

# FosterlineBC

BC Federation of Foster Parent Associations



Winter 2019 Volume 17, Issue 1

REGIONAL DELEGATE  
AND MINISTRY UPDATES

FOSTER PARENTS, STRESS  
AND DIABETES

7 BUDGET-FRIENDLY WAYS TO  
CELEBRATE FAMILY DAY

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## BCFFPA

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*For Board of Directors contact information, please call the Provincial office.*

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.

BCFFPA provides education, training and professional development as well as advocacy, support and assistance for foster parents in BC.

**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 Jayne Wilson at jayne@bcfosterparents.ca.

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

## President's Report



I hope you enjoyed the holidays with your family and friends, and I hope 2019 has started off well. This year will be busy for the BCFFPA, tackling new challenges and offering you more support through our Solutions Program.

Annette has been very busy addressing individual and community advocacy needs and working with Jayne and MCFD to ensure that Ministry leadership teams are aware of our Solutions Program services. Annette and Dianne Swansburg, in consultation with our Board Secretary, Julie Holmlund, have been revising our community training for our volunteer supporters. You can expect regional trainings to be offered across the province within the next few months. Our volunteer team will work directly with Annette to provide assistance to foster parents across the province.

Hopefully all foster parents received an email link to a survey sent the first week of January. This survey was part of the Ministry's ongoing work to review and revise the current system of care. It included questions regarding the level system, payments and relief care.

With the changes to the Societies Act, this spring we will be embarking on a legal review of our Bylaws document to ensure conformance. All members should have received an email copy of our Constitution and Bylaws. Please send all feedback to Jayne Wilson at [jayne@bcfosterparents.ca](mailto:jayne@bcfosterparents.ca) prior to February 15, 2019.

This spring we will produce three new videos for our BC Foster Basics series on YouTube. If you haven't visited our channel yet, please do! You'll find great videos with useful information for all BC foster parents.

This FosterlineBC issue includes an article about foster parent health. Our work is stressful, so check out the article for some ideas on self-care!

I look forward to seeing you at AGM 2019 in Harrison Hot Springs. If you haven't reserved your room already, please do as the block will fill up fast.

Marcy Perron  
President

## Notes from the Office



The beginning of a new calendar year marks the beginning of the last quarter of our fiscal year. This is the time of year where we tidy up loose ends, do some critical assessments of our programs and services, check

in with staff about their annual goals, and review our targets and achievements. It's also the time when we review our budgetary needs for next fiscal year.

Early in 2018 our landlords had a change in plans for the building and we were suddenly in the position of moving our office. As market rents are largely unaffordable for a non-profit of moderate means anywhere west of Surrey, we were able to find suitable space in downtown Langley. Come visit us when you have a chance!

We have added a part-time outreach position to address the continuous need for community education and foster parent recruitment. BCFFPA will be stepping into the school, law enforcement and medical communities with short presentations and the goal of dispelling many of the myths about foster parents and foster children. We're looking forward to sharing more about the great work foster parents do.

We are embarking on an Interior foster parent recruitment campaign this month. We will be gathering a working group of individuals who work in the sector to decide on messaging specifically aimed at recruiting more foster parents in the Interior. We hope to leverage some of our advertising contacts so that the resulting campaign materials will be visible at bus shelters and other high profile locations.

Our partnership with the UBC Vancouver School of Economics continues. Our staff have proposed some topics to explore as a result of the previous two studies. This work is being provided to the Ministry to consider in their review of the current system of care.

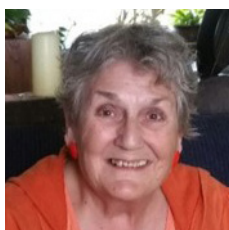
With spring quickly approaching, our AGM planning once again kicks into high gear. We hope to produce another informative and fun event for our community.

Jayne Wilson  
Executive Director

## 2019 Regional Delegate Reports

### New Coast Fraser Delegate

Welcome Jeanette Dyer!

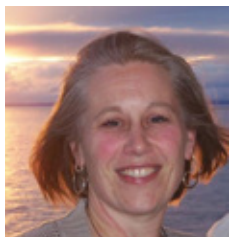


Jeanette started fostering in 1954 when she was asked by police to take an infant into her care and keep her safe until she could return home to her mother. From then on, whenever asked, she would take any child in at the request of police, parents or Catholic Children's Aid Society. No contacts, no money, just a need she felt she could fill.

Her belief was and is, if needed, there is always room for one more. Just throw another potato in the pot. It was not until 1999–2000 that she worked exclusively with the MCFD. She asked for and had the children of a previous foster child placed with her. The rest is history. They are still a part of her family.

Today, she is still fostering, still willing and able to reach out, open her door and heart for those vulnerable kids who need a safe, caring place to call home for however long. It is her profound belief that your, mine, and their futures dependent on the acceptance, love and nurturing of our children now, so as to foster positive outcomes for tomorrow.

Jeanette lives in the Mission area and has worked with BCFFPA's Mission Branch for many years. Welcome to the provincial team, Jeanette!



### Vancouver Island Delegate Report

by Tanya Hooker of Courtenay

Hello Vancouver Island, Happy New Year to everyone!

Activity across the Island still continues to look promising as progress is being made in the areas of communication, networking, and bridging with foster parents. As Delegate of the BCFFPA, partnership with MCFD and FPSSS is rolling along superbly as usual.

