



Family Group Conferencing Ontario Provincial Resource

ISSUE # 3

WINTER 2010

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Provincial Resource Update
- Provincial Roster Membership Renewal Form
- Next issue of Newsletter

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PROVINCIAL RESOURCE UPDATE



On October 21, 2009, the Provincial Resource held its 5th Professional Development Day. Keynote speakers Dewitt Miller and Sarah Allewalt from “It takes a village” presented on Transitional FGC’s.

The Provincial Resource and the Office of the Children’s Lawyer completed work on the “Guidelines for the Involvement of the Child’s Counsel during the FGC process”. The document has been distributed to all FGC community and posted on the FGC Provincial Resource website through the George Hull Centre.

Our efforts continue to focus on promoting the use of FGC with youth transitioning into adult-

hood. As a way of engaging youth to consider FGC as a planning tool for their future, we have developed a bookmark to be distributed to youth in February 2010 through OACAS, the FGC community and child welfare staff. The bookmark denotes FGC as a process that brings together friends and family to create a plan to help youth re-connect with family, friends, community, and plan for his/her future.

We have expanded the criteria for the research study to reflect all youth 14+ involved with child welfare. The working group will be incorporating the new criteria into the brochure and distributing it to child welfare staff across Ontario.

A small compensation of \$25 will be offered to youth who participate in the interviews for the research study.

The steering committee will be meeting in February to begin planning for the next Professional Development Day scheduled for April 2010. The feedback from the last PD Day will be used to inform the planning. The topics suggested by participants will assist the committee in determining what topics are relevant to the FGC community.

Carolina Pizarro,
Provincial Resource

Provincial Roster Membership Renewal Form

As part of the Provincial Resource’s efforts to maintain accurate and updated information on the Ontario Family Group Conferencing Roster, we will be distributing the Yearly Renewal Form to all FGC coordinators on the Roster on February 1st, 2010. The Yearly Renewal Form will be available on our website.

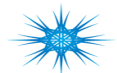
Some small revisions were made to the Membership Renewal form; it now includes the number of cases coordinated, and the number of conferences coordinated over the last year. The purpose of collecting this information is to help us identify the level of activity individually and collectively (regionally and provincially). The information collected is non-identifying and will be used in general terms.

We have added two check boxes for FGC coordinators to mark if they have a current Police Check no more than 3 yrs old (as per the ADR directive) and if their liability insurance coverage is up to date. FGC coordinators are not required to send these documents to the Provincial Resource, however it is their responsibility to ensure that they stay current.

Carolina Pizarro, Provincial Resource

FGC/FGDM CAPACITY IN ONTARIO

REGION	Coordinators	Coordinators in Training	Trainers	Mentors
Central West Region	6	4	1	1
Toronto Region	10	0	6	4
South East Region	2	0	0	0
Eastern Region	4	3	2	0
Northern Region	5	0	2	2
South West Region	10	1	3	3
North East Region	3	0	0	0
Central East Region	8	4	1	1
Hamilton/Niagara Region	7	0	1	3
Total	55	12	16	14



Central West Region –ADR Service

Since Associated Youth Services of Peel (AYSP) became the Transfer Payment Agency for the ADR program in 2007 for the Central West Region, there have been significant changes. An amazing group of individuals from the Ministry and each of the five societies within our region meet with AYSP as our “Steering Committee” quarterly, to brainstorm ideas and provide valuable feedback on activity statistics in order to refine our ADR process. Working together, several revisions have been made to meet the needs of Service Providers, CAS, the Ministry and AYSP and to use our allocations efficiently and productively.

Additionally, AYSP has attended Professional Development Days organized by the FGC Ontario Provincial Resource and has met with knowledgeable ADR professionals in order to gain insight into the

process to assist the progression.

AYSP has attended meetings and been in conference with ADR Coordinators from various regions to exchange information, offer assistance, and gather constructive input in order to facilitate smoother administration of the program.

Funds have been put aside for FGC trainees to ensure the Roster of coordinators remains professional and sufficient for our societies to utilize when recruiting service providers.

Gathering of statistics and quarterly evaluation reports to the Ministry have been instrumental in addressing concerns, measuring the success of the ADR program, and revealing aspects of the program that require additional attention.

By incorporating all the practices; Steering Committee, training and conferences, meetings, and reporting, the Central West Region has been working to help standardize the ADR program across the province to provide the best possible service for our families in need.

