



# ViewPoints

## Falling Into Place

When I accepted the nomination as President for the Nova Scotia Child and Youth Care Workers Association [NSCYCWA] I expressed that one of my goals was to continue to work towards certification of CYC Workers in Nova Scotia. As an executive body we have been working on this. It is however not something that can be done quickly. To give you a sense of what is going on and why this is such a laborious process, I want to share with you a briefing paper on professional regulation that was done for the Canadian Council of Child and

Youth Care Associations. There are two provinces that have had long standing certification process and are now moving towards regulation and legislation. It is the hope of the Canadian Council that this will begin a national wave, and the rest of the provinces will move in a similar direction. The aims of the NSCYCWA include promoting the development and practice of high quality Child and Youth Care service. One way to support quality service is to have standards of practice which can be connected to a certification process for Workers. If you believe in

professional Child and Youth Care Practice I encourage you to become involved with your provincial association. We need active members to move this initiative forward.

Please contact us through: [nscycwa@hotmail.com](mailto:nscycwa@hotmail.com) or visit our website: <http://www.garthgoodwin.info/NSCYCWA.htm> and leave comments there. Ω

Kelly Shaw

President, NSCYCWA

*Please read Pages 2-3 for follow-up article Professional Regulation of CYCW*

### Editor's Note:

There has been a re-print of an article from the last edition. There was an error in the name of the author. We apologize for this inconvenience to the writer. The NSCYCWA decided to reprint the whole article with the proper name. This was done to ensure the credit would be received by the rightful author. We look to prevent such errors in the future.

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### Notice of Annual General Meeting:

- December 6, 2010
- Kingstec Campus  
5:30-8:30pm Room 2101  
Kentville, Nova Scotia
- Available Positions: Secretary and Central Region Representative

## **Professional Regulation for Child and Youth Care:**

### **Prepared for the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Care Associations**

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#### **Who are Child and Youth Care Workers?**

Child and youth care practitioners work with the most troubled and troubling children and youth in our society. They can be found in a variety of settings, such as community mental health, community-based outreach, group homes, residential treatment, school-based programs, pediatric health care, parent education and family support, and juvenile justice programs. Child and youth care workers specialize in the development and implementation of therapeutic programs and planned environments, and the utilization of daily life events to facilitate change. At the core of all effective child and youth care practice is a focus on the therapeutic relationship; the application of theory and research about human growth and development to promote the optimal physical, psycho-social, spiritual, cognitive, and emotional development of young people towards a healthy and productive adulthood; and a focus on strengths and assets rather than pathology. Child and youth care workers are most often seen on the front-line. They spend the most time with severely troubled youth and, therefore, have the most influence on therapeutic outcomes.

#### **The Scope of the Problem**

Child and youth care practitioners work with millions of children, youth and families across Canada. In Ontario alone, there are 533,000 children with a diagnosable mental health disorder (Canadian Mental Health Organization, 2005) It is estimated that there are approximately 25,000-30,000 child and youth care workers in Canada, although the absence of any kind of regulation of the field makes it difficult to determine exactly how many practitioners there are, or how many lives they touch. What is known, however, is that the vast majority of child and youth care practitioners are not specifically educated or trained in child and youth care prior to obtaining employment in the field. For example, in Newfoundland and Labrador there are approximately 400 child and youth care workers practicing across a variety of domains. Less than 100 of these, or 25% of all practitioners, have received post-secondary education in child and youth care. This trend continues across the country, as the majority of child and youth care practitioners come from a variety of educational backgrounds including education, psychology, sociology, recreation, community development, and corrections. Many practitioners have no post-secondary education.

Further to the above, most child and youth care workers are not affiliated in any way with their professional associations. In Ontario, there are an estimated 7000 child and youth care workers. Only 1200, or 17%, are certified members of the Ontario Association of Child and Youth Counsellors. This is in a province with the highest number of child and youth care education programs in the country.

Every province in Canada is responsible for the delivery of services to children, youth and families. At the federal level, Health Canada co-ordinates the Directors of Child Welfare to set policy recommendations for consideration by the provinces and speak on issues of national concern, yet they know little about the profession of child and youth care. Each province therefore determines the best route to professional regulation of child and youth care practice, and there are wide variances between provinces. Alberta and Ontario are the only two provinces that offer certification for child and youth care practitioners, and this certification is voluntary. No province offers legislation to govern the practice of child and youth care or the use of its name. Membership in the professional associations is voluntary. Provinces vary widely in their requirements for accreditation or licensing of programs and services that employ child and youth care

## Professional Regulation for Child and Youth Care

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practitioners, and rarely do these service-based requirements govern the qualifications of child and youth care practitioners. As a result of the lack of regulation in the field, employers have the most control over determining the qualifications of individuals hired as child and youth care workers. This translates into significant discrepancies between agencies with regard to the educational qualifications, knowledge, skills, and competency levels of employees. There are, subsequently, too many examples of poorly trained or totally untrained individuals in child and youth care worker positions.

