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# ANNUAL REPORT

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Toronto Parent-Child Mother Goose Program

2014 - 2015

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720 Bathurst Street, Suite 500A, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2R4

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## Toronto Parent-Child Mother Goose Program

Originating in Toronto in 1984 as an intervention for families at risk, the Parent-Child Mother Goose Program© is a joyful group experience for parents and their babies or toddlers. If vulnerable, well-meaning parents fail to emotionally bond or actively communicate with their young children, the parent-child relationships and the children's futures can be compromised. The Parent-Child Mother Goose Program© intervenes to prevent this outcome with a physically close and interactive program in which parents and children learn to share the power and pleasure of oral rhymes, songs, and stories. The approach is backed by decades of research, yet is so simple and natural that parents effortlessly gain the skills and confidence that foster healthy relationships during their children's crucial early years, and their children acquire a foundation for lifelong emotional, physical, and cognitive development.

Because of rapid brain development, including the formation of synaptic connections and the turning on and off of genes, the return on investment during this period is greater than for any other development period in a child's life.

The Parent-Child Mother Goose Program (PCMG) embraces newcomers and the rhymes and stories they bring. It reaches out to low-income, isolated families and is committed to running programs in neighbourhoods with limited resources. The Program is always free of charge to all participants.

In 2014-2015 the Toronto Parent-Child Mother Goose Program office provided:

- PCMG programs in underserved Toronto communities: Lakeshore, Elmbank Infant, Elmbank 2-4, Parkdale, Malvern, and Aboriginal Programs.
- PCMG Teacher Training Workshops and second level Workshops in Toronto and across Canada to train PCMG teachers for agencies that wish to provide PCMG programs in their own communities
- Print and Disk resources for PCMG program providers and families across Canada and abroad
- Advocacy and partnership with allied organizations throughout Toronto

# Programs

## Highlights from the Field

*Please note that since some of the most heartwarming results were also very personal, some potentially identifying features, including the names of the programs, have been omitted from these teachers' end-of-term report excerpts in order to preserve confidentiality.*

One mother and son who joined part way through the fall term clung to each other at first, the boy hiding his face and barely paying attention to anyone else. But as they kept coming week after week they both warmed up to the group. The mother began to communicate with the teachers and the boy began to enjoy the rhymes and enter into the group actions at the end of the program.

Many of the moms and babies make new friends and exchange child care information as well as knowledge about each other's cultures. The feeling of joyful energy and happiness is contagious. It promotes learning and reduces isolation. One single mom who had been going through a very challenging time was reassured by the weekly phone calls from the teachers that they cared about her, and she was able to open up and talk about her situation. One mom reported that the program had helped her tremendously because she is the only one among all her friends and extended family with a new baby. So she found connecting with the other moms and babies very nourishing for her baby and a great support for her.

Two children came every week with both parents. As a family they dealt with many common newcomer issues, including language, access, education and income. These parents said that they felt more personally acknowledged in this program than in any other early years program they had tried. Another family used to come with either the mother or the grandmother. Once when the grandmother left the room, the older child did the rhymes and motions with her baby brother on their own.

One mother who had had a difficult past initially needed to be prompted by her partner to come to the program every week. As the program progressed, she attended willingly without having to be encouraged. Eventually she became more and more engaged and felt like part of a community. Near the end of the term, she was pre-emptively calling the teachers to make sure the program was on! Her daughter and her older children, who came out on PD days, became familiar with all the rhymes and would smile at the ones they knew the best.

Another mom reported that though her little boy is shy and quiet during the program, he sings rhymes all the time with her at home. A mother and father that attended regularly together with their son used to make up rhymes for their son at home and then teach them to the whole group. Inspired by the program and its lullabies, one mother established a bedtime routine with her child, ending with "Listen to the Water".

In one program with a record number of men, a total of five dads and uncles, one was coming because another man in the program had made an effort to befriend him. When the mothers saw that the men were participating, they began to bring their male family members as well.

One mother went back to work after the fall term, but her child continued to come with her grandmother. Another mother returned to work and the father starting to bring the child. In both cases it was comforting and stress-reducing for the mothers, who clearly valued the program, to know that their children would continue to progress, and that the children's relationships to their grandmother and father would deepen.

