



# Our Commitment to Excellence

September 2009

**Canadian Mothercraft Society**  
32 Heath Street West, Toronto, ON M4V 1T3  
Tel: 416-920-3515 Fax: 416-920-5983

[www.mothercraft.ca](http://www.mothercraft.ca)

Supporting healthy child development across all families.

*Because a good start in life  
endures forever.*

**M**othercraft has one goal ... “to support healthy child development across all families”. This goal is evident throughout our organization. Teachers at **Mothercraft’s Centres for Early Development**, Educators in our **Ontario Early Years Centre** and our Special Needs Consultants foster positive development each day in their interactions with children and families. Faculty at the **Mothercraft College** train others in caring for young children, always focusing on evidence-based practice. And at our early intervention programs, **Breaking the Cycle**, the **Parent-Infant Program** and **CITYKIDS** (Kids Included in Developmental Supports), counsellors, therapists, early childhood educators, and community service workers come together to promote positive outcomes for those made vulnerable by psycho-social, congenital, and developmental risk factors. Our **Community Data Group** has proven to be invaluable in managing databases and in interpreting data in the early years community.

Our dedicated support staff, administrators and Board of Directors ensure that the organization has the resources necessary to provide leadership and vision to the early years community. It’s through the strength and focus of the entire organization, and our unique range of interconnected services, that we provide an unmatched **Mothercraft** experience.

Our services are driven by community-identified needs and are provided in a flexible manner to best support individual families. We encourage professional sectors to work together, to build on existing community strengths and to secure necessary resources.

This is **Mothercraft** and, together, we strive to accomplish our goal in unique and innovative ways, ensuring that, regardless of where children begin in life, they are on a path to reach their full potential.



Beverley Koven  
Executive Director

# What Mothercraft Values

Across the organization, core values and beliefs form the basis of our work...

**First**, Mothercraft believes that infancy and early childhood are critical periods for children's ability to trust and to develop a strong sense of themselves, and to build a foundation for learning. Mothercraft's pioneering work in caring for infants and young children using innovative approaches continues to the present day. Our belief in prevention ("Build healthy babies rather than patch sick ones", Dr. Truby King 1907 Founder of Mothercraft) guides Mothercraft in the creation of caregiving environments and relationships that promote well-being in infants and young children, and supports family functioning. We believe that how we care for infants and young children has a lasting impact on the kind of adults they become.

**Second**, Mothercraft values diversity and practices inclusion and acceptance of all children, families and students. Mothercraft staff, students, and families come from all countries of the world; they speak many languages, practice many faiths, live alternative lifestyles, and experience many stressors – some temporary and some more enduring – that present challenges to family life.

Mothercraft environments reflect the appreciation of families' diverse experiences by delivering services that are responsive to the unique needs of each child and family, by collaborating with other organizations to enhance access to coordinated services, and by creating environments that are free of bias.

Mothercraft recognizes the unique placement of Indigenous peoples within our society. We understand the importance of incorporating Indigenous thinking into all aspects of the work we do, while being guided by a community of experts who form the Mothercraft Wisdom Council. It is our goal to continuously provide quality programs, services and resources to help create learning opportunities for First Nation, Metis and Inuit students, as well as people from all other nations.

It is only through the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge that we are able to assist in strengthening the Indigenous community, generate greater awareness and create strong hand in hand, eye to eye partnerships with our country's first cultures.



**Finally**, Mothercraft believes in the value of a committed and professional staff team. Staff development opportunities and regular supervision promote a learning environment, and ensure that all Mothercraft programs are based on emergent practice. Mothercraft programs are internship sites for students from the Mothercraft College as well as from other college and university programs. Students are mentored to meet the Mothercraft Standards of Excellence and to provide the highest standards in the industry. Students are part of the Mothercraft team; and, in this way, mentoring plays an important role in training future teachers. We recognize the importance of our work with children and families and respond in a variety of ways that support staff and students in achieving professional excellence.

# Mothercraft Programs are Grounded in Theoretical Foundations

Programs at Mothercraft are grounded in the following theoretical foundations and are transferred to practice based on a comprehensive understanding of the individual needs and experiences of the infants, young children and families attending our programs:

## Developmental Theory

Children's development is a product of the combination of their inborn qualities and the contributions from their experience. Developmental theory calls for the consideration of the combined contributions of both the prenatal and postnatal environments. This allows us to understand and respond to every child in our programs based on their unique strengths and vulnerabilities, and to tailor our programs and interventions appropriately.

***In our Centres for Early Development***, the priority of Mothercraft teachers is to fully understand every child in their care. This includes understanding the complex ways in which every child's temperament, as well as their prenatal and postnatal experiences, have combined to contribute to the way in which they experience their world. Through keen and sensitive observation, developmental screening/assessment, and ongoing communication with parents, Mothercraft teachers come to understand each child as completely as possible. Because of this, each child experiences a caregiving relationship that is respectful of and responsive to their unique developmental needs and experiences. Teachers' interactions with children are empathic, consistent, affectionate, caring and growth-promoting.

