

FosterlineBC

BC Federation of Foster Parent Associations



Fall 2020 Volume 18, Issue 3

A Tapestry of
Foster Parent
Voices and Stories

Youth Artist
Feature

30th Anniversary
of Foster Family
Month

From Foster Sister to
Social Worker: Meet
Ferryyn Mulholland

Celebrating
Staff
Milestones

BC FEDERATION OF FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATIONS (BCFFPA)

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Submissions — Forward articles, personal stories or ideas to the BCFFPA provincial 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.

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President's Report



Happy Foster Family Month!

This is my last message as President of BCFFPA. It's been a very eventful 4 years. We've achieved some goals and set new ones. We've said hello and goodbye to some wonderful Board members and friends. As I finish up my second term I know that the Board of Directors and staff team will continue to work towards the fruition of our largest goals.

I have had the honor of working alongside the most amazing people throughout my term as your President. Minister Conroy and her staff have supported the foster parents of this province in a way we had not seen in the previous 12 years. Her team travelled the province listening to foster parents' concerns, brought that information back and have set up committees to address the most pressing issues. The first issue addressed was the increase in funding for the children in our care in 2019. Though small, this was a first step in a larger body of work and the first increase received in 10 years. The second issue was the restructuring of the leveling system for foster parents and an increase in payment under a new system. We are involved with the working group addressing this goal. Another issue is the Foster Parent Rights and the stories we've heard for so many years that foster parents aren't treated with respect. This year we have been actively working with a Ministry team to review policy and make recommended wording changes that incorporate the intention of each of the foster parent rights. Our recommendations are currently circulating through the leadership team for review. I would like to express a huge thank you to both Annette Harding and Torri Seale for all the behind the scenes work they put in to prepare for our bi-weekly meetings with the goal that Foster Parent Rights are reflected in policy.

Jayne, Ronda, Michelle, Annette, Gabby, Tanya and Krissy, I don't even know how to express how important your support and patience over the past 4 years has been to me. Jayne, you allowed me to learn from you at my own pace and we've been a great team. You are one of the rare people who have the ability to work with and support all individuals no matter their personalities and make them feel like they are the best they can be. I have enjoyed every day working with you all and I wish you all great success.

Kevin, Julie, Jeanette and Raquel, thank you for your hard work and support throughout my time as President. We have accomplished some of what we had hoped for and I'm sure if the pandemic hadn't happened we would have been able to accomplish more! However we are foster parents and that means we are wear many hats and are survivors. We will continue to move forward facing any new challenges and completing the goals not yet achieved.

To the Foster Parents of BC - thank you for allowing me to be your President for the past 4 years. It has been an honour to represent you – the gifted and devoted group of people who work 24/7 ensuring the most vulnerable children in our province are given the best chance at success.

Marcy Perron, President

Reflections from the Office



Happy 30th Anniversary of Foster Family Month to our foster parents!

I hope most of you enjoyed time outside with friends and family this summer to shake off some of the COVID-19 hibernation. As the pandemic continues, we are all looking at the days ahead with a measure of uncertainty, but we're a flexible community of resilient people who are used to forging ahead in challenging times.

Recently, BCFFPA finished up an investment of a year's worth of work with MCFD's policy team to review and recommend wording to child welfare policy documents that are supportive of the intention of each Foster Parent Right. Although we are regularly consulted regarding proposed changes to the Resource Work Policies, the opportunity to recommend new wording in child and youth care policy (which is the main reference for a child's social worker) is a first for us. We are hopeful that our recommendations are accepted.

Along with our Solutions Manager, I have been in contact with MCFD leads who have invited BCFFPA to help resolve some community-wide issues. Where there is a foster parent support program already in place, we will work in partnership to meet with the foster parents and Ministry team members. Our hope is to engage in honest conversations and to dig down to the roots of these concerns so that we can begin to resolve some of these longstanding conflicts. In the coming months we will be scheduling Zoom meetings as it appears that we won't be able to meet in person for a while yet.

There is concern among some in our community regarding the long term mental health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic for those who are on the front line caring for children and youth. The risk of exposure is stressful and for those with fragile health, the impact of constant stress may be difficult to manage. We will be bringing this concern to the Ministry's attention in the coming weeks. If you have any other concern related to the stress related to the COVID-19 pandemic and fostering, please let us know!

We neglected to feature a welcome for our new receptionist in the last newsletter issue! Gabriele (Gabby) Cousins joined us in February as our full time receptionist. Gabby comes to us with an eagerness to learn about fostering, having met some foster families through her sports coaching background. Her enthusiasm for meeting new people and hearing their stories certainly makes our reception role a great place for her to start at BCFFPA. Gabby has quickly embraced our quirky staff culture and is an excellent steward of our front office.

Wishing you all the best as your young people transition back into school with the new restrictions. I hope you all have a safe and happy Foster Family 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.

