



AFKA Board Reports

REPORTING PERIOD: OCTOBER 1 – DECEMBER 31, 2022

ALBERTA FOSTER AND KINSHIP ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY REPORTS

REPORTING PERIOD: October 1 – December 31, 2022

A. EXECUTIVE REPORTS

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

B. DIRECTOR REPORTS

1. TREATY 8CARLY MORTON
2. CALGARY REGION..... CARMEN LEGGE
3. CENTRAL REGION.....DANIELLE GOUCHIE
4. EDMONTON REGION.....LINDA KRAUSKOPF
5. NORTH REGION PATRICIA MENSINK
6. NORTH REGION – ASSOCIATE: EAST STREAMBEV TOWE
7. NORTH REGION – ASSOCIATE: WEST STREAMTERRI FORSEILLE
8. SOUTH REGION - VACANT
9. TREATY 6 – VACANT
10. TREATY 7 - VACANT

A. EXECUTIVE REPORTS

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Sylvia Thompson

Welcome to 2023. Last year was an amazing year both personally and professionally.

Personally, we welcomed a baby to our family. Our newest family member joined us early on Oct 5th. While she was a wee one at 5lbs 10 oz, I am happy to say she is growing quickly and amazes us daily. Our great grandchildren also continue to amaze us. I am so fortunate to have these little ones so much a part of my life.

On a professional level, I am so honoured to have been a recipient of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal. It was such an honour to be presented this award with several other Albertan medal recipients. These awards were presented by the Honorable Minister Avery at McDougall Center in Calgary.

I am so pleased to say that 2022 was an amazing year for our association. Our future directions were set at a strategic planning session by the Board of Directors and the Team of Staff of our organization. It is wonderful to see what can be accomplished by working together.

I am also pleased to welcome new board members to our board; to say I am so pleased that you are here with us to our seasoned members, and to say that we will miss you and your valuable contribution to our members who have left our board this year. While change can be difficult, it is always a good opportunity to move forward.

I feel we are at a very good place in our organization to move forward. While continuing to work with our partners, one enhanced focus will be to offer varied supports to our caregivers. You can help us to do this by letting us know what you would like to see. You can do this many ways including contacting the AFKA Board Representative from your region, attending district and/or regional meetings and completing any surveys that are sent to you by the AFKA. Communication is the only way to let us know what we can do to assist.

We look forward to providing you with more updates in the near future.

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Rene Rajotte

I would like to wish everyone a Happy New year and all the best in 2023. Hopefully many of you had the opportunity to get out and have some winter fun. The weather was much better this year than we have had in the past few Christmas Holidays.

Many changes happened in 2022 at the AFKA office. With changes there is much discussion, thoughts and ideas, staff changing some of their roles, as well as the addition of new staff. I have had opportunities to be at the office a bit more and realize how much they do and how well they work together. I would like to thank Melissa for all that she does, as well as all the staff; they all seem to want to truly make a difference in the lives of caregivers and the children in their care.

I would also like to thank you, the caregivers, for all that you do 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. I believe unless you have been a caregiver it is hard to understand all that you do, so THANK YOU! Without you, so many children would not have that family environment to grow up in.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Melissa Jones

The last few months have been a busy time for the staff and volunteers at the AFKA, maintaining our programs to continue providing supports to foster and kinship caregivers as needed, as well as continuous work on building relationships with external organizations and individuals with the hopes of being able to provide further benefits to our membership through member perks, training, resources, and additional supports.

Our Caregiver Support Team has welcomed new staff/team members within other a few regions of the province (i.e. Calgary Region, Central Region, Edmonton Region, and North Region; South Region will be supported by the team as needed until we have the ability to welcome an experienced individual in that region to our team). We look forward to the support they will be able to provide within the guidelines of their role with the AFKA, supporting caregivers through Assessment of Care Concerns and providing support through resolutions. For this reporting quarter, our Caregiver Support Team provided a total hours of support within each of the following provincial regions: South (5), Calgary (2), Central (50.5), Edmonton (128.5), and North (133). These supports include Resolution Support, Systemic Support, and Caregiver Allegation Support. Foster and kinship caregivers can access this support by contacting the AFKA office, then matched with an appropriate member from the Caregiver Support Team (toll free 1-800-667-2372).

The AFKA Annual Conference and Awards Banquet was a huge success, with great feedback regarding the variety of sessions provided and the opportunity to network and build relationships with others in the foster and kinship caregiving communities. We were so pleased to honour AFKA Award recipients once again at the Awards Ceremony and Banquet; an important time for those being recognized amongst peers for the outstanding service/work they commit to with the vulnerable children and families they support!

The AFKA Staff and Board of Directors participated in a Strategic Planning session, facilitated by an external consultant, to help continue our work with relevant focus and goals for how we can support foster and kinship caregivers in Alberta. These goals, and the plan to achieve goals established, are based on a 3-5 year plan; as with everything we do, we are taking the time to really evaluate the best way forward and to be intentional on what we do and how we do it to achieve our association's goals.

