

ANNUAL REPORT

Vermont Square Parent-Child Mother Goose Program

2018-2019

November 29, 2019

Vermont Square Parent-Child Mother Goose Program
720 Bathurst Street, Suite 500A, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2R4

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Our program originated in Toronto in 1984 as The Mother Goose Enrichment Program, developed by Barry Dickson and Joan Bodger and offered under the auspices of the Children's Aid Society as an early intervention program. Katherine Grier and Celia Lottridge were invited to be part of that program. In 1986 after the pilot project ended, Katherine and Celia took the program out into the community as the Parent-Child Mother Goose Program, which was incorporated in 1986 and became a registered charity in 1987.

The program is a joyful group experience for parents and their babies or two-to-four-year-olds. If vulnerable, well-meaning parents do not emotionally bond or expressively communicate with their young children, the parent-child relationships and the children's futures can be compromised. The Parent-Child Mother Goose Program® intervenes to prevent this outcome with a physically close and interactive program in which parents and children learn to share the power and pleasure of oral rhymes, songs, and stories. The approach is backed by decades of research, yet is so simple and natural that the parents effortlessly gain the skills and confidence that foster healthy relationships during their children's crucial early years, and the children enhance their neurological foundation for lifelong emotional, physical, and cognitive development.

All children's early experiences mold their brains, and the primary caregiver provides most of those experiences. Simple things like the caregiver's choice of words, tone of voice, gestures, facial expressions, holding, and cuddling lay the neurological foundation for the child's life.

Because the peaks in a child's brain development for literacy, numeracy, social skills and emotional control all occur from ages one to three, the changes to a child's brain around this period are unlikely to be reversed. As a result, the return on investment during and close to this period is greater than for any other time in a person's life.

Because Parent-Child Mother Goose initiated a training and certification process for Parent-Child Mother Goose Program teachers nation-wide and internationally almost 30 years ago, there have been Parent-Child Mother Goose programs for many thousands of parents, babies and young children in every province in Canada as well as Australia, China, United States, Iran, and Ecuador. Program languages include Indigenous languages, English, French, Spanish, Somali, Farsi, Mandarin, and ASL

Principal Activities 2018-2019

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

Programs

Highlights from the Field

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 from teachers' end-of-term reports and participant questionnaires in order to preserve confidentiality. Thank you, all, for the great information!

One mother has been coming to the program since her oldest child was young. She then came with her middle child and recently returned with a new baby. Because she is thoughtful and gracious and has always enjoyed and related to the stories, she now takes a leadership role in reflecting on what the story means to her in her life and how it makes her feel, which makes it easier for the newer parents to connect with the story and join in the conversation.

One of the mothers did not connect very well with the babies despite having three children of her own. As the program progressed, she gradually opened up and seemed to become more aware of her situation. Fortunately her baby joins in with or without his mother's assistance, and the baby's responsiveness together with the encouragement of the teachers is helping the mother to become more comfortable in the group and more engaged with her children.

The mothers appreciated that because the same families were together each week and developed trust in one another, they were able to share mutual concerns that they would not discuss in a drop-in program. One mother also attributed her baby's easy transition to daycare to what she and her baby had learned with Mother Goose.

One mum told a story about being frustrated in a non-Mother Goose program because she was asked to force her very active child to sit in the circle. At Mother Goose she felt welcome and at ease because, although the basic set-up involves sitting in a circle, children are not forced to remain there. They can still listen when they are moving around and eventually they become so engaged by the material and the group feeling that they will want to be in the circle – mostly! At

any rate, the parent is still learning how to engage with her child when they are at home, which of course is most of the time.

One Spanish family was referred to the program by a speech therapist because their almost two-year-old son was not speaking words yet, only making sounds. He is shy but extremely attentive and engages joyfully with the teachers and other children, sometimes running into the room and sitting down when he hears a favorite rhyme, and sometimes peeking out from behind his mother with a big smile when he recognizes a rhyme. The teachers incorporate Spanish rhymes and stories into the program, and he is beginning to say words here and there. His mother is very pleased and very proud of him.

The parents in one group go to the park together and see each other socially because of the community that has formed in the program.

One of the newer mothers was fascinated by the stories and always talked afterwards about her experiences growing up and memories of hearing stories from her wise grandmother. Other parents began to share their experiences of storytelling growing up in their various cultures, and the discussions became a bridge between their individual childhoods and their more recent experiences in Canada. This was stimulating and supportive for the adults and inspired them to share their childhood stories with their own children.