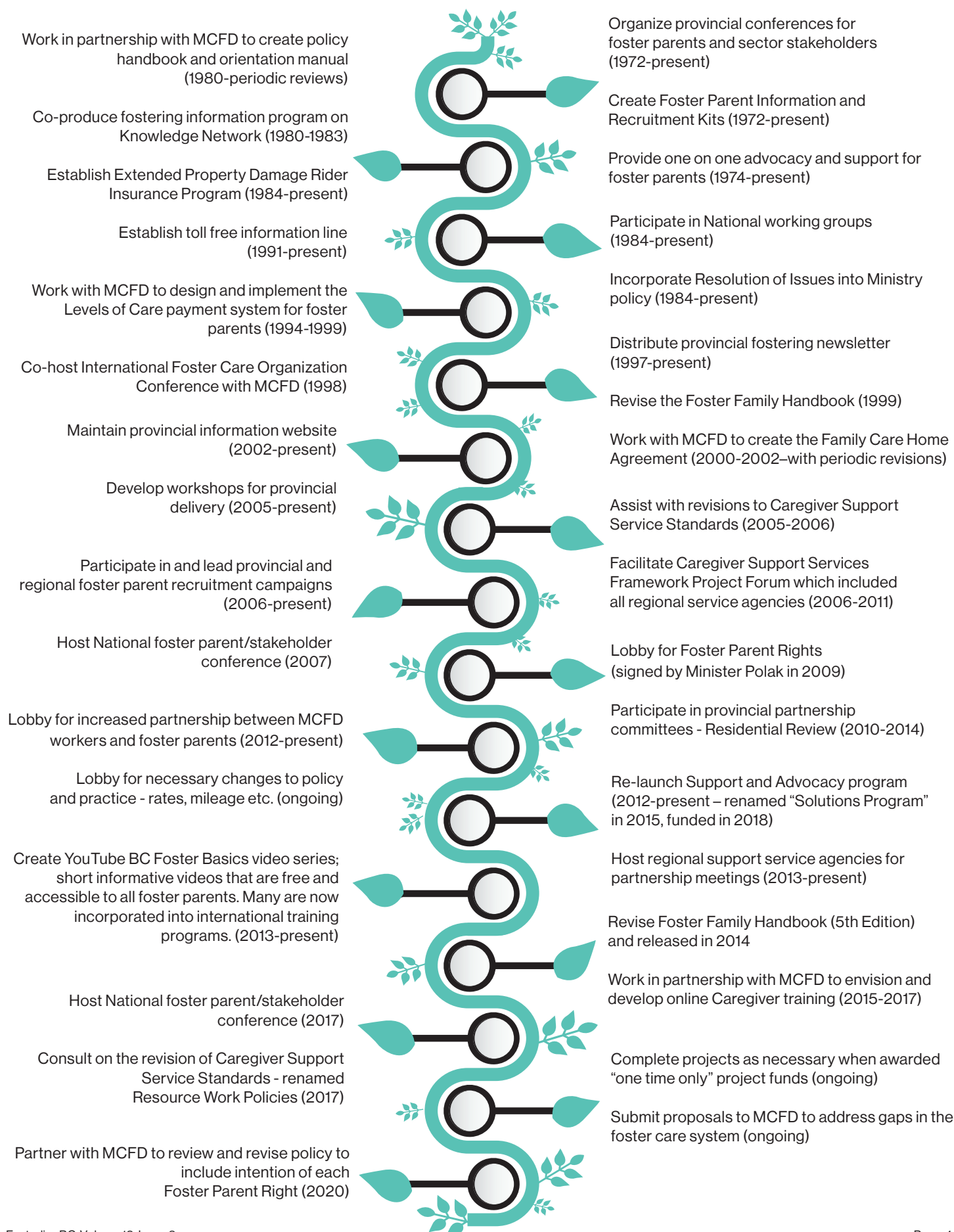


The BCFFPA is a provincial organization for foster parents, run by foster parents. We are a registered non-profit charity which aims to bring together foster parents, social workers and other stakeholders who are working to continuously improve the standard of care for children in our province.

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, accessible fostering information and 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.

Marking Milestones: BCFFPA Services to the Entire Fostering Community Since 1967



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



October 2020 marks the 30th anniversary of Foster Family Month in British Columbia. Congratulations on reaching this milestone!

This has been a year like no other. British Columbians have faced challenges like never before and have proven that by working together – even while staying apart – we're able to accomplish amazing things.

This is especially true for foster families throughout our province. I want to offer my sincere thanks for all the work you do and the efforts you make every day to support B.C.'s most vulnerable young people.

The commitment you've made takes time, patience and effort. And of course, it takes that genuine desire that you all possess to make a big difference in a child's life. Being a caregiver is not an easy job.

No matter how long you've been a foster caregiver, no one could have foreseen the extra levels of commitment that have been asked of you this year. Homeschooling this spring certainly wasn't on the

radar for most of you when you signed up! Not only did that involve many extra hours during the week, but I'm sure it also caused many caregivers to google math formulas or grammar rules that they never dreamed they'd have to know again! What I know is this: you are doing your best to provide a strong foundation of learning that the kids you care for will remember for the rest of their lives.

COVID-19 has caused many of you to quarantine at home with children. It's another challenge no one was counting on, but it's one you've adapted to and taken in stride. The character and resilience you've shown reflects the sincere dedication and devotion you have for these children, and we are so grateful for your efforts.

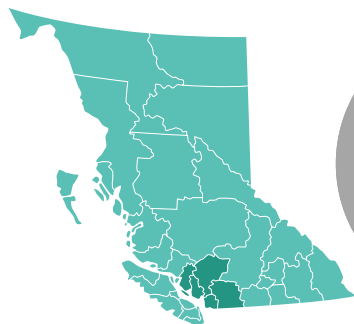
In these challenging times, I deeply appreciate the work undertaken by agencies like the B.C. Federation of Foster Parent Associations to support foster families and help them through.

Whether you're a caregiver yourself or part of the support team, I extend my most heartfelt thanks. Your care and compassion are needed more than ever!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Katrine Conroy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'K' and 'C'.

Coast Fraser Delegate Report

by Jeanette Dyer



Hi everyone! Happy Foster Family Month! Fall is upon us with winter moving in fast behind. I hope you all have been managing through these past months. Some of you have adjusted to the new reality. Others, like me, may be having a bit of difficulty. Hang in there and don't be afraid to reach out or ask for help.

BCFFPA members should have received the Bylaw changes package. I trust you've had a chance to go over it—at least the summary of changes to be in compliance with The Societies Act, all non-profits such as BCFFPA need to comply and amend a few things. If you have not had a chance to review the materials, please do so. The most impactful changes are summarized in a few pages and everything you need is in the package.

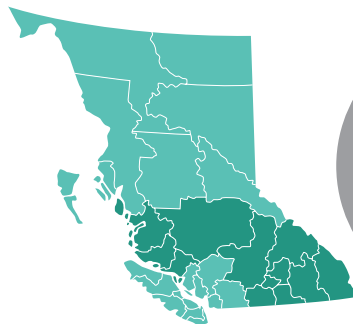
Not a lot has been happening in the Coast Fraser region. In terms of get-togethers, meetings, and workshops, Zoom seems to be the go-to format as well as YouTube. Our kids, for the most part, have adjusted reasonably well. They are so into everything digital. I am incredibly grateful that I have young people in my house to keep me connected! I am still struggling with computers and all their complexities. So far, those of us who can send children off to school may finally be able to catch up with things left undone these past months due to the extra challenge of keeping little ones entertained and bigger ones on track. Perhaps we will find some time for some much-needed self-care. And for those of you schooling from home, thank you for your dedication to your kids and their education. Stay focused. Stay strong.

