

Report of the Professional Development Committee

October 2007

As Chairperson of the Professional Development Committee I am pleased to submit my report for the period 2006-2007. The annual general meeting is an important event as it gives our Board of Directors and members the opportunity to stop and reflect upon our activities, accomplishments and goals for the past year.

Review of 2006-07 Activities

As a not-for-profit we are ever mindful of our responsibility and need to offer opportunities as efficiently as possible while keeping committed to quality information and identification of new trends. This year we have explored ways to offer and promote professional development opportunities. A valued part of our mission is to support, empower and strengthen families and individuals through the provision of professional mediation services. A primary objective of Family Mediation Canada is to provide a restorative and preventative function to people through mediation. This, in turn assists clients to find reasonable solutions to their presenting challenges, to learn new skills, to enhance their relationships and to improve the overall quality of their lives.

An important component of our professional development commitment is promoting and sharing a variety of educational opportunities with our members. This year we have partnered with many universities and curriculums vetting and promoting topics of interest for mediators. A sampling of these opportunities include:

- York University - Family Mediation series
- University of Victoria - Aboriginal Rights: negotiating strategies and agreements.
- Carleton University – Dispute Resolution
- Community Mediation of Southern Alberta – The Joy of Conflict Resolution: Transforming People
- Centre for Conflict Education and Research, Carlton – Law and the Mediation Process
- Ontario Association for Family Mediators (OAFM) – Elder Mediation Workshop
- Carleton University and St. Paul University – Families and Conflict: Challenges to Transformation
- Conflict Resolution Network – Building Bridges of Understanding
- Centre for Conflict Education and Research – Child Protection Mediation
- St. Paul University – Making sense of conflict: Leadership in complex times – offered in British Columbia and Ontario.
- Association of Family and Conciliation Courts – Applications for high conflict families, domestic violence and alienation.
- University of Victoria – The Art of Successful Engagement with Adversaries and Restorative Resolution: Nonviolent Communication in Practice
- University of Victoria – The Creative and Destructive Potential of Conflict
- Corkum & Associates Chartered Accountants – Senior Citizen and Estate Issues
- York University – Certification Preparation Workshops
- Association of Family and Conciliation Courts – Fitting the Forum to the Family: Emerging Challenges for Family Courts

- Member participation in public forums, workshops, and community presentations

As the needs of families become more diversified, mediators are required to become more diversified in their training. The advancing age of our population combined with our belief that all people deserve quality of life has resulted in elder care issues steadily finding their way into the mediation industry. In the field of elder issues there is a growing interest from lawyers, physicians, nurses, psychologists, social workers, educators and other healthcare professionals to refer to mediation as well as to enhance their own knowledge of mediation. Mediators have asked for training in related issues. Over the past year FMC has hosted training that has addressed the following issues:

- Eldercare issues
- Elder abuse
- Eldercare mediation
- Pioneering efforts in eldercare mediation
- Unique characteristics for elder mediator's
- Grief issues

The Professional development committee is interested in promoting learning this year that is research based. We know that past research shows that the level and intensity of parental conflict is a very important factor in children's adjustment after separation and divorce. Parents who cooperate after they separate, increase the chances that their children will have close relationships with both of them and cope successfully after the divorce. Parental conflict and lack of cooperation have a negative affect on children's adjustment after separation. When the parents' interpersonal struggles assume centre stage, the children's needs are not given adequate attention. We need to promote new research in the newer subject areas to provide necessary and current knowledge sharing. Once again this year we invite each of you to share your expertise in particular subject areas necessary for ongoing development of mediators. This will give us an opportunity to expand and improve our webinar series. We wish to offer programming that:

- Ensures the learning needs of all mediators are considered
- Improves all aspects of the quality of education and is delivered in adult learning fashion
- Broadens our curriculum to balance traditional subject areas with developing areas
- Builds links with communities, provinces, and countries
- Promotes and develops best practice knowledge garnered from Child welfare mediation, elder mediation, caregiver mediation as well as raises awareness of the ethical issues that accompany those forms of mediation.

I want to give a special thanks to the Professional Development committee, to President Linda and to Betty Ife who is doing a spectacular job for the professional development area by always ensuring that there are stimulating articles as well as current literature recommendations in every issue of Resolve.

Judy McCann-Beranger, Chair

Members: Dr. Pat Donihee, Elizabeth Sterritt, Pat McDowell, Greg McCann-Beranger, Laura Luz, Betty Ife.