



AFKA Board Reports

REPORTING PERIOD: JANUARY 1 – MARCH 31, 2023

ALBERTA FOSTER AND KINSHIP ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY REPORTS

REPORTING PERIOD: January 1 – March 31, 2023

A. EXECUTIVE REPORTS

1. PRESIDENT.....SYLVIA THOMPSON
2. VICE PRESIDENT.....RENE RAJOTTE
3. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.....MELISSA JONES

B. DIRECTOR REPORTS

1. TREATY 8CARLY MORTON
2. CALGARY REGION..... CARMEN LEGGE
3. CENTRAL REGION..... DANIELLE GOUCHIE
4. EDMONTON REGION..... MELODY BAIRD
5. NORTH REGION PATRICIA MENSINK
6. NORTH REGION – ASSOCIATE: EAST STREAMBEV TOWE
7. NORTH REGION – ASSOCIATE: WEST STREAMTERRI FORSEILLE
8. SOUTH REGION - VACANT
9. TREATY 6 – VACANT
10. TREATY 7 - VACANT

A. EXECUTIVE REPORTS

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Sylvia Thompson

Welcome to spring, it will be great to be able to get out more and enjoy the great outdoors. I am very much looking forward to having many walks and outdoor activities with my grandchild and great grandchildren.

The AFKA is in the process of building better and more accessible support for all of the caregivers. This is an area that needs to hear from our caregivers, what is meaningful support to you? Let us know.

We are hosting an Indigenous teaching day at Fort Edmonton Park on March 25. We met with the staff to plan the day and we are amazed by the facility and the people who work there. I am looking forward to hearing about further teachings that will be offered later this year.

The Board of Directors is working diligently on becoming a Policy board which has a very determined focus. Basically, we are the liaison between the owners (you) and management. We develop the policies that guide the work. The Board of Directors felt that this was the most productive and accountable way to go. The future looks good for us, we will keep you updated on our progress.

If you have any concerns, questions, or issues, please feel free to contact your representative on our Board of Directors. They are all listed on our website along with many other important topics, have a look.

We are looking forward to keeping you posted about how things are going. Talk to you soon.

Sylvia Thompson

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Rene Rajotte

Hope this finds all of you coping with our winter weather, around Wainwright we have had more snow than we usually get, so for some outdoor sports it has been great. It is not always great for keeping the sidewalks and the skating rink clean though.

I would like to thank all Kinship and Foster Parents and your families for sharing your home and time with those you bring into your home. I don't believe anyone knows what it is like to do the work you do unless you have been a Kinship or Foster Parent. So, THANK YOU again.

I would also like to thank the dedicated staff at the AFKA office for the incredible work they do. I am fortunate that I get to see a small part of what they do and how dedicated they are in wanting to make a difference for all of you across Alberta. We are fortunate for the team that we have in the office.

I would also like to thank the AFKA President, Sylvia Thompson, she is so knowledgeable about many parts of the work that she does and the time and effort that she puts in. Her input is most valuable and thank you Sylvia for putting up with my many phone calls about meetings and how everything works!

I believe working as a team we can make a difference and positive outcomes in the future.

Rene Rajotte

Executive Director/CEO's REPORT

Melissa Jones

It has been a very busy few months in the AFKA office supporting the evolution of our programs and supports for caregivers, supporting caregivers, advocating, collaborating with partners, as well as supporting transitions in programming and new staff within our team.

We continue to provide information to our membership, as received and needed, which includes updates regarding ministry policies and practice, support programming through the AFKA, and additional news and activities of relevance to the Children's Services foster, kinship, and adoptive communities. Through the months of January-March 2023, we have expanded our caregiver support team to the best of our ability to include a team member within each region of the province. As funding and capacity allows, we hope to expand those numbers of caregiver support team members, specifically in the regions where it is needed the most.

The AFKA team is continuously working to have collaborative conversations with important stakeholders across the province as a way to expand supportive services and relationships for the betterment of everyone involved in supporting children/youth in care. As always there are changes, at times beneficial and others challenging, that we will continue to have conversations about with these stakeholders; it is important for everyone involved in the sensitive world of the children/youth in care to take time to understand one another and to work in a transparent, collaborative environment. Through some of these relationships, the opportunities for training for both AFKA team members and the AFKA membership is expanding. We share these opportunities through our member email distribution list and media platforms (i.e. Facebook, AFKA website). If you are not on our email distribution list and want to be kept up to date about training and engagement opportunities, please add your email to our list; it's the best way to stay up-to-date and involved! Sign up at: <https://www.afkaonline.ca>

A new addition to the support AFKA members can receive through our Caregiver Support Team is our "Caregivers Matter" Chat Time. These interactive sessions are for all Children's Services foster, kinship, and adoptive caregivers to come together and chat in a safe space. These sessions are held every last Thursday of the month, with a morning option and an evening option. Please pre-register for these sessions through our website: <https://www.afkaonline.ca/general/the-afkas-every-caregiver-matters-chat/>

The AFKA has worked with our insurance brokers, LloydSadd, to develop a group home and auto insurance program tailored specifically for our caregiver members! We are very excited about this, as we know there are some members who struggle to get insurance for these items

through a company that understands the realities of our caregiver communities. Please contact our office (780-429-9923) for information on how to contact LloydSadd for a quote specific to this group program.

