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# ANNUAL REPORT

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Toronto Parent-Child Mother Goose Program

2015 - 2016

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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. When vulnerable, well-meaning parents cannot emotionally bond or expressively 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.

The peaks in a child's brain development for literacy, numeracy, social skills and emotional control all occur from ages one to three. The quality of the primary caregiver's responsiveness is the most crucial element in this process, and the changes to a child's brain around this period are unlikely to be reversed. As a result, the return on investment during and close to this period is greater than for any other time in a child's life.

The Parent-Child Mother Goose Program (PCMG) makes a point of embracing 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 2015-2016 the Toronto Parent-Child Mother Goose Program (PCMG) provided:

- 7 PCMG programs to underserved Toronto communities: Lakeshore, Elmbank Infant and 2-4, Parkdale, Malvern, Aboriginal, and Somali.
- 17 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
- 418 books and Disks for PCMG program providers and families across Canada and abroad
- Advocacy and partnership with governmental and non-governmental organizations

# Programs

## Highlights from the Field

*Please note that since some stories are very personal, some potentially identifying features, including the names of the programs, have been omitted from these excerpts from teachers' end-of-term reports and participant questionnaires in order to preserve confidentiality. Thank you, all, for the great information!!*

In one program, a mum came with a two-year-old girl and an infant son. She said that the older child's vocabulary had gone through the roof and she had learned to appreciate babies and younger children more. "It's hard work raising two kids by yourself. This is the only quality time for the three of us together every week," the mother said.

One little boy wouldn't stop crying during the program, so the teachers suggested that he and his mother sit outside near the door and listen. At snack time he came in and ate, and then happily joined the group, having satisfied his apparent need to feel that it was his own choice.

A mom who is expecting a new baby soon had greatly enjoyed the day's story and re-told it to her two-year-old daughter on the way home. The little girl wanted to hear it over and over, three times in the car alone!

A grandmother in the two-to-four program says that her grandchild's vocabulary is very advanced compared to other children in their social circle. She attributes this to the child being exposed to Mother Goose rhymes, songs and stories from age three months to age four. Of course grandmothers can be prejudiced! But the child's teacher also praises his listening skills and his ability to come up with stories.

## QUOTES FROM PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

- I have made a lot of friends and I wish we could keep coming in the summer.
- It allows my children to socialize with other children, and learn to sit still and listen.
- We like learning to sing songs in different languages.
- It has been excellent for my son's social development.
- I like the ideas behind the stories. No matter the culture, there are always similarities.
- Programs like Mother Goose are vital not only to mothers, fathers, and children, but also to the community as a whole because they bring us together.
- It was great to learn rhymes and stories that help to bond with my baby. I didn't know a lot of rhymes in English before.
- Coming to the program makes us feel good.
- I like interacting with the other mums and learning from them too.
- It helps me learn how to use facial expressions while I am reading to my child at home.
- The stories are easy to follow and we enjoy doing the actions.

- My son listens carefully, plays with the other kids, and has fun. We enjoy the stories from different cultures.
- I enjoy the imagination and creativity of the stories and seeing the children's language development.
- I love when my son comes to me at home and starts one of the songs from the program.
- I know the effects of songs and stories in my son's early years will play out for many years.
- It is a great opportunity to socialize with children of the same age.
- It has helped me have a closer relationship with my child. The stories are often funny.
- The stories capture the babies' attention and teach them patience.
- Will not miss a class for anything!
- Coming to the program meant a lot for me and my child. It is our time to learn and meet new friends. It makes my child pay attention and learn new words.
- It's very supportive for us. My child loves to come. He has learned so many things, like how to behave with others.
- It's good to meet and talk with other parents.
- Thanks very much. This program is an amazing way to learn parenting tools.
- We feel good and happy.
- It helps establish our routine around dinner, changes, and singing in general!
- A wonderful bonding experience and great to see how the children have grown and developed each week. The stories are calming and relaxing for the adults.
- It helped me be a better mom! My son loves it!
- The program is very important to us. It helps with speech development, memory, and interaction with other children.
- It is a very welcoming environment. Our son loves coming and he has a lot of fun. I get ideas for stories to tell our child at home. It is very good for parents, and I recommend it to other parents who are looking for activities to do with their children.
- My baby learns both paying attention and interacting. Thank you! The program really is GREAT for babies and moms too. It helps me to feel good after some very tedious times as a mom!
- In the program I make friends. I feel free, happy.
- The teachers are doing a great job.
- It means a lot to us because my son loves it. He sings all the time, and we socialize.
- The stories are very interesting and take us to that story world. I love it.
- Keep up the good work because the kids love it and they are learning.
- It makes me feel good to sit with my baby and do the actions to the rhymes and songs. And it is nice to meet other parents and hear different views.
- It is a great learning tool and preparation for kindergarten. The stories are good for the imagination.
- I feel less stressed just from getting out of the house instead of being at home.
- It's a great support to make the connection to my baby to make her happy.
- We have been so blessed with the presence of all the wonderful teachers. We enjoy the hand movements and the tones in their voices while telling the stories. It is important to have someone to share experiences with.

## **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 was funded by Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation, Tippet Foundation, and TD Canada Trust.

Our 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 (listed in Donors near the end of this report) or our social enterprise.

## **Program Statistics**

The 282 adults and 333 children registered in our directly operated Parent-Child Mother Goose Program groups in Toronto are culturally diverse, and they often share rhymes and stories from their mother tongues that create bridges of language and culture for themselves and their children. Program participants represented 33 different languages and cultures: Amharic, Arabic, Assyrian, Bangali, Bargla, Bosnian, Cantonese, Chinese, Croatian, Dari, Edo, English, Eritrean, French German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Japanese, Malayalam, Mandarin, Pashtu, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Sudanese, Tagalog, Telugu, Tigrinia, Tamil, and Tibetan.