Sometimes the group support each other through tragic events. Teachers understand that the only thing that matters then is for the parents to talk about how they feel. This helps them to forget what has happened for the moment, and to heal. Then they come back to the doing the rhymes and songs, feeling closer to each other and better able to care for their children.

Another mother had come into the program not wanting to introduce stories and rhymes in her own language. One of the teachers was from the same culture and knew stories and rhymes in that language, but both teachers respected the woman's feelings and omitted them, even though they were normally part of the program. One day after the mother had been coming for two terms, when it was a very small group, they did "Ring around the Rosie", and in passing the teacher asked the mother if she remembered it in her own language. The mother said, "Yes, but I don't remember the beginning." The teacher replied, "I do," and together they did the rhyme in that language. The mother's face lit up, as it brought back happy childhood memories. Her children smiled and said, "We're doing a rhyme in Mommy's language!" The group continued to do this rhyme in that language and all the other families loved it too.

One mother said that her children were very excited to already know some rhymes in English that were used when they started going to school. They also like the comfort of doing the rhymes in their mother tongue at home. A little girl in the same program was particularly responsive to the storytelling. When asked on the last day whether she remembered any of the stories well enough to tell, she was very enthusiastic in saying that she did, and then she listed the people she would like to tell the story to!

On an extremely bitter and snowy day in one program, only one family showed up. The mother revealed that her partner, the father of her children, had died suddenly the day before. She had asked her three-year-old daughter whether she wanted to go to Mother Goose and the little girl had said yes, that she needed the rhymes. The teachers adapted the session to accommodate more stories and memories than usual, and when it came time for the rhymes, they asked if they should skip them. The mother told them no, that her daughter needed the rhymes - that she had asked for them and needed the consistency. The teachers were very moved by the strength of this mother, the love she had shown for her child, and how important Mother Goose was to this family in their darkest hour.

## **Program Funding**

The majority of the direct costs of our Lakeshore, Parkdale and two Elmbank Programs were funded by the City of Toronto's Community Services Partnership.

The direct costs of our bilingual Somali Program were funded by Etobicoke Brighter Futures Coalition.

Our Malvern Program (previously known as the Taibu Program) was funded by new donors, Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation, Tippet Foundation, and KRG Children's Charitable Foundation.

Our new customized Aboriginal Program at Native Child and Family Services Toronto was funded by a grant from the Access, Equity and Human Rights fund of the City of Toronto.

All other funding for operational expenses and indirect program costs were from the private sector or our social enterprise.

## **Program Statistics**

The Parent-Child Mother Goose Program groups in Toronto are culturally diverse and offer many opportunities for parents to share rhymes and stories from their mother tongues and create bridges of language and culture for themselves and their children. Program participants represented 40 different languages and cultures: Afghan, Arabic, Bengali, Bosnian, Cantonese, Cree, Dari, English, Eritrean, Farsi, Filipino, French, German, Ghanaian, Gujarati, Hindi, Ilocano, Japanese, Kannada, Mandarin, Mandingo, Nejanan, Ojibwa, Oji-Cree, Oniya, Pushtu, Punjabi, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog, Telugu, Tigrigna, Tami, Tibetan, Twi, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese, and Visayan.

In 2014-2015, there were 301 adults and 327 children registered in our directly operated programs, compared to 243 adults and 287 children in the previous year.

## **Social Enterprise**

Our workshops, books and disks are offered as a service to agencies and individuals anywhere in the world who are interested in PCMG, with the ultimate goal of disseminating the PCMG program and its methods and benefits as widely as possible. In a good year, our workshops, books and CDs are also a source of revenue to support PCMG programs and operations in Toronto.

## **PCMG Workshops**

PCMG delivered 20 teacher training workshops and six second level workshops in 2014-2015 in Quebec, British Columbia, Alberta, Yukon, and Ontario, of which seven were in-house in Toronto, with one welcoming a participant from Iran.

In 2011 the program director of Horseheads Family Resource Centre in Horseheads, New York attended the PCMG teacher training in Toronto with a parent from their community. The two women have been offering the program ever since in Horseheads and Elmira, NY.

