

2022 ANNUAL REPORT



VERMONT SQUARE PARENT-CHILD
MOTHER GOOSE PROGRAM

720 BATHURST STREET, TORONTO, ONTARIO M5S 2R4

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Letter from Our Board Chair

Our 2021-2022 year can be captured in three words; perseverance, creativity and gratitude. As many can appreciate, the COVID-19 pandemic had dramatically impacted the way of life for Canadian families, parents and children. Because of physical distancing, families had to alter their usual routines, and many children and families had to be isolated in their homes for months, often at critical stages along their social developmental stages. Our work, of fostering attachment and enriching interactions between parents and their young children became even more critical during this precarious time in our communities. We stepped up to this need and challenge.

Our teachers and programs met this layered and delicate need with perseverance and creativity – the first two words to describe our year. In the initial part of the year, our teachers adapted programs to be offered online to bring a sense of rhythm and joy into the homes of many of our participating families. In the latter half of the year, our teachers pivoted once again to bring the programs to be back in-person. We had a total of 360 children participate in our Toronto programs, both online and in-person with tailored rhymes and stories to meet the mother tongue preferences of 13 different languages! In addition to the core programs, during this time we supported a teacher-led initiative for a new parent-child mother goose program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing families. Full details on all our program offerings can be found on page 5.

We are so proud to continue our commitment of offering this program to families, free of charge, since our inception 38 years ago. This is no easy feat and can only be achieved through the generosity of our funding organizations, foundations, partners and individuals. Thank you. In a time when many not-for-profits struggled with less predictable funding sources, we felt grateful that many of our long-time donors and funders continued their support of our programming. Though we lost a few funding sources, we were thrilled to welcome a few new ones to our family! And this is what leads us into our third word for the year, gratitude. On page 16 you will find a list of our funders and donors for the past year to whom we are deeply grateful.

One of our learnings coming out of the pandemic was just how relevant, essential and desired our work is within communities. Though our focus is on fostering attachment between small children and their parents, we've come to appreciate how much our work impacts entire families and the communities they are in. We invite you to read the feedback we received from the parents that participated in our programs yourself within "Our Impact in Words" section found on page 10. We are so excited for the future of Vermont Square Parent-Child Mother Goose Program and how we can grow to meet more of this need. With such an incredible team of passionate staff, teachers and facilitators, whose names can be found on page 15, 2022-2023 has kicked off to a great start.

Warmly,



Samina Hashmi
Chair of the Board, VS P-CMGP

Our Organization Overview

The Parent-Child Mother Goose Program® is backed by decades of research, yet is so simple and natural that parents easily gain skills and confidence to foster healthy relationships and give their children experiences that promote positive brain development.

Evidence-based research confirms that children’s early experiences mould their brains, and the primary caregiver provides most of those experiences. The caregiver’s choice of words, tone of voice, gestures, facial expressions, holding, and cuddling lay the neurological foundation for the child’s lifelong emotional, physical, and cognitive health. Our programs are designed to easily, simply and naturally support parents to deepen this relationship. Proudly, our programs prioritize families in need of support and is always free.

Though this understanding of healthy child development is widely known today, our program first originated in 1984, when this knowledge was not nearly as widespread. As early trailblazers in this arena of early child development, we are so proud to have remained focused on our main purpose from day one – supporting the child through enabling their primary caregiver.

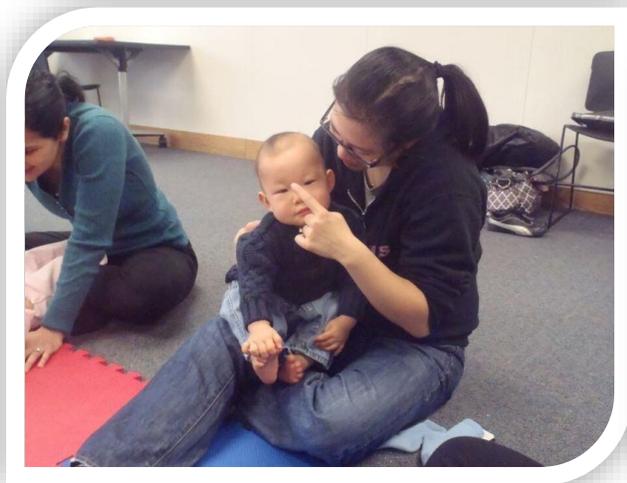


Our Program Overview

This program year was shaped by a response to the covid-19 pandemic where programs were run on internet platforms, mostly Zoom. In the Spring of 2022, the Elmbank 2 to 4 Program was the first to return to in-person programming, paving the way for more in-person programs, the following Fall.

