

ALBERTA FAMILY MEDIATION SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Edition 12: December 2005

Special points of interest:

- We welcome your input about the newsletters and encourage you to submit articles and features

Our President is the Recipient of an Outstanding Service Award

Alberta Family Mediation Society is proud to announce that **Kent Taylor**, President of AFMS, was recently the recipient of the **Alberta Centennial Medal** in recognition of his outstanding service to the people of Alberta.

This Medal was awarded to Kent by Ron Stevens, the Minister of Alberta Justice. This one time commemorative Centennial Medal recognized the accomplishments of 8,000 extraordinary Albertans.

Congratulations Kent—this was a well deserved medal to recognize the many valuable contributions you have made in the ADR field, the lives of families, your colleagues and those who have mentored with you.

Greetings from the AFMS Board of Directors:

On behalf of the Board of the Alberta Family Mediation Society, we would like to extend our best wishes for the holidays and for a happy new year to our members and their families.

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AFMS Board of Directors

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Lunch and Learn Sessions

The location is always the Edmonton City Hall in the Heritage Room. Doors open at 11:30 a.m. and the presentations run from noon until 1:00 p.m. There is a question period and mixer beginning at 1:00 to 1:30. This is a great venue to learn, share information and network with colleagues (all over a lunch break).

Lunch and Learn sessions are a great way to network, learn and connect with colleagues all at once.

Next Lunch & Learn:

January 11/06

See Page 5 for details

There is no cost and you just need to bring your own lunch.

These sessions have been held now for several years.



Lunch and Learn

Books to Check Out

Two Old Potatoes and Me by John Coy (1958).

This book is a funny loving story about a single dad and his daughter who are moving forward after the parents separation. The story has humor and is told during the potato growing season (May to the fall). The story provides strategies that are about growing potatoes while subtly dealing with the parent's divorce.

My Stick Family– helping children cope with divorce by Natalie June Reilly (2002).

The character in the book Billy learns that just because his parents do not live together, does not mean that the love and strength of family is missing. He learns that what matters most is the love that each has for one another and how to cope with difficult times.

**AFMS Spring
Conference: April
20 and 21/06 at the
Chateau Louis
Hotel– Edmonton,
AB**

**Presenters:
Gerald Monk and
John Winslade**

***We look forward to
seeing you there.***

From the newsletter Editor– Charmaine Hammond

I was fortunate to take in an interesting seminar about Humor in the Workplace. Many people are reporting increased stress and a sense of busyness at work.

Billy Streaan offered some thought provoking information that related closely to how individuals think about and are affected by conflict.

His reminders about stress having an element of choice was a welcomed reminder about the power of perspective.

If we choose to see something as awful and stressful, it most likely is (from our perspective). He also spoke about the difficulty many people have saying "no". It is his perspective that

instead of making a complaint, we could make a request (e.g. for help, change, support, etc.). Have a safe and enjoyable season and I wish you all well in the New Year.



Virtues

Virtues- Creating a shared Path

Another year has almost come and gone. At this time of celebration, festivity and family activities, we would like to wish everyone a safe and joyous season. As we begin a new year, here is a poem to think about the journeys we take with others.



Cultivate Virtue in yourself and
Virtue will be real.

Cultivate Virtue in the family,
and Virtue will flourish.

Cultivate Virtue in the village,
and Virtue will spread.

Cultivate Virtue in the nation,
and Virtue will be abundant.

Cultivate Virtue in the world,
and Virtue will triumph
everywhere.

Lao Tsu.

Examples of Virtues:

*Respect
Trust
Caring
Integrity
Tact
Love
Peacefulness
Joyfulness
Honour
Courage
Tolerance*

(Source: Virtues Project)

Cultural Perspectives and Celebrations:

The following article/information is provided by the Multicultural Health Brokers.

Vietnam

Vietnam is mostly Buddhists; Buddhism came to Vietnam from India, during the Chinese rule. This religion concentrates on self improvement and the belief of more lives after death. The other major religion is Catholicism. The most important and most widely celebrated holiday in Vietnam is Tet, the lunar New Year. Tet is celebrated during the full moon prior to the spring planting, usually in late January to mid February. The Vietnamese people dress up in their best clothes to enjoy the festivities. People decorate their homes and the graves of their ancestors with flowering branches and red and gold paper.

Continued on Page 6, 7 and 8.

Membership Categories with AFMS

Registered Family Mediator (RFM) specializing in separation/divorce mediation.

Registered Family Mediator (RFM) specializing in General Family Mediation.

Registered Family Mediator (RFM) specializing in Family Business Mediation.

Practicing Mediator (designation for those who are continuing to gain mediation experience or for whom mediation is a small part of their practice.

**General Member
Student Member**

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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 public
education regarding family
mediation.