Looking back over this past year, the AFKA has grown in many ways and, with the amazing team we have, plan on continuing this growth to the best of our ability within our current capacity. In order to grow most effectively, we will require feedback from our foster and kinship caregiving community. Please take a few moments when you receive those links to provide your thoughts, as they are carefully reviewed and used to help guide our work.

Our first survey to send out this year will be regarding caregiver recognition in the province. There were a great number of activities happening across the province, throughout the year, to recognize foster and kinship caregivers. We are interested in gathering your feedback about the activities organized, individual recognition received, etc. as many opinions have been expressed; however, stronger voice is only supported with solid input and data collection from our members. Please watch for that survey to come in your email within the next week; your feedback will have a huge impact on the movement forward in recognizing caregivers, as it is feedback I will be sharing with the Provincial Caregiver Recognition Working Group (i.e. where leadership within each region come together to plan and share what is being done regionally within this focus area).

The AFKA President (Sylvia Thompson), Vice President (Rene Rajotte), and myself were very fortunate to meet briefly with the new Children's Services Minister, the Honourable Mickey Amery, prior to our AFKA Conference Opening Ceremonies. Minister Amery joined our Opening Ceremonies to bring greetings from the Ministry of Children's Services after only being in his position formally for 3 days; we were honoured to be recognized as an important starting point for the relationships he will be working on. Minister Amery was open and willing to connect with caregivers at the event, which he was able to do with an open mind and willingness to assist a couple caregivers to the best of his ability. We will continue to reach out to have meaningful conversations with Minister Amery to explore how the AFKA, as well as the Ministry, can work toward supporting and recognizing caregivers in meaningful ways.

We continue to take the messages received from the regional/local association appointed AFKA Board Members to our conversations with the Ministry. It will also be important to continue conversations within our organization about other practices we can put in place to ensure members of government and the Ministry are hearing the voices of the AFKA members, regionally and provincially. As practice is developed in this area, the Board of Director from your region will share information with your regional/local association on ways that you can get involved further to support relationships, advocacy, and support in your own regions. The AFKA's advocacy conversations continue, as always, however to have a greater impact yourself, it is important for you to connect with your regional/local association to be actively involved in conversations and to seek support.

I would like to conclude this report by thanking the Board of Directors for their continued support of and belief in the AFKA team, as well as the willingness/desire to be part of creating a shared vision and goals to do the best we can within our capacity. In addition, I can never thank my team in the AFKA office enough; thank you all very much, for working diligently and so thoughtfully to best support our membership through all our supports and services. It has been very busy, many days emotionally and

mentally exhausting, but the AFKA team continues to strive to be as effective as we can for our members we support. Finally, a sincere congratulations to our President, Sylvia Thompson, on being recognized for her commitment and dedication to children and families through being awarded a Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal from the Minister of Children's Services, the Honourable Mickey Amery; we are all so very proud of you and continue to appreciate all you do!

Wishing you all a year of special, peaceful times with your families!

B. DIRECTOR REPORTS

DIRECTOR – TREATY 8

Carly Morton

Happy New Years! I hope you all had a well-rested and festive season with family and friends. Thankfully with things opening, this past holiday season felt like a real holiday. I know my family enjoyed the many get togethers we attended.

I would like to share with you the many activities, meetings and get togethers I have been able to participate this past year. Definitely, the highlight of the year is the AFKA's "It's All About Kids" Conference held in Jasper. This was an opportunity for kinship and foster parents to come together to learn and support each other. This past year several government officials attended, including the newly appointed Minister of Children's Services, Mickey Amery. It was also very exciting to see some of the government officials attend and learn side by side with foster and kinship parents in the many workshops presented at the conference. We were also extremely fortunate to have had a resident Elder to attend the conference to support families who raise and care for Indigenous children. This is a wonderful direction the AFKA staff and board, aiming to include more Indigenous practices, something I am extremely excited for.

I was also able to attend several online classes the AFKA provided on several topics that inform, teach and support kinship and foster families. I look forward to the classes that will be provided this coming year.

Attending meetings with the other Board Directors, Presidents and very knowledgeable AFKA staff is something I look forward to several times a year. This is an opportunity to learn of successes and challenges that each region is experiencing. I know with myself, the region of Treaty 8 has a vast array of culture, language and traditions. With my position I am so excited to learn from each and every settlement, Nation and community within the Treaty.

I would love to hear how you celebrated your holiday season within Treaty 8 and the rest of the province. What are some of the traditions you share with your foster and kinship children? What are some of the traditions you have learned as a caregiver from your kinship or foster children?

Marsi cho and all the best for 2023

DIRECTOR – CALGARY REGION

Carmen Legge

The Calgary Foster Parent Association (CFPA) sends out season's greetings and well wishes for the new year to foster and kinship caregivers across the province. The holidays are a busy and often stressful time of year for caregivers and we hope that each of you were able to find some time to relax, connect with family and build priceless memories that will last a lifetime.