One program had a young boy from The Gambia who spoke neither English nor his mother tongue. After just one session of the program, he was always so excited to be there. He says names, knows rhymes by heart, and is very happy.

In the same program, the youngest infant had learned a lot of the actions that go with the rhymes, while another boy told his father that he was “studying at Mother Goose”.

One child who speaks Tamil at home, when practicing his English, loves to say, “You you monkeys, give me back my caps!” which is a line from one of the stories he has heard in the program.

Another child who has some language delays is really excited to be at the program and tries his best to do the actions of the rhymes. This familiarity and enjoyment will serve him well as his language skills develop.

A babe in arms in one program seemed to be more responsive when held by program staff because his own mother seemed to be struggling with pain. When the mother was encouraged to engage more with her child, she made the effort to follow what she had seen the staff do, and she seemed comforted when others shared their personal experiences with her.

One little boy who attends consistently has developed so well socially that he is comfortable interacting with everyone and “welcomes” the new babies that come! Even if his mother leaves the room, he is fine and never cries.

One Mum had come in the past with her eldest son, who is three now. At that time she was really uncomfortable with being a mother. Even doing the rhymes there was no real interaction with her child, and she didn't always stay for the full hour. Gradually she became one of the most loyal and enthusiastic participants. Now she comes with both her older child and her new baby, whom she has been bringing ever since he was two weeks old – and in winter! She takes opportunities when her baby is with one of the staff to do rhymes with her older boy. The program has made such a difference in her life that she is interested in becoming a PCMG teacher.

QUOTES FROM PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

- Interacting with the other babies means a lot to my son, as he does not go to daycare. Mother Goose is often the only time that he sees other babies.
- I would like to thank everyone at the program for making us feel welcome.
- I like to socialize with the other parents and I appreciate the diversity of backgrounds.
- There is always a lesson to learn in each story.
- The program meant a lot to me. We love the rhymes, and I know the program will help my son's future mental development. Its great that the stories are interactive!
- We love learning new stories.
- The stories get my imagination going!
- The stories are relaxing.
- The stories are fun!
- The stories make us feel good.
- In the program my child learns how to be sociable with children and adults. She engages in both listening and participating.
- We enjoy interacting with other parents and children and learning rhymes and stories to use at home.
- My child loves to listen to everyone singing. Music can be a good distraction! That made a big difference with my oldest. Keep it going! We will miss our teacher tremendously.
- I like learning new ways of telling stories and singing songs.
- It helps to break up the routine and get out of the house with my child.
- My baby enjoys the change of scenery and all the different stimuli.
- We like learning songs and rhymes that are at the right level for both my children.
- It is good for parents to be able to share with each other.
- The program definitely calms my active kid, and my older daughter sings along as well.
- It's a way to communicate with my baby.
- Great for moms with newborns as well as for second-time moms.
- It gives us a social outing together, something that has become familiar to my baby and enriches the middle of our week. It's a structure that I believe new parents need.

- The stories are fun and playful, but also calm and social. It's great for the kids' brain development and language learning. We can connect with our children afterwards by talking about the stories.
- Knowing rhymes and songs together gives us a way to connect at any moment during the day. It calms my child and allows him to focus. We will miss coming during the summer!
- The program really engages us and I like meeting other moms.
- It is good for my daughter to see other children and adults and get more comfortable with meeting people.
- Having a snack was a lovely surprise. It's good to observe healthy eating outside the home.
- My favourite thing about the stories is the animated delivery!
- Moms get a bit of a break from their babies when they bring them to the program.
- It is an opportunity to listen to a great story creative told.
- I love the culture of oral storytelling because it fosters imagination. I love that the program keeps it alive.
- The stories are an unfolding of events, but also fun repetition and sound effects.
- We are always happy and excited to come to the program.
- Thank you. Everybody is friendly and nice.
- Every morning my son asks if it's Mother Goose day!

Program Statistics

The 297 adults and 360 children registered in our directly delivered Parent-Child Mother Goose programs in Toronto this year were culturally diverse, and many shared rhymes and stories from their mother tongues. Program participants' cultures and languages included: Amharic, Arabic, Assyrian, Creole, Cantonese, Croatian, Dari, English, Farsi, French, German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Hausa, Italian, Mandarin, Mandingo, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Tagalog, Tigrinia, Tamil, Tibetan, Urdu, Vietnamese, and Yoruba.