Between September 2021 and June 2022, the 6 core programs, ran once a week for a full 30 weeks. These programs are, **Parkdale, Elmbank Infant, Elmbank Two to Four, Lakeshore, Somali Program and Malvern.** Most of these programs are for parents and infants up to 2 years old as per our model. The exception is the Elmbank 2-4 years of age program.

In addition to the 6 core programs, VS PCMGP supported a new initiative undertaken by Guita Movallali, to run a program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing families, partnering with the organization VOICE for Children Who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing.



Zoom Programs

Parents with babies and preschool children continued to attend our zoom programs. In addition, older school-aged siblings sometimes joined us for part, or all of the programs, since they too were often home during the pandemic. And of course, being online, families could join us from anywhere, so we also had a few families from areas in the GTA that we cannot usually reach. As always, the programs were highly multicultural, reflecting the diverse population of Toronto. Even online there were opportunities for sharing rhymes in people's first language or culture.

While we missed running the program in-person, we still found that teachers were able to adapt the PCMGP model and share rhymes, songs and stories online. Parents and babies

enjoyed rhymes and songs within the group and could also learn them and use them, during, sometimes, long hours at home with their child. They listened intently to the stories that were shared. And some parents said this inspired them to begin telling stories to their children at home.

Teachers were impressed by how quickly babies and young children began to engage with the program, recognizing the rhymes and other children, smiling as they sat with their parent, waving at the beginning and end of the program. Older children began to share their favorite rhyme with the online group. It was remarkable to witness the social intelligence and resilience of these young children.

In addition to sharing rhymes and stories, the online programs during the pandemic, sometimes, served as an avenue to answer questions from parents and to offer support to those who shared difficulties they were facing.

There were challenges with running online programs, of course. Apart from the limitations of the medium for socializing, parents could get distracted when their child moved away from the screen. We were aware, as well, that some families do not have the technology to join a zoom program. Or, in some cases we heard that older children were using the family computer to attend school and so the parent and younger child could not attend the PCMGP. Outreach was also a challenge as community spaces were no longer being used, and it was harder to let people know how to find us. However, creative solutions were found either through other community resources or sometimes online through Facebook groups.



We heard from parents that they appreciated the break from isolation, as well as learning rhymes and stories to use at home with their child. See section on parent quotes.

The Parkdale Program was run by Velrina Alexander and Renita Fillatre. This program has a following of community members who attended online.

Velrina used her contacts in the community to reach parents, and Ren did other outreach online. These parents came regularly and greatly appreciated that the program was available to them.

The Elmbank Infant Program was run by Leeya Solomon and Vijaya Agrawal. This program is in an under resourced area and has always had to work hard at outreach; an online program was no exception. However, presentations at a local online community pre-natal group, as well as a Facebook parent group brought together a committed core group, each week, out to receive great support from the program.

The Elmbank 2 to 4 Program was run by Maria Ordonez and Sarah Abusarar with Seema Walia. This program had a core group of very committed families, some of whom had been coming before the pandemic lockdowns started. They continued to attend, and sometimes brought older children. This program successfully ran our pilot in-person program from March to June 2021. This was much appreciated by many neighborhood parents who were ready to return to in-person programs and felt that their children, too, needed to socialize.

The Lakeshore Program was run by Lynda Howes and Renita Fillatre. The families in this area look out for a good program and are easy to reach through the community center. As a result of this, and of Ren's publicity on Facebook, the Lakeshore program was full with regulars who came each week and expressed much appreciation for the support the program gave them.

The Somali Program run by Falis Kediye and Batun Farah was able to run successfully on What's App, a favorite online platform in the community. Parents were often contacted one at a time for support as well. In addition to the rhymes and songs, the teachers were able to answer many questions and explain public messaging in a community where translation is often needed. This allowed us to support families that might have been particularly isolated otherwise.



