

ALBERTA FAMILY MEDIATION SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Edition 3: December 1, 2004
Special Holiday Edition

Special points of interest:

- *AFMS is pleased to feature the new look for the newsletter*
- *Newsletters will be distributed six times yearly*
- *We welcome your input about the newsletters and encourage you to submit articles and features*
- *This newsletter features information on coping with the holidays, roundtable and more!*

This is a special holiday edition of the AFMS Newsletter. The AFMS has reviewed books related to the Christmas Holiday season in the edition of the Newsletter. Many cultures do not celebrate this holiday and in respect of those culture we also recommend seeking out the following book: *How to be a perfect stranger: a guide to etiquette in other people's religious ceremonies.*

This book by Sanford Jr. Cloud (forward and Arthur Magida (editor) focuses on 20 chapters devoted to different religions including (not limited to) Baptist, Buddhist, Quaker, Roman Catholic, Hindu, Islam, Greek Orthodox, Jewish, Mormon, Christian Science and more. Each chapter

begins with a brief introduction to the history and beliefs of the faith followed by a series of standard questions that detail basic service; holy days and festivals; life cycle events and home celebrations. Guests at religious celebrations of faiths other than their own often are unaware of customs, rituals, appropriate dress and gift giving practices. This book highlights questions and answers in a straightforward and nonjudgmental manner. Representing a diversity of faiths, the guidelines to correct social behavior at religious ceremonies belongs on every mediator's bookshelf.

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Introducing the AFMS Board of Directors for 2004 and 2005

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Holiday Greetings from MRJC to AFMS Members

The Board, Staff and members of the Mediation and Restorative Justice Centre send Season's Greetings to everyone at the Alberta Family Mediation Society. This is a good time to reflect on how much we enjoyed working with your organization this past year and let you know we look forward to future collaboration. We wish you all the best for the holidays and in the New Year.

**AFMS
Board of
Directors
wishes its
members a
safe, joyous
and
peaceful
holiday
season and
best wishes**

**for the New
Year!!**



Best wishes for the holiday season

Alberta Roundtable on Family Law

The Alberta Roundtable on Family Law became a society in 2004 with a goal to provide ongoing forum for legal, social services, educational and mental health professionals to improve responses to the needs of families in separation or conflict. This multidisciplinary group of professionals are coming together to:

- provide education, information and networking opportunities to the professionals (locally and provincially)
- to identify and coordinate re-

sources for professionals and families to facilitate dissemination of information,

- to promote interdisciplinary approach to understanding issues for children and parents in conflict or distress
- to advocate for change in policies and practices that impact functioning of children and families.

Jean McBean, Q.C. spoke about the upcoming Family Law Act (to be pro-

claimed April 2005) at the June Meeting. Upcoming plans for the chapter include lunchtime seminars, free to members. The Roundtable has also linked with Alberta Family Mediation Society to share resources and presentations on topics of mutual interest. For more information contact Patricia Hebert at 427-4145 (780) or to become a member please contact Bernice Rawes at 427-5139 (780).

**Holiday Greetings from
the Round Table!!**

Creating New Traditions at Christmas (author unknown)

Berna Skrypnek (U of A) suggests that issues can arise for blended families around the holiday season because of the traditions and rituals in families that hold a tremendous amount of meaning. They are part of what provide us with a sense of identify and a feeling of cohesion in our family



Creating traditions

units. She adds that Christmas and other religious celebrations can be stressful when the blended family is not feeling connected with the traditions. It is recommended that blended families create some of their new and shared traditions and rituals.

Sometimes families may merge traditions or create entirely new ones. She also stresses the value in having the children be part of the planning for the holiday season and the creation of new family traditions.