I would like to take a moment to send out my gratitude to our volunteers, Debbie and Lesley, who operate the CFPA's Take Me Home Toys. Debbie and Lesley spend countless hours collecting toys, uploading them to the website and preparing orders for pick up. The Take Me Home Toys website is available year-round to support the work of foster parents, kinship parents and caseworkers. With just a few weeks left in 2022 over 1,900 toys have been distributed to kids in care. The Take Me Home Toys site has close to 1500 items in stock with new items continuously being added. A huge thank you to those who have supported this initiative with their time, donations of new and used toys, and direct donations to the toy website. If you have a moment stop by the CFPA contact page and leave a note for Lesley and Debbie to let them know how Take Me Home Toys has made a difference for you and your family. Coming in 2023 the Take Me Home Toy site will be accepting donations of broken video gaming systems to be refurbished and made available to our members. Thank you, Lesley and Debbie for your commitment to supporting our caregiver community through this valuable service.

The CFPA annual Christmas party was held at the end of November and attended by over 400 caregivers and children. It was fantastic to see so many people out to celebrate the season with Christmas activities, pancake breakfast and a visit from Santa. If you weren't able to join us for the Christmas party, we hope to see you in the new year at our upcoming events. Check out the CFPA events page to find out details about our movie night, tubing event, and laser tag.

I would like to take this opportunity to share the news that the AFKA has hired a Caregiver Support Team Member specifically for the Calgary area to support caregivers who are going through a placement concern response (PCR). The Caregiver Support Team Member works as part of the provides assistance, advocacy and information to caregivers as they go through the allegation process. If you are in need of support from the CAST team or need some advice on managing a dispute give the AFKA team a call and they will connect you with a member on their team. Toll Free: 1-800-667-2372. If you have ideas or concerns that you would like to share with the AFKA, please reach out to me.

I would love to hear your stories and learn about your experience as a caregiver in the Calgary region. As the Calgary representative for the AFKA I will forward ideas, concerns and questions directly to the AFKA Board. Send me an email at boardcalgary@afkaonline.ca

Happy New Year and Season's Greetings

DIRECTOR – CENTRAL REGION

Danielle Gouchie

Hello from snowy Central Region! This quarter we have had a lot going on. On October 15, 2022, the Central Alberta Caregiver Council (CACC) had a day at the Lacombe Corn Maze for caregivers. Approximately one hundred people attended the event. The weather was spectacular and the families spent the day enjoying the many activities at the Corn Maze.

Red Deer Regional Council continues to hold monthly support and networking meetings at the Crossroads Church in Red Deer, any Red Deer area caregivers are welcome to join. Information is posted on the CACC Facebook page every month; we would love to see more people attend!

The CACC also holds a monthly meeting via zoom on the 3rd Thursday of the month. Everyone is welcome to attend and the zoom link is posted on the CACC Facebook page.

Red Deer Regional Council is currently working in partnership with the Red Deer foster and kinship support unit to host a networking and tech event between caregivers and department staff. The intent is to get to know the staff from the office and other caregivers while getting assistance in utilizing the electronic CMI's and reports on different technical devices. Stay tuned for further information and dates in the New Year.

Central Region caregivers continue to be challenged by the increasing costs related to fuel, food, inflation, and the lack of basic maintenance to keep up with rising costs. Caregivers also continue to be challenged by the lack of consistency with caseworkers and between caseworkers, regions, and offices. Caregivers are also reporting an increasing sense of isolation in the sense that they are no longer feeling like they are "part of the team", they are feeling devalued and overlooked.

As the Board of Director for Central Region, my goal is to elevate the voices of the caregivers, to bring forward the challenge's caregivers are facing and to advocate for change on their behalf, as well as to celebrate the successes that happen within the region.

DIRECTOR – EDMONTON REGION

Linda Krauskopf

This is my last board report, it has been a great 22 years. I enjoyed the highs and lows in fostering.

I know you will be in great hands with the new board member Melody Baird. Also new members on CRCC council, which you will meet soon.

We had our AGM last night on Zoom, at the meeting we discussed retaining and recruitment of foster caregivers. Having exit interviews and just getting us out there so more foster caregivers know who we are.

So please look for all the exciting news and updates from the new member of the CRCC.

Looking forward to retirement!

DIRECTOR - NORTH REGION

Patricia Mensink

This past year has gone so quickly! From the beautiful colours of fall to the red noses and cold toes.

The Jasper conference that was held at the end of October had a great attendance! What a wonderful way to learn, network and re-connect with others across the province. Being able to enjoy the beauty of this setting is certainly an added bonus.

I have added to my role with the AFKA as the Conference Fundraising Committee Chair. If you are interested in becoming involved in this part of our conference, please feel free to send me a text or email. Your time, treasures and talents are always welcomed.

Our Executive Director, Melissa Jones, will be taking our voiced concerns to the Ministry. Consistency across the province, cost of living increase, the need for grief/trauma therapy for caregivers are a few of the collective concerns to be brought forward.

The Northern Alberta Caregivers Committee (NACC) is gathering in