I've had the opportunity to speak to some of you to remind you about registering to attend this year's AGM either in person or by Zoom. It would be great to keep the lines of communication open so feel free to contact me. If you have an event, a person you want to recognize, some information you would like to share or just need to vent, you are welcome to call, text or email me. I would love to hear from you. During the calls, I realized that there is a need for stronger support for foster parents during this time. Do not foster in isolation. Do not hesitate to contact the BCFFPA Solutions Program Team at 1-800-663-9999 whether you're a member or not. BCFFPA supports and advocates for all foster parents in British Columbia.

Here in the Mission/Abbotsford area we have had the wonderful support of Archway Community Services. They put on monthly get-togethers that include some great learning experiences. The Mission/Abbotsford Branch is still looking for a way to get together as a group. This may well be another online meeting to keep our social bubbles smaller. Remember, the BCFFPA is your provincial voice and we carry your voices with us whenever we go. If you'd like to connect with me, you can reach me at jfcdyer@gmail.com or 604-826-9348. Until next time.

Interior Delegate Report

by Raquel Lesieur



Happy 30th Anniversary of Foster Family Month to all foster parents in British Columbia!

Every day in British Columbia, more than 2,300 foster families open their hearts and their homes to some of our province's most vulnerable children and youth. Foster parents put their hearts and lives on the line, stepping in to care for children and youth who are unable to live with their families for a variety of reasons. Whether they provide emergency, short or long-term care, it's comforting to know that there are families who open their doors to children just when it seems that all other doors have closed. To the thousands of foster families who commit to making a real and lasting difference in the lives of BC's children and youth, thank you for your dedication and your determination to create a better future for our province! Many of BC's future leaders, parents, teachers, counsellors, social workers, doctors, lawyers, artists and social service advocates have lived in your caring homes.

Things have been quiet in the Interior. There are a few trainings planned and scheduled for the Fall—one with Dr. Vanessa LaPointe and another with The White Hatter team. Throughout the summer, foster parents have been busy and focused on keeping the kids busy while staying safe. The end of summer and going back to school can be challenging in the best of times. Returning to school under COVID-19 made it even harder. Back to school this year presented us with an opportunity to feel some normalcy and get back into school year structure and routines. However, it can also be a time of anxiety for many families. Amidst the stress and uncertainty, the pandemic is offering us a powerful opportunity to model healthy coping. When adults are under stress or are feeling anxious, kids can sense it. Practicing calming strategies with them would help—perhaps some deep breathing, journaling, going for a walk or talking it out. Staying connected to the kids in your home is important. Kids do best when they feel seen and supported by their caregivers. Spend quality time with them and listen to their worries. Validate and empathize with their feelings.

This Foster Family Month, I would also like to recognize and thank the people who support foster families. Foster parents need all the support that they can get. It truly takes a village. I am really grateful to the support agency staff for giving us the tools to navigate the challenges of COVID-19 while fostering. Don't foster in isolation. Support networks do more than offer a sense of community and belonging—they provide non-judgemental support and encouragement when we need it. Together, we are raising resilient young people and building stronger communities.

Message from BC's Representative for Children and Youth, Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth

Hello, everyone. October 1 marks the beginning of Foster Families Appreciation Month – an opportunity to really acknowledge the incredible value of your work. This year, it is particularly important to recognize foster caregivers and families who are raising children and youth during a global pandemic. COVID-19 has introduced new changes and challenges; I raise my hands to all of you who are supporting young people.

It takes an enormous amount of compassion and flexibility to be a foster caregiver at any time– but particularly during a pandemic. Over the past six months, you have assumed new roles to support the young people in your care, you have had to figure out ways to help children make good decisions about physical distancing, self care and online activity and you have been faced with unique back-to-school stressors. In my two years as Representative, I have been impressed by the warm and nurturing environments that caregivers provide while taking on many roles, from child-centred advocate to health and safety educator. COVID-19 has introduced even more roles and foster caregivers are filling them accordingly. I want to emphasize how significant the work is that you do.



As for the work in my Office, we are monitoring relevant issues as they arise, and our advocacy lines remain open to support youth and their caregivers during this time. I am excited to announce that our new online chat option is now available for children and youth, where our Advocates are just a message away when the desktop version of our website is used (rcybc.ca).

Earlier this year, we launched a social media campaign using the hashtag #CovidandKidsBC to get crucial messages out to youth on the importance of physical distancing, hand washing, harm reduction, self-care and on specific supports for young people during COVID-19 that they may not be aware of. You can view this campaign on Facebook (@RCYBC and @RCYBCYouth), Instagram (@RCYBCYouth) and Twitter (@RCYBC and @RCYBCYouth). We will continue to shape our messaging in this campaign to support the changing needs of children and youth during COVID-19.

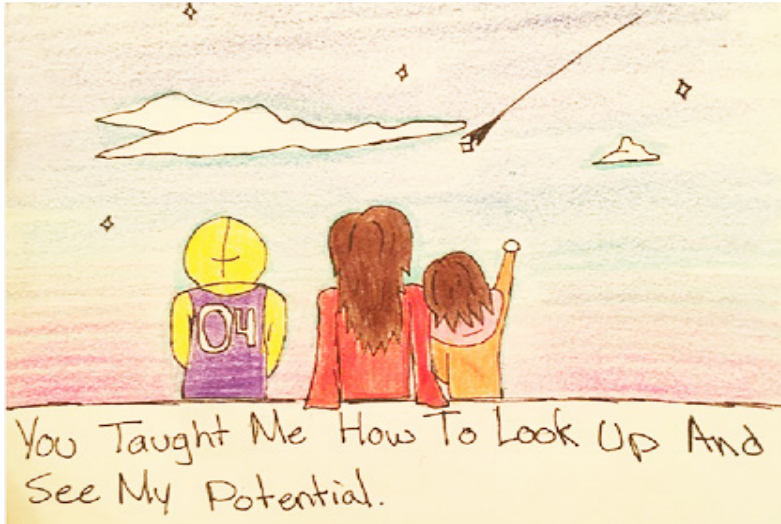
We recently released a report on the issue of youth non-suicidal self-injury titled, *A Way to Cope: Examining non-suicidal self-injury in B.C. youth*. Before year end, we also plan to release reports on transitioning out of care, services for children and youth with FASD and a lessons in the pandemic series that highlights the impact of the pandemic on children with special needs and their families, youth in transition, mental health and substance use.

