

## Fall 2019 Newsletter

Issue 22, October 2019

### President's Message

"Everybody knows," Leonard Cohen intoned matter-of-factly in his song by the same name. He proceeded in that work to catalogue a list of grim "facts" about life within our modern society.

While at the time of its release Cohen's song may have seemed unduly depressing and dark, in light of our present situation it strikes me that, as usual, Cohen was prescient in his cold analysis. Ditto for his even darker and more end-of-days song, "The Future". Perhaps we aren't quite yet in Cohen's Future, but one could be forgiven for worrying that we are, to paraphrase him, sliding in that direction.

In our own quarter, it seems to me that the family justice world is increasingly facing more complexity and challenge, and yet with far fewer resources of all kinds to go around. This situation is leaving many in dire need, scrambling and struggling. Justice being a fundamental right — perhaps the most fundamental and foundational of all human rights — this situation simply cannot under any circumstances be something that we "grow to accept". It is unacceptable and so it must be changed. The warning sounded by The Manic Street Preachers over twenty years ago in their famous song often sounds in my mind these days: "If you tolerate this then your children will be next".

That's what might be called the passionate aspect of the crisis, and it is important. But what is equally important is that we understand that *why* things are the way they are right now is a highly complex matter. While it is easy and may in some ways be satisfying to point fingers at this or that specific circumstance, or person, or group, as if they are "the cause" of it, the reality is that there are multiple, intersecting, overlapping, and amplifying causes at play. As a very wise law professor (later turned appeal court judge) of mine used to remind his students: "We ought to be very wary of simple solutions to complex problems, for they are rarely true solutions indeed".

So, given the magnitude and complexity of the issue, what can we do about it?

First, a hint from one of the Harry Potter movies, which I recently started re-watching with some of my children. At a dark moment in "The Half Blood Prince," Dumbledore says to Harry, "Once again I must ask too much of you..." I think that rather poignantly sums up the quality and intensity of the effort that each of us must employ if we are to truly make a difference.

In addition to employing intensity of effort, I think that to fix this situation, we workers in the family justice world must also think carefully, plan strategically, and then act decisively. We must do so in

### Inside this issue

AFCC-O 11th Annual Conference.....	3
Member Spotlight .....	4
Walsh Events .....	6
Upcoming Events .....	6
Parenting Guide .....	7
Membership Benefits.....	7
Community Programs.....	8
Communities of Practice .....	9
Courthouse Facility Dogs and Child Witnesses .....	10
Film Review.....	13
New Book Feature.....	15
Advertisements .....	14-17
Publication Information .....	18

## President's Message —*continued*



manifold ways, having regard for our own individual professional trainings, skills, passions, and talents. We must also, for true and certain effectiveness, act collaboratively and cooperatively in our various professional disciplines: as judges; as mental health professionals; as mediators; as researchers; as lawyers; as court administrators; and as others. It is in this area that AFCC Ontario members excel. I think many of you might agree with me that it is, indeed, the hallmark and defining feature of this organization.

The AFCC Ontario Board has also, for a long time now, been considering how the organization can innovate and adapt to better meet the evolving needs of the organization's members. We are therefore working on new, modern initiatives, taking into account in that regard the impact of both innovative technology and a constricted economy.

Another change at AFCC Ontario relates to our administration. We say farewell to Kimberly Brown and thank her kindly for her many years of dedicated service to this organization; we say hello to Kristy Joplin, our new administrator, who will help us innovate, grow, and adapt to these changing times.

Best wishes to all, and do keep the faith.

*Brian Burke, AFCC-O President*

**Register to attend the 11th Annual Conference in Hamilton, ON,  
on October 17 and 18, 2019!**

**[www.afccontario.ca/2019-afcco-annual-conference/](http://www.afccontario.ca/2019-afcco-annual-conference/)**

### **Pre-Conference Events**

**October 17, 2019**

**Location: Sheraton Hotel, 116 King St. West, Hamilton, ON**

**2:30 - 4:00 p.m. Hindsight 20/20 - An Interdisciplinary Reflection**

An opportunity to draw on the insights and experience of multidisciplinary professionals from the Bench, the Bar and mental health fields.

**4:00 - 6:00 p.m. AFCC Ontario Chapter Social Reception**

Complimentary appetizers and one drink ticket

### **SPONSORSHIP & DISPLAY TABLE OPPORTUNITIES**

**Gold \$2,000**

**Silver \$1,500**

**Bronze \$750**

**Display Table \$250**

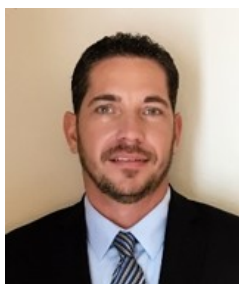
**Supporter \$200**

**[Download Sponsorship Information](#)**

Contact Michelle Hayes for  
conference or sponsorship information  
at [mhayes@afccontario.ca](mailto:mhayes@afccontario.ca)  
or call (905) 667-1999

# **AFCC-O 11th AGM & Annual Conference, “Changing the Landscape of Family Law” October 18, 2019**

**Location: Liuna Station, 360 James Street North, Hamilton, ON**



**Keynote Speaker: Steven Bradley, Our Family Wizard**

## **The Interaction of Technology & Family Law**

As family law, mental health, and legal professionals, we know that offenders use whatever means available to abuse, harass, stalk, and monitor victims. Today's technology has provided offenders with tools to accomplish these tasks without having to leave the safety of their homes. In this interactive workshop, Steven Bradley will explore the risks and benefits of technology for victims and professionals alike. Attendees will learn safety planning and evidence collection strategies for phone technology, location apps, social media, and more. Non-technical language will be used to describe the privacy levels of each area and how to safely navigate the world of technology.