As county-wide interest developed – mothers were calling to ask for the program - a Chemung County committee formed to coordinate programs, with Horseheads Family Resource Center taking the lead. Horseheads has successfully applied for special funding to host a PCMG teacher training workshop, which will give them more teachers to meet the demand for PCMG programs in their county.

To keep the facilitators who deliver the workshops connected with one another and to share the feedback of workshop participants as a basis for policy and planning, Office and Workshops Manager Renita Fillatre once again compiled a summary of the year's workshop reports for all the facilitators and the National Program and Training Committee.

### **Book and Disk Sales**

Our best-selling books were *The Moon is Round* and *Zoom, Zoom, Zoom*, followed by *Bounce Me, Tickle Me, Hug Me* and the *Mother Goose Board Book*. The best-selling disks were *Sally Go Round the Sun* and *Sally Go Round the Moon*. Book and disk sales were less than half of the previous year, probably reflecting that the prevalence of online digital media continues to increase. However, we now have an online PayPal shopping cart system on our website with Add to Cart buttons for each item and shipping calculated automatically, and recently there has been an encouraging upward trend in sales.

## **Partnerships**

### **Native Child and Family Services Toronto**

We were extremely pleased to work with Native Child and Family Services Toronto to deliver a customized Aboriginal Parent-Child Mother Goose Program for 2014-2015. Two veteran PCMG teachers, Ruth Danziger and Velrina Alexander, who have worked with indigenous communities in the past, taught the program, assisted by two Native Child and Family early childhood education staff members, who apprenticed in the program in preparation for delivering it themselves in 2015-2016, for which they will receive continued support from PCMP Program Director Ruth Danziger.

### **Etobicoke Brighter Futures Coalition**

As a long-time member of the EBFC, who fund our Somali PCMG Program, we participate in the EBFC evaluation and coordination committees and meetings.

### **National Council**

The National Council represents PCMG across Canada in the areas of policy, research, and teacher certification in order to ensure that the program maintains its integrity. We are grateful to the many dedicated volunteers who do this invaluable work.

### **Early Child Education Colleges**

PCMG once again provided students from ECE and Child Care degree programs at Ryerson, Seneca, and Humber the opportunity to gain exceptional experience and knowledge as volunteer childcare assistants in our PCMG programs. A student commits to a minimum of 10 weeks in order to maintain continuity in the program, and receives a PCMG childcare certificate if he or she completes 30 weeks. Thank you to our wonderful ECE students!

### **Midaynta Community Services**

We are grateful to partner with Midaynta for our bilingual Somali Program. Midaynta Executive Director Mahad Yusuf offers outstanding support and shares his invaluable knowledge of the Somali community.

### **Family Resource Agencies**

In addition to the programs we deliver directly, the Parent-Child Mother Goose Program is offered throughout the Greater Toronto Area by many other teachers who have taken our teacher training workshops and become certified by our National Council. These teachers are employed by a variety of family resource agencies, including the following, who are listed as members by National Council:

- East York/East Toronto Family Resources
- Native Child & Family Services
- Parent Resources
- Parkdale-High Park OEYC Child Development Institute
- Regent Park Community Health Centre
- Mothercraft/Breaking the Cycle
- Blue Hills Child and Family Centre
- Region of Peel
- Cobourg Public Library
- OEYC Stoney Creek
- Today's Family-Caring for Your Child-Hamilton
- OEYC Markham Family Day Care Services
- Mississauga Parent-Child Resource Centres
- OEYC York North
- Oakville Parent-Child Centre
- YWCA Durham OEYC
- Markham Ontario OEYC Family Day Care Services
- Milton Community Resource Centre
- York Child Development & Family Services

## Memberships

PCMG is a member of the Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs (FRP Canada), Storytellers of Canada, Social Planning Toronto, the Centre for Social Innovation, and Sick Kids Hospital Infant Mental Health Promotion.

## Special Mention

### **International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) Nomination**

Merle Harris, a long-time IBBY Canada member in Alberta, nominated PCMG for the very prestigious IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award. "The International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) is a non-profit organization which represents an international network of people from all over the world who are committed to bringing books and children together."

