



# Alberta Foster and Kinship Association Annual Board Reports

## 2021-2022

**ALBERTA FOSTER AND KINSHIP ASSOCIATION**

**Annual Board Reports  
2021-2022**

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

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- 1. TREATY 8 .....CARLY MORTON
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- 3. EDMONTON REGION.....LINDA KRAUSKOPF
- 4. NORTH REGION ..... PATRICIA MENSINK
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# A. EXECUTIVE REPORTS

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

**Sylvia Thompson**

**Annual Board Report 2021-2022**

Welcome to Autumn! I am amazed every year by the variety of fall colours we get to enjoy.

Thank you to the Board and staff of the AFKA; without your talents, abilities, and input, we would not have accomplished what we have this year.

Welcome to our new Board Directors; while it is always hard to say goodbye to the Directors leaving the Board, it is a pleasure to welcome new ones. Thank you also for the input from Board and the regional /district associations; your input is shared regularly with the foster and kinship team within the Ministry. We also had the privilege to meet with the new Children's Services Minister, the Honourable Matt Jones and share our asks with him. It was a great sharing opportunity and I am sure we will continue to meet.

We are in the process of reaching out to the regions to see what we can do to help build stronger district and regional associations or support groups. We are in contact with the south region and in collaboration, with the hope, to set up networking/information meetings with the foster and kinship parents within the region.

Please continue to reach out to your district associations, as the presidents continue to meet across the province. The information from these meetings has a great impact at the local and regional levels. More and better information to share with the Ministry means better supports for all.

One of the ways for our Board and the AFKA staff to support foster and kinship families is by getting together for a strategic planning session. Ours is scheduled on October 26, 2022. I am pleased that this will be a joint session between our Board of Directors and the AFKA staff. It will be great to have a set plan of action with contribution from all.

Our campground has been sold; again thank you to the many volunteers for all you did to make it an amazing place. Unfortunately, with the negative impact financially of covid and restrictions, we could no longer afford to maintain the facility. There were few opportunities to raise the funds required to pay the bills.

Thank you to all who volunteered and worked the casino the AFKA hosted in August 2022. Funds for this will now be directed to supports for foster and kinship families.

Keep up the good work and we will keep moving forward.

## VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

**Rene Rajotte**

**Annual Board Report 2021-2022**

It seems just a short time has passed since writing my last annual report. I know that everyone lives such busy lives. I believe technology is partly to blame for that. It seems that we are at the fingertips of everyone we are connected too. I know years ago when I started working, I would get up at sunrise get on the tractor have a lunch packed and get back at dark. I got to enjoy the sunrise and the sunset and the many things of nature that would happen throughout the day in the field. Today, we get a couple of phone calls before sunrise and it doesn't stop until way into the evening until we shut it off. Do you think I like technology?!

I truly know how busy you, as foster and kinship caregivers, are and I would like to thank everyone that is involved in trying to make a difference in a child's life. It is no easy task. Sometimes there doesn't seem to be a solution. We need to make sure we are listening to each other, work together and get the most positive outcome that we can for the child.

Brownell Children's Camp was sold this past spring to a group of people that will be providing rehabilitation to young adults that have drug and alcohol addictions. I have been to the camp to clean up a few odds and ends and I have seen the work they are doing to the building's interior and exterior. I wish them all the best in also making a positive difference in young people's lives.

I would like to add that every time I go out to the camp it brings back so many great memories, summer camps, Indigenous cultural weekend, and all the work bees. Thanks, Norm, for making this experience happen for so many of us.

I would like to thank Sylvia for the many hours that she puts in for the AFKA, and the support she gives Melissa and her staff. Also, I would like to thank Melissa and her staff for all the hard work they have done over the past year. We are so fortunate to have staff so dedicated. Many thanks to Board Members for all they do, especially those who have stepped down after many years of service that they have given, and I look forward to working with our new Board Members.

Well, it's that time of the year when we head back to Jasper to take training and visit with fellow caregivers. To those of you that have never been there, it is a great experience. I look forward to seeing many of you there.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

**Melissa Jones**

**Annual Board Report 2021-2022**

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This past year at the AFKA has been an extremely busy one for the entire team. I have been with the AFKA for over 10 years in various roles; almost one year in this current role as Executive Director. We have been working hard to build relationships with all our stakeholders, to work collaboratively to do what's best for kids, and to advocate for and provide supports to caregivers so they are able to continue doing their best to provide optimal environments for the children in their care to thrive.

