

FosterlineBC

BC Federation of Foster Parent Associations



foster
parents
British Columbia

Fall 2019 Volume 17, Issue 3

MEET THE KID ADVOCATE
SEMA'TSE JORDAN

HAPPY FOSTER FAMILY
MONTH

FOSTER FAMILY:
THREE PERSPECTIVES

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Submissions — Forward articles, personal stories or ideas to the BCFFPA office. Materials may be edited for length and suitability. To be added to our Foster Community Resources list as a regional or agency contact, please email Michelle Relevante at michelle@bcfosterparents.ca.

Advertising — Please contact the BCFFPA office for advertising opportunities, sizes and rates.

President's Report



Wow! Another year has gone by and we are still trying to catch up with all the changes. As you are all probably aware, the face of fostering is changing. More children are being placed with family or friends of the family rather than being brought into care. While this is a positive change for the children and their needs it has opened our eyes to the fact that the families taking the responsibilities for raising the children will need our help and support as well. We are advocating with the Ministry to set up a program that will not only support the families but also provide training courses to help them maneuver through the challenges many of these children face.

The priority to keep children with family or friends has also had a direct effect on our existing foster families. With more children staying within their family circle, it appears that those who come into care, in a majority of cases, have more severe behavioural, emotional and mental health issues and require our professional parenting skill set. Please remember to take advantage of all training workshops available to you!

The Strategic Priorities branch of the Ministry is working full out on designing positive changes to our system of care. We are excited to be working alongside a government that actually hears, understands and is passionate about helping to make changes that will benefit foster families now and in the future. We will keep you informed as these changes crystalize.

But let's take a break from the continuous work of advocacy for a moment and remember that October is Foster Family Month! Please accept my sincere admiration for all foster parents, the daily challenges they face and their undying commitment to the children in their care. We are a unique community that I am proud to be part of.

Marcy Perron
President

Notes from the Office



Happy Foster Family Month to our community of families!

We're kicking off the month with our Annual General Meeting in Harrison Hot Springs. What better way to celebrate your valuable role in the community than with a couple of days of learning, networking with other foster parents and soaking in warm, rejuvenating mineral pools?

We're happy to bring you the news that BCFFPA will be involved in a short-term project in partnership with Learning and Development Division of MCFD to bring more training to foster parents and out-of-care families. We also have the exciting opportunity to create more videos and a supplementary classroom sessions for caregivers to support the current Problematic Substance Use training.

Speaking of videos, our producer is in the process of finalizing drafts of our most recent BC Foster Basics Series 2 videos. The upcoming topics are:

- How Foster Parents Can Support Permanency Planning
- Engaging and Working with Indigenous, First Nations, Metis and Inuit Communities
- Professional Side of Fostering

Filming wrapped up in June. The topics are facilitated by sector professionals who we're certain you'll find very engaging. We expect to have the videos posted to YouTube in the next couple of months.

Our Solutions Program is going strong and is now supported by a comprehensive online database. The database will allow us to track and report support and advocacy trends and outcomes to MCFD (your anonymity is protected). This information is vital as we continue to meet regularly with Ministry leaders to discuss the needed positive shifts in our fostering culture. We recognize that foster parents work extremely hard and sometimes aren't treated with the respect they deserve.

I've been busy behind the scenes attending advisory committee meetings with other sector partners discussing much needed philosophical and practice shifts that will benefit foster parents, children and youth, as well as others. Change takes time, as we all know, but the foundational work is well underway.

I know the rest of BCFFPA's staff team join me in wishing you all a very happy Foster Family Month. The work you do creating healthier communities is invaluable. Have a wonderful month!

Jayne Wilson
Executive Director

OUR MISSION

To represent and support all foster parents who provide quality in-home family care in BC.



OUR BELIEF

Supported and resilient caregivers raise empowered children and youth.



OUR VISION

Supporting children and youth to reach their full potential through exceptional care.



The BCFFPA is a provincial organization for foster parents, run by foster parents. We aim to bring foster parents, social workers and others together in order to continuously improve the standard of care for BC's children in care.

We are a registered non-profit charity which aims to bring together foster parents, social workers and other stakeholders who are working to improve the standard of care for children in our province.

We provide information to the general public about fostering and recruitment services to the Ministry of Children and Family Development and Delegated Aboriginal Agencies. We offer our community a support network through our local Branch affiliations and our Solutions Program, opportunities for education, a hub to share news across our sector and insurance resources for foster caregivers. For over 50 years, we have consulted about the revision and development of policy and practice within BC's child welfare sector.

BCFFPA's structure facilitates contact with all foster parents in the province. We provide funding to our Branches and Regional Councils, and we maintain a Board of Directors that represents our diverse BC culture. BCFFPA's Board of Directors provincially, regionally and at a community level are all volunteers, elected by their foster parent membership community.

Programs and Services

BCFFPA has been serving BC's foster caregivers and our broader fostering community since 1967. We strive to meet the needs of all caregivers by maintaining an involvement in the provincial government's development of fostering policy and practice guidelines. In order to effectively address the diversity of our community's needs, we provide several core programs and respond to additional needs as we are able.

Recruitment



BCFFPA facilitates the Provincial toll free FosterlineBC. Those who are interested in fostering can call for basic information about fostering and complete an intake form. FosterlineBC toll free line is BC's main access for information, referral and support for all foster caregivers.

Community Capacity Building



BCFFPA facilitates opportunities for foster parents to network with other caregivers and agency workers within the fostering community through hosted events and community meetings.



BCFFPA supports the development and operations of community level foster parent groups called BCFFPA Local Foster Parent Associations or Branches. Our Branches meet regularly to offer support, mentorship, family activities and education workshops.



Through our Solutions Program, BCFFPA provides direct advocacy and support for foster caregivers who encounter challenges with placements, contract issues, investigations, and other foster-related interactions. We provide training to interested foster parent community members across the province.



BCFFPA has been working with the BC government for over 50 years to ensure fostering policies reflect best-practice and a positive, nurturing environment for BC's children and youth in foster care. BCFFPA works in partnership with the Ministry of Children and Family Development and all contracted regional support agencies providing services to BC's foster caregivers.

Provincial Information



We maintain a website that provides information for new and experienced foster caregivers including the steps to becoming a foster parent, policy updates, the BC Foster Basics video series, policy links, news releases, ongoing project updates, event details and regional information.



BCFFPA produces a provincial newsletter for our community members 3 times each year that contains current news from across the province.

Rider Insurance Program



BCFFPA administers an insurance program that, in many situations, covers the damages done to the property and belongings of all MCFD and DAA contracted foster caregivers in BC. The Rider Insurance Workshop is available for presentation across the province so that caregivers, social workers and agency staff are aware of program details and how to access the Rider program for coverage.

Supplementary Education for Foster Parents



BCFFPA develops and offers workshops to address the current issues that foster parents and the broader fostering community need to hear about. Current workshops cover themes such as grief and loss, permanency, communication, working in partnership, accessing and providing support and advocacy, and safeguarding.

Financial Support



BCFFPA provides financial support through grants and bursaries that are accessible by foster parents, birth children of foster parents and youth in and from care.