The North Island Branch had their AGM in October, where President Kevin Lagan stepped down after committing the past year completely to the interests of foster parents in the North Island region. The President role has been appointed to Lorna Adams for the remainder of the term. The North Island Branch Board also includes Vice President Tanya Hooker (myself), Treasurer Ev Anderton, and Secretary Colleen Yurianna. The Branch holds monthly meetings open to the fostering community, and also welcomes Ministry staff, FPSSS reps, and Family Services support staff. If you are interested in attending one of these meetings and getting to know the board members of the Branch (along with other foster parents and BCFFPA members) please contact me, Lorna Adams or BCFFPA Vice President, Chad Hooker, for more information about the date and time of the next meeting.

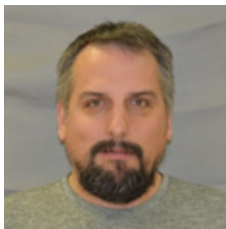
Branches create a strong voice in your local community, with a collective provincial impact. Together as a unified body, we create a strong and healthy fostering community moving forward in our province. Working together in partnership with the Ministry and local agencies to collaborate and share information, trends, resources and tools is the current primary goal across the Island (as well as provincially) for the BCFFPA. If you reside on the South of the Island and recognize the importance of having a Branch in your area, please don't hesitate to give us a call or send us an email. We would be more than happy to visit your community and set up a BCFFPA Branch information session.

As your Vancouver Island Delegate I've been attending local partnership meetings, including the VI Regional Partnership meetings twice a year, as well as taking phone calls from foster parents to answer questions and offer advice, direction, connection and support. Remember, we are here as your provincial voice: the BCFFPA wants to advocate for you. Resilient foster families raise empowered children and youth! I encourage you to contact us at any time with questions, concerns, comments, or if you require support from a provincial level. Let's meet for coffee or go out for lunch!

Enjoy the rest of winter – talk to you soon!

## Interior Delegate Report

by Kevin Daniel of Williams Lake



Happy New Year, everyone!

It's hard to believe it has been three months since the AGM in Nelson – one of the nicest locations for an AGM I have been to since I first became a member of the

Federation in 2008. The drive was long but well worth it as I was able to connect with service providers and foster parents face to face instead of over the phone.

The Interior is split into three different operating areas. These are the Kootenays, Okanagan, and the Thompson Cariboo area. Many of the struggles are the same: lack of foster homes, foster parents feeling disrespected, and kids not being placed in appropriate levelled homes causing foster parents to burn out. Each of these areas also has its own struggles. The Kootenays is seeing a large lack of homes, with one community having several homes at full capacity. With this comes added financial stress on foster families, causing some homes to close. But even with these issues, the Kootenays had some good things happen over the last few months with foster parent appreciation and other events. The Okanagan had successful Christmas and foster parent appreciation events. For Foster Parent Month, the Kamloops resource team made foster parents breakfast. The Kamloops branch also provided Christmas hampers. Cariboo area had a successful lunch put on by the resource team, during which several 20- and 10-year pins were handed out to foster parents. This was the first time in 10 years a lunch like this was held, and foster parents felt appreciated when they left.

At this time, we are also waiting to hear whether the Vernon branch will continue to operate. Okanagan has several ongoing protocols and Kamloops currently has approximately five on the go. Kamloops has the largest number of foster homes in the Interior, including placements from one Delegated Aboriginal Agency.

In the coming months we have new policies being brought forth, a new budget year, and the Nanaimo by-election. This could change the BC political landscape again and create more chaos and delays.

Over the coming months I ask that you communicate with the BCFFPA office, your service provider (like ICS or OFPA) or your regional level reps and let them know what the ongoing issues are in your area.

[Editor's Note: Vernon branch is now operating with a full Board of Directors.]



## Thank you to outgoing Coast Fraser Delegate, Walter Aguilar

What an honour it has been to serve on the Board of Directors alongside Walter Aguilar, BCFFPA Coast Fraser Delegate, for the past three years. Walt has been an immense joy to have on our team, with his humour, positive approach to life, passion and compassion towards foster parents, as well as his endless source of experience, tremendous drive to see children better cared for across BC, and his exceptional communication and motivational skills... wow!

Walter, you have served the board and the BCFFPA respectfully and diligently. On behalf of our President, Marcy Perron, and the BCFFPA Board of Directors, we thank you and commend you for your esteemed years of service on this team. You're quite the guy and you will be greatly missed in your role.

Best wishes in your future endeavours!

## Message from BC's Representative for Children and Youth

### Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth



Since your last newsletter, much has happened in my Office. Among other things, we have released reports, held an open house in Prince George, spent time in community, begun two special reports and, on October 1, I was officially confirmed in my appointment as Representative for Children and Youth for a five-year term.

Some highlights: on November 15, I released my first report, *Time to Listen: Youth Voices on Substance Use*, which offers the perspectives of 100 young people in B.C. with lived experience and draws upon lessons learned from an aggregate review of substance use-related injury and death reports received by RCY in 2017. In my recommendations, I call for a comprehensive support system – from materials to encourage prevention, to easy-to-access information about available services, to a robust array of culturally responsive harm reduction and treatment options, to youth-focused, safe-consumption sites. These recommendations are directed at the Ministries of Mental Health and Addictions, Health and Children and Family Development.

