

Chapter Mandate

The Alberta/NWT Chapter is a community of diverse professionals, identified as counsellors and psychotherapists, who facilitate professional development and support as well the advancement of the profession within Alberta and the Northwest Territories. The objectives of the Chapter are to promote an identity of those in the counselling field; connect with practitioners in the counselling field in Alberta and the NWT, and to develop connections with various counselling-related associations in Alberta.

President – Shelley Skelton

This has been an exciting first year for me in the role of chapter president. As you can read below, our executive board members are incredibly dedicated and determined to build various aspects of this chapter. As president of this fine chapter, I have been chairing regular teleconferences, liaising with our Head Office, and exploring ways to build a stronger network among our members. I hosted a number of chapter sponsored meetups in Calgary over the past two years and as a board executive, we determined that these meetups were not meeting the needs of our members; as a result, we withdrew sponsorship from meetups. Currently we are investigating how social media could help our chapter grow in numbers and be more connected. Currently, I am preparing for our AGM and hope to see many of you attend.

Past President – Kathy Offet-Gartner

The job of the Past-President is to assist the President in any way they can including presiding over meetings or representing the Chapter in the event that the President cannot. Shelley and I have continued to work closely together, consulting, and collaborating on matters related to promoting the growth of our Chapter and the regulation of our profession.

Together we chaired the very successful Research Conference held in St. Albert in October of 2016. As the outgoing President I chaired our AGM which was also held at the Research conference. It was well attended and those who attended offered feedback of gratitude and appreciation for its informative and brief nature—something we will ensure we attend to moving forward. Half of our meeting time was devoted to getting an overview of Regulation across Canada from Barbara MacCallum (CEO of CCPA), followed by an in depth update of the progress that has been made toward the same efforts here in Alberta (see Nicole Imgrund’s report for more information). As a Board, and certainly as President, we felt that it was important that the membership be made aware of the extraordinary measures we are taking to seek Title Recognition and Regulation. Many people have given numerous hours to this cause; we/I believe it is imperative that members stay engaged, ask questions, donate time, talents, money to this cause. We all know that there are those who call themselves “counsellors” who actually have little or no formal training or real experience and who have done our profession

and vulnerable clients harm. Regulation helps to protect the public and the professionals as well as the profession by making the standards and basic competencies clear.

As Past-President as well as Regional Director, I have remained committed to be involved in various committees, meetings, and caucuses to ensure continuity and continue the exemplary work being done.

When neither of the student reps could do a presentation to the U of C-Online Master of Counselling class, I did the presentation on the benefits of CCPA membership, clarifying the difference between a Canadian Certified Counsellor (CCC) and a Registered Psychologist (RPsych, AB). I also did this for a graduating class of Athabasca University's Master of Counselling program. I strongly encourage students to join while studying and apply for CCC status as soon as they complete their degrees. To date, I have written so many related CCC reference letters, I have lost track! I am always encouraging Chapter membership, and we continue to grow, so I am hopeful some of my invitations contributed to this.

Regulation – Nicole Imgrund

It has been another exciting and fast-paced year for the process of regulation of the counselling profession in Alberta, including a productive meeting with Minister Payne, Associate Minister of Health. I submit for your information a summary of the events this year. Following this summary, I also include the timeline of the regulation process for 2016, as background information for any new members or those who missed it.

- Since submission of the application for regulation in September, I have become the Chair of FACT-AB (Federation of Associations of Counselling Therapists in Alberta)
- On behalf of FACT-AB, I continue to meet regularly with Government of Alberta staff to discuss regulation and necessary work to be done
- This year, FACT-AB engaged in numerous discussion with other stakeholders, including representatives of addition counsellors in AHS, counselling-related associations not yet affiliated with FACT-AB, and the Union of Healthcare Professionals. I also made several presentations for member associations of FACT-AB, to help inform their members of the need for regulation and process to date.
- I represented FACT-AB in a meeting with Minister Payne on April 19th. It was an exceptionally positive meeting. The Minister expressed appreciation for the environment in which counsellors work and recognized the benefits of regulating the profession to

increase accountability, facilitate health system integration and enhance addiction and mental health services to Albertans. The Minister expressed support for her department staff to further explore the application and asked staff to continue to work with FACT-AB. I will say as a side note that this meeting was one of the highlights of my career and long journey to promote regulation in Alberta. It left me hopeful that regulation may come sooner, rather than later.

