

Restorative Reflections

A Newsletter of Mediation Services: A Community Resource for Conflict Resolution

Winter/Spring 2008

TAMING THE PARROT

by David Dyck

Interpersonal conflict actually always involves at least *two encounters*: there is the *encounter with the other* (of which we are usually more conscious) and the *encounter with the self* (of which we are often only dimly aware at best). Both encounters are a place rich with possibility. One possibility is for these encounters to help you expand or open up, to grow. Another possibility is that these encounters will cause you to contract, to shut down. Both outcomes are equally possible. What determines which way it will go? While there are no certainties, we do know one thing. Whatever happens, it will involve a struggle, a sense of wrestling with oneself, with the other, and with both possibilities.

The Encounter with the Other

The struggle with the other is usually to be heard, to be understood, to be respected, to be taken seriously, and to live well together. This encounter is an external engagement; something that takes place outside myself, manifesting in

the ongoing, visible interaction between the other and myself. The challenge, to which the lion's share of conflict resolution literature is dedicated, is to conduct myself on the external plane in a way that does not just beget more of the same. For most of us, this would be enough!

But an even greater challenge awaits. In fact, it is this second challenge we must tackle first. This is the challenge of the encounter with the self. The encounter with the self also involves a struggle, only this engagement is internal. That is, my sense that I am not being respected – while usually beginning with an external momentary encounter with the other – can only ultimately take root and continue to grow inside of me, out of sight, apart from the other *in my own heart and mind.*

The Encounter with the Self

This second struggle is between me and my feelings, me and my thoughts. And the question is, what will this struggle beget? Will I come to see my thoughts and feelings for what they are – worthy of attention to be sure but ultimately no more real than any other momentarily arising phenomena, as a cloud passing in the sky? Or will I lose my mind-fulness (awareness of mind's capacity for delusion), collapse the dis-

tance between my thoughts and reality, and thereby allow those thoughts to run me around? To take me over?

Too often, my thoughts take over. The internal dialogue of recrimination, defense, and counter-attack continues unabated (often largely or even completely apart from the encounter with the other). This can go on for weeks, months, even years.

(Continued on page 3)



Illustration by David Falk

WHAT'S INSIDE

Taming the Parrot	1
Executive Director's Update	2
Volunteer Update	2
Associate Update	2
United Way/MS Partnership	2
NVC Report	3
RJ Week 2007	3
New Resources	4
Training Calendar	4
ACR Conference	4
Membership	4

Our Mission

To promote peace and restorative justice within the community by empowering people, through education and mediation to resolve conflict using non-violent conflict resolution processes.

THANKS TO EVERYONE

who attended our annual Pancake Breakfast, February 14, 2008

Special thanks to our sponsors:

Starbucks, Tallgrass Prairie Bakery, Kendrick Quality Printing and MicroAge.

Thanks to Dan Frechette and to The Land for donating their time and musical talent, and to staff and volunteers for all their hard work!

"Many of our fears are tissue paper thin and a single courageous step would carry us clear through them."

Brendan Francis Behan,
Irish poet
(1923-1964)

UPDATES

Executive Director's Update

This past year for Mediation Services has been rewarding, exciting and eventful!

We have welcomed new staff and said good bye to some very special individuals in the Mediation Services family. Val Pankratz, Wendy Bonnie, Chris Freeman, Heidi Magnuson-Ford, Jacquie Anderson, Robb Nickel and Greg Barrett have left our work place to move into new and exciting adventures. We wish them well! Charlene Guenther and Janine Hogue Sansregret are on maternity leave. Charlene, Jon and Eryn welcomed Abby into their home last June and Janine and Vince brought Amelie home in October of '07. All are doing well and Charlene and Janine will return to Mediation Services in the fall of '08.

New staff have joined Mediation Services – Cori Reimer as Community Outreach Worker, Tera Dyck as the Training

Administrative Assistant, Megan Bowman (term), Volunteer Coordinator/Case-worker, Selena Bewsky (term), Front Desk Receptionist/Office Manager and myself, Maureen Robertson as Executive Director. We are excited to join the Mediation Services Team.