On December 10, I released *Alone and Afraid: Lessons learned from the ordeal of a child with special needs and his family*. This report tells the story of 12-year-old “Charlie,” an Indigenous boy with special needs who was removed from his mother’s care after police found him alone and in a state of profound neglect. In this report, I make 11 recommendations, including calling for an overhaul of MCFD’s Children and Youth with Special Needs services. Again, my recommendations for this report were directed at multiple ministries, including the Ministries of Children and Family Development, Health and Education. The good news is that Charlie is now thriving in foster care and cultural connections are being built with his community. Government responded positively to both reports. Our Monitoring team monitors and follows up on our recommendations, and we will be keeping close tabs on developments that result from our reports. Both reports are on our website: [www.rcybc.ca](http://www.rcybc.ca).

While our reports receive a lot of attention, there are many other vital facets to our work at RCY. Important to know: our Advocacy services are here for all children and youth and their families or caregivers who are receiving or navigating government services. We can help you connect with services or programs you need, self-advocate and even advocate directly on behalf of a child or youth if necessary. We can also advocate for those between 19 and 24 who are receiving, or are eligible to receive, CLBC services. Call us free at 1-800-476-3933 or email [rcy@rcybc.ca](mailto:rcy@rcybc.ca).

In addition, I spend significant amounts of time in community – along with RCY staff – both sharing and receiving information about the issues and interests of children and youth. This helps us stay attuned to emerging and ongoing issues.

This year promises to be just as full and interesting, with two new special reports underway – one on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and the other on youth transitioning to adulthood. I’ll have more for you in my next article. In the meantime, I invite you to keep up with all the latest news from my Office through our social media channels. Like us on Facebook (@RCYBC and RCYBCYouth), Twitter (@RCYBC and @RCYBCYouth), Instagram (@RCYBCYouth) and YouTube (Rep4Youth). And remember, if you or someone you know needs to call, please don’t hesitate. We are here for you.

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

### Number of former children and youth in care attending post-secondary schools more than triples in a year

According to a November 2018 article in the Vancouver Sun, there are 687 former children and youth in care benefitting from the tuition waiver at 25 post-secondary institutions in BC. That’s more than three times the 189 students in 2017 before the free tuition program was expanded. This just goes to show that when young people are given the opportunity, resources and support, they have what it takes to succeed.

# Advocating for Change: What it takes to inspire shifts in the fostering sector

by Jayne Wilson

Over the past few years we have heard the occasional comment that changes to MCFD policy and practice are taking far too long. For those working on the front lines of fostering who have a very real need to see practice issues addressed, you are correct, it does take quite some time. The reason for this is because there is a process that we must follow, and sometimes it takes months or years for the requested change to gain traction at the Ministry.

For decades BCFFPA has been mandated with the key role of advocating for and insuring supportive infrastructure for foster parents. While BCFFPA certainly provides direct service to foster parents, most of our work has a broader scope. Examples of other work we do includes speaking directly with the Minister regarding changes to mileage amounts and foster parent rates, addressing contract wording changes with the Policy Division, working collaboratively with MCFD to revise fostering publications, and collaborating with other agencies to create foster parent recruitment campaigns.

Given that our advocacy work is done without any public fanfare it's no surprise there are questions about what impactful change we are making in fostering practice for the province. If you've never been an advocate you may not be aware that advocating for change can take a very long time. On occasion our timing is perfect and a community-level problem can be resolved quickly. But efforts to address larger issues that require more than a few conversations sometimes straddle a change in government, new leadership with different priorities, and require us to renew connections and then reintroduce an issue. When change happens for the community it might seem like it was sudden, but in most cases it has taken many years of conversation and collaborative effort to achieve the budget, the policy revisions and, on occasion, legislative amendments.

When we identify a troublesome trend, our immediate priority is to find who to speak to and how to respectfully but authoritatively present the facts and evidence of hardship, and assert the need for change to practice or policy. We must be cautious about how we approach advocacy to avoid the ever-present risk of losing our audience with too much noise or a combative attitude. We have to have patience and maintain our positive working relationships with Ministry staff who we

are hoping will understand the experience of foster parents. Most of our advocacy work is invisible and involves utilizing the connections we have to influence the changes we've been asked to advocate for.

Future foster parents who experience a positive policy or practice change won't realize it was the result of four years of BCFFPA's requests for meetings and presentation of evidence, many conversations, antacids, moments staring at a blank wall, research, strategy, and a few redirections that result in one or two individual leaders embracing an alternative evidence-based perspective and changing something critical for our community. It's that simple. And it's that challenging. It only takes ONE person in a position to influence change to create a better environment for foster parents and foster children. All wins in advocacy are hard won. Have confidence that we're crafting solutions, asking for changes, and leading the charge for renewed practice and policy whenever necessary. Our responses take some time and consideration. Our responses are sustained and intentional. We don't give up.

## Examples of recent impactful "change the system" requests we have successfully responded to:

- Mileage amount increase (requested in 2010, announced in 2015)
- New foster parent education program (requested in 2011, pre-service completed and launched in 2017)
- Changes to Foster Care Home Agreement without consultation (issue raised in 2016, resolved in 2016)
- Funding for BCFFPA support program (requested in 2011, funding provided in 2018)
- Foster parents signing permission slips (requested in 2013, announced in 2018)
- Foster parent rates increase (requested in 2014, system of care review in process)

Advocacy is not meant to be a game of power or personal profile raising, but a job to improve the experience of a particular group. There will always be critics of an agency that has a mandate of advocacy, and perhaps that's as it should be. But whether we are supported or criticized by individual community members, we support each foster parent in our province by taking the steps necessary to advocate for a future where foster parents are recognized, respected, remunerated appropriately and valued for the crucial resource they provide in their communities.