### **Morning Breakout Sessions: (choose 1 or 2)**

#### **1. Family Violence and Divorce: Does the New Divorce Act Do the Job?**

Pamela Cross, Legal Director, Luke's Place

#### **2. Extending Property Rights to Unmarried Separating Couples**

Robert Leckey, Dean, McGill Law School; Joanna Radbord, Partner,  
Martha McCarthy and Co.; and Robert Shawyer, Shawyer Family Law and Mediation

### **Special Plenary Sessions:**

#### **AFCC Ontario Parenting Plan Guidelines**

Nicholas Bala, Professor, Queen's University; Brian Burke, AFCC-O President; and Andrea Himel, Himel Mediation

#### **Changes to the Family Law Rules - Expert Testimony**

Lauren Bale, Partner, Hughes & Bale LLP; and the Honourable Justice Kendra Coats, SCJ

### **Afternoon Breakout Sessions: (choose 3 or 4)**

#### **3. Respecting and Protecting Transgender Children in Canada's Family Courts**

Claire Houston, Professor, Western University

#### **4. Research & Knowledge Dissemination for Child Protection Involving High Conflict Parental Separation**

Dr. Dan Ashbourne, Executive Director, London Family Court Clinic;  
Dr. Rachel Birnbaum, Professor, King's University College, Western University; Dr. Deb Goodman, Director, Child Welfare Institute, CAS Toronto; and Katherine Kavassalis, Legal Director, Office of the Children's Lawyer

### **Closing Session: Reflections From The Bench**

Justice Kendra Coats, Superior Court of Justice  
Justice Lena Madsen, Superior Court of Justice  
Justice Sheilagh O'Connell, Ontario Court of Justice

## **REGISTRATION INFORMATION**

### **October 17:**

Pre-conference & Reception \$75.00  
Social Reception only \$25.00

### **October 18:**

AFCC-O member \$250.00  
Non-member \$295.00  
Student, Presenter, or Retiree \$150.00

**Download our conference  
brochure and access our online  
registration from our  
conference webpage at**

**[www.afccontario.ca/2019-afcco-annual-conference/](http://www.afccontario.ca/2019-afcco-annual-conference/)**

## AFCC-O Member Spotlight

**Our Member Spotlight recognizes AFCC-O members throughout Ontario.**



**In this issue, we recognize Justice Deborah Swartz, Superior Court of Justice (Family Court) in Kingston, Ontario.**

Justice Deborah Swartz was appointed to the Superior Court of Justice in April 2017. Her appointment followed a successful 23 years of practice in Kingston, where she represented both children and parents in family law and child protection cases. In addition, she provided mediation, arbitration and parenting coordination services.

Justice Swartz spent her childhood in rural southwestern Ontario, primarily in close proximity to her grandparents' farm. She completed her undergraduate studies in sociology at McMaster University and then at the University of Western Ontario, before coming to Kingston to study law at Queen's University. Law school was a highly stimulating, eye-opening experience for her, quickly leading her to the conclusion that she wished to practice in an area where her work would have a direct impact on people.

---

***Developing new skills and exploring new areas of practice can be tremendously invigorating and a good reminder of the value of one's own work.***

---

Remarkably, over her three years of law school, Justice Swartz gave birth to two children: a son during her first year and a daughter during third year. This, no doubt, provided her with early exposure to the challenges of balancing family and work responsibilities, which she addressed in part by bringing her newborns to lectures and study sessions. As an aside, Justice Swartz's enthusiasm for the law (and perhaps some of the lecture material) was clearly absorbed by her daughter, who has recently been called to the Bar and is now practicing family law in Kingston.

Following her call to the Bar in 1994, Justice Swartz joined Bishop Law Office, the small Kingston firm where she had articulated. She maintained a general practice, but focused primarily on civil litigation: personal injury, estates, and family. Over time, it became clear that her true passion lay in family law, and by the late 1990's, this work formed the bulk of her practice. As she had suspected in law school, she wanted to provide direct service to clients in difficult times, she wanted to be in court, and she wanted to wrestle with complex legal and evidentiary issues.

In 1999, Justice Swartz joined the Office of the Children's Lawyer's (OCL) legal panel and quickly discovered a passion for representing children and youth. In addition to finding OCL work to be personally rewarding, she also experienced it to be a welcome break from the pressures that a family lawyer often feels. From her perspective, while acting as OCL does place counsel at the centre of a parental dispute, this can often be less challenging than representing a strident family law client whose emotional goals may be at odds with a reasonable outcome in court. Her OCL cases offered her the chance to be a "purer" kind of advocate, wedged less frequently between competing obligations to the client and to the court. She now encourages all family lawyers to consider this deeply satisfying complement to their practice.