I want to sincerely thank caregivers all over B.C. for continuing to do the important and skilled work you do during COVID-19. And, if you or someone you know needs advocacy help, please don't hesitate to call us at 1-800-476-3933 or children and youth can chat with us on our website at RCYBC.ca. We are open and here for you.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Charlesworth
Representative of Children and Youth

Youth Artist Feature: Hadassah Otanga



— “ —

I was in care until I was about 4 (I'm now 16) and then got adopted into a big, loving family. I am a homeschool student who loves art whether it be music or sketching. I believe that art should move you.

— “ —

It's important to me to show other kids that community not only helps you grow to become a better person, but also helps you thrive to complete to reach your dreams. That's what happened to me!



Remembering Leona Dawne Pedosuk

BCFFPA extends our deepest condolences and sympathies to the family and friends of Leona Dawne Pedosuk. Leona passed away peacefully on September 5, 2020 at the age of 83. She was a founding member and the first president of the Federation. In 1981, she became a Member of the Order of Canada in recognition of her work with foster parents and her dedication to vulnerable children and youth.

At the age of 50, Leona went back to school to obtain her degree in Social Work. Leona and husband Dick then relocated from North Vancouver to Kelowna where Leona pursued her career as a Director of Social Work. Leona was on the board of many organizations over the years with the last being The Bridge.

She will be missed by all that had the pleasure of meeting her but her memory will stay with the community always.



Photo and bio from the Castanet.net

BCFFPA Members have access to discounts through our partnership with Canada's leading perk program!



Step 1: Go to Perkopolis.com and click 'Register' in the top right corner.

Step 2: To access all perks, you must register by using a valid email address. Then, you will receive an email to activate your registration. – click the link within this email that says "Complete my profile".

Step 3: Enter your member ID code which is BCFFPA + your 5-digit membership number (e.g. BCFFPA12345). Once you are logged in, click on your name in the top right corner of the screen, then choose 'Profile'. Your BCFFPA Membership Number will appear as the first item under 'Your Information'. You can now navigate back to perkopolis.com.

Step 4: Enter the required information. Click the 'accept terms and conditions' box. Click 'Confirm'.

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Hunter	HP
Indigo	KitchenAid
La-Z-Boy Furniture	Kiehl's
Landmark Cinemas	LE CHÂTEAU
LEGOLAND	RW & CO
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UGG	Walt Disney World
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MONTHLY DONOR SPOTLIGHT: ANNALISE BURDETT

"My grandparents were foster parents for over 30 years and they are my heroes. Foster parents are often the true unsung heroes of many young people's lives and I would like to support BC Federation of Foster Parent Associations for what they do for the community."



Annalise with her grandmother June Ekelund and grandfather Robert Ekelund

Like Annalise, you can be a monthly donor at whatever giving level is comfortable for you. Your donations will help us expand our services to the fostering community.



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A Tapestry of Foster Parent Voices and Stories

Last year, BCFFPA released a survey to assist the Ministry of Children and Family Development in their comprehensive review of the family-based caregiver payment model. We are incredibly grateful to the 687 foster parents who have generously and anonymously shared their expertise and stories, so valuable that we did not want their stories to stay in a spreadsheet. In the next 4 pages, we will be sharing some of the responses to help you get to know some of BC's amazing foster parents.

We are also launching a social media campaign called “30 Voices and Stories for 30 Days” to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of Foster Family Month in British Columbia. We will be posting one quote each day for 30 days during the month of October to spread awareness about fostering.

30VoicesAndStoriesFor30Days

A Tapestry of Foster Parent Voices and Stories

What made you decide to become a foster parent?

"My husband and I think that children are wonderful gifts and we love the idea of being able to stand in the gap with and for them while they are in a time of transition (aka foster care). We believe that supporting children and birth families during this time in their lives may positively influence the trajectory of their lives. In addition, we believe that our family benefits because of our involvement in the foster care system (e.g. increase in empathy, patience, compassion, wisdom, etc). Children can be our greatest teachers if we are humble enough to appreciate their lessons."

"I believe it's important to give children a loving home free of neglect and abuse. Children and youth can heal within a stable, nurturing and secure environment. Everyone deserves a fair chance at life. To love a child without prejudice and acceptance is the best gift you can give. We have a homelessness crisis in our country and involvement with the child welfare system is known to be a significant contributor to youth homelessness. By fostering and addressing trauma, we can contribute to both supporting the wellbeing of parents and children, but also decrease further instances of youth homelessness."

"I gave up my job as a stock broker to become a foster parent. I wanted to do something fulfilling and meaningful."

"I was approached by MCFD staff initially. I have the time available and want to support children and their families."

"After seeing so many children in care (in my field of work), I wanted to be part of the solution. I always wanted to adopt and fostering was something I learned about during my adoption application."

"I am a frontline worker for an agency in BC. I have a passion for children and youth and I believe that providing caring support during the family reunification process can help children and families heal. A foster parent is a place to land during a very difficult time in the lives of our children and teens."

"Fostering was the way we wanted to start and grow our family. We began with an adoption path and found ourselves fostering."

"I was a family development counsellor and met children in care living in foster homes that were not a good match for their needs. I knew I could provide more care in a more holistic and creative environment. I was also aware of the great need for good caregivers who had an open minds."

"We were contemplating adopting from overseas and realized how many children in our own province needed a home."

"It was our biological children (when they were young) who encouraged us to foster. Fostering taught our children values such as empathy and kindness. We wanted to make a difference in children's lives and to provide a better path for all involved."

"I started as a respite caregiver for Queen Alexandra Hospital in Victoria 35 years ago. I enjoyed seeing how the children grew and were able to overcome whatever their adversities they might have or had encountered."

"I found 5 children including a sick special needs baby in dangerous, cold and wet conditions. I brought them to my office and called MCFD. They asked me if I could keep the siblings together. It's been 30 years and that special needs baby is still living with me as an adult."

"I was unable to have kids of my own but wanted to provide a a nurturing home for a child who needed one even if it was temporary."

"I retired as a teacher and missed being around the energy of children. I had the time and the space in my home so I decided to become a foster parent."

"I have always felt that fostering was my calling. It was the next logical step when I decided to leave my career to have children. Fostering allowed me to stay at home while trying to make a difference in the community."

