**Story Driven – Evidence Based – Extraordinary Results**

**28-8: The Power of Teamwork**

For 27 days in September of 1972 ice hockey players representing Canada and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) competed in an eight-game exhibition series. Known originally as the “Super Series”, over time it became known as the “Summit Series”.

Due to international rules which made National Hockey League professional athletes ineligible to play, the Soviets had become the dominant team in amateur international competitions. Prior to the Soviet’s rise in hockey, Canadian players had long dominated the NHL in North America. The Summit Series aroused intense feelings of nationalism in both countries.

Four hockey games were played in Canada in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver from September 2nd to September 8th. The remaining four hockey games of the series were played in Moscow, Russia from September 22nd to September 28th. This was the first competition between the Soviet National Ice Hockey Team and a Canadian team represented by professional players of the National Hockey League, which were known for the very first time as **“Team Canada”.**

The eight-game series was played over twenty-four 20-minute periods of hockey, 1,440 minutes or 28,800 seconds. The Canadian team were comprised of thirty-five players and two coaches, who were bitter rivals from ten different NHL cultures, which came together during those **28,800 Seconds** through **The Power of Teamwork** against incredible odds.

Through gamesmanship the Soviets had positioned themselves to appear as if they were undertaking the series to learn from the NHL professionals when in fact, their intensions were to dominate and win the series. The organizational structure of the entire series was orchestrated to favour the Soviets. The Soviets would have never agreed to the series if they felt they could not win.

What began as a simple series between two hockey-loving nations evolved quickly into a clash of cultures, ideologies and politics with the Canadian way of life hanging precariously in the balance.

The Canada – U.S.S.R Hockey Series of 1972 matched players from great hockey powers of North America and Europe with opposing political systems and ideologies (democracy versus communism). It took place during the height of the Cold War when the world lived under the threat of a nuclear disaster. The Series included some of the greatest players of their time. It wasn’t just another battle for a championship. It was for hockey supremacy. It was Canada’s game and democratic values against the game and political ideologies of the Soviet Union.

After a shocking 7-3 loss to the Soviets in game one in Montreal, a solid 4-1 Team Canada win in Toronto, a disappointing 4-4 draw in Winnipeg and an embarrassing 5-3 loss in Vancouver, where Team Canada was booed off the ice by many Canadian fans, Team Canada found themselves leaving Canada with just a single win and a tie in four games. Both the Canadian fans and media were in disbelief and shock resulting in a backlash of negative press and disillusioned fans. This left the disappointed Team Canada players uncertain of their support in Canada leaving them feeling disenchanted, discouraged and disconnected.

Many experts felt that as the team flew to Sweden for 10 days for training, adjusting to the Olympic-size ice, drastic different time zones and a pair of exhibition games against the Swedish National Team, they arrived as 35 individual players but left Sweden as a unified and united team before resuming the series in Moscow.

As the Team Canada players departed Sweden and arrived in Russia they received a huge boost from 3,000 Canadian fans that travelled to Moscow to support their team and thousands of telegrams from British Columbia to Newfoundland and the Territories from every city, town and village in between which covered the walls of the hallway outside the Team Canada dressing room.

In game five after watching 3-0 and 4-1 Team Canada leads disappear in a 5-4 loss to the Soviets, the 3,000 Canadian fans stood and sang ‘O Canada’ to the Canadian players as they were exiting the ice after the heartbreaking loss. Team Canada was now forced to win the remaining three games to claim the series victory.

Team Canada earned come-from-behind wins in games six, seven and eight to win the series. The Canadians faced significant adversity in game six as they were assessed 31 penalty minutes compared to the Soviets’ 4 minutes but managed to rally for a 3-2 win. In game seven a pair of third period goals, including one with just over two minutes remaining, lifted Team Canada to a 4-3 victory.

Heading into game eight the series was tied at three victories apiece with one game tied. In the deciding eighth game, Team Canada entered the third period trailing 5-3. Through **The Power of Teamwork** they blanked the Soviets and scored three times, including the series winning goal in the dying seconds to win 6-5 and earn their place in Canadian history as “An Event of National Historic Significance”.

So how did a group of talented yet separate individuals come together, to learn to trust, to become a team, to rally against tremendous adversity and to draw upon **The Power of Teamwork** to make this happen? Over the years when talking about the series, many people remember two things: that the Soviet players were as talented, motivated and determined to win as the Canadian players and that it was the greatest comeback in team sports by a team that just **would not give up.**

For their extraordinary efforts in this classic series, Team Canada 1972 was voted “Canada’s Team of the Century”, was the first team inducted into Canada’s Sports Hall of Fame, and was recognized during Canada’s 150th celebrations as the ‘Biggest Moment’ in Canadian sports. What was it about this series that resulted in these honours being given to a group of Canadian hockey players?

This is the opportunity for your **organization** to hear how Canada’s Team of the Century rose to the challenge and to learn how to draw from this incredible story to build your own championship team. Team Canada 72’s story is built around the **28,800 Seconds** that encompassed those entire eight games. While Canadians warmheartedly remember the miraculous comeback, the message the Team wishes to share is that it was the building of the team over those eight incredible games that it is the true success story that forms the Team’s lasting legacy.