We began my term with looking at what the AFKA is doing well, how to continue doing those things well, what we could improve within our scope of ability, and adjusting along the way to do them better. We have a very skilled, passionate team in the association, and I am grateful for the insights and commitment they bring to their work and of the work we do collectively for caregivers.

The Board of Directors continue to support our growth by working thoughtfully and with intention through the suggestions of the Governance Review completed in 2021. I appreciate the insights brought forward from each region, either through the Board Directors or the Presidents of local/district associations, regarding the successes and challenges they are seeing. Working collectively will help bring about clarity and change where needed, within our capacity. Thank you to all the Board Members and Presidents for your support in my new position; I am grateful for the working relationships we are building and the sense of teamwork moving forward.

The AFKA continues to meet with Children's Services Ministry staff on a monthly basis as much as possible. We have had opportunities to share the challenges caregivers are facing, to share successes we have had within our association, to hear important updates from a provincial level as they occur, and to become an integral part of providing input in various aspects of changes in policy and practice within the Ministry. In addition to these meetings with the Ministry, we are involved in various other working groups and partner meetings with ministry, department, DFNA, and agency leadership. Through these groups we are able to continue bringing the caregiver's voice and experience forward, make recommendations when required, and work together to try to make things better. Relevant information coming out of these meetings is shared with the Board of Directors, Presidents of local/district associations, and our membership via an emailed "Update from the AFKA Executive Director." We have some valuable feedback from members who appreciate the work being done and are thankful for the AFKA advocating on behalf of foster and kinship caregivers in Alberta. We know change does not happen overnight, needing constant communication and more direct methods of creating conversation and opportunity for real change; these changes take time and perseverance, not always going the way we expect they might, but often better than they were previously.

In this last year, we have done a great deal of work for the betterment of our association and how we support caregivers within our mandate:

- Offering input and support into planning policy, practice, and events for caregiver recognition, caregiver retention, caregiver recruitment, and caregiver training
- Negotiating ways to make it possible for regional associations to host activities for caregivers to connect and build relationships to support one another
- Current concerns and trends of provincial nature:

- Training challenges for some caregivers (e.g., accessibility for rural/remote caregivers, lack of training to complete hours required, inconsistent approval of supplemental training) – addressed and training options provided
  - inconsistency in special rates and development of support plans – addressed with provincial working group, nearing completion on better practice for provincial consistency
  - inconsistency in home inspections/environmental checklists – addressed and being worked on by a provincial working group
  - inconsistencies in supports for permanency – addressed with the adoption unit, given opportunity to attend and invite local/district association presidents to attend a focus group to discuss this matter; they are currently working on updated policies and practice to support caregivers better and more consistently province-wide
  - Assessment of Care Concerns process and support
  - administrative reviews and appeals process and support
  - therapeutic support for caregivers experiencing loss and grief through their roles
  - impact on children and families facing assessment of care concerns
  - trauma informed lens in transitioning practice, staff shortages impacting support and communication
  - decreasing number of foster homes
  - increase in cost of living; survey sent to members, results shared with Ministry and requests for support were advocated for
  - true due process for caregivers
- Meeting regularly with ALIGN and DFNA Directors regarding support, practice, and working together to support families and children in care
  - The redesign of the Kinship Care model, how caregivers are being assessed and supported through the ASKC tools, support to these families with a designated kinship worker, as well as training provided and required
  - Providing feedback on updates to policy and handbooks related to supports for foster and kinship care
  - Invited to participate and provide feedback into resources with the Injury Prevention Centre at the University of Alberta
  - AFKA Bursary applications are now completed online
  - AFKA Award Nominations are now completed online, with winners selected by an AFKA Award Committee
  - AFKA Conference Registration and payment now done online
  - AFKA Membership is now automatic for all newly licensed/approved foster and kinship homes
  - Connecting with membership regularly by sharing of events and information through the email distribution list, social media posts, website updates, surveys, contests, social events, and supplemental training
  - Completed a Caregiver Support Pilot with Little Warriors with positive outcomes; more discussions with Little Warriors to happen regarding future partnerships
  - Increased number of virtual supplemental training sessions offered to members; more sessions to be established after the planning of the 2022 AFKA Conference is complete

