

April 16, 2018

My name is Trace, I am 18 years old and employed full time as an electrical apprentice. I am "Troy" in the Saskatchewan case MLS vs NED. A final decision in my case was rendered June 21, 2017. In my case the Judge took away mine and my brother's choices and did not take our opinions into consideration and sided with my mother. Thankfully for me my 18 Birthday was on June 28, 2017 and at midnight on my birthday I moved back in with Dad.

I am writing this letter with respect to my experience with the Family Bridges program and to share my story from my point of view. My parents divorced when I was 4 and my brother was 2. I always enjoyed a very close relationship with my Dad. When I was 8 both my parents remarried and my mother had another child when I was 9. Both my brother and I are very close with my Dad, Stepmom and both their families. In terms of my Mom and her family our relationship has never been great. We have had little to no contact with her family.

The relationship between my parents has always been strained. When I was 12 my brother and I expressed that we wanted to live with my Dad full time. My brother and I went for counselling and participated in Voices of the Child report in June 2013. We expressed we wanted to live with my Dad. When my mother read the report she confronted my brother and I to ask about the report. She basically threw us out of her house demanding keys back and dropped us off at our Dad's on July 15, 2013.

For a period of 2 years I lived with my Dad full time with very little contact with my mother. Over that time my mother kept taking my Dad to court, my brother and I were forced to attend counseling. We have never had any counselling sessions together with our mother.

Then in September 2015 my parents were involved in a trial. On November 17, 2015 my Dad and stepmom dropped me off at the courthouse and my life was forever changed. My brother and I were taken into a court room, there we were advised by the Judge that we were now in the custody of my Mom, if needed the police would enforce this order. From there my brother and I were split up and taken in separate vehicles to the airport and our phones were taken by complete strangers. There was no notice to friends or family members, so lots of people thought we dropped off the face of the earth.

When we arrived in BC, we were forced to participate in the Family Bridges program that was facilitated by Randy Rand and Connie and Elizabeth from Aspire Too. Randy was there as he was training Connie and Elizabeth to deliver the workshop.

While at the program both my brother and I were threatened that if we did not cooperate our father would be arrested and we would never see him again. The whole experience was a complete and utter waste of time. We watched days' worth of videos about "parental alienation" and how to spot it. All three people there, (Randy, Connie and Elizabeth) then forced us to take in what was taught in the videos, to love our mom and hate our dad, and apply it to our lives. We didn't end up seeing our father at all for almost 4 months and then very little after that, for over a year after the program, as it was part of the "anti-brainwashing" program we attended.

Today I am living with my father and happier than ever. I am still emotionally and somewhat physically damaged from the program. I can tell that it has had significant impact on my relationships and my ability to open up and express myself. I have difficulty connecting to others because I feel I can't trust anyone to be honest, sincere or real with me. I have no contact with mother at this time as this whole program only drove me away even further and made me want nothing to do with her ever.

After the 4 day program ended we had very little contact with the program facilitators, I do remember one time, Connie visited and over saw what they called a "family meeting" which basically was everyone brainstorming topics, talking about the topics, resolving the topics then forcing everyone to say something they appreciated about each person at the table. Since the Summer of 2016 I have had no contact with anyone from the Bridges program.

What I can say is this program is not a success and if anything made my relationship with my mother worse. Unfortunately, my brother is still "stuck" with my mother as the courts will not respect his wishes. My brother is really struggling, I can see it in his change of behaviour when he comes to and leaves our father's house. The program has failed to do its job and has thus only made the problems worse. All both my brother and I wanted, was to live with our Dad full time, as that was our home.

Trace Dielschneider

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Trace Dielschneider', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.