## AFCC-O Member Spotlight - *continued*

In 2006, Justice Swartz left Bishop Law Office and struck out on her own, setting up a family law practice. By this time, she had articulated her affinity for building consensus in family law matters and had trained as both a collaborative lawyer and parenting coordinator. She rounded out these qualifications by training as a mediator and arbitrator in 2010-2011. By the time she was appointed to the bench, her mediation, arbitration, and parenting coordination work formed a significant portion of her practice.

Looking back, Justice Swartz sees the importance of building these alternative skill sets, as it has allowed her to service families in a variety of different ways rather than focusing exclusively on traditional lawyering. For her personally, these varied skills have been invaluable to her on the Bench. However, she also sees mediation, arbitration, and parenting coordination services as significant areas of need in many communities, with demand swiftly outstripping supply. Her advice to new professionals working with families is to look closely at the services that their communities are seeking, and to tailor their careers accordingly.

Similarly, Justice Swartz encourages more seasoned practitioners to open themselves up to changing the nature of their work. While often satisfying and absorbing, working with families can also be exhausting, emotionally challenging, and at times thankless work. It is easy to become jaded and cynical. Developing new skills and exploring new areas of practice can be tremendously invigorating, and a good reminder of the value of one's own work.

Justice Swartz's other key advice to new family lawyers specifically is to seek out training opportunities and mentorship in relation to the practical aspects of running a law practice. Her own experience was that the business side of practicing law was not addressed in any detail in law school or as part of the Bar admission course, and accordingly the learning curve was very steep at the outset.

As a member of AFCC-O, Justice Swartz has benefited primarily from the AFCC-O-sponsored continuing education programs organized locally in Kingston. Both as a lawyer and a judge, she has appreciated the opportunities to connect with colleagues and to discuss areas of common concern and interest. For newer professionals, it can be very helpful to see that even highly experienced family law professionals and judges don't always have all the answers, that family law is an ever-evolving area, and that learning must continue throughout one's career. AFCC-O seminars offer this opportunity in a collegial and supportive environment, and they provide a chance to hear the perspectives of colleagues from other disciplines.

When not presiding over family law and child protection matters, Justice Swartz can be found tending to the bees and fainting goats who reside on her small farm and apiary just outside Kingston.



*Carolyn Leach, AFCC-O Board Member and Newsletter Committee*

## Walsh Family Law Moot and Negotiation Competition

**SAVE THIS DATE IN 2020!** The Annual Walsh Family Law Moot and Negotiation Competition will be held on March 7, 2020. The Walsh Family Law Moot is a competitive moot for 2nd and 3rd year law students. Each competing law school can send two teams to argue a case before a panel of judges and senior lawyers. Working in teams of two, using facts for each partner in a family law dispute, the law students negotiate with opposing teams in three successive rounds of increasing complexity.

The AFCC-O recognizes the importance of assisting our future Ontario lawyers by offering them the opportunity to collaborate with our diverse membership of lawyers, mental health professionals, judges, and other professionals who support families going through separation and divorce. To recognize and thank law students for their participation in the Walsh Family Law events, the AFCC-O offers a complimentary one year AFCC/AFCC-O membership to participating students.



### Visit our Walsh Family Law Events webpage

[www.afccontario.ca/walsh-moot/](http://www.afccontario.ca/walsh-moot/) to:

- find out which teams won in March 2019;
- download Rules and Regulations; and
- find out about sponsorship information.

## AFCC-O Upcoming Events

### October 10-11

Intensive Child Protection Training Primer

### October 17

AFCC-O Pre-conference Events

### October 18

AFCC-O Annual Conference

### November 18-22

Family Dispute Resolution Institute of Ontario (FDRI) FDR Week

### November 18

FDRI Conference

Check our events calendar at [www.afccontario.ca/calendar/](http://www.afccontario.ca/calendar/)



## Update - AFCC-O's Parenting Plan Guide



The latest drafts of the AFCC-O Parenting Plan Guide and Parenting Plan Template were sent to members in an eblast on September 17. The Task Force preparing these materials will be further revising them, and they should be made available for use by professionals and parents on the AFCC-O website in early 2020.

On Friday, October 18 at the Annual AFCC-O Conference in Hamilton, there will be a plenary consultation session when attendees will be polled about the materials and have an opportunity to provide feedback on them.

If members are unable to attend or wish to comment on the materials before then, please contact the Task Force Chair, Prof. Nicholas Bala: [bala@queensu.ca](mailto:bala@queensu.ca).



*Prof. Nicholas Bala, Faculty of Law, Queen's University*

## AFCC and AFCC-Ontario Chapter Membership Benefits

### AFCC Membership Includes:

- A subscription to the **Family Court Review**, a quarterly journal with full access to archives dating back to 1963!
- Access to an online membership directory of over 4,800 colleagues worldwide (don't forget to log in to the members section of the AFCC website at [www.afccnet.org](http://www.afccnet.org) to update your member profile);
- AFCC eNews monthly electronic newsletter;
- Parenting Coordination listserv of AFCC members; and
- Special member discounts to attend AFCC Conferences, training programs, webinars, and download publications.