Photo by Khiem Ha

## Our Mission

The BCFFPA represents and supports all foster parents to provide quality in-home foster care in British Columbia

## Our Vision

Supporting children and youth to reach their full potential through excellence in foster care

## Our Belief

Resilient foster parents raise empowered children and youth

## Foster parents can now sign school and activity permission forms

In fall 2018, the MCFD announced that foster parents can now sign permission forms providing consent for children and youth in their care to participate in social and recreational activities at school or outside of school. This policy change was made to ensure children in care have the same opportunities to participate in these activities as children not in care, and to allow caregivers to make these decisions.

Caregivers can and should now sign all permission forms, including waivers and indemnities, unless they feel it is a high-risk activity or have personal concerns about signing. If you have any questions or are uncertain about signing a form, please bring it to the child's/youth's guardianship worker. Parental consent may still be required in certain situations.

For more information and full slides, visit our News section at [www.bcfosterparents.ca](http://www.bcfosterparents.ca)

## Thank you to the Vandekerkhove Family Foundation

The Allen and Loreen Vandekerkhove Family Foundation has been generously donating to registered charities since the foundation's inception in 1989. Since then, the foundation has had an energetic and compassionate board made up of founding members Dr. Allen Vandekerkhove and Dr. Loreen Vandekerkhove along with respected business professionals. The board members are an integral part of the foundation as they reflect decades of expertise within the business world and charitable organizations. They are committed to their community, the province and its needs.

We are pleased that generous funding from the Vandekerkhove Family Foundation will help BCFFPA provide training to foster parents throughout the province. BCFFPA's training materials help to increase knowledge and skill development so that foster parents can more effectively care for children with complex care needs. If it weren't for the generosity of foundations like the Vandekerkhove Family Foundation, we would have a limited ability to respond to the needs of foster parents in BC. We look forward to a wonderful community relationship with the foundation.

[www.vandekerkhovefamilyfoundation.org](http://www.vandekerkhovefamilyfoundation.org)

Join us for our next Annual General  
Meeting and Conference  
in Harrison Hot Springs!

October 4 and 5, 2019

Join us this October at Harrison Hot Springs Resort in one of BC's most beautiful lakeside locations. The conference will feature workshops, guest speakers, a meet and greet, dinner and fundraiser. You will also have free time on Friday night to enjoy the resort's relaxing mineral pools!

Room rates start at \$150.



## Not covered by a group health plan? Concerned about health & dental expenses?

Find the coverage that's right for you and your family with a **Health Assist plan**  
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Want more info?

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in strategic alliance with Group One

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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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# How stress contributes to high blood sugar and diabetes

Working at BCFFPA, we are aware that many foster parents in our community are pre-diabetic or have been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. We decided to look into the connection between stress and high blood sugar. Not surprisingly, there is a correlation.

In a survey done by UBC students in 2017 of 538 foster parents within the BCFFPA community, 47% indicated their reason for choosing to become foster parents was to “volunteer to change the life of a child.” But even though most foster parents are motivated by the desire to nurture a child and the rewards of being a parent, fostering can be a stressful life calling.

## Stress hormones in the body

Stress is a multifaceted issue that affects everyone differently. The body experiences stress in response to physical, psychological or emotional threat, causing it to go into fight-or-flight mode. Being a parent, along with other individual and lifestyle factors, can potentially lead to long-term stress, which may have adverse health effects. Prolonged stress can cause headaches, strain and agitation, fatigue, elevated blood pressure, as well as changes in mood, appetite and sleep. It can also cause hormones to fluctuate, which may lead to anxiety, depression and turning to harmful addictive substances like cigarettes and alcohol.

When the nervous system feels stress, the adrenal glands release the hormones adrenaline and cortisol. Although this is meant to be a short-term response to danger, the body will keep producing these hormones under long-term stress, which can affect blood sugar levels and be barriers to glucose control. Additionally, although cortisol is meant to reduce inflammation in the body, chronic inflammation can lead to an over-production of this stress hormone. Chronically elevated cortisol levels can suppress the immune system, lead to obesity and increase risk of various autoimmune diseases. So it is important to reduce stress and inflammation in the body in order to avoid a number of other health risks.

## Blood sugar and diabetes

Glucose (sugar) is the body's main source of fuel, which we get from eating food. The pancreas produces the

hormone insulin to turn glucose into energy, which the body stores in the muscles, fat cells and liver. Insulin helps the liver take sugar out of the bloodstream and stores it in a concentrated form called glycogen, which the liver slowly releases back into the bloodstream to nourish various organs. Physical factors like obesity and having too many fatty acids in the body can cause cells to start ignoring insulin's function, which may result in insulin resistance.

Insulin resistance prevents insulin from having its intended effect on the body's cells, which puts a higher demand on the pancreas to produce more insulin. Over time, the pancreas can no longer produce the amount of insulin needed, which can result in developing diabetes. Many factors contribute to developing insulin resistance, including excess weight and too much belly fat, genetics, aging, ethnicity, lack of exercise, and smoking.

## Stress hormones and diabetes

The body produces cortisol and adrenaline when it needs energy and alertness to deal with stressful situations, causing the liver to secrete glucose into the bloodstream. In those who do not have diabetes, a stress-induced rise in glucose also increases insulin production to moderate blood sugar. In those who do have diabetes, the body either does not produce enough insulin, or it cannot use the insulin it makes to process glucose. As a result, glucose builds up in the blood instead of being used for energy. In people with type 2 diabetes, cortisol suppresses insulin's function and prevents glucose uptake by the cells, causing blood sugar levels to rise. Prolonged stress can lead to insulin build-up in the bloodstream and chronically high blood glucose levels.

