

Carol Loughrey Response to Bruce Perry's keynote:

Impact of Abuse, Neglect & Trauma on the Developing Brain and the Importance of Early Child and Family Intervention on vulnerable children.

Wow, how often does an organization get such incredible validation for what they are doing by an internationally respected expert.

We have been sitting for awhile so Before I begin my comments let's take a few moments to stretch. If you don't want to stand I suggest we do the 6 movements of the spine. 3 deep breathes. Doesn't that feel better!

In listening to Dr. Perry, I couldn't help but consider how appropriate he is as the choice of a speaker tonight as we celebrate 50 years of work in supporting children and families, especially those marginalized. Early in his presentation he said that the challenge was to, and I quote, "create a better understanding about

how we can intentionally construct the way we parent, the way we educate, the way we provide therapeutic services, the way we build communities". What a summation for why we are here tonight, celebrating the work that Moncton Head Start has achieved, while looking ahead to the work remaining.

His pioneering work on children's mental health has raised global consciousness of the impact of trauma on a child's neural development and how that has a life-lasting impact. However, much more importantly, Dr. Perry has led the charge on how to ameliorate this impact and redirect the trajectory of children's life. Today we use words such as developmental trauma, and trauma-informed practice, as if such concepts have been in our vocabulary for years. I assure you that they have not and they exist now, in many ways because of the research, the teachings, the clinical practice, and the publications of Dr. Perry. We owe this man a debt of gratitude.

The MWMFF has long advocated for universal access to high quality early learning. The research is conclusive in stating that exposure to

early learning boosts a child's development, supports families, strengthens communities, and optimizes social, economic and developmental outcomes - especially for the marginalized who often show the largest gains in development. We know that ECE is compensatory for early maltreatment, and that it helps with the biological development of young children's brains. Tonight, we saw the science behind intervention through programs such as those offered by Moncton Head Start. Dr. Perry references these programs as "biologically respectful". Perhaps we need to start including that description in funding proposals.

Dr. Perry pointed out that "the health and creativity of a community is renewed each generation through its children". Moncton Head Start knows this. They know the importance of the work they are doing. They see it in every child, nurture it in every family, hold it with every parent and they dream it for each child that is to come. Renewal is at the crux of not only what they do but why they do it.

Tonight, we heard about the power of relationships and the science behind that power - our need to be together, to work together, our inter-dependence and connectedness. Moncton Head Start witnesses what Dr. Perry references as relational poverty in many of their families. However, Dr. Perry wasn't just speaking about these clients but to all of us, the need for us to be attuned to our relational landscape and our own mental and social well-being. Dr. Perry has told us that "Human connectedness is the major mediator of a sense of felt safety". Moncton Head Start does critically important work in our community in strengthening our relational landscape and in renewal. It's equally important that we, as a community, support one another and those on the front lines of this work and foster a shared "felt safety".

I believe in strategic philanthropy. Many people use a shot gun approach with their philanthropy. I believe the better way is to decide what you think is important to you and to your community and focus on those things. Be strategic. For those of you who live in Moncton I encourage you to support the wonderful Moncton

Headstart. It is incredible bang for your buck. Helping and strengthening children and families will reduce the social and economic burden for decades if not centuries to come. And if you own marketable securities and your broker hasn't told you about the incredible tax advantages to donating marketable securities you need to talk to them.

In leaving here tonight let's remember one statement of Dr. Perry which really encapsulates what Moncton Head Start strives to do:

He said "If we are able to make individuals feel connected, we can help to decrease their poverty of experience, their poverty of relationships, and increase the number of repetitions that they have available for social, cognitive, and motor learning". I hope that you feel connected tonight not just to the people at your table or in this room but also to all the possibilities that Moncton Headstart gives to their clients and the community.

Congratulations to Moncton Headstart for their half a century of making Moncton better.

Please enjoy your dinner.