### ***DID YOU KNOW...***

The AFCC has 21 chapters, only one other in Canada (Alberta), and the AFCC-O is the second largest AFCC chapter after California in terms of membership!

### ***Are you a member of the AFCC and would like to join the Ontario Chapter?***

[www.afccnet.org/Chapters/JoinaChapter](http://www.afccnet.org/Chapters/JoinaChapter)

### **AFCC-O members have access to the "members only" section of our website.**

This section contains presentations from past AFCC-O conferences, as well as links to valuable resources and articles specific for Ontario professionals.

## AFCC-O Community Programs

### Hold an AFCC-O sponsored event in your community!

The AFCC-O has developed several Community Programs to assist in membership outreach, education and development. They provide local communities, professional associations, and new groups with a creative way to network and learn with and from colleagues in their areas.

We invite you to host an AFCC-O sponsored event. We can connect you with AFCC-O members in your area or provide guidance through a Board or Membership Committee member. Invite AFCC-O members and other professionals in your community to attend. We are able to provide a subsidy and printed resource material for your event.

**Programs currently available include:** Adult Children of Divorce; How to Build a Thriving Practice, Prevent Complaints and Feel Rewarded.

**Programs we are developing include:**

- After-work meetings in a collegial and relaxed atmosphere, where an assembled group of multidisciplinary professionals can discuss various topical issues and initiatives, share insights, and network.;
- An update of the multi-day program in Child Protection Law, in collaboration with the Law Society of Ontario; and
- Webinars to expand the reach of educational offerings to members throughout the province.

**For further information on current and developing programs visit our Community Programs webpage at**

[www.afccontario.ca/community-programs](http://www.afccontario.ca/community-programs)

**or contact us via email [info@afccontario.ca](mailto:info@afccontario.ca)**

### Sudbury Child Protection Conference

AFCC-O and the Sudbury and Manitoulin District Children's Aid Society (SMDCAS) co-hosted a conference on May 3 at the Northern Waters Centre in Sudbury entitled *The CYFSA – A Year Later, Lessons Learned, New Approaches*. The 76 people who attended included judges, lawyers, child protection supervisors and workers, mediators, and band representatives. The program examined the significant changes to Ontario's child welfare legislation that came into effect on April 1, 2018.

The conference's keynote address was delivered by Marion Jacko, Ontario's Children's Lawyer. The conference featured panels composed of judges, senior counsel for the OCL and for societies throughout the Northeast including counsel and representatives from the newly devolved First Nation child and family services agencies that serve areas from Manitoulin Island to Hudson Bay.

The conference was conceived as part of AFCC-O's plan to forge partnerships with local service providers and to facilitate relevant education and best practice discussions throughout our very diverse province. We hope to establish an AFCC-O working group in the Northeast.

AFCC-O wishes to thank the organizing committee: Justice Romuald Kwolek OCJ (Sault Ste. Marie); Dawn Dubois, senior counsel; Elaina Groves, manager for SMDCAS; Elizabeth McCarty, counsel OCL; and Gwen McDonald, mediator and former director of child protection mediation for OAFM and the undersigned.



*Justice Philip Clay, AFCC-O Board Member*



## AFCC-O Communities of Practice

Throughout Ontario, AFCC-O is working with professional groups in different communities. For example, AFCC-O has Standing Sub-groups in Kingston and Southwest Ontario, and High Conflict Forums in Hamilton, London, Toronto, York, and Ottawa. We have traveled to Thunder Bay to meet with professionals working with families in the justice system in Northwestern Ontario. Through our Membership Committee, we are working on development of a webinar schedule and long distance plan to deliver education programs.

**Kingston:** This group regularly hosts meetings, generally a panel representative of the multidisciplinary nature of AFCC-O, followed by audience discussion. The catchment area includes Kingston, Belleville, Perth, Brockville, Cobden and Napanee. Download “Negotiating the Family Justice Maze”, or a Kingston regional resource list of services for separating and divorcing parents. For information on the “AFCC-OK” Working Group, please email [kingstonafcco@gmail.com](mailto:kingstonafcco@gmail.com).

**Southwest Ontario:** Round Table dinner meetings are held quarterly in Windsor for the professionals in the Sarnia, Chatham, Windsor, St. Thomas and London-Middlesex area. These events are organized to reflect current topics such as access to justice, high conflict, and dispute resolution options.

AFCC-O has partnered with Bridging Family Conflict and Jennifer Suzor to deliver these programs. For information on this group contact [jsuzor@familylawspecialist.ca](mailto:jsuzor@familylawspecialist.ca).

**Ottawa Region:** A new group is forming in the Ottawa area. The first event was held on November 13, 2018, *High Conflict: Consulting or Court Room?* which included discussions on how the court room and mental health services can collaborate. Anyone who is interested in participating in future events, please email [info@afccontario.ca](mailto:info@afccontario.ca).

**High Conflict Forums:** Many AFCC-O members support the efforts of various High Conflict Forums across the province through dialogue, information sharing, trainings, research, and/or consultations.