The Malvern Program run by Ruth Danziger and Gail Miller has the advantage of close ties with Babies Best Start (BBS), a home visiting program run through Aisling Discoveries. The BBS program includes Home Visitors who have done the PCMGP training and understand PCMGP. As a result of referrals from these home visitors, the Malvern program online filled up with higher need families and many of them stayed to become a strong core group. A few of these families attended from the start of the pandemic until the present.

The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program initiated by Guita Movallali in response to the need for a program for parents with deaf and hard of hearing children. It is run by Guita Movallali and Gail Miller, and began programming through the support of VOICE, from February 2022 to December 2022. The program was on Zoom and targeted the parents with deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) children who choose oral communication for their children or use both sign and spoken language.

This program teaches rhymes, songs and stories, in a way that works for DHH parents and their children and focuses on oral communication. It's totally different from American Sign Language (ASL) P-CMG program. The program is inclusive and parents of hearing children are welcome, too. They can learn, meet other families and ask questions of the teachers during the program. These families came online from all over the country as well as the GTA. This is the first DHH PCMGP that we know of in Canada.

In recent months, through Guita's digital marketing and social media advertising, several parents/caregivers with deaf and hard of hearing children from US have also joined the program. We have, sometimes, the whole family in the program and, they enjoy sharing thoughts and concerns with other families from other parts.

Teachers:

In June of 2021, Renita Fillatre left her role as teacher, when she began a full-time job. Renita has been affiliated with the PCMGP for many years in various roles, and we will miss her. However, we know that the door is open, both, on our side and on hers, and we still know her as a committed partner.

We wish to offer our thanks to Ruth Danziger, the Program Director and all the Teachers who were so persistent and creative in adapting the PCMGP, supporting families, doing outreach and meeting the new challenges of online programming, and subsequently beginning a return to in-person programs again.

Summary of Program Activities

- 6 PCMG programs to underserved Toronto communities: Lakeshore, Elmbank Infant, Elmbank 2-4, Parkdale, Malvern, and Somali
- 19 PCMG Teacher Training Workshops to train PCMG teachers for agencies across Canada and abroad that wish to offer PCMG programs in their own communities, including Wiikwemikoong First Nation under a designated Ontario Trillium Foundation grant.
- 70 books and disks to PCMG program providers and families across Canada and abroad
- Advocacy and partnership with governmental and non-governmental organizations

Program Statistics

- 360 adults and 360 children registered in our directly delivered virtual and in-person Parent-Child Mother Goose programs in Toronto this year.
- 130 new children and 119 new adults
- Participants were, as usual, culturally diverse and many shared rhymes and stories from their mother tongues. Program participants' cultures and languages included: Afrikaans, Amharic, Arabic, Cantonese, Croatian, Dari, English, Farsi, French, Filipino, Hindi, Mandarin, Portuguese, Punjabi, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Tagalog, Telugu, Tigrigna, Tamil, Tibetan, and Urdu.

Program Funding

The majority of the direct costs of our Lakeshore, Parkdale and both Elmbank Programs were funded by the City of Toronto Community Services Partnership. Most of the direct costs of our bilingual Somali Program were funded by Etobicoke Brighter Futures Coalition. Our Malvern Program was funded by the Tippet Foundation. General program funding was provided by the P.E.A.R.L. Foundation, Leonard Wolinsky Foundation, Jackman Foundation, and Shum Vourkoutiotis Fund. First Nations Project funding was provided by the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Please see list of Donors. Many thanks!

PCMG Teacher Training Workshops

Teacher training workshops create new Mother Goose teachers, expand and strengthen the network of Mother Goose programs, help to maintain the program standards, and develop important skills and awareness in people who work with children in other ways. PCMG delivered 19 Teacher-Training Workshops in 2021-2022 in Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario, and Quebec.

Our Impact in Words

We often let the words of our core stakeholders do the talking to express the impact we are having with our programs. Below you will find beautiful words shared from our program participants, which include mothers, fathers, grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, uncles and other primary caregivers. As well, you will find highlights from our teachers.

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, taken from teachers' end-of-term reports and participant questionnaires in order to preserve confidentiality. Thank you so much to the program teachers and parents/caregivers for sharing these inspiring stories and quotes!

Words from our Participants

Three generations, mother, grandmother and daughter:

My mum and I feel very warm, and my baby can feel that, too! Mother Goose gives our family lots of love and happiness. We love mother Goose!