### **What is Being Done**

The Council of Canadian Child and Youth Care Associations (CCCYCA) is a national body comprised of representatives from the provincial and territorial child and youth care associations. Major activities include advocating for consistent quality of care across Canada for children, youth and families, providing provincial, national and international opportunities for professional development, and supporting the development of professional regulation.

At the 12<sup>th</sup> National Child and Youth Care Conference held in St. John's, NL in 2002, a pre-conference forum was held to start addressing the issue of professional regulation for field of child and youth care. At this forum, the CCCYCA was given a clear mandate to co-ordinate provincial efforts and develop national policy for standards of practice and professional regulation.

So far, the key elements necessary for effective professional regulation have been identified.

Recommendations for a pathway to regulation using several possible models to accommodate provincial differences have been developed. These models include certification standards for practitioners with legislation of practice, accreditation of educational programs with employer hiring standards, and professional licensing. It is the intent of the CCCYCA that professional regulation be driven provincially, through a model that works best for each province, with national support and guidance from the CCCYCA and associate sub-committees.

### **What Lies Ahead?**

In order to move this initiative forward, several specific short-term objectives have been identified:

- \*increased public advocacy at the national level regarding the need for consistent standards of care and practice for the children, youth and families served by child and youth care workers
- \*increased communication and collaboration with other national organizations and stakeholders, including the Child Welfare League of Canada, The National Youth in Care

We hope that this gives the reader a good idea of what is happening in the world of youth care. We also hope this information brings people into action. We are the mechanism for change, all we need to do is get involved.

## Reflections from the Field

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### My Journey into Child and Youth Care

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure”. This was written by Marianne Williamson and I first heard this quote in the movie *Akeelah and the Bee*, it not only exemplifies my transition as a youth care worker from student to on the floor and for me can also be applied to the work I do with the youth on the floor.

As a student entering the child and youth care program, I did not know exactly what to expect; I had been volunteering with youth for the past few years and knew I wanted to work full time with youth. Entering the program, I was thrown off by some of the things we had learned, not knowing how it fit, but now after working for a number of months as a new casual on the floor it has begun to all make sense. I find the foundation that school gave me has prepared me for the floor. The team I work with at the BRIDGES Program has continued to help me grow and develop as a youth care worker. The Child and Youth Care Diploma program at the NSCC teaches about use of self in relationship building, challenging skills, activity based training and behaviour modification. As a student I was able to write papers and understand the theory, however, some things came easy to the floor and other things took time.

I have been struggling how to put into words what my transition from student to worker has been, but this evening I watched the movie *Akeelah and the Bee* for the second time and was inspired not only by the above quote but the story. The story and the quote exemplify for me the transition for me personally onto the floor, the youth we work with and the work we do as youth care workers. The movie *Akeelah and the Bee* is about an eleven year old girl (*Akeelah*) that has grown up in a poor area of California where through adversity in her life she is resilient. She enters a spelling bee and the movie follows her journey, the journey of her coach and the influence she had within her community.

In transitioning onto the floor and being a casual youth care worker, the above quote (Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure), is a great example of my first “aha” moment as a new youth care worker. When I first started, I questioned and wondered (as I am sure any new casual would be fresh out of school). I had this fear of inadequacy and what if I am not ready, what if I do not know what to do. I was challenged specifically by my Team Leader (TL) to bring more of myself to the floor as use of self is a significant part of what we do. I was not only afraid of being inadequate, but nervous of the impact I would make as a youth worker because in school we are taught that we are to doing things with a purpose. Being new, I had ideals of wanting to make a difference and an impact, but also a fear of how and what that would look like. However, through encouragement from my TL and support from Team members I found ways to bring more of myself to the floor. I am learning how to use my interests, activities and life experience to impact the youth that I work with. One significant piece that was encouraged by a team member of mine was to bring my guitar. This experience was amazing for me and gave me a basis to develop relationship with a youth I work with.

Just as the relationship we have with youth has an impact on them it also impacts us as youth care workers, much like the impact *Akeelah* had on the people who were supporting her in the movie. I have grown as an individual and know myself better since I began my Child and Youth Care journey. Things I used to take for granted as a student I appreciate specifically working with youth day to day in their lives. I

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think as a student I knew that I was studying to be a youth care worker wanting a job that makes a difference not realizing how the youth I work with would impact me.

One particular relationship building experience with a youth was recognizing, for me, when that relationship was not ready to go to a particular place either me as a youth care worker or the youth. In this particular case I had the opportunity to play guitar with one of the youth, the song the youth had chosen had significant meaning to me. At that point in our relationship I was not ready to self disclose, however in future I may choose to when our relationship has reached that place. Personally I had to recognize that although the meaning of the song for that youth could have been beneficial for them. I did not feel in my relationship with them I was prepared to go there.