- Invited to participate in providing feedback and supporting research with a University of Alberta team and Little Warriors, which will look at “Understanding a Family-Based Approach to Child and Youth Trauma Care in Alberta”
- Invited to attend in the Treaty 7 Caregiver Symposium in October 2022, allowing opportunity to network with DFNA Directors and Elders from their communities
- Chosen by a grade 9 leadership group in Edmonton as their not-for-profit charity to focus on in their presentation competition; interviewed by the leadership group and invited to attend final round presentation, which, if they win, will win the opportunity to provide a donation to the AFKA
- Networking regularly with other provincial associations to collaborate and share best practice in meeting the needs of caregivers in the provinces
- Working toward a more effective CRM database for more efficient use with our membership capabilities, as well as to increase our ability to provide documentation and data as requested by the Ministry Unit that supports our programming, also allowing us to reflect and plan more efficiently on the needs, acknowledgement, and trends of our membership
- Provided information and feedback into the Provincial Review of Caregivers Supports; this review is still on hold
- Continuing to connect with the South Region leadership to establish some networking opportunities, allowing AFKA to connect with caregivers and staff in hopes to re-establish some local associations or, minimally, some voice for caregivers in working with the department and agencies in the region
- Invited to support the development/organization of kinship family gathering events in the Edmonton Region; providing opportunity to network with these families and build supportive relationships with them, as well as the workers who also support them
- We continue to share these Indigenous cultural teaching events opportunities throughout the year, provide training and event opportunities for caregivers provincially within our capacity, and continue to educate ourselves through various modes of learning in order to increase our own level of understanding and commitment to truth and reconciliation; included in this is our commitment to building relationships within the provincial DFNAs to learn from them and help support their caregivers within our capacity
- The Caregiver Advocate role has been implemented within the AFKA, with goals to expand this support within each of the regions in the near future; this role has been highly effective in supporting caregivers through resolution support, systemic inquiries/support, and within the Caregiver Allegation Support Team
- Meeting regularly with most of the PCR teams in the province to ensure we have a very solid understanding of the process and practice of assessing caregivers through allegations within each region
- The Provincial Mentorship Program now has “CAST Mentors” to support caregivers specifically after they have been through an Assessment of Care Concern
- Recognizing AFKA Award winners on a provincial level and within each region, as requested, with a recognition video and presentation of awards at the annual banquet in Jasper

Toward the end of August 2022, the AFKA (i.e., myself, Sylvia Thompson – President, and Rene Rajotte – Vice President) were given the opportunity to meet the new Minister of Children’s Services, the Honourable Matt Jones. Within the brief time given, we were able to have a good conversation with him regarding many of the items listed above, as well as have a space to open the door for further discussion regarding additional supports for foster and kinship caregivers through the AFKA.

The AFKA Annual Training Conference and Awards Banquet is almost here and the team at the AFKA has been working extremely hard to work on a weekend of amazing training, networking, and social events. We are excited to have our Awards Banquet back at the Conference, as it’s a truly important event where we honour the dedication of foster caregivers, kinship caregivers, and Ministry staff to do what is best for the vulnerable children and youth in their care. The conference is a valuable opportunity for caregivers and staff to come together to network, learn more, teach more, build friendships and natural supports, and to celebrate all the good that is happening.

It may be the end of an amazing year, however, it is also the start of a new year that will provide us time to continue our growth and, with intention, support and advocate for caregivers within our capacity, and to the best of our ability. As I often remind our team, each day is an opportunity to learn and grow, to choose to do the best we can with what we have in the moment, and to continue to create more of what is good. I want to send a special thank you to my team at the AFKA for their commitment and dedication to always put the needs of our membership first and to continually being creative in offering suggestions for improvement and then working hard to make things happen! The AFKA team are a very special group of people.

With gratitude,  
Melissa



## **B. DIRECTOR REPORTS**

### **DIRECTOR – TREATY 8**

**Carly Morton**

**Annual Board Report 2021-2022**

Happy Autumn! I hope you all managed to get through the hectic month of September. I know in our house it is one of the busiest months of the year. Back into the routine of school, new classes for our children and the excitement of what the year will bring. I hope you all had a wonderful summer, making lots of memories with family and friends.

This past quarter has been exciting for the AFKA, we have some new Directors and a new Presidents. I look forward to working with the new members. I have been able to attend several meetings with the fellow Board Members, working to put the needs of kinship and foster families in the forefront. These meetings have been with stakeholders and the Government of Alberta. I continue to work with the Nations within Treaty 8, building relationships and assisting where I can.

I had the opportunity this past summer to attend a cultural camp with my family at Jackfish Lake Reserve north of Fort Chipewyan for a week. It was a week filled with medicine picking, hand games and teaching from the Dene Elders. I would love to hear of the cultural events you and your family were able to attend over the summer.

