

No-court divorce that puts kids first gaining popularity

-Ontario's Collaborative Practice professionals focus on children at conference in Burlington

Toronto, September 15, 2010 - When Cyd Barley's twenty year marriage came to an end, the Toronto mother of two wanted a process that wouldn't pit her against her husband or turn nasty, as she'd seen it happen with so many people. Barley says she and her former husband opted for Collaborative Practice instead - a process that avoids the courts, values the needs of children and brings both parties and their lawyers to the table to work cooperatively on resolutions that work for everyone, especially the children.

"In the end this was the best solution for my family because even though there was tension between my husband and I the process was not confrontational. That meant our kids never saw us going at each other, because we never did," says Cyd Barley. "It allowed us to realize what was important to us, arrive at middle ground and figure out if we could afford what we each wanted. In the end we came away feeling as if we'd both won".

Collaborative Practice (also known as Collaborative Law) provides couples with specially trained lawyers and other specialists who help with financial, child and family issues. Many of those professionals, members of the Ontario Collaborative Law Federation (OCLF), are gathering for a conference, "Children: The Beneficiaries of Collaborative Practice", September 23-25 in Burlington. "At this conference we're sharing information to help us keep parents focused on the best interests of their children when they separate or divorce," says Judith Huddart, a family lawyer and President of the OCLF. "There is a growing demand by couples looking for an alternative to the traditional adversarial approach which they see as divisive and expensive. And we're happy to let them know they have another option that works for people who agree to treat each other with respect, share information and work together to reach a mutually acceptable settlement."

Cyd Barley says she and her former partner got help sorting out personal and financial issues. "I have horror stories about people who went through the courts and nickel and dimed each other down to who got the dining room table. Not us - we've been able to compromise and maintain a relationship. And I don't think we would have been able to do that without the help of our Collaborative Practice professionals."

About OCLF: The Ontario Collaborative Law Federation represents 17 groups of specially trained professionals across the province. Our members provide legal, financial and emotional support to couples during separation and divorce. This unique approach avoids the conflict and expense of going to court by promoting a family-focused resolution based on open communication and mutual respect. www.oclf.ca