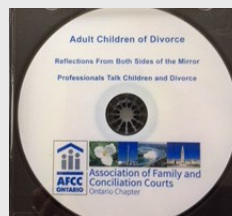
Justice Rom Kwolek  
Sudbury Conference

---

For more information on currently offered community programs, visit our Events Calendar at [www.afccontario.ca/calendar/](http://www.afccontario.ca/calendar/)

---

Fall is the time to start planning upcoming events in your community to build your business and connections with colleagues!



To borrow our Adult Children of Divorce Program, email: [info@afccontario.ca](mailto:info@afccontario.ca)

## Courthouse Facility Dogs and Child Witnesses



Last year, Ellie — a cockapoo puppy — became our family dog as a birthday gift to our young son. She became his best companion and filled our home with joy and laughter. Ellie started to accompany me to the office, and in no time the office atmosphere became warmer and more affectionate. Ellie became the star attraction for my child clients, whom I represented in the family courts. Having a puppy around during interviews was the most effective ice breaker, as the children relaxed quickly around a furry friend. It made me curious about the new trend and effects of having trained dogs around children who are engaged in the justice system.

We have come a long way in understanding the profound effects of violence against children. Children who witness violence or are victims of abuse are at risk for long-term physical and mental health challenges. The Canadian legislature took seriously the various harmful effects of involving children in the legal process and passed the Testimonial Support Provisions for Children and Vulnerable Adults Act (Bill C-2) requiring that a child "shall" be permitted to testify via closed circuit television or from behind a screen. The Parliamentary debates leading to the enactment of Bill C-2 suggest that the accommodation of closed-circuit television is intended "to make it easier for child and youth witnesses to testify." In the 1980's in Ontario, this technology brought a wave of change by creating distance between the witness and the child victim via close-circuit television (CCTV) and privacy screens. Since 2014, children, youth, and vulnerable adult witnesses in criminal courtrooms now have the additional support of the courthouse facility dogs. From the use of technology to the companionship of animals, we have witnessed a profound shift in the judicial system, driven by various innovative child-focused justice system partners.

---

*Having a puppy around during interviews was the most effective ice breaker, as the children relaxed quickly around a furry friend.*

---

Since 2014 there has been a steady increase in the use of support animals by young and vulnerable witnesses in courtrooms across the country. Presently there is no specific provision in the Criminal Code for seeking testimonial aid, but the applications for a court facility dog to support a witness are made under s. 486 and s. 13 of the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights. Progress has been similar in the United States. In 2015, Arkansas became the first state to pass legislation allowing child witnesses to be accompanied by a certified facility dog while testifying, and half a dozen other states followed suit soon after.

## Courthouse Facility Dogs and Child Witnesses —*continued*

In 2014, Hawk from the Calgary Police Victim Services Unit became the first dog to officially support a young witness while testifying. One year later, in a decision of the B.C. Provincial Court, *R. v. J. L. K., (2015) B.C.J. No. 1055*, Judge Oulton allowed an application to have Caber, an accredited assistance dog, to become the Province's first in-court therapy dog. Judge Oulton noted in his decision that, "it is unusual that a dog come and be a support person to this young complainant," but allowed the application as "the spirit and intent of the testimonial accommodation legislation was meant to ensure that witnesses who could be perceived as more vulnerable, were provided with support so that they could give full and candid accounts of what they were being asked to testify about in court." As a result, Caber the therapy dog supported a nine-year-old complainant by sitting at her feet while she testified.

In Ontario, Brampton court invoked s. 13 of the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights, which states that "every victim has the right to request testimonial aids when appearing as a witness in proceedings relating to the offence" in the case of *R. V. C.W [2016] O.J. No. 5647*. The court allowed Gordon, a Golden Retriever and support dog from the organization "Therapeutic Paws of Canada," to sit as a "testimonial aid" beside a young victim of human trafficking as she gave a highly emotional statement to the court.

Rachel Braden, Child Witness Project Coordinator at the London Family Court Clinic ("LFCC"), discussed the use of support animals in an interview for this article. She noted that there are currently 45 courthouse facility dogs working across Canada, and 11 of these dogs work in Ontario courts, including at London Courthouse Facility Dogs Project. Braden explains that a courthouse facility dog is a professionally trained assistance dog, suitable for providing quiet companionship to vulnerable individuals in legal settings without causing any disruption of the proceedings. Braden noted the distinct terminology of "facility dog" used by the London Courthouse Facility Dogs project, rather than other widely used interchangeable terms such as service dog or court support dog, etc., as these and other terms could suggest that the witness is suffering from a condition caused by the accused.

The London Courthouse Facility Dog Project uses professionally trained and accredited dogs to ensure that the dogs are not obstructive in the courtroom and are able to remain still and calm for long hours. The dogs should not react when a witness becomes emotionally distressed. Child witnesses meet the courthouse facility dog at least once before the court date, and the facility dogs typically sit at the feet of the witness during testimony. Their handlers are professionals in the justice system, who receive special training for this role and are skilled in working with vulnerable victims. They are also familiar with the legal system and courtroom behavioural norms. This differs from other examples of support animals in which dogs are required to be on leash while at work, and require the presence of their "civilian" handler who may be excluded from the courtroom.

