his travel companion was already 18. They could hit up a bar in the big city after his friend was done with his business.

During his wait at the recruitment center, while his friend was in writing aptitude tests etc., a recruiter looked Murray in the eye and said, "You're next." Without hesitation Murray jumped up, handed the recruiter his fake birth certificate and was escorted to a room to write a few tests. This was followed by an interview which quickly became a hand on a bible swearing allegiance to the Queen.

At the age of 15, Murray found himself on a military transport jet heading to the east coast to start basic training. This would be followed by a short time at Camp Borden in Ontario, Canada for Medical Assistant training. This training proved to be a bit out of reach for the underaged dyslexic teenager and he quickly re-mustered into the infantry. Murray was whisked off to CFB Wainwright in Alberta to join up with others entering the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry.

Murray's time with the PPCLI proved to be enjoyable but short lived as he was posted back to Winnipeg following combat arms training. Since he had joined the military to escape, he found it logical to leave. Unfortunately, he neglected to ask permission and once he relocated himself to the west coast, living on base with the third battalion, he was discovered, invited to stay in a jail cell for a few weeks and then discharged. All the while the military remained blind to the fact that he had not yet turned 18.

Following the military adventure, he returned home to Selkirk where he would eventually find work on the local ambulance. This led to a job with the city ambulance in Winnipeg which, due to restless feet, in 1983 he left to attend a paramedic program at United Hospital, University of North Dakota in the US.

Graduating and successfully obtaining a US National Registered Advanced Life Support designation (NREMT-P) he returned to Canada where work was unattainable as very few jurisdictions in Canada had advanced life support services. After a failed attempt to secure work on the west coast, in 1986 he accepted an offer to move to Saudi Arabia and work at a National Guard hospital. This choice led to joining the medical detail who served the then Crown Prince Abdullah. Several years later, following a downturn in oil and gas, Murray would return to serve royalty in Brunei. He worked at a private sports medicine clinic which served the Sultan of Brunei's family and adjacent Polo Club.

Industry and Consultancy 1990 to 2015

Shortly after leaving Saudi Arabia and returning to Canada, the Gulf War started and Iraq invaded Kuwait setting the country a blaze with over 700 oilwell fires. Having gained middle east experience in Saudi and picking up a working knowledge of Arabic, Murray was recruited by Safety Boss Canada to become part of the first team to travel to Kuwait onboard an American

Airforce C-5 Galaxy. This would mark the beginning of a career in the energy sector cross training as an H2S Technician and working as a site medic and H2S Tech.

Following his time in Kuwait he was offered a job in Qatar working for SECORP Industries out of Lafayette, Louisiana, first as an offshore medic/H2S technician and later as Country Manager. While working onshore in Qatar in his new supervisory role, the rig manager for the first rig he had worked on came to the office and asked if he'd like to join Cliffs Drilling as a Safety Officer in a newly created position offshore.

This entry into occupational safety saw Murray working through a series of mergers. First Cliffs being swallowed up by R&B Falcon (Reading and Bates merged with Falcon Drilling just prior), then merging with Transocean Sedco Forex (recently merged Sedco Forex and Transocean Offshore). After years of working around the globe Murray was offered a position with the newly created TODCO (The Offshore Drilling Company) which was created to take over the Transocean shallow water division and he found himself working in Angola West Africa.

It was while working for TODCO that Murray turned his sights on obtaining a master's degree. He enrolled at the University of Greenwich in the UK where he received a Master of Science in Occupational Safety and Health on his 49th birthday.

Armed with his new degree Murray was now positioned to move up and work for the big five. First, remaining in Angola, he accepted a contract with Chevron working on a major capital project in West Africa. This led to a contract advising BP on a Transocean drillship off the coast of Africa, following which he returned to Canada. There, he took a position with Global Training facilitating safety leadership programs for Chevron, Shell, Exxon Mobil, and many other oil and gas companies and service companies.

After almost a decade of traveling with Global Training Murray accepted a consultancy position with the Chevron Mafumeira Sul project, back in Angola, West Africa where he would work in the Houston office until the downturn in oil and gas led to international layoffs.

It was also during this time when Murray began being selected to speak at various professional development conferences as a keynote speaker, and session presenter.

Outside the Box Activator 2015 - Now

Following the last downturn in oil and gas prices Murray found himself with some time on his hands and began consulting to small businesses and communities in British Columbia where he had made his home base for the past 35 years. One client he worked for was a First Nations community in the process of expanding their economic development into logging, mining, and tourism.

During this same time the government of BC was promoting foreign student enrollment in colleges and universities and hiring temporary foreign workers for their oil and gas projects in the north. This continuous promotion seemed out of step with the demographics of BC whereby

the largest growing population of new and young workers were represented by First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth. This led Murray to investigate where they fit in the foreign student/worker programs.

Not surprisingly he discovered that this demographic was being passed over in both education and work opportunities with companies citing, among other things, safety training or lack thereof and lower education as the reasoning for passing them by. This was something Murray had been aware of following his consultancy with Global when he would travel to camps in the north and find indigenous youth working in the menial and low paying jobs such as catering or housekeeping.

Confirming this with youth from various First Nations communities Murray enlisted the help of 10 well respected and knowledgeable people from 10 First Nations communities in BC and the First Nations Safety Council of BC was incorporated under the societies act of BC in March of 2015. It was his involvement with the council that would lead Murray to be invited to sit on the program advisory board for the Occupational Health and Safety diploma program at BCIT.

While researching the failures of Joint Health and Safety Committees and through his involvement with various First Nations communities he quickly learned that Joint Committees needed to be reworked to be more organic and inclusive rather than committees governed by regulation. This would lead to speaking engagements at several regional chapters for professional organisations in North America which in turn led to an offer to work as a contract instructor at the University of Alberta.

The involvement with the University of Alberta would eventually land him a position at a college in the Maritimes. Faced with having to work within a very narrow curriculum being utilized at the college he began investigating how we educate, train, and test competency in the safety profession. This became the springboard for the book *Seven Bad Habits of Safety Management – Examining System Failures* (Taylor & Francis CRC Press). Another bonus for making the move to the east coast is that it allowed him the opportunity to return to school at the University of Prince Edward Island and begin a diploma in Adult Education. The classes were cut short by the 2020 COVID pandemic, however, in the classes that were completed, he was introduced to the concept of UDL (Universal Design for Learning). From these concepts grew ideas for rethinking safety training development, delivery, and implementation.

Today Murray continues to be sought after as a presenter, guest lecturer, and committee facilitator. Having turned keynote speeches into keynote conversations, he engages audiences via Bluetooth technologies allowing them to participate in the keynote. This leads to a memorable experience and helps to start conversations he hopes will continue when he's done.

As for his first loves, drumming, he continues to play music with various friends and shares a beautiful home in Mexico with the only woman who can help him turn the pages.