"I started by wanting to do respite for special needs children. There was a shortage of foster parents on the Sunshine Coast so we gradually began helping out. That was 25 years ago."

"Fostering is a great way to give back to the community. We saw the need for skilled foster parents and we had something to offer. Our friends were also foster parents and suggested we do it as well. It's great to have the support of other foster in our community."

"I started fostering because I came across a young man who seemed to be slipping through the cracks and needed someone to advocate for themselves."

A Tapestry of Foster Parent Voices and Stories

What made you decide to become a foster parent?

"My husband and I wanted a large family but I had so many medical problems during both of my pregnancies. I almost died the second time I was pregnant. We also lost our daughter who was born at just 3.5 pounds. A specialist discouraged me and my husband from having children which we both were extremely sad about.

One day, I saw a flyer advertising for the need of foster parents in our community. I brought it up with my husband—who said he had also been considering it! We called that same day to inquire about becoming foster parents."

"I wanted to support our First Nations children to have a successful life and overcome challenges caused by intergenerational trauma."

"My husband and I felt that we are able to give a child a chance to thrive with lots of love, routine, nutritious food and a stable home."

"I was an empty nester and missed having children in my home. Fostering felt like the next natural step for me."

"Working in the school system, I recognized the need for skilled caregivers so I applied to become a foster parent."

"As a trainee special education teacher, I have always felt I could do more to support children and their families. Fostering was a natural choice for me. I love having a busy home with a diverse range of kids and needs."

"I was in care as a child and know how it feels. I applied to become a foster parent because I wanted to help other kids in care."

"I heard about the desperate need for skilled caregivers for babies. The more I thought about it and the more my wife and I discussed it, the more we felt the calling to help be a part of the solution."

"I have a lifelong love of children and the desire to make a difference in their lives. I decided to become a foster parent because I believe I have the skills to change the outcomes for children and youth in care. I am a certified post partum doula. I have worked with underprivileged and children with complex trauma histories. I have worked with children with special needs and also ran a daycare in my home for 12 years. Fostering is my purpose in life."

"My mother is a foster parent and through her, I have seen the need and importance of fostering children and supporting families in need."

"I'm a fourth generation foster parent. I wanted to provide the same supportive and nurturing environment for vulnerable children and youth."

"We wanted to help break the cycle of trauma for children and youth in care so we applied to become foster parents."

"I grew up in a home that fostered and adopted. We were approached by MCFD to provide care for a specific teen who needed a respite placement. It's grown from there."

"I decided to become a foster parent when I became aware of the need for more First Nation caregivers. It's important for children to have access to their culture."

"Fostering is 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 so I decided to become a foster parent myself."

"I became a foster caregiver at 21 years old. I am now 71. My aunt was also a foster parent and I thought that what she provided for children and youth in care was invaluable."

"I decided to become a foster parent when my son passed away. Fostering helped me heal, grieve and come to terms with the loss."

"Fostering was something I always thought about doing. I wanted to provide a stable, secure and nurturing home to teens in foster care. I love the challenge of working with teenagers."

"I was inspired to become a foster parent by close family friends many years ago. They fostered teenagers at that time and I thought 'one day I am going to be a foster parent'. Thirty years later, I am still fostering and caring for 2 beautiful little boys and also now wanting to adopt them."

"I grew up with a parent who was a social worker and had foster parent friends. I thought that was such an amazing way to grow a family."

"I was working with high risk youth and met many amazing kids who couldn't live with their parents. They needed a safe, secure and loving home. I opened my home to them and will be there for them for as long as they needed me. I can't change their past but I can change their future just by being present in their lives."

A Tapestry of Foster Parent Voices and Stories

What are your proudest moments a foster parent?

"Our proudest moments come from watching young people develop and grow into independent and resourceful adults. We feel proud when we are able to make a connection with the teens placed in our care. Much of what we do in the beginning is about stabilization and building trust."

"When we are given the opportunity to work side by side with the Ministry and the child's parents in order to give the child and the family the best chance at healing."

"Seeing a child laugh, make jokes and feel comfortable to be themselves in our home."

"So many moments! I fostered a youth who became pregnant while in my care—We walked through the pregnancy together and I got to be a part of her reunification with her family. I also supported a youth through a personality disorder diagnosis. Being part of maintaining a placement while she was in crisis and connecting her to resources made me feel very proud. I work with younger children now and I am proud to be walking a child through the trauma spectrum with realized successes."

"Many! Witnessing their first steps, hearing their first words, dropping them off for their first day of school, seeing them enjoy extra-curricular events, helping them get their drivers licence, watching them graduate, and a million other cherished moments in-between."

"I'm at my proudest as a foster parent when I see the children build resilience, gain confidence, excel in school, and make friends."

"We knew we were doing something right as foster parents when both of the biological parents for both children asked us to adopt them since they were unable to live with them permanently. It's an honour to know that their parents trust us to love their children as our own while still rooting for them as parents. We are currently in the process of adopting both children."

Oh my, so many moments! It's like seeing wilted little flowers start and keep blooming into beautiful, strong and loving people."

"When I see them settle in and start to feel safe in my home. I was also able to help break their family's cycle of being in foster care for 5 generations."

"My proudest moments are when I get to return a child back into the arms of a rehabilitated parent."

"I have been personally asked for on several occasions by parents when their children have gone into care. Other parents have been so grateful that their children came to live with us. Older children I have done relief for have asked to move to our home. Recently, a baby we had from birth who transitioned home at 18 months, the parents gave him my husband's middle name as they valued us so much."

"I'm very proud to say that I have attended many graduations in my 20 years of being a foster parent. I'm also proud of the lifelong connections that I have built with parents, social workers, teachers, medical professionals and so many other people that continue to inspire me to become the best caregiver I can be."

"Seeing children bouncing back from trauma and seeing stabilizing behaviors because of their time with me as a foster parent."

"When the youth are able to break the bonds of addiction and chart a new course for their life."

"I'm at my proudest as a foster parent when I see a child—who many people judged and believed couldn't overcome challenges—overcome it all."

"Seeing breakthroughs and subsequent emotional stability from children presenting extreme behaviours due to history of trauma."

"I just love watching the babies in my care grow, learn and gain a healthy attachment with the hopes that reunification or adoption will be possible. My goal is to help them find permanency, strengthen connections to family, and create healthy lifelong connections. Those moments are priceless and make me proud to be a foster parent."

