

Val Wilson

Mediation Training Opens Doors to Growth

Many disputes in BC today are being resolved through mediation. Before involving the courts, more legal professionals are recommending that their clients seek the services of a professional mediator.

Why? The process of mediation can result in faster solutions that are more cost-effective than litigation.

In our Cover Story, Sharon Sutherland says she continues to be surprised by the perception that she must have chosen mediation to avoid litigation. She maintains she “enjoyed litigation but found my clients didn’t usually enjoy it as much as I did.”

A viable alternative to litigation, mediation can give participants a feeling of control in the proceedings and, in many instances, satisfaction with the outcome they have helped create. It can also save both sides time and money.

The skill of effective mediation requires wisdom, life experience, expertise specific to the situation, patience, and the sincere desire to help the parties come to agreement.

Sharon uses her extensive training in drama and theatre and her love of

The process of mediation can result in faster solutions...

trampolines (she is a former trampoline instructor) to help her students understand the mediation experience.

I push my students to be creative and to take risks in their approaches to both learning and mediating. One way is by guiding them through image theatre exercises where we create physical images of conflict and our roles as mediators. In an image theatre exercise, the spect-actors—participatory audience members—share their impressions of the image. I might also share my own intentions about what I



Sharon in “Suicide Dive”

am trying to depict . . . risk-taking, practice, fun, etc.

Sharon created the diving image for her students as a reflection on mediating. The trampoline skill she is demonstrating is a *front three-quarter*, also known as a “suicide dive.”

At the end of her Cover Story, Sharon offers Recommended Reading on Mediation.

Ken Glasner strongly recommends the book, *Beyond Reason, Using Emotions as You Negotiate*, by Roger Fisher and Daniel Shapiro. The authors talk about the roles that positive and negative emotions can play during mediation.

In another slant on the topic, Nigel Atkins notes we often mediate with ourselves—for example, *If I eat that delicious piece of triple-chocolate cake right now, I promise I will work out at the gym tomorrow!*

Currently, 27 Notaries trained in the art of mediation are listed on the BC Court Mediation roster. Thoroughly enjoying their mediation experiences, these Notaries are making a real difference in helping resolve problems for many individuals in our province.

I believe that mediation training is invaluable for stimulating growth—at work, at school, at home, and at play . . . anywhere we are interacting with other people. ▲



www.WildmanPhotography.com