## Courthouse Facility Dogs and Child Witnesses—*continued*

Merel was the first facility dog to be placed in a courthouse setting in Ontario, and she was trained for London Family Court Clinic by National Service Dog (NSD), a not-for-profit organization in Cambridge, Ontario. Merel is a black Labrador/Bernese cross and she likes to sit on the feet of the child witnesses, laying her head on their lap. Since 2016, Merel has been supporting children who have testified about sexual abuse, human trafficking, or other crimes. Merel's calm presence and helping paw have a positive impact on child witnesses, as clearly expressed by one 12 year old victim: "Without Merel, I would have never been able to talk about what happened to me".

Via LFCC, Merel and Rachel have supported over 200 child witnesses and victims who have made statements, testified, or delivered victim-impact statements. Merel's services are made available to all of those under 18 in the London region who have witnessed or been victims of a crime. Merel now has a friend to work alongside as Yzer has recently joined the team.

---

*"Without Merel, I would have never been able to talk about what happened to me."*

---

The calming effects of trained dogs on human health and well-being—both physically and psychologically—are largely supported by scientific studies. For example, see: Wells, D. L. (2009), "The effects of animals on human health and well-being". *Journal of Social Issues*, 65, 523-543.). As such, the number of courthouse facility dogs across Canada is quickly growing. Many organizations are waiting for dogs to complete their training and become part of the support team. Courthouse facility dogs have helped numerous children deal with the fear of testifying in court and have enhanced their ability to tell their story to the court. These dogs are indeed an innovative way of allowing children to use their voices.



**Archana Medhekar,**  
Certified Family Law  
Specialist and Family  
Mediator practicing in  
Toronto, Ontario. You  
can reach her by e-mail

at [amlaw@amlaw.ca](mailto:amlaw@amlaw.ca).

Archana was a member of PPC and is a  
current AFCC-O Board Member and

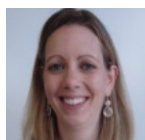
## Film Review: “Weekends” by Trevor Jimenez

“Weekends” is a silent film that speaks volumes. The film depicts beautifully hand-drawn animated scenes from the childhood of Canadian animator Trevor Jimenez as he was shuffled between his mother’s home in Hamilton, Ontario and his father’s home in Toronto, Ontario

In an interview for Variety Magazine online edition (November 8, 2018 11:00AM PT), Jimenez explained: “I grew up with divorced parents and I drew a lot about those experiences. The film started as a drawing I did 10 years ago for an animation portfolio of a kid walking from his mom’s house to his dad’s apartment. I put that online and got more response on that than anything else on [my] vlog. People were talking about their divorced families in the comments section and I started sharing memories with my friends, and they’d be amused by them. It made me think that there was something there that could connect emotionally and also be kind of quirky and entertain.”

This short animated film packs a lot of complexity into its 10 minute running time. The film begins with a 6-year-old child trying to make sense of his new living arrangements, and continues by depicting the subtle yet palpable tensions that exist between his parents during transitions. Jimenez’s approach in portraying his experiences with his mom and his dad is nuanced and multi-layered. Negative first impressions are likely to develop about the quality of the parenting time. However, these impressions then evolve into a deeper understanding of each parent’s personal and parenting challenges as they struggle to balance their own needs against those of their child. The film’s storyline is punctuated with dream-like scenes that reveal the child’s point of view. There is no fairy tale ending with “Weekends”, as the child learns to cope with a reconstructed life into which he had little input. “Weekends” balances amusing parent-child interactions with the melancholy and loss that often follows divorce.

This short film was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Animated Short Film in 2019. The film has cultivated an international audience, winning prizes at Annecy, Anima Brussels, Anima Mundi, the Toronto Shorts International Film Festival, the Nashville Film Festival, Spark Animation Festival and the San Francisco International Film Festival, among others. Available for viewing on Kanopy ([www.kanopy.com](http://www.kanopy.com)), a free video streaming service available with a valid public library card or with a University login. “Weekends” is also available for purchase on iTunes.



*Kimberly Harris, AFCC-O Board and Newsletter Committee Member*

## Categories of AFCC Membership

AFCC offers Individual, Institutional, Retired, Student, and Developing Nations and Indigenous People Memberships.

Visit [www.afccnet.org/Membership/Member-Categories](http://www.afccnet.org/Membership/Member-Categories) for more information.

*Don't forget to add our Ontario Chapter to your membership!*

If you require assistance with joining or renewing your membership, please contact AFCC at [afcc@afccnet.org](mailto:afcc@afccnet.org) or call 1-608-664-3750 for assistance.

AFCC-O members are eligible to receive **discount pricing** to attend our annual conference, seminars, and special events

**AFCC-O is now on  
LinkedIn!**

Find us at  
[linkedin.com/company/afcc-o](https://linkedin.com/company/afcc-o)



**DIVORCEMATE** CLOUD

**ANYWHERE  
ANYTIME  
ANYDEVICE**

The complete suite of tools for family law professionals is now securely in the cloud

Learn more at [divorcemate.com](http://divorcemate.com)  
or call **1.800.653.0925**

A woman is shown in profile, sitting on a beach chair and using a laptop. The background is a serene beach scene with waves and a clear sky.

