

**2020/2021**



**Alberta Foster and Kinship  
Association**

# Annual Board Reports

## ALBERTA FOSTER AND KINSHIP ASSOCIATION

### ANNUAL REPORTS

2020/2021

#### A. EXECUTIVE REPORTS

PRESIDENT.....SYLVIA THOMPSON  
VICE PRESIDENT.....RENE RAJOTTE  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.....KATHERINE JONES

#### B. DIRECTOR REPORTS

SOUTH REGION..... MARLIN MEYER  
CALGARY REGION.....MONIQUE MCCARDLE  
CENTRAL REGION..... HEATHER GUARD  
EDMONTON REGION..... LINDA KRAUSKOPF  
NORTH REGION..... JOYCE GOLDING  
TREATY 6 ..... VACANT  
TREATY 7 ..... JANET DELORME  
TREATY 8..... VACANT

# A. EXECUTIVE REPORTS

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

**Sylvia Thompson**

**Annual Board Report 2020-2021**

2021 has been a very difficult year. COVID is continuing and becoming a crisis. With the tragic discoveries made this year, I believe more than ever that we all need each other.

The AFKA continues to meet bi-monthly with Children's Services Ministry for updates and changes to programming, as well as to bring forward any concerns. Our core training has restarted in a big way; we have changed to a PRIDE model while keeping some modules specific to Alberta. It does sound like an ideal model for us.

The AFKA has been involved in a Governance Review. It is now complete and will be presented at our AGM. I am interested in hearing what recommendations will be brought forward to continue to improve the AFKA.

We have added the position of Associate Director to our Board of Directors. This is extremely helpful for regions that cover a large area. The associate directors will have the same roles and responsibilities as the director with the exception of voting on motions. This is done to have valuable input and to keep each region with equal votes. The additional members will bring more input and points of view to our board.

While meeting virtually was not something we were accustomed to doing, it has proven to be a great way for us to connect more often. As a result, communication is continuing to improve and we continue to look for opportunities for more growth in our organization.

After an intensively thorough search, many hours of shortlisting, scheduling interviews and conducting them, our next Executive Director has been chosen. Please join me in welcoming Melissa Jones as our Executive Director.

Hopefully within the next little while, the current Covid crisis will be over and we can get on with doing what we do best ... looking after children and families.

Thank you for all what you do for our children and their families. You guys are the best!

## VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

**Rene Rajotte**

**Annual Board Report 2020- 2021**

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Another year has come and gone. Who would have thought that we would still be struggling with Covid? I believe there is no one that has not been touched in some way.

This is always an exciting time of the year as we think of heading to Jasper for the AFKA conference. Hopefully we will still be able to make this happen, even though I am sure there will be some restrictions. Hope to see many of you there.

It was a fairly busy summer with the AFKA. I believe most people know that Katherine, our Executive Director, is retiring. Katherine has been part of the AFKA from its early years until now. I can't imagine the work and forward thinking that she has had to do to take the AFKA to where it is today.

With the retirement of Katherine came the task of selecting a new ED. The Personal Committee, which consisted of four people, had the task to go through approximately 40 resumes and narrowing down to four. Then a panel of four interviewed these four candidates and selected our ED. Through this process Melissa Jones was chosen and she accepted the position. Even though she is not new to the office, we welcome her into her new position.

Next, we go to the Brownell Children's Camp. When the province lifted the Covid restrictions we were able to meet some of our commitments. We did close the camp down with the new provincial restrictions. The people that are looking at leasing the camp are putting together a leasing proposal and would like to start their programs November 1st. Thanks to all those volunteers that take the time to go out to work at the camp work bees. It is very much appreciated.

I was shocked and saddened when I got the news that Norm Brownell had passed. He was so passionate about Foster Care and the AFKA. It was his life. I will miss him so much. If I ever had a question about the AFKA or the Camp, I could talk to Norm and he would listen and share his thoughts. My thoughts and prayers go out to his family. Norm will be missed by many.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Katherine Jones

Annual Board Report 2020-2021

Farewell to thee! but not farewell  
To all my fondest thoughts of thee:  
Within my heart they still shall dwell;  
And they shall cheer and comfort me

-Anne Brontë

It is with a sad heart that I say goodbye to my dear friend and colleague Norm Brownell. I will miss the stories and laughter we shared. Thank you for all you did for the foster care and kinship community. I don't think most people know how much of your heart and soul you put into your work as President, and Past President, of the Alberta Foster and Kinship Association. I was honoured to call you my friend. I will always hold you in my heart and never forget you.

What a challenging year this has been, not just for the AFKA but for all our members and Ministry staff. I truly believed that when I wrote about the Covid-19 pandemic in my 2020 report, it would all be over by the time I wrote *this* report. Boy was I wrong, as Covid-19 continues to throw challenges our way.

