

ANNUAL REPORT

Vermont Square Parent-Child Mother Goose Program

2019 - 2020

November 27, 2020

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.

Since 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 2019-2020

- 6 PCMG programs to underserved Toronto communities: Lakeshore, Elmbank Infant, Elmbank 2-4, Parkdale, Malvern, and Somali
- 19 PCMG Teacher Training Workshops across Canada to train PCMG teachers for agencies that wish to offer PCMG programs in their own communities, including two in First Nations communities under a designated Trillium grant
- 571 books and disks to PCMG program providers and families across Canada and in Australia and Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- 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 so much to the program teachers for sharing these inspiring stories and quotes!

Though our program teachers missed the face-to-face sessions, they found it beautiful to have families invite them "into their homes", which gave them the opportunity to meet many other family members that they otherwise would never have met. Our program families shared how helpful it was to have the program to look forward to during isolation.

The eldest child in one family, a four-year-old, came every week and did the rhymes and songs on her doll while her mother did the rhymes and songs with the youngest child. Sometimes Dad also came, and they all did the program together. Infant and child alike knew all the rhymes. On the last day the eldest child had pictures drawn to give to the Mother Goose teachers and childcare. The drawings were about the stories and rhymes she had heard and loved.

The grandmother of one of the toddlers said that her grandchild did not speak much, but soon he started singing along to the songs that he particularly liked, and in the last session of the term when his mother brought him, he was more talkative and interactive than he had ever been.

One of the mothers had attended with two children and returned with a third. She shared that it was very reassuring to her to have people that she trusted accept without judgment that she had needed to take a bit of time away for herself without her children in order to regroup and recharge. The group was still there for her when she returned.

Babies' Best Start home visitors came to the one of the programs to reconnect with the group and refer new participants to the program.

At the start of the lockdown, a single mother with two girls who was on the email list for the virtual program, wrote asking if the teachers knew where she might access some help. She was out of money for supplies and didn't know what to do. The teachers were able to put her in touch with a program at the neighbourhood community health centre that quickly got in touch with her to offer support, including gift cards to local stores to see her through.

One mother had been coming to our program for about four years, first with her older boy and then with his baby brother, but did not show up for Zoom. When her teachers phoned her, she sounded as if she was dealing with things very well and, like other parents, said she was using the rhymes she had learned with us at home with her children. This was wonderful news because when she first came to the program, she was struggling with her mental health and lacked confidence and commitment in her role as a mother. She was often noticeably unskillful with her child and within the group dynamic. Over time she became one of our most devoted participants, relaxed as a parent, and even extended herself to new participants. Her teachers had watched her grow over the years and were delighted that she seemed undaunted by this crisis.

One mother reported that using specific rhymes like *From Wibbleton to Wobbleton* helped with getting her baby to sit up.

A first-time mom with twins felt very good to learn a lot of rhymes that she uses every day with her babies. She mentions that her girls are now getting verbal and she gives Mother Goose a lot of credit for helping them learn to speak faster and more easily.

One mom who came with her older child for the first time came back with her second six years later. She loves the program a lot!

One mother who came almost every week became increasingly interested in the stories. She gradually increased her confidence and began to tell one or two at home. She remembered hearing stories as a child and said she had discovered a new passion through Mother Goose. She requested her favourite story be told again so she could learn it, asked questions about storytelling, and developed a commitment to using stories with her family. Her questions and enthusiasm encouraged all of the participants. This mother also talked about the many other ways that our program helped her deal with the isolation and hard work of mothering two young children in lockdown.

QUOTES FROM PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

We absolutely loved the program, which you could probably tell by our attendance! The teachers are so great at what they do. We sing the songs and rhymes everyday all day. We now give the girls two choices of Mother Goose rhymes and they say the one they want. Its amazing!

I'm glad we had these Zoom meetings every week. It's been great to have the connection. If we can't meet in person, we can do this and have the connection with all the other parents and singing. Please keep it going, it is working, so let's keep it going. I will miss everyone over the summer.

When I first brought my daughter she was only three months old. I remember that the teachers said then that I would start to remember the rhymes and use them. And now I do! She is 11 months old now, and it's amazing. She is starting to say some words, she knows the rhymes and recognizes them, and she loves to do them.

The Zoom program was really good for us. It was something to look forward to each week. We have no other program like this. We like doing the same songs each week and practicing them at home. It was nice to have his big brother join us too sometimes.

I came as often as I could, but I am looking after my mother with dementia and my baby at home. This lockdown time has been very hard for me. We only moved to Canada in January.

My granddaughter has only this one Zoom program every week that is just for her. Her older brother is doing all his classes on Zoom and there is lots for him, but this is the only one for her. Even her big brother, who does it with her, says it's very fun and his favourite part is seeing everyone, the teachers and the families we used to play with. We would do it every day of the week if we could!