The main tip I would give new youth care workers would be that youth, Team Leaders, supervisors and team members have great insight they are a source of great support and as a new casual to the floor you can learn a lot from them. One thing we talk about in class was learning your own style as a youth care worker. I think I have learned more about my style in feedback from people I work with then I learned in school. I know when I had my casual interview and they asked about my style I said I was still learning what it was because I was unsure how to put it into words. I think receiving feedback from those you work with and how the youth receive you on the floor is good learning tools that you can grow as a youth care worker.

I have thoroughly enjoyed becoming a youth care worker and love the work I do. I believe that it is important to always desire to learn and grow. Ω Donna MacLean

Atchinson, D. (Director). (2006). Akeelah and the Bee [Motion Picture]. Lions Gate Films.

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## NSCYCWA

The NSCYCWA is a non-profit, volunteer membership organization. Currently we are aiming to provide membership with the most current and up to date information. Our goal is to have youth care workers involved in this by submitting articles, updates, summaries, acknowledgements, etc.

We wish to support our field, we hope our field supports us by contributing.

Thank- You, NSCYCWA Executive

**Note: Information will come under scrutiny of the NSCYCWA Executive and inappropriate language, or information which is detrimental to individuals or organizations will not be published.**

## **Honoring a Commitment to Youth Care**

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HomeBridge Youth Society in Halifax Regional Municipality has been providing residential care for at-risk youth for more than 30 years and some of the talented youth care workers who make up the teams have been with the organization for a large part of that history.

Each year the organization makes an effort to recognize that commitment and depth of experience. Employees are honored at the Annual General Meeting for milestone years of services starting at 10 years and moving through 5-year increments all the way up to an employee who has been part of the HomeBridge Community for over 30 years. This includes employees from all areas of the organization, the majority of which are youth care workers. HomeBridge understands what an incredible gift it is to have an employee base that spans many generations and combines an incredible depth of experience with new viewpoints and innovations.

***“The depth and breadth of the employees at HomeBridge inspires confidence and safety with not only the youth and their families, but with each other,” explains Ernie Hilton, Director of Youth Care and Operations. “We are privileged to have such a vast resource of support internally.”***

Each year in preparation for the Annual General Meeting youth care teams are notified of who will be honored and asked to come up with three words that best describe each person. These are the same team members who they stand shoulder to shoulder with every day on the front line and depend on in the moment, so seeing what words they choose to describe them is often very meaningful for those honoured. It can be challenging to condense a description down to only three words, but the impact is substantial.

***“Like when one family member says to another family member they are worthwhile, when a teammate tells another teammate their work is worthwhile, the gesture is profound and connecting,” says Hilton.***

During the event, the employees come up on stage and are presented with a milestone plaque recognizing their years of service. One by one those honored are called up to take the stage as a projection screen displays their picture with the three words their team has chosen behind them on stage.

In June HomeBridge honoured the following employees: (25 years) **Conrad Durnford** – Passionate, Dedicated, Caring, (20 years) **Michelle Sullivan** – Compassionate, Genuine, Patient. **Shelley Teal** – Committed, Compassionate, Creative. **Lisa Ross** – Patient, Friendly, Organized. **Ruth Meade** – Professional, Dependable, Supportive. **Lynn Parsons** – Fair, Advocate, Appreciative. (10 years) **Melanie Bennett** – Organized, Committed, Caring. **Lloyd D'Eon** - Friendly, Courteous, Helpful. **Tanya Shaw** – Thoughtful, Playful, Positive. **Lisa Goulden Ross** – Nurturing, Thoughtful, Efficient **Shana Hendsbee** – Creative, Committed, Kind. **Jason Matthews** – Professional, Insightful, Calm, and **Jim Rathwell** – Dedicated, Reliable, Humorous

HomeBridge does not under estimate the reality that its employees are transforming lives and providing strength, vision and future plans for youth they have the honor of knowing. This is just one means of recognition within the organization. HomeBridge’s vision of all youth and their families living in health, safety and harmony would not be possible without the amazing talent and commitment that comes from the employees. Ω

***Renee Stevens***



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**[www.homebridgeyouth.ca](http://www.homebridgeyouth.ca)**

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**HomeBridge Youth Society Online Fundraising Auction**

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**November 4<sup>th</sup> to November 18<sup>th</sup>**

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Log on to **[www.homebridgeyouth.ca](http://www.homebridgeyouth.ca)** and start shopping for a good cause!

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HomeBridge Youth Society is holding their second annual Online Fundraising Auction. All funds raised support life skills programming, educational supplies, and recreational and cultural experiences for the youth in HomeBridge's six residential care facilities and on site-school. Please go to [www.homebridgeyouth.ca](http://www.homebridgeyouth.ca) to register.



**Nomination Form**  
**Nova Scotia Child and Youth Care Worker of the Year**

Nominator's Name:

Nominator's Address:

Membership Number:

Your Nominee's Name:

Nominee's Address:

Nominee's Employer:

Please provide a profile of the qualities of the nominee, which you believe could be recognized by this award, in the space provided.

