



## Dear Editor

**T**hank you for your invitation to respond to Deborah Sword's article in your Spring edition. This response is likely old news, but since I just picked up my first copy of *Interaction* at the Family Mediation conference last week, it is new to me ... so I hope it finds a place to be heard.

My background is not law, social work or any other kind of university degree based job. I have enormous respect for the work done in all of these fields but I do not always feel the equal and returning respect for my chosen profession. I have owned or co-owned and operated small businesses in Ontario for 20 years in order to finance my own and my family's daily needs and wishes. I have taken many "post secondary" school courses to satisfy my intellectual or spiritual needs. My primary choice in life however was to dedicate my skills to parenting, family and the hopes for healing community at the grass roots level. From their birth into a world that was being threatened by nuclear war, as a "mother" I learned quickly that raising human beings to exist in a hostile and often uncivilized world was not going to be easy.

My interest in the field of conflict resolution stems from a passion of mine to help heal the place that people are born into.

Five years ago I took courses in mediation and am currently taking York's dispute resolution training program in order to get some "certification." I have years and years of training in the art of caring for people's hearts as well as their day to day dilemmas. I am concerned as I look out into the dispute resolution community today, that it hasn't evolved over the past 5 years as I had hoped it would. The "Attorney General's Roster" seems to carry a certain weight with people currently. I had hoped that mediation would be integrated into the legal community and it appears that it is happening. What is missing for me is a parallel but different community that allows

for the creation of options that do not currently exist. Trying to fit mediation into schools, into courts, into existing corporate programs is so constraining to the pure hope that I feel about the potential for handling conflict differently. Existing systems can be helped by mediation but can mediation be helped by existing systems ... or only watered down?

What is the true potential for this new social revolution? If we lose the belief that everyone is capable of helping others and themselves resolve conflict peacefully and productively, then have we not lost the essence of this movement? How much training should it take to "get" the official training I need to qualify as a mediator? I want to be trained, and I want to be masterful in the art of resolving differences. Perhaps differentiating between levels of experience and specific kinds of mediation experts would be useful. Lumping everyone into one corner is exclusive not inclusive.

What I want after the training I get at York, is a mentor to work with, not more hoops to jump through. I think that if there were designated mediators willing to work with students, then students wouldn't go out into the field calling themselves mediators. I think a progressive system of training could include, so much theory and role plays, then say 10 hours of observing mediation, then 50 hours of assisting a mediator, then 50 hours of co-mediation. This would then produce a qualified, certified, official general mediator.

Kids can use this process successfully ... my hope is that the process of "qualifying" people to mediate is not too intellectual. The "roster" system of accreditation seems to have evolved by default.

Thank you again for providing me with this opportunity to speak about this matter.

Tricia Lipton