



AFKA Board Reports

REPORTING PERIOD: JANUARY 1 – MARCH 31, 2022

ALBERTA FOSTER AND KINSHIP ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY REPORTS

REPORTING PERIOD: January 1 – March 31, 2022

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

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A. EXECUTIVE REPORTS

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Sylvia Thompson

Welcome to spring!

Many thanks to Melissa and her team for the regular updates that go out. These include monthly AFKA updates, highlights of the board meetings and board updates. These will keep everyone informed of what we are doing. Information goes out regularly about the training opportunities that are being offered through our office. I am impressed with the topics being offered.

Many exciting opportunities for providing feedback are being requested by surveys that are being sent out to membership. Input from these surveys is vital for the conversations we are having with the Ministry. We can present better, more detailed information with your help. This will benefit all. Please take the time to fill out the surveys so we have your input.

Thank you to those who joined us on March 12th to bid farewell to our camp. We had a great time reminiscing about all the great years we have had there. Talking about our kids' camps, our Indigenous training weekends, volunteer get togethers, work bees and many other functions, really pointed out to us what a great, amazing group of people foster and kinship families really are. We all agreed that we need to find a way to continue the sense of family that was created. Many have volunteered in many ways to keep the camp in the excellent condition it is in. Again, thank you all so much. Also, a big thank you to Margaret Lachance for bringing and sharing pictures of camp and events beginning in 2006. They were awesome to see.

The current conference committee has met to start the planning for the 2022 AFKA Annual Training Conference and Awards Banquet. The event will be hosted in Jasper, AB from Oct 27 – 30, 2022, so save the date. We look forward to having our award winners join us. We will keep our fingers crossed that we have no unforeseen things come up.

The AFKA is setting up a committee to update our Organizational Handbook, which is used to help those interested in starting a local association. Local associations are one of the foundations of the AFKA. They are vital for gathering information about the needs of our caregivers. If you are interested in forming one, please give us a call.

Again.... Thank you for everything you do. Our world would not be what it is without you.

Sylvia Thompson

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Rene Rajotte

In my last report I remember saying that the beautiful weather we had up to the first part of December was really going to shorten our winter. Well that ended shortly! The week the kids were out of school for Christmas and into the middle of January we saw temperatures drop to -30 to -40 degrees, tough to be outside to enjoy winter. Well, it's finally nice to see the days getting longer and I think we are really going to enjoy spring.

Much has changed for the lease/sale of the camp. We were very close to having a lease agreement done when we received an offer to purchase the camp that put the lease on hold. With the first offer not moving forward we received a second offer that we are moving forward with at this time, with a closing date around the 25 of March.

The AFKA is planning a farewell get-together on March 12 out at the Brownell Children's Retreat. I look forward to seeing many of you out there.

I would like to thank Melissa and her team at the office for all that they do for all of us, thank you.

I would also like to thank all of you that work so hard for making a difference in the lives of children, especially in the past couple of years, thank you. All the best in the days and weeks to come.

All the best,

Rene Rajotte

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Melissa Jones

My team and I have been extremely busy! We have been spending the last few months renewing connections, establishing new relationships, gathering information from our membership through surveys and conversations, and planning some exciting things moving forward. Our biggest goal, at this point in time, is to gather as much information as we can from our membership to help us in planning new ways to support you through programs, training, and other forms of regular communication.

It is also my goal to provide you with updates from our regular meetings with the Ministry staff that support our association in order to support you, Alberta's foster and kinship caregivers. I hope you find the information helpful; the amount of information shared will only be dependent on what is happening at that point in time and how much information there is to share.

A few updates I'd like to share for the last couple of months are as follows:

- Conversations are happening between AFKA and various Ministry staff regarding the increase cost of living, challenges with availability of training for some caregivers, special rates, support plans, home inspections/environmental checklists, Assessment of Care Concerns process and support, administrative reviews and appeals process and support, and methods of resolution support. As policies and practice supports are updated, we will share those with you and be available for conversations about the benefits, challenges and potential impacts of these for you. In addition, the need for caregiver connection and in-person engagement is being discussed; we are trying to negotiate ways to make it possible for regional associations to host activities for caregivers as a way to connect and build relationships to support one another.
- AFKA Bursary applications will be available online this week; watch for the link and information shared through our email, website and social media platforms
- Planning for our 2022 Training Conference and Awards Banquet is underway; dates for this event will be October 27-30, 2022. Registration will be online and membership will be notified as soon as it is open.
- We are hosting a "Family Fun" art contest for children and youth of foster and kinship caregivers! Watch for more information being share about this in the next couple weeks.
- We are beginning to plan our first virtual focus group session with our membership; more information on this in the next month.
- Information regarding online submissions for the AFKA 2022 Awards will be shared in the near future