In addition to increasing risks associated with diabetes, long-term stress and elevated cortisol levels also interfere with immune function, bone density and weight, blood pressure and cholesterol, learning and memory. It may also increase chances of heart disease and depression, and lower life expectancy.

## Self-care and stress management

Stress can be amplified when you are busy responding to the needs of children in your home. This can lead to more stress and neglecting your own self-care.

Parenting requires us to spend most days caring for children, with little time to relax or consider our own wellbeing. Experiencing stress without time to care for yourself can continue to increase stress.

The ways in which you care for yourself depend on your specific health needs, personality, lifestyle and how you cope with stress. Part of managing and recovering from stress is identifying what triggers it for you and resolving any associated underlying personal issues. Is the stress physical, mental or emotional? When does it happen? How does your body react? Monitor your blood glucose levels when you experience lasting stress to see what you may be associating it with.

## Diet and exercise

Proper nutrition is vital to keeping balanced blood sugar levels and providing healthy fuel for a busy life. Nutritious food and a plant-based diet also combat the effects of stress and inflammation in the body. As mentioned, excess body fat is associated with insulin resistance, which can lead to diabetes, as well as other conditions like high blood pressure. Try reducing your dietary intake of trans and saturated fats, caffeine and alcohol, and add more anti-inflammatory food. Diabetes Canada ([www.diabetes.ca](http://www.diabetes.ca)) has some excellent recipes to get you started.

Eating mindfully can help with changing behaviours that lead to obesity and other habits that harm your health. With practice, you can learn to recognize when you are eating out of hunger (or out of boredom, or for comfort) and when you are feeling full. Pay attention to what motivates you to eat, what foods, when, and how you feel when you are eating.

Exercise and cardio activity can help with lowering blood pressure and maintaining a healthy weight. Yoga, tai chi or other physical movement (even just stretching) can also help reduce stress. Thirty minutes per day is recommended, but even ten minutes would help move some stress out of the body.

## Mindfulness to reduce stress

How you think about something affects how you feel and experience it, and how it impacts your physical health. Mindfulness involves being present in your body and paying attention to what is happening in the moment—

without judging whether it is good or bad, right or wrong. Meditation is a mindfulness technique that can help reduce stress by focusing attention on breathing and slowing the heart rate. When feeling stress, try to find a quiet area where you can take a few deep breaths. Although it is easy to ruminate on the negative, try bringing to mind several things you are grateful for in the moment in order to focus your attention on the positive. Practicing this “attitude of gratitude” can help you rewire your brain to let go of the cycle of negative thinking.

You can experience mindfulness in many ways, like connecting to nature, creating or looking at art, and exploring other cultures at free events or through family activities. You can also try calming practices like taking a shower or bath, having a cup of herbal tea, diffusing essential oils, reading a poem or something that inspires you, or listening to your favourite music.

## Compassion to improve wellbeing

Studies show that treating yourself with compassion reduces feelings of depression, increases energy and improves mental wellness. Compassion is kindness and empathy. Those who practice it are better at adhering to their personal health plans and managing their glucose levels—presumably because having compassion for yourself means caring about your overall wellbeing.

When you need support, try connecting with others who can relate. Sharing experiences and resources is a great way to learn from others and find healing in community. When experiencing stress and high blood sugar, try to treat yourself with patience and care. Listen to your body’s needs in the moment in order to prevent further risk and complications later.

Although fostering is a labour of love, raising a child comes with many stress factors that may result in neglecting your own self-care, potentially leading to health risks such as diabetes. If you already have diabetes, these stressors may also interfere with how you manage your health and blood glucose. For these reasons, it is necessary to be proactive about health, not only to ensure your own wellbeing and ability to care for your children, but also to set a good example for them as they learn and develop important life skills.

# 7 budget-friendly ways to celebrate Family Day on February 18!

## 1. Board games and puzzles

Board games and puzzles are an easy and cost-effective way to spend time together and build learning skills, including social ones like teamwork, communication and language skills, as well as being patient while sharing and taking turns. Depending on the ages of your children, it can be a great way for older kids to bond with younger family members and for you to provide encouragement to build up your children's self-esteem.

Board games are a good way to teach kids about fair play, friendly competition, and winning and losing in a healthy and respectful way. Games can help younger children with pattern, colour and shape recognition, as well as numeracy and literacy skills. Puzzles help teach kids what it means to focus and persevere – good skills to have in the age of limited attention spans and instant gratification.

As they get older, your kids may want more cognitively challenging games and puzzles that teach them planning, reasoning and critical thinking skills. You can get board games and puzzles from your local thrift shop if new ones are not in the budget. If you prefer a game you can play on your digital device, Ellen Degeneres has a free trivia app called Heads Up! (for children 12+).

## 2. Movie night

Movies are a great way to explore new worlds together, including imaginary ones and social scenarios that your

kids may or may not relate to. They can inspire kids to dream and create, and teach them important life lessons. If you're watching a movie and questions come up, take the opportunity to discuss them. It could be a great way for your kids to learn about others who are different from themselves, or to understand that what's on the screen isn't necessarily reality (a good lesson in the digital and social media age). Create a cozy atmosphere with blankets and pillows, encourage your kids to bring their toys or stuffed animals, make some popcorn and enjoy!

## 3. Parks and nature, walking, hiking, picnics, starting a garden

Unplug from technology and connect to nature, get fresh air and exercise, talk and share with one another. Learn about the natural world and how to protect the planet. Picnics are a great way to enjoy food and the outdoors together, which generally costs less than going out for lunch. You can prepare food ahead of time or when you arrive at the park.

