



# *Active Parenting* *...Active Leadership*



The Role of Rural Remote  
and Northern Parents in the  
Development of ECD Services

Best Start Conference

February 2008



Tell us your name and where you are from.

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- In one to three words, write down what you believe is your biggest challenge regarding your role in supporting the development of services for families and young children in:

your community (yellow)

your region (green)

your province (orange)



# Goals of the Day

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- Gain a level of familiarity with the facilitators and the Rural Voices Network
- Be able to identify the key components of the CARS Process
- Be able to identify the steps in the CARS Process
- Be able to identify how the steps in the CARS Process could assist you in your capacity building efforts in local communities
- Understand the importance of engaging parents and the broader community in developing services for families with young children



**Rural Voices For Early Childhood  
Education and Care**



# Rural Voices For Early Childhood Education and Care

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- National support network which provides a means for rural communities to benefit from knowledge, learning and best practices in early childhood education and care locally, provincially and nationally
- Provides a “rural conscience” for other organizations and government
- Focus on sharing knowledge and best practices across jurisdictions



# Rural Voices For Early Childhood Education and Care

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Network is maintained through:

- Electronic means (email and our web site)
- Toll free telephone line
- Individual Mentorship either locally or from afar
- Connecting/matching communities
- Distribution of public education materials
- Development of a common voice for rural remote and northern issues and needs



# Rural Voices For Early Childhood Education and Care

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- Two volunteer co-managers
- Host agency is CFAN (Childcare Family Access Network) in Langruth, Manitoba
- No ongoing funds, but periodically look for funds to complete project activities



# Who are the Presenters?

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- Volunteer Co-Managers of Rural Voices For Early Childhood Education and Care
- Independent Consultants
- Live in small rural communities ( and love it!)
- Started as “Needers not Leaders”
- As young parents, initiated the development of child care options in their rural regions where no services existed (Ontario and Manitoba)



# Who are the Presenters?

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- Learned to facilitate the development of very localized community services through a process that was based on consumer values and vision
- Required the building of ongoing partnerships in communities with limited resources
- The network of programs developed is still in place 20 years later
- Advocate locally, provincially and nationally for public policy change that supports access and responsiveness of services to residents living in rural remote and northern communities

# Resources Offered by Rural Voices

Created, and distributed nationally:

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- A community development workbook and video series called Lessons Learned...Roads Traveled
- A public education CD and Poster package called Rural Child Care ...We're Worth It!
- The CARS training session package including the CARS Indicators of Change Tool and CARS Fact Sheets



# What is CARS?

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**CARS**

**Communities Achieving  
Responsive Services**



# What is CARS?

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- Process not a program
- Group effort not an individual effort
- Collective leadership not one lead organization or person
- Capacity building not isolated learning
- Community driven not government imposed
- Evaluation seen as a beginning not an end (participatory evaluation)



# What is CARS?

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- Engages consumers not just service providers
- Responsive services not just access (service integration)
- Focuses on assets not just needs (partnerships)
- Identifiers of needs are also creators of solutions
- Links community development to public policy development



# Steps in the CARS Process

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## Dare to Dream

1. Identifying Leadership
2. Setting the Stage
3. Creating a Common Community Vision and Values

## Making it Happen

4. Planning for Action
5. Measuring Success
6. Mobilizing Resources – Creating Responsive Solutions
7. Mobilizing Community Partners

## Working For Changes

8. Developing an Interest in Public Policy Development
9. Mobilizing using IEC (Information, Education, Collaboration)
10. Working for Responsive Public Policy Change



# Use of CARS in your Community

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- 1) to explore ways in which groups or organizations that provide services to the same target group can work more closely together
- 2) to develop a new service in your community
- 3) to improve the responsiveness of a service in your community
- 4) to work on improving or changing public policy around a certain issue in your community



# What are the intended results?

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- Sustainable services and leadership
- Better access to services
- Increased community partnerships
- Policies that reflect community need
- More effective use of resources
- Transferable learning, building community capacity



# Group Activity

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- Read the scenarios handed to your group and answer the following questions:
- How is the CARS processes being used?
- What are the main messages of the story?
- What message is most relevant to your community?