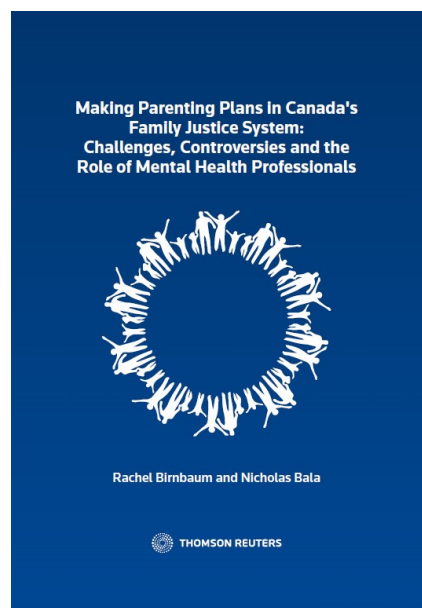


## BOOK LAUNCH AT FAMILY DISPUTE RESOLUTION INSTITUTE OF ONTARIO (FDRIO) CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 18, 2019!!

### Making Parenting Plans in Canada's Family Justice System: Challenges, Controversies and the Role of Mental Health Professionals

Rachel Birnbaum, Ph.D., RSW, LL.M.

Nicholas Bala, L.S.M., B.A., J.D., LL.M.



This new book deals with challenging issues in the field of parenting assessments and is written for a multi-disciplinary audience in the family justice field, including psychologists, social workers, lawyers and judges. Chapters include special needs children, children's participation and evidence, to help explain the role of the mental health professional in the family justice process and testifying in court. The authors focus first on the historical context, definitions, theory, and empirical research, and then on practice issues from both the mental health and legal perspectives. The four substantive topics (relocation, domestic violence, special needs children, and children's participation in family law disputes) that are the focus of this book are among the most frequently encountered and controversial issues facing legal and mental health practitioners who work with high conflict separating and/or divorcing parents.

Published by Thomson Reuters and can be ordered online at

Information on the following topics can be found on the Resources page of our website at <https://afccontario.ca/parent-resources-links/>:

- AFCC Parent Website
- Separation and Divorce for Children and Parents
- Parenting Plans and Communications Tools
- Child Welfare
- Domestic Violence
- Child Abductions
- Mediation and Counsellors/Therapists
- Community Resources
- High Conflict Forums in Ontario
- Child and Spousal Support Information
- Court and Legal Services
- Legislation
- Alcohol and Drug Abuse Treatment
- Other Government Resources & Information

*Special thanks to our advertisers — your continued support of AFCC-O is much appreciated!*

 <p><b>Brayden</b> SUPERVISION SERVICES INC.</p> <p><b>SERVICES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Supervised Access</li><li>• Supervised Exchanges</li><li>• Supervised Parenting Program</li></ul>	<h2>Brayden Supervision Services</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ New Parenting Program</li><li>■ High-conflict custody and access supervision</li><li>■ Providing supervised access services to families in central, southwest and southeast Ontario</li><li>■ Extensive experience with out-of-country/ Hague Convention cases</li><li>■ Brayden Supervision services are provided in home, community, and in one of our three family centres: Toronto West, Burlington and Barrie</li></ul> <p><b>Contact us</b> Intake: 1 855 222-7712 <a href="mailto:info@braydensupervision.com">info@braydensupervision.com</a></p> <p>Please visit our website for more information at <b><a href="http://www.braydensupervision.com">www.braydensupervision.com</a></b></p>
---	---

## UPCOMING TRAININGS

**Barbara Jo Fidler, Ph.D., C.Psych., AccFM, FDRP PC**  
**Shely Polak, Ph.D., MSW, RSW, AccFM**

### FOUNDATIONS OF PARENTING COORDINATION: RESEARCH & PRACTICE

**March 26, 27 & 28, 2020**

Training includes: definition, roles, benefits & risks; overview of research on parenting coordination, and on relevant topics related to working with high conflict coparenting; standards, guidelines & training requirements; clinical & psycho-educational interventions; nuts 'n' bolts, including referral, intake & screening, and the consensus building & arbitration phases; and involvement of children (risks & benefits, reliability of children's reports, developmentally-informed interviewing protocols)

### CHILDREN RESISTING POST-SEPARATION CONTACT: CONCEPTS, CONTROVERSIES, ASSESSMENT & INTERVENTION

**April 16 & 17, 2020**

Training covers: Research update, continuum of parent-child contact problems; assessment & differentiated clinical & legal remedies; role of the court; nuts n' bolts of systemic family-based therapy (aka reunification therapy) - intake/screening, informed consent process and agreement, and psycho-educational interventions. Many resources provided to expand your clinical & psycho-educational tool kit!

