FACULTY OF EDUCATION

ORAL EXAMINATION

NYM HUGHES

FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
EdD

Wednesday, April 29, 2009
SFU Harbour Centre (Room 1525) at 10:00 AM

EXAMINING COMMITTEE

Chair: Dr. Lee Southern

Senior Supervisor: Dr. Geoff Madoc-Jones
Member: Dr. Tom Nesbit
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It Unfolded Quite Wonderfully:
A History of the Certificate in Conflict Resolution at the Justice
Institute of British Columbia 1983–1993

ABSTRACT

The Certificate in Conflict Resolution based at the Justice Institute of British Columbia was a manifestation of a North American conflict resolution movement of the 1970s and 1980s. Its location in a justice and public safety training institution facilitated its emergence and its first decade was marked by exponential growth.

This study makes visible the theoretical and contextual bases of this first Canadian post-secondary conflict resolution educational program. A narrative research approach was used to gather stories from trainers and administrators; archival documents and the relevant literature were examined. The text was created using hermeneutic and dialogical interpretive strategies.

The Certificate’s practical content, short course format and highly interactive teaching methodologies contributed to its popularity. Creating enough trainers to teach all the courses and the self-creation of identity as conflict resolution practitioners were major projects. Course content was based on ideas in circulation coming from disciplines of communication, psychology, game theory and organizational relations. By 1991 a JIBC conflict resolution model had coalesced: a perceptual definition of conflict paired with a four-stage resolution process—setting a co-operative atmosphere, defining concrete issues, identifying interests, and brainstorming mutual agreements. Additional contributions to the teaching of conflict resolution were an emphasis on defusing anger in self and others, and active listening and assertive speaking skills. The experiential pedagogy emphasized coached role-play but contradictory adult education philosophies led to some inconsistencies, particularly in the end-of-program performance assessments.

The early years are remembered as a time of excitement, collegiality and creativity. In the early 90s a new generation of trainers was hired, competition for training days and mediation cases fuelled escalating conflict, and collegiality eroded. Core course content, teaching practices and conflictual relationship patterns solidified and this dissertation recommends as a corrective the adoption of a self-critical stance and the integration of newer, more contextual theory and practice developments.

This study makes contributions to the documentation of the history of the mediation field in Canada, and to the construction of conflict resolution training practice. It also advances discussions of curriculum development, mediator professionalization, and adult education orientation applications.

Academic Record

2001 – M. Ed. Simon Fraser University
1999 – Dip. Adult Ed., Vancouver Community College
1997 – Provincial Instructor Diploma, Vancouver Community College
1987 – Certificate in Conflict Resolution, Justice Institute of British Columbia

Professional Experience

2002 – Present Sessional Instructor, Adult Education, University of the Fraser Valley
2006 – 2009 Specialist: Learner and Instructional Development, Centre for Conflict Resolution, Justice Institute of British Columbia
1995 – 2006 Program Co-ordinator, Centre for Conflict Resolution, Justice Institute of British Columbia
1989 – 1992 Instructor/Co-ordinator, Community Support Worker Program, University-College of the Fraser Valley
1983 – 1988 Instructor/Co-ordinator, Community Access Skills Program, Fraser Valley College