For most of us, our hopes and expectations for 2021 were dampened by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, out of this difficult situation we have seen many acts of selflessness and kindness, offering signs of hope for the future. In addition, we have found ways to stay connected and support one another. You, the caregivers, have continued to provide safe and loving care to Alberta's children and youth. You have been resourceful and creative in ensuring connections to family, community and culture, and supporting both educational and medical needs for these children. You have done this while adapting your lives, as you often do, to ensure the health and safety of the children and youth placed in your care. You take your role seriously and, in many cases, go to great lengths to advocate for the children without any expectation for acknowledgement or praise. For that, you should be commended! Thank you.

The AFKA has mostly focused on keeping caregivers informed of all the changes in policies related to Covid-19. We appreciate all the calls and emails we've received thanking us for our efforts and we will continue to update you until our world changes for the better.

I'd like to take this opportunity to extend our thanks and appreciation to the Ministry of Children's Services and their staff for supporting caregivers through an incredibly challenging time. Hopefully, wearing a mask will be a thing of the past one day soon. I'd also like to acknowledge and thank them for their quick and effective work in developing new resources

and guidance documents to relieve some uncertainties for caregivers and the children and youth placed in their care.

Last year the Honourable Rebecca Schultz, Minister of Children's Services, on behalf of the province of Alberta, declared the month of October as Foster and Kinship Caregiver Appreciation Month. We are excited to have October to celebrate the outstanding support, commitment, and kindness shown every day by Alberta foster and kinship caregivers. Happy Foster and Kinship Appreciation Month everyone!

For the better part of the year the staff have worked from home, however they are now back working in the office. We continue to work with staff to support them as best we can in this difficult time, making safety our prime focus.

Our webpage is a work in motion as we constantly share information with the foster and kinship caregiver community, as well as provide relevant information to prospective caregivers to assist in recruitment.

We recently held two information sessions in the North Zone where we shared our website with caregivers while reviewing AFKA programs and services. This was an excellent way for us to share our program information, showcase our site, and highlight where to find information. The AFKA would be more than happy to do a similar thing in all the regions as it would give caregivers awareness of the resources available to them through the AFKA, their association.

Just a reminder to all caregivers, if you do not have your AFKA membership, please use the following link to register for your free membership: [www.afkaonline.ca/membership-application](http://www.afkaonline.ca/membership-application).

The AFKA continues to be involved in discussions with the Provincial Working Group to work towards achieving consistency province-wide for caregiver recognition events. Due to COVID-19 restrictions being implemented in late September, caregiver recognition events will be mainly completed online, or with a video compilation, which will be developed and delivered by each Region. It is imperative that we continue to find ways to engage with caregivers and to ensure they feel appreciated for the critical work they do in providing a safe and nurturing home for the children and youth of our province. The AFKA will provide updates on our webpage [www.afkaonline.ca](http://www.afkaonline.ca) to changes in policy and training events as we receive them. Please visit our webpage to stay updated.

The AFKA has undergone a Governance Review by IntegralOrg, which is a registered charity focused on advancing the capacity of charities and non-profit organizations by providing supports to staff and boards to carry out their organization's mission; it was a very good process and the report has outlined areas where we can improve and grow.

For those of you who are not aware, I am retiring at the end of October 2021. I have worked for the AFKA for 28 years and I could not have asked for a better place to be. I have seen a great deal of growth in the organization over the years, but that only came with hard work on the

parts of many. I hope most of you know who you are and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for all you did to help the association, and me, to grow. I leave knowing that you will be in good hands with the new Executive Director, Melissa Jones. Melissa has a very strong connection to the world of foster care and adoption, and a strong understanding of the struggles you face in your roles as caregivers. I hope you will afford her the same kind of support that I've received in my role as Executive Director.

I thank Sylvia Thompson, President, for her commitment and dedication to her role. I have enjoyed working with you Sylvia and I wish you all the best as you move forward. I know we will keep in touch. I also thank the Board of Directors for their guidance; it has been an honour working with you all.

I would also like to thank the Ministry staff for all they have done over the years to support the AFKA. I have enjoyed getting to know many of you.

Lastly, I thank my staff for the million little things you do on a daily basis. I will miss you terribly so have decided to make a point of visiting you every month or so for lunch. There is a place in my heart for each of you.

Warm Regards,

Katherine

## **B. DIRECTOR REPORTS**

### **DIRECTOR – SOUTH REGION**

**Marlin Meyer**

**Annual Board Report 2020-2021**

With all that has happened in the world in the past year, it's amazing that so many are still doing well and giving of their time to children. It speaks to the passion that we have for kids.