"Sometimes, it's the little moments that mean the most like getting heartfelt hugs from the children in my care. That's when I know I'm on the right track as a caregiver."

"When I helped a youth who did not want to go to school graduate and continue to go on to higher education."

"Each time I witness a reunification happen between children and biological parents who have worked hard to get their children back. Those are moments that I treasure."

A Tapestry of Foster Parent Voices and Stories

What are your proudest moments a foster parent?

"I get so proud every time one of my former foster kids comes to visit and I see the positive impact I've had on their lives. They even bring their own children so I could meet them and I see how awesome parents they are. Sometimes, I recognize some of my parenting ways in the way they parent their own children."

"Reuniting families, seeing families created through adoption, and children showing vast improvements in their physical and mental health. It's rewarding when I hear the youth who have lived in my home tell me that they can still hear my voice asking them to empty the pockets of their jeans before laundry as there was one time they accidentally left an uncashed cheque in a pocket and threw it in the washer. I also ran into a young lady who lived in my home, ran away and refused to come back—I ran into her one time and she told me that she should've never left my home. Whenever they call or visit me even after leaving my home, I feel so rewarded."

"Just seeing them smile gives me so much joy especially after working so hard to gain their trust."

"Transitioning a sibling group who had been through terrible trauma for years and helping them feel safe and loved by their adoptive parents. We still see them and consider them as family."

"When I'm able to support other foster parents and make them feel that they are not alone."

"Giving them the gift of permanency—we adopted 5 of the children who were placed with us."

"When I receive constant feedback from others that the youth have grown to become well-rounded individuals. I also consider it a great sign when children that I've fostered want to keep in touch with me even when they've moved on to forever homes. It makes me happy when their adoptive parents continue to see me as a positive influence in their lives and allow us to maintain the relationship. I know that it can be difficult for biological parents/extended family to admit but it gives me validation when they recognize the work that I do to help their family heal. One parent even made me a large canvas painting saying 'the best foster parent award goes to'—that was really special because I knew she was cash-strapped at that time yet she still wanted to give me something for Christmas."

"Seeing the child's personality shine through makes me very proud."

"I was told that the child would never talk, walk or make much of himself but with a family environment, the child is excelling in areas that doctors didn't think he would."

"When I receive artwork from the children as gifts."

"Watching a child realize that they have a voice and that they can use it to advocate for themselves."

"Even after years of leaving my home, they still call me almost everyday just to talk."

"Seeing the kids in our care thrive in healthy relationships. Two of them even requested my husband to walk them down the aisle on their wedding day. That was such a proud moment for us."

"When a child finally feels that they are safe enough to be who they really are! I can't help but be proud every time they reach milestones at their own pace."

"I feel most proud when I spend quality time with them—doing something that makes them feel like a 'normal kid' like playing or cooking together. It's important for me to create memories that they will carry with them forever."

"I feel proud when the children and youth in my care defy statistics which is why graduation days are very important to me."

"It gives me so much pride and joy when I watch a child grow in confidence and have the sense of security knowing that they can discover the world around them independently but with us caregivers there for them when they need love and support. My favourite moments are when I realize that the children and youth in my care have defied the odds and have achieved more than what others have predicted for them."

"Seeing my foster son of 17 years graduate high school, complete a drug treatment program and return to work as an electrical apprentice."

"Watching a youth who was in my care for 11 yrs walk across the graduation stage and be the first in her family to graduate. I also supported a child who was in 4th grade and reading at a grade 1 level learn to read at a grade 4 level within a 4 month period."

"When the pediatrician recognizes a big improvement in their physical health and quality of life."

From Foster Sister to Social Worker: How Growing Up as the Birth Child of Foster Parents Helped Me Find My Life's Purpose

by Ferryn Mulholland



Ferryn Mulholland comes from a large family who has supported children in care since 2007. She recently graduated from the University of Victoria with a degree in Child and Youth Care specializing in Child Protection and Indigenous Supports. Ferryn now works with the Ministry of Children and Family Development as a child protection worker. Her parents are in their 60's and are still fostering. They currently have five children in their care aged 5-11. She is passionate about reconciliation as well as the rights of parents and children. Ferryn spends her spare time going for runs, doing puzzles, watching Netflix, and spending time with her family and friends. She is a gifted writer and we are grateful that she has shared with us two of the poems she has written about her foster siblings in this feature.

In 2007, my parents decided that after having 7 of their own children, they wanted to open our home to other children in need of a loving and nurturing environment. To this day, this is the best thing my parents have ever done for me, and being a foster sister has been the best blessing I could have ever known. What have I learned as the biological child in a foster family? It has allowed me to fall in love with wonderful and beautiful children, but more importantly, it has given me direction and helped me find my life's purpose. It has made me who I am.

From day one, it has been clear to me that caring for and connecting with children is my calling. It first became clear to me as I rushed home from school when the first baby placed in our care became sick—just so I could hold her, not letting her out of sight so that I knew she was okay. I learned to be

selfless, as I slept on the floor next to a crib when a new foster infant would cry if I left the room her first night. I discovered my talent and patience with the most difficult children we welcomed through our doors, as I found a natural ability to empathize with their challenging behaviours and emotional outbursts. I was overwhelmed with pride when they learned a new word, or how to ride a bike, or won an award at school.

Being a foster sister also showed me heartbreak, as I was the one to see these children off on their first day of kindergarten, grade one, grade two. As I was the one to watch them skate for the first time without the assistance bar. As I was the one who got to rock them to sleep at night and watch their eyes close and their breath steady, feeling more love in these moments than I have ever known.

I wished that their parents could have seen them in these moments—that they could stand beside me in pride, or even take my place; but this taught me just how strong addiction as a disease can be and how difficult mental health can be to control. I found empathy for their parents inside of me. As I held children crying ceaselessly for their mothers, I saw how strong the bond is between parent and child. It is through this that I knew I had to be part of the puzzle that not only worked to keep children safe, but that also helped families become families again.

Being a foster sister opened my eyes to racism. I became acutely aware of the disproportionate number of First Nations children and youth in care. Growing up in Duncan—which is home to a large First Nations reserve, I started to truly hear the jokes my friends and classmates would make. I started to notice the mistreatment of the First Nations people and the stigma they wrongly adopted just because of their skin. As I learned about Indigenous culture and its true beauty, as well as its history, I had to learn to understand that most of the discrimination they endured was out of ignorance. This motivated me to further my education which would help provides me with a platform to educate people on the ripple effects caused by intergenerational trauma and to reduce the ignorance around racism. My goal is to help children and youth harvest their strengths and cultivate their resilience so they can overcome the obstacles they will encounter in life.