### PARENTING COORDINATION: ADVANCED APPLICATIONS

**Barbara Jo Fidler, Ph.D., C.Psych., AccFM, FDRP PC**  
**Guest Speaker: Brahm D. Siegel**

**May 7 & 8, 2020**

Follows a PC case, from start to completion including a mock arbitration. Learn protocols for responding to referrals and intake/screening, conflict analysis, consensus building phase, coparenting education, and arbitration. Case law update (from guest speaker/lawyer), role-plays and demonstrations are included. Ethical dilemmas and risk management will be discussed.



**ONLINE TRAININGS COMING IN 2020**

Visit <https://familiesmovingforward.ca> or email [camilla.fidleradmin@bell.net](mailto:camilla.fidleradmin@bell.net) for more information

Compassionate, fair,  
and convenient.



Lawyers, mediators, and other family law professionals are using OFW Professional Access to streamline their work with clients.



### Organize your cases

With a single account, connect to an unlimited number of clients and manage their cases from **one central location**.



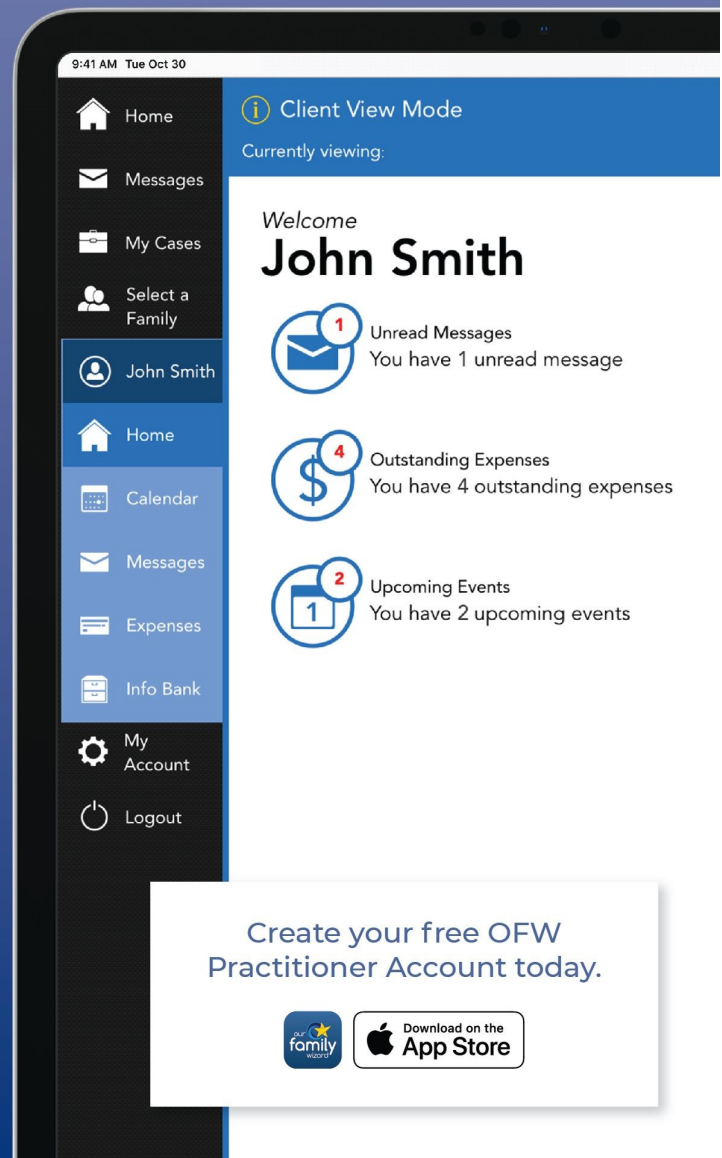
### View client activity

Review messages, expenses, schedules and more to ensure you are always working with **accurate information**.



### Simplified reporting

Quick and simple report generation means you're never left waiting for **authenticated records**.



**Published by:**  
**Association of Family and Conciliation  
Courts, Ontario Chapter**

**Newsletter Committee**

393 University Ave., Ste. 2200,  
Toronto, ON M5G 1E6

**Newsletter Committee:**

Hayley Glaholt (Chair), Kimberly Harris, Carolyn  
Leach, Karla McGrath, Archana Medhekar

**Administration, Layout, and Design:**

Kristy Joplin, Kimberly Brown



**Advertising Opportunities**

The AFCC-O Newsletter is a publication of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts, Ontario Chapter.

Our newsletter is published two times a year usually in Spring and Fall.

Advertising copy must be provided in JPEG format and payment made in Canadian funds.

**Full page**

\$425 (member)

\$600 (non-member)

**Half page**

\$300 (member)

\$450 (non-member)

**Quarter page**

\$150 (member)

\$250 (non-member)

[Download Advertisement Details](#)



If you have an interesting topic or article you would like featured in our next issue, please let us know by emailing us at

[info@afccontario.ca](mailto:info@afccontario.ca)



**Follow Us, Like Us, Share Us!**

**Facebook** @afccontario

**Twitter** @afccontario

**LinkedIn** afcc-o

or [www.afccontario.ca](http://www.afccontario.ca)

Except where otherwise indicated, the articles in this AFCC-O Newsletter represent the opinions and views of the authors and do not necessarily represent the opinions or views of the AFCC, the AFCC-O, or any of the officers of either organization.