- Camps for Kids Grant
- Medical Travel Grant
- General Scholarship Fund
- Natural Child Bursary
- Merv Davis Bursary
- William Curtis Memorial Fund
- Fine Arts for Kids Fund
- JCW Excellence in Writing Grant

Message from the Minister of Children and Family Development, the Honourable Katrine Conroy



I've had the pleasure of being minister for a little over two years now. Meeting and hearing from young people and their caregivers has been invaluable in helping me and my ministry do the best job we can. With your help, we're working to create a better future for B.C.'s young people through positive relationships, emotional and financial support and progressive policy changes.

One of my stand-out memories this year was our announcement in February of the long overdue caregiver rate increase—the first boost to caregiver rates in 10 years! I witnessed the emotion in the room that day from people who know better than anyone else what that increase would mean. For the first time in a

long time, a government was not just telling them but showing them—through action—that children in care matter, and so do their foster caregivers! That rate hike was just the first small step.

My ministry is shifting how we approach supporting children and youth in care. You remain essential partners in those efforts, opening your homes and giving children and youth the love, support and safety they need to thrive.

We all know that it has become more challenging to recruit and retain foster caregivers for a variety of reasons, most notably the high costs of living and the increasingly complex care needs of many of the children coming into care. That's why I'm doubly grateful for the work the BCFFPA does and the help you give to new foster caregivers who are so needed. We are eager to continue our collaborative work on an updated Foster Parent Rights document.

You make an incredible commitment every day and from the bottom of my heart, I thank you.

I'm excited about the steps we'll take together in the coming year and I look forward to being with you in beautiful Harrison Hot Springs at your upcoming AGM.

See you there,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Katrine Conroy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Regional Delegate Reports

Interior Delegate Report

by Kevin Daniel of Williams Lake

October is Foster Family Month. It's the perfect time to honour the extraordinary dedication of foster parents. Foster parents are professionals and they are experts on caring for the children in their home. Unfortunately, many foster parents are still looking for respect—for their input to be valued and genuinely considered.



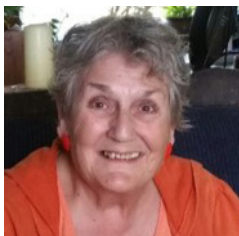
Many of the Interior Branches are just having their first school meetings of the school year. We are also just starting to hear from our community partners. Interior Community Services (ICS) and the Okanagan Foster Parent Association (OFPA). At this time, ICS has announced a two-day workshop with Andrea Chatwin on October 9th (Trauma and Loss) and 10th (Transitions) in Kamloops. Andrea Chatwin specializes in effectively responding to attachment and trauma, particularly focusing on children who have had caregiver loss and placement disruptions.

As we get busier and busier, it seems to be harder to find out what's happening in the community. Hopefully with the AGM just around the corner, we can figure out better ways to communicate and share information on what's happening in our region.

Coast Fraser Delegate

by Jeanette Dyer of Mission

Happy Foster Family Month! Here we are in October already, the kids are back to school and routines have been re-established. I hope you all had a great summer and are getting ready for all the Fall activities.



Things have been relatively quiet in the Abbotsford/Mission area. We have some homes without placements. We have had some placements with kinship families in many out-of-care situations. The concerns in my area include not having enough relief/respite homes for caregivers to take breaks and recharge.

Over the Summer, the Mission Branch hosted a Foster Family Barbecue. We supplied hotdogs, chips, drinks and fruits. Everyone had a good time and the kids put the play equipment to good use.

Archway Community Services (formerly known as Abbotsford Community Services) put on two outdoor barbecues for families. The August barbecue had fantastic weather. The kids enjoyed the fun activities such as face painting and temporary tattoos. Archway also hosts "Fostering Connections" on a monthly basis. Each month, there are valuable lessons at the group meeting. In November, they will offer the CALM Curriculum through the Fraser Valley Child Development Centre. The curriculum creates positive change in the social and emotional well-being of young children. You can contact the Archway Foster Parent Support Group at 778-880-5555.

Just a reminder to everyone in the Coast Fraser Region, would love to hear from you. I can be reached by phone in evenings at 604-826-9348 or email at jfcdyer@gmail.com. Looking forward to seeing you at the AGM!

Vancouver Island Delegate Report

by Tanya Hooker of Courtenay

Hello once again amazing Vancouver Island dwellers! I can't believe that the summer is finally over! Fall has come on in full force! This past year has been so eventful with many personal meetings together, phone calls, and community summer events where I've had the opportunity to meet so many amazing foster parents! The North Island Branch had pizza and swim nights—shifting and spreading out from upper to mid Island, monthly meetings together (mainly in Campbell River and Courtenay), as well as supporting, and advocating, for a few of you with challenging circumstances as they have arisen.



This Foster Family Month, make sure you take part in the Nanaimo, Courtenay, and Campbell River Foster Family Appreciation festivities. Make the best of these opportunities and participate in your hometown appreciation activities, these venues prove to be an excellent opportunity to gather with like-minded foster parents in your community. It's a well-known and proven fact that when we dine together—we bond together! Step out of your comfort zone and join together with fellow foster parents and yes, even caring and supportive social workers. Enjoy yourself, and allow yourself to be spoiled, even just a little bit—each of you totally deserve it! We hope you're able to join us at the AGM in beautiful Harrison Hot Springs for an amazing time of partnership, learning, education, and just good old fun!

Message from BC's Representative for Children and Youth

Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth



Oct. 1 ushers in an important month to recognize: Foster Families Appreciation month. Coincidentally, it also marks one year since I was officially confirmed as Representative for Children and Youth.

Over the past year, I have travelled B.C. extensively and participated in hundreds of events, conferences, speaking engagements, workshops, ceremonies and meetings with the goal of getting to know young people, and the people in our province who are dedicated to improving the lives of children, youth and young adults with vulnerabilities. Not surprisingly, many of the most passionate and skilled people I have met have been foster parents. I expected a diversity of stories – and I got them.

An interesting thing happened during these conversations. No matter where in the province I've been, foster parents have delivered one clear message that is remarkably consistent, regardless of position and experience. Caregivers have told me that they are looking for respect as skilled practitioners. They want inclusion in planning for, and carrying out, a child's care plan. They cherish the opportunity to open their hearts and homes, but to truly make systemic improvements that will benefit children and youth and enhance the caregiver experience, they need to feel respected by government.

I think we were all thrilled earlier this year when, in the provincial budget, foster caregivers were finally – after 10 years – given a long overdue budget lift. This was particularly welcome as it is a signal of the respect foster caregivers have been seeking. Also welcome was the increase to caregivers in the Extended Family program to ensure that their rates match the foster parent rate. This change especially benefitted Indigenous families and was gratifying to see.

But as foster parents have told me, there is more to be done. Currently at my Office, our Monitoring team is working on a child- and youth-centred report on services and supports for children and families living with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD). We have been working directly with children and families, including caregivers, to find out what is working and what's not, and what change is needed. I have to tell you that we have been profoundly touched and inspired by the families we have met, including a foster caregiver couple who have fostered nearly 50 young people, almost all of them with FASD. They have provided the warmth, nurturing and advocacy that the children in their care have needed over the years. Their bottomless commitment is phenomenal, and I can honestly say it is an honour to witness such a depth of devotion.