Dr. Stephen Lye, Executive Director of the Fraser Mustard Institute for Human Development, provided a letter of support, as did long-time Somali PCMG Program teacher Falis Kediye. The winner will receive \$10,000 USD, but regardless of the outcome, the nomination raises PCMG's profile and introduces the Parent-Child Mother Goose Program to 71 countries.

### **New Joseph Boyden Rhyme for Aboriginal PCMG Program**

Renowned Canadian writer Joseph Boyden, who has explored his First Nations heritage in several award-winning novels, including *The Orenda*, which won the 2014 CBC Canada Reads competition, generously wrote an original rhyme for our Aboriginal PCMG Program at Native Child and Family Services.

### **PCMG at Canada Day at Queen's Park**

Celia Lottridge was invited by the provincial government to create a PCMG event for the Canada Day celebrations at Queen's Park on July 1, 2015. PCMG teachers enchanted the little ones and their parents with rhymes, songs, and stories. Many thanks to: Celia Lottridge, Ruth Danziger, Maria Ordonez, Velrina Alexander, Leeyah Soloman, Falis Kediye, Sarah Abusarar, Mastofa Soma Hosa, Fatime Khamis, Seema Walia, Heejoo Yoon and Ke Xu.

### **1001 Friday Nights of Storytelling Fundraiser**

Every Friday night for the last 37 years, storytellers and listeners have gathered in downtown Toronto for 1001 Friday Nights of Storytelling, an open evening of oral stories. Once again this year Pat Bisset organized one of their gatherings as a benefit for PCMG, raising more than \$500. Undying gratitude to Pat Bisset, the storytellers, and their donors!



### **Retirement Party for Lead Teacher Lynda Howes**

It bears repeating that cherished Lead Teacher Lynda Howes retired in 2014-2015, so there had to be a party! It was a lovely evening with specially chosen rhymes performed for Lynda's enjoyment. Administrative and teaching staff who had moved on came back to celebrate Lynda's many years of inspirational service and all were delighted to be assured that she has no plans to leave the PCMG family.

### **Future Plans**

We are partnering with the Toronto Military Family Resource Centre in the hope of funding from the True Patriot Love Foundation for a PCMG program for military families. In the military lifestyle, securing infant attachment can be challenging due to many unavoidable factors, such as parental absences and high levels of stress, including frequent moves.

## **Thank you to our Contributors!**

The Parent-Child Mother Goose Program thanks the creative and dedicated individuals who deliver PCMG programs and workshops to the community:

**Office and Workshops Manager** Renita Fillatre

**Program Director** Ruth Danziger

### **Program Teachers:**

Sarah Abusarar

Velrina Alexander

Pat Bisset

Ruth Danziger

Batun Farah

Renita Fillatre

Lynda Howes

Nimo Jama

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Mina Kosar

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Heather Boonstra

Ruth Danziger

Lizanne Eastwood

Kim Heatherington

Beth Hutchinson

Celia Lottridge

Ginger Mullen

Maria del Carmen Ordonez

Moire Porter

And heartfelt thanks to our talented and devoted

**2014-2015 Board of Directors:**

Mira Adler, Chair  
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Andrea Gonsalves  
Heather James  
Joan MacDonald  
Eddy Nason

**Donors**

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**2014-2015 Major Funders**

- Alan Dines, CIBC Wood Gundy World Markets Children's Foundation
- Bridge St. United Church Foundation
- Canada Gives Foundation #CG 0633
- Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation
- City of Toronto Community Service Partnership Program
- City of Toronto Access, Equity and Human Rights
- Etobicoke Brighter Futures Coalition
- KRG Children's Charitable Foundation
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- TD Canada Trust

### **2014-2015 Individual Donors**

- Anonymous
- Andrea Imada
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- Naomi Harris
- Marg Anne Jones
- Peter Jones
- Lakeshore PCMGP
- Heejoo Yoon

### **2014-2015 Donors in Kind**

- Elmbank Community Centre
- Green4Good (Compugen)
- Parkdale Community Health Centre
- Native Child and Family Services Toronto
- St. Paul's Church, Etobicoke
- Salesforce.com
- Toronto Community Housing Corporation
- Toronto Public Library, Malvern Branch

Report prepared by  
Susan Ryan, Executive Director  
Toronto Parent-Child Mother Goose Program