Tips for Getting Through the Holiday Season by Mary Jane Klein

Tip #1: Many parents in a spirit of equality may believe it is “only fair” to alternate Christmas. However, children treasure traditions and so this may be a holiday where each may want to “own” a particular piece of time over the holiday and continue or develop annual expectations around that time. Children enjoy the security



Creating new holiday traditions

of being able to say “We always go to Grandma’s house for Christmas Eve and open present at then Santa comes the next morning at mom’s house and we go over to dad’s house for brunch and supper” (or whatever the case may be).

Tip #2: In the event one parent wants to take the children out of the jurisdiction for all of the material Christmas period, the parent left behind may be quite upset at the prospect of the holiday without the children. Christmas can be a moveable feast for that year and have an early or late celebration with the children (attitude is everything!). They can have a “credit” towards a Christmas time trip they may be able to organize in a future year.

Facts about Stepfamilies (Statistics Canada)

In 2001, Canada had 503,100 stepfamilies, compared with 430,500 in 1995. That is almost 12% of all Canadian Couples with children compared to 10% in 1995.

The total number of stepfamilies is split equally

between married and common-law couples, just over 250,000 of each nationally.

In 81% of the blended family cases, they were formed after the birth

of a child to the couple, in addition to the children born from a previous union of at least one of the two spouses.

In 2001, 5/10 stepfamilies contained only the female spouse’s children. 1/10 contained only the male spouse’s children.

The remaining blended family (19%) were made up of the children born from previous unions of both spouses. Source: Stats Canada

Q&A: Response from Mike Paddison (from Journal)

Q- My parents don’t seem that keen to meet their new step grandchildren this holiday season. any advice?



Meeting new family members at Christmas

spend some time with them first. I am a grandparent and one of the quickest ways I get to know my grandchildren is to play with them. Don’t just buy them toys, play with them”.

The holiday season can be a stressful time for many families, and introducing children to new family members for the first time at Christmas can often be difficult for the children and the other family members.

A- “you are asking them to be receptive to stranger they don’t even know. They need to

Book Review: Whose Home for the Holidays by Brian Guthrie, PhD. RSW

Review Provided by Greenwood Books

Modified from the Book Review.

“For many families the excitement and anticipation of the Christmas holidays is overshadowed by the conflicts over custody and access of their children. The pressures of the season and the expectations of how those special days should be can create anger, anxiety and resentment. Of course each par-



Helping children cope through the holidays

ent has rights but families also have rituals.” This book provides valuable information about developing a plan for the holiday season and the importance of communicating this plan with the children and the extended family members. The book also encourages parents to maintain daily contact between the children and each parent during the holiday season. Children may seem quite sad over the holiday season, it is important for parents to recognize that this is a normal reaction to change. The book provides helpful information to

parents to develop realistic expectations. Guthrie states that children state their Christmas wishes as “to share my time with my mom and dad and not feel guilty.” or “to be able to call my mom when I am with my dad and to call my dad when I am with my mom to see how they are without feeling that I am taking sides or hurting someone’s feelings.”

Dr. Brian Guthrie is a Marriage and Family Therapist who has assisted many children and families cope with change, loss or trauma in their lives.

More Holiday Greetings

Holiday Greetings Alberta! --- from your friends at FMC...

With delegates still raving about conference 2003 in Banff, and AFMS' / FMC's new President-elect Michael Porter, prepping to take the reigns next September, Alberta figures large in FMC's future. Have a great holiday and get ready for many more good things to come in 2005.

All the Best!

Ned Courtney, Executive Director

Conflict Resolution Network

Canada wishes to extend all the best of the season to our friends in conflict resolution at Alberta Family Mediation. May this year bring peace and enriching relationships for you, your loved ones and the families in conflict that you serve.

Special wishes for the New Year!

Best Wishes for the New Year

It is hard to believe that 2004 is almost coming to a close and a New Year awaits us.

This year has been an exciting year for AFMS,



Newsletter Editor-- Charmaine Hammond

the website has had some enhancements including favorite links/resources, a newsletter scheduled six times yearly (we are in

our third edition already) and some plans to market AFMS to a wider audience. Please remember that we welcome articles, news, books reviews, etc. from our membership.