The AFKA Art Contest 2023 has been open for submissions since February 2023. This is a great opportunity to engage in some fun with your kids, as well as to showcase their talents! The winners of our art contest receive a \$100 gift card, and their artwork is printed on notecards for use by staff within Children's Services throughout the year. In addition, the winners' original artwork is framed and displayed in the AFKA office for regular celebration! The deadline for submissions is fast approaching, so please check out our website or call the office for more information: <https://www.afkaonline.ca/general/afka-kids-art-contest/>

The AFKA Bursary, designed to help in continuing education, is now open for applications. The AFKA Bursary is open to all former children/youth placed in Children's Services foster/kinship/adoptive homes, and bio children of foster or kinship families; for specific details, please visit the website before June 15, 2023: <https://www.afkaonline.ca/programs/bursary/>

The AFKA hosted our first ever Indigenous Cultural Event in collaboration with Fort Edmonton Park on March 25, 2023. Although the AFKA has had many years of providing these type of opportunities at the previously owned Brownell Children's Retreat, this was our first attempt to collaborate with external stakeholders to help deliver training opportunities of this scale. It was a very positive (and snowy) day, with families engaging in teachings, games, and fun together. We have taken some learning of our own from this event to help us plan the next one to be even better. We are looking at other venues across the province to provide similar training opportunities and will share these with the membership as they are arranged. Please let us know if there are any venues you are aware of and could support our connection with.

We are beginning the planning for our 49th Annual Training Conference and Awards Banquet! It will be held again this year in Jasper, Alberta from October 26-29, 2023. We are making some changes to the layout of our training, and working to incorporate feedback into the sessions and time spent throughout the weekend. We are excited to share more information with you, with a goal to have our registration open in August 2023.

January 2023 brought news to Children's Services caregivers of inclusion in the Alberta Affordability Program being rolled out for Alberta families. As an outcome of the advocacy done to the Ministry last year to recognize the increase in the cost of living for Alberta's foster, kinship, and adoptive families, the affordability payments were recognized as important

additional support for caregivers with children in their care through the Government of Alberta. The inclusion of these families in the affordability program was a step forward in recognizing the need to help offset, even temporarily, the increased costs of providing care. Conversations will continue with the Ministry regarding the persistent need for an increase to basic maintenance.

In February 2023, there was a round table discussion organized with the Minister of Children's Services, the Honourable Mickey Amery. This round table was a time for the AFKA and local/district association presidents to meet with the Minister directly, sharing the concerns and themes brought forward by caregivers across the province with specifics to each region. It was a very productive conversation, with the Minister actively acknowledging the concerns brought forward and trying to find a way to have a deeper understanding as to why some of the challenges exist. The presidents were asked to provide the Minister with some further examples, which was done. The AFKA has reached out to the Minister and his team to arrange a meeting for follow-up, as well as to establish a time to discuss the challenges that exist for kinship caregivers. There have been a couple meetings established, however for uncertain reasons the meetings have been rescheduled and/or postponed. As soon as the AFKA has any further information from the Minister on how the challenges have been, or will be, addressed, we will share that out to the membership. The AFKA and local/district association presidents would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all of you who have shared your stories. We understand the strength it takes for some of you to come forward, as well as the importance of sharing these stories to help create change.

To be as informed as possible as a Children's Services foster/kinship/adoptive caregiver, it's important for you to be active as much as possible at the regional level, as well as provincially through the AFKA. If you are active through the regional level, you provide information to the local/district associations they can use to bring issues forward at the regional level and through the AFKA's Board of Directors to the provincial level for advocacy. The more active members are, the more effective voices will be heard. To find out where there is a local/district association you can become involved in, please visit the AFKA website:

<https://www.afkaonline.ca/contact/district-assoc-presidents/>

Thank you to all the members who are connected and engaged. We appreciate every one of our members and value feedback when you see fits, as well as when we are actively seeking it through surveys. Stay well and enjoy the warmer, sunny days to come!!