***In our Early Intervention Programs***, we provide support to infants and young children who have experienced potential risks to their developmental progress, including impacts of their prenatal environment (substance or other exposures in pregnancy, maternal health risks, poor prenatal care), congenital impacts (prematurity, low birth weight, birth trauma), and postnatal impacts, which range from acute, episodic family stress, such as those experienced by children and families served at the Magic Castle. Our programs also support children experiencing separation and trauma or acute, intergenerational stress in the caregiving environment often evident in children served at Breaking the Cycle.

***In our Academic Programs***, we train early childhood educators to be skillful observers of the development of infants and young children, to develop theoretical frameworks for understanding their observations, and to provide developmentally appropriate care and interventions based on each child's unique characteristics and needs. Through comprehensive training programs that help to foster early learning and care, professionals enter the field with the understanding of the link between knowledge and practice and how it continues to support strong foundations in promoting emergent practice in healthy child development.

Developmental theory recognizes the importance of the child's connectedness to a primary caregiver, to family, as well as to community and environment. A child's developmental outcome is described as a continuous dynamic process of interchange between the child and his or her environment over time.

## Attachment Theory

Attachment theory proposes that it is within the emotional relationship between infant and primary caregiver that the young child's cognitive and emotional sense of self and others is developed, in ways that have a critical influence on the infant's perception of the environment and on others, as well as on later personality development, social functioning, and learning.

The primary pathway to a secure attachment is caregiver sensitivity to the infant's cues and signals, as well as an appropriate and consistent response to those signals.

Attachment develops out of patterns of early interactions between the infant and his/her primary caregiver. As the attachment relationship develops, it serves four major functions:

- a.** providing a sense of security;
- b.** regulating affect and arousal;
- c.** promoting the expression of feelings and communication;
- d.** serving as a base for exploration.

A sensitive, responsive caregiver is fundamental to the development of a secure attachment bond during the early years of life. Consistency, sensitivity, and contingent responsiveness on the part of the primary caregivers are essential to the young child's cognitive and psychological development

***In our Centres for Early Development,*** attachment theory is applied through the implementation of a primary caregiver model. One Mothercraft teacher is identified as the primary caregiver for each child; this model is familiar to the children in our care and ensures the integrity of individualized programming.

Through the use of small groups, Mothercraft teachers promote quality interactions between staff and children and between the children themselves. In their day to day interactions and relationships with children, teachers model prosocial interactions and respect for others. Through such interactions, children learn about their role in a civil society, and their interdependence with nature and all living things.

Through their interactions with children, Mothercraft teachers also promote key social-emotional milestones during the infancy and preschool years, including regulation, attachment, and exploration of their social and physical worlds, all of which are the foundations for learning. We recognize the importance of consistency, and of predictability in routines to facilitate smooth transition processes as children move through various stages in their young lives.

***In our Academic Programs,*** classes are designed to support the individual learning needs of students through smaller class sizes, sensitivity and attention to the ethnic diversity of our students, and the availability of accessible support services.

***In our Early Intervention Programs,*** developmental guidance is used to enhance parents' knowledge and understanding of their child's unique developmental needs. Developmental information is provided within the context of a relationship between the parent and a counsellor that supports the parent in functioning comfortably in promoting their child's

developmental needs, and in anticipating the next expected event in the child's development.

Many parents in the Early Intervention Programs also benefit from interventions that help them reflect on what they learned in their own early relationships, and how those experiences influence how they respond to their own children. This focus on the parent-child relationship is particularly critical for those parents who are burdened and preoccupied with past or present conflicts or stresses that may intrude (knowingly or unknowingly) on the parent-child relationship. Interventions to enhance the quality of parent-child interactions, therefore, support and enhance sensitive and responsive caregiving and address the personal and contextual factors that can undermine sensitive care.

## Relational Theory

A central principle of relational theory is that people, institutions and systems grow through relationships with others. Relational theory calls for attention to larger system changes, including reduction of service fragmentation and access issues as part of the solution for families and children.

At Mothercraft, we have learned the importance of relationships and connections between previously disconnected service sectors and providers.

Accordingly, we have created environments that facilitate the engagement of children and families in services that promote child development, family functioning and access to services. Through the creation of strong programs and cross departmental team activity, we maximize internal expertise and internal capacity to respond to the complex needs of children, families and communities.

The ***CITYKIDS Program*** is a collaborative, interagency program that supports the complex needs of children with special needs and their families, through integrated service access and the delivery of early childhood programs.

Mothercraft's partnership with the Princess Margaret Hospital allows for the delivery of the ***Magic Castle***, which provides specialized, hospital-based child care to young children whose family members are accessing cancer treatment. The ***Magic Castle*** aims to reduce stress, stabilize family functioning, and promote access to services for families experiencing medical crises.

***Mothercraft's Breaking the Cycle*** program delivers a comprehensive range of integrated services for substance-involved mothers and their young children, through the efforts of a partnership of nine community-based agencies. The integration of services delivered through a single-access model with home visitation and street outreach components has increased access to a population of mothers and children traditionally marginalized from services.

