

# Partnerships and Collaborations

## NORA SPINKS

For the past 50 years, the Vanier Institute's partnerships and collaborations with universities and family-oriented organizations have been vital to enhancing our capacity and increasing our understanding of families in Canada.

In 1997, when I was president of Work-Life Harmony Enterprises, I partnered with the Institute to create *The Manager's Work-Family Toolkit*, a publication designed to facilitate work-family balance in small work environments and family businesses. By leveraging our respective skills, knowledge, experience and networks, we were able to create a valuable resource that has stood the test of time.

In 2011, the Institute collaborated with the University of Guelph, the University of Alberta and the Université du Québec à Montréal for the Caregiving & Work project. Through a national survey and a series of round tables and research reports, we examined workplace practices that included a variety of flexible work arrangements, leave policies and supports that enable employees to effectively manage their paid work and caregiving responsibilities. Together, we looked at caregiving and work through employers' and managers' perspectives as well as through the family lens.

In 2012, the Institute and the Canadian Armed Forces launched the multi-year Military Families in Canada initiative - an innovative project to build awareness, capacity, competency and community to ensure military families have access to services and programs in their neighbourhoods. By analyzing data, synthesizing information, organizing resources and mobilizing knowledge, this initiative is building a strong, supportive network to connect community clinicians, researchers and community organizations working with military families.

Last year, the Institute partnered with the Carleton University Survey Centre (CUSC) to explore *families and changing gender roles* as part of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP). This project will shed light on family roles and relationships in Canada - work that will be incorporated into our recognition of the 20th anniversary of the UN's International Year of the Family. We will be releasing survey results through 2014 and 2015.

Currently, the Institute is part of an exciting multi-year collaboration involving 40 researchers, 22 universities and more than 30 community organizations across Canada and around the world. Led by Memorial University in Newfoundland and Labrador, On the Move is examining the phenomenon of employment-related geographic mobility (ERGM) and extended commuting. The Institute is exploring how long-distance commuting impacts family life, neighbourhoods and home and host communities.

In June 2014, we launched a year-long national listening tour gathering *family stories behind the stats*. Partnering with community organizations, we will engage families in conversation about modern family life and family experiences and aspirations, across neighbourhoods in Canada from coast to coast to coast.

It's through partnerships and collaborations like these that the Institute is able to engage individuals and organizations in academia, government, community, business and labour to increase our collective understanding of families in Canada. The *diversity* of strengths and capacities among teaching and learning organizations is perhaps their greatest asset. ◀



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