

# ALBERTA FAMILY MEDIATION SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Edition 5: March 2005

## 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 the upcoming conference, book reviews and interviews with colleagues

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## John Haynes Memorial Award for Outstanding Contributions in the Field of Family Mediation in Alberta:

The Annual Conference is quickly approaching, mark April 29/05 (Calgary) in your planner as we hope to see you there. As part of the Annual Conference, an award is presented to a person (or persons) who has made an outstanding contribution to the field of Family Mediation in Alberta. Past recipients of this award include: Dr. Larry Fong, Lou Faber, The Honourable Judge Nancy A. Flatters, The Honourable Madam Justice Marguerite Trussler and Dr. Kent Taylor. This is a significant and important achievement award and the Nominations Committee is in the process of accepting and considering nominations

for this year's award. You may contact Michael H. Porter, chair of Nominations Committee at fax: 403-932-1136 or by email at [mike@resolutionassociates.ca](mailto:mike@resolutionassociates.ca)

## AFMS AGM is almost here:

Friday April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2005,  
7:30 AM

See back page for more information

## Introducing the AFMS Board of Directors for 2004 and 2005

Dr. Kent Taylor (President)  
Ms. Geeta Bharadia (Vice President)  
Ms. Bonnie Murray (Secretary)  
Ms. Barbara Acton (Treasurer)  
Ms. Barbara Bishop  
Ms. Jane Warren

Ms. Marilyn Herrmann  
Dr. Trevor Neil  
Ms. Lori Yasenik (past president)  
Mr. Michael Porter  
Ms. Kim Rieger  
Ms. Shelley Taggart  
Mr. Terry Zibin

## News from around our province

### What's Happening Around the Province

Interviews with Kent Taylor and Barbara Acton:

**This newsletter features another way of learning who does what around the province, interviews with colleagues. We invite you to participate in an interview for the newsletter if you are interested.**

In talking with Kent and Barbara about family mediation, the field and the service they provide to families, I was intrigued by their perspectives and their commitment to the field. When asked about how they and families might define success, an interesting discussion emerged. Both Barbara and Kent discussed that in many occasions, a written agreement is the outcome of a mediated process, there are many successes that occur as a family or couple works towards developing collaborative solutions. Some of these might include: improvements in communication, the children "doing well", children adjusting to going between their parents homes, and the enhanced ability to problem solve together.

They also talked about what families might say about success in a mediated process: they feel like they are moving on, children are doing better, they felt heard and that they developed workable outcomes to their issues. Kent and Barbara also spoke about the evolutions in the field of family mediation over the past number of years, some being that mediation is a better understood process by the public, there are evolutions within the field of mediation in that IB processes have evolved into other models (such as Transformative mediation, narrative mediation, etc.), and that it is a process used in many areas of conflict, not just family.

When talking about some of the valuable learning's, Kent and Barbara mentioned the value of reflective practice, demonstrating empathy and being an authentic practitioner. SEE BACK PAGE FOR REST OF INTERVIEW.

### Our Directory is on line.

**Have you listed your name in our directory on line? If not, please contact Sue at the office for information. Please feel free to provide this directory and web link to referral agents.**

Did you know we also have a directory of trainers and education providers? This directory is also found on our web page.

## AFMS Conference

### *High Conflict Personalities— Managing their Effect on Family Disputes*

Date: April 29, 2005

Location: Calgary, AB.

William Eddy, an Attorney, Mediator and Social Worker is an experienced practitioner in

family disputes. This seminar will cover:

- understanding the role of underlying personality characteristics which impacts high conflict situations in families
- identifying behavioral patterns
- responding constructively
- collaborating with other professionals

To find out more, please contact AFMS. Please help spread the word—this seminar is for mediators, lawyers, social workers, psychologist, and others working with families.

## Lethbridge Queen's Bench Civil Mediation Project Update:

As an update to newsletter edition #4 Lethbridge report, we congratulate Erika Deines on the appointment of Mediation Coordinator for the Court of Queen's Bench Civil Mediation Program in Lethbridge. She reports that the initiative is off to a good start. While the program is currently aimed at non-family civil issues that are appropriate for mediation the program recognizes the value mediation brings to families in dispute. Erika is a strong advocate for expanding the program to also deal with

family issues after the pilot project is completed. She is available to provide in house presentations to create awareness of the initiative in the Calgary, Lethbridge and any other Southern Alberta areas. She can be reached at 403-388-3102.

