



# AFKA Board Reports

REPORTING PERIOD: APRIL 1 – JUNE 30, 2022

# ALBERTA FOSTER AND KINSHIP ASSOCIATION

## QUARTERLY REPORTS

**REPORTING PERIOD: April 1 – June 30, 2022**

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

### B. DIRECTOR REPORTS

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2. CALGARY REGION..... MONIQUE MCCARDLE
3. CENTRAL REGION..... SAMARA STONEHOCKER
4. EDMONTON REGION.....LINDA KRAUSKOPF
5. NORTH REGION ..... PATRICIA MENSINK
6. NORTH REGION – ASSOCIATE: EAST STREAM .....BEV TOWE
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# **A. EXECUTIVE REPORTS**

## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

**Sylvia Thompson**

I would like to start by saying I am greatly anticipating the continued work of the AFKA, as well as newly developed supports for all our caregivers. Teamwork is a desired state; in our field it takes all of us to be successful.

Our provincial association is designed to take our direction from the grassroots. For this to happen, foster and kinship caregivers' express concerns, issues and successes to their district association president or a spokesperson. The information is then taken to the regional association of all the district representatives. The region has a director, who is chosen by the region, that attends the AFKA Board meeting and brings their information forward. When it is determined that it is a provincial matter, it is taken forward to the ministry. Discussions take place and ideas for solutions are determined. As you can see, everyone has a role to play in these pieces of communication and advocacy. Sounds easy and should work well, however, it requires effort on all our parts within local/regional associations, AFKA Board of Directors, and the caregiver communities across the province.

Your provincial association, the AFKA, needs the data, issues, and trends to come to the provincial association to then be presented to the ministry. That information can be collected by the AFKA but is more impactful when gathered from the local and regional levels of associations. Local association meetings are a great place to gather and share information, strategies and just chat with someone who gets it; they offer support to help you on your journey. I know foster and kinship parents are busy people, as are those who are supporting through the local association councils. Remember though, this type of support and advocacy is only possible when you take the time to communicate, as well as when another busy foster or kinship caregiver has taken on this role at the local and provincial levels, requiring time and effort on their part, to help make things easier and better for you. All those individuals working hard to share your experience and concerns believe in you and what you do as a foster or kinship caregiver and understand what you are experiencing.

To maintain enthusiasm, we ask everyone to play a part. When only a couple people show up to local association meetings or events, it is difficult to advocate for a provincial outcome without interaction. With more engagement at the local and regional levels, more information is shared at the provincial level which makes helping caregivers provincially more meaningful and

effective. Thank you to those of you who do participate regularly; your participation is helpful in informing where support is required and affirm the belief that we learn from each other.

The AFKA is an organization able to provide support programs through Grant applications. While we do have outcomes to meet, these are best developed and delivered with membership input. Interaction with our membership will help in having a stronger voice to advocate on behalf of Alberta's foster and kinship caregivers. Please consider becoming involved, you can find the membership application on our website at [www.afkaonline.ca/membership](http://www.afkaonline.ca/membership). Membership is free to all Alberta licensed and approved homes foster and kinship homes.

I would like to say a big "Thank You" to the members, Presidents and AFKA Board Directors who take the time and make the effort to be involved; your participation is greatly appreciated and valued. We are all working toward a more informed and accountable organization. With your involvement, we will be successful.

Sylvia Thompson

## **VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

**Rene Rajotte**

As I am writing this, I am outside enjoying the smells of trees blooming and sounds of birds singing. We are truly blessed to be able to enjoy such beauty.

I would like to start by congratulating and welcoming our two new Board members: Patricia Mensink and Samara Stonehocker, I look forward to working with them.