I want to sincerely thank caregivers all over B.C. for the important work you do and for your advocacy to create positive change. On behalf of all the staff of my Office, we raise our hands to you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J Charlesworth".

RCY can now help more young adults!

- Are you younger than 24 and have been in care or received services from MCFD?
- Do you know about Agreements with Young Adults?
- Have you heard about the tuition waiver for post-secondary education?

If you need help or advice, RCY's Advocates can work with you.

Call toll-free: 1-800-476-3933



REPRESENTATIVE FOR
CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Meet RCY's Kid Advocate, SEMA'TSE Jordan

Born and raised in Victoria, SEMA'TSE Jordan has been in and out of care her entire life until she aged out. She is First Nations from Ahousaht (Nuu-chah-nulth), Nanaimo (Snuneymuxw) and Terrace (Nisga'a). Her journey through foster care began at age eight when she was removed from her mother's care due to addictions, neglect and abuse. Wise beyond her years and a product of remarkable resilience, Jordan started a podcast series called "The Kid Advocate" where she talks about her experience in care. She currently works at the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth's Social Media Youth Team.

While many young people are using social media in other ways, you are using your powerful voice to share your story and to talk about important topics such as intergenerational trauma and forgiveness. What inspired you to start a podcast?

J: A coworker encouraged me to start a podcast. Since I was a child, I have always kept to myself. I felt alone and voiceless. The podcast gives me an opportunity to use my voice and inspire other youth to find their voice.

Where did you draw strength from as you were navigating all of the challenges you encountered at such a young age?

J: I always thought about my mom and being reunited with her. I had to be strong for my siblings. I also drew strength from vulnerability – the more vulnerable I am, the more helpful people who care can be.

When was the first time you thought to yourself, "I want to be an advocate for children and youth"?

J: It was during an Ignite Your Spirit Camp (a youth-led event organized by RCY designed to engage and empower Indigenous youth in care). I met the previous Rep Bernard Richard and talked to him about someone who needed help at that time.

What have you learned about yourself throughout your journey?

J: I have a voice and I am worthy of being loved and cared for by the right people. I got lucky with the last two foster families that I had. They welcomed me with open arms and I even became best friends with one of their daughters. I put one of my foster moms under a lot of stress and she still stuck by my side.



We believe in the importance of maintaining cultural connections for children in care. How important is your unique Indigenous culture to you and what role does it play in your everyday life?

J: I can't stress enough how important it is for children to have access to meaningful cultural connections. I did not have access to my culture when I was low and really needed it. I am still learning about my culture. I recently made a paddle with an orca design which I gifted to my social worker. Orcas are known for their loyalty which reminded me of her loyalty to her job.



What message would you like to give to youth in and from care?

J: Don't be ashamed of your story. It's your journey – do what's best for yourself. No one can underestimate your resilience.

What changes would you like to see in the system to break the cycle of family trauma so that youth in care can look forward to brighter futures?

J: More supports for youth in and from care and their families are needed especially long-term counselling.

You can listen to Jordan's podcast at rcybc.ca/kid-advocate

Legalization of Edible Cannabis, Cannabis Extracts and Cannabis Topicals

Federal regulations authorizing the production and sale of edible cannabis, cannabis extracts and cannabis topicals come into force October 17, 2019. The regulations aim to reduce public health and safety risks of these cannabis products, including reducing the appeal to children and youth.

The Ministry of Children and Family Development recognizes that edible cannabis products can pose a risk to children and youth given that food items made with cannabis may be indistinguishable from non-cannabis products.

Under Ministry policy, cannabis plants and products (including but not limited to cannabis in the form of fresh or dried leaf, oil, food and drinks) are to be stored in such a way that they are inaccessible to a child/youth in a family care home.

Upon legalization, licensed producers must give Health Canada at least 60 days' notice before making a new cannabis product available for sale. Consequently, edibles, topicals and extracts will not be available for retail sale until mid-December at the earliest.



Thank you to the Pacific Blue Cross Health Foundation

The Pacific Blue Cross Health Foundation supports not-for-profit organizations across British Columbia striving to improve health and well being among children, youth, individuals and families. The BC Federation of Foster Parent Associations is proud to have the support of the Pacific Blue Cross Foundation in support of the health and well being of foster parents and children across British Columbia.

This year, the Pacific Blue Cross Health Foundation funded BCFFPA in the amount of \$10,000. These grant funds will be used to support training workshops for foster parents throughout British Columbia, giving them the tools they need to help raise happy, healthy children in their care. The funds will also be used to support education and camp programs for foster children, both of which are essential for emotional and social wellbeing and development.

BCFFPA would like to thank and acknowledge the kindness and generosity of the Pacific Blue Cross Health Foundation.



Remembering Betty Davis

The fostering community is grieving as we remember Betty Davis, who was a fervent champion for foster parents and children. Betty passed away peacefully on June 27, 2019 after a long, brave battle with Crohn's Disease. Her love of children inspired her to become a foster parent, touching the lives of many children and youth over the years. Betty was the sitting Treasurer of Fraser Valley Foster Parent Association, offering caring support to many foster parents in the Fraser Valley when needed.

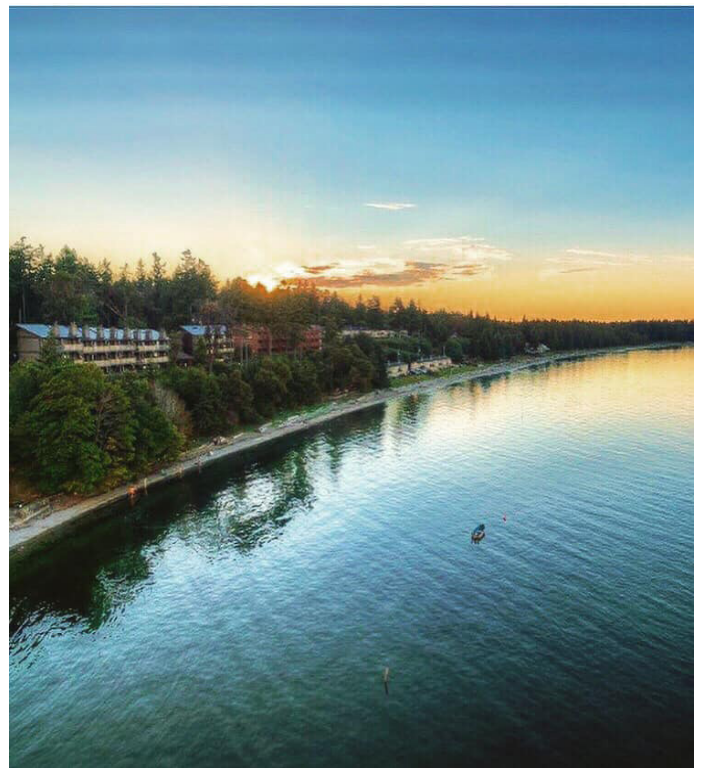
BCFFPA extends our sincere condolences to Betty's family and friends. She will be missed by all that had the pleasure of meeting her but her memory will stay with the community always.

