



AFKA Board Reports

REPORTING PERIOD: JANUARY 1, 2021 – MARCH 31, 2021

ALBERTA FOSTER AND KINSHIP ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY REPORTS

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2. VICE PRESIDENT.....RENE RAJOTTE
3. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.....KATHERINE JONES

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A. EXECUTIVE REPORTS

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Sylvia Thompson

Welcome to Spring. I am sure everyone is as pleased as I am about the warmer weather coming.

It has been a very busy time at the AFKA. Many meetings have taken place and plans are being discussed. One example of this is preliminary planning around our fall Provincial Training Conference and AGM. More info to follow.

The aim for the AFKA is to have a local association with a president or delegate in every community that has a local Children's Services office in rural Alberta. Many of the larger centers have great streams of communications now. Ideally all of the local presidents attend regional council in their regions which share information about what is happening in Children's Services and our world. The provincial presidents have regular meetings to discuss concerns, and happenings to improve the fostering experience.

The AFKA regional Directors are elected into their positions for the Board of Directors at the AGMs of these councils. It is the job of the directors to bring your questions, ideas and concerns forward.

Our Board of directors is responsible for providing direction for our association. Because of this and a desire for more input, we are discussing increasing the number of directors on the board. More information to follow.

We meet bi-monthly with the ministry to talk about new ideas, the concerns and any changes in policy. At our last meeting, topics discussed included special rates, medication approvals, caregiver recognition events and supplemental training and first aid.

As you can see, important topics that need your input.

Please consider becoming involved in any way that works for you. You can reach out to me at 780 621-7815 or the office at 780 429-9923 with any question or to provide input and interest.

I am looking forward to more input and communication with all in the future.

Have a great spring

Your president

Sylvia Thompson

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Rene Rajotte

Hello everyone, I hope this finds everyone healthy and doing great. To those of you that are struggling with health or what caregiving can throw at us, our thoughts and prayers are with you.

It seems as though spring is here, it seems so great even though winter was not too bad with just a couple weeks of cold weather. The longer daylight hours and warmer weather feel so good. It also makes me feel good when you see the geese back and the baby calves and gophers running around, but we do live in Alberta so I am sure we will still get the odd snow storm.

It has been a bit busier at the AFKA the start of this year as we have had to make some decisions about the kid's camp. Our revenue has been very little because of Covid, and it's not looking good for this summer with many cancelations. We are thinking of renting out campsites to Foster and Kinship Parents to go camping to create some revenue, if you have any ideas give me a call: 780 842 7324.

We have also had a few extra meetings between the board and presidents which I believe have been awesome. We have shared many ideas and had great discussion on how to move things forward right from you the caregiver, regional council, the board and to our great staff at the office. I feel really good about this, and I know with change comes some reluctances, and I know there will be hoops to cross, but I know as a team we can move forward. I would like to thank the board and Presidents and Staff that have put in so much extra time with extra meetings THANK-YOU!

I would like to wish all the best to all of you that work so hard at caregiving, have a great spring and summer.

Rene Rajotte

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Katherine Jones

I was reminded today that my report was due and was shocked as to how quickly time has flown since my last report. One good thing is that Spring is nearly here and that brings with it a sense of hope and new growth. The ability to go for long walks with a warm breeze on my face and the smell of freshness surrounding me gives me a whole new outlook on life.

Once again, 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 throughout this incredibly challenging time when we are limited to what we can do and who we can see because of the Covid 19 Pandemic. In addition, I'd like to acknowledge and thank them for their quick and effective work in developing new resources and practice guidance documents to relieve some uncertainties for caregivers and the children and youth placed in their care.

The AFKA staff continue to work from home for the most part, although there are days when we need to go into the office to do work that can't be done from home. I am pleased to say that things are running smoothly and the work is getting done. A big thank you to my staff for the way you have rallied to provide the supports to our members through this challenging time.

Training for new and current CAST Representatives is being revised based on updates to the Ministry's Policies and Practice Guidelines with regards to Assessment of Caregiver Concerns. Once this training is updated, there will be a push for recruitment across the province for additional CAST Representatives. If you, or someone you know, is interested in supporting our CAST Program as a Representative, please fill out the form online at <https://www.afkaonline.ca/programs/caregiver-allegations-support-team-cast/i-want-to-become-a-cast-representative/>.