Casinos have started back up again, and I will be chair for the casino committee, for now. We need others to be on the committee as well. If you'd like to assist, you don't have to be on the board to be on the committee. We also need other volunteers to help at the Casinos. Anyone interested in being on the committee or volunteering to help, please call me at 780 842 7324 or call the AFKA office. This will be the first time for me being involved in the casino, let alone chair it, so it will be a learning experience for me. The dates for our upcoming Casino are August 15 and 16, 2022, in Calgary. I hope to see you there.

Keep up the great work that you do and enjoy your summer!

Rene Rajotte

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

**Melissa Jones**

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

The AFKA and Align met with the Caregiver Supports Unit within the Ministry of Children's Services on April 20, 2022, to discuss the situation for caregivers regarding extraordinary expenses. A briefing note was provided to this Ministry team in March 2022 to share the data gathered from our member survey. We had a good discussion with the team regarding the issues and our thoughts for potential future support. Unfortunately, no clear answers or direction were provided to us, nor was there a commitment with a time frame to follow up with additional information from that team for our caregivers. The team had stated they wanted to try to fully understand what is happening in the regions, as the Ministry is going through a number of reviews and will be able to use the information provided through the briefing note as helpful input into those reviews. They agreed to take the information we shared to the Regional Directors with a goal to see what is happening regionally and to provide further communication, as needed, to regional staff. The AFKA and Align have also requested further discussions for negotiating basic maintenance increases for caregivers. We will continue to update our membership as information is provided.

On June 6, 2022, with respect to our ongoing discussions with the Ministry regarding increases to cost of living, we have been notified these concerns have been heard and understood and are being addressed with the Regional Directors. Continued conversations will be had as to how caregivers can request and receive additional supports to assist through these financial challenges. I commit to sharing updates with you as soon as I have some concrete information to share. There have been questions raised at the Ministry level regarding mileage rates. To clarify, the increase seen by some were at the Federal level of government, not the provincial level. The government of Alberta did not receive an increase in mileage rates and, therefore, remain the same for staff and for caregivers.

The provincial review of caregiver supports has been paused. The Ministry unit responsible for this project has decided there needs to be a more robust look at these supports, more so than originally thought. As more clarity regarding this review and how caregivers can share their knowledge and concerns, updates will be shared by myself with the AFKA membership. Other partners (ie. departments, agencies and DFNAs) will also provide that information to their caregivers, so we can do our best to have all informed of this opportunity for input.

The AFKA has been in discussions with the Adoption Unit within Children's Services. We had "door opening" conversations around the apparent disconnect of programming/practice of Supports for Permanency (ie. SFP) and other service providers that support adoptive caregivers and their children/youth. Conversations continued from this new relationship to invite the AFKA, regional council Presidents, and Agency leaders to participate in some focused group discussions around SFP as there is movement toward improving and updating the policies and practice guidelines. A great deal of information was shared regarding what was working well within the practice across the

province, what the challenges were from all parties in attendance, specific stories of concerns from the caregivers, and sharing of the hopes for how this support could ideally look moving forward. I'm hoping to have more information about the results of this discussion and how the information is being rolled into the policies and practice guidelines being developed to ultimately provide more clarity and consistency across the province.

The AFKA will be scheduling networking sessions with some of the regions over the next year. We look forward to meeting with caregivers and CFS staff to have some focused discussions and share information about local and regional associations. We have made some tentative plans to start with networking sessions in the South Region, hoping to also work collaboratively in their caregiver events with the department, agencies, and DFNAs moving forward. We look forward to meeting with caregivers, as well as CFS, DFNA and Agency staff in that region to have some focused discussions and share information about local and regional associations.

The AFKA Bursary will be awarded to 5 recipients this year: 3 bio youth of foster/kinship caregivers and 2 youth in care living with foster/kinship caregivers. The passion and commitment they show in their applications for the industries they wish to work in is very enlightening to see. I'm pleased we are able to support these youth in their future endeavours.