Join us for our next
**Annual General Meeting and
Conference at Tigh-Na-Mara
Seaside Spa Resort & Conference
Centre in Parksville!**

October 2 and 3, 2020

Join us at Tigh-Na-Mara Seaside Spa Resort and Conference Centre in Parksville. The conference will feature workshops, guest speakers, a meet and greet, dinner and fundraiser.

Call 1-800-663-7373 to book a room and quote **"BCFFPA 2020 AGM & Conference"**. Room rates start at \$164. Full information and registration package will be available in May 2020.



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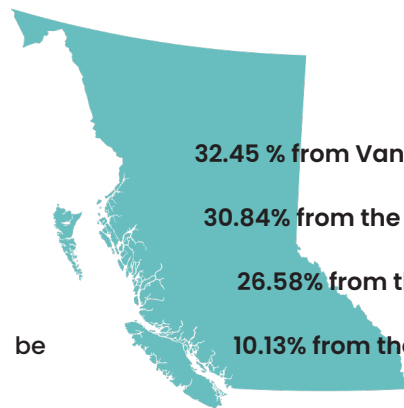
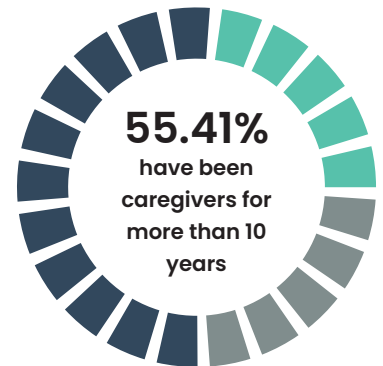
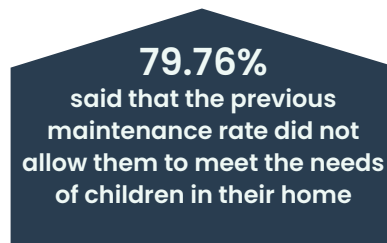
*Acceptance is guaranteed for select plans as long as GSC receives the initial payment; other plans require completion of a health questionnaire and medical underwriting.

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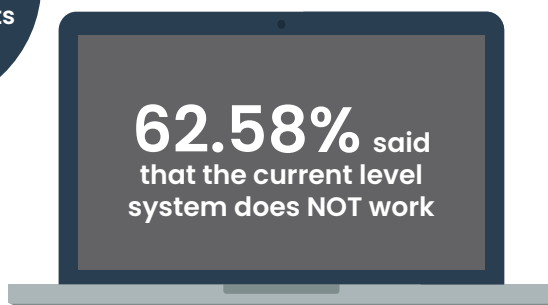
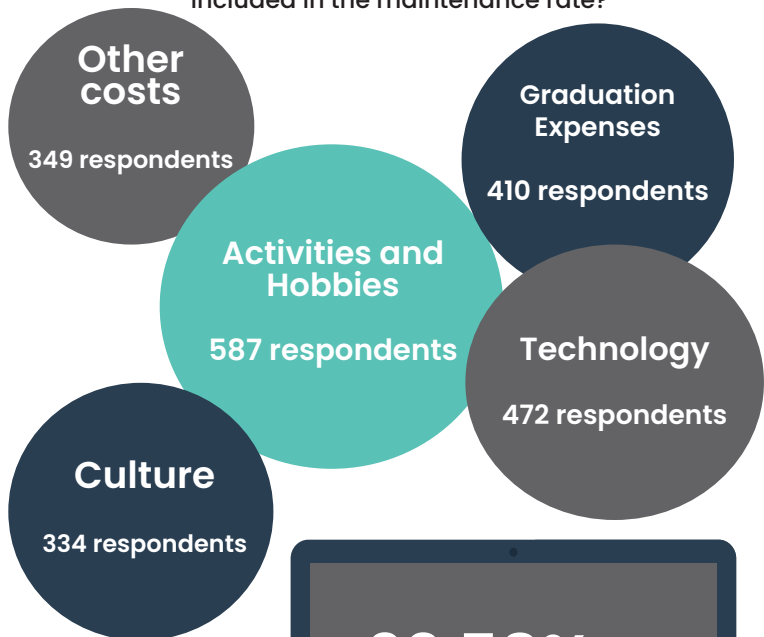


Thank you to everyone who participated in our survey!

In February of this year, BCFFPA released a survey in order to assist the Ministry of Children and Family Development in their comprehensive review of the family-based caregiver payment model (including rates, and financial and non-financial supports). The survey was open to foster caregivers, extended family program caregivers, Post Transfer of Custody caregivers and Post Adoption Assistance parents. Thank you for providing us a 360° view of all the supports that caregivers currently receive or need to help care for children and youth! We are confident that your responses will play an integral role in the Ministry's comprehensive review of the family-based caregiver model.



What additional cost categories do you feel should be included in the maintenance rate?



What made you decide to become a caregiver?

"It's a great way to help children in crisis and in need. I was in foster care as a child and my foster parents changed the outcome of my life. I wanted to give back."

"We originally fostered to meet a need in our community. Our children have grown and we enjoy having children in our lives. It keeps us busy and young."

"The child was family and I would like her to remain within our family and culture."

"We believe that supporting children and birth families during a difficult time in their lives may positively influence the trajectory of their lives."

"I have worked in Group Homes and Schools. I love kids and feel that I have an excellent educational and practical background."

BCFFPA in the Community

Rider Insurance Tour

BCFFPA toured the Lower Mainland for a week to meet with foster parents, Ministry offices and Agencies to present the Rider Insurance program. There were a total of about 100 attendees from Vancouver, Surrey, Delta, Langley, Chilliwack, Mission, Abbotsford, Burnaby, New Westminster and the Tri-cities.

The Ministry of Children and Family Development has arranged for Extended Property Damage (Rider) Insurance to supplement a residential caregivers homeowner or tenant insurance policy. The Rider follows the underlying homeowner/tenant property policy to provide up to the same limits and coverages. The Extended Property Damage Rider Coverage is extended to all caregivers who have a Family Care Home Agreement with MCFD, Youth Justice Care Homes or who foster through a Delegated Aboriginal Agency. The policy provides coverage for claims for direct loss or damage to property in the care, custody and control of the foster parent where such damage is caused by the accidental, criminal, or willful act of the foster child.

For questions or to file a claim, call 1.800.663.9999 or email office@bcfosterparents.ca.


Solutions Program Training

The Solutions Program offers assistance to foster parents working in partnership with the Ministry of Children and Family Development and Delegated Aboriginal Agencies to address concerns and resolve disputes in order to ensure children's care teams are working together collaboratively, fairly and responsibly. The value of BCFFPA's service is in our solutions focused perspective, our peer support model, and long history and experience working within the Ministry's policy and practice framework.

Last June 17 and 18, our Solutions Team—Annette Harding (Program Manager), Dianne Swansburg (Training Consultant) and Marcy Perron (BCFFPA President)—delivered a two-day training workshop at the Village Work and Play Space in Langley. Twelve foster parents from the South Fraser area attended. The goal of the two-day training is to assist foster parents in understanding the processes and policies that guide investigations, quality of cares, the Family Care Home Agreement, team work, planning, permanency and dispute resolution, complaints and appeals.