- The AFKA's Wellness Blog will be presented weekly in the near future, with submissions from the AFKA team who support you through programming, referrals, and training ... and bring a unique perspective to the voice they wish to share with you
- We have some wonderful training coming your way, through virtual sessions provided by the AFKA. We've had some really great feedback for the sessions provided thus far; we look forward to bringing more practical and thought provoking workshops to you. Please feel free to share any topics or trainers you've experienced and would like us to consider in the future!
- We have been collecting data from the membership, using that data to guide our decisions, and sharing relevant information with stakeholders and Ministry staff. Many thanks to those of you who took the time to complete the surveys, often only consuming 1-3 minutes. Your feedback is valuable and is being used in all we are doing. We share these surveys, as well as training events through our email distribution list and social media platforms.

Updates for Surveys:

Supports for Caregivers - We presented options to the membership about potential training and support for caregivers through a pilot partnership with Little Warriors. The feedback we received highlighted a large interest in providing the supports suggested, as well as additional possible themes/supports moving forward. These themes and ideas for support will be considered in the future. As a result of the survey feedback and interest level, we now have the AFKA and Little Warriors Caregiver Support Program Pilot running for the next few months. We have caregivers who have signed up for the Be Brave Bridge Program Pilot, the weekly Caregiver Support Groups (theme based), and will have two future training sessions developed for registration in the near future. All these activities are trauma-informed, practical support and guidance with relevant issues and suggestions caregivers can relate to, with a focus on the caregiver. Watch for registration links for the caregiver support groups and the additional workshops through our email distribution, social media platforms, and AFKA website. Based on feedback from these activities, we will be able to see if they are viable to continue in moving forward after the pilot. Therefore, if you participate in any of these activities, your feedback will be very value!

Injury Prevention Education - The Injury Prevention Centre, University of Alberta, approached our association for feedback regarding possible safety topics of interest to foster and kinship caregivers. Thank you to those of you who responded to this survey. It was a survey designed to give ideas to the Injury Prevention Centre team to assist them in developing information for sharing with parents and caregivers through posters, fact sheets, social media posts, etc. All the data we received from you, including additional ideas, was shared with this team. We have already been provided with draft versions of the information they'd like to develop; we will share these through our social media platforms

once they are complete and ready for sharing. We are excited to be seen as an important contributor to other organizations supporting families and children.

Foster and Kinship Caregiver Cost of Living Feedback Requested - This survey was created and sent to our membership, to assist in identifying extraordinary expenses experienced during this point in time for foster and kinship caregivers. We asked this question as we needed some concrete data from our membership to take to the Ministry when highlighting this issue. There was a great response from this survey, with the majority of responses referring to significant increases in fuel, utilities, and groceries. The results from this survey were combined and put into a request to the Ministry for discussion. I am hoping to have some more information to share with you in the next reporting period. Thank you so much to all of you who participated in this survey; your voice and experience is important in the AFKA trying to present needs with the Ministry.

I attended a collaborative meeting this last month with Executive Directors from other provincial associations across Canada. It was very enlightening to see the concerns and needs of foster and kinship caregivers are very similar in each province, however how the associations function is quite varied based on resources and relationships. We are very fortunate to have a great team, Board of Directors, and collaborative relationship with our Ministry, department and agency teams. I look forward to continuing to build on these relationships in working together to do what's best for kids and families in Alberta. We focus on what we can do and continue to have necessary conversations with Ministry, department, and agency staff to ensure our caregivers' voices are heard and that we are able to support our membership to the best of our ability.

New information regarding Alberta PRIDE Training (ie. registration procedures and listing of courses) has been released, with more information to come. For the information we have received to date, please visit the following link:

<https://www.afkaonline.ca/afka-training/>

Watch for more information updates, surveys, and focus groups to come your way from us! We truly appreciate your input and feedback, as we want to ensure we are supporting you in the best way we are able to.