The AFKA Award Nominations have been available online for submission from each region for each category. We have received a number of nominations across the province, which we will review with the AFKA Awards Committee in July 2022. Award winners will be chosen at the end of July 2022 and notified shortly after to enable those individuals to register and participate in our annual Conference and Awards Banquet.

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 aiming for online access to registration packages by the first week of August 2022. The AFKA Board of Directors and staff will be engaging in the first of two days of strategic planning with a contracted consultant, happening prior to the start of the conference in Jasper on Wednesday, October 26, 2022. We, the staff, are looking forward to working with the Board and being able to contribute to the development of goals and plans moving forward with the information we can bring to the discussion.

Our Caregiver Supports Pilot, in partnership with Little Warriors, is near completion. Once we have a summary of information from the feedback provided by participants, we will look at the feasibility of offering pieces of the pilot to caregivers moving forward.

June is National Indigenous History Month and a great opportunity to recognize, honour and share the rich history, achievements and cultures of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in Canada. We are continually striving to learn more, understand better, and connect and build relationships with our Indigenous communities, colleagues, families, and organizations. To support the cultural lessons and engagement in activities, the AFKA is sharing events as they become aware of them through our social media and email distribution list to members. We will continue to share these events throughout the year, provide training and event opportunities for caregivers provincially, and continue to educate ourselves through various modes of learning in order to increase our own level

of understanding and commitment to reconciliation.

I would like to thank my whole team at the AFKA (ie. Shelly, Cassandra, Amey, Yvonne, and Rolly) for the support they have given and additional commitment to helping our association evolve into what it is becoming. We have a wonderful team, with great expertise and knowledge, that is only continuing to grow! I am pleased to announce we have two new team members with the AFKA, both providing support to our caregivers as Foster/Kinship Caregiver Advocates. This is a very important new role within our association, one that has been developed out of feedback from our volunteers, membership, caregivers, Board of Directors, local/district association Presidents, and AFKA staff.

Welcome to our team, Bo Antal ([Kinship Caregiver Advocate](#)) and Stacy van Cingel ([Foster Caregiver Advocate](#))! We are so pleased and excited to have these individuals join our team. They both bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to these roles, which will be important as they support and advocate for caregivers across our province through various situations, such as systemic navigational concerns, resolution support, and CAST (direct support through allegations/Assessment of Care Concerns). We have begun connecting these team members with the PCR teams across the province, as well as notifying Ministry, department, agency, and DFNA leadership about the additions to our team and level of support they will be able to provide for caregivers.

Our CAST program will continue to exist; however, it will look a little different in how the team supports caregivers with the two caregiver advocates and our CAST volunteers. I would also like to extend a deep gratitude of thanks to the volunteers who have supported our CAST Program for many years as CAST Representatives. Your time and commitment to supporting caregivers has been so appreciated, not only by the AFKA, but by the caregivers themselves. Although these volunteers will no longer support caregivers directly through the Assessment of Care Concerns process, their expertise and deep empathy for caregivers will be very beneficial in their new roles as CAST Mentors. This role has evolved to extend the support to caregivers after these assessments, providing a unique level of mentorship support when caregivers in these situations need someone who understands the process, loss, and grief they have just experienced and to support them in moving forward in their roles as caregivers. Thank you to all of you!

Along with changes in our AFKA team, we also have some changes occurring within the regional councils for caregivers. At this particular time, we would like to welcome: Bernie French as the new President of the Central Alberta Caregiver Council, Samara Stonehocker as the AFKA Board Director for Central Region, and Patricia Mensink as the AFKA Board Director for the North Region. We look forward to these new working relationships. Being involved within your local or regional associations provides you with an opportunity to not only network with other caregivers, but to have your stories heard and to receive support at a regional level.

Thank you to everyone for your continued commitment, drive, and support to doing the best we can within our capacity to support foster and kinship caregivers across Alberta. Enjoy the rest of the summer!