Community. Somewhere, there are people to
whom we can speak with passion without having
the words catch in our throats. Somewhere a cir-
cle of hands will open to receive us, eyes will
light up as we enter, voices will celebrate with us
whenever we come into our own power. Com-
munity means strength that joins our strength to
do the work that needs to be done. Arms to hold
us when we falter. A circle of healing. A circle of
friends. Someplace where we can be free.

Starhawk

People are as healthy, confident and successful as
the stories they tell themselves.

Adapted by Ben Okri

"The aspects of a
thing that are
most important
to us are hidden
to us
because of their
simplicity and
familiarity."

-- Ludwig Wit-
tenstein

ONCE AGAIN, MARK YOUR CALENDARS
ALBERTA FAMILY MEDIATION SOCIETY
PRESENTS
A NEW SERIES OF
LUNCH AND LEARN SESSIONS
In Co-operation with
Mediation and Restorative Justice Centre
(NO COST / BRING YOUR LUNCH)

PLACE:
TIME:

EDMONTON CITY HALL, HERITAGE ROOM
11:30 AM (doors open) to 1:30 PM
(Presentation begins at noon to 1:00 PM.)

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11

Rob Papin and Derrick Powder
Showing of film "Gang Aftermath"
(ex-gang members open to any questions and/or information about their program)

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 12

Brad Kring (Legal Counsel and Senior Program Coordinator of the Family Law Information Centre)
An overview of the New Family Law Act

WEDNESDAY, MAY 10

Dianne Dalley (Project Coordinator with MRJC)
An Overview of Research Project: Assessing Domestic Violence and the Dynamics of Restorative Justice Mediation

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 7

Gordon Andreiuk (Lawyer with Laurier Law Office)
Summary, insights, funny stories of
"Changes in Retroactive Child Support"

Contact: Barbara Bishop at Barbara.Bishop@gov.ab.ca or Sue Bedier at info@afms.ca
Visit our website: www.afms.ca

News, Upcoming Events and Other Information

- **Family Justice Services and Family Law Act brochures** are now available on the AFMS Web-site

AFMS Annual Conference— April 20 & 21, 2006 (Chateau Louis Hotel, Edmonton)

Watch upcoming newsletters for details. The conference is a collaborative effort of AFMS and the Collaborative Law Lawyers Association. The featured speakers are Gerald Monk and John Winslade.

Continued: Cultural Perspectives and Celebrations

On midnight of the New Year, people bang drums and gongs and visit with friends. It is believed the status of the family's first visitor is what determines the families luck for the next year. Also during this day people will go visit and pay respect to their deceased family members because it is believed the spirits of their ancestors retunes to earth on Tet. Tet is a time for the deceased to enjoy life, re-view the past and plan for the future.

Furthermore, the Kitchen God also called the Hearth God, the Stove God or the Household God. This God is privy to the family's most private business and intimate secrets. The God returns to Heaven to make his report to the Jade Emperor. This report includes the year's activities of the household in which he has lived. On the 23rd day of the 12th month, a farewell and thank you dinner is given to the Kitchen God by the household. The Kitchen God needs a week for his mission back to Heaven.

Like a Christmas tree some families set up a Tet tree the week before New Year's Eve. The Tet tree is called cay neu, it is a bamboo pole stripped of most of its leaves except for a bunch at the very top. The tree is decorated with objects in order to attract good spirits and keep the evil ones away. There are different traditions and superstitions that are celebrated during the 15 days of Tet.

In this culture birthdays are celebrated when a baby is a month old, and again on his or her second birthday, when the child is one. After this time birthdays are not celebrated but gifts are exchanged during Tet..

Chinese

The Chinese New Year is one of the most celebrated holidays for the Chinese people. Chinese New Year starts with the New Moon on the first day of the New Year and ends on the full moon 15 days later. The 15th day of the New Year is called the Lantern Festival.

New Years Eve and day is a family event that is meant to celebrate. Traditionally, there used to be a religious ceremony given in honor of Heaven and Earth. Also, a ceremony for the household Gods and family ancestors. Relatives who have passed away are remembered with great respect because they were responsible for the laying the foundations of fortune and glory for the family.

Food is a big part of the celebrations. However, many people attribute various superstitions to certain food. For example, Lotus seed signifies having male offspring, fresh bean curd and tofu is not included in meals because it is white and white is unlucky and the color signifies death and misfortune. Note this is why some cultures such as the Chinese and East Indian's do not wear white on their wedding day. Other foods such as whole fish represents togetherness and abundance, chicken represents prosperity and noodles should not be cut as they represent long life.

Etiquette dictates that you must bring oranges or tangerines to family and friends during the two week long celebration. Tangerines with the leaves intact assure that one's relationship with other remain secure. For newlyweds this represents the branching of the couple into a family with many children. Oranges and tangerines are symbols for abundant happiness.