Wishing you all the best,

Melissa Jones, BEd, MEd, CPC
Executive Director

B. DIRECTOR REPORTS

DIRECTOR – TREATY 7

JANET DELORME

Nothing to Report

DIRECTOR – TREATY 8

CARLY MORTON

Greetings and Happy Spring! I hope you and your family are enjoying the warm weather. With restrictions starting to lift, it feels like this spring is warmer and more energizing. As the Director for Treaty 8 with the Alberta Foster and Kinship Association, I have had the privilege of working with Nations and Settlements within the traditional lands. I have also had the opportunity to meet and learn what the different agencies within the urban centers, and how they can support our children in care.

During this quarter, I have attended meetings with the AFKA board, staff, presidents and other stakeholders. With the goal of continuing work with kinship and foster parents, along with other stakeholders and putting the interests of our children at the forefront. I look forward to reaching out more the Nations and Settlements within Treaty 8 and working with the pivotal caregivers who are raising our Indigenous children. I am also excited to learn how the many Nations will be celebrating Treaty Days, over the next few months. It is a strong belief within the Indigenous culture that it takes a community to raise a child. I know working together with all involved will we continue to support families within our province. Once again, I would like to thank all Kinship and Foster families for being the roots and stability to our children during the trying times over the past two years.

Masi chok (thank you) Carly.

DIRECTOR – CALGARY REGION

Monique McCardle

2022 began with a change in membership fees for our association. We are no longer charging a fee to become a member but are charging a nominal amount to register to attend each of our monthly events. This will help ensure those who register are committed to attending.

Our board of directors is currently looking to fill one director space as Christina Hernandez has stepped down. Thanks Christina for all your hard work in this position. CFPA President Joanna Busse's term is complete in June and she will not be putting her name forward for another term, please contact anyone on the CFPA board if you are interested in putting your name forward for either of these roles.

It's been a busy winter season for the CFPA. Our events committee has completed the first event since covid put a pause on everything. Our February event was a successful movie afternoon. We're looking forward to hosting Norquay snow tubing March 19 and Hide and Seek indoor playground April 20. Stay tuned for a list of future events.

FosterTalks has hosted spectacular podcasts and a fireside virtual chats in January and February that are available on <https://fostertalks.com/> to view at your leisure. January featured Maya Coleman on building family connections and February hosted Terra Bovingdon sharing strategies on balancing fostering while parenting bio children. Join us for our March episode as we feature Peter Choate sharing his knowledge on understanding FASD.

We're all looking forward to connecting again in person!

DIRECTOR – Central REGION

Heather Guard

Not yet submitted

DIRECTOR – EDMONTON REGION

Linda Krauskopf

It appears we are back to normal, or as normal as we can get. Now the war in the Ukraine will be affecting us in the Foster/Kinship families in some other ways, price of food and gas are just some of those things. But as we always do, we will make due and do what needs to be done for our families.

We finally have training and a new training format. Bill C92 is changing how we foster/kinship. But as Foster/Kinship Families, we will find ways to work with the system to make sure the outcome is the best for the child. Hopefully make it work with the system.

CRCC met with Joan Conibear and we talked about what COVID has done to Foster/Kinship Families and also to the system with shortages in workers. Joan is hoping to have some new hires, and workers coming back from medical leave, so they can get back to normal workloads.

Start thinking about Social Workers, Foster/Kinship Families of the year. Submissions will be online through the AFKA webpage, sent directly to staff at the AFKA office. Watch for that information in the near future.

As I write this report, we have 14 foster/kinship families coming for a get-together. We are meeting in Morinville at the Bistro for supper in a private room. Hope to get some ideas and support from everyone. We plan and hope to do this more, as I for one do think we need support from each other more than the system, as we are in the front lines.

So hope you all have a happy Easter and hoping the war ends soon.

NORTH REGION

North Regions Associate Report – East Stream

Bev Towe

The caregivers in the east stream can call or email, more than willing to chat about any questions/concerns or thoughts you have. Please reach out, here to help support you through the caregiving journey.

East stream caregiver support are trying to get groups up and running. Please email bev.towe@hotmail.com or call 780-207-1041, if you want to help set up support group in the north east stream or just become a part of the group.

Respectfully,

Bev Towe

North Regions Associate Report – West Stream

Terri Forseille

Not yet submitted