We are planning virtual events to replace the Indigenous Cultural Teachings Weekend that we have traditionally held annually at our Brownell Children's Retreat. Although we are unable to have this event in person due to the Covid 19 restrictions, the AFKA is planning multiple virtual events throughout the year. We believe this will give all caregivers the opportunity to participate in workshops highlighting Indigenous cultural through storytelling, crafts and games. Our first event will be offered on March 25, 2021 and will be an evening of Song and Creation Stories by Mackenzie Brown.

The AFKA has been busy in this first part of 2021 with the Provincial Mentorship Program. We have been focusing on recruiting Mentors to ensure we have the capacity as a program to support caregivers from across the province. We have recently met with the Leadership Team in Edmonton to discuss how we can work together to support access to the program, particularly for all new foster and kinship caregivers. We will be looking at setting up future meetings through other parts of the province to discuss how we can all effectively work together.

We have started to see the benefits of our efforts with incoming mentor and mentee applications. We are looking forward to positive growth and positive program experiences for all. Over the past few months, we have sent out program information to contacts identified for information sharing in all regions and agency providers. We encourage anyone who would like to discuss the program, would like to request program resources i.e.: brochures etc., or would like to request more information on becoming a program Mentor or Mentee, to contact Amey Carey, Provincial Mentorship Coordinator at amey@afkaonline.ca or 780-701-4088. The Mentorship program, including online mentor/mentee applications and program referrals, can be accessed on our website at: <https://www.afkaonline.ca/programs/mentorship/> .

Through feedback from mentors, mentees and program meetings, it was identified that some group mentoring options may be valuable to caregivers. We are looking at some new virtual options for Mentorship where a long-term commitment would not be required, a “Mentorship Hour” led by AFKA Mentors, as well as some small group ongoing mentorship sessions. These are in the early stages, and we will have more to report soon. Watch your email for updates as we roll out these exciting new opportunities!

The AFKA has developed a new virtual brochure that speaks to all of the AFKA programs and services. If you would like to access this document, you can download the .PDF from our website at: <https://www.afkaonline.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/AFKA-Promo-Document-Jan-2021.pdf>

We have completed updates and improvements to our website this past quarter. We have updated our resources pages with some valuable resources and links, so be sure to check them out.

I would like to extend a big WELCOME to all of our 2021 Members and extend a thank you for your membership; not only does it give you access to AFKA programs and services, and some great perks, but the larger our membership is, the stronger our voice! Thank you for being a part or strengthening our voice for foster and kinship caregivers across Alberta.

A reminder that AFKA Board Member contact information and board vacancy information can be found on our website at: <https://www.afkaonline.ca/contact/board-of-directors/>. Please reach out anytime to your AFKA board representative in your region, they'd love to hear from you!

Regional and Local Association information and President contact information can be found on our site at: <https://www.afkaonline.ca/contact/district-assoc-presidents/> . Give them a call or send an email to learn how you can get involved in your area with your Association/Regional Council. We are excited to welcome a new President on for the Wainwright/Lloydminster FPA, Jana Treen! Welcome, Jana, we look forward to working with you.

We are working on making some improvements to our “Become A Caregiver” page of our website to include more information for prospective caregivers, including links to Agency providers across the province. This is a small but important step we are taking in working collaboratively with Children’s Services and Agency providers.

A reminder that we are now accepting AFKA Bursary Applications. Program details and application packages can be accessed on our website at: <https://www.afkaonline.ca/programs/bursary/> . The deadline for applications is June 1, 2021.

In case you are not aware, there is now a place, on our webpage, for caregivers to send in a request for support from the AFKA; we handle these requests as they come in. We have received a number of requests and are happy to see that our efforts to reach caregivers is working. If you wish to request one-on-one support from the AFKA, you can do so by submitting a form at: <https://www.afkaonline.ca/general/request-for-one-on-one-support/>

In closing, I wish you all the best for a Spring filled with sunshine and happiness. Please feel free to contact me at any time at 780-970-2372 or drop by the office to say hello. I look forward to hearing from you.

B. DIRECTOR REPORTS

DIRECTOR – TREATY 8

Carly Morton

With Spring right around the corner, this is a time for growth and renewal. This is my favorite season!

During this past quarter, I have had the opportunity to attend a number of meetings with and representing the AFKA; sadly, they have all been through Zoom. The Board of Directors, Presidents and staff of the AFKA have all been able to meet. This gives us the opportunity to share our accomplishments and struggles we are working with in our regions. I have learned of the similarities and differences from each region.

I am continuing to learn more about Treaty 8; I am working on updating all the Nations, Settlements and agencies information, and the persons responsible for each portfolio.