The Chinese appear to be superstitious and there are many taboos for the Chinese New Year. Some of these superstitions include; the entire house should be cleaned before New Year's Day. On New Year's Eve, all brooms, brushes, dust pans and other cleaning supplies need to be put away. This is because it is felt that sweeping or dusting will sweep away all good fortune in the home. Another tradition is to use firecrackers to shoot off the old year and welcome in the New Year. The New Year is welcomed in by having everyone open all of their doors and windows on the stroke of midnight on New Years Eve. Also, it is recommended not to use any knives this day as it may cut off good fortune.

See Page 7 and 8 for continued information

The Virtues Project: Recently a colleague talked to me about a moving and profound conference she had attended– the Virtues Project Training. The Virtues Project is a global initiative focused on implementing virtues in our everyday lives and was developed to help people of all cultures live by their highest values. It was founded in 1991 by Linda Kavelin-Popov, her husband Dr. Dan Popov and her brother, John Kavelin after they explored and researched the world's diverse traditions, and learned there are more than 360 virtues at the heart of people's beliefs about the meaning and purpose of life. The Virtues Project provides life-skill strategies and approaches that are applicable to people of all cultures. "The Five Strategies help individuals to live more reverent, purposeful lives, support parents to raise children of strong moral character, inspire excellence, commitment and service in the workplace, and help schools and communities to build a climate of safety and caring" (source: Virtues Project).

The Virtues program looks at virtues and the project's perspective is that virtues are simpler than values and are the qualities that make up our individual characters. The Virtues Project views values are those elements that we consider important and are culture-specific. Virtues, on the other hand (such as courage, honor, justice, and love) are the common elements of character and spirituality that appear to be universally valued by all cultures. These virtues may be displayed and practiced differently from one culture to another but we all value them. The initiative focuses on 52 Virtues. In this newsletter, we'd like to focus on five.

Virtues:

Compassion

Flexibility

Joyfulness

Peacefulness

Tolerance

When you think about these five virtues, how is it you that you demonstrate these in your practice? Or in everyday life? How is it we teach children these virtues? How do practicing these virtues carry us through times of challenge and times of accomplishment?

Continued: Cultural Perspectives and Celebrations:

Philippines

Christmas and New Year's are national holidays in the Philippines. The nine days preceding Christmas are a time for prayers and preparations for festivities. Dawn masses and plays are held almost everyday. On Christmas Eve, midnight mass is followed by Noche Buena this is when family members and friends get together to exchange gifts and good wishes. Along with this is a big feast and prayers are shared. Red is worn for good luck while polka dots on clothes are considered auspicious.

On the Island of Marinduque, people end the Christmas season by celebrating the feast of the Three Kings on the first Sunday in January. Traditionally, Filipinos were given gifts from the three wise men and not Santa Clause.

December 25th is also known as Pasko ng Mga bata a children's Christmas. Children go to visit their godparents. They kiss their godparents hands as a greeting and in turn their receive gifts and other treats.

January 1st is called Pasko ng Mga Binata't Dalaga which translates to the Christmas of unmarried men and women. Firecrackers are used to ward off evil spirits for the transition from the old year to the new year.

Christmas lights and decorations stay up for a long time. It is not until March when the Lenten season begins when people in the Philippines start to take down the lights and decorations.

Hindu and Sikh

Hinduism and Sikhism are two religions that come from India. They are very different religions with different traditions and languages. However, one similarity between these two is the celebration of Diwali. Diwali is a celebration of lights.

This celebration is five days long unlike most Indian holidays that are one day events except for weddings! During the Diwali it is festival of lights, sweets, happiness, shopping and family. Due to the Lunar calendar Diwali falls on different days and different months. For 2005 Diwali was on November 1st in 2006 it will be celebrated October 21.

Diwali falls on the day of amavasya this is when the moon does not rise and there is darkness all around. Light, being the symbol of hope and positive things. This indicates the victory of good over evil. By spreading light in every corner of our homes it is assumed that darkness is destroyed on the night of Diwali.

For Hindus this day is to celebrate the return of Rama and Sita to their Kingdom Ayodhya after fourteen years of exile. People prepare for Diwali many weeks in advance. People buy new clothes, clean their houses and decorate their homes. In the evening people turn all of their lights on inside and outside their house. It is believed that the Goddess of wealth Lakshmi roams the earth this day. She enters homes that are pure, clean and brightly illuminated. Gifts and sweets are shared with friends and family members. This is also the beginning of a new financial year for the business community. Firecrackers are also lit to attract children and is the highlight of the festival.

This festival is important for the Sikh community because this celebration is in honor of their sixth Guru. Guru Har Govind ji came back from being captive of the city of Gwalior. People lighted lamps along the way to the Golden temple in order to welcome their Guru.

Resources: www.cp-pc.ca
 www.filipinoheritage.com
 www.c-c-c.org/chineseculture
 <http://www.educ.uvic.ca>
 <http://festivals.iloveindia.com>
 www.allaboutsikhs.com
 www.saiginfo.com/tet/meaningoftet.htm
 <http://library.thinkquest.org/25734/h/people.html>

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Gurinder Dhillon BSc