# The CARS Advantage

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**Participation** (of community members and partners)


**Diversity** (of community members, groups and sectors participating)

**Ownership** (strong community support and participation)

**Responsiveness** (supports and services that truly respond  
to community need)

**Sustainability** (working together to ensure progress and  
successes are maintained)

**Long Term Change** (working for public policy  
change)





# Building National CARS Capacity

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- **CARS Lawson Project** –hosted by CFAN (Childcare Family Access Network) and funded by the Lawson Foundation -training communities in every province and territory over the next three years- site visits and teleconference training
- **CARS for Women and Children** – hosted by Canadian Women’s Health Network and funded by Social Development Partnerships - training mothers of young children in every province and territory over the next year (5 month training program- two groups of mothers -physical meetings and teleconference training)



# Building National CARS Capacity

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- **CARS National Conference** in Winnipeg on Feb 20-22, 2008
- **CARS Web Site** – part of the CARS for Women and Children project – launching in March 2008
- **CARS Training Packages** negotiated individually through Rural Voices- specific, responsive training and mentoring supports developed for individual communities or regions



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Active Parenting.....

Active Leadership



# CARS process views communities as puzzles.....

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- Many individual pieces to a community
- These pieces have little meaning on their own
- If you look at only one piece you don't see the picture that is potentially in front of you
- When you begin to fit the pieces together you can see a wonderful picture unfold
- Picture becomes clearer with each additional piece





# Active Parenting....Active Leadership

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- consumers of services as natural leaders in the development of community services and supports
- personal need plays a vital role in mobilizing people for action and change
- emphasis is on the service itself rather than the provider or the origin of the service



# Active Parenting....Active Leadership

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- Service development needs to be sensitive to local context and developed with an awareness of local assets and challenges
- create opportunities to engage consumers of services
- Kitchen table meetings, one on one conversations, focus groups, “talk to us” pages like simple surveys, community events



# Active Parenting....Active Leadership

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- Parents should be answering questions like:
  - When should services be available?
  - Where should they be located?
  - Who should be able to attend?
  - What does the service look like?
  - Who could support this service?



# Active Parenting....Active Leadership

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- Best way to get parents involved is through the active leadership of other parents
- CARS is relationship based and therefore easier to engage marginalized populations
- Process of building community confidence and trust



# Group Activity

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Do you see parents as:

- a) **Needers** (use parents for evaluation only....tell us how we are doing? - no role in the process of developing services)
- b) **Partners** (process initiated by others but parents may be requested to play a part – advisory committee – token representation of larger service providers groups)
- c) **Leaders** (take the leading role in developing and implementing community services – service providers become facilitators of community leadership)



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# **CARS for Women and Children Training**





# Leadership

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- Leaders is a skill you can learn
- Learn it best through doing
- Not about one person – if only one person than nothing to lead
- Leadership is about action
- Skills include building relationships, problem solving, active listening, creating shared visions, cultivating shared responsibility
- These are skills anyone would benefit from



DARE TO DREAM

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You as a FACILITATOR



# You as a ***FACILITATOR***

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## Encouraging participation of community members

- Everyone in the community has talents, skills and gifts relevant to community development
- Each time a person uses his/her talents the community is stronger and the person is more empowered
- The CARS process not only helps create solutions to community issues – it contributes to the development “of” the community



# You as a *FACILITATOR*

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## Building community confidence and trust

- Demonstrate that you are open to ideas of others and that you value other people's alternative views
- Need to demonstrate trust *in* others before you can ask for trust *from* others
- Learn how to be an active listener to show your respect for others and their ideas
- Follow through on commitments you make to the group



# You as a *FACILITATOR*

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Ensuring community ownership and inclusiveness

- Important that participant's feel they are directing and controlling the actions and decisions of the group process
- Ensure equal access to information and a high comfort level of all involved
- CARS Facilitators need to be committed to empowering community members to reach their goals
- A good community process is not imposed on people



# You as a *FACILITATOR*

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Organizing opportunities for community members to meet

- Getting together is the beginning of building partnerships, identifying asset and ensuring community commitment to an issue
- Often starts with “kitchen table” meeting of a small group of people
- Must look at other ways for people to participate (ie. surveys, teleconference events, etc..) because not everyone will be willing or able to attend a meeting



# You as a *FACILITATOR*

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## Gathering community wishes and dreams

- Need to help participants dream beyond present boundaries and picture life as they want it to be
- Provide an opportunity to focus on the future without dwelling or being hindered by the past
- Facilitate the gathering of community wishes and dreams into one collective community vision



# You as a *FACILITATOR*

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Promoting mutual understanding  
between participants

- Help participants move forward on what can be agreed upon
- Keep process positive and open – don't hide the conflicts – manage them
- Ensure marginalized groups have a real voice in the process