Best wishes for the New Year

The Good Divorce— Constance Ahrons

Constance Ahrons has expanded the study she conducted that formed the basis of her highly acclaimed *The Good Divorce*, by interviewing the grown children of the divorcing parents she interviewed twenty years ago. The results provide invaluable information for those of us who work with parents today in trying to make the right decisions for the parenting of their children now that separation and divorce will be part of their reality.

The major findings, described using the voices of the children, show that:

- ® Most of the young adults emerge stronger and wiser in spite of – or perhaps because of – their parents’ divorces and remarriages.
- ® For the majority their parents’ divorce had positive outcomes, for their parents’ and for themselves
- ® More than half felt that their relationships with their fathers actually improved after the divorce

® New families of stepparents and step/half siblings may look different but the majority of these young adults feel connected to the family members who make up their world

By listening to the voices of these grown children, and understanding the different paths and choices that their parents made, divorcing parents can learn what they can do to maintain family bonds and enable their children to thrive.

CALGARY UPDATE by Lorri Yasenik and Jane Warren

Geeta Bharadia is currently Vice-President of Alberta Family Mediation Society. She has been practicing in the area of family law since 1990 and she is a practicing mediator and Registered Collaborative Family Law Lawyer. She held a quasi-judicial federal appointment for 8 years and is currently a Dispute Resolution Officer at the Court of Queen’s Bench of Alberta. This appointment in-

volves mediating family law conflicts prior to a court application being heard in an attempt to give the parties an opportunity to resolve matters and obtain a neutral third party’s perspective on the issues.

Geeta has been on the AFMS Board for over three years. During that time she has been involved in the Conference Committee, the Strategic Alliance Committee and Membership Committee.

An update about the Calgary Board Members.

Points of Interest

If you would like to receive the Human Rights newsletter, please email the following and request to receive their quarterly newsletter.

www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca

Our next newsletter is scheduled for January. We are looking for members to be interviewed, please contact Charmaine at 464-3828 to share any information, perspectives, new approaches in the field, what

is happening in your community or any noteworthy news.

CALGARY by Lorri Yasenik and Jane Warren

As members of the Education Committee, Lorri and Jane have busy consulting with Mount Royal College to assist them to design the first 40-hour training on family business mediation. The course content will meet special training requirements of the Alberta Family Mediation Society for application for **Registered Family Mediator: Family Business** specialization. Those interested in expanding their practice to include family business mediation services will be interested in this course. Participants will gain an overview of multi-party mediation with a focus on family business and review

common issues, including succession planning, risk management, basic accounting, wills and estate planning, dissolution, legacies and cultural influences. The first 5-day Institute will be held on January 24th – 28th at Mount Royal College. Those interested in registering are encouraged to do so as soon as possible by contacting the Registration Services office at (403) 440-3833.

Mount Royal College has also listed some of their general family mediation courses with AFMS, which will help members fill the 40-hour course contents require-

ment for **Registered Family Mediator: General Family** specialization

Those interested in registering as RFM: General typically work in areas related to peer mediation, adoption, adult children and aging parents, adult guardianship, child protection, and community mediation. Please check our website at afms.ca for courses that may interest you

As members of the conference committee, we are busy organizing our Annual Conference, which will be held on April 29th, 2005. Bill Eddy from San Diego will be speaking about High Conflict personalities. This conference topic will be of great interest to *all* mediators, regardless of your area of specialization. When working in the field of conflict resolution, it is inevitable that you will meet people who are drawn to conflict and effectively interrupt most attempts

at any resolution. This conference is sure to generate interesting discussions amongst fellow mediators.

