



Looking Forward to the Next 50 Years

NORA SPINKS A lot can happen in 50 years. Individuals, organizations and society are always in a state of transition, perpetually pushed and pulled by social, economic and cultural forces – and by the ways people and institutions respond creatively to this evolving landscape. Today’s society and today’s families would have been difficult to imagine, let alone understand, a half-century ago.

When we look at the “then and now,” the way we interact with one another is significantly different than it was 50 years ago, but the matters that occupy our hearts and minds – our loved ones, our relationships, dealing with transitions in those relationships, care, employment, household functioning, household management, combining work and family – remain constant.

Throughout this time, families have been a stabilizing force, acting, in the words of Dr. Elise Boulding, as “an interface between the private and the public.” This is one of the reasons Governor General Georges P. Vanier considered families an essential cornerstone of society, and why in 1965 he established a research institute devoted to understanding them.

This is a milestone year for the Vanier Institute of the Family, and this edition of *Transition* is focused on the Institute, its roots and its work. We’re taking this opportunity to pause and reflect on what we’ve accomplished and to honour and celebrate the past. This introspective process will help us to understand and appreciate where we are and to look forward to the future.

The Institute was created following the original *Canadian Conference on the Family* in 1964, an event that enhanced the national understanding of families across the country. In June, the *Families in Canada Conference 2015* will mark the start of a new generation of understanding, as we engage in conversation with families and with those who study, serve and support them.

Throughout its history, the Institute has provided information, insights and inspiration. If we are going to continue to do that, we will need to create and seize

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opportunities for imagining and planning the future in an engaging and thoughtful manner. We will need to use all of today’s diverse data sources and innovative communication platforms so we can interact with the public in new ways, so we can “be the change we want to see.”

We will continue to reach out to Canadians, leveraging all of the means available – articles, reports, presentations, lectures, fact sheets, social media and other emerging platforms. Relationships with stakeholders, partners, networks, educators, journalists, business and community leaders and the public will be built upon and nurtured.

We will expand the depth and breadth of our reach as we continue to ensure our relevance and enhance our rigour. We will continue to explore leading and promising practices while listening to and telling the stories behind the statistics, and to examine diverse structures and forms of family as this diversity builds and as our data on that diversity expands. Finally, we will continue to focus on knowledge translation, interpretation and mobilization, acting as a national resource for Canada and Canadians for the next 50 years. ♡

Nora Spinks is the CEO of the Vanier Institute of the Family.