

Certification Committee Report
to the 2009 Annual General Meeting
of Family Mediation Canada
Vancouver, BC
October 31st, 2009

One of the issues being hotly debated in the ADR field is that of the licensing and regulation of the practice of mediation. Through its National Certification Program for Family Mediators Family Mediation Canada continues to establish best practices and to set standards of training and ethical conduct for family mediators, increasing public confidence in family mediation and the skills of FMC certified family mediators. In 2008-2009 FMC was pleased to acknowledge the 11 new Family Relations Mediators and 4 new Comprehensive Family Mediators who worked so hard to obtain their FMC certification. We were also pleased to renew a license agreement with the Ministry of Attorney General, Family Justice Services Division at the Justice Institute of BC, to use our materials to deliver Family Mediator Certification Preparation Workshops to people who may seek FMC Certification.

During the year the members of our Certification Committee – Linda Bonnell, Judy McCann-Beranger, and Cynthia Spratt-Goodmundsen – along with co-chairs Betty Ife and Andrew Pavey, have been busy answering practice questions from the field about the FMC Certification Program, reviewing applications for certification, and working to update the Certification Program policy, manuals, and materials. We have also had the opportunity to field questions about our Certification Program from interested parties outside of Canada. We have corresponded with a family mediator living in Israel who wrote FMC on behalf of the Israel Association of Marital and Family Therapy, within which is a section for family mediation, and on behalf of the Israel Association of Mediators, with questions about our certification program. In her initial communication the mediator wrote, "From my "world-wide" search about criteria and certification of family mediators it seems that FMC's performance-based assessment is rather unique and impressive." High praise indeed from a colleague from the international family mediator community! We also fielded an inquiry about the FMC Certification Process and a request for consultation on behalf of the Association for Conflict Resolution (ACR) Skills and Assessment Subgroup of the Certification Task Force.

In July 2009 FMC was invited by the International Mediation Institute to apply to be one of the few organizations authorized by the Independent Standards Commission of IMI to qualify experienced mediators for IMI Certification. IMI's mission: to generate confidence in and much enhanced understanding and usage of the mediation process among businesses and other disputants by encouraging high standards of training, by certifying high competency standards of mediators throughout the world, and by aiding users to find suitable competent mediators quickly and easily in the most transparent ways. If our application is accepted, we will be able to qualify for IMI Certification those mediators who have been certified by FMC.

FMC is committed to supporting our certified mediators in their annual education and training. This year we sent out a new certification renewal form asking for detailed information on the nature of each certified member's education and training. Our hope is that we will be able to collate this information to identify training needs, and areas of common training interests.

This year FMC also embarked on two other projects related to certification. The first was to commission a report by the Justice Institute of British Columbia on a Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) process to award equivalency credit when appropriate for a portion of the mandatory training hours required for FMC Certification. The Certification requirements for practicum or peer evaluation, skills assessment and written examination would remain unchanged. Your Board will be looking at the recommendations arising from the Report, which was completed in July of this year, and will provide feedback to the Certification Committee. The other project was to start a dialogue between interested parties on the possibility of establishing a non-practicing category for certified members. Cynthia Spratt-Goodmundson is our representative on that project.

We want our certified members to be proud of their achievement as a certified member of FMC, and to proudly display that achievement. After all, it demonstrates a great deal of education, skill development, time and energy on the part of the successful candidate. Recognizing that a good number of our certified members were initially part of the pilot certification project from 1998, whose certificates bore a 5 year time limit, FMC embarked on a project to re-design a perpetual certificate acknowledging the qualifications of its certified mediators, and to issue these to each certified mediator. It will be supplemented with a wallet card that can be used to demonstrate that certification is current. We hope that our certified members will display their new certificate with pride.

Many thanks to our Certifying Assessors – Anne Bolton, Kirsten Lund, Carole McKnight, and Leanne Shafir – for their timely evaluation of our candidates' videos and written exams, and their supportive feedback to our candidates. Many thanks as well to Carrie Cekerevac, our Operations Manager, who receives and processes the applications, answers general questions from the field about our Certification Program, coordinates the assessors, forwards the names of successful candidates to the Board for approval, and corresponds with the candidates.

Respectfully,

Betty Ife and Andrew Pavey
Co-chairs,
FMC Certification Committee