



Community, family and relationships

Getting this issue out on time has required that I draw strongly on community and family relationships for assistance. Even within my own interpersonal communities I am usually the one giving of my time and energy to others, rather than the one that is drawing on others for support. I am therefore amazed at the depths to which people will offer support and then inquire about what more they can offer. This issue of RCYCP offers thought-provoking articles about personal and professional relationships among family and community. Of course that observation is affected by my own circumstances over the time it took to pull the issue together. As Thom Garfat and Grant Charles note in our lead article, "self and other are inseparable in effective child and youth care work" and this applied to my "self" in the context of the editorial work I did with this issue. Their work, along with the second article by Carla Alexander will speak to the professional entering the field of Child and Youth Care as well as offering something for the seasoned professional.

Carla Alexander titled her work "You are what you do" and as a child and youth worker, in my editing role with this issue I

had to step back and ask others to do some of my work for me. It was very difficult for me not to be fully involved with the authors and the authors' work, but I simply didn't have the personal/interpersonal resources to review and think about every bit of material; I had to ask others to do that for me. Fortunately, the people that I made those requests of hold the same value of relational interactions that I do and I trusted that the authors were treated respectfully in the exchange.

As Carla describes, time has an irreversible flow and therefore, in this irreversible flow is embedded my own developmental change. I've learned to let go of many things, among them: stress; the importance of doing things myself; and the day-to-day annoyances which previously might have troubled me no longer seem so important. Thus, I offer my own thoughts on the authors that have honoured us with their submissions in this issue.

We have previously published articles on Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transsexual, Transgendered, Two-Spirited, Intersex, and Queer Youth (GLBTTTIQ) youth however Kerry Chutter raises several new issues on a relational and "community" level. He begins

with a fairly sweeping statement that “the goal of Child and Youth Care Counselors, and indeed society, is the end of homonegativity” and goes on to talk about the need to connect youth within the homosexual community which of course requires our own self reflection (back to the self again!) on our homophobic or homonegative attitudes. Even the notion of “coming out” implies a negative difference that he argues one should not need to feel. Someday, there may be no need to discuss how to support these youth; by then we will have accepted that there is more than one sexual lifestyle.

There are two articles on violence and assault against children and their mothers and the implications of such abuse. On first read, Dr. Willem Martens’ article describes a horrifying murder case and suggests some simple solutions, ones that many child and youth counselors will be familiar with. He suggests simple, evidence-based interventions that are vested in the education of both community professionals and friends of a family about the importance of reporting abuse as well as working with perpetrators to enhance parenting skills. My first reaction was that perhaps these were programs that were missing in the Netherlands or that as a psychiatrist he was unfamiliar with what programs existed. I think that this is a naive assumption, particularly in light of an almost identical case which was reported in the Toronto area within the last five years and a murder/suicide involving a young child that occurred in Victoria, B.C.

in the summer of 2007. Evidence-based interventions are present in many communities, but if we don’t get children and families to them, they are useless. Cases such as those described in this article drive this point home.



Pat Kostourous offers some very practical applications for Child and Youth Care Practitioners working with children in women’s shelters. These applications remind us that not only are children affected physically and emotionally by abuse and being witness to assault but that the cognitive development of their brain is also affected. There are some simple techniques that we can use to “retrain” their cognitive responses. There is hope that these applications will enable children who are survivors to develop healing and healthy relationships in their families and communities. While all children in shelters could benefit from her suggestions, child and youth care practitioners working with children who witness family violence in many other programs will benefit from careful consideration of the ideas.

In every issue we try to have one or two “blind” peer reviewed articles as a forum for research and

for controversial ideas generated by the growing group of academics in the field of Child and Youth Care. If you are already familiar with peer review, skip the rest of this paragraph, but for those of you who are not familiar, blind review is a process designed by the academic community to ensure that the material that is published (and sometimes controversial) is of a high quality, ethically sound, provokes thought in the discipline, and brings something new to the growing body of knowledge in our professional and academic community. Peer reviewers provide critical feedback to which the authors respond with at least one revision. All our articles are reviewed and revised, but not all are subject to blind peer review. It’s a quirk of our journal that we like, and which enables us to work with and encourage new authors, field based authors and offer independence to our columnists — who have their own thought provoking and sometimes radical ideas.

“Radical Youth Work: Love and Community” is the peer-reviewed article in this issue. Hans and Kathy Skott-Myhre discuss and debate what community is, was, and may become, and the role of Child and Youth Care Practitioners in moving forward within such a transition. They also argue for the concept of love and its importance in our work. Normally, we just identify that such an article is peer reviewed, but in this case both peer reviewers seemed to issue a challenge, not just to the authors but to our readers, that I think it is worthwhile to comment on. The peer reviewers said, of the first



version, that the language was too challenging and in fact because the language was sophisticated it seemed to negate the very concept of inclusion the authors argued for and failed to make concrete suggestions for change. The authors made revisions, but have also argued that the point of the article IS relational discourse and that making many concrete suggestions for change would negate the idea of inclusion in the dialogue. In the relatively concrete world of Child and Youth Care practice we are always looking for solutions to problems with youth. This article challenges us to just sit with the relational and re-think our notions of community and love, with those youth. I hope that practitioners will respond to the debate and send comments — our peer reviewers did not think so — issuing a challenge to front line practice as well as to the authors!

Jason Whiting, Paul Huber and Alice Koech follow their research work on foster parenting published in our last issue with an article on foster parent training. They offer a thoughtful analysis and together the two articles speak to the increasing professionalization of foster parents and the need for knowledge for any professional working with children and youth.

I have to close by returning to my own “self” interests in compiling this issue. The issue would NOT have been produced at all if it weren’t for an amazing community of family and friends who all know how obsessive I am about getting RCYC out on time. Thom had just finished editing the previous issue and he agreed to

review a number of the initial articles and provide the first round of feedback. Kirsten did a marvelous job of copy-editing. These two formed the specific back-bone of the work of this issue, but surrounding me was this huge community of people, some of whom I didn’t even know, doing things that I didn’t even know I needed done. Things that I would discover had simply been taken care of, allowing me to focus on the critical things that no one else could do, like writing this editorial. So thanks all ... Hope the readership enjoys the collective efforts of my family and community in getting this issue out.



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and add a little reality
to their lives!”

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