***“The members of Team Canada 1972 are custodians of an important milestone in Canadian history, and they take that role very seriously.”***

The Business Case for ***The Power of Teamwork****:*

**Important:** People want to feel a sense of belonging – being part of a team doing important work that has their best interests at heart and provides emotional context to their efforts.

**Committed:** Individuals and teams need to fully commit to succeed. Being committed is less of an antidote to a hard-knock world and more of an ongoing focus on mastering growing complexity at work. It is about saying‘let’s find a way – together’.

**Engaged:** Helping everyone work towards identifying, amplifying and developing the strengths they see in others is central to team and, in turn, to organizational success.

**Energy:** When challenges arise it is through the collective energy that the will to achieve is enflamed and the drive to succeed realized.

**Success:** By being fully committed to a key outcome and to each other, teams achieve far more together by harnessing their creativity, diverse insights, collective passion, and combined expertise.

Creating an effective team performance culture is one of the central success initiatives of any **organization**.

**Drawing upon Team Canada 72 Lessons Learned:**

The story of 1972 Summit Series Team Canada - which pulled off the greatest comeback in hockey history - has become a touchstone in Canadian and Russian history and popular culture and was only made possible by **The Power of Teamwork.** Here are the lessons that can be learned from this experience that can be readily translated into your **organization’s culture**.

***Find the Why:*** *Discover the reason to come together, to play for something bigger than oneself – develop a* ***PURPOSE*** *focused mindset.*

***Come Individually Ready to Play:*** *Learn to be Accountable, Committed, and Prepared – develop a* ***GROWTH*** *mindset.*

***From Many to ONE:*** *Switch from me to a we mentality by developing Cohesion, Creativity, Swift Trust, Selflessness, Build Belonging to Build an Engaged Team Culture – develop a* ***TEAM*** *mindset.*

***Overcome Adversity:*** *Understand the power of Commitment, Grit, Passion, and Perseverance – develop a* ***CAN-DO*** *energy mindset.*

***Playing to Win:*** *Focus on achievement by attaining we are stronger together focus – develop a* ***28-8 TEAMMATES*** *mindset.*

This ‘Upfront and Personal’ training program brings to your **organization** the inside stories and the lessons learned by the players and coaches who were proud to be playing for Canada. You will learn firsthand what it took for the inaugural Team Canada to weather a surprisingly strong opposition, overcome doubt and a nation’s disbelief to come together, to believe, to trust in each other, and to win. It was not an easy journey. It was truly an epic one. Through this unique training program your **organization** will learn to unleash **The Power of Teamwork** and develop your own **Team of the Century**.

***“It’s not what Team Canada did, but how Team Canada did it.”***

**HONOURS BESTOWED UPON TEAM CANADA 1972**

1972 Named the “Team of the Year” by the Canadian Press

1997 The Canadian Mint released a 25th Anniversary Coin

1997 Canada Post released two 25th Anniversary Stamps

1999 Voted “The Team of the Century” by the Canadian Press

2000 The Team Canada 1972 Royal Mint Millennium Tribute Monument unveiled in front of the Hockey Hall of Fame

2000 Russia Post released a stamp commemorating the Summit Series

2005 Team Canada 1972 is inducted into the Canada’s Sports Hall of Fame, currently the only team to be inducted into the Hall

2012 Presented with a Star on Canada’s Walk of Fame

2012 Awarded the Queen’s Golden Jubilee Medal

2016 Parks Canada recognized the 1972 Summit Series as “An Event of National Historic Significance” with designations and plaques placed at the actual sites of the four games played in Canada in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver.

2017 Thirteen team members are recognized as members of the NHL’s Top 100 Players of All-time.

2017 Canada Post honours Team Canada 1972 with a stamp commemorating one of Canada’s most unforgettable moments as a part of their Canada 150 celebrations.

2017 Recognized as the Top Sporting event in Canada during the Canadian 150 Anniversary celebrations

**ACHIEVEMENTS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 1972 SUMMIT SERIES**

• 14,813 regular-season NHL games played

• 38 Stanley Cups

• 8 Art Ross Trophies (NHL Regular Season Leading Scorer)

• 6 Hart Trophies (NHL Regular Season MVP)

• 5 Calder Trophies (NHL Rookie of the Year)

• 5 Norris Trophies (NHL Top Defenceman)

• 4 Conn Smythe Trophies (NHL Playoff MVP)

• 3 Lady Byng Trophies (NHL Sportsmanship and Ability)

• 2 Masterton Trophies (NHL Perseverance, Sportsmanship and Dedication)

• 2 Vezina Trophies (NHL Top Goalie)

• 2 World Championship Gold Medals

• 1 Lester B. Pearson Award (NHL Most Outstanding Player, as judged by the Players)

• 1 Olympic Silver Medal

• 1 Olympic Bronze Medal