

Abstract for Master Class
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Building inclusive communities for families and children: lessons for practice and research.

This workshop will extend the themes from the keynote presentation. It will explore how social workers and other practitioners can work in partnership to build inclusive communities that respond to the diverse needs of families and children. This workshop will draw on the learning from a research and practice collaboration between a community-based multidisciplinary agency and a team of university researchers. This partnership has developed over several years and has involved research on family change processes and on community development initiatives focused on supporting parents to enhance their parenting capacity and on building strategies that address the intractable issue of family and community violence. These projects are based on building strong partnerships between clients, practitioners and researchers in order to develop innovative approaches to addressing the challenges vulnerable families face through their life cycle and across generations. The research generated practices that took account of the worldviews and experiences of those participating in the project. Of particular interest was the way in which community development methodologies were used in conjunction with action research methods and developmental evaluation approaches. Also of interest was the central role that cultural frameworks played in informing the practice of researchers and practitioners to ensure that the project remained relevant to the diverse population groups within the community. The key themes to be introduced in the workshop include: how to involve practitioners and clients in research projects and to sustain their involvement; how to form authentic and respectful research relationships including how to effectively engage with sensitive ethical issues; how to transfer research findings into practice and respond to the need to build inclusive communities for families and children; and how to effectively utilise critical reflection processes.