Mediation Services welcomed new office mates through October and November of '07. The Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba Programs have moved their Ellice and Plaza Drive offices into Mediation Services. It's great to welcome the new faces and learn about the programs that are offered. MCCM and MS celebrated the new space with a well-attended Open House on December 18, 2007!

The year of 2007 has been one of transition for Mediation Services. We look forward to 2008 with optimism and the certainty of a strong and productive future!

Maureen Robertson

2007-2008 Board of Directors

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Heather Erhard – Vice Chair
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Associate Update

Congratulations to Wendy Kroeker on her new position as the Program Director for Latin America and Director for Gender Equity and HIV/AIDS with Canadian Lutheran World Relief. Wendy and her contributions to Mediation Services' Training Program will be missed.

David Dyck and Tammy Sutherland welcomed Bennett Francis Sutherland-Dyck, born May 31, 2007. He is a younger brother to Addison McKay (aged 27 months). According to David, he and Tammy are fully immersed in the joyfulness of parenting while also gaining new appreciation for the rigours their parents endured!

Volunteer Program Update

by Megan Bowman

The Mediation Services Volunteer Program is undergoing a variety of changes this year. I am filling in for Janine during her maternity leave, and am enjoying seeing the volunteer program from this new perspective. In other program news:

A volunteer community casework training/orientation was held November 29, 2007. This is a pilot project, to give interested volunteers an opportunity to participate in case development, to gain new skills, and to expand the available opportunities for volunteer participation. Anyone who was not able to attend the orientation, but is still interested in doing casework, please contact me and I'll be happy to discuss what's involved.

A volunteer meeting was held December 5, 2007, to discuss changes to the program. There was a lively discussion, a lot of helpful feedback, and some new ideas generated. My thanks to everybody who attended, and to those who weren't able to make it but provided feedback later on. This meeting produced some immediate changes, most notably in the area of scheduling, and some items which will be the subject of further work and discussion.

Beginning in January, the MS office welcomed a new practicum student. Mack Hastings is doing a practicum with us through Menno Simons College at the U of W. Mack is with us two days a week, and is a welcome addition to the office.

Finally, look for an upcoming Volunteer Appreciation event in the spring, and as a reminder to all of you who have not yet picked up your volunteer gifts, please swing by the office to pick them up!

As always, if you've got feedback, ideas, questions or comments, please call, e-mail, or drop by the office!

United Way/MS Partnership

In fall of 2007, United Way of Winnipeg and Mediation Services embarked on a unique and progressive pilot project called Conflict Resolution Intervention Services and Training for Community Organizations (CRISTCO). The United Way has earmarked \$30,000 to help resource their partner agencies in dealing with conflict. United Way funded agencies are encouraged to access

these funds to supplement the fees for conflict resolution training and for intervention (mediation, group facilitation) services. To date, 6 community organizations have already taken advantage of this important resource. Together, we are making our communities stronger. For more information please call Sandy Koop Harder at 925-3423.

EVENTS

Nonviolent Communication Seminar Report

In October, 2007 Mediation Services, in partnership with Kelly Quigley, hosted a seminar on Nonviolent Communication (NVC). This seminar was facilitated by Rachelle Lamb, President of Mindful Communications, and based on the NVC model developed by Dr. Marshall Rosenberg.

NVC teaches us how to break patterns that lead to conflict and helps pave the way to relationships based on respect, compassion, and mutual cooperation.

The NVC model consists of four basic parts:

- Observing, without judgement, the concrete actions that are affecting us.
- Understanding our feelings in relation to what we are observing.
- Identifying the needs, values, desires that are creating our feelings.
- Requesting concrete actions in order to enrich our lives and the lives of those around us.

For more information please visit: www.rachellelamb.com

Restorative Justice Week 2007

Mediation Services was pleased to host a number of events during the week of November 19 – 25th, 2007.