The South Region has been quiet because of the current situation. The Lethbridge was able to have a BBQ at the start of September that was well attended and enjoyed by all. A Citation Awards Banquet was being planned, but has since been shelved. If the world comes back to normal there will be more activities held.

In Medicine Hat, it's more of the same. In speaking with Medicine Hat president, Cindy Margetts, it seems that most of her board has moved on from fostering or just moved away. I encourage Medicine Hat folks to call her and see if there is a way you can assist her in getting the Association there moving forward.

I would also take this chance to thank Cindy for her tireless efforts in being the only CAST Representative in the south, serving both Medicine Hat and the Lethbridge areas. Thanks Cindy.

I want to take a moment to write about the passing of my dear friend Norm Brownell. To say the news of his passing was a shock is truly an understatement.

I have known Norm for almost 20 years. In that time, I have grown to treasure our friendship. I loved sitting and listening to his recollections of the early days of the AFPA and the struggles with Government and the department, the many great Conferences he helped plan, the times he sat with different MLA's and convinced them that the AFPA was a viable organization that the government should support, and of course the long road that was taken to establish "The Camp", his vision.

This July we had a work bee out at the camp. Norm was there as usual. He always lamented that he was unable to help do the physical work that he once did. However, that didn't stop him from directing the troops and seeing that things got done. As I sat with him on Friday and Saturday evening, sharing a good Single Malt Scotch with him, I never dreamed that this would be the last time I would get to listen to the stories and wisdom of my friend. Any of you out there, who enjoy a good Single Malt, raise a glass to our mentor and friend, Norm Brownell.

Norm, you are missed.



## DIRECTOR – CALGARY REGION

**Monique McCardle**

**Annual Board Report 2020-2021**

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It's fall again and with that brings a special focus on celebrating caregivers and social workers in our region. Due to the ever changing COVID 19 situation, the board decided to recognize our caregivers and social workers virtually again this year. We have put together a slide show comprised of videos, photographs and write-ups of each amazing recipients to be viewed on our website during caregiver's week.

Another opportunity we have provided for our caregivers is an all-day virtual training event facilitated by Bruce Perry taking place October 14th. We are also in the process of putting together a video of our 20 plus year caregivers answering questions about their journey supporting children in the foster care system, which will be available on our Foster Talks website during caregiver's week. We are incredibly grateful to have such wonderful caregivers and social workers in our region!

At this time, we are not holding an in-person gatherings for our membership, but are very hopeful we can resume our regularly scheduled events in the new year. Some events we are excited to announce are snow tubing, movie afternoon, swimming, farm visits, indoor play space gathering and the corn maze.

Fireside virtual support/training has been very successful Alberta wide over this last year and we have plans to expand our current model to include pre-recorded sessions based on the topic of that month to be reviewed at your convenience and then come together to have a live training session with the expert. Fireside is a resource available to everyone in Alberta and you do not need to be a member of the CFPA to gain access. Look forward to hearing more about this in the coming months.

Marie's boutique has been relocated to a dedicated space in a centrally located part of the city, this has proved to be a very well accessed resource to both foster and kinship families. We are so pleased that Marie's vision can live on at this new venue and are incredibly grateful to the CFPA volunteers that manage this wonderful resource.

As mentioned in my previous report, ten of the region's visit rooms in 6 offices have been given a facelift and the reports are glowing. All ten rooms were painted in a warm inviting color, received new durable furniture, new toys and toy storage. Our indigenous services visit rooms also received beautiful art work completed by an Indigenous artist. Work on all rooms is complete and families are now able to access comfortable rooms to enjoy family time.

## DIRECTOR – CENTRAL REGION

**Heather Guard**

**Annual Board Report 2020-2021**

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I would like to start my report by saying hi to everyone in Central Region. I hope everyone had the opportunity to enjoy summer with family and friends before our new COVID lockdown. I also hope you're all healthy. I know these times are hard on all of us, but if I know anything, I know foster parents are resilient. We work hard every day to keep our kids and family safe and, with the partnership with our government counterparts, we will persevere.

I've heard that many of the local offices have held social events that were successful. The region as a whole had a weekend camp-over and those people I talked to told me they had an enjoyable time.

We have yet to have our first regional meeting, but Samantha is working hard on pulling one together. I'm looking forward to seeing you soon.

Heather

## DIRECTOR – EDMONTON REGION

**Linda Krauskopf**

**Annual Board Report 2020-2021**

So, another year of COVID sure has done a number with our plans for the year. We so wanted face to face; we are all in much need for human contact. CRCC had planned on some face to face events, some great training, and moral support, but even with our best efforts, COVID got in the way.

