

Coordinator's Report

May 2014

I recently heard my position described as an “information broker”. I think that is very fitting. April was filled with information gleaned as I had the opportunity to attend 2 different workshops and one at the very beginning of May.

April 7 an early years based workshop “Putting Collective Impact into Practice” presented by Paul Born. He emphasized that every community needs a comprehensive plan for children. What are ways that we can ensure that “Chilliwack, the Best Place to Raise a Child for Everyone.” It is important to ensure the right people are sitting at a table and then identify the community issues, the collaboration issues and the child development issues. He believes in order to be successful, collaborations need a backbone organization as the lead. It is also important to identify specific desired outcomes.

On April 23 I attended the Middle Years Summit, sponsored by the United Way. A lot of emphasis was placed on the UN Convention and how to incorporate it into services and programs. I also had opportunity to hear what other communities are doing in regards to programming for Middle Years. Through the presentations it was very clear that we have a long way to go in creating awareness around poverty in our province and how this is effecting the well-being and potential of many of our children.

On May 2, I attended the Youth and Family Consensus Conference where the focus was child and youth mental health. The emphasis was of course the defining of Family Smart and what that looked like. The importance of engaging families as experts of their own journeys and the importance giving children, youth and families what they need, not just what happens to be available. The stigma around mental illness was pointed out, as you rarely see get well cards and balloons on a psych ward in a hospital. Families often live in a tension of secrecy verses the need to talk. The difficulty of engaging fathers in the care plan of children and youth experiencing mental illness was also discussed. How can we engage fathers? Usually only get the

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mother's perspective of the family. One father from the audience offered a solution. His thought was that mothers wanted a "sounding board" where fathers wanted "to fix". Putting men and women in a support group is a bad mix. His suggestion was that there be a different style of support group geared for men. At the end of the day I had the privilege of watching a premier of documentary "ADHD and Me". It shared the struggles and the techniques that the presenter has used to have success despite her ADHD. In grade 11, she was told by a teacher she would never amount to anything. Now she is currently working on her PHD. Once complete the series will be a 10 part documentary which highlights different aspects of ADHD.

In April I had the privilege of working with Sherry Sinclair on a RFP for an Early Year's Centre grant. The process, while demanding, was worthwhile and again showed the great partnerships and collaboration amongst agencies that we enjoy here in Chilliwack.