

# **Report of the Education & Professional Development Committee**

**November 2008**

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As Chairperson of Family Mediation Canada's Education & Professional Development Committee I am pleased to submit this report for the period 2007-2008. 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. Governments, organizations, and not for profits should be inspired and awed by the work that has been accomplished by this organization. I believe our success is because we have a group of solid, dedicated, mediators who bring considerable knowledge, passion and energy and, with the help of a great Executive Assistant, the output is phenomenal.

## **Review of 2007-08 Activities**

Knowledge sharing and the development of meaningful partnerships has been high on our radar this year. Information was sent out to more than 6000 mediators and service providers. Workshops were held to celebrate Family Mediation Day across Canada. As a not-for-profit we are ever mindful of the need to offer opportunities as efficiently as possible while keeping committed to quality information and identification of new partnerships, new ideas, and new trends. Not only have we continued to offer and promote professional development opportunities this year, we have also offered to share them with like minded organizations and individuals, building new bridges, attending to ones we already have and mending ones that need attention. It is in our partnerships that we are exploring how to share more with others and thus do more for our members, creating synergy that ensures quality professional development for members and all others who use, or who are interested in our services. It is because of these developing and unique partnerships Family Mediation Canada is growing and expanding more creatively and efficiently.

This year we advertised positions we believed mediators might be interested in considering. Examples included the Government of Ontario's call for proposals for the provision of family mediation and information services in connection with the Family Court of the Superior Court of Justice (previously known as Unified Family Court) in Brockville as well as in Cornwall and the Alzheimer Society of Cornwall's call for an Elder Mediator position in Cornwall.

An important component of our professional development commitment is promoting and sharing a variety of educational opportunities with our members. We partnered with several universities and curriculums vetting and promoting topics of interest for mediators. A 2007-2008 sampling of these opportunities include:

- Minister of Attorney General – Child Protection Mediation
- York University – Certification Preparation Workshop
- Centre for Conflict Education & Research at Carleton (in conjunction with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services) – Child Protection Mediation
- North Coast Conflict Solutions – The Mediator Newsletter
- Justice Institute of British Columbia – Mediating the Financial Aspects of Separation
- Centre for Conflict Resolution & Research – Advance Practice Workshop
- CHIN RADIO – Promoting family law dispute resolution radio series.

- Family Mediation Manitoba – Law and Reality: Grandparent Access issues.
- ADR – Intensive Arbitration for Family Lawyers
- Additional CCER workshops by Gordon Sloan – The Art of Convening Parties and Capturing Agreements
- Dr. Cheryl Picard (Carleton) – Introduction to Mediation
- Mediation PEI INC – promoted their conference and Annual General Meeting
- Family Mediation Nova Scotia and FMC - lunch and a day of discussion of current issues in mediation.
- Dr. David Wolf – Adolescent development with an emphasis on family and cultural factors affecting their adjustment.
- AFCC – promoted their Vancouver conference as well as supported the conference by an information table that was available to provide knowledge about FMC and its services.
- First World Summit & Symposium on Mediation with Issues of Aging – Promoted this pioneering effort and hosted five people to attend the event.
- Alberta Arbitration & Mediation Society – promoted their annual conference
- Carleton University – Insight Mediation & Dispute Resolution
- Community Mediation of Southern Alberta – The Joy of Conflict Resolution: Transforming People
- Dispute Resolution Office, Andrea Clarke – Promoting the RFQ for expanding the Child Protection Mediator Roster
- Centre for Conflict Education and Research, Carlton – Law and the Mediation Process
- Ontario Association for Family Mediators (OAFM) – Insight Mediation
- 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
- OAFM, CCER, FMC - Thinking about Family Conflict Through the Lens of “Cares and Threats”
- Member participation in Family Mediation Day, public forums, workshops, and community presentations.

Our Board of Directors has been exploring opportunities for strategic alliances this year, realizing that in so doing we enhance and improve our capabilities and resources. Our hope is that this will allow our members to gain knowledge of our partners and their work thus inspiring us to discover and create efficient ways to develop our own community partnerships, growing and expanding our practices more intentionally and efficiently. A great example of a partnership is this AGM with our fabulous hosts – OAFM (Ottawa Chapter), along with our workshop presentation by Dr. Cheryl Picard. 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. Family Mediation Canada has partnered with Elder Mediation Canada and assisted and supported them in their developing certification process for the Elder Mediation specialty.

Our webinar series has been very successful this year. Over one hundred mediators availed of these opportunities and evaluated the webinars with a high rating. Dr. Don Gordon, for example gave us the latest research which has been integrated in his “Children in the Middle Program”. 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 effect on children’s adjustment after separation. When the parents’ interpersonal struggles assume centre stage, the children’s needs are not given adequate attention. These facts are being repeatedly validated with empirical evidence.

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 ensure that the learning needs of all mediators are considered while broadening our curriculum to balance traditional subject areas with developing areas. Webinars this year included:

- Mediator Compassion Fatigue delivered by Education Committee member Pat Brady
- Children In The Middle presented by Dr. Don Gordon from Ohio University
- Ethical considerations in Elder Mediation delivered by Judy McCann-Beranger
- Issues of Aging and its implications for mediators delivered by Judy McCann-Beranger
- Elder Mediation Part one and Elder Mediation Part two delivered by Judy McCann-Beranger
- Elder Mediation Case Studies delivered by Judy McCann-Beranger

I want to give a special thanks to the Professional Development committee, to President Linda Bonnell for her strong leadership and great direction – always forwarding interesting and relevant articles for us to review and to our efficient and dedicated 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. Experiencing how they model dedication to excellence in every encounter is truly a learning experience. Because of them and the many active, altruistic, forward thinking members we are now forging long-term partnerships that are creating synergies of respect and knowledge - thus growing this field like never before. It is the continuous learning, sharing, growing, and “hanging in there” by many committed members that is making us more than we would have been.

Respectfully submitted,

**Judy McCann-Beranger, Chair**

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