My foster siblings changed my life. Even those who have returned home, whether they were with us for a short while, or for a long while, have taught me lessons which guide me each and every day. My foster siblings sent me along a path that helped me find my life's purpose and my place in the world. I look at their beautiful faces, and as their mentor, as someone born with the unasked-for privilege of being Caucasian, and as someone with a gift to use words well, I do not take lightly the responsibility this puts on me to create a better world for them. I dream of a world devoid of racism, so that these precious children do not have to grow up and learn to understand that their skin might find them the word “no” too often. I believe that I have a duty to protect these children who are deserving of a life full of unconditional love and nurturing from the moment they take their first breath. I have a goal of supporting parents so that fewer children are placed in care, and so that they do not have to experience the pain of being separated from their family or community.

Her

**The failure to connect two loose strings,
each secure end tied to a beating heart,
caused her to pull on mine.
Knotted together so tightly, we became blood.
She became mine, and I was hers.
Mine to put to bed and hers to look up to,
and just like that my heart was taken over.
Our separation undesirable, yet inevitable,
her oblivious, and me holding back heart break.
So I left her with a parting gift,
my beating heart to hold in her tiny hands.
Now it is the thought of her that keeps me full,
even when my stomach stays empty.
The thought of her pushing me forward
positively with a hope,
the hope that our paths will once again find their way to
each other, and choose to meet.**

**This poem was written by Ferryn when she was 18 years old.
It's about a foster sister who they had very briefly but had a huge
effect on her life. She continues to be in her everyday thoughts.*



**To all the children I've held
Know that I hold you still
Tenderly
In my heart
Wrapped in warm memories,
And you are never alone.**

**To all the children I've held
Know that I see you still,
Excited
By the possibility
Of crossing your path
When you are fully grown.**

**To all the children I've held
Know that I love you still
Wholly
Unconditionally
And passionately
No matter who you become.**

**To all the children I've held-
Even you
Who may not remember
Me-
Wherever you are
Know
That I hold you
That I see you
That I love you**

And I always will.

CELEBRATING STAFF MILESTONES

We're celebrating the 10th work anniversary of our Executive Director, Jayne Wilson! Jayne is exactly the kind of leader we need—a strategic thinker, a strong advocate, a generous mentor, and a resilient pack leader. Get to know her in this feature as she reflects on her 10 years as BCFFPA's Executive Director.



Milestones present an opportunity to reflect on where we've come from and where we want to go. Think back to ten years ago. Did you envision your career as it is today? What's been most surprising about the journey so far?

I absolutely didn't envision my career as it is today because I went to university to pursue an entirely different path! I literally tripped into non-profit work about 20 years ago and it sent me in a completely different direction. All these years later, I'm fortunate to work for and with an amazing team of people with the focus of helping others – which has always been a consistent pursuit for me. The Board and staff of BCFFPA all help to create a supportive, creative, challenging and lively environment. To be completely honest, when I started in this position 10 years ago, I had no idea how long I'd be here. We had some restructuring to do and that vision was all-consuming for about 4 years until we had achieved our key goals. Since then, there has been a continuing pursuit of new targets and exciting plans – and of course the sector problems that needed to be addressed– all of these things have kept me very engaged and focused.

I'd have to say that what surprises me the most is that, as often as challenging issues come up, no matter how many hard advocacy conversations need to be had, no matter which staff move into and out of their positions at BCFFPA and at the Ministry, the work stays the same. I've actually been at BCFFPA 12 years including my research and admin role between 2006-2008. But since I returned in 2010, we've had 3 tremendously strong Presidents. As varied as their interests, skills and goals have been, ultimately the mandate and strategic plan have been guiding us all. There has been fantastic continuity for our staff team because the Board leadership has been strong.

If you could go back in time, what's one piece of advice you would give yourself 10 years ago?

Absolutely do not sweat the small stuff! Pause, breathe and think things through. An answer will always come...sometimes it takes a while. If I'd known this when I started, I'd likely have been a lot less worried about the road ahead and the potholes along the way. It's a piece of hard won insight that I'm happy to pass on to others on our staff team and new Board members as they familiarize themselves with our work.

What would you say has been the most rewarding part about working at BCFFPA?

The biggest reward for me has been the honesty in the relationships that I've enjoyed. This is really gritty work that sometimes challenges the most stoic of people. Foster parents are tough, honest individuals and the staff team develop that same resilience after a few years on the job. I so enjoy watching our team grow together and gain insight and skill – it's particularly rewarding to watch our staff and Board members deepen their understanding of the work we're doing at BCFFPA.

What does BCFFPA mean to you, on a personal level?

Oh gosh, what a great question. I feel as though the capacity and success of BCFFPA has become very personal to me. I jumped into the deep end when I returned to take the ED role 10 years ago. Over these past years the Board of Directors has been more supportive than I could have anticipated. It has allowed me to develop leadership skill, patience and much more ability to strategize successfully. Consequently, I've been able to pour all of this right back into the Federation.

What's the most important leadership lesson you've learned and how has it proven invaluable?

Listen and ask questions until you understand any issue that someone brings to you. Respond with consideration of what's right, rather than what's easy. If you react before you understand, it doesn't develop trust. In a leadership role, trust is critical. In some cases our decisions and actions can have a large impact on the welfare of a family or an individual. It is our responsibility to seriously consider the outcome before we take action.

I have a favorite lesson from watching my dad interact with his coworkers. He was a very respected sales and marketing guy in the airline business who told me to treat everyone as though they are your favorite client.

These two lessons (right versus easy and seeing everyone as a client) have helped me stay grounded in my direction, in leadership and continuing advocacy efforts. I am here to support hard working individuals and best practice within the fostering sector. If I'm not modelling how we expect decisions will be made and how we hope to be treated by others, then I have no business being in this seat.

How has being part of a diverse and vibrant fostering community changed your life?