I really miss the in-person sessions, but it was a great alternative for these unforeseen circumstances. Thank you for welcoming my daughter and me to the program. :)

I'd like to say thank you for the amazing introduction to the world of song for our son. He has learned great tunes and silly moves while making new friends and acquaintances. His social skills have developed very quickly with the interaction and socializing with his peers. We really appreciate what you have done and continue to do.

At first it was so funny talking to people on screen, and now we're used to it!

I like learning new things about other cultures.

My daughter loves when I use the songs for everyday activities.

It was nice to be able to involve my older daughter when she was here. She loves the storytelling.

I enjoyed it for myself. Coming to the Zoom program was therapeutic for me too!

I started coming to PCMG just before Covid. Then for weeks I was at home, but after a while I started coming to the Zoom Mother Goose. We are having fun and learning lots of rhymes. It's nice to hear good stories too.

I enjoyed meeting new people and having my son interact with other children. And it was fun listening to stories that were not out of a book. We have enjoyed the program a lot.

Thank you for supporting this program and allowing it to be free to our community.

Program Statistics

There were 245 adults and 286 children registered in our directly delivered Parent-Child Mother Goose programs in Toronto this year. Numbers were down slightly due to Covid-19 even though we adapted to virtual programming in April.

Participants were as usual 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 the City of Toronto Community Services Partnership. TD Canada Trust provided additional support for the Elmbank Infant and Elmbank Two to Four Programs.

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.

General program funding was provided by the Tippet Foundation, Peter Gilgan Foundation, George Lunan Foundation, J.P. Bickell Foundation, St. Andrew's Charitable Foundation, Potruff Family Foundation, and Jackman Foundation.

First Nations Project funding was provided by the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

Please see Donors below for full list of all donors. Many thanks!

Social Enterprise Activities

Thanks to a model developed in 1992 by PCMG co-founder Celia Lottridge, our PCMG teacher training workshops and 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.

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 2019-2020 in Alberta, British Columbia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario, and Yukon

Book and Disk Sales

Our most popular books were *Zoom Zoom Zoom*, *The Moon is Round*, and *Where are the Stars?* The most popular CD's were *Sally Goes Round the Sun* and *Sally Goes Round the Moon*.

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 parenting skills, they must do so in the light and spirit of their own culture.

Thanks to a designated Ontario Trillium Foundation \$105,200 grant, PCMG is working with three northern Ontario First Nations communities to support parenting and early child development for parents and their children aged 0 to 4.

We are thrilled to engage in this partnership with these First Nations communities and look forward to extending the original two-year grant period after the pandemic.

Parent-Child Mother Goose in Australia

We are in regular contact with our fellow Geese in Australia, particularly regarding virtual PCMG teacher training workshop procedures, which they were very quick to move on, since they do not have workshop facilitators across their large country, as we do. We also sent 50 PCMG books as a small comfort during the terrible fires they were enduring.

Babies' Best Start

Babies' Best Start refers vulnerable participants to our Malvern program. Their home visitors who have taken our training sometimes visit our programs to enhance and supplement their early child development expertise, and they contributed to our book *I Bring You a Story*.

Etobicoke Brighter Futures Coalition

As a long-time member of the outstanding EBFC, who fund 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 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, and refers the program parents to study English and computer use.

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 (Earlscourt-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 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.

Special Mention

Parent-Child Mother Goose in Sarajevo

The new PCMG teachers in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina were set to begin their program in spring 2020 when the pandemic set in. Workshop facilitator Lynda Howes and PCMG teacher Sarah Abusharar, who initiated the teachers' training, have stayed in touch with them on Skype and shared our resources on virtual PCMG programming.

Parent-Child Mother Goose in Iran and Afghanistan

Since 2011 Dr. Guita Movallali has been offering a customized Mother Goose program at her Faranak Clinic at Tehran in Iran. The program supports children who are deaf or hard of hearing together with their parents. Recently Dr. Movallali was contacted by a group in Afghanistan who would like to set up a similar program. We are in communication with Dr. Movallali about providing virtual Mother Goose teacher training for the Afghanistan group.

Parent-Child Mother Goose Research and Articles

We continue to post new material to our 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!

1001 Friday Nights

This wonderful storytellers' group has been gathering in downtown Toronto for 40 years! Once again this year dear Pat Bisset organized one gathering as a benefit for PCMG, raising \$500 in individual donations. Hats off to the amazing Pat Bisset, the storytellers, and their donors!

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!

Program Director Ruth Danziger
Office and Social Enterprise Manager Jag Parmar

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Sarah Abusharar
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Volunteers:

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Teacher Training Workshop Facilitators

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Celia Lottridge
Terrie Moar
Ginger Mullen
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We are immensely grateful to our donors,
who so generously support our cause!

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- Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation
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2019-2020 Donors in Kind

- Alderwood Centre, City of Toronto
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- Midaynta Community Services
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- Toronto Community Housing Corporation
- Toronto Public Library, Malvern Branch
- WholeNote Media
- WordPress

Thank you!

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Vermont Square Parent-Child Mother Goose Program

