



### ***Training Begins for Thunder Bay Counselling Centre's Alternative Dispute Resolution Initiative***

***Thunder Bay ON, December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009-*** Throughout the holiday season, Thunder Bay Counselling Centre is also looking to help families in need. For a limited time, free family mediation is available in the city of Sault Ste. Marie.

Under an initiative funded by The Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS), Child Welfare Secretariat, and headed by the Thunder Bay Counselling Centre, there is a training program currently underway in the city to train mediators in family law and child protection mediation. Sault Ste. Marie Counselling Centre Alternative Dispute Resolution Project Manager, Cathy McLelland says; "Part of this initiative involves trained mediators having supervised practice under the direct supervision of an experienced mediator".

This voluntary service is available to help families resolve disputes arising out of:

- Separation and Divorce, including
  - Parenting plans for children
  - Child Support
  - Division of Property
  - Spousal Support
- Family disputes where the Children's Aid Society is involved
- Cases involving Child Welfare
- Other family disputes

McLelland says; "Mediation can be used as a complement to the court process or in some circumstances, instead of court. Parties, who already have legal counsel, may wish to speak with their lawyer to find out if mediation could be an option for them".

Although it is recommended that all parties obtain independent legal advice, it is not necessary to have access mediation services.

Thunder Bay Counselling Centre launched the *Alternative Dispute Resolution* project aimed to protect children and enhance their lifestyle, this past October. The new initiative will build capacity, with a goal to



expand options for families and children who are experiencing breakdown while involved with the Family Court or the Children's Aid Society in Northern Ontario.

The Child and Family Services Act, as amended by Bill 210 back in 2006, identifies ADR as a strategy to streamline court processes and encourage alternatives to court. Extensive ADR training will continue to be held over the next year that will produce ADR facilitators in Northern Ontario.

Those looking to obtain more information or would like to access these services, are being asked to contact Thunder Bay Counseling Centre.

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