Warm Regards,

Melissa Jones

B. DIRECTOR REPORTS

DIRECTOR – TREATY 8

CARLY MORTON

Happy Spring! This is my favourite time of the year; days are longer, giving more time to spend outside with my family and planning my garden. Everything seems to become green overnight after a long winter. What are some of your Spring traditions you practice with your family?

I have been super busy this past quarter with a lot of meetings. Collaborating with all regions within the province with the focus of making it easier for Kinship and Foster families when working with stakeholders; this would make more time for caregivers to spend with their families.

I was honoured to be involved in a session with the Minister of Children Services, Mickie Amery. This meeting was very positive with honest conversations of success stories and concerns from each of the regions within the province. The Minister was open to suggestions, a very positive step moving forward for caregivers.

I have also attended several CRCC meetings and am excited for all the events coming up for caregivers within the Central region.

I continue to work with building relationships within Treaty 8, reaching out to Nations and settlements, also urban and rural organizations that support our caregivers. Learning how all the treaties within the province work together along with listening to successes, struggles and solutions each of these areas endure.

I hope you all are enjoying the longer days!

Masi chok (Thank you)

Carly

DIRECTOR – CALGARY REGION

Carmen Legge

Spring is just around the corner and here at the CFPA and we are excited to get outside to enjoy the warming sun, spring flowers and of course jumping in puddles. It has been a busy couple of months for the CFPA and we are looking forward to continuing that trend as we head into spring and summer. We hope you can join us at our upcoming events to meet fellow foster and kinship families from the Calgary area.

Become a member to have access to the events and services offered by the CFPA. Membership is \$25.00/year and is available to all Foster and Kinship Families in the Calgary area. Go to cfpaonline.ca to learn about the benefits of membership. April 20th join us for adventure, play, and dinner at Hide'n Seek Indoor Playground. May 27th we'll be at Granary Road enjoying a day in the sun.

All members are invited to join us at our Annual General Meeting (AGM) on June 19th. The AGM is an excellent opportunity to find out what the CFPA does, share your opinions, and learn about opportunities on how you can contribute to the programs that directly support Caregivers in our regions.

The CFPA would like to thank all those who contributed to the Caregiver Retention Survey sent out in February to get a sense of the wellbeing of caregivers in our region. This information was shared with the Minister of Children Services, by the president of the CFPA, at a round table discussion hosted by the AFKA. The minister heard concerns from representatives from each of Alberta's regional councils and associations. The CFPA is looking forward to continuing to work with the AFKA to advocate on behalf of our region's caregivers and to be a part of finding solutions for the concerns brought forward.

We want to thank our hard-working volunteers who plan and organize our events. Our February movie night, and annual tubing event in March were a huge success. Thank you to all those who came out and joined in the fun. Our popular Fireside chats are back up and running; the first for 2023 was on March 16th and provided valuable education on bill C-92 and how it impacts children in care.

We are excited to announce the expansion of our community partnership program to include Heritage Park. Members of the CFPA will now have access to Heritage Park passes at no cost. Watch for emails from the CFPA to learn more about this program and how to get tickets to enjoy a day out at Heritage Park, or take advantage of our long-standing relationship with Telus Spark to enjoy a day of science and fun.

DIRECTOR – CENTRAL REGION

Danielle Gouchie

Hello from Central Region! It has been a quiet couple of months, I think the highlight for Central Region, as it is for most regions was the round table with Minister Mickey Amery which occurred in February. As a result of that meeting, numerous foster parents provided me with emails/information to pass on to the ministry about the challenges they are facing.

Red Deer Caregiver Association continues to meet monthly to network and support caregivers. There is a core group of foster and kinship families who attend, and as always, they are looking for ways to increase attendance.

The Central Region Caregiver Council meets once a month via zoom. Attendance is typically just board members and occasional presidents of the regional associations. Despite lots of notice and sharing of the meeting attendance continues to be low.

I did ask on the Central Region Facebook page for any news/successes and challenges. There were very limited responses, however 3 foster parents did reach out to share.

One Central Region foster parent shared that a success for her was the get togethers the Red Deer region has been able to put on for foster parents. Specifically referencing an activity that was done in the fall at the local corn maze. Another success is the in-person meetings that have been occurring within the red deer region.

Challenges noted by caregivers within central region:

- Allegations and negative information are discussed by workers with each other and supervisors but not bringing it to the foster parent's attention in a timely manner. Foster parents only finding out about issues at licensing, this has left foster parents feeling hurt, surprised, and frustrated. If information is worth reporting to workers or supervisors, then it should be immediately addressed and not brought up months later at licensing.
- Foster parents being frustrated or getting into trouble for providing information and reaching out to a child's lawyer through the OCYA (LRCY) it appears to be a grey area, however the foster parent is being told by the OCYA that the lawyer works for the child and foster parents are free to contact the child's lawyer and provide information. Foster parents being then reprimanded by caseworkers and being told they are not able to share information with the lawyer.
- Single foster parent told they should have a better support network when a child in their care ended up getting sick. The foster parent reached out to the worker requesting assistance with care for the child so the foster parent could attend an important meeting. The foster parent made to feel inadequate and unappreciated.