I have also attended the Kinship Care Linkages quarterly meetings within the Edmonton region. I had the opportunity to become the treasurer for the Capital Region Caregivers Council (CRCC). I am excited to learn more about these groups.

I would like to thank all of the kinship and foster families again for your dedication, strength and love to our children during these trying times with Covid. You are all amazing!

Thank you,

Carly

DIRECTOR – SOUTH REGION

Marlin Meyer

I trust all are doing the best they can in these crazy times we are living in. As spring is now here, I urge all to get outside and enjoy the sunshine and fresh air. Put down the iPads and let's enjoy the outdoors. At least you don't have to wear a mask in the park!

The province is still in lockdown so not much is happening in the South.

In the past weeks I have spoken to the Presidents' of both the Medicine Hat and Lethbridge Societies and both are anxious to get out and start having activities for our Caregivers and kids. It has been over a year now since anyone was able to hold a real gathering. Zoom activities don't cut it!

Both the Presidents have met virtually with the Presidents of the rest of the Regions Association and Societies, more than once, since the beginning of the year. This has been the same for the Board of Directors.

DIRECTOR – CALGARY REGION

Monique McCardle

As we enter year 2 of the Covid pandemic we are all getting quite used to the new normal; our region has seen many changes in how we interact with one another. We are all way more comfortable with meeting virtually, online grocery shopping and curbside pickups! We are looking forward to seeing restrictions ease over the next couple of months and hopefully resume our regular in person events to support our Kinship and foster caregivers.

A new initiative started this year is our Fireside virtual meet ups; we are hosting a monthly virtual supplemental training group that is gaining in popularity each month. Our last couple of topics has covered FASD, loss and grief, and maintaining bio family connections. We look forward to our ask the expert panel April 8th @ 7, check out fostercalgary.com for more information.

In partnership with our monthly virtual group we are adding to our FosterTalks prerecorded training session in the coming year. Look forward to seeing experts share their wisdom on all topics relevant to caregivers.

The CFPA has also relocated Marie's Boutique, a gently used children's clothing exchange that supports caregivers with clothing for ages newborn to teen. It is open by appointment only to keep in line with covid restrictions.

This year has stretched us in new directions and we look forward to exploring new ways to continue connection with our region's caregivers.

DIRECTOR – CENTRAL REGION

Paulette McArthur

Not yet submitted

DIRECTOR – EDMONTON REGION

Linda Krauskopf

Due to COVID things have been slow, but hopefully we will get back on track as everyone is beginning to get their shots. I for one am really looking forward to face to face interaction, but until then the CRCC are planning on doing some zoom meetings such as informal meetings. Hopefully we will be starting in the next couple of weeks.

The AFKA will hopefully be getting back to normal as well with face to face meetings and staff back in the office. Look for some zoom training from the AFKA, you can look on the website for great training and information that's coming out.

I have still been attending linkages once every second month and kinship care every second month via zoom to make sure that we are up date and to make sure I have all the up to date information on the region.

I meet four times a year with upper management for our region to have input into what it is happening and concerns in our region. They inform us of what is coming up and what is happening within our region, the information will be put on the CRCC's website.

I know that one of the hot topics in the region is private guardianship, and we are either looking to conduct a zoom meeting or find more information on the topic to become more knowledgeable, so if you have any concerns or questions you can send them to me.

If you need any information or any help please feel free to contact me at:

Phone: 780-940-4465

or

Email: paulind@shaw.ca

Linda Krauskopf

ACTING DIRECTOR – NORTH REGION

Terri Forseille

It's so good to see the snow melting, soon it will all be gone. It will sure be nice to be outside enjoying the sun. Hope all is well for you and your families in this challenging time.

In our North Region I've been fortunate to be a part of the setup of the Northern Alberta Caregiver Committee (NACC). Watch for updates to come from the committee.

The West and Central streams have Council meetings coming up on the following dates. West Council April 13th, 2021 contact Andrea Kolodychuk for more information. Central Council will hold elections for President and Treasurer April 16th, 2021 contact Stephanie French for more information. All caregivers are welcome and encouraged to attend.

March 23rd we had our first North Zone Caregivers Support Zoom. There were 17 caregivers in attendance. It was wonderful to see some familiar faces as well as to meet some new people. We had some great discussions, it was wonderful to connect with other caregivers. We set 2 dates for the next meeting, May 26th @ 7:30pm and June 1st @ 9:30am. We would love for you to join us.

May you have much good fortune planting your garden, flowers or just enjoying the outdoors in the coming months. I know my family is so looking forward to this after the long winter.