



## 2021/22 **ANNUAL REPORT**

*Mount Pleasant Family Centre Society is located in unceded Coast Salish territory, represented today by the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations.*

# CO-CHAIR'S MESSAGE

E. Farah Samli



This summer marks the Mount Pleasant Family Centre Society's (MPFCS) 46th year of serving our community. During this third year of the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing vaccination rates have helped our community return to more frequent in-person activities and the Centre's program offerings have continued to grow in response.

Our Drop-in programs, ABC Time (School Readiness program), various parenting programs (including Nobody's Perfect, Neufeld: Making Sense of Preschoolers and Circle of Security), and the Circles of Care and Connection (CCC) Early Years Refugee Programs have all experienced increased engagement manifesting our vision of "a vibrant, joyful child and family community where families connect, share, learn and grow."

The ability of MPFCS to meaningfully respond to our community's evolving needs would not be feasible without the dedication of our passionate and creative staff, our volunteers, donors, and community partners. I am thankful to Virginia (Gini) Bonner for her leadership and service during her tenure as Executive Director and wish her well on her future adventures. I also want to recognize our incredible staff for their professionalism and daily devotion to our community, advancing our shared mission of "inspiring families to build caring relationships with each other, our neighbours and the broader community." I am especially thankful to our Program Manager, Theresa Tang, who served as Interim Executive Director this summer. Theresa's stewardship of the society and support of the staff during the transition months, enabled all MPFCS programming and services to continue uninterrupted.

The society's collective efforts this summer set the stage for the arrival of our new Executive Director at the end of August, Sanja Sladojevic. I am thrilled to have Sanja's inspiring servant-minded leadership at the helm of our society. She brings extensive not-for-profit experience working with several neighborhood houses and family places, including working at the MPFCS earlier in her career as the Program Manager for our own Circles of Care and Connection Early Refugee Program. Sanja's recent experiences developing and implementing programs for immigrant families at the Immigrant Services Society of BC and the Pacific Immigrant Resources Society are directly relevant to our growing community needs at MPFCS. For those who have not had the opportunity to meet her, Sanja exudes warmth and is passionate about building community connections in a manner that embraces inclusivity and diversity. I am delighted to have her back at MPFCS as our new Executive Director.

In closing, I thank our previous Chair, Michelle Horn, for her willingness to continue supporting MPFCS (virtually) as my Co-Chair on the Board of Directors this past year. For myself, and many Board Directors, it was our own experiences of connection, support and community while participating in MPFCS programs that inspired in us a desire to give back to the society. For any readers resonating with this experience, I invite you to consider joining the Board of Directors, where you can support MPFCS through an invaluable donation of your time and professional expertise.

As I look forward to the year ahead, I thank you for being a part of our community this past year.



# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Sanja Sladojevic



It is a great pleasure to work at Mount Pleasant Family Centre Society again and a real honour to be here in my new executive director role. MPFCS has been a part of my life since I moved to Vancouver. My family still remembers going to the centre and enjoying fun activities and field trips when our children were young.

Knowing how important it is to have a friendly, safe and supportive place for families with young children, was one of the reasons why I decided to work in family resource programs. Over the last 20 years, I have held various positions in the field. I facilitated programs such as family drop-ins, Nobody is Perfect and Mother Goose. I also managed family resource programs at a neighbourhood house. For several years, I coordinated city-wide projects including Parent Connector Program and Open Doors to Learning. MPFCS participated and played an important role in those projects. I am really excited about collaborating with other family places and non-profit organizations again, working with our amazing donors, funders and partners and developing new partnerships.

Having lived in different countries, I understand how difficult it is to settle in a new place, especially if you have been forced to leave your home. As a result, I always wanted to help newcomers and refugees. From 2015 until recently I worked with newly-arrived government-assisted refugees (GARs), first as a manager of our Circles of Care and Connection (CCC) program and then as an ISSofBC Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) manager.

I look forward to working with our Board of Directors and MPFCS staff to ensure that the Family Centre continues running the existing programs, and to explore new programming opportunities that will help and support families with young children.

It has been a real pleasure meeting our participants and hearing how they enjoy coming to MPFCS programs where they can relax, get support when needed, learn new things and connect with other parents and caregivers while their children are playing and meeting new friends.