BCFFPA is available to deliver the Solutions Volunteer Training depending on demand and the needs of certain areas, particularly those who are not covered by contracted support services. When planning a training, BCFFPA generally partners with a foster parents support agency or Ministry office. The Solutions Manager will contact the local Resources Team Leaders and support agency to plan the training.

For questions, call 1.800.663.9999 or email office@bcfosterparents.ca.



Find us on CanadaHelps.org and help us expand our work for the community.

Photo by Fraser Valley Foster Parent Association



Foster Parent Spotlight: Andy and Jeanette Noordam



Andy and Jeanette Noordam live in Kamloops and have been married for 40 years. They have four children: three biological and one adopted. Andy is the President of the Kamloops BCFFPA Branch while Jeanette is a Member-At-Large.

How did you get started in fostering?

Andy: Fostering was something we had considered in the past and once most of our children had moved to their own homes, we had the space to provide a place for vulnerable kids who needed it. We have always enjoyed kids and felt we would be able to use our skills for others. We have been fostering for a little more than five years.

Jeanette: We have thought about fostering over the years but it was when a lady from our church started fostering that motivated us to apply to become foster parents.

What life lessons do you hope to impart to the kids in your care?

Andy: I want them to know that they matter and that they are loved. There are people out there who are willing to stand up and give them a helping hand.

Jeanette: We hope that our littles experienced a good sense of security in our home. Most of all we hope that they know they are loved.

What have you learned about each other in your fostering journey?

Andy: Each of us have unique strengths and abilities—I am more about instilling structure, following schedules and being organized while Jeanette fulfills the nurture role. These unique and different talents work best when they are utilized together for the betterment of the kids placed in our care.

Jeanette: I have learned that we have the love and compassion to care deeply for children who are not our own.

What is one lesson that one of your foster kids taught you?

Andy: This is difficult to answer as each of the kids placed in our care has, in his or her own way, shown us something new and different or has given us a new outlook on something we may have taken for granted in the past. This is remarkable as Jeanette and I usually take in babies and very young children.

Jeanette: One of our foster children has taught us how strong a child can be. This little four-year-old girl assumed the role of a mother to her two-year-old sister. This little girl had stepped in and taken the reins when the adults in her life had let them down. We had to convince her that we would take good care of her sister and that she could relax and rest from her many assumed responsibilities. Older siblings are often forced to step into their parents' shoes and take care of their younger siblings, all while dealing with trauma and its effects. We can never underestimate the resilience of children.

What's the best thing about fostering?

Andy: For me, it is the contented look in a child's face and knowing that I helped and did my part to make that contentment possible. Being able to provide that feeling of a "safe haven" for a child is awesome.

Jeanette: The best thing about fostering is being able to be a productive member of society—being able to make a difference in the life of child, their families and the community.

What have you found to be the most challenging thing about fostering?

Andy: The feeling that the well-being of a child is often placed second to policy and "agendas" where no consultation has been solicited from us. We feel that, as we have these children living with us 24/7, we have a pretty good idea of what works best for them.

Jeanette: The most difficult thing about fostering is not knowing from day to day when the child will be moving back to their parents.

Do you have a favourite story you can share?

Andy: I personally don't have any favourite stories – just a raft of very pleasant memories of being able to watch these little people grow and develop into amazing individuals.

Jeanette: There are so many favourite stories but the one memory that always sticks is the unusual joyful laugh of one little baby girl. We had brought her to church one Sunday and in the middle of the sermon, this four month old baby girl burst out laughing and had everyone around us grinning from ear to ear.

Has your experience as foster parents changed your definition of "family"? What does being a foster family mean to you?

Andy: It did expand my definition. I thought that we were done with kids but fostering has taken over our lives. Fostering has been a real eye-opening experience for us. Jeanette and I feel that we have been fortunate as our children grew up in a "normal", happy family. We want to give children who are unable to live with their own families some sense of normalcy and a boost in life. I am so pleased to see the kids placed in our care fully accepted as part of the group by all whom I traditionally see as "family". They are not treated differently or less favourably. Our bio children have been very supportive and understanding.

Jeanette: Our definition of "family" has not changed but we do take our hats off to all the single mothers who are determined to improve their lives in order to keep and care for their children.

How important is a good support network to a foster family?

Andy: It's very important and it makes a huge difference! A good support network – primarily a group like BCFFPA as well as other experienced foster parents can give a foster parent the knowledge and confidence to be effective.

Jeanette: A good support network would make fostering so much smoother for foster families. There are too many foster families fostering in isolation and having to "learn the ropes" on their own. Speaking for ourselves, we had no idea what was coming down the pike and would have appreciated a mentor to count on for support.

What advice would you give to families interested in becoming foster families?

Andy: Make sure you touch base with several experienced foster parents. They can fill you in on what you may encounter when you become a foster parent (the good and the bad) but they can also fill you in on how rewarding the experience can and will be. Seek out resources that will support and help.

Jeanette: I would advise families interested in becoming a foster family to talk to or connect with other experienced foster parents. Lean on others who understand. Don't be afraid to ask questions.

From Foster Care to Entrepreneurship: An Inspiring Story by Lual Lual

Faced with uncertain futures, youth in care are often called upon to adapt instantly, take risks and recognize opportunities, and use ingenuity to make the best out of every situation. That's exactly how Lual Lual, a former youth in care, discovered his passion for entrepreneurship at a young age. Last year, Lual successfully launched his book entitled "From Foster Care to Entrepreneurship" which takes his readers on a journey as he shares his unique personal story and draws heavily on life lessons learned both in and out of care.

Lual was born in South Sudan and grew up in Ottawa after immigrating to Canada with his family. Lual had a rollercoaster childhood which involved navigating his parents' separation and dealing with the constant displacement of bouncing from one shelter or foster home to another. With his resilience and the support of caring adults like foster parents, social workers and mentors, Lual is now continuing his path to entrepreneurial success.

What inspired you to write this book?

L: I wanted to share my personal story. Young people in care need to know that they're not alone. They need to know that somebody has been where they are and made it through. I also wanted to give back to The Children's Aid Society of Ottawa for helping shape who I am today.



When did you realize that you wanted to write a book about your journey?

L: It was in Grade 12—when I was transitioning out of care and into college. I thought it was the perfect time to write a book as I still maintained strong relationships with my mentors at the Children's Aid. They helped me develop ideas and connected me with publishers. While writing the book, I learned that opportunities open up when I keep a positive mindset.

What was it like navigating all of the challenges you encountered at such a young age? Where did you draw strength from?

L: It was very difficult. I would not change anything about my childhood though. I look back at them as tough times. The challenges can be overwhelming but it's important to never give up.

A lot of my childhood memories were not happy, but in those dark times, the brightest light was hope. Having hope for a positive future got me through my darkest moments.

How did you handle the switch from relative calm to turbulence during your childhood? As the oldest of your siblings, how did you handle feeling a strong sense of responsibility for your siblings when you were brought into care?

L: Maintaining connections with family and friends really helped. The visits were difficult but essential. They kept my hope alive that one day me and my siblings will be reunited with my mom.