Lorri Yasenik sits on the Conflict Resolution Extension Certificate Program Advisory Committee at Mount Royal College. The committee is comprised of approximately 12 people from the

ADR community in Calgary including, instructors of conflict resolution courses, mediation and court service director, Calgary by-law representatives, Calgary Police Service member, community and civil mediation services director, Chair of the Calgary Chamber of Commerce ADR committee and family law lawyers.

More about what is happening in the Calgary area.

The committee provides feedback and direction to the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program to ensure community input. During a recent meeting it was announced that Calgary will host the 2nd Annual Mediation Month in April again this year. Committee members were excited to hear the AFMS conference will also be held in April. Mediation month provides a forum for all mediators

to gather and promote mediation. Lorri is Co-director of Rocky Mountain Psychological and Mediation Services in Calgary, and has a private practice in mediation and child and family therapy. In addition to private practice, Lorri contracts with Alberta Justice to provide mediation and brief conflict intervention services. She is past President of AFMS and has served as a board member for the past 9 years. Lorri works with high-conflict families in separation and di-

voiced, matters related to transition in family, child protection and multi-party mediation. She has been an instructor for the court mandated Parenting After Separation Course since 1997 and teaches the courses: Understanding Family Conflict; Children and Conflict; and Introduction to Conflict Resolution for the Conflict Resolution Program at Mount Royal College. Lorri will be co-instructing Mediation of Divorce and Family Matters (40-hour Institute) again this year from April 14-19th, 2005.

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Alberta *family* Mediation Society

*Advancing the practice of
family mediation.*

***We're on the web—
look us up!***

About AFMS

Established in 1984,
the non-profit
society provides
services to family
mediators.

The organization has a
part time administrative
assistant and is managed
by a volunteer board of
directors, with
representatives across the
province.

The society is dedicated to
both professional and pub-
lic education regarding
family mediation.

Wishing you all a safe and
harmonious holiday season and
all the best for the new year.

More Book Reviews

Holidays can be stressful for children missing familiar Christmas routines, and storybooks which tip tradition on its head can provide welcome humour and comfort.

The Chicken Who Saved Christmas Daniel Howarth, preschool - 8
How Murray Saved Christmas Mike Reiss, ill David Catrow, 6-adult

These are funny tales of Santa stand-ins, both of which avoid the minefield of portraying families, and show that although some things may be different, but the important things stay the same year after year. Chicken realizes something is amiss at the North Pole when she awakens to a very quiet Dec. 24th, so she organizes the barnyard animals to ensure that Santa gets into the air. Murray Kleiner is recruited by an elf to deliver toys after the elf's new toy knocks Santa for a loop. Mishaps occur and Murray is discovered by a young boy, and in convincing the boy that Santa is real, Murray gets into the spirit: even the bad kids get presents! Youngsters will enjoy the rhyming text and the wacky illustrations appeal to teens.

Santa's Favourite Story Hisako Aoki, 3-10
December, Eve Bunting, ill David Diaz, 6-adult

These stories emphasize spiritual teachings. December is a version of the Elijah story of charity to strangers, featuring a homeless boy and mother. Suitable for any faith, with the values of love, simplicity and charity strongly presented, this underlines that our circumstances - changed though they may be - are cause to give thanks. Santa's favourite story, which he shares with the forest animals, is the nativity: love was the gift god gave us the first Christmas, and is better than any present Santa can deliver.

Red Ranger Came Calling is a superb book by cartoonist Berkeley Breathed, to be read with older children & teens who are losing their sense of wonder about Christmas. A cynical, disappointed child ("the quicksand of faith in a grownup") with a superhero fascination meets a fading Sander Cloos ("times are newer, people are newer, who'd believe now?"). Hope is rekindled & miracles happen, but this is NOT for young children.

Drop in to your independent bookstore to see more of our favourites, and may you and your clients enjoy the season.

Lorna Murray is a bookseller at Greenwoods Bookshoppe and Small World in Old Strathcona, Edmonton 439-5600 or 1 800 661 2078.