

## **NEXUS 2009: PRESENCE BEYOND BORDERS; THE JOURNAL IN A NEW HOME**

**Mark Krueger**

Dear Andy and Dale:

Thanks, Andy, for your gracious comments in the introduction. Your first article on activities was a perfect example of what we had in mind when we developed the *Journal* in the 1980s (see *Journal of Child and Youth Care* Volume 2, 1984) to put more direct line child and youth care workers' words in action. Dale, I also remember your early work and thinking what an insightful writer you were. It is such a pleasure now to see you both, with your own rich portfolios of contributions to the knowledge base, at the helm of "our journal." With Jean, Chip, and others in support, I look forward to the new ways the editorial team will help steer and show us how to do and think about child and youth care by building on the fine work of Karen VanderVen, Varda Mann-Feder, and many others who helped the *Journal* survive and thrive.

As always, I have pen (keyboard) in hand, and appreciate the opportunity to continue to my column, *Nexus*, which is defined as a series of interconnected themes or "spaghetti bowl" of ideas and phenomena in child and youth care practice. It is also the name of a fictitious group home and title of a book I wrote with Henry Maier's encouragement to show competent youth work in context.

Dale, when Andy asked me to write something related to the theme, perhaps from my international experience and interest in meaning making, I jokingly responded, "I don't follow instructions any more now than when I was editor." Then I referred to the famous speech given by Mario Savio in 1964 on the steps at the University of California Berkeley when he encouraged students to throw themselves on the cogs of the corporate machine that was taking over universities. Andy responded with his own good humor.

Kidding aside, Savio's speech is as timely as ever today when journals are being taken over by international publishing corporations. As you probably know, our pioneering journal, *Child and Youth Care Forum*, fell victim to one of these takeovers. I used some of Savio's lines in my letter of resignation from the *Forum* board. It was unthinkable for me to stay on and support the new big "odious" publisher's efforts to strip the soul from what had become over the years the leading journal in child and youth care—thanks largely to Jerome Beker, the editor-mentor par excellent, whose footsteps so many of us have tried to follow. The really sad thing was that the *Forum* was flourishing with a cache of articles from around the globe, thanks to the fine work of Doug Magnuson and Sibylle Artz of the University of Victoria.

This takeover made me more convinced than ever that we have to keep our journals close to home, like *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice* in Canada has managed to do. So thanks also to Peter Correia, Jean, and the National Resource Center for Youth Services at The University of Oklahoma for stepping up! It's nice

to know our journal is in good hands in a good home that is just the right place for it at this stage of evolution. Please hold on tight. As you know, all of us at the Youth Work Learning Center, its home for the last 25 years, will do whatever we can to help make the transition a successful one.

Back to Andy's request: I was a little reluctant to accept his challenge because I learned long ago not to make generalities about cultures and countries, including the one I live in. There is so much diversity everywhere (isn't it grand what the United States just did to show this with its new president?). I try to stick with telling the stories of my experiences and interactions in different places with different people I meet from, as they say, "all walks of life." And I can never write a story on demand. Stories show themselves when the time is right.

One thing I have learned though, is that wherever we are, we have to, as child and youth care worker Amy Evans, said "show up." Whether in Copenhagen, Prague, Berlin, London, Switzerland, Bermuda, or across Canada and the United States, we have to be there to know and work with others. Thus, if we want to interact with and understand children, youth and family, and community members from many places, cultures and backgrounds, I recommend that we try these things:

Be self aware, walk the talk, and show a genuine interest in their stories. As my friend Gerry Fewster, cofounder of the Canadian journal argues, be present, open, and available to mirror back our experience of the other.

Be curious about what we are experiencing, with, as Native American poet Simon Ortiz wrote, "eyes fixed on specific points." Have comfort with the space that is one's self, and "speak across the spaces" of our experiences, as Gregory Sarris wrote. Give others our undivided attention (it's easy to get distracted). "Hear it deep," as Jerome Beker urged us to do. Become "enmeshed," as Henry Maier showed in *Developmental Group Care of Children and Youth*. Remember we are what we do and become what we have done, as Karen VanderVen wrote about activities, postmodern thinking, and a number of other topics at the center of our work. Also pay attention to boundaries, as Varda wrote in her article "You/Me/Us." Then "tread lightly" in the footprints we see because as Canadian, Thom Garfat, coeditor of our sister journal, *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice*, suggested, the footprints could be our own. If you haven't already, run to the store and buy *Standing on the Precipice: Inquiry into the Creative Potential of Child and Youth Care Work*. It is the new anthology of work by some of the brightest and most curious of our Canadian colleagues. Watch for columns and comments in the *cyc-net Online Magazine* from an institute held last spring in New Mexico with leaders from the United States and Canada to discuss relational child and youth care work. Read and look at what filmmakers, artists, actors, and philosophers have to say about being present.

I could go on and on, of course. The point is that there is much to learn from the writings in our field and elsewhere about presence and from a myriad of other phenomena that help us relate to others. And the beauty of it is that in the future, writers in this journal and the other wonderful journals in our field, including [www.cyc-net.org](http://www.cyc-net.org), will continue to show us more. Because in the end it is not as much

about what we already know about another culture, country, or person, but how much we want to know about ourselves and the people we are with.

Next time we recruit at Nexus, I will remind myself to focus on this so we hire another worker with a desire to be present, the way many of the workers at a real agency Nexus in Nova Scotia are present. Thanks again, Andy and Dale, for giving me the opportunity to continue to express myself here, and best of luck as the new editors. Now it's your chance to experience the thrill of seeing a new worker publish a first article alongside some of the best practitioners and minds in the field.

Peace,

Mark

PS: I'm sure you know many of the people and articles mentioned above. Google the names of the ones you don't know and enjoy the riches you find