Brown Bag Lunch with Zoughbi Zoughbi

Zoughbi is the Director of Wi'am - The Palestinian Conflict Resolution Centre. The Wi'am Centre helps to resolve disputes within the Palestinian community by complementing the traditional Arab form of mediation with Western models of conflict resolution. Zoughbi spoke about his experiences with conflict resolution and mediation in the community in which he lives and works.

Film Screening

The film *Beyond Conviction* tells the moving story of three crime victims on a journey toward healing and resolution. The film follows participants in a pioneering program run by the state of Pennsylvania in which victims of the most violent crimes meet face-to-face with their perpetrators. *Beyond Conviction* provides a rare glimpse into the lingering pain, questions and regrets for

both victims and perpetrators and reveals the bold and difficult path to redemption and reconciliation. A special thanks to Kendrick Quality Printing for sponsoring this event.

Mary Wolfe Award

The Mary Wolfe Award is given annually by Mediation Services to a community member who best exemplifies Mary Wolfe's spirit of community service in peacebuilding. The recipient of the 2007 Mary Wolfe Award was Chris Freeman.

Justice Storytelling Quilt

The Justice Storytelling Quilt is a project sponsored by Church Council on Justice and Corrections. Each patch of the bilingual audio quilt was created by victims and offenders from across Canada and is symbolic of their story.



(Taming the Parrot cont'd)

As it does so (with my full if unconscious cooperation), it gnaws away at both my own sense of identity and my sense of the other as fully human, as a person worthy of respect and dignity. It is this, ultimately, that brings me to the extremes of silence or violence, of de-selfing or striking out. It is via this process that we arrive at war, against the self, against the other.

The Parrot – Befriending and “Taming” the Mind

The internal struggle exacerbates the external and vice-versa. Both are critical to engage intentionally if peace is to be built. But because it is in the mind that the seeds of enemy are first planted and germinate, it is there we must begin. The mind – and its inner patterns of self-dialogue – creates the fertile conditions for enemy making or not. One simple way to think of the conditions you create within your mind is in terms of a parrot sitting on your shoulder.

Why a parrot? A parrot is a clever animal. A tricky animal. It can mimic a seemingly human voice like no other. And yet, in the end, a parrot is not a human voice. And it is not in a dialogue. Indeed, all the parrot does is repeat the lines that it has heard. Over time, it develops the capacity to repeat these same lines without even being prompted. Yet this is *still not* a dialogue, only mind-less repetition of the things we have been saying to it over the days, weeks, months, and years. The parrot sits on our shoulder and repeats to us the thoughts and feelings we have said to it. Many of us mistake this “voice” for something real and – even worse – come to base our decisions, actions,

attitudes, and interactions with the other on this so called “reality.” This is very dangerous.

So, what do you say to your parrot? After an encounter with another that began with a pinch moment, a very specific moment-in-time that was uncomfortable, our parrot talk usually begins. It might sound something like:

“Can you believe that?! What a &^%#! To speak to me like that at a meeting!”

or

“I can't believe I didn't put him in his place. I should have told him where to get off! Next time I'm going to...”

or

*“Sh**! I am so stupid! I can't ever get anything right. And now she's mad at me!”*

Over time, our parrot takes over. Our mind, with all its fears, projections, and insecurities continually reinforced, begins to have its way with us. We are no longer in control. The parrot is controlling us. Its dialogue may not be real but its consequences will be.

So what can we do? We must work at mindfulness. We must explore our thoughts and feelings to be sure, but without always taking them utterly seriously. You have heard the expression, “Don't believe everything you hear.” When it comes to our parrot, we must remember instead, *“Don't believe everything you think!”* We must approach ourselves with compassion and humour, seeing our parrot for what it is: an interesting companion to be sure, but ultimately just a funny little bird that does not have the wisdom to dictate our major life decisions and relationships.