As the eldest of three siblings, I've always felt responsibility to protect my siblings and take care of them. I needed to be a good role model for them so if I wanted them to be positive, I knew I had to model that behaviour.

You talked about the power of positive thinking in your book. Do you have any practical tips on maintaining a positive mindset for youth in care?

L: Don't give in to negativity. A simple shift in mindset can make all the difference! You can train your mind to focus on the good.

You and your siblings were placed in the home of Ngoza Simwanza who was a cultural match and helped you and your siblings tap into your African heritage. How important do you think it is that children in care have access to meaningful cultural connections?

L: It is very important that children have access to their culture. It helps them feel more safe and secure due to familiarity of culture. Matching every child with a foster parent of the same cultural background would be ideal but I know that it's not always possible. When it's not possible, foster parents need to show interest in the child's culture. They can take them to cultural events, celebrate cultural holidays with them and read them books that showcase their cultural heritage and traditions.

What's the most important lesson you've learned from a foster parent?

L: Patience—patience is a life skill that children need to learn at a young age. Foster parents show an incredible amount of patience as they deal with different kinds of people (both children and adults) with different personalities and behaviour.

It's amazing how you come up with inventive ideas and just go for it but what's more inspiring is how you bounce back from failure and move on to the next idea. What advice do you have for current and former youth in care who would like to pursue a path in entrepreneurship?

L: Grab a piece of paper, write down your goals and make a plan of action. Believe in yourself and your ideas. Believe that you can get to where you want to be.

Research about success stories in entrepreneurial excellence and draw lessons from their experiences.

Seek help and support by actively looking for mentors—their advice is invaluable. Be open to constructive criticism.

In the book, you talked about several positive role models in your life while growing up. How can caring adults—who would like to help—make a difference for kids that are in and from care?

L: You don't have to be a foster parent to change someone's life. Not everyone is called to foster and is able to but that does not mean that they can't help. You can be a mentor. You can be a relief or respite care provider. You can also donate to an agency or help raise awareness.

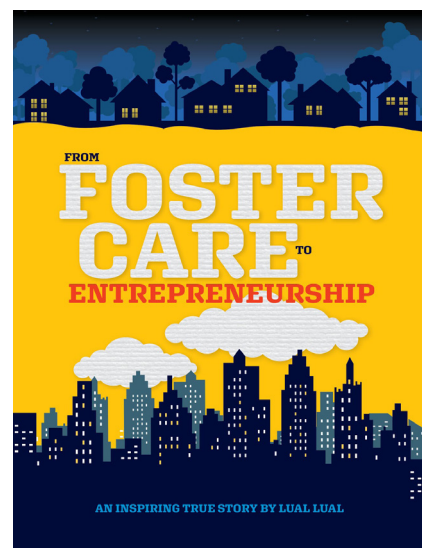
Has your experience in care changed your definition of "family"? How has it changed?

L: Family is not about blood. I am blessed enough that I have maintained connections and relationships with family members but my foster parent, Ngoza, showed me what family is about with her commitment to providing a warm, loving home to children who are not able to live with their birth families.

What's the most important thing you hope your readers will take away from the book?

L: Don't let adversity keep you down. Obstacles in life can be overwhelming but it's important to never give up and keep a positive mindset. Adversity may knock us down to the ground but it's how we respond after we're knocked down that makes a big difference.

“A lot more good things will happen if you really try and reach out to make connections with people. This approach proved so much better for me than just sitting around, waiting and hoping for things to happen.” –Lual



To learn more about Lual's journey and to purchase a copy of his book, visit fromfostercaretoentrepreneurship.com

What's It Like to be a Birth Child in a Foster Family?

by Emma Cuell

My parents started fostering when I was three years old. I am who I am today because of my experience of being raised with my siblings, both biologically related to me and not. Each child I had the opportunity to meet deeply impacted who I am by sharing pieces of their lives with me. Some of these experiences were positive, others taught me valuable lessons.

Fostering gave me a brother. My brother came into my life 18 years ago, when he was one and a half. We were raised together and share memories of homeschooling, family vacations and daily activities. As we grew older, I started to notice differences, from our genetics, to our ability to articulate our thoughts, and our abilities to regulate emotions. From this, I learned that people are so much more than their looks and cognitive ability. Even later, I realized that our cognitive differences were affected by actions our biological mothers took during their pregnancies, something neither of us could control yet impacts our whole life. I am thankful that he came into my life and that he has shown me how to persevere through challenging times. From him, I learned that there is strength in asking for help and support.

Another experience that has deeply impacted my life happened during my adolescence—two siblings were living with my family before they were moved to a home that was believed to be safe and would offer them opportunities that my family could not. At this home, the brother was killed and his sister experienced severe trauma. When she returned to my family's home, I quickly learned about the impact of trauma on a child, specifically a three-year old. I remember her being unable to sit at the dinner table if any adult males were present, laying on the floor next to her bed as she screamed before falling asleep and her sheer terror of dogs, an animal that she previously adored. I spent a lot of time being angry that she was initially moved from our home and that she had to endure the trauma. I still struggle to trust what other people tell me is safe. I learned that love is not enough to support a child. Although she moved to another foster home ten years ago, she is still excited and happy to see me when we see each other in our small town. From her, I learned the positive power of relationships.

Fostering also gave me a sister. I met my younger sister thirteen years ago, when she was two. The original plan was for her to spend the night, but she ended up staying for two years. I am so thankful that when she moved to

to live with her biological family that they valued the relationship she has formed while in care and allowed her to still spend time with our family and even come on our family vacations. When she reentered care three years ago, she moved back in with my parents. As a teenager, she has demonstrated some challenging behaviours, which creates difficulty ensuring her safety. I am learning the importance of unconditional positive regard, being present and knowing what I can influence. I believe that I can try to keep her safe, but I cannot control her actions. With my relationship with her, I am learning how crucial it is to not give up, even during difficult times.

Being in a foster family, I learned to be non-judgmental, patient and compassionate. I believe that the way I was raised created a lifelong desire for me to help others. Two years ago, I started my post-secondary journey in Human Services at Selkirk College. During these years, I have spent a lot of time reflecting on my childhood and the way it has impacted me and will likely continue reflecting for a long time. The classroom learning solidifies what I learned earlier in life, such as the importance of a secure attachment. Now, I have graduated as a valedictorian from Selkirk College with my diploma in Human Services specializing in Child and Youth Care and an Associate Certificate in Mental Health and Addictions but I am still wanting to further develop my skills, knowledge and experiences so I can help children, youth and their families more effectively. I have recently transferred to the University of Victoria to complete a degree in Child and Youth Care.



Emma is this year's recipient of BCCFPA's Natural Child Bursary.

Documentary Review: Foster

by Michelle Relevante

Released on May of this year, HBO's documentary "Foster" takes an honest look at the often misunderstood foster care system as seen through the eyes of those who know it best. Produced by Oscar-winning filmmakers Mark Jonathan Harris and Deborah Oppenheimer, the film is set in Los Angeles County, the largest child welfare system in the United States. It is a mosaic of success stories from multiple perspectives—birth parents, foster parents, social workers, lawyers and judges. Their stories are beacons of hope for others in the same situation. Because the foster care system is crisis-driven, success stories are often outweighed by the tragic ones.

Raeanne, the story of a mother: Raeanne gives birth to her daughter at a hospital and tests positive for cocaine. The authorities quickly remove the baby from her care but finds a good alternative—Raeanne's boyfriend, Chris, who is healthy and is in a position to care for his daughter. The film shows Chris trying to care for his daughter on his own as Raeanne fights to maintain her sobriety and earn back her parental rights.

Mary, the story of a young adult leaving care: Mary was exposed to drugs as a baby and experienced abuse before entering care. Mary asks: "Why didn't any of my family members take me in instead of just watching me get passed around?" She has been in about 18 homes and is now navigating life as a college student. She constantly wrestles with the feeling of "not being enough" and has difficulty maintaining mental focus in school. In the film, Mary talks about being able to write the end of her story even though she did not get to write the beginning.

Earcylene, the story of a long-time foster parent: Earcylene Beavers, now 71 years old, started fostering children at her Los Angeles home 27 years ago and has adopted three foster children. She has taken in over 1,000 children and has served as a legal guardian for many of them. "I want to recruit other foster parents, and I want foster parents to be more involved with the kids. I know sometimes it's hard, but 'you gotta be strong'. Love them to the point that you can say, You know what? I know you didn't mean it. I know you're scared. I know you're hurt. But we're going to work through this together.", Earcylene said.

Denyshia, the story of a youth in care: "I was abandoned. I was abused, mistreated and no one showed that they cared for me. I thought something was wrong with me. I didn't know that I could actually be loved again or ever", referring to her foster family.

Jessica, the story of a former foster youth who is now a social worker: Jessica takes us on her heartbreaking and inspiring journey as a young girl who navigated many challenges including juvenile hall and a teen pregnancy. She carried a deep hatred for the system she grew up in. However, life truly works in mysterious ways and through hard work and resilience, Jessica now has her master's degree and has been a social worker for five years. She believes that allies make a big difference: "Only allies can really disrupt the cycle and intervene. The people who are in it, living in it and surviving, they aren't able to disrupt. I hope the larger society takes a closer look at who we are as people and maybe see the potential."

Full of compassion, humanity and hope, "Foster" gives a face, voice and identity to people within the system. Far from the lights of Hollywood that Los Angeles is known for, the film shows us that we can do so much more for both the children in care and the

caring adults who give their all to help vulnerable children. It is evident that the problems in and around the foster care system reveal larger issues that society has not addressed, such as poverty, substance use and abuse, homelessness, mental health issues and racism. Each story tells us that there are systemic issues that must be acknowledged and addressed.

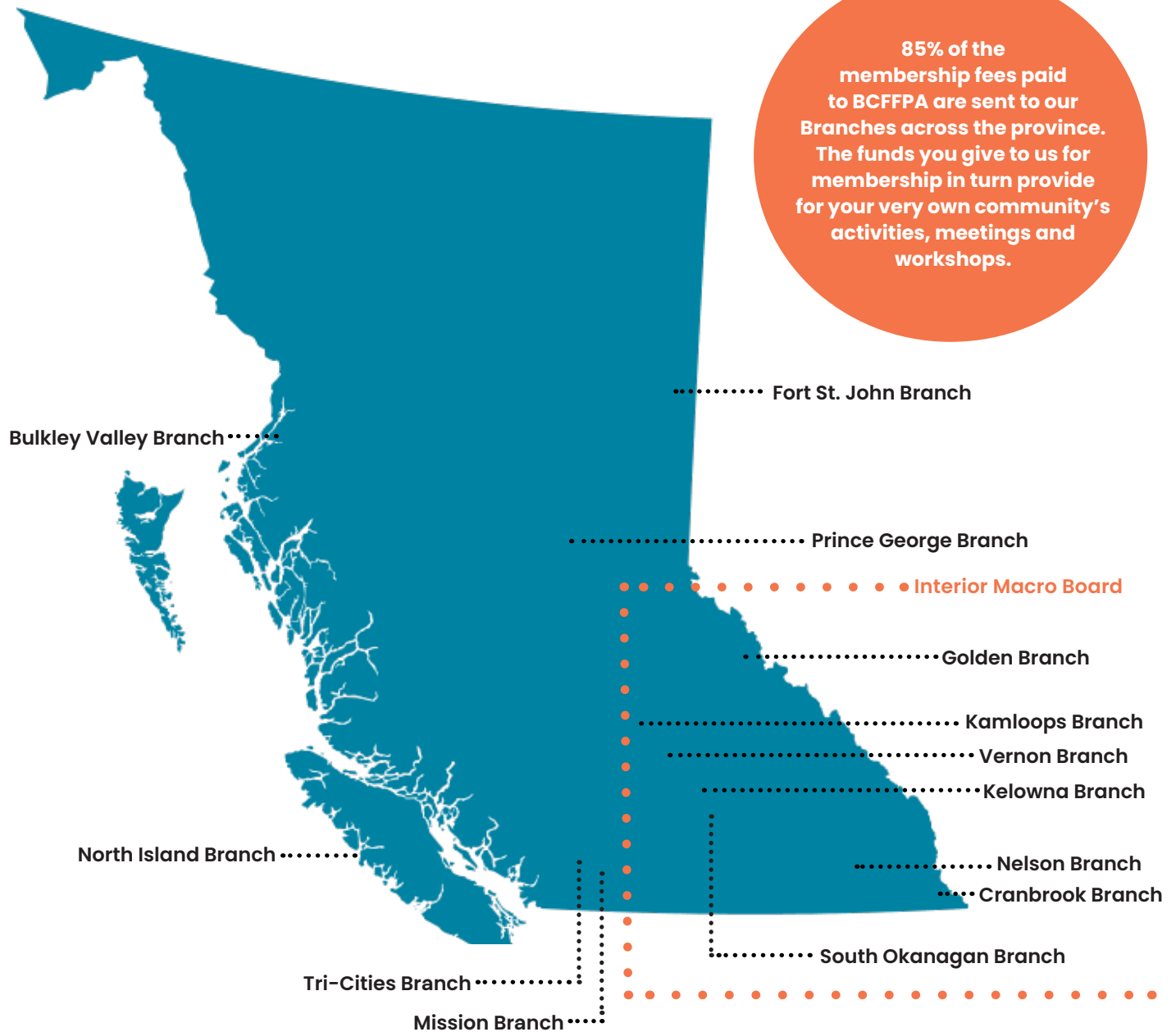
Watch the documentary on CraveTV (www.crave.ca) and don't look away.



Join a Branch and be part of a powerful community of caring foster parents!

A strong community of care like our Branches makes sure nobody goes it alone. There are active foster parent branches in every region and if there isn't one near you, it's easy to start one!

85% of the membership fees paid to BCFFPA are sent to our Branches across the province. The funds you give to us for membership in turn provide for your very own community's activities, meetings and workshops.



BC Federation of Foster Parent Associations was created in 1967 and is a Federation that represents Local Foster Parent Associations or Branches (formerly called Locals). Foster parents in a community join together to create an entity that operates under BCFFPA's bylaws and policies for the purpose of strengthening the community network for foster parents. Most branches meet monthly to give and receive support, discuss the work of fostering, host an educational workshop, plan family events, and offer mentorship to newer foster parents. Branches can initiate partnership meetings between the Ministry, agencies and foster parents to discuss successes, issues and common initiatives.

You can start a Branch when you have five BCFFPA member foster parents interested in doing so. Any time of the year, any season, any day—we'll be happy to help you along the way! The provincial office hosts bi-monthly calls with Branches to make sure that their voice is heard as we advocate for policy and practice development and changes that affect present and future BC foster parents.



JOIN A BRANCH, START A BRANCH

Community is important for foster parents. Gathering together on a regular basis gives foster parents the much needed sense of community that is essential when they're working within the complex child welfare structure. Nothing beats a group of like-minded people who share similar experiences.

When foster parents come together in a Branch, they are able to communicate to BCFFPA's provincial office the successes and issues experienced by their fostering community. This better informs us so that we are then able to represent the interests and activities of your community in our discussions with the Ministry.

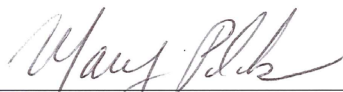
For more information about joining or starting a branch in your community, please call 1-800-663-9999.

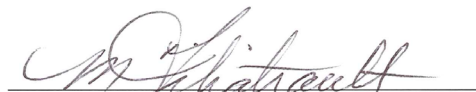


Ministry of Children and Family Development
AND
The British Columbia Federation of Foster Parent Associations

~ Foster Parent Rights ~

- Whereas** we wish to acknowledge the special role foster parents have as caregivers for vulnerable children
- Whereas** we wish to acknowledge that the relationship between them, built on mutual respect, deserves recognition
- Whereas** the residence that foster parents share with the children and youth of British Columbia is exclusively their private residence
- Whereas** the Foster Parent Rights document and statements therein is not intended to create, infringe, amend, or change existing or future legal responsibilities or duties whether by statute or contract
- Whereas** we agree that, from time to time, we will meet to discuss the relationship between us and will do so with regard to the stated rights in this document and may seek to amend these rights by mutual agreement
- Whereas** we recognize the paramount consideration is the safety and well being of the child
1. The right to continuing professional development opportunities with respect to caring for children, and to participation in professional foster parent associations.
 2. The right to be consulted and be able to have meaningful input into decisions affecting the foster parents home, family and other placement(s) in the home.
 3. The right to be involved in the development of the child's plan of care and informed of changes to the plan.
 4. The right to limit access to private spaces within their own home, to special possessions, and to private or personal conversations, in the same way their own children are limited.
 5. The right to refuse a placement if they feel they cannot meet the child's needs regardless of the home level.
 6. The right to be able to continue to participate in cultural, social and religious activities of their choosing, while honouring rights, values and beliefs of the foster child.
 7. The right to be considered as a permanent family for a child, along with all other suitable homes if the Director determines that a permanent plan is in the child's best interest.
 8. If requested and permitted by legislation, the right to be provided with notification of the serious illness, injury, or death of a former long-term placement, when this information is known.
 9. The right to receive available information for the care of the child, including, but not limited to, any history of violence or illegal activity, as well as medical, educational, behavioural, personal care and relevant family information in addition to guardianship, custody and access arrangements. In the case of an emergency placement, information is received as soon as possible.
 10. The right to be provided as soon as possible with reasons when a child is removed from a foster parent's home.
 11. The right to be informed of standards expected by ministry staff and consequences of not meeting the standards.
 12. The right to access information contained in any and all documents related to themselves which are held in the Director's custody, subject to all relevant legislation.
 13. The right to access support of their choosing, and the right to be assisted in contacting the British Columbia Federation of Foster Parent Associations, the Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents, or any other support provider or agency on any issues concerning, but not limited to, Child in Care Standards and Conflict Resolution.
 14. The right to be provided with reasons an agreement is terminated or suspended and the right to appeal the decision.
 15. The right to be treated with consideration, trust, honesty, respect, acceptance, and fairness in all circumstances by ministry staff and community service providers and the right to request the ministry's assistance when situations arise that involve verbal or physical abuse of the foster parent by a child or youth in care or their family members.
 16. The right to be informed of their Rights and the regional process or protocol for resolving differences or disagreements between the ministry and foster parents.
 17. The right to receive services to support and stabilize a placement.
 18. The right to be provided with access to support services when placements are terminated to minimize the foster parents' feelings of disruption and grief.


HONOURABLE MARY POLAK
MINISTER OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT


MELANIE FILIATRAULT
PRESIDENT, BRITISH COLUMBIA FEDERATION
OF FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATIONS

Foster Community Resources

Provincial Resources

BC Federation of Foster Parent Associations www.bcfosterparents.ca	1-800-663-9999
After Hours Foster Parent Support Line	1-888-495-4440
Indigenous Perspectives Society www.ipsociety.ca/foster-caregiving	1-844-391-0007 (ext. 229)
Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks www.fbcyicn.ca	1-800-565-8055
Adoptive Families Association www.bcadoption.com	1-877-236-7807
Pacific Post Partum Support Society (also supporting adoption placements) www.postpartum.org	604-255-7999
Parent Help Line	1-888-603-9100
Parents Together	604-325-0511
Parent Support Services of BC www.parentsupport.bc.ca	1-800-345-9777
Representative for Children & Youth www.rcybc.ca	1-800-476-3933
FAE/S Support Network	604-507-6675

Coastal Fraser

For contact information for local foster parent groups or support in your area, please call 1-800-663-9999.

Hollyburn Family Services www.hollyburn.ca	604-987-8211
Vancouver Aboriginal Child & Family Services Society www.vacfss.com	778-331-4500
Foster Hub www.fosterhub.ca	1-877-926-1185

Fraser Valley Foster Parent Association	604-533-1924
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South Vancouver Youth Centre www.milieu.ca/svyc	604-325-2004
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Island

For contact information for local foster parent groups or support in your area, please call 1-800-663-9999.

Foster Parent Support Services Society	1-888-922-8437
FPSSS (Victoria)	778-430-5459
FPSSS (Nanaimo)	250-390-9686
FPSSS (Campbell River)	250-286-0555

Interior

For contact information for local foster parent groups or support in your area, please call 1-800-663-9999.

Okanagan Foster Parent Association www.okfosterparents.ca	
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Central Okanagan	250-870-8991
North Okanagan	250-558-0939
South Okanagan	250-462-6907
Shuswap	250-515-1522

Okanagan Metis Children & Family Services	250-868-0351
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Interior Community Services www.interiorcommunityservices.bc.ca Support to Family Care Network www.icsfp.info	1-877-376-3660
East Kootenay	250-426-6013
West Kootenay	778-460-5174
Cariboo	250-609-2017
Kamloops and area	236-421-0031

North

For contact information for local foster parent groups or support in your area, please call 1-800-663-9999.

AXIS Family Resources (24/7 support) www.axis.bc.ca (satellite office locations online)	1-877-392-1003 Press 205
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Community Bridge Fort St. John www.communitybridge.ca	250-785-6021 (ext. 235)
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Please complete and return to BCFFPA: 208-20641 Logan Avenue, Langley, V3A 7R3 or join or renew via our website at www.bcfosterparents.ca