I'm so Zoomed out! I was still having meetings with Children's Services; Foster Care and Kinship Care Linkages meetings, as well as meetings with Joan Conibear and Gail Bajaj, when needed. Yes, there are some nice things around Zoom; Yyu didn't have to get dressed or even drive to the meeting, so saving time to do more was nice. But I miss the interaction with all of you. Also, the difference in scenery I would see on my way there is missed.

I am looking forward to our conference in Jasper so much! Just going for the drive and seeing everyone there! The great interaction with all of you, the great training, and most of all game's night! I love playing cards and hope to win against some of you! Seeing you all there and just having fun with you all once again.

Hoping in the next year we can hug and see each other's faces again. We would like to have some time to get together and just talk about the last year; how it had been for everyone, all the different things we did, and the trouble we all have gotten into!

## **DIRECTOR – NORTH CENTRAL REGION**

**Joyce Golding**

**Annual Board Report 2020-2021**

I would like to give a big thank you to Terry Forseille for covering for me during my leave of absence. Also, if anyone missed the announcement, Bev Towe is our new Associate Director for the East Stream. We have not had a very busy year other than zoom meetings and a bylaw review, which is ongoing.

There have been NACC meetings with all streams present, these are ongoing. Also, there has been online training.

### **Associate Director - West Stream - North Zone**

**Terri Forseille**

**Annual Board Report 2020-2021**

With another crazy year coming to an end, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our caregivers. We have seen so many of you step up to challenges that continue to be put on your plates; your commitment is greatly appreciated.

We participated in many Zooms / WebEx Meetings and far less face to face, especially at the beginning of the year. Through discussion, the need of a place for caregivers to connect was very apparent. Caregivers Support Group was set up on Zoom. It was later renamed Caregiver Connections.

It has been wonderful to connect with caregivers throughout the zone. These Zoom calls are very informal and meant as a place for caregivers to share information and build relationships with one another. We will meet the first Tuesday at 9:30 a.m. and the second Tuesday at 8:00 p.m. for the next 3 months.

Summer brought a little more freedom; much needed connection with family and friends. As school started, it was back to schedules and routines and Summer also brought the retirement of a wonderful lady, Colleen Strebchuk. She cared for children in need for 41 years and her commitment to not only children in her care, but the caregiving community was and is still amazing. She is still wishing to continue her work with NW Council and we are so happy to have her help. We honoured Colleen on September 16th with a few in-person guests and a beautiful virtual presentation. Enjoy your retirement, Colleen!

Our stream has two support groups still meeting when restrictions allow. One in Grande Prairie on the third Tuesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. The second is in High Prairie monthly, no date is set at this time.

As well, caregivers are encouraged to attend the Northwest Council; meetings are via Zoom at this time. This is a great place to bring any successes or challenges that you are having. The next scheduled meetings are November 9th, 2021, March 8<sup>th</sup>, and June 14th, 2022. Please contact me for information about any of the above meetings.

May Fall stay beautiful for as long as possible, and all of you stay well during these uncertain times.

**Associate Director - East Stream - North Zone**

**Bev Towe**

**Annual Board Report 2020-2021**

Hi everyone in the North, I will be your AFKA representative for the East Zone of the North.

I have been a foster parent for 24 years, had many long term placements and took private Guardianship of 3 lovely daughters.

Vince Artymko and I will be setting up a support group for the East Zone. There have been a couple emails sent out by the department to introduce ourselves.

You can contact me at [bev.towe@hotmail.com](mailto:bev.towe@hotmail.com) or my cell 780-207-1041.

Hope to connect with all caregivers in the East Zone.

Bev Towe

## **DIRECTOR – TREATY 7**

**Janet Delorme**

**Annual Board Report 2020-2021**

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Summer time feels like it was short lived due to restrictions being lifted July 1st. I sure hope all families were able to enjoy the sun and some vacation time to reflect on the year of being isolated or not.

The past months I was able to meet the wonderful Presidents, staff and Board of Directors for AFKA. Finally seeing people in person, I was able to attend a meet and greet, and a board meeting. Since I am new to this position I am in the learning stages. Everyone is so patient and willing to help me out to better understand policies and procedures. I hope to bring ideas and any issues that may arise to AFKA for discussion.

Until then, I will keep communication open through my phone or email. I am hoping to venture out to treaty 7 territories and build community. Upon hearing some concerns as well as myself being a kinship parent, I hope to have a good relationship with the bands and/or nations so I can address any needs of the families and bring any awareness if need be. As well as share more information to our AFKA board on indigenous topics or issues.

Therefore, lots of changes are going on with this pandemic hoping we can see some light at the end of this dark tunnel. With children returning back to school or continuing with online learning, I wish all families to be safe and continue the practices so we can return to normal life again.

We will be successful in our fight against this virus. I do believe. Take care and be safe. Thank you.