Zoom Programs

I liked how interactive the class was. Thank you. We just love it! I've told others about it

The teachers and facilitators at this program made Marcus feel very welcomed and engaged! Very knowledgeable staff with lots of creative ways in demonstrating rhymes and storytelling! This program is especially very good for new parents. Highly Recommended!

This child is 2 years old and does not speak

He often comes and goes but he knows the rhymes and is able to do them during the day when we sit down together. He likes the rhymes. When I sing "Sailing" he knows it is time to go to sleep and he starts to hum along. We do "Where are the Stars" outside but since it is daytime we say "clouds"- he likes that. This is a very good program.

Words from our Teachers

Moms expressed becoming very comfortable with attending programs on Zoom.

Moms enjoyed having a social connection in times of social isolation.

A young boy, since the first day of attending the program, now regularly asks

if today “is another Mother Goose day?” Henceforth, mother and son attended regularly (even when the boy was ill.) One of the stories I told, Just Enough to Tell a story, prompted the boy to ask his mother to get him some material. He wants to make his own clothes!

One mother speaks no English at all, however she comes consistently with her son. At first she did not seem engaged with the group much at all, and her husband was the one most present. However, he had to go back to work and now she watches and notices what we do and joins in with her son. She always does a song in Mandarin for the group, which makes her an important part of the group and her son loves this too. Both of them relate to the others in the group and despite the language barrier for her, she participates. Even when we ask everyone to provide a line in their language, like in Yo Te Amo, she picks up what to do and joins in. Her son too notices all of this and is very engaged.

One parent told us about a day when her daughter cut her lip and she had to take her to the hospital. She sang one of the songs they know from the program, over and over as they waited, and it calmed her daughter down, and it got the two of them through that anxious time.

Another mother, whose daughter was premature, confided that she has had special challenges and concerns since she had her. She has an older girl who is mildly autistic too. The little girl has come consistently with her mother, in-person, since she was a small baby, and almost every week on zoom. She is thriving, very responsive and very bright. Now that her mother has to work at the program time, and she is over 2, she still comes with her caregiver and knows every rhyme and song, and speaks with us directly. At times the older girl who loves stories has also joined us for the storytelling part. The PCMGP has been a program that worked for many members of this family in different ways.

Our Resources and Social Enterprise Overview

Social Enterprise Activities

Thanks to the model developed in 1992 by PCMG co-founder Celia Lottridge, our PCMG teacher training workshops, our books and disks are offered as a supplementary 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 small source of revenue to support PCMG operations.

Book and Disk Sales

Our most popular books were: *The Moon is Round* and *I bring You a Story*. Our total sales for the year were near \$1050.00.



New Website

This year we celebrated the launch of a much needed, renewed website! Our new website can be found on www.parentchildmothergooseprogram.org. The new features have also helped to make a few of our internal processes more efficient and centralized. We are also in the midst of getting more tech savvy with social media platforms so we can reach more parents and donors.

Our Partnerships

We cherish the model of partnership in all aspects of our work. We believe here is no need to reinvent the wheel, and we seek to partner with organizations with shared values and purpose where and when possible. This allows us to share and learn together, so we can collectively do our best work.

First Nations Project

Indigenous parents still live in the shadow of the residential school experience that has severe effects on their families. Many of their children are residing in permanent care outside of their culture. This is related to the colonization of Indigenous peoples in Canada across generations. As desirable as it may be for today's Indigenous parents to enhance their parenting skills, they need to do so in the light and spirit of their own culture.

Thanks to a designated Ontario Trillium Foundation support, PCMG worked with Wikwemikong Health Centre to support parenting and early child development for parents and their children aged 0 to 4.

This three-year partnership ended this year, and reporting is now complete. We delivered one more virtual teacher training workshop through Wikwemikong Health Centre and organized two meetings held last winter to support Indigenous programming. We thank Ojibiikaan Indigenous Cultural Network and Wikwemikong Health Centre for their participation in this.

Parent-Child Mother Goose in Australia

We regularly share information and experiences with our fellow Geese in Australia.

