

**2015 Assessment Conference ~ April 30, 2015**

13<sup>th</sup> Annual Assessment Conference:

**“Navigating the Assessment Process: Supporting Families and Learning from Their Perspectives”**

A special note goes to *Joyce Branscombe* and *Nicky Byres*, of EventAbility. Joyce and Nicky helped us for the past 12 years and made this a very special and successful event that is now established in our early childhood education (ECE) communities. Your organization and coordinating skills and presence were very much missed through the planning stages and on April 30!

This year, our event “Navigating the Assessment Process: Supporting Families and Learning from Their Perspectives” focused on families and the different stages of assessment and intervention between birth and school ages, and including a bit of the children’s life trajectories with their families. This year we tried a new format for our Conference with expert panels and keynote presenters all in one main hall – Room 100, Neville Scarfe building at the UBC Faculty of Education. Our Committee took this decision in order for the event to be viable, and in light of a “no-budget” reality, and hence, no conference organization support except for our own Committee members’ own time and in-kind support from their agencies/institutions.

Therefore, together with the Institute for Early Childhood Education and Research (IECER) at OGPR, and the Psychoeducational Research Training Centre (PRTC) at the UBC Faculty of Education, we gratefully thank the Office of the Provincial Advisor, Aboriginal Infant Development Programs of BC, the BC

Aboriginal Head Start Programs, the Supported Child Development Programs (Centre for Ability).

At the same time, the administration and logistics support from the Vancouver Infant Development Program and Developmental Disabilities Association made this day a reality with registration and day preparations being followed up and taken care through Vancouver IDP.

Here is an overview of the day, starting with our parent panel: Dr **Jennifer Baumbusch** presented a compelling story of her family's journey through assessment for their daughter. She shared such important insights, practical advice and reminded us all about the importance of connection and relationships. This all happened while a beautiful slide show of her daughter's life was showing in the background. **Cindy Packer's** vivid stories as an adoptive non-Aboriginal parent of three Aboriginal children and the challenges and triumphs in everyday life followed; the images in the background slide presentation, with her children at different ages and stages and sharing different family and community activities in their different roles in the community provided that strong connection with Cindy's account of her journey, together with her husband, as parents raising children with "non-visible" disabilities. The subsequent keynote expert individual and panel presentations throughout the day naturally drew on --and built upon-- each other, with Dr **Barb Fitzgerald's** "do no harm" presentation. This presentation not only combined assessment practices that both follow the family-centred approach and are rooted on sound developmental principles, but also included a call for conference participants to act out as leaders and advocates for the children and families with whom we all work from our different positions in the

community. Drs **Suretha Swart** and **Carla Merkel**'s two-part presentation clearly connected the world of schools with what the assessment/testing and follow up processes are with parents' experiences and understanding of these assessment activities (Dr Merkel) and how they "twist and bend" themselves to fit-in this complex journey of assessment, identification and services for their children with special needs (Dr Swart). **Michaela Wooldridge** session (with the contributions from Michele Tardif and Judie Sahaedeo) explained the different elements that early intervention assessment tools ought to include *and* provided participants with a very clear review of these guidelines --more specifically referring to the DAYC-2, a standardized tool that is being implemented for early intervention/supported child development programs in BC. Finally, Dr **Veronica Smith** shared with us her views and findings of her current study with parents in different cultures with data collected on site (including India) and illustrating what parents experiences and expectations as they parent children with developmental delays or disabilities and they navigate the assessment process are. Our day was cut a bit short without our closing keynote presentation from **Denise Findlay** who was unable to attend due to health reasons on that day. We hope to have Denise come and present for one of our future event(s). Dr **Bill McKee**, distinguished member of our steering committee cheerfully wrapped our afternoon with well-wishes and thanks to All who attended.