Now that it's almost spring, if you have the outdoor space available, think about starting a small flower, herb or vegetable garden. If you live in an apartment or urban setting, you can plant indoor or outdoor herbs in smaller pots, or join a local community garden. This is a great way to teach kids about caring for plants, and could also be a good opportunity to talk to them about recycling, composting and sustainability.



Photo by Jessica Ruscello

#### 4. Museums, art galleries and community centres

You can do a variety of educational and recreational activities together as a family depending on your budget. Museums are a great way to involve kids in immersive learning experiences, where they can feel transported to a different time or environment to learn about the past and be inspired to create the future. Art galleries open up imagination and creativity as kids explore different ways of seeing and thinking about the world. Museums and art galleries spark curiosity and encourage innovation and new perspectives.

Check out museums and galleries in your area to see which ones offer free or discounted rates for children, seniors and families. Community centres also provide a range of free or low-cost activities like yoga, dance, fitness classes, swimming, skating and arts and crafts. These are great opportunities to connect with your kids, stimulate their growth and development, learn about their interests and encourage their hopes and dreams.

#### 5. Family and community events and festivals

There are lots of free or low-cost events across BC throughout the year, depending on your region and on the season. These are great opportunities to explore and experience culture, music, live entertainment, sports, art, food and more! Learn about the traditions of First Nations, Métis and settler families at Fort Langley National Historic Site, or head to North Vancouver's Lonsdale Quay for Family Day at the Market. Visit [www.art-bc.com](http://www.art-bc.com) for a guide to festivals and events across BC.



#### 6. Cook or bake together

Go grocery shopping together and learn about nutrition and mindful eating. Teach kids how to prepare healthy meals and why it's important to eat a balanced diet. Learn about teamwork and cooperation, creativity and enjoying the product of your work together. You never know what gifts and talents you might discover in the kitchen as family!

#### 7. Draw, paint, write, build and create

Exploring creativity together helps your kids use their imaginations and express their thoughts and feelings. Art is a non-prescriptive way to learn and to discover your kids' individual expression and unique talents. Drawing, painting, colouring, crafting and building can all be sensory experiences that involve different modes and materials. Emotionally expressive writing can also help with healing. Allow your kids to experiment, make mistakes, go at their own pace and enjoy the process of creating. If you're making something with your kids or encouraging them to express themselves, be there for support instead of correcting them or demonstrating the 'right' way to do it. You can get relatively inexpensive art supplies at your local Dollar Store. Set a budget and let your kids pick out their favourite supplies!

**Happy Family Day!**

## It's that time again!

### May 2019 submissions for BCFFPA bursaries

#### BCFFPA Camps for Kids Grant

BCFFPA's Camps for Kids Grants were established by BCFFPA to alleviate some of the costs foster parent members encounter when sending their foster, adopted or birth children aged 6-19 to camp. Bursary amounts have been raised to \$300 per "campership."

**Application Criteria:** BCFFPA foster parent members in good standing who require assistance can apply. Foster parent must provide proof of payment of the camp deposit along with any other relevant documentation prior to awarding the grant.

Application for the Camps for Kids grant can be found on our website at [bcfosterparents.ca](http://bcfosterparents.ca).

**Application Deadline:** May 31, 2019\*

#### Merv Davis Bursary

The Merv Davis Bursary was established for foster children residing in the Coquitlam, Maple Ridge, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody or Pitt Meadows areas who have reached age 19 and wish to continue their education.

**Application Criteria:** Any youth who has been in care of the Ministry, residing in the Fraser River corridor (noted above), who has reached the age of 19 years, who intends to further his/her education, whether to finish high school, attend business or vocational school, college or university, and where other funds available are inadequate, is eligible to apply. The highest marks, although considered, will not be the only determining factor in the allocation of the bursary.

**Application Deadline:** May 31, 2019\*

\*All application forms for BCFFPA bursaries and grants are available at [www.bcfosterparents.ca](http://www.bcfosterparents.ca). Or call 1-800-663-9999 for more information.

#### Natural Child Bursary

The Natural Child Bursary was founded in 1991 and is intended for children born or adopted into a family providing foster care in BC.

**Application Criteria:** The eligible youth must be the child by birth or adoption, as stated above, to a foster family who have been members of BCFFPA for three consecutive years since 1990. This can also apply to the child of an individual who is an Honorary Life Member. The youth must reside in BC, have graduated from high school and is interested in extending his/her education in any field of study. High grades, although considered, will not be the only determining factor in the allocation of bursary funds.

**Application Deadline:** May 31, 2019\*

#### BCFFPA General Scholarship Fund

BCFFPA occasionally receives funds from donors that they request be put toward scholarships for children and youth who were formerly in care. The Board of Directors has outlined a General Scholarship Fund into which we can place donations from these generous donors. Unless directed to do otherwise, scholarships will be distributed under the name of the donor(s) until the funds are expended.

The General Scholarship Fund was established in 2013. One bursary will be distributed annually.

**Application Criteria:** Former foster children residing in BC, aged 19, who show an interest in continuing their education (whether to complete high school, attend a business/vocational school, college or university). High marks, although considered, will not be the only determining factor in awarding this bursary.

**Application Deadline:** May 31, 2019\*

## JCW Excellence in Writing Grant

Former president Russell Pohl and his husband Darrell Ewasiuk have generously provided funds to establish a bursary in the name of our Executive Director whose passion is the art of writing.