## **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 social enterprise is a source of revenue to support PCMG programs and operations in Toronto.

## **PCMG Teacher Training Workshops**

PCMG delivered 16 teacher training workshops and one second level workshop in 2015-2016 in Quebec, British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, and New York State, of which four were in-house in Toronto. This was one third fewer than the 25 workshops in 2014-2015. We are exploring ways to promote our trainings, including the development of our database's marketing and communications capacity.

The New York State workshop was hosted by Horseheads Family Resource Centre in Horseheads, New York. Their program director attended a PCMG teacher training in Toronto

with a parent from their community in 2011. The two women have been offering the program ever since in Horseheads and Elmira. The program is so popular that they formed a county committee to coordinate programs, and they are planning to host another teacher training workshop in 2017

## **Book and Disk Sales**

Our best-selling books were *The Moon is Round* and *Zoom, Zoom, Zoom*, followed by *I Bring You a Story* and *Ten Small Tales*. The best-selling disks were *A Smooth Road* and *Sally Go Round the Sun* with *Sally Go Round the Moon*. Surprisingly book and disk sales were 72% higher than in the previous year, which had been unusually low, mainly thanks to some very large orders from Australia.

## **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 with two veteran PCMG teachers, Ruth Danziger and Velrina Alexander, who have worked with indigenous communities in the past, and were 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 received continued support from PCMP Program Director Ruth Danziger.

### **Etobicoke Brighter Futures Coalition**

As a long-time member of the outstanding 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, especially the very active Program and Training Committee.

### **Early Child Education Colleges**

PCMG once again provided students from ECE and Child Care degree programs 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:

- Birchmount Bluffs Neighbourhood Centre
- Afghan Women's Organization
- Centre for Immigrant and Community Services
- Parkdale High Park OEYC (Earls court-Creche Child Development Institute)
- Story Planet
- 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
- OEYC Today's Family
- 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, Etobicoke Brighter Futures Coalition, Social Planning Toronto, the Centre for Social Innovation, and Sick Kids Hospital Infant Mental Health Promotion.

## **Special Mention**

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

Celia Lottridge and Ruth Danziger once again created a lovely PCMG event for the Canada Day celebrations at Queen's Park on July 1. 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, Leeya 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 38 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 \$300. More gratitude than ever to Pat Bisset, the storytellers, and their donors!

### **Promotion of PCMG for Indigenous Communities**

Since the PCMG Program is relevant to items 1. and 5. of the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Office of Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Carolyn Bennett is helping PCMG to raise our profile and promote the program in indigenous communities.

Starting in Ontario, with the help of the Department's Ontario Social Programs Manager, we hope to expand our indigenous programming and teacher training, possibly with the assistance of Cisco's Connect the North project, which is supplying large HD screens to northern communities that would make selective use of distance training feasible.

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

The Parent-Child Mother Goose Program extends heartfelt thanks the creative and dedicated individuals who brought about delivery of PCMG programs and workshops to the community!

### **Office and Workshops Manager**

Renita Fillatre (July-May)

Sarah Pinder ( May-June)

### **Program Director** Ruth Danziger

#### **Program Teachers:**

Sarah Abusarar

Velrina Alexander

Pat Bisset

Ruth Danziger

Batun Farah

Renita Fillatre

Lynda Howes

Heejo Yoon

Falis Kediye

Mina Kosar

Maria del Carmen Ordonez

Leeya Solomon

Maryaleen Trafford

Megan Williams

#### **Childcare Assistants:**

Fatime Khamis

Nassira Hassan

Seema Walia

Gail Miller

Solomon Bokre

Anu Sharma

#### **Childcare Volunteers:**

Tina Zafreen Alam, Centre for Expressive Arts  
Therapy Education

Nancy Feng, Seneca College

Urge Urgessa, Seneca College

#### **Apprentices:**

Nahanni Araujo

Anna Eagle Child

#### **Teacher Training**

#### **Workshop Facilitators:**

Heather Boonstra

Ruth Danziger

Lizanne Eastwood

Kim Heatherington

Beth Hutchinson

Celia Lottridge

Ginger Mullen

Maria del Carmen Ordonez

Moire Porter

And of course we are extremely grateful to our outstanding and devoted

**2014-2015 Board of Directors:**

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Joan MacDonald

## Donors

We could not be more thankful to our financial donors, who truly make it possible to deliver our program free of charge to families with babies and young children:

### 2015-2016 Major Funders

- Alan Dines, CIBC Wood Gundy World Markets Children's Foundation
- Bridge St. United Church Foundation
- Canada Gives Foundation #CG 0633 (George and Lindy Small)
- 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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- Shum Vourkoutiotis Fund at the Toronto Community Foundation
- St. Andrew's Charitable Foundation
- Tippet Foundation
- TD Canada Trust

## 2015-2016 Individual Donors

- 1001 Friday Nights of Storytelling
- Mira Adler
- Hani Albatish
- Anonymous
- Judith Blumstock
- Charles Casement
- Andrea Gonsalves
- Deborah Tsui Ping Chan
- Naomi Harris
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- Giovanella Sylvia
- Josie Turner
- Cassy Welburn
- Luanne Winchiu
- Amir Zarabi

## 2015-2016 Donors in Kind

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

Report prepared by:  
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Toronto Parent-Child Mother Goose Program