Moving forward into the fall, I am always excited for the annual “It’s All About Kids” Conference held in Jasper. I would love to meet more families from the Treaty 8 territory.

Masi chok (Thank you)

Carly

### **DIRECTOR – CALGARY REGION**

**Carmen Legge**

**Annual Board Report 2021-2022**

My name is Carmen Legge and I am excited to take on the role of AFKA Board Director for the Calgary Region. I have been a foster parent in the Calgary Region for 13 years and a board member of the Calgary Foster Parent Association (CFPA) for 3 years.

The Last 6 months have been busy for the CFPA, with Covid restrictions lifting we have been busy planning in-person events for our membership. It was great to see everybody again and to witness the amazing friendships that are built through these events. In September, many Calgary families joined us at Cobb’s Adventure Park; August we hosted an event at Calaway Park, which was a fantastic day in the sun for those who were able to join us; June’s event was a trip to Granary Road; May a night of laser tag; and in April we hosted an event at Hide n’ Seek.

In October, we will be celebrating Alberta's Foster and Kinship Caregiver Appreciation Month, as well as National Foster Family Appreciation Month, with a Flag raising on October 17<sup>th</sup> and our Annual Awards Banquet on October 21<sup>st</sup>. We will be honouring those who have provided extraordinary service in their roles as foster and kinship parents, and caseworker. As well as caregiver awards for years of service, and the CFPA mentor recognition award. As part of the evening activities, we will be conducting a silent auction to raise funds to support the many events we host for our families and the children they care for.

In addition, we are planning an exciting laser tag event in November along with our annual Christmas Banquet in December. Sign up as a member of the CFPA to receive emails about our upcoming events. Our annual membership is \$20.00 and gives foster and kinship families access to all our events and services.

In June, we had our Annual General Meeting where we welcomed new board members and provided annual reports to our membership. Monique McCardle was elected as our president and Nicole Bull as vice president. Sean Busse joins us as secretary. We want to send our sincere appreciation to our outgoing president, Joanne Busse, for her years of service on the CFPA. In addition, a heartfelt thank you to the board members and staff whose dedication and ingenuity allowed the CFPA to continue to support Calgary area caregivers throughout the pandemic.

The CFPA continues to grow our Caregiver Mentorship program, and is excited to provide services like the "Take Me Home Toys" website, where foster and kinship families can use a "click and collect" model to browse through secondhand toys. Check out the CFPA website to learn about the benefits of membership with the CFPA. <https://cfpaonline.ca/services/>

The CFPA board is looking forward to another year of events and growing our services to further support Calgary area families. The board will be updating our bylaws, and reviewing our mission, values, and goals to ensure we are heading in the right direction.

We are sad to see the end of our online community FosterTalks and the Fireside chats that the CFPA had hosted over the last 18 months. They provided an important opportunity for foster and kinship parents around the province to continue to connect with other caregivers and experts who offered strategies for the challenges commonly encountered by foster and kinship parents. We will be carefully evaluating if there is a need for the fireside chats going forward and how they might be best adjusted to support caregivers in the future.

Members of the CFPA are welcome to join us on the third Monday of each month for our regular board meetings. A chance to inform the direction of the CFPA and participate in a caregiver led association, with the goal of supporting caregivers and the children they care for. As the AFKA Board Director, I bring forward concerns from the Calgary region to the AFKA. If you have ideas or concerns, I'd love to hear from you. Please email me at [boardcalgary@afkaonline.ca](mailto:boardcalgary@afkaonline.ca)

## **DIRECTOR – EDMONTON REGION**

**Linda Krauskopf**

**Annual Board Report 2021-2022**

So hard to believe that a year is coming to an end, but can hardly wait for the AFKA Conference in Jasper, AB. We so need to get back to normal.

This being my last conference as a board member, it is time for me to call it a day. I am still fostering, but once my current child leaves my care, it is my time for me to go. I know we will get someone to take over as AFKA Board Director, Edmonton Region, who will do a good job with new ideas.

Not too much has happened with the Capital Region Caregiver Council. First we had Stacy leave to go and work with the AFKA as a Caregiver Advocate, great news for her but not so much for the regional council. Then we had some serious health issues on the council's board. However, we still attended meetings and helped anyone who called for help with the system.

With everyone so short staffed, we will not meet with upper management; they are keeping us in the loop by calling us when anything comes up that we need to know about.