Conflict Resolution Course Offerings

Winter/Spring 2008

Core Courses

How to Deal with Difficult People (formerly ICR)
March 3-4, April 10-11,
May 5-6, June 2-3

Conflict Resolution Coaching
March 6-7, May 29-30

Dealing with Anger
March 27-28, May 14-15

Culture and Conflict
Feb 20-21, April 16-17,
June 11-12

Electives

Difficult Conversations
March 17-18

Certificate Courses

*Polarities: Managing
Unsolvable Issues*
Feb 25, June 9

Mediation Practice
Feb 28-29, June 17-18

Mediation Skills I
March 10-12, June 4-6

Communication at Work
March 14

Generations at Work
April 14

Assessing your Organization
April 22-23

ACR Conference Reflection

by Dorothy Barg Neufeld

The Association for Conflict Resolution (ACR) held its 7th Annual Conference in Phoenix, Arizona in October 2007. I was grateful for the opportunity to attend and to connect with *Facilitated Solutions* colleagues in a setting away from home and ever pressing cases. Reflection time is precious, and it is always valuable to contemplate our mediation practice within the context of other programs and practitioners.

One of the most interesting sessions I attended was titled "How Do We Mediate Thee? Let Us Count The Ways." This workshop featured a videotape of eight mediators' approaches to handling the same workplace conflict between two employees. A very lively discussion in the group ensued, as we all had suggestions to make about alternate ways of responding or structuring the mediation.

A presenter in another workshop called "The Neuroscience behind Mediation" affirmed the need for multiple sessions in mediation. Apparently 6 hours of sleep are needed to retain new information. If we are hoping to build understanding in our mediation processes, integration time is clearly necessary.

NEW REFERRAL PROGRAM!

Every time you recruit a new participant to Mediation Services' in-house training program, you receive one day of free training toward your next course of two or more days—\$179.25 value!



referral source at the time of his/her first registration. There is no limit to the number of free days you can earn. Every new person you introduce to Mediation Services' training program means one free day of training for you!

To obtain your free day of credit, the new participant must identify you as their

For more information please call 925-3410

You are invited to become a member of our organization!

With every donation of \$20.00 or more you become a member in good standing of Mediation Services.

\$ _____ Donation

Members will receive our bi-annual newsletter, an invitation to attend our annual general meeting as well as notification of special events.

Please make cheques payable to:

Mediation Services
302-1200 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3G 0T5

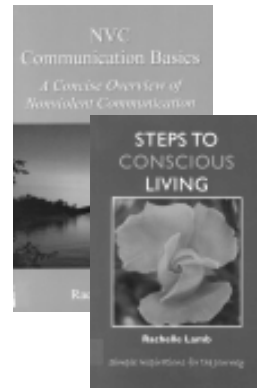
Donations can also be made by VISA, MasterCard, Interac. Phone 925-3410. Charitable tax receipts will be issued for donations.

New Library Resources

Steps to Conscious Living: Simple Inspirations for the Journey. Rachele Lamb. 2005.

NVC Communication Basics: A Concise Overview of Nonviolent Communication. Rachele Lamb. 2005.

A very special thanks to Brandi Ives for donating these books!



OUR SUPPORT

Mediation Services would like to graciously acknowledge our supporters: the Manitoba Department of Justice, the United Way of Winnipeg, the Winnipeg Foundation,

the City of Winnipeg, the Thomas Sill Foundation as well as private donations, memberships and over 50 volunteers whose expertise mediating, training and other activities continues to be vital to the program.

Restorative Reflections, edited by Cori Reimer, is the bi-annual newsletter of Mediation Services and has been in print, in various forms, since 1991. A collection has been compiled containing every edition of the newsletter and is available in the Mediation Services library. Copies of any newsletter can be made free of charge.

Comments, articles, announcements and letters are always welcome and can be sent to: Mediation Services, 302-1200 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, R3G 0T5. Phone: 925-3410, Fax: 925-3414, email: info@mediationserviceswpg.ca