Actually, it's made me much more aware of who I am, what my limitations are, and what skills I do and don't have. Foster parents have expansive patience and unconditional love for all the children who come into their homes. I so admire that! Witnessing the dedication of foster parents has taught me that, as much as I'd love to believe myself to be endlessly open-armed and nurturing, I accept that there are limitations to how much I'm able to give of myself. That's not a bad thing! Since this awareness, I've been able to focus my efforts on where my talents are and better manage the stressors in my job and personal life.

What's one thing about you that many people may not know?

I didn't know how to answer this one so I asked my husband, Rob! He said that people likely don't know that my love of animals has led to our driveway resembling a Disney movie during the winter months. Since we live on a snowy forested hillside and food for the birds who stay through the winter is scarce, I put out a constant rotation of seeds and nuts. Any day during the winter you can count on seeing squirrels and chipmunks, families of deer along with woodpeckers, nutcrackers, thatches and all sorts of other birds gathering to feed from the big containers scattered around our long driveway. Looking out our kitchen window and seeing all the animals wandering, flying and skittering nearby is soul food for me.

What do you admire most about foster parents?

I first met a group of foster parents when I did a training about grief and loss in 2005. What struck me most at the time was how resilient and honest they are. Some of the foster parents in the room shared stories of loss associated with fostering that made my jaw drop. Since then, resilience has been a reoccurring theme in the work we've done together over the years. I also admire that foster parents are deeply committed the children and youth that they are raising. That deep commitment has taught me a great deal about moving through challenging times with grace and a sense of humor.

As you think about the future of BCFFPA, what is most motivating to you?

I've always had a list of goals – not all of them driven by our strategic plan. I'm excited by quick impact changes, like a fresh new format for the magazine or a splashy media campaign. But it's the longer term goals that keep me moving forward. Building our staff team enough to realize that we now have a separate program that has a manager of its own and 2 part time staff (which was a very exciting and hard won achievement!) – these things motivate me to keep a vision of expanding our service capacity. Then there are those large sector-wide goals like the elusive significant increase in payments for foster parents and seeing foster parents consistently acknowledged as the valued Care Team members that they are. I would love to see the day that we arrive at this place. Actually, I'd like to see what things look like 3 or 5 years after we achieve these things because surely the sector will operate differently when foster parents are able to afford to go to the dentist, save for retirement and consistently buy nutritious food for the children and youth in their homes. Yup...I'd have to say that's a pretty significant motivation for me.

**10 years of service
120 months
520 weeks
3,653 days
87,672 hours
5,260,320 minutes**

**Thank you for everything
you do for BCFFPA, Jayne!**

BCFFPA Services to the Membership

Another branch of the
family tree since 1967

1966-1972

BCFFPA was created and incorporated to establish a foster parent network, organize the first Foster Parent Conference and set up informal “Branches” where foster parents could gather together and maintain provincial communication through BCFFPA’s network.

MEMBERSHIP (THEN AND NOW)



Members pay annual fees.



Membership fees support community family activities hosted by foster parents in BCFFPA’s “Branches”



Bursaries for CICs to go to summer camp, for higher education or fine arts supplies



Bursaries accessible to children of members to pursue higher education



Bursary to assist foster parents with the costs of medical travel with a CIC (covers additional expenses)



Discounts available to members for products, services and hotels



Members participate in the governance and strategic direction of BCFFPA



Members abide by BCFFPA Code of Ethics





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!

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. 85% of the membership fees paid to BCFFPA are redistributed 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.

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.



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** 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! Meet the mandatory adoption education requirements in your province with the AEP Online Refresher. This course is designed especially for those who have completed approved prior caregiver training. Check with your resource or social worker if you are eligible to take the AEP Refresher. Get more info and sign up at: **bcadoption.com/AEP-online**

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
www.ipsociety.ca/foster-caregiving ext. 229

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

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

Pacific Post Partum Support Society 604-255-7999
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.parentsupportbc.ca

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

FAE/S Support Network 604-507-6675

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 250-515-1522

Okanagan Metis Children & Family Services 250-868-0351

Interior Community Services 1-877-376-3660
www.interiorcommunityservices.bc.ca
www.icsfp.info
East Kootenay 250-426-6013
West Kootenay 778-460-5174
Cariboo 250-609-2017
Kamloops and area 236-421-0031

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 (FPSSS) 1-888-922-8437
www.fpsss.com
FPSSS (South Vancouver Island) 778-430-5460
FPSSS (Central Island) 250-618-8327
FPSSS (Comox/Courtney) 250-898-4488
FPSSS (Cowichan Valley) 250-818-3293
FPSSS (Upper Island) 250-204-1566
FPSSS (Port Alberni) 250-735-1124
FPSSS (North Island) 250-949-7419

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
www.axis.bc.ca Press 205

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

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

Archway Community Services 778-880-8555
www.archway.ca

Fraser Valley Foster Parent Association 1-877-797 7701
www.fraservalleyfosterparents.org

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

Pacific Community Resources Society 604-587-8100
www.pcrs.ca

The Children's Foundation 604-434-9101
https://www.childrens-foundation.org

IT PAYS TO BE A MEMBER!

Please complete and return to BCFFPA: 208-20641 Logan Avenue, Langley, BC V3A 7R3 or join or renew via our website at www.bcfosterparents.ca

Name(s): _____ Date: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ Postal Code: _____

Phone: _____ E-Mail: _____ Region: _____

Local Association (BCFFPA Branch): _____

Level of Foster Home: (select one)

Restricted ____ Regular ____ Level I ____ Level II ____ Level III ____ Contractor ____ Other ____

This is a: New Membership ____ (OR) a Renewal ____

1 year: individual \$30.00 ____ OR couple \$35.00 ____

2 year: individual \$50.00 ____ OR couple \$60.00 ____

*\$10.00 of this membership fee will be used by the provincial office for administration of the program and development of services to foster parents. The balance of the fee will be returned to your regional board or local association.

I/we contract with ____ MCFD ____ Delegated Aboriginal Agency Other: _____

OR my affiliation with the BCFFPA is (i.e. staff, MCFD, non-foster parent): _____

As members of the BC Federation of Foster Parent Associations, I/we agree to abide by the Bylaws, Policy and Procedures, and Code of Ethics of the Federation. _____

[signature(s)]

Please bill my VISA or MC # _____ Expires ____ / ____

[signature for approval]

Get social with us!



@fosterparentsbc



Youtube.com/BCFFPA



@BCFFPA



@fosterparentsbc