



FACS

Family and Children's Services
of the District of Rainy River



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A Word from the Executive Director



The Spirit of Christmas

The spirit of Christmas is certainly alive and well at Family and Children's Services this year. Over the last month, staff have been very busy working on a number of projects that reflect what Christmas is about.

The season kicked off with the launch of the Christmas Adopt An Angel campaign which has become an annual event and one of our most successful initiatives. This year, displays were set up at Walmart, Tompkins Hardware and Taggs, which resulted in donations for a record number of needy children. Thanks to the efforts of some of the staff, our offices have been decorated, and a tree decorating event was organized where we also had an opportunity to share hot chocolate with our

colleagues. Christmas parties for our children have also been organized in Fort Frances and Atikokan, and staff and team parties have been held in both offices. Staff have been busy collecting items for children in care to give out as presents and a Christmas Hamper for a family in need is being organized. Christmas music is filling the hallways, food and Christmas goodies never seem to be in short supply and Secret Santa has been warming the hearts of a number of our staff.

If all this wasn't enough, a very successful YouthCAN conference was organized for over 25 children and workers from around Northwestern Ontario, and an appreciation evening was held for our volunteers, and a couple of very successful workshops were organized for staff. The staff's efforts have been outstanding, and

my thanks go out to everyone whose thoughtfulness, generosity, comforting words, and/or selfless deed touched someone's heart this season and in so doing contributed to the magic we call Christmas.

In closing, I'd just like to wish everyone a very joyous and peaceful Christmas, and leave you with the words of Norman Vincent Peale who once said "I truly believe that if we keep telling the Christmas story, singing the Christmas songs, and living the Christmas spirit, we can bring joy, happiness and peace to this world."

Vik Nowak

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Children's Services

YouthCAN Retreat

On December 10th, a YouthCAN conference was held in Fort Frances at the Family and Children's Services building.



At this conference youth in care from across the Northern Zone (Thunder Bay, Dryden, Kenora, Atikokan and Fort Frances) got together for an entire day full of events. The youth had an opportunity to take part in a cultural presentation as well as water colour painting at the Fort Frances Museum. They also had a presentation from local Pharmacist

and Doctor of Natural Medicine, Renata Winkler, on healthy living. Other guests included local High School teacher, Shane Beckett, who spoke to the youth as a former youth in care himself, and Jackie Lampi-Hughes from Energy Fitness, who got the youth up and moving for an hour of hip-hop dancing and pilates.

The youth had a panel discussion between them, where they were able to voice any concerns, questions, comments...that they would like to have brought to the Ministry on their behalf.



These recommendations will be forwarded to the Ministry in a report



that two of the youth are compiling on behalf of their fellow panel members. During the conference, the youth were able to meet other youth from the Northern Zone and share their experience and words of support with each other. Many youth exchanged email addresses and phone numbers with each other before leaving the conference. After a full day of events, the youth ended their day with a couple of hours of "hanging out" at Global Gaming.

For more information on YouthCAN, visit their website at www.youcan.org.

We hope everyone has a wonderful holiday season!

Community Services & Quality Assurance

A Word from the Family Conferencing Coordinator...



In previous newsletters, we have discussed a new program at FACS called "Family Centred Conferencing."

FCC is a meeting that brings together family, service providers and other supports to create a plan for the child(ren)

By now, some of you may have participated in a conference, or may soon be invited to attend a conference. You may be asking yourself,

"How do I prepare for a Family Centred Conference as a community member?"

All participants should be prepared to share their "Hope for the Day," or what they would like to see accomplished at the meeting and also their hopes for the future of the child(ren) and family. Everyone participates by identifying strengths, concerns and available resources and supports. Service providers can present any relevant plans or assessments.

During the conference all options, resources and obstacles will be explored in developing a plan for the

family. Participants will assist in developing an agreement that will address issues and identify desired outcomes.



Together, we can make a difference!

If you have any questions, please contact Tina Arnold, Family Conferencing Coordinator, at 274-7787, ext. 223.

If you would like to receive this newsletter electronically; or to provide feedback about the newsletter, please notify us by sending an e-mail to: Information@facsrr.ca

We are on the Web!
www.facsrr.ca

Child Protection Services



In the course of duties as a child protection worker, I occasionally come up against parents who are hostile towards me showing up unannounced (or even announced) on their doorstep. In these situations, my presence might be perceived as intrusive and unwarranted. It has happened that sometimes I don't get the chance to explain the nature of the concerns before a parent becomes understandably upset.

The general public, it would seem, has mixed perceptions of child protection agencies. It is not unusual for such agencies to be seen in a negative light. We're sometimes criticized for being too intrusive, and sometimes criticized for doing too little too late. It is not unusual, therefore, for child protection workers to walk a thin line between these two paradigms.