- After the meeting with the Minister, I was invited to represent FACT-AB on the Valuing Mental Health Advisory Committee. I look forward to the first meeting on June 27th.
- As part of our commitment to both regulation and advocacy for counselling in Alberta, I requested that the AB/NWT Chapter made an application to the Alberta Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health (AAMIMH) to become a member. After a formal presentation about CCPA to the Alliance in September, we were accepted as members. It is now my privilege to represent the Chapter and our unique perspective on the needs of Albertans for safe and effective counselling as a Director of AAMIMH. On June 24th, I made a presentation at the AGM about regulation of the counselling profession. It was well received the alliance has offered to initiate further conversation between FACT-AB and other stakeholders on this topic.
- I presented on regulation in AB at the national CCPA conference in St. John's at a cross country regulation check-up. The experience of hearing what is happening other provinces reiterated for me how quickly the process is moving in Alberta, and how positive our working relationship with government has been to date.
- In June, I requested that the Chapter develop social media accounts - Facebook and Twitter - to help with regulation communications. To carry out our Chapter mandate, which includes promoting regulation, we are in desperate need of a strong Communications Director for the Chapter this year.
- FACT-AB is currently working on a budget and determining how much money may be needed to carry out its work this year. There are immediate expenses which will be incurred, such as legal costs for a review of case law in Alberta regarding restricted activity of psychosocial interventions. I am working with our Provincial Director, Kathy Offet-Gartner, and our Chapter President, Shelley Skelton, to apply for funding within CCPA for some of these urgent and immediate costs.
- As Chair of FACT-AB and Regulation Director for our Chapter, I continue to meet with my MLA, other politicians, media, members of the public, and counselling therapists in the profession, to provide information about regulation.

- FACT-AB is currently approving the final draft of a document which summarizes the need for regulation of the counselling profession, and highlights the ways in which it will help to bring about some of the recommendations of the *Valuing Mental Health Report*. I hope that this document will be available to members to familiarize themselves with regulation and talk about it with others, in the next few weeks.
- FACT-AB continues to work on the next steps towards regulation, including:
 - creating Code of Ethics, Standards of Practice and By-Laws for the college
 - working on communications strategies with the government
 - connecting with stakeholders in preparation for the formal consultation process
 - researching and discussing the legislation for the HPA
 - establishing a budget and formula for collecting fees from the associations
 - developing a memorandum of understanding for any new associations joining FACT-AB
 - writing an 'enhanced application' to include more detail in some areas of the application
 - filling out a workbook provided by the government about regulation of our profession.

I wish to offer my gratitude for the leadership within CCPA that continues to help me in my role with FACT-AB - in particular, Barbara MacCallum (who provides an incredible amount of support, time and knowledge about regulation to the FACT-AB Steering Committee), Kathy Offet-Gartner (tireless supporter of regulation who always makes herself available to me to strategize, debrief, and learn from), our CCPA Past and Current Presidents, Blythe Shepard and Natashia Caverley, and the national office staff. Without these dedicated people working for our membership and counselling in Canada and Alberta in general, FACT-AB would not have made so much progress in such a brief time. I feel very proud to represent such a mature and committed organization in this work! I also feel well supported and recognized for my efforts, for which I am very grateful.

Review of regulation process in 2016

Summer 2015 - I met by phone with Shawn Knight, Director of Professional Practice for Alberta Health, to discuss the need for regulation of counselling in Alberta, including opportunities and challenges in the current context, and to request a more formal meeting to identify clear next steps.

Kathy Offet-Gartner and Barbara McCallum (along with some other stakeholders) met with Shawn Knight and other policy analysts and leaders in Alberta Health. We were informed that the next steps toward regulation would be to collaborate with other counselling associations to agree on a definition of Counselling and entry-to-practice competencies for the profession.

Fall 2015 - We began networking and advocacy efforts to develop a list of counselling associations that might participate in a process towards regulation and to share with them developments thus far. A meeting for all interested groups was set for the new year, to be hosted and facilitated by CCPA, and invitations were extended.

January 16th, 2016 - the first meeting of counselling associations interested in regulation, attended by representatives of 14 associations. Barbara MacCallum (CEO of CCPA) facilitated the meeting and provided a historical and geographic overview of regulation of counselling in Canada. The meeting was 5 hrs. long and provided an opportunity for all the associations to 'catch up' on the process in AB to date, express hopes and concerns, share their own efforts towards regulation, ask questions and dialogue. The group decided to form a coalition, named FACT-AB (Federation of Associations of Counselling Therapists in Alberta). Representatives from each member association were to appoint a representative to the newly formed Steering Committee of FACT-AB and some general guidelines for working together were established.

Winter 2016 - FACT-AB met monthly, establishing a website (<http://www.fact-alberta.org/>) and forming subcommittees, including Communication, Definition and Competencies, Governance and Membership. Kathy Offet-Gartner, Shelley Skelton, and Blythe Shepard were each named to a subcommittee, while I maintained my role on the Steering Committee. Barbara MacCallum continues to act as a facilitator for the Steering Committee, providing invaluable expertise, administrative support and national context to our work.

June 16, 2016 - I met with Andrew Douglas, the new Director of Professional Practice for Alberta Health, along with a CPCA representative, to confirm his understanding of the next steps towards regulation and assess whether support for the process had changed with a new person in the role. It was a productive meeting, as we learned more about the current political and policy climate as it might pertain to regulation, updated Mr. Douglas on new developments in our process (namely the establishment of FACT-AB), and felt we had established a good working relationship to continue to move forward. It became clear in this meeting that there were numerous factors which might make it advantageous to submit an application for regulation early in the fall.