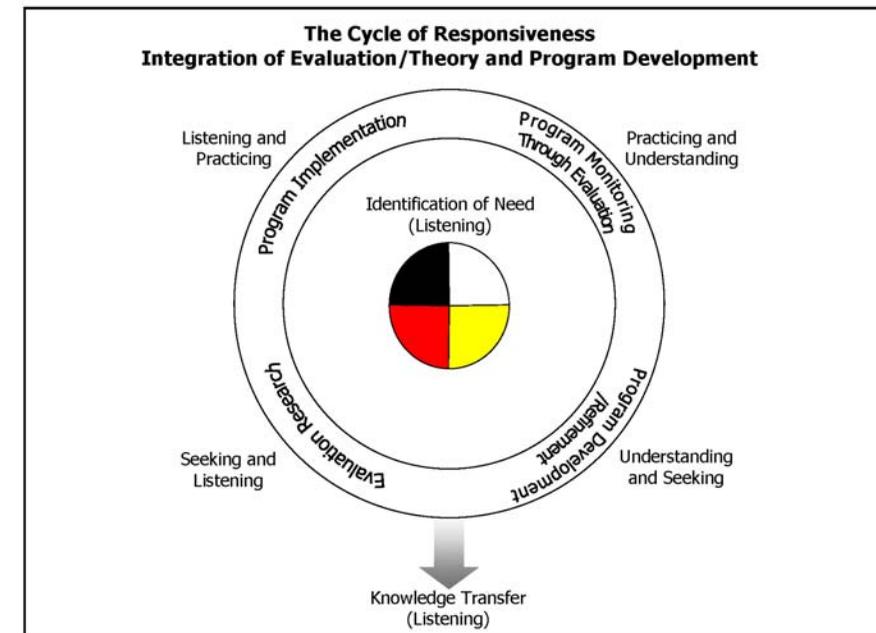
**Mothercraft's Academic Programs**, in collaboration with Indigenous organizations and with other cultural groups in the community, provide a staged approach for students who are entering academic environments and experiencing cultural and geographic dislocation. Partnerships with other learning institutions bridge theory to practice for future professionals offering hands-on training opportunities geared to each student's diverse strengths, skills and interests.

## Research: Developing and Transferring Knowledge

Research has been an integral part of Mothercraft since the early 1930s. Most of our programs and services have their roots in research, and Mothercraft's ongoing commitment to evaluation and research ensures that our programs are evidence-based and of the highest quality. Mothercraft's partnerships with academic and community researchers have enriched knowledge development in the early years community. Our research partnerships provide additional examples of a relational approach to practice, with partnerships between community organizations, and with academic institutions, creating stimulating environments for research and evaluation. The Mothercraft Community Data Group analyze and interpret the results of the Early Development Instrument (EDI) to support early learning professionals and educators in looking beyond statistics as a way to inform and develop responsive programs in the community. New knowledge and emergent practices are transferred to professionals, communities, and students through training, consultation and publication.

Mothercraft has four research priorities targeted at the early years community:

- Infancy and early childhood
- Relationship-based care
- Support to families, practitioners and students
- Early child development and learning



Our cycle of program evaluation and research is integrated into everyday practice to ensure our continued commitment to excellence in supporting young children and their families. The cycle of responsiveness can be seen in the above Medicine Wheel diagram.

# Mothercraft Programs

## **Mothercraft College**

646 St. Clair Avenue West, Toronto, ON M6C 1A9

Tel: 416-483-0511 Fax: 416-483-0119

Email: [college@mothercraft.org](mailto:college@mothercraft.org)

## **Community Data Group**

646 St. Clair Avenue West, Toronto, ON M6C 1A9

Tel: 416-483-0644 ext. 211 Fax: 416-483-1547

## **Brookfield Place, Centre for Early Development**

10 Front Street West

Mailing Address: 161 Bay Street, Toronto, ON M5J 2S1

Tel: 416-367-1758 Fax: 416-367-3839

## **Eaton Centre, Centre for Early Development**

14 Trinity Square, Toronto, ON M5G 1B1

Tel: 416-340-9651 Fax: 416-340-7407

## **Robertson House, Centre for Early Development**

32 Heath Street West, Toronto, ON M4V 1T3

Tel: 416-920-3515 ext. 115 Fax: 416-920-5983

## **Ontario Early Years Centre, Main Site**

32 Heath Street West, Toronto, ON M4V 1T3

Tel: 416-920-3515 Fax: 416-920-5983

Email: [office@mothercraft.org](mailto:office@mothercraft.org)

## **Early Intervention, Breaking the Cycle and Parent Infant Program**

761 Queen Street West, Suite 107, Toronto, ON M6J 1G1

Tel: 416-364-7373 Fax: 416-364-8008

Email: [btcycle@mothercraft.org](mailto:btcycle@mothercraft.org)

## **CITYKIDS – Kids Included in Developmental Supports**

32 Heath Street West, Toronto, ON M4V 1T3

Tel: 416-920-6543 Fax: 416-920-1543

Email: [citykids@mothercraft.org](mailto:citykids@mothercraft.org)