

President's Address
To the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Of Family Mediation Canada
October 31, 2009 in Vancouver, British Columbia

Since taking over the role of President of FMC in May 2007 I have witnessed our organization move through from a period of stabilization into focused energy. This energy is evident in our monthly Executive and Board meetings.

At our Board retreat last year we developed guiding principles to assist us to define the role of FMC as a national mediation organization: to examine our role as a relevant national mediation organization; to be more inclusive; and to adopt a mutually supportive attitude to people and to organizations with similar aims. We began in Ottawa last year. The Board of Directors met with members of OAFM-Ottawa for dinner and a social and FMC initiated dialogue to begin the gentle process of healing old wounds and the tensions created from past interactions with FMC. We provided financial support for Mediation PEI Inc. to host a regional workshop. We supported the Elder Mediation Summit in Dublin, Ireland. FMC is committed to "walk the talk" and I would encourage all mediation organizations and associations to begin to do the same. Together, we can facilitate the required culture shift within Family Justice Systems across Canada to recognize mediation as an effective alternative for families working to resolve conflict.

At this year's AGM and Board retreat in Vancouver we will be reviewing last year's organizational goals and setting new goals for 2010. In conjunction with our AGM FMC is hosting a 2 day workshop on *Elder Mediation, Hague Convention Mediation and Mediation as Theatre*, drawing on the depth of talent and knowledge of our own FMC members as presenters. FMC recognizes that working together we are stronger as a profession, and can offer more to our members. FMC is committed to working with, and alongside, local mediation organizations across Canada to assist them to fulfill their members' educational and training requirements.

The FMC Committee reports that will be shared with you today reflect the many ways that our goals have been turned into successful outcomes for the organization and for you, our members. We are keenly aware that our member services are very important and we are constantly focusing on new ways to provide services to our members. This year we were able to negotiate a 2 year fixed rate for mediator liability insurance with AON and we are in discussions with them to create an additional rider for those members who also work as Parent Coordinators. We continue to offer conference registration draws, and member referral discounts. We initiated several book draws this past year which were very well received. We continue to provide educational opportunities via webinar and the resurrection of our national newsletter, *Resolve*. I would like to include a very special thank you to Betty Ife, the editor and writer of *Resolve*, for her dedication to this latter initiative.

FMC takes its role as a national organization seriously. We have been approached by the United States and Israel for information on our certification program because of our expertise in certifying family mediators. The International Mediation Institute has asked FMC to consider becoming a Qualifying Institution. We also responded to an inquiry from Justice Canada regarding Hague convention mediation. On the home front, FMC recently participated in discussions with the Law Commission of Ontario about their family law project. We also received a very positive

response to a letter we sent to the Attorney General of New Brunswick earlier this year expressing our concern over the cancellation of their court mediation program. We will post the Attorney General's response in our next edition of *Resolve*. There is much more to be done at both the national and international level.

Carrie Cekeverac, our Operations Manager, has begun her third year as our only full time employee. She continues to provide front line communication for the organization in a warm and cheerful manner. Carrie actively promotes FMC at FMC functions and exhibits and through her own marketing initiatives. To most members she is the one who assists them on a daily basis. Carrie's responsibilities have grown over this year. Besides the daily operations she now does our book keeping. She assisted with preparing for our annual audit, and she participated on most of our committees, assuming much of the delegated work that they created. I would like to thank her for her tireless work ethic and commitment to FMC. It has been a pleasure to call on Carrie, on an almost daily basis, to help the Board carry out FMC business.

We have all read articles from those mediators or trainers who speak of the pros or cons of certification and the even greater question of how to ensure quality mediation practice for families. We should be proud of our Certification Program. Certification provides an essential baseline for the training of mediators. I recently asked a family law mediator why he wasn't listed on the BC Roster of Family Mediators or why he didn't pursue the FMC National Certification if mediation is the way for families to separate today and he said "because I don't have the training requirements." Enough said.

I would like to thank the Board of Directors for their contribution and commitment to the organization and to the hours of volunteer time that they donate over the year. This year I would like to especially say thank you to Howard Irving, Frank Bulger, and Michael Porter who have completed their terms on the Board.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve FMC as its President these past two and a half years. I have made many professional contacts and personal friendships and I hope to continue developing many new ones in my role as Past President and Chair of the Certification Committee.

Linda Bonnell
President