## **B. DIRECTOR REPORTS**

### **DIRECTOR – TREATY 8**

**CARLY MORTON**

Happy Summer! With the school year ending and all the restrictions lifted, it will be nice to get back to a normal way of life. This includes family gatherings, travel and socializing, something we could all use.

This is my second year as Director for Treaty 8 with the Alberta Foster and Kinship Association. I have had the privilege to meet and learn from the other Directors, Presidents, staff at the AFKA office, stakeholders, and families. The overall tone that I have heard and seen is putting our kinship and foster children's needs first.

During this quarter, I have attended meetings with the AFKA board, staff, presidents, and other stakeholders. I have also been able to attend several of the amazing classes offered online by the AFKA, these classes have helped me as a parent and as a Board Member.

I will continue to reach out to the Nations and Settlements within Treaty 8 and working with the pivotal caregivers who are raising our Indigenous children. I am also excited to hear of all the adventures our families will have over the summer.

Once again, I would like to thank all Kinship and Foster families for being the roots and stability to our children in care.

Masi chok (thank you)

Carly

### **DIRECTOR – CALGARY REGION**

**Monique McCardle**

Not yet submitted



## **DIRECTOR – CENTRAL REGION**

### **Samara Stonehocker**

It seems June has crept up on us! Where did February go?? I'd like to start with a thank you to our AFKA Board Director of the last year, Heather Guard. The Central Alberta Caregiver Council (CACC) is grateful that you stepped into the role when our previous Director retired from fostering.

In CACC news, just before this reporting period, we held a supplemental training day in Ponoka, AB. We had good attendance, there were four courses offered: First Aid, Caregiving with the Virtues Project, Life Hacks for large families, and Getting the Most Out of Success in School Meetings. Lunch was served and all sorts of networking happened after a LONG time apart. Thank you to all that attend and supported the hard work of the CACC!

In April, the CACC held a quick zoom meeting to discuss the outcomes of the President and AFKA meeting in Edmonton, as well as the upcoming AGM in May. May 14<sup>th</sup>, the CACC held a caregiver BBQ and AGM in Ponoka. Many thanks to Bernie and Deanna French for the food prep, Jeff Stonehocker for BBQing our burgers, and Amanda and Tom Scott for the last-minute errand runs. It was such awesome weather that we pulled our chairs outside to eat and visit. We ended up with 12 caregivers in attendance and one more joined via zoom for our annual general meeting.

Big changes have come about in our little CACC! After 10 plus years as a Regional President, I accepted the nomination to the AFKA Board representative position on the CACC. Bernie French accepted the nomination to the role of president, and Deanna French accepted the nomination for the position as secretary. Staying on, we have Amanda Scott as vice president, and Sammantha Reinhardt as treasurer and event coordinator. Huge thanks go to Betty Dyck as she leaves the secretary position. Central region has had an incredible CACC executive for many years, and this crew will be just as magnificent in advocating and supporting the caregivers in our region.

The CACC will be holding one last monthly zoom meeting before summer. Meetings will resume in September after everyone has had a couple months off to enjoy their family and friends. CACC meetings are always open to any caregiver in central region to attend, either in person or via zoom. Any caregiver within the region is encouraged to connect with their local. There is such a renewal of energy as roles change and everyone regroups!

The new CACC executive has fantastic goals for this upcoming year. The focus being on rejuvenating relationships in the local association areas. There are some vacancies in the local associations across our region, this leaves many caregivers less supported and disconnected from their peers. The CACC will be working hard to find people willing to fill those roles and will support all caregivers to the best of their ability until those positions are filled. Another focus for the CACC, as well as myself, is to reconnect with regional management and build relationships with the new faces in the offices. Covid and office closures did not make it easy to stay connected, but it will happen again!

As the AFKA representative on the CACC, as a Director on the AFKA Board, I hope to learn the ropes quickly, so I can carry messages forward from central region caregivers to the AFKA and in turn the province. Advocacy, growth, and making the best use of our time, energy, and resources, are

important to me as we work toward bettering caregiving experiences for all. I look forward to being a part of the board and working alongside other caregivers with similar passions.

