

FROM THE EDITOR

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Recently, I was interviewed by a graduate student who was completing her thesis research. She wanted to talk about the state of the Child and Youth Care field and how I saw our future. I suspect our conversation helped me more than it did her. Through our dialogue, I had the opportunity once again to think about where we are now and what we need to do to fulfill the dream of professionalization. In many ways, this issue of the Journal of Child and Youth Care Work reflects where we are in that process.

I do believe we are closer than ever to consolidating our collective identity and securing widespread recognition for our work. We have made huge strides in a relatively short time. The Competencies for Professional Child and Youth Care Practitioners, printed here for the first time, are the cornerstone of the North American Certification Project. They represent a monumental achievement. They provide a blueprint for standards of practice, and represent the clearest definition to date of who we are as Child and Youth Care Practitioners. The process by which the document was formulated was a model of collegiality, collaboration and inclusivity, which augurs well for the future of the field.

At the same time, our practice is more diverse than it ever was. This, too, is aptly represented by the range of contributions to this issue of the journal. The articles here describe practice in many settings, with different populations, focusing on a complex range of issues. At the same time, the journal has become a venue for a growing body of Child and Youth Care research. And at the heart of it all, is a focus on relationships and partnerships that foster competence and well-being.

We have come a long way, but perhaps the greatest challenges are still ahead. Not only are we now ready to communicate about who we are to those external to the field, we must come together as a community of Child and Youth Care Workers to embrace our identity and develop pride in who we are. There are still too many of our peers who are unaware of recent developments as the field moves ahead and who may be working in isolation. Our associations have too few members. Our journals have too few readers and too few writers.

Our future is now. The North American Certification Project has the potential to unite us, but only if every Child and Youth Care Practitioner helps to spread the word and to get their colleagues on board. Share this journal with everyone you work with; discuss these articles and especially the competencies whenever and wherever you can. And know that each and every one of us can contribute to the forward motion of this field by declaring our professional self-esteem and reaching out to those around us to do the same.