Our team of experienced, professional, caring, cooperative, and dedicated individuals in the Central West Region is the force behind our success.

“Working together, several revisions have been made to meet the needs of Service Providers”

Lynn McNeely
AYSP, ADR Advisor



Distinctions Between Original Dispute Resolution and Alternative Dispute Resolution Models

After over a century of government efforts to expunge our traditions, Aboriginal communities face the challenge of reclaiming family structures and culture. Due to the impact of colonization, Native families still experience overwhelming rates of poverty, unemployment, violence, addictions, disease, malnutrition, homelessness, and we remain grossly over-represented in the child welfare system.

One hopeful development has been Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) processes when families become involved with child protection. Even though an attempt has been made to incorporate an Aboriginal Approach in the government's ADR programs, it falls far short of the Aboriginal Original Dispute Resolution (ODR) model. It is, however, a beginning, and offers a healing step away from the court processes which Aboriginal communities historically have been subjected to.

Despite the apparent similarities to ODR of another model, Family Group Conferencing (FGC), it should not be confused with ODR. There are important distinctions between the needs of the Maori peoples in New Zealand, where FGC originated, and those of the Aboriginal peoples of this continent. Child welfare protection laws or 'bottom-lines' would certainly not be found in the traditional Aboriginal society. Neither would the Office of the Children's Lawyer (OCL) be involved. Instead, a child's Auntie (who has been involved with the child since birth) would help support the child/ren through a family crisis.

In most cases an Aboriginal Approach cannot be 'put onto' a mainstream model without sacrificing its integrity. As long as ADR or FGC programs are looked at through a Western lens, they will not reflect a traditional Aboriginal process. An Indigenous worldview entails continuity and will never have just a beginning, middle and an end.

The following chart offers a comparison between the two models:

ODR: Indigenous Worldview	ADR: Linear (Cause and Effect) Worldview
The transformative potential of conflict is respected. Harmony is established through counter-balancing whatever is unbalanced.	Conflict is viewed as problematic, to be avoided
Non-dominant; collectivist values	Dominant worldview; individualistic
A Native facilitator may or may not be formally trained. Their job is to balance any power differences, and at times will stay in the room while the family is negotiating	Facilitators are formally trained. They are to be impartial and unbiased, and leave the room when the family is negotiating
Concept of time as always in motion. Indian Time is the 'right time' – fluid, rich in meaning, and loosely related to the clock	Time has a clear beginning, middle and end, dictated by the clock
Anyone can ask participants into a circle	Controlled entry into FGC by state mandated programs
Native languages are verb driven with no words such as me, I, lying, punish, power, blame, or mine. Native understandings of the dominant English language are often missed	Dominant language of English with its strong emphasis on nouns
Emphasis on healing relationships and restoring harmony to the group	Emphasis on parties reaching an agreement and developing a plan
There are no bottom lines or representatives from the OCL. Each person understood their roles, and their commitment to harmony to ensure survival	Bottom lines are standard but generally positive and strength based. OCL involvement is mandatory.

In the rebuilding of our communities, finding our balance between oppression and empowerment remains a crucial task. To seek the harmony from where we are now is to also find our way to the sovereign, healthy and gentle Nations our Creator intended us to be.

Wendy Stewart, Original Dispute Resolution Coordinator, Guelph



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Upcoming Training

Next Professional Development Day

APRIL 2010

Next issue of the Newsletter

April 2010

If interested in submitting an article,
please contact Carolina Pizarro at
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THE GEORGE HULL CENTRE
for Children and Families

FGC Training Activities

FGC Basic and Advanced Training Fall 2009

- FGC Project of Toronto - October 5 and 6
- Services á la Famille, Ottawa (Eastern region)- October 29 and 30
- Community Services Network Coordination (CSNC), London (South West Region) - November 12 and 13
- Sault St. Marie (Northern region) - November 17 and 18
- Thunder Bay (Northern region) - November 25 and 26
- Blind River (Northern Region) - Basic Only— December 8

UPCOMING FGC TRAINING WILL BE POSTED ON THE FGC PROVINCIAL RESOURCE WEBSITE at <http://www.georgehullcentre.on.ca/FGCTraining>

Visit our website for an e-copy of our Newsletter at
http://www.georgehullcentre.on.ca/FGCOPR_News