

The PACE Program - Executive Director's Report

AGM - September 10, 2020

The past fiscal year ended in such a dramatic and life changing way, that it is a challenge to recall all the details that made this another year of rich and rewarding though, at times, demanding service. The pandemic has challenged us personally and professionally – as individuals, as a team and agency, and as a broader system. I was touched and proud, but not surprised, by how the team responded. They had to learn much and adapt quickly in a very short time. We moved from direct connection with clients to a virtual world. We had to figure ways to manage our own anxiety while supporting others to manage theirs on a scale never before experienced. While this was definitely not an easy journey, the team is to be commended for their dedication and perseverance to finding new paths to navigate an unfamiliar world. Within the social service sector, we have had to find new ways to meet service deliverables and support families in the best possible way. More frequent team meetings were implemented and a 6-week training with Lisa Dion on managing anxiety during the pandemic was made available to the team. We were extremely grateful to Suzanne Bolton and Jeff Mooney who generously redirected some of their training donation to staff wellness.

However the year held so much more. It was once again a very productive and inspiring period, with difficult moments to challenge us and help us grow and evolve. All our contracts were renewed and we were very appreciative to receive two additional one-time-only contracts to fund the Supporting Healthy Transitions Program (SHTP) in Vancouver/Richmond. This year again we enjoyed a rich partnership with the Ministry for Children and Family Development (MCFD), Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society (VACFSS), Family Services of Greater Vancouver (FSGV) and the Vancouver School Board. We want to acknowledge at MCFD: Renaa Bacy, Jyoti Rikhi, Trudy Westermarck and Teresa Goodman. At VACFSS we want to acknowledge: Holly Anderson, Donald Robertshaw, Crystal Phillips and Doris Peters. With FSGV: Karen Dickenson-Smith and Jim Staton and at the Vancouver School Board, we thank Jenny Jung and David Hill. As of April 2020, we are looking forward to working with David Phillips, our new Director of Operations. We thank them for their commitment to PACE and for their support of our services. We also continued strong collaboration with a number of community partners including the Vancouver Early Intervention Network (VEIAN), the Aboriginal Head Start programs, the Phil Bouvier Centre, the Alan Cashmore Centre, the Supported Child Development agencies, the Community Care Facilities Licensing Officers and the Early Intervention teams at Vancouver Coastal Health and the BC Centre for Ability. We want to recognize and thank the SHTP Advisory Committees across the various regions who for many years have helped steer and guide this program. It is thanks in large part to their knowledge and dedication that this service is well recognized within MCFD. I also want to acknowledge the crucial role the Federation of Community Social Services of BC has played in supporting member organizations, especially during the pandemic. Their wise guidance and caring have alleviated much stress and ensured access to critical information. This provincial organization truly exemplifies why working together is vital.

This past year has seen changes on team as well. We said a sad goodbye to Vicky Probert who had been involved with PACE for more than 10 years, and played a key role in the development of the SHTP. Vicky was extremely well respected and sought after for her exceptional service. Marya McVicar left us after 5 years of involvement in both the Family Program and Outreach Support Services, where she was held in high esteem for her skilled and caring service. Brenda Hunt and Erin Malki also left us, and we thank them all for their rich contributions. We wish everyone well in their new endeavours.

This year will bring a very significant loss to PACE with the resignation of Barb McEachern, our Program Director, after 25 years of dedicated service. It is difficult to recognize all Barb's contributions to PACE, as they are so many and all so critically important. Barb was the one to welcome all new team members through a warm and caring orientation. This support to team continued ongoingly as Barb touched every aspect of every program, always looking for ways to streamline and make life easier for all. Barb has a unique gift to both hold the big picture, as well as to pay attention to all the small, yet important details. We thank her for sharing her many skills, her wisdom and insights, and her compassion. There are so many things to recognize Barb for but two stand out as being essential to the sustainability of the organization: PACE being accredited is largely due to Barb's perseverance and her skilled and wise guidance through many highly successful surveys. When the pandemic hit, PACE was ready with the team able to work remotely – again thanks to Barb's foresight in putting this system in place. These examples illustrate Barb's leadership and her ability to see need and to create action plans to respond. We thank her for exceptional service, her commitment to the children and families, to the team and Board, and to the growth and development of the organization. Barb has played a crucial role in PACE becoming such a well-respected service. She will be deeply missed. We wish her happiness and fulfillment as she moves on to new adventures.

We were delighted to welcome Kim Bayer, Lauren Phelan, and Milos Despotovic, who joined us on a short-term contract. The PACE team is truly exceptional and it is an honour to be connected to them. They continue to offer dedicated, highly skilled and compassionate service, which they deliver with integrity and professionalism. They all display a deep desire to continually grow and evolve. Above all, they bring a strong commitment to children and families. It is with gratitude that I recognize: Barb McEachern, Deborah Mollica, Manfred Kuchenmuller and Sharon Hamer (the Management Team); Amy Ives, Anna Lui, Kim Bayer, Marya McVicar, Meigan Swanson, Nancy Courtemanche and Paul Gordon (Family Program and Outreach Support Services); Brenda Hunt, Hannah Mills, Kim Bayer, Lauren Phelan, Liisa Laakso, Lori Bennett, Milos Despotovic and Vicky Probert (SHTP team); Nancy Courtemanche, Milos Despotovic, Liisa Laakso and Vicky Probert (Child Therapy Services).

This year again saw regular supervision and consultation for each program. This is an essential component of PACE as it offers an opportunity for each team to address concerns, support one another and find new ways of practice, as well as share new learnings. We want to thank Dr. Manfred Kuchenmuller and Dr. Sarina Kot for their skilled and thoughtful guidance. As part of the PACE commitment to the team's professional development, a number of training opportunities were made available.

Our strategic goals were primarily met over the past year, though some elements were impacted by the pandemic. For a number of reasons, the research into the SHTP was paused and will be revisited in

the coming year. Another challenge that we may face comes from the growing gap in funding between union and non-unionized agencies.

I want to extend my deep appreciation to the PACE Board: Paul Dubè (President), Heather Whiteford (Vice President), Eric Wilson (Treasurer), Suzanne Bolton, Helen Francis, Yong-Jae Kim, Ian Macnaughton, Deborah Nelson, Terry Sumner, Miriam Webber and Sandi Witherspoon. This exceptional board demonstrates an extraordinary level of caring, commitment and dedication to children and families. I want to thank each of them personally for their wise and supportive guidance.

Finally, as always, I close my report by acknowledging the children and families that we work with. It is an honour to be invited into their lives. I continue to be touched and inspired by their resilience. After 35 years, it continues to be a privilege to work within this wonderful organization.

Michèle Aderem, PACE Executive Director