Summer 2016 - FACT-AB voted on accepting a definition and entry-to-practice competency profile for Counselling. Members of the Steering Committee began to dialogue and offer suggestions on the content of the extensive and formal application for regulation.

September 10, 2016 - FACT-AB met for 4 hrs. to discuss and deliberate the final draft of the application and voted to adopt it for submission with minor edits. A motion was also passed to accept a new set of "Organizing Principles" for FACT-AB, which will entail forming an executive for the Steering Committee next meeting, as well as levying a 50.00 fee to member associations due Nov. 1st, 2016.

The efficiency of this process can largely be credited towards the work done by FACT-BC and their willingness to share their documents with us. The participation of Blythe Shepherd, who was also involved in the work of FACT-BC, is another contributing factor to arriving at this definition and competency profile in such a timely manner. Barbara MacCallum wrote the initial draft of the application, drawing on her experience in other provinces, and facilitated the process of arriving at a final draft that could be embraced by all the member associations. It should be noted that members of the FACT-AB Steering Committee volunteered many summer hours to ensure that the September deadline we agreed on for the application could be met. It is a noteworthy and inspiring accomplishment for 13 diverse groups to agree on the foundational aspects of their profession. The primary goal of FACT-AB is to establish safety of the public through regulation, and this was a guiding principal throughout what could otherwise have been a challenging process to navigate. I feel truly honoured to have been a part of it.

Advocacy and Professional Identity – Dawn Israel

I have continued to reach out to employers in Alberta to educate them and advocate that they consider including the CCC designation in their insurance policies for employees seeking counselling/psychological support. Green Shield and Manulife are the most open to working with employers to get our designation added to their policy. Less success has been experienced with Great West Life and Desjardin, and Alberta Blue Cross has been inconsistent. I continue to recommend that Head Office persists in reaching out directly to insurance companies to educate them on our credentials so that they might include us under more of their policies.

Recent progress includes:

1. We will have coverage with the Alberta Nurse's Union starting in July
2. We will have coverage with the Royal Bank of Canada starting in July
3. We have been added to the Manulife employee plan for coverage
4. We have had coverage with the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees for the past year.

Letters are available from the National Office and the instructions letter is saved to google docs to share with members.

Communications Coordinator – Nina Sangra

From September 2016 to date, in the role of Communications Coordinator, I helped with the Fall 2016 newsletter and will be helping with the Summer 2017 newsletter which will be released in the first week of September.

Secretary-Treasurer – Cathy Underhill

As secretary-treasurer, my position entails the following: taking minutes of regular monthly meetings and AGM and distributing to Board members, corresponding with other members of the executive as needed, making payment invoices/reimbursements of receipts as required, making deposits of monies received from National Office, presenting report updates at each

Board meeting, and presenting a financial report at the AGM. Over the past year, I accomplished most of the above duties, notwithstanding challenges presented by the wildfire evacuation in Fort McMurray where I reside. I also attended the CCPA National Conference held in St. John's, Nfld. In the coming year I hope to continue to support the AB/NWT Chapter through fulfilling the role of secretary-treasurer.

Professional Development Coordinator – Jan Regehr

This last year's activities began with coordinating several subcommittees for the provincial Reserach Conference held in St. Albert. A summer/fall PD newsletter flyer was sent to the membership advertising this conference as well as other PD opportunities. Lastly, a winter PD opportunities flyer was released to members in January. I have served two consecutive terms in my role as Professional Development Coordinator and feel that it is time to step aside and allow some new synergy to come onto the board. Thank you for the privilege of serving you these past four years.

Student Liaison (South) – Barbara Pickering

The Student Liaison serves as a touch point between the chapter and students in post secondary counselling or counselling psychology education. Additionally, the Student Liaison makes him or herself available to institutions or organizations to organize and/or present information sessions, facilitate meet and greet opportunities where appropriate, answer any questions through the Chapter email, and generally take opportunities to interact with students and CCPA student representatives.

As Student Liaison for Southern Alberta I engaged in the following activities.

1. Throughout the year attended board meetings and contributed when asked
2. Served as an ambassador for students and/or faculty when I had the opportunity to speak about the benefits of both CCPA and belonging to the AB/NWT Chapter.
3. Volunteered, attended, and presented at the 3rd annual CCPA research conference.
4. Invited to present to students in August at the University of Calgary Master's of Counselling Program.

Student Liaison (North) – Lindsay Ashmore

Overall it has been a busy year and I have enjoyed serving in this capacity thus far.

I have been involved in organizing a few community gatherings and professional development events for the CCPA AB/NWT Chapter, over the last year. I am currently working to collaboratively organize a Facebook page for our AB/NWT chapter, to further support our chapter members in being able to connect through a social media platform.

Member at Large – Mira Singh

In my role as the Member at Large, my goal over the last six months has been to learn as much as I can about the Chapter. I attended four teleconferences and have learned a considerable amount about the process to advance the regulatory requirements of the CCPA as well as the work required to advocate for insurers to cover registered clinical counsellors in Alberta. One of my role is to help promote the chapter awards.