I hope that our in-person services will not be interrupted again and I look forward to seeing you soon at our Family Centre.

# HIGHLIGHTS 2021-2022



## Special Events

Perhaps what we are proudest of is how the community came out in big numbers to celebrate Mount Pleasant Family Centre Society's 45th Anniversary, August 2021. Robson Park was filled with over 190 community members and we celebrated with amazing activities, many memories, Anniversary tattoos, and Anniversary chocolate.



## Dad's Drop-in Programs

After some COVID-19 downtime, our Dads' Drop-In resumed in September 2021 and we welcomed over 250 visits from Dads and their families on Saturday mornings.

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM DROP-IN

Despite COVID-19, a Heat Dome, and Flooding, MPFCS staff rallied and continued to offer services for 45 of our regular 50 week fiscal year. What a year of resiliency, dedication, and determination!! Thank you to all!

- 196 NEW families were able to use our services
- 229 families became members of our society
- Due to COVID, MPFCS had limited in-person visits but continued to connect with families using many creative outreach options including Curbside Visits, 1:1 Phone calls, Activity Kits, Busy Bags, and through Facebook and Telus Television.



## Drop-in Programs

- We documented over 3700 visits at our Drop-ins whether outdoors, indoors, or a hybrid of both.
- MPFCS playroom VIPs' Maria, Ewa, and Alma produced 175 recordings of "Family Time" for our Facebook page and, they were aired through Telus broadcasting to families throughout British Columbia and Alberta
- Flora and Alma identified an increasing need to support new parents with their babies and increased the number of 'Baby and Me' sessions to twice a week. 'Baby and Me' registered over 600 visits providing ongoing support to many isolated new parents. Guest speakers provided further opportunities and activities to enhance parent-child attachment and child growth and development; these activities included Baby Sign language, Baby Yoga, Storytelling, and Music!



# HIGHLIGHTS 2021-2022



## Farmers Market Outing to Trout Lake and False Creek locations

- 3 outings with 90 families total (104 adults, 41 children)



## Impactful deliveries to our Refugee Families

- 500 Food Bags delivered to temporarily address food security
- 324 Activity Kits delivered to encourage early childhood development activities

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM CCC



### Parent Orientations

- February 16 – our 1st Virtual Parent Orientation with 40 newly arrived refugee participants attended online
- 7 in person parent orientation workshops delivered



### Special Events

- Picnic in the Park at Trout Lake
- 45th Anniversary Celebration at Robson Park
- 71 clients total attendance

### October 2021

CCC received new funding to hire a new Child and Family Settlement Worker to support Short Term Clients residing in Lower Mainland other than Vancouver (i.e. Surrey, Coquitlam, Richmond, Langley).

## OUR FUNDERS



## OUR RESOURCES & COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Mount Pleasant Family Centre Society would like to give a heartfelt thanks to the following supporters:



....and for the unwavering support from our volunteers and donors, our sincerest gratitude.

# BOARD

## **E. FARAH SAMLI**

*Co-Chair*

## **MADELEINE SPECK**

*Secretary*

## **MICHELLE ZAPIOLA**

*Director*

## **SARAH CHU**

*Director*

## **MICHELLE HORN**

*Co-Chair*

## **TOM LINKLATER**

*Treasurer*

## **YAZMIN VAZQUEZ**

*Director*

## **ALDEA PALLARD**

*Director*

# STAFF

## **SANJA SLADOJEVIC**

*Executive Director*

## **BERNADETTE AQUINO**

*Administrative Assistant*

## **MARIA LUZ FERNANDEZ**

*Playroom Coordinator*

## **EWA PACIOREK**

*Family Support Worker*

## **MANJIT GARCHA**

*Senior CFSW*

## **FARNAZ KARIMIZADEH**

*Playroom Coordinator*

## **MAALY BRAKE**

*Child & Family Settlement Worker*

## **JULIE SHIM**

*Child & Family Settlement Worker*

## **THERESA TANG**

*Program Manager, CCC*

## **CATHRYN MCPHEE**

*Program Manager, Drop-in*

## **FLORA PURCELL**

*Adult Program Coordinator*

## **ALMA TULIAO**

*Family Support Worker*

## **NADIYA SHIRAZI**

*Child & Family Settlement Worker*

## **RASHIDA SAMAR**

*ECE Assistant*

## **CHERYL MIXON**

*Case Manager*





# TESTIMONIALS



## Testimonials from our Drop-in families and caregivers:

*"The Mount Pleasant Family Centre has become a home away from home for me and my two young children. The staff are the heart and soul of the space, and are exceptional at what they do. They radiate warmth, humour and wisdom, and are as nurturing to caregivers as they are to their children. I am beyond grateful that this gem exists within our community"*

