

A Child's Song

● Consultation, Education and Therapeutic Services

A Child Song Adoption Conference **Workshop Schedule**

Saturday, November 1st, 2014



For more information visit www.achildssong.ca

8:30 am – 9:00 am

Registration & Coffee (Sunrise Room)

9:00 am – 10:30 am

Keynote Speaker - Dr. Vanessa LaPointe (Main Room)

Anchored With Hope: Making Sense of the Attachment Brain in Transplanted Children

For the child who has been “transplanted” there have been goodbyes and there have been hellos. And through all of that, something very intense and instinctive happens to the attachment brain. As the attachment brain reacts, adapts, and attempts to make sense of all of this, interesting, sometimes difficult, and often hard to make sense of behaviors can surface. The child might respond at times in ways that confound and seemingly escape reason. Whole developmental systems can appear delayed or slowed. Intense emotions can bubble through. Unfortunately, popularized approaches to discipline and child development are often remiss in addressing what can be highly complex, developmental needs for children who have been transplanted. We will discuss the foundational developmental needs of the child through the lens of attachment. We will use this understanding to make sense of behaviours and other complexities. And we will blend all of this together to arrive at ways to respond such that true rest might be found and genuine growth fostered.

10:30 am – 12:00 pm

Breakout 1A - N. Sonya Vellet, Ph.D., R.Psych (Sunrise Room)

Understanding the Matching Process

Research highlights the importance of attachment issues for children in foster care and how crucial it is that we are making good decisions about placements either foster or adoptive. Disruptions to a child's primary attachment relationships, combined with a history of maltreatment, increase the risk for developing insecure or disorganized attachment to future foster or adoptive parents. A child's successful passage through the foster care system requires a high level of foster and adoptive parent sensitivity to the child's early experiences and how this has and will continue to impact their overall development. Based on my extensive clinical experience and my current research findings, I have discovered that there are several factors that can promote optimal outcomes for children being adopted from foster care. In making placement decisions for both foster care and adoptive homes, professionals must first take into consideration crucial information about the child's early history, biological vulnerability, cognitive functioning, self-regulation, quality of their attachment relationships, losses and anticipated needs. Equally careful consideration must be given to the characteristics and perspective of prospective foster and adoptive parents such as unresolved trauma and loss, anticipated parenting strategies, family life stress, intra and extra familial in order to optimize a best matching between family and child. This workshop offers participants new information that will give them a framework for making evidence-based, informed decisions about placements that are in the best interest of each child being placed with a foster or adoptive parent.

Breakout 1B - Meagan VanDiermen, MA, RCC (Horizon Room)

Exceptional Parenting: Understanding the Unique Needs of Adoptees

Whether you are a parent through adoption, fostering or raising a relative you know that a high level of care giving is required to meet the needs of your child. All children who have been abused, neglected, witnessed violence or have had multiple caregivers have experienced some degree of trauma. These experiences can interfere with the typical course of development for children. Traditional discipline responses are ineffective and often counterproductive for traumatized children. Yet the behaviors of young adoptees often leave parents feeling unsure of how to best meet their child's needs. Even when these children are placed in a safe, loving home they often continue to respond in ways that were previously adaptive but are no longer necessary. Exceptional Parenting offers insight and practical suggestions to increase parent confidence in meeting the needs of their children.

Breakout 1C - Cate McPherson and Choices Representative (Sunset Room)

MCFD and CHOICES Adoption Information Session

Choosing to adopt is a life changing decision and leads to many more decisions that can seem overwhelming for adoptive parents. One of the first decisions is choosing whether you will pursue a local ministry adoption, domestic or international adoption. Then you may need to decide which adoption agency you are going to work with. Cate McPherson from the Ministry for Children and Families will provide participants with information about adopting children from our local foster care system. There are over 1000 children in BC waiting for a forever family. A representative from CHOICES adoption agency will speak to participants about working with an adoption agency to facilitate inter country and domestic adoption. This workshop will provide clear and accurate information to support adoptive parents in making the decisions that fit best for their family. There will be opportunity for questions and discussion.



