



FAMILY MEDIATION IN CANADA YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM: JUNE 26, 27 AND 28, 2014 • HOLIDAY INN MONTRÉAL AIRPORT HOTEL

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25 Years Ago ...

Presidents of Honor

Teresa Spinelli, B.A.
President
Italian Centre Shop Ltd.
On Canada's Top 100 Female
Entrepreneurs List
Edmonton, Alta. (Canada)

Steven K. Young, B.Ed., MBA
Chief Government Whip
MLA Edmonton-Riverview
Government of Alberta
Former Staff Sergeant
Edmonton Police Service
Edmonton, Alta. (Canada)

Scientific Committee

Peter Allik-Petersenn, LL.B.
Lawyer and Family Mediator (retired)
British Columbia (Canada)

Nicole Audeh, M.D., M.A.
Family Medicine Specialist
Associate Professor
University of Montreal Clinic
Social Pediatrician in Montreal and Laval
Montreal, Quebec (Canada)

Luciano Bentenuto, B. Soc. Sc.
Criminologist and Organized
Crime Expert
Ottawa, Ontario (Canada)

Catherine Clément-Talbot
Lawyer and Mediator
President
Association de médiation familiale
du Québec
Montreal, Quebec (Canada)

Franco Conciatori
Constable / Social Community Officer
Québec Provincial Police/
Highway Montreal
Montreal, Quebec (Canada)

Dominic D'Abate, Ph.D.
Accredited Family Mediator
and Social Worker
Director, Consensus Mediation Center
Montreal, Quebec (Canada)

**Mary Damianakis, M.S.W., MPA-FMC
FMCC, Certified IMI**
President, Family Mediation Canada
Montreal, Quebec (Canada)

Ricaardoe Di Done
President
Organizing Committee of the Symposium
Chief Executive Officer, Children Now
Vice-President, Responsible for Global
(Earth-XXI) Youth Upbringing Programs,
World Philosophical Forum
Montreal, Quebec (Canada)

Angela Ficca, B.A., LL.L., LL.M.
Director of the Scientific Committee
Lawyer, Children Now
Montreal, Quebec (Canada)

Lorraine Filion, M.S.S.
Social Worker
Accredited Family Mediator
Montreal, Quebec (Canada)

Aldo Morrone, B.A.
Family Mediator (retired)
Family Mediation Service
Centre jeunesse de Montréal
Institut universitaire
Montreal, Quebec (Canada)

John Mould, M.S.W., R.S.W.
Provincial Child and Youth Advocate
(retired)
Alberta Children Services
Past President of the Canadian
Association of Social Workers
Alberta (Canada)

Natacha Tychowski Viaud
Family Mediator
Paris (France)

The first international conference that was spearheaded by Mr. Ricaardoe Di Done in collaboration with a multidisciplinary scientific committee, dealt with separation and divorce and the various ways to support before, during and after a separation or divorce. Family mediation, support groups for children and parents, joint custody and preventive approaches in family conflicts, were among the various topics that were discussed by international keynote speakers and workshop presenters. At the time, several recommendations were made with the aim of promoting and further developing family mediation services and were sent to various stakeholders around the world.

- ❖ *Fast forward 25 years; it is time for reflection on the achieved changes and the needed improvements to ensure children obtain the support and resources they need to move ahead with their lives and establish a normal level of functioning after the break-up of the family.*

In pursuit of the well-being of children, **Children Now**, a registered charitable organization whose Chief Executive Officer is Mr. Di Done, organized an international symposium in Montreal:

Family Mediation in Canada: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow
June 26th, 27th and 28th, 2014
Holiday Inn Montreal Airport Hotel

Over 60 renowned experts coming from a number of countries and professions (social workers, psychologists, lawyers, judges, government officials, law enforcement officials) addressed issues that parents and families face when they are obliged to restructure their family relations following separation and divorce.

This symposium aimed to present a unique opportunity for dialogue, exchange and, most importantly, it provided the occasion to deepen our knowledge and understanding of mediation and its evolution over the past 25 years in North America as well as Europe and Australia and to become aware of their countries' approaches. In addition, the participants elaborated recommendations for possible future developments. It is essential to address the problem comprehensively rather than to limit the focus to a single aspect of mediation.

The main events

The symposium began with an address by **Nicholas Bala, LL.M.**, Professor of Law, Queen's University, Ontario, Canada who provided a brief history of family mediation in Canada.

During the morning of **June 27th**, prominent family mediators from the Northwest Territories, British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, Québec, and the Maritimes spoke about mediation services, how mediation began, access to mediation and services that exist to support families in their respective provinces and territories.

On Friday afternoon, family mediation was looked at from an international perspective with:

- **Robert Emery, Ph.D.**, Professor of Psychology and Director of the Center for Children, Families, and the Law at the University of Virginia, USA;
- **Jon Graham, BA, B. Com., LL.B.**, Clinical Director Institute of Specialist Dispute Resolution, Sydney, Australia;
- **Patrizia Arensi, M.A.**, Psychologist, Psychotherapist, Family Mediator, Local Public Health Service, Family Counseling, Milano, Italy.

On the morning of **June 28th**, the participants engaged in round table discussions and were called upon to discuss particular topics of interest (Access to Mediation, The Healthy Divorce, Variations: Models and Approaches, Children in Mediation, Training and Accreditation) Following these discussions, the attendees of the symposium worked on recommendations for the future of family mediation in Canada in order to maximize our efficiency and minimize suffering and family tragedies. The recommendations are presently being finalized and the key note presentations as well as the presentations of the retrospective speakers will also be included in a book that will be published in the very near future.

It is important to look at how the breakup of the family was dealt with 25 years ago and how it is dealt with today and the consequences on children. A particular focus and importance was placed on how the following issues were handled in 1988 and how they are handled now:

- The Co-Parenting Relationship and how parents can best exercise their continued parental responsibilities in a collaborative and mutually supportive manner so as to minimize the unfortunate consequences that may be experienced by children when there is no collaboration between the parents;
- Social net work support systems and professional (legal and psychosocial) services (counseling, mediation, collaborative assessments, parenting coordination) that can help families (parents and children) going through a difficult transition;
- Community and public resources that are available or that need to be implemented to assist children and the parents with the changes in their family.

Considerations to reflect on:

- ✓ Children's needs to develop normally within a family that is in transition;
- ✓ Ways that separating or separated parents continue to meet their parental responsibilities without undermining the well-being of their children;
- ✓ Progress made over the years and goals to be achieved;
- ✓ Co-parenting, successes and elements that need attention;
- ✓ Co-parental guidelines pre and post separation;
- ✓ The effectiveness of present forms of mediation to address modern family issues and to better protect children;
- ✓ Methods to improve the efficiency and visibility of mediation;
- ✓ Existing solutions that could be adopted and new solutions that can be effective.

Post Symposium

- ❖ Following the symposium, community organizations and service providers will be called upon to review their services and to make the necessary applicable changes that were recommended at the symposium.
- ❖ A film crew was present for the duration of the conference in order to record the discussions as well as to interview the experts who were on hand. We envision preparing an hour-long documentary in both official languages to be broadcasted nationally aimed at raising awareness on how the interests of children are dealt with in the present state of family law in Canada. The goal of the documentary is to sensitize individuals to the situation of families in transition and what must be done to improve the circumstances of individuals who are experiencing the break-up of their family and most importantly what children need in order to develop normally within a family that is in transition.