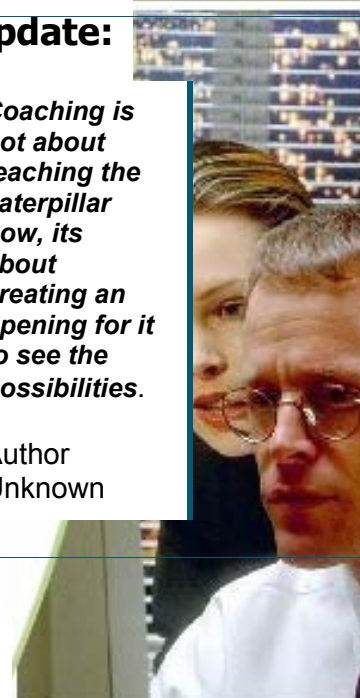
*Coaching is not about teaching the caterpillar how, its about creating an opening for it to see the possibilities.*

Author  
Unknown

## Mediation Canada: Mediation WORLD National Exposition and Trade Show

Mediation Canada is having a Mediation WORLD Trade Show in Mississauga, Ontario March 21-23/05. The show will include:

divorce and separation expo, Family Conflict Resolution Show, Private Exhibitors, Vendor Exhibits and much more. Call Family Mediation Canada 1-519-585-3118



# Lunch and Learn Sessions 2005– Edmonton

## Mark your calendars for the 2005 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).

Wednesday May 18/04– Lloyd Steier of University of Alberta School of Business Center for Entrepreneurship and Family Enterprise. Sibling partnerships at best and worst.

Wednesday June 15/04– Nora Deisman Enhancement Mediation Pilot Project Alberta children's Service/Alberta Justice  
Presenting: Mediation in Child Intervention

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

### Summary of Lunch and Learn Session January 19, 2005 Bankruptcy and Credit Counseling

**Rhonda Fox-Miles of Fox-Miles and Associates Inc.** provided a wealth of information regarding bankruptcy and options for families and individuals experiencing financial difficulties. Rhonda is unusual in her vocation as she is the only licensed Trustee in Bankruptcy in Alberta and possibly Canada who is also a Registered Social Worker. Her background brings compassion and understanding of the stresses and implications of family breakdown during separation/divorce as well as the complicated emotional dynamics that occur. With her broad range of insolvency experience, with the emphasis on personal bankruptcy Rhonda presented legislative options under the Acts providing her audience with understanding of the different steps that need to take place prior to a Bankruptcy. She outlined the pros and cons of each step as well as current details of changes in areas that have huge impact on the decisions that individuals and businesses need to consider prior to making financial decisions. The participants' feedback was very positive and appreciative of the information provided as well as gaining a valuable trusted referral option for their clients.

Rhonda can be reached at [foxmiles@telusplanet.net](mailto:foxmiles@telusplanet.net) or call 1-877-353-5355 / (780)-444-3939

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead

## From the newsletter Editor– Charmaine Hammond

What is success in our work with clients? I have often been asked how one knows if a mediation process is successful. Over the years I have heard practitioners define success in many ways, below are some of the different perspectives my colleagues have graciously shared with me:

- success is being integral to the

process we are facilitating

- Parties developing workable and mutual solutions
- When the parties experience a reduction in the emotions related to their conflicts
- When the conflict has been understood and resolved

- Success can be a respectful conversation when parties have not been able to achieve this

How do you define success? How might our clients define it?





## Book Review

### Charmaine Hammond

Last year I added two valuable books to my collection. While they are not really about families, I found that there was a great deal of transferable information in terms of understanding ourselves and others.

*Who Moved My Cheese* (Spencer Johnson) is a short book about dealing with change in one's life. The story is short and through the behaviours of the two little characters in the book, there are profound learnings of how people perceive and in turn cope with change.

The ability to cope with change is something that separating parents are faced with and for many, coping with change is extremely overwhelming and difficult. This book provides a gentle opportunity for self reflection around coping with change.

*The Five Dysfunctions of a team* by Patrick Lencioni is another frequently used resource. It is written as a story (rather than a text). The tale reveals some of the challenges in resolving

conflict when there is an absence of trust, and the direct correlation of this to the challenges that often surface in implementing outcomes to conflict or reaching/attaining goals. Lencioni presents a model that speaks volumes to the dangers of superficial harmony and how to achieve true collaboration.



A book to add to your collection

## Family Wellness submitted by Charmaine Hammond

Resiliency— the ability to recognize our own personal power (Patricia O’Gorman, *Dancing Backwards in High Heels*) or the human capacity for change and transformation (Robert Lifton). Resilience is an important element of conflict management in family issues. Some of the research demonstrates a belief that resilience is innate and that when we believe in this capacity, the change process can begin.

As practitioners working with families experiencing conflict, we can offer doorways to resilience by:

- believing in the client’s ability to deal with issues and challenges
- to use language that provides hope and embraces the family in problem solving
- demonstrating support to families and also to those who work with them
- providing families with refer-

- rals to other services that will help strengthen resiliency modelling respect for individuals’ abilities and beliefs and providing opportunity for individuals to learn more about the beliefs and values of others
- recognize accomplishments and success

Heightening resilience will allow families to better move through change and challenge.

