

We asked Vanier Alumni members for their thoughts, reflections and insights about the Institute and its work over the past 50 years. Here's what some of them had to say...

Looking Back

Alumni Reflections on the Vanier Institute



At the heart of the Vanier Institute's founding, survival and longevity lie the deep-rooted beliefs and devotion of a large number of individuals who believed in families of all shapes, sizes and composition, and who invested time, energy and loyalty to an organization committed to the well-being, evolution and growth of all families.

– CARMEN COUILLARD BJERRE, PHD

During my time on the Board, I was introduced to the unique spirit of the Vanier Institute that inhabits everyone, from assistants to Chairs. It is a spirit of being bound to a common, and indeed lofty, purpose of generosity in listening and speaking, of support for each other when facing challenges/obstacles, of a deep and unshakeable faith when things look bleak, of joyful celebration of milestones achieved through innovative and painstaking research translated into meaningful and popular communication through collaboration and shared leadership.

– JAMES GANNON, PHD

For some time, I have considered the Vanier Institute as Canada's equivalent to a "Ministry of the Family," a cabinet post that exists in a number of civil law jurisdictions. Such a Ministry engages in research and policy-making about families in society, including legal initiatives to support and foster families and family living. As we have no equivalent at the national level in Canada, it is the Vanier Institute that tracks the changes in the way families are evolving, the new challenges they are facing and the options for responding to the needs of families in Canada.

– MARY JANE MOSSMAN, LLD (HON)

The consistent high quality media activity and the many publications constitute the Institute's primary contribution to Canadians. This contribution has, very likely, prompted many Canadians to actively try to "feel and see" the current and historical complexities that inhabit each and every family in this land. Creating such awareness is not a small feat.

– JUDITH MARTIN, PHD

Equanimity refers to stability and composure in the face of change, disruption and unexpected events. Over the past 50 years, the Vanier Institute of the Family has demonstrated equanimity in the face of many dramatic changes in families. Throughout these five decades, the Vanier Institute has always been at the forefront of any emerging trends in family life. The Institute has been unwavering in giving precedence to data over rhetoric, thoughtful analysis over political lobbying and respect for all Canadian families over the championing of certain ways of being a family.

– KERRY DALY, PHD