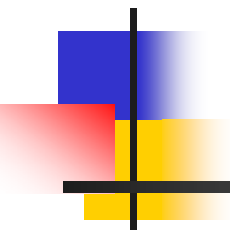
# You as a *FACILITATOR*

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## Cultivating shared responsibility

- No one organization, much less one individual , can drive a good community development process
- Giving people responsibility in the process helps build commitment to the process
- People begin to see themselves as identifier of solutions instead of just an identifier of needs
- Shared responsibility also supports long term sustainability

MAKING IT HAPPEN



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You as an ORGANIZER



# You as an ORGANIZER

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## Taking Minutes

- The role of facilitator is ensure a “running record” of the group’s conversation highlighting decisions and/or actions made
- Facilitator focuses on group process so that participants can focus on content of conversation
- Makes sure minutes are available to all
- Helps participants see the progress being made by the group – no matter how small



# You as an ORGANIZER

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## Summarizing discussions

- Techniques might include reframing or paraphrasing what you hear back to the group
- Stay focused on the present....don't spend the time thinking about what *you* are going to say next
- Don't give advice unless it is requested



# You as an ORGANIZER

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## Supporting problem solving and decision making

- Identify and clarify the problem or issue
- Gather information
- Evaluate the source of the information
- Create solutions and alternatives
- Choose and implement the best solution or alternative



# You as an ORGANIZER

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Helping participants work together

- Realize that conflict is a natural occurrence that needs to be managed – not avoided
- Summarize the main issues involved in both sides of the conflict
- Ask questions and explore the nature of the conflict ensuring both sides receive equal attention
- Consider all available solutions to the conflict
- Work towards finding a mutually acceptable solution without coercion
- Carry out the decision and ask both parties to help evaluate the results



# You as an ORGANIZER

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- Remaining focused on the task
- Get the group to agree on ground rules then post them
- Priorize agenda items and give them a time frame for discussion
- Keep a “parking lot” of issues that are off topic or too detailed to be covered now for discussion later as time permits
- Focus on the disruptive behaviour – to the disruptive person/people
- Always start the meeting on time no matter how many people are there



# You as an ORGANIZER

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## Ensuring ongoing evaluation

- Evaluation is a proactive process
- CARS uses participatory evaluation processes
- Those most effected by a decision or action should be part of the evaluation process
- Evaluation is an opportunity to see what is working, what isn't working and what needs to be changed
- Lessons learned form the basis for next steps



# You as an ORGANIZER

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Asking questions that encourage creative thinking

- Avoid questions with only one acceptable answer
- Break big questions down into smaller questions to make the thinking easier
- For example, instead of starting with "*what is your vision for child care?*" ask "*what is one thing you could not live without if we were developing a child care program?*"



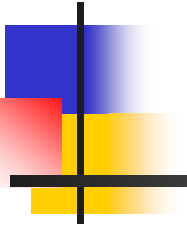
# You as an ORGANIZER

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## Encouraging identification of community assets and partnerships

- Community development, to be successful over the long term, must engage and use the resources of the community
- Critical that we uncover all the local assets and resources available to address local issues
- We must build linkages and relationships among people, institutions and organizations
- Good community processes are not a single process but the development of an intentional strategy
- Process must be valued and supported by a range of participants

# WORKING FOR CHANGE



You as an **ADVOCATE**



# You as an ADVOCATE

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Creating a link between developing services in the community and the creation of government public policy

- A good community development process links other processes together – like public policy processes
- Must explore how the government will be able to respect the wishes of the local community
- Ensure community process is being driven by community members, not by government processes
- Policy can be supportive when it is made with the people whose lives are affected by it. This is because it will better reflect their values, experiences and circumstances



# You as an ADVOCATE

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Helping participants analyze problems and issues

- A good community development process requires advocacy
- Advocacy requires clear understanding of the issues
- Need to ask questions like: What behaviours contribute to the problem? How do these behaviours need to change? Who is affected by this problem? How significant is the effect? What forces keep this problem in tact?



# You as an ADVOCATE

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Generating potential solutions to policy challenges

- To change an existing policy that is unresponsive
- To get rid of an existing policy that is unresponsive
- To stop a new policy that is harmful
- To keep a good policy that is threatened
- To introduce a new policy where one is needed



# You as an ADVOCATE

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Creating opportunities for participants to share community progress with governments

- Look for opportunities to participate in government initiated meetings
- Organize a community initiated meeting with government representatives
- Invite government representatives to visit your group, program or community
- Develop a social marketing campaign (selling an idea by honing in on a communities attitudes to influence social change)