## Membership Categories with AFMS

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

Registered Family Mediator (RFM) specializing in General Family Mediation



AFMS Membership Categories

General Member

Student Member

## ALBERTA FAMILY MEDIATION SOCIETY (AFMS)

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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.

We are continually faced  
with great opportunities  
which are brilliantly  
disguised as unsolvable  
problems.

-- Margaret Mead

Summary of Lunch and Learn Sessions  
November 24, 2004  
Human Rights in Alberta

Cassie Palamar, Manager of Education and Commission Services presented an overview of the Human Rights Commission's Conciliation and ADR programs.

Cassie has spent 10 years with the Commission in a variety of capacities: Assistant Director, Regional Manager of Compliance, Regional Director and as a Human Rights Officer.

Cassie is currently based in Calgary, previously lived in Edmonton for 15 years and is a former Board member of The Edmonton Community Mediation Society.

We learned that with human rights, there are also responsibilities and that discrimination does not have to be intentional but it is the effect on the receiver of the discrimination that is taken into consideration.

There are defenses deemed reasonable and justifiable concerning certain actions perceived as discrimination, for example drug/alcohol testing because there is an interest in maintaining safety in the workplace, which would make the defense of this a bonafide occupational requirement.

We learned that 60% of all complaints are settled through conciliation and the financial settlement totaled \$1,000,000.00 last year.

If there is no agreement in spite of negotiations taking place and offers being made the Regional Manager can send the complaint to Panel Hearings and then the decision is filed in court and becomes public. Only 3% of all complaints are referred to the Panel and some of these settle prior to the hearing indicating that the Conciliation and ADR programs are very successful.

Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission has a free online newsletter:  
<http://www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca/publications/subscribe/subscribe.asp>

### **Interviews with Kent and Barbara continued:**

Some of the difficult aspects of family mediation, as many of us know are when individuals are deeply entrenched in their anger or resentment and it prevents them from moving forward. Kent spoke about the ripple effects that this has on children, the other parent and the family unit. Sadly, it is difficult for individuals in this state to focus on their children. Barbara and Kent spoke fondly of the times when families are able to manage the emotional issues, to focus on their children and the sense of relief that often results as they work together to problem solve. instead of blaming on another.

It is always so interesting to learn about how our colleagues found this field (or in some cases how the field found them). Kent for many years prior to practicing in mediation was a therapist and recalled the days of providing reconciliation services to couples. He recalled that at this time the court system for divorces was quite different than it is now. This work inspired his interest in mediation, as many of the relationships were not able to be reconciled but he believed in the couples' ability to still work together to address the issues and decisions pertaining to the change in their relationship. After attending specialized training from UCLA (very few programs available at that time compared to today) he began his work in this field, later being a leader in many provincial initiatives and one of the founders with the AFMS Society. Barbara's beginnings were inspired by a family lawyer friend who suggested that her background in working with families and children would perhaps have other avenues whereby she could continue helping children through a different path.

Both Kent and Barbara are on the AFMS board, Kent is the president and Barbara is the Treasurer. From my discussions with them it is evident that there is great commitment to AFMS but also to their chosen field of practice.

*Thank you Barbara, Kent and Barbara for sharing your perspectives and thoughts.*

Barbara Bishop also responded to some of the questions asked of Barbara Acton and Kent Taylor. She indicated that working with families in mediation is a constant challenge, or as Kenneth Cloke puts it we "mediate dangerously" or "by the seat of our pants" creating a very diverse learning curve, especially due to the complicated relationship dynamics. The benefit of continual learning and my own personal satisfaction of being trusted and allowed to be a "guest" in so many families' worlds when they are in conflict and having a positive role as the mediator is a very powerful "draw" for Barbara, Kent and Barbara. All three practitioners spoke about the opportunities that are created in practice for self reflection and professional/personal growth but that the same stands true for the individuals with whom we may meet through mediation.

Barbara reported that mediation is evolving and the AFMS Board is very integral in promoting and maintaining high standards for family mediators and the public. Family mediation is being applied in a broader scope of areas such as family business, wills and estates, partnerships, sibling, trustee, etc.

The insight and value that comes from experiencing a skillful mediator manage the process is the most powerful marketing tool for mediation and can also be a downfall when there is damage done through mediation. AFMS is an organization that acts as a resource for families and a support for professionalism in mediation.

## **NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The Alberta Family Mediation Society will hold the Annual General meeting at the Annual Conference on April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2005.

Where?: Glenmore Inn and Conference Centre,  
2720 Glenmore Trail SE, Calgary

When?: Friday April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2005, 7:30 AM

***All AFMS members and mediators are encouraged to attend!***

Sincerely,  
Dr. Kent Taylor  
President AFMS