



Ontario Association For Family Mediation

Conference Speaker Bios 2009

John Winslade, Ph.D.

Morning Keynote Session

John Winslade, Ph.D, is an Professor at California State University San Bernardino. Until 2003, he was Director of Counsellor Education at the University of Waikato and he still returns regularly to New Zealand to work part-time at Waikato University, including a Masters course on mediation in the School of Education. He has been a member of the editorial board of the Conflict Resolution Quarterly journal.

With Gerald Monk, John was the author of the groundbreaking text, "*Narrative mediation: A new approach in conflict resolution*" (2000, Jossey Bass). John Winslade and Gerald Monk also have a new book on mediation "*Practicing narrative mediation: Loosening the grip of conflict*" (2008) with Jossey Bass. John has also written a series of articles on narrative mediation and has taught workshops on this subject in the USA, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, the UK, Denmark, Netherlands, Cyprus & Israel.

Howard Hurwitz, Ph.D, MSW, RSW

Afternoon Session

Howard is the Director of Children's Services at Jewish Family and Child Service in Toronto. He is responsible for all child welfare services and programs related to child protection services. Howard has an MSW and over 30 years experience in various child welfare and children's mental health agencies.

Howard is the creator and chairperson of the High Conflict Forum which is a community based network of lawyers, mental health professionals and child welfare staff from more than 30 agencies, serving high conflict families going through a separation/divorce. Howard is frequently called upon to provide consultation to other professionals around working with high conflict families.

Howard has extensive experience in staff and management training around a variety of social work issues.

Howard is also on the social work panel for the Office of the Children's Lawyer as well as through his private practice.

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

Afternoon Session

Rachel Birnbaum, Ph.D., RSW, LL.M. is an Associate Professor of Social Work at King's University College at the University of Western Ontario.

Dr. Birnbaum has over 20 years of clinical practice experience working with children and families of separation and/or divorce. She has presented and published both nationally and internationally on child custody and access assessments, child legal representation, and working with high conflict families. She recently published with her co-authors, *Child Custody Assessments: A Resource Guide For Legal and Mental Health Professionals, Challenging Issues in Child Custody Disputes: A Guide for Legal and Mental Health Professionals and Law for Social Workers (4th Edition)* by Thomson Reuters.

Her current research focus is on evaluating the Dimensions of Conflict in Separated Families Scale (DCSFS), an instrument to differentiate different levels of conflict in disputing families. The goal of this research is to be able to match families experiencing different levels of conflict with the appropriate services. Dr. Birnbaum has been the President of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers since 2005.



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Conference Speakers - Continued

Elizabeth Sterritt, Mary Alice MacNeil

Afternoon Session

Elizabeth Sterritt is a certified bilingual mediator, coach and teacher. Elizabeth brings a great deal of experience to the field of mediation, coaching and training. Her work in the field of coaching and mediation has given her a consummate understanding of the importance of the role of relationships. An Accredited Family Mediator (OAFM), Elizabeth focuses on family conflict, with a special interest in intergenerational conflict and Elder Mediation. She is a coach and mentor in the Graduate Certificate in Conflict Resolution program at Carleton University. Trained as a CODE Model TM Coach, Elizabeth infuses wisdom and enthusiasm into her coaching sessions. Elizabeth is the President of OAFM (Ottawa) and a member of the Collaborative Family Law Network in Ottawa. Elizabeth is a member of the Board of Directors of the Centre for Conflict Education and Research at Carleton University and the ex-officio member of OAFM on the Family Mediation Canada Board of Directors.

Mary Alice MacNeil is a family mediator Accredited by the Ontario Association of Family Mediation, and a roster mediator for the Ottawa Family Court mediation service. She holds a Graduate Certificate in Conflict Resolution and a Bachelor of Commerce degree, both from Carleton University. She has worked with many families in transition to collaboratively reach agreements involving separation, divorce, parent/child relationships and the care of elderly family members. Prior to her work as a mediator, Mary Alice worked for more than 25 years in the public, private and non-profit sectors. As a human resources consultant, Mary Alice advised senior management within federal government departments on organization issues, and worked with managers and staff to collaboratively build team and organizational capacity, resolve conflict, and remove barriers to performance.

Karen Ehrlich, Jan Schloss, Maggie Hall, Alison McKelvey

Afternoon Session

Karen Ehrlich is the Program Manager for the Toronto Mediation Centre. Karen is an Accredited Family Mediator and Child Protection Mediator with a private practice in Toronto.

Jan Schloss is the Executive Director of the Toronto Mediation Centre. Jan is an Accredited Family and Child Protection Mediator, Certified Coach, member of Family Solutions, with a private practice in Toronto.

Maggie Hall, MSW, RSW, LLM, AccFM (OAFM), CPMed., is the Director of The Mediation Centre of Hamilton. She co-authored the Ontario Mandatory Child Protection Mediation Training Curriculum and has mediated more than 100 child protection cases.

Alison McKelvey is the ADR coordinator at Blue Hills Child and Family Centre Blue Hills are coordinating CPM for 5 CAS's across Central East Region. She is also a supervisor at the Family Law Information Centre at the Newmarket Court House and on the panel at the Office of the Children's Lawyer as a clinical investigator.

Brahm Siegel

Afternoon Session

Brahm D. Siegel is a senior partner at Nathens, Siegel, LLP, a five-lawyer boutique in Toronto restricted to family law. He received his Bachelor of Arts with First Class Honours from McGill University in 1990 and his Bachelor of Laws from Queen's University in 1993. He articulated with McMillan Binch in Toronto in 1994 and was called to the Bar in 1995.

Brahm is the founder and consulting editor of the McCarthy Tetrault Guide to the Family Law Courts in Ontario, co-author of the Ontario Family Law Rules Annotated and the consulting editor of the Consolidated Ontario Family Law Statutes and Regulations, both published by Carswell. He is also the author of the chapters on divorce, procedure and alternative dispute resolution for the family law Licensing Process at the Law Society where he had the pleasure of being an instructor from 2000-2006.

Brahm has also spoken at various conferences and seminars at the Law Society of Upper Canada and Advocates Society, been published in the Canadian Family Law Quarterly and is the founder of the Nathens, Siegel Award, a scholarship for first year law students at Queen's University. He is also a member of the Executive Committee of the Bench & Bar at the Ontario Court of Justice in North York.

In 2006, he began offering services as mediator/arbitrator and is enjoying assisting lawyers and clients resolve family law and divorce disputes in this manner.