President's Report
FMC's Annual General Meeting
November 16, 2013

Family Mediation Canada has had a busy and productive year. I would like to take this moment to acknowledge and thank our members, directors, and devoted volunteers for all the time and effort they have put into our association. There are too many people that I would like to thank - and I cannot name everyone here today.

We are delighted that Family Mediation Canada now has a new website, and I wish to thank everyone who participated in this project, especially Betty Ife. I also wish to acknowledge Carrie Cekerevac for her excellent and dynamic work. I would like to thank Linda Bonnell and the entire certification committee for their diligence and outstanding work with the FMC certification.

Family Mediation Canada and the DR5 offered a two day training event in Toronto which was well received. Family Mediation Canada is a member of the DR5 (Dispute Resolution 5) in Ontario along with the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts-Ontario Chapter, Ontario Association of Family Mediators, ADR Ontario, and the Association of Collaborative Law Professionals. It has been a pleasure to work with these different groups and I hope that the DR5 extends to other provinces to become an example of cooperation and collaboration. This has been an incredibly enriching experience and I want to offer my heartfelt thanks to all these groups.

As well, FMC has been working with the Governance Committee to help transition FMC's by-laws to conform to the Canada Non for Profit Corporations Act which must be completed by October 2014. This is an enormous task, and I would like to acknowledge the excellent work of Gerry Schoel and Andrew Pavey, a former board member.

Connecting in person is very important for the board and for our membership too. The board retreat was held in Toronto this year and was facilitated by Tim Ragan who did an outstanding job. Gerry Schoel highlighted the importance of the transition and explained mandate of the Governance Committee's ongoing work. In addition Ernest Tannis provided the board with training on the new Canada for Non for Profit Corporations Act.

This is the second year that FMC offers different areas of specialization. We are proud to now have national committees such as the Elder section, the Aboriginal section, the Child Protection Mediation section, the Separation and Divorce Committee, and the International Family Dispute

section. All these projects and committees have the potential to create a positive impact across Canada and we look forward to seeing them grow.

Earlier this year, one of FMC's Aboriginal Committee members was featured in the Law Times article, on the new federal legislation for native territories. The Aboriginal Committee is new and building bridges and recognizing the traditions of Cultural problem solving, in Native history and their inherit self-governing rights.

Additionally, the Elder Mediation section offers a national accreditation in elder mediation through Family Mediation Canada. I want to thank Colleen Currie and all the members of the Elder Mediation Committee for their outstanding work.

The International Family Dispute section, currently at its embryonic stages, however, still requires more governmental outreach. It is imperative that Justice Canada recognizes that FMC offers trained, experienced, and certified mediators who can assist families experiencing cross border conflicts during a time of difficult family transition. In particular, this area highlights the importance of having access to certified family mediators as well and role they play within global family disputes.

Resolving family conflicts through a gentle and humane process benefits children, parents, elderly, workplaces, schools, and communities. Families are the foundation for our communities, workplaces, and at the heart of Canadian society. Mediation, notably family mediation, has the potential to grow more and in many different sub sections. Our job is to continue to nurture it and acknowledge it as an interdisciplinary profession. With the help of emerging technology, we can now work with parties in an effective manner without compromising ethics and the principles of mediation.

The training process that family mediators undergo takes time. Professionals from different backgrounds take additional courses, follow internships, are mentored and supervised, and undergo an examination process, before being certified. The series of steps are essential and help us serve the public and provide the best possible services. Through my own work experience, I have discovered that mediation and Alternative Dispute Resolution groups must work closely together and begin to have dialogue on self-regulation in Canada. Family Mediation Canada has the potential to become the regulatory body for family mediation- nationally. This would help elevate mediation and would benefit the public. This important work requires us to leave our comfort zone and do more for our profession without compromising established certification. As we share, we learn, grow, and explore the best possible options for moving forward.

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In my estimation -a pledge to do no harm is a responsibility we all have to the public and family mediation needs to be promoted as an interdisciplinary profession with standards, accountability and ethics. This is a gift we can pass on to the next generation of family mediators.

My vision for FMC is to celebrate our 30th anniversary in 2015 as the national regulatory body with interdisciplinary and certified family mediators.

It has been a true pleasure to serve as chair of the Family Mediation Canada board for two years. You have made my work pleasant and I have enjoyed meeting, and connecting with many of our members and affiliates. I would also like to thank former board members Dr. Pat Donihee, Andrew Pavey, Joe Pintarics, Aaron Bourque, Viola Evans- Murley, predecessors, past President Betty Ife and welcome our esteemed colleague Tom Dart. I know that FMC will be in good hands, with Tom Dart's leadership, vision and experience.

I would like to extend my gratitude to my friend, colleague and mentor Ernest Tannis. His compassion, care and dedication to the Alternative Dispute Resolution field is an inspiration. Family Mediation Canada has a great team of people and I feel honored to have worked with all of you.

Respectfully Yours,
Mary Damianakis
President Family Mediation Canada