Program Funding

The majority of the direct costs of our Lakeshore, Parkdale and two Elmbank Programs were funded by City of Toronto Community Services Partnership. The direct costs of our bilingual Somali Program were funded by Etobicoke Brighter Futures Coalition. Our Malvern Program was funded by the Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation and the Tippet Foundation. TD Canada Trust provided additional support for the Elmbank Infant and Elmbank Two to Four Programs. First Nations Project funding was provided by the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The George Lunan Foundation, Jackman Foundation, and Potruff Family Foundation provided all-program funding. Please see Donors below for full list. Thank you!

Social Enterprise Activities

Our workshops, 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.

PCMG Teacher Training Workshops

Teacher training workshops create new Mother Goose teachers, expand and strengthen the network of Mother Goose programs, and help to maintain the standards of programs as well develop important skills and awareness in people who work with children in other ways. PCMG delivered 21 teacher training workshops in 2018-2019 in Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario.

Book and Disk Sales

Our most popular books were *Where are the Stars?* and *The Moon is Round*. The most popular CD's were *A Smooth Road to London Town* and *Savez-vous planter des choux?*

Partnerships

Big Trout Lake First Nation

M'Chigeeng First Nation

Sandy Lake First Nation

Indigenous parents still live in the shadow of the residential school experience that almost destroyed their cultural identity. As desirable as it may be for today's Indigenous parents to enhance their own parenting skills, they must be allowed to do so in the light and spirit of their own culture.

Thanks to an Ontario Trillium Foundation \$105,200 designated grant, PCMG is supporting parenting and early child development programs for two years for parents with their children aged 0 to 4 in each of three remote northern Ontario communities: Big Trout Lake First Nation (Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug), M'Chigeeng First Nation, and Sandy Lake First Nation.

Programming will be led by trained PCMG teachers from the community. Local elders and extended family will be welcome and encouraged to participate. To create the PCMG teachers, PCMG has delivered two-day PCMG teacher training workshops to adults from the health, education, and childcare sectors in each community. Trainees who do not teach a classic PCMG program can immediately apply their new skills in their own work with children.

We are thrilled to engage in this partnership with First Nations communities!

Etobicoke Brighter Futures Coalition

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

Program and Training Committee

The Program & Training Committee are 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 women who do the invaluable work of maintaining the integrity of our programs and workshops.

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.

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 with families through Somali Immigrant Aid, where the parents study English.

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
- Birchmount Bluffs Neighbourhood Centre
- Blue Hills Child and Family Centre
- Centre for Immigrant and Community Services
- Davenport Perth Neighbourhood and Community Health Centre
- Parkdale High Park OEYC (Earls court-Creche Child Development Institute)
- 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
- Mothercraft/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 the Canadian Association of Families Canada (previously known as the Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs FRP), Ontario Nonprofit 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.

Looking to the Future

Parent-Child Mother Goose Program in Australia

The education department In Australia is accrediting the two-day PCMG teacher training workshops specifically for Early Years teachers and aides.

Parent-Child Mother Goose Research and Articles

We will be posting links on our new website that will take you to three repositories of research and articles for the PCMG community:

- Parent-Child Mother Goose Research, Articles
- Parent-Child Mother Goose - Related Research, Articles
- First Nations Early Childhood Resources

Please use, enjoy, and share!

Parent-Child Mother Goose in Sarajevo!

We are enormously grateful to PCMG teacher, workshop facilitator, storyteller, and Program and Training Committee member Lynda Howes and PCMG teacher and storyteller Sarah Abusarar, who speaks Croatian, for the wonderful enthusiasm and initiative they displayed in delivering two demonstration programs and a teacher training workshop in Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Lynda and Sarah will stay in touch on Skype with the programs in Sarajevo.

In Memoriam

Taima Tyebjee was a long-time member of the Parent-Child Mother Goose community. Taima was a participant in the Parkdale program with her son, who is now 23, and a fabulous storyteller and friend of many of us in the storytelling community. She also served on the board of directors and contributed a story from India to *I Bring You a Story*. Taima's husband Qaid came by recently to purchase two copies of the book, as he wanted to have copies of her story to give to relatives. We extend our deepest condolences and appreciation to Taima's family.

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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Samina Hashmi
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Donors

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Thank you!

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