Under these circumstances, the stressful nature of our work is not made any easier, and we may question why it is that we continue to work in this field. So, how do we keep going in the face of such adversity? I imagine we all have our own methods or techniques for dealing with such situations, some perhaps more effective than others. For the majority of child protection workers, motivation goes way beyond monetary gain and job security and I'm sure most of you will agree that dollars were not the primary lure to this line of work.

In my experience, child protection workers train for this line of work out of a genuine and compassionate sense of calling and desire to protect children from harm, perhaps similar to the sense of calling that educators or health-care practitioners may experience. This desire or calling may be fueled by personal experiences from our own childhood, or perhaps from having an acute sense of awareness that child abuse is intrinsically and morally wrong in any so-called civilized society, such as ours for example.

The latter philosophy helps me in my work. I adopt the tenet that under no circumstances do I make apologies for trying to protect children, no matter how minimal or severe the level of intervention might be. We have a job to do that cannot be compromised in any way, shape or form, and it is also up to the entire community to contribute their support to achieve this end.

As a civilized society we have come a long way in protecting children in a relatively short-span of time, especially if we look to the historical roots of child welfare. If we look to history we can see that it was not too long ago that children had little or no rights—and in some societies this remains true—and it was not uncommon for children to work in factories or on the land as soon as they were able to function on an independent level. The notion of

childhood as we know it today did not always exist.

I believe Canada is way ahead of certain other First World countries (e.g. Great Britain) with our philosophy and approach to child welfare. Although by no means perfect, I feel fortunate to be able to work in such an environment. I also believe that child protection is continually evolving in a holistic way.

It is being honed and tweaked to achieve perfection and maximum effect, while respecting the rights of children and families. This is reflected in the recent changes in the model now used across the province of Ontario (the Differential Response Model).

I truly hope that at the end of the day I have helped to make a positive difference in the lives of children and families, no matter how small the changes may be, and I hope that the community will continue to understand that this is the agency's goal. I have no doubt in my mind that you feel the same way.

Jonathon Cumming



Children's Mental Health



Play therapy is a treatment approach that has been developed to help children explore and resolve emotional and behavioral problems that they are having. The child works with a therapist in counseling sessions with carefully chosen toys, games and art materials that encourage safe expression of their feelings.

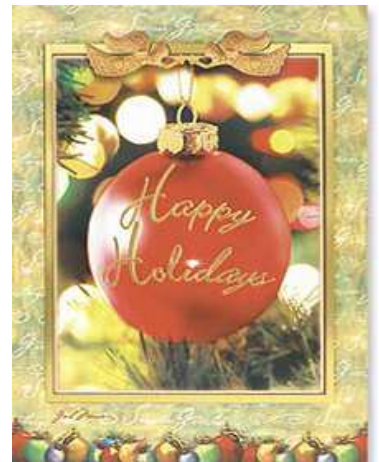
Typically the equipment consists of a small sandbox with miniature items, puppets, stuffed toys, dolls, a dollhouse with furniture, dress up clothes, art materials for drawing and painting and games.

A child may go through a stressful or traumatic experience leaving

them with unresolved feelings. It is often these feelings that cause emotional and behavioral problems for children. They can express these feelings through play without necessarily talking about them. The result is that they feel better because they have expressed these feelings safely. Expressing their feelings helps them to understand their feelings and decreases the intensity.

All children use play to understand and learn about their world while solving day-to-day problems. Through play they make sense of their problems and gain a better understanding of what they are experiencing. Children can gain hopefulness about situations that may have felt hopeless previously.

Joan MacGibbon
Children's Mental Health Therapist



*May this Christmas be filled
With happiness in all that you do
And may this joy continue
The whole year through.
Wishing you a Merry Christmas
And a Happy New Year!*

Call your local
office of
Family & Children's
Services
24 Hours a day,
7 Days a week
Or visit us on the
web www.facsrr.ca



Developmental Services

"Make the Connection" Parenting Program for Parents with Babies 0-12 Months

"Make the Connection" is a parenting program for parents and babies birth to one year of age. It is an interactive parenting program that promotes secure infant attachment, two-way communication and infant led learning—the essential building blocks

for healthy, happy futures. Based on current research and sound principles of adult learning, this enjoyable program combines parent-baby activities, parent discussion and personalized video feedback. The next session starts on January 18th, 2008 at the Ontario Early Years Resource Centre (115 Portage Avenue) at 10:00 a.m. This exciting program is a

partnership between the Northwestern Health Unit, Ontario Early Years Centre and the Family and Children's Services Development Program. Register now! Limited spaces available. For more information, call Brenda Witherspoon at 274-7787 ext. 243 or Miranda Sigurdson at 274-9827. Snacks and child care will be provided if needed.