Babies' Best Start and Aisling Discoveries

Babies' Best Start refers vulnerable participants to our Malvern program. This is part of the Strides program run by Aisling Discoveries in Scarborough. We have been connected to them for a very long time. Their home visitors who have taken our training, sometimes, visit our programs to enhance and supplement their early child development expertise. They refer many vulnerable families to the Malvern program. They also contributed to our book *I Bring You a Story*.

Etobicoke Brighter Futures Coalition

As a long-time member of the outstanding EBFC, who fund most of the direct costs of our Somali PCMG Program, we participate in the EBFC evaluation and coordination committees and meetings.

Program and Training Committee

The Program & Training Committee is a national volunteer group responsible for the policy and standards of the Parent-Child Mother Goose programs and teacher training workshops. We are very grateful to the dedicated people who do the invaluable work of maintaining the integrity of our programs and workshops.

Voice for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Children

Last year, Guita Movallali, as the board member of the Voice for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Children, initiated a virtual PCMG program for parents with deaf and hard of hearing children. This was possible with the funding that came from them. We, also, had partnership in a Webinar, hosted by Voice. The PCMG program Webinar was organized by Guita, after several months of intense work to include several other deaf organizations, too.



Early Child Education Colleges

PCMG offers students from ECE and Child Care degree programs the opportunity to gain exceptional experience and knowledge as volunteer childcare assistants in our programs. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, we didn't have student placement, this year.

Midaynta Community Services

We are very happy to partner with Midaynta for our bilingual Somali Program. Midaynta Executive Director Mahad Yusuf offers highly knowledgeable support and promotes the program to families, and encourages parents in the program to study English and learn computer skills.

Family Resource Agencies

The Parent-Child Mother Goose Program is offered throughout the Greater Toronto Area by other organizations with teachers who have taken our teacher training workshops.

- Afghan Women's Organization
- Alderwood Community Centre
- Birchmount Bluffs Neighbourhood Centre
- Blue Hills Child and Family Centre
- Centre for Immigrant and Community Services
- Davenport Perth Neighbourhood and Community Health Centre
- Elmbank Community Centre
- Parkdale High Park OEYC (Earlscourt-Creche Child Development Institute)
- Parkdale Community Health Centre
- Malvern Public Library
- Milton Community Resource Centre
- Ministry of Education
- Oakville Parent-Child Centre
- The Chartwell House Early Learning Centre
- YWCA Durham

- OEYC Today's Family
- Story Planet East York
- Toronto Family Resources
- Regent Park Community Health Centre
- Region of Peel
- Mississauga Parent-Child Resource Centres
- Mother craft/Breaking the Cycle
- York Child Development & Family Services
- Native Child & Family Services
- Parent Resources
- OEYC Stoney Creek
- OEYC Today's Family
- OEYC Markham Family Day Care Services
- OEYC York North
- Oakville Parent-Child Centre
- YWCA Durham OEYC

Memberships

PCMG is a member of Families Canada (previously known as the Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs FRP), Ontario Non-profit Network (ONN), Storytellers of Canada, Etobicoke Brighter Futures Coalition, Social Planning Toronto, the Centre for Social Innovation, and Sick Kids Hospital Infant Mental Health Promotion.

PCMG program Webinar

On April 13, 2022, the VS PCMG participated in an Informational Webinar which targeted mostly parents with deaf and hard of hearing children. The programming was done by Guita Movallali.

The webinar was a collaborative work between VOICE for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing Children organization, the Bob Rumball Canadian Centre of Excellence for the Deaf and Ontario Cultural Society for Deaf. Both American Sign Language (ASL) and Spoken Language (traditional) PCMG program for parents with deaf and hard of hearing were introduced. The facilitators were Celia Lottridge, the co-founder of the PCMG program (history of the program), Lynda Howes and Guita Movallali, (traditional PCMG program) and, Sarah Colbeck and Mario Pizzacalla (ASL PCMG program). Guita, also, made a video clip of the history and the current situation of the PCMG program for deaf and hard of hearing all around the world. The video is available at: <https://nationalpcmqp.ca/parent-child-mother-geese-program-for-families-with-children-who-are-deaf-hard-of-hearing/>.



Thank you to Our Contributors

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

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Thank You to Our Donors

We are immensely grateful to all of our donors, who so generously support our causes. We apologize if any names were missed.

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- Burgundy Asset Management
- CIBC Wood Gundy World Markets Children's Foundation
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- City of Toronto Community Service Partnership Program
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