We run this event thanks to the dedicated and committed effort of an outstanding committee of volunteers – Dana Brynelsen, Diana Elliott, Joan Gignac, Hillel Goelman, Andrea James, William McKee and Mari Pighini. This year, we said "so long" to Beth Hutchinson, Provincial Advisor for the Parent Child Mother

Goose Programs who could no longer continue as a committee member. We thank Beth for her insights during the past year when she actively participated in our committee. We also said “au revoir” (but hopefully not “good bye”) to Diane Tannahill whose multiple commitments at the UBC Childcare Centre kept her away from our meetings this year. We thank Diane for all her contributions since 2003 and hope to have her back for 2016! We are thankful for the graphic design contribution of ISABELLE HSU, volunteer at the Society for Children and Youth, SCY, for designing our flyer. We thank Diane Burgar at DDA’ Berwick Centre for providing us with a space, with the Including All Children and Families team, at Berwick. As always, deep gratitude to Iris Berger and Dr Marilyn Chapman of IECER, the Institute for Early Childhood Education and Research at UBC’s Faculty of Education for their contributions.

Out of the 72 registrations, we received 56 enthusiastic evaluations with ideas for more events – parent voices and Aboriginal content in assessment are very strongly voiced, among other invaluable ideas. Before we plan our next event for Spring 2016, we will be looking around for additional funding contributions to make the next one a reality – so please do contact us if you have any ideas!

**We gratefully acknowledge** the administrative, logistical and onsite volunteering support provided by Dr **William McKee**, The Psychoeducational Training Centre, and Dr **Iris Berger**, Institute for Early Childhood Education and Research (IECER), Faculty of Education, UBC.

**Warm thanks** to our enthusiastic and committed ECE graduate students and community volunteers for their help with registrations and logistics throughout the day: ♦ **Qaisar Niazi** ♦ **Patricia Cortés Olivera** ♦ **Jaime Semchuk**

*Our final words go back to Dr **Hillel Goelman**'s greetings, beautifully expressed in this opening note for our 2015 program:*

Once again the program committee has delivered an outstanding program for the annual assessment workshop. The special focus this year on parental perspectives and experiences will ensure that all participants will come away with new understandings of how parents advocate for their children with love, skill, knowledge, patience and wisdom. Their stories educate us and inspire us. Once again we have a range of professions represented at the workshop, ensuring that we are all exposed to the different kinds of expertise we can draw upon in our work with children and families. As one of my best teachers taught me, the key to all learning is the ability to “listen loudly.” It took me a while to understand what “listening loudly” is all about. A Zen teacher once explained “listening loudly” in this way: you can’t fill an already full teacup. It becomes necessary to empty our tea cups so that we can then fill it with new, hot and nourishing tea. I wish everyone a successful workshop this year, with where we can safely empty our teacups and come away with new, rich and deep understandings of what the world of assessment looks like to children, their parents and their families.

*All the best,*

*H. Goelman*

## 2015 Presenters

Name	Presentation	Title
Cindy Packer	Opening Panel	Parent's Experiences About Their Children and
Jennifer Baumbusch	AM	Assessments  No handouts available. Please contact Cindy Packer (cindy@packer.ca) Baumbusch, Jennifer <Jennifer.Baumbusch@nursing.ubc.ca>
Dr Barb Fitzgerald	Keynote	<a href="#">Through a different lens: what assessment means to vulnerable families</a>
	Presenter AM	<a href="#">Paying the Bills Handout</a>
Dr Carla LeHouillier and	Expert Panel	Understanding the experiences of parents of children with exceptionalities as they navigate the school system and assessment process. This is a two-part presentation.
Dr Suretha Swart	AM	<a href="#">Dr Suretha Swart's presentation</a> <a href="#">Dr Carla Merkel's presentation</a>
Michaela Wooldridge	Expert Presentation	<a href="#">Keeping it Real! Effective assessments in practice</a>
Dr Veronica Smith	Keynote Presentation	<a href="#">Parents and cross cultural beliefs</a>
Denise Findlay	Closing Keynote	<a href="#"><b><i>Presentation Cancelled</i></b></a>