**Application Criteria:** Any youth (17-24) who has been in care of the Ministry who intends to further his/her education in the field of writing – whether it be journalism, screen or play writing, poetry, travel, creative, political, or non-fiction, can apply for this bursary to cover the cost of courses that will further their skills. Submission of a 500-word short story or essay about their future goals, accompanied by a description of their desired education program or receipt for the program they intend to pursue, should be submitted. One bursary of \$2,000 per year is available until funds are expended.

**Application Deadline:** [May 31, 2019\\*](#)

## BCFFPA Fine Arts for Kids Fund

BCFFPA has received two generous donations to support the establishment of the Fine Arts for Kids fund. This fund is available exclusively to BCFFPA member foster parents to assist them with the costs of involving their foster children in the arts. The fund will cover costs including (but not limited to) art supplies, paints, easels, canvas, paper, dance shoes, costumes, lessons of all varieties, musical instrument rentals and purchases, drum making, carving, fabric arts and regalia making supplies. This fund is for supporting extracurricular programs and not available to support school district art program activities.

BCFFPA's Board of Directors will identify annual awards based on funding available.

**Application Criteria:** Child must be between the ages of 6-18, must be in your care at the time of application, and receipts for supplies must accompany the application. We will accept one application per year per family, but new families will have priority.

**Application Deadline:** [Accepted throughout the year](#)

## Medical Travel Grant for Caregivers

This grant is accessible to BCFFPA member foster parents who travel to hospital for medical appointments with their foster children, finding themselves away from home for a night or two. You may find yourself with time on your hands between medical appointments or in need of a nutritious meal. Maybe you've encountered bad weather on the way home and you need to spend an extra night in a hotel. Or maybe you need some extra funds for relief that is not covered by your contract.

**Application Criteria:** Any BCFFPA member foster parent can apply two times in a calendar year. Proof of medical travel and overnight stay away from home can be provided by copy of an email confirming the medical appointment dates or a note from your resource worker. Grants of \$250 dollars are available until funds are expended.

**Application Deadlines:** [June 15 & December 15, 2019\\*](#)

## William Curtis Memorial Fund

The William Curtis Memorial Fund was established in January 1979 for foster children who have reached the age of majority and wish to continue with their education. It is awarded annually.

**Application Criteria:** Former foster children residing in BC, aged 19 who show an interest in continuing their education (whether to complete high school, attend a business/vocational school, college or university). High marks, although considered, will not be the only determining factor in awarding this bursary.

**Application Deadline:** [May 31, 2019\\*](#)



Photo by element5 digital

## Foster Parent Insurance update

If you are a foster parent, you are most likely aware that the Ministry of Child and Family Development provides liability insurance to all caregivers through the Master Insurance Program. The Master Insurance Program (MIP) is a group liability insurance program that was created in the late 1980s for contractors delivering social programs to the public on behalf of government. Essentially, the MIP ensures that the funding provided by the Provincial Authority goes directly to the services listed in the agreement and not to the cost of liability insurance. The BCFFPA holds the MIP Certificate for all foster parents who are individuals looking after foster children in their own home. The MIP provides a commercial general liability insurance policy with \$2,000,000 per occurrence of coverage protecting the contractor for liability arising out of the social program services set out in their agreement with the Province Authority.

It was recently announced that the Province will be terminating the MIP and launching a new liability program called the Social Services Group Liability Program (SSGLP) beginning January 1, 2019. Like MIP, the SSGLP will provide coverage for service delivery risks (i.e. foster parents and group foster homes) and facilitate the delivery of essential social services. SSGLP coverage reflects a modern Commercial General Liability insurance policy, insuring against third party bodily injury, third party property damage and personal and advertising injury arising out of your performance of the services outlined in the written agreement you have in place with a Ministry and/or government corporation. **[\*\*Please note: Foster parent coverage from the MIP to the SSGLP will not transition until later in 2019. You will receive a notification regarding the transition.\*\*]**

It is important to remember that the MIP and now the SSGLP provides no property coverage at all. So it is imperative that you arrange your own homeowners, tenants, or condominium unit owners policy through your insurance broker in order to protect your personal property. And in addition to the coverage provided through your personal insurance policy, you are also covered under a policy that the BCFFPA has arranged through Megson FitzPatrick Insurance Services for any intentional, criminal or accidental damage caused by

a foster child. Such damage is usually excluded through your personal property insurance, so the policy through Megson FitzPatrick ensures that you are not negatively impacted by any damage caused by a foster child.

**Erin FitzPatrick, BA, CAIB, CIP**

Commercial Account Executive

Megson FitzPatrick Insurance Services

## Join a branch, start a branch

BCFFPA's structure is based on community 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.

BCFFPA provides funds for the operation of these branches through membership funds paid in the community where the branch is based. The funds can be used to pay for any branch activities.

Many branches form partnerships with contracted foster parent support service agencies in their region, or with a Ministry office that may offer sponsorship to the group. Branches may also choose to fundraise locally or seek discounts from vendors in the community. These are offered to foster parents to reduce expenses for their families.

Foster parents who are part of a BCFFPA branch are more informed of what takes place in the fostering sector as a whole. They have a say in BCFFPA programs and activities, and can exercise their right to vote for regional representation on the BCFFPA provincial Board of Directors.

BCFFPA was created by foster parents for foster parents and is governed by foster parents who work with a dedicated staff team. Please join us!

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



## Did you know?

Each year, approximately  
**42% of all adoptions  
in BC are foster parents  
adopting** the children in  
their care.