I know that some of the challenges for Foster and Kinship is shortage of staff new and old, not knowing who is doing what. This is causing families to go without or explaining over and over what they need. The CSD agencies have not been keeping us informed about anything going on with the children, and the workers are not knowing either. Cost of living is going up and no increase in sight is causing a lot of problems.

Next year, we hope to have new members to lead us on to the right track with new ideas and just refreshing everything the regional council.

Hope to see you in Jasper.

## **DIRECTOR - NORTH REGION**

**Patricia Mensink**

**Annual Board Report 2021-2022**

I hope everyone had a relaxing summer and is now enjoying the cooler days and beautiful colours of fall. Much is happening in the North! Consistency is being worked on across the North Region; since not all cases in the North are managed by the North, this presents challenges. Those challenges become increasingly more difficult when there is no consistency across the province.

There is no change to mileage rates. Special rates and support plans are currently unchanged, although being worked on. The target date is spring of 2023.

Clarification was given on med consent because nothing was clear. The director's consent is a process intended for the caseworker who is acting as a guardian to be informed on what is happening with the child, doing their due diligence. The director's consent is not an approval for prescribed medication, an increase or decrease in medications require director's consent, unless the treatment plan included changes, the turnaround should be a maximum of ten days, ideally the next day.

Transitioning children and supports for caregivers seem to be slowly getting better. Open communications between the caseworker – caregiver team is key.

Recruitment for new caregivers is ongoing. As of September 1, there has been a foster – kinship re-design in the North. Each are now separate identities. The hope for this is one consistent approach. An improved level of service is what’s expected, improved invoicing and payments in a timelier manner as well.

The Caregiver Connection is planning to host a camping weekend in Rochester, spring of 2023. There will be camping, activities, games, crafts, a silent auction, a family dance, and food. For a nominal fee, families can come and enjoy the weekend with other caregivers from various places.

July 23, Barrhead Association hosted a Picnic in the Park. There were games, a scavenger hunt, treats and food, fun was had by all who attended.

Both the Caregiver Connection and Northern Alberta Caregiver Committee (N.A.C.C.) meetings are held monthly; come join us to learn more about the happenings in the North.

I’d love to hear from you! Any ideas, concerns, upcoming events you’d like me to bring forward, please contact me either by e-mail at [trishmensink@hotmail.com](mailto:trishmensink@hotmail.com) or text (780) 498-2669.

## **ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR – NORTH REGION, EAST STREAM**

**Bev Towe**

**Annual Board Report 2021-2022**

Good day,

The east zone has been working on a support group. We had two sessions on Thursday, thank you to all who attended.

I will be setting up weekly supports on the third week of every month. The invite will go out to all caregivers in the east.

We have monthly northern caregiver supports with the management team once a month. All information will be shared at the support meetings.

Any information or questions about the east zone give me a shout email, text, or phone.

Hoping everyone is enjoying the kids being back in school.

Bev Towe

[bev.towe@hotmail.com](mailto:bev.towe@hotmail.com)

780-207-1041

## **ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR – NORTH REGION, WEST STREAM**

**Terri Forseille**

**Annual Board Report 2021-2022**

Here we are nearing the end of another interesting year. Fall has officially landed in the west stream. It's wonderful to see how well the harvest seems to be going for the farmers in this area.

School and extracurricular activities are back in full swing, keeping many of us very busy. I'm hoping to get to see some of you in Jasper for the AFKA's "It's All About Kids" training conference. I'd love to connect with you.

Watch your emails for upcoming training opportunities. There has been a lot of training offered lately.

Important dates coming up:

- Grande Prairie Support group meetings are held at Mr. Mikes @ 7pm, Oct 11, Nov 8, Dec 12 (second Tuesday of every month)
- High Level Support group meeting TBA
- High Prairie Foster Parent Association is planning for gatherings in Slave Lake & Valleyview
- Northwest Council Meetings are held via zoom, everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend. Next meeting dates are Nov 8th, January 10th and March 14th @ 9:30am for Caregivers and 10am for CS staff (by Zoom).
- The AGM will be an in-person meeting in Peace River June 13th at 11:00am.

If you would like any more info about any of these meetings, please contact me @ (780) 536-7421

May you all enjoy the beautiful fall colours & weather we are having!!

Terri Forseille  
Northwest Council  
West Stream Associate Director

## **DIRECTOR – SOUTH REGION**

**VACANT**

**Annual Board Report 2021-2022**

## **DIRECTOR – CENTRAL REGION**

**VACANT**

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**DIRECTOR – TREATY 6**

**VACANT**

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**DIRECTOR – TREATY 7**

**VACANT**

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