*"I love the Mount Pleasant Family Centre. And even better the 2 year old twins love it too. Right away we are greeted at the door by a supportive friendly staff. The twins head to their favourite centres. The centres, whether trucks and cars or the kitchen and art centres are always well set up, clean and easily accessible. The staff is amazing, they get down on the floor and play with the kids. They talk to kids and ask what they want to play with. I very much appreciate the Centre. It is a great part of our community and should be supported." - Trisha*

*"It's my son's favorite place in the world!" - Becky*

*"I first attended the Mount Pleasant Family Centre when my son was 4 months old, and it took only 30 minutes for me to realize how amazing it was. When I arrived on that rainy day, I received a warm welcome, one of the staff took my son to the play area, and I was told to have a little rest and some snacks. I became quite emotional, because the idea of someone taking care of my child and me seemed very special. It's a pleasure to be there, and we always feel so supported by the amazing staff, who quickly became part of our extended family.*

*Through the Family Centre, I have also become more connected to other parents. Before I became a mom, I expected it would be easy to connect with other parents when I was out with the baby. But it wasn't easy at all! I did meet many parents and their children during different activities and programs, and we did make some small talk, but to get really connected with someone was difficult. I felt I needed a "parent matchmaker" who was not sleep deprived, stressed, or distracted by watching their running toddler. At the Family Centre, I got something very close to this matchmaker: I got a group of lovely staff who facilitated conversations with other parents, and who provided a wonderful, safe space where I could forget my stresses and distractions, and focus on connecting with other parents.*

*I really can't imagine what I would do without the Family Centre; it's truly a home away from home. It has given me so much, so I joined the Board of Directors to try to give a little back."*



# TESTIMONIALS



## Testimonials from our short term clients from our Home Visiting Program:

*"I would like to use this opportunity to express my best gratitude to you for all the support that you have done for me and my family during the past few months. I really appreciate your professional behaviour as well as your cooperation and coordination skills which resulted in the best outcome from your assistance and support. We are so much satisfied from your service and never forget your friendly manner and your prompt action to support us solving our challenges. Again, thank you so much for everything and for sure we will miss you."*

*"I thank you very much Julie. You are a really wonderful person. I am very happy that I have known and worked with you. I hope to find a counsellor like you in the future again. I will confess to you that when you received our file, everyone around me said try to change the person because you will not be comfortable with someone who does not speak Arabic. But through my work with you, you proved that you are better than all the Arab advisors. My kids are very attached to you, especially my daughter who is a spoiled child. I am sad that I don't expect to have some like you. You made me love my life by spreading hope and self-confidence and overcoming obstacles. We are sad that you won't continue with us. I wish you all success and happy life Julie. You are really wonderful. I hope we can keep in touch. Thank you."*

## Testimonials from our newly arrived CCC clients attending our playroom:

*"This program is very good and I loved it. The way that staff were caring of the kids. This program 100% very good for my kids and for my self as well. I feel here like home. Children learned alphabet and got familiar with art. They wake up early to come to the playroom. Please continue your program. I am very thankful for all the services. Thank you."*

*"A wonderful place, my children loved it very much. My little girl got used to it, and on holidays she starts crying. She wants to go to the playroom. She is treated very kindly and humanely with all the love and respect."*



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### **MPFCS Family Centre at Robson Park**

2910 Saint George Street  
Vancouver, BC V5T 4L9  
604-872-6757  
[info.mpfcs@gmail.com](mailto:info.mpfcs@gmail.com)

### **Circles of Care & Connection**

**(CCC)** - located at ISS of BC  
Welcome Centre

3rd floor - 2610 Victoria Drive  
Vancouver, BC V5N 4L2  
778-372-6552  
[manager.mpfcs@gmail.com](mailto:manager.mpfcs@gmail.com)



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Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations.*