The Journey Towards Excellence : The History of FAMILY CHILD CARE TRAINING PROGRAM

Our work on family child care training can be traced back to 1995 at a child care conference. There, Lee Dunster and several others in family child care discussed the need to work together at a national level to create resources for the field. These conversations eventually led to a proposal that was funded by the Child Care Visions fund of Human Resources Development Canada. Although it was called a research and development project, it was unique in many ways. The steering committee for the project was not composed of national research experts, but mostly of active and former caregivers. Many were representatives of provincial family child care associations. Although researchers were involved, the steering committee set the research agenda.

This first phase of this project ran from 1997 to 1999, and involved Canada-wide research on the training needs of family child care providers. We conducted a survey of colleges, caregiver associations, child care agencies, family resource centres and other organizations that we thought might offer training to caregivers. We did focus groups around the country with caregivers, trainers, agency staff and parents. We tried to understand the content that training should cover, the format it should take, and the barriers to participating in training.

From this research process, a list of core training content was developed, as well as nine principles to guide the delivery of caregiver training. We also learned that very little caregiver training was available in Canada at that time, and that the training that was available didn't usually reach unregulated, self-regulated, license-not-required, or independent caregivers. Limited time and money, long working hours, and lack of recognition were just a few of many obstacles that caregivers had to overcome in order to access training. The people we spoke to told us that new caregivers, rural caregivers, caregivers from different ethno-racial and cultural groups and unregulated caregivers all had unique training needs.

Despite these challenges, the conversations we had about training were full of excitement and hope. There was a great deal of interest in caregiver training, and we met many caregivers who saw training as a route towards professional development and networking. There were also some good training resources and innovative approaches to delivering training beginning to emerge in certain parts of the country.

The time was right to create a new, up-to-date, Canadian package of training materials that would be readily available across the country to all types of caregivers. The project steering committee talked at great length about what these resources should look like. Eventually, the committee arrived at a creative approach. A decision was made to create a series of training "modules," which could each be covered in a three-hour workshop. Each module would be set up to accommodate a wide range of training situations from self-study to internet-based learning, to traditional workshops. The modules would not be organized in a set "order," but would each stand alone so that local groups could pick and choose the modules that they needed, add in extra material of their own, or otherwise adapt the content to local needs. Three "levels" of modules would be created, to cover basic, intermediate and advanced topics and to give local groups even more choice over the design of their own training program.

The committee also recognized that the modules alone would not lead to the creation of new training opportunities for caregivers. Resources for the trainers themselves were also needed so that they would know how to deliver the training effectively, and how to build interest in the idea of caregiver training in their communities. Research on key issues facing caregivers needed to continue.

In 1999, the project was funded for a second phase, and we began to develop the resources. By 2000, the first 12 "basic level" modules had been developed and pilot tested. The modules proved popular, and lent themselves well to a variety of training situations. Groups across Canada were able to adapt the content and where necessary link it to other training packages. By 2003, all 36 modules had been completed and available across Canada through the Canadian Child Care Federation. A manual and workshop for trainers was also in development. Two new research reports were also created; one about defining quality in the context

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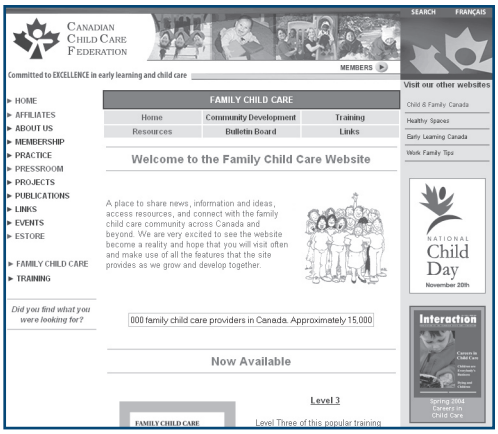
of family child care, and another on strategies for outreach to unregulated caregivers.

For caregivers, coming together to learn is much more than a way to access information. It is a networking opportunity, a chance to build a sense of professional pride and identity, and ultimately a way to let others know that their work is important and valuable. Since the beginning, this project has tried to use the development and delivery of caregiver training resources as an opportunity to empower Canadian caregivers, build leadership for the field, and celebrate the unique strengths of family child care. The training modules you are working with were created by caregivers, for caregivers. Caregivers across the country shaped the research process, wrote modules, pilot tested them, and encouraged others to use them. In choosing to use these materials, you are helping family child care to gain the recognition it deserves in Canadian society, and we look forward to working with you!



This bilingual site offers an opportunity to share news, information and ideas, access resources and connect with the family child care community across Canada and beyond. Some of the features include a training section showcasing the Family Child Care Training Program, research papers related to capacity building and community development, downloadable resource sheets, a bulletin board and much more! Visit often and make use of all the features as we grow and develop together.

www.cccf-fcsge.ca/subsites/familytp/english/quality_en.htm