1:15 pm – 2:30 pm

Breakout 2A - Dr. Joanne Crandall, PhD and Andrea Chatwin, MA, CCC (Sunrise Room)

Transitioning Children from Foster Care to Adoption Transitioning a child from foster care to adoption is a complex process with significant implications for the future development of the parent child relationship. Planning transitions based on current 'best practice' can be slow, confusing and at times discouraging for those involved. The purpose of this presentation is to explore current trends in transitioning young children from foster care to adoption and then, to provide guiding principles that support more effective, research based ways to support the transition. Through the use of case studies and visual representations, participants will develop a deeper understanding of the children's needs during transition. The transition process is a highly complex one that includes many factors such as the role of culture, the lived experience of both foster and adoptive parents as well as the role of community. Once the transition process is more fully understood, guidelines will be presented to the participants. The guidelines that have been developed are based on the presenter's field experience as well as current research on neurobiology, infant mental health and trauma. Participants will be given an opportunity to explore through the use of case studies how to apply the principles in 'real life' so they will be better able to incorporate them into their own practice.

Breakout Session 2B - Carol Alexander, MA, RCC (Horizon Room)

Therapeutic Play to Strengthen Parent-Child Connection

Psychologists Virginia Axeline and Gary Landreth brought this non directive approach to play into the realm of children and families. They theorized that playing with a child in a nondirective way would encourage a secure relationship between the parent and child while providing the child freedom and room to express him or herself. In the context of this play, children are free to express their innermost thoughts and feelings. A child's behavior and self-expression within the play is determined by how the child feels and what's on their mind which offers parents a window in to the child's inner world. In special, non-directive playtimes parents can learn to build a different kind of relationship with their child, one where the child feels understood and accepted as they are. When children feel accepted and understood in this way, they often will play out their problems and in the process release tensions, feelings and problems. In her work with adoptive families Carol has witnessed the power of relational activities that promote acceptance and provide insight to the child's thoughts and feelings. She has been teaching new adoptive parents non-directive play techniques for several years and is excited to have this opportunity to help parents understand the benefits of making time for this play as well as teach the basic techniques parents need to get started on their play journey.

Breakout Session 2C - Andrea Dixon, BA, RSW (Sunset Room)

Understanding the Homestudy Process

The homestudy process is intended to support parents in making educated decisions about the way they form their family. The process can also help prepare parents for the experiences that lay ahead. Parents are not meant to be recipients of this service but active participants in looking at how both the past and the present influences the way they will parent. Andrea Dixon will guide participants through the process, addressing why the home study process is so essential and what parents can expect in terms of their role in the process. She will speak to the importance of the relationship that is built between the applicants and their social worker and how decisions are made.



2:45 pm – 4:00 pm

Breakout 3A - A Child's Song Therapy Team (Sunrise Room)

Overview of Parent Child Therapies and Adoption Specific Services for Adoptive Families

A Child's Song provides a variety of services that are specifically tailored to meet the needs of adoptive families. We offer education, consultation and therapeutic services for adoptive families, communities and professionals caring for adoptees or adoptive parents. As a therapeutic team we believe that parents are the key to the healing and transformation of their children. Through research and practical application we have identified two therapeutic interventions that are most effective for adoptive families, Child Parent Relationship Therapy and Watch, Wait and Wonder Intervention. This workshop will cover all of the available services for adoptive families and the rationale for why these services meet the unique needs of these families. Professionals will leave with a better understanding of what service to refer families to, when the service will be most effective and what to expect in terms of outcomes.

Breakout Session 3B - Martin Bartel, MTS-C, RMFT, RCC (Horizon Room)

Making Sense of the Emotional Experience of Parenting Your Adopted Child

As a clinical therapist and adoptive parent Martin will speak to the unique emotional journey of the adoptive parent. Research supports that adoptive parents, particularly those parenting children with a history of abuse and trauma, have a unique set of emotional experiences. Parents often find themselves triggered by the behavior of their children and reacting in ways that they had never intended to. Adoption brings into the parent child relationship dynamics that are unique and powerful. Understanding where the feelings come from, what they mean and how to manage them effectively is essential to being able to parent effectively.

Breakout Session 3C - Andrea Dixon, BA, RSW and Meagan VanDiermen, MA, RCC (Sunset Room)

Emotional Preparedness for Prospective Adoptive Parents

From the instant that you first consider adoption you are on a journey to discover if adoption is the right choice for you and how you will parent your child. Adoption is a beautiful way to bring a child into your home. It's also a long and emotionally complex process for all people involved. Prospective adoptive families benefit from being knowledgeable about adoption issues and the impact of their child's early experiences. Andrea, an adoption social worker and Meagan, an adoption therapist will speak to the unique emotional ups and downs that come with the adoption process. Parents will have an opportunity to ask questions about the experiences of other adoptive families and how they can best prepare themselves.