- Overloading some foster homes while other homes remain empty. Very frustrating for foster parents to see and understand why this is happening.
- Level 1 foster parents not being compensated appropriately when level 2 children are placed in their homes. If a level 1 home is parenting a level 2 child they should be compensated as a level 2 home.
- Kids being removed from a placement they have had for years with 2 days notice.
- Lack of expediency when it comes to permanency for children. Workers drag it out for years saying it is not a priority for them.
- Ministry directing people who inquire about adoption to foster care, but then the ministry does not support foster parents to adopt their long-term placements, sets everyone up for failure.
- High number of long-term foster parents quitting or no longer taking placements while they wait for their current kiddos to age out of permanency as they intend to quit fostering at that time.

My goal as Central regions Board of Director is to continue making connections with area caregivers. I would like to find a way that allows foster parents the ability to feel safe in forwarding their concerns and successes and advocating for foster parents.

DIRECTOR – EDMONTON REGION

Melody Baird

Not yet submitted

DIRECTOR - NORTH REGION

Patricia Mensink

The North continues to be a busy place! On February 17, 2023, Melissa from the AFKA, AFKA reps and presidents met with the ministry as a collective voice, province wide concerns were brought forward. The ministry is listening and committed to change. It's very important each and everyone's voice is heard continue to share your concerns.

Northern Alberta Caregivers Committee (NACC) met January 24, 2023, in Slave Lake. Struggles with transitioning and structure changes are an ongoing agenda item. NACC met via Zoom February 21, 2023. Items discussed were CMI'S, Signs of Safety, recruitment, long term foster care, transitions & growth series. An in person gathering of staff and caregivers took place in St Paul March 2, 2023, for Operational Planning. This is the first-year caregivers were included.

Operational Planning is a living document which sets the tone between the ministry, the province, and the region for a three-year period. The long-term goal will fuel future business discussions.

A recruitment campaign began February 1, 2023.

A letter from the minister media release focusing on a wide area of needs and posters with current pictures have gone out the target is 200 new homes.

The surveys that were sent out to both foster and kinship homes indicate similar feelings across the province, caregivers want to feel respected, appreciated and a part of the team.

Unfortunately, this is not happening, the survey will once again be sent out stressing the importance of voicing your concerns, each survey will be kept anonymous.

Fall training events for the North are underway! The central group will meet with Theresa Ouellette and Shaun Miller March 15, 2023, for planning. More information will follow as plans are finalized.

The Caregiver Connection meeting have been rescheduled, the first Tuesday of every month at 1:00 pm and the second Tuesday of every month at 8:00 pm. Come join us! This is a wonderful opportunity for foster and kinship caregivers in the North Region to connect in a safe setting to share successes and challenges. A zoom link will be sent out prior to meetings. Mark your calendars! The Caregiver Connection group is hosting a camping weekend June 2-4, 2023, in Rochester, more information and registration will come out soon!

Please send me any ideas, concerns, or upcoming events you would like me to bring forward.

trishmensink@hotmail.com

Or text 780-498-2669

Happy Spring!

Patricia Mensink

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR – NORTH REGION, EAST STREAM

Bev Towe

Not yet submitted

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR – NORTH REGION, WEST STREAM

Terri Forseille

We still have a lot of snow here in the West but with the warm weather spring should be here soon. It sure will be nice to see the grass and flowers growing.

We just had a Northwest Council meeting this week. The council is in the process of helping with the organization of the Caregiver Connection Gathering weekend in June. We are also planning for our AGM in June; we'd love to see you there. It is great to see the support groups throughout the zone getting together regularly. If you'd like more information on any of the support groups, please reach out to me or any of the names listed below.

Earlier this month we attended an Operations meeting in St. Paul. This meeting was for the entire North Region. In attendance was staff, supervisors, and managers for both Foster and Kinship care. We had the opportunity to speak to the issues in the region as well as what is going well from both the casework and caregiver perspectives.

Important Dates

Northwest Council AGM June 14th @ 11am in Peace River

Caregiver Connections

April 4, 11/May 2, 9/June 6, 13

Support groups

Valleyview & Slave Lake – Terri Forseille, Grande Prairie – Dawn Buhler (3rd Tuesday of the month),

La Crete – Ronalda Wolfe (2nd Wednesday of the month)

Caregiver Connections Weekend

Save the Date June 2nd- 4th in Rochester Alberta

More information will be sent out soon, hope to see you there.