Cheers to a fantastic summer for all, soak up the sun, take every opportunity to connect with the people in your life, kids, friends, family, neighbors, and co-workers, the world needs connection. Be someone's reason to smile today, it'll feel good.

## **DIRECTOR – EDMONTON REGION**

**Linda Krauskopf**

In the last couple of months COVID is still causing us trouble, so we are taking it slow with face-to-face meetings. We did get together in Morinville with about 13 people showing up, everyone stated that it was much needed. They have all had enough of COVID ruling their lives. When we left, everyone was asking when is the next one and where. We plan on having them in different venues around the Edmonton area.

We still are meeting with Joan Conibear about every four months. At these meetings we get up-to-date information from ministry. Look for information on our Facebook page. Also, anything that comes down from the AFKA, please feel free to ask any question on this page. Hopefully someone will be able to help in some way.

Crystal Arcand is putting up any information she has around any indigenous activities around the province. Great information please keep it up Crystal!

Challenges that we have heard from caregivers:

- Appeals not having a set date for updates. We have 30 days from outcome, but they can keep asking for a new date. Where do we go and to who do we talk to about this?
- Who and where can we go when they will not answer calls, and when they are not following Policy and Procedure?
- What do they mean when they say what is the best interest of the child, Foster and Kinship Parents would like to know what the answer is?

Future goals are getting together to come up with some ideas to help us in the Fostering and Kinship path. We should listen more to what the needs are and try to come up with a solution everyone feels good with!

## **DIRECTOR - NORTH REGION**

**Patricia Mensink**

My name is Patricia Mensink. I am your newly elected AFKA Board of Director for the North Central Region. The North has been a busy place! Regular meetings take place monthly with both the Northern Alberta Caregiver Council (NACC) and the Caregiver Connection group.

The next NACC meeting is on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2022, at 8:30 am, followed by the Central Stream meeting at 10:30 am. July 12<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 am and 8:00 pm are the Caregiver Connection sessions. All caregivers are encouraged to attend both the Central Stream meeting and Caregiver Connection.

Elections were held in June: Stephanie Larsen-Maslanka remains President, Marianne Ambleton remains Vice President, Clinton Maslanka remains secretary with the additional role of treasurer, and Patricia Mensink was elected to Board of Director.

Both challenges and successes have been experienced in similar ways regarding communication, transitioning of children and caregiver support.

I'd love to hear from you! If you have any ideas, concerns, or bouquets you would like me to bring forward, please contact me either by email or text.

Have a safe and enjoyable summer!

Patricia Mensink

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

**Bev Towe**

Not yet submitted

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

**Terri Forseille**

We are finally headed into summer; the beautiful weather is sure a wonderful thing after the long winter and wet spring, may you and your family get a chance to get out and enjoy it.

The NW Council had their AGM in early June, I was given the position of AFKA Associate Director for another 2-year term. Please feel free to contact me with any questions, concerns or just to let me know what's going on in your area with caregivers.

Important dates coming up:

- Grande Prairie support group meetings are held the second Tuesday of every month at Mr. Mikes at 7:00 PM  
Dates: July 12, August 9, September 13, October 11, November 8, and December 13.
- High Level support group meetings are TBA.
- High Prairie Foster Parent Association meetings will take place in Slave Lake and Valleyview to accommodate caregivers.
- Northwest Council Meetings are held via zoom, everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend. Next meeting dates are September 13th, November 8th, January 10th, and March 10th at 9:30 AM, for caregivers and 10 AM for CS staff.  
The AGM is on June 13<sup>th</sup>, in person & Zoom meeting starts for Caregivers at 11 AM and 11:30 AM for CS staff.

May you all have a wonderful summer, full of sunshine and memories!!

Terri Forseille