# Foster parents make great adoptive parents!

Being adopted by their foster parents means stability and less disruption in the child's life and relationships. The message children hear when they're adopted is "I'm wanted, loved, and know where I belong."

If you're thinking about adopting your foster child, post-adoption assistance may provide funding for services and maintenance. While financial assistance continues, decision making and legal responsibility for the child shifts to you, the new adoptive parent.

Visit **[www.bcadoption.com](http://www.bcadoption.com)** or call us at **1-877-ADOPT-07** to learn more about adopting your foster child.



## AEP-Online Refresher

*Learn the essentials for building  
a strong adoptive family!*

This convenient online course has been designed especially for foster parents who need to meet the mandatory adoption education requirements in BC in order to adopt their foster children. Get more info and sign up at **[bcadoption.com/aep-refresher-child-home](http://bcadoption.com/aep-refresher-child-home)**.

## Article sources and additional reading:



### **Stress and diabetes:**

[www.diabetes.org/living-with-diabetes/complications/mental-health/stress.html](http://www.diabetes.org/living-with-diabetes/complications/mental-health/stress.html)

[www.diabetesforecast.org/2018/06-nov-dec/mindfulness-techniques-can.html?loc=morefrom](http://www.diabetesforecast.org/2018/06-nov-dec/mindfulness-techniques-can.html?loc=morefrom)

[www.diabetesforecast.org/diabetes-discovery/pi/self-compassion-improves.html?loc=morefrom](http://www.diabetesforecast.org/diabetes-discovery/pi/self-compassion-improves.html?loc=morefrom)

[www.healthline.com/health/diabetes-and-stress](http://www.healthline.com/health/diabetes-and-stress)

[www.insulinnation.com/treatment/how-stress-hormones-raise-blood-sugar/](http://www.insulinnation.com/treatment/how-stress-hormones-raise-blood-sugar/)

Lightfoot, H. and Wu, J. (2017). Do the current care rates reflect the true costs of meeting the needs of foster children in British Columbia?

[www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/the-athletes-way/201301/cortisol-why-the-stress-hormone-is-public-enemy-no-1](http://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/the-athletes-way/201301/cortisol-why-the-stress-hormone-is-public-enemy-no-1)

[www.todaysdietitian.com/newarchives/111609p38.shtml](http://www.todaysdietitian.com/newarchives/111609p38.shtml)

### **Budget-friendly family activities:**

[www.scholastic.com/parents/kids-activities-and-printables/activities-for-kids/arts-and-craft-ideas/benefits-board-games.html](http://www.scholastic.com/parents/kids-activities-and-printables/activities-for-kids/arts-and-craft-ideas/benefits-board-games.html)

[www.arts.gov/art-works/2014/importance-taking-children-museums](http://www.arts.gov/art-works/2014/importance-taking-children-museums)

[www.art-bc.com/events/festivals-1/](http://www.art-bc.com/events/festivals-1/)

[www.parents.com/toddlers-preschoolers/development/intellectual/why-art-and-creativity-are-important/](http://www.parents.com/toddlers-preschoolers/development/intellectual/why-art-and-creativity-are-important/)

[www.healthland.time.com/2013/07/13/how-writing-heals-wounds-of-both-the-mind-and-body/](http://www.healthland.time.com/2013/07/13/how-writing-heals-wounds-of-both-the-mind-and-body/)

## Foster Community Resources

### Provincial Resources

**BC Federation of Foster Parent Associations** 1-800-663-9999  
www.bcfosterparents.ca

**After Hours Foster Parent Support Line** 1-888-495-4440

**Indigenous Perspectives Society** 1-844-391-0007 (ext. 229)  
www.ipsociety.ca/foster-caregiving

**Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks** 1-800-565-8055  
www.fbcyicn.ca

**Adoptive Families Association** 1-877-236-7807  
www.bcadoption.com

**Pacific Post Partum Support Society** 604-255-7999  
(also supporting adoption placements)  
www.postpartum.org

**Parent Help Line** 1-888-603-9100

**Parents Together** 604-325-0511

**Parent Support Services of BC** 1-800-345-9777  
www.parentsupport.bc.ca

**Representative for Children & Youth** 1-800-476-3933  
www.rcybc.ca

**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** 604-987-8211  
www.hollyburn.ca

**Vancouver Aboriginal Child & Family Services Society** 778-331-4500  
www.vacfss.com

**Foster Hub** 1-877-926-1185  
www.fosterhub.ca

**Fraser Valley Foster Parent Association** 604-533-1924

**South Vancouver Youth Centre** 604-325-2004  
www.milieu.ca/svyc

### 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

Central Okanagan 250-870-8991  
North Okanagan 250-558-0939  
South Okanagan 250-462-6907  
Shuswap 250-253-4499

**Okanagan Metis Children & Family Services** 250-868-0351

**Interior Community Services** 1-877-376-3660  
www.interiorcommunityservices.bc.ca  
Support to Family Care Network  
www.icsfp.info  
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** 1-877-392-1003  
(24/7 support) Press 205  
www.axis.bc.ca (satellite office locations online)

**Community Bridge Fort St. John** 250-785-6021 (ext. 235)  
www.communitybridge.ca

Please complete and return to BCFFPA: **208-20641 Logan Avenue, Langley, V3A 73R** or **join or renew via our website at [www.bcfosterparents.ca](http://www.bcfosterparents.ca)**

Please bill my VISA \_\_\_\_\_ M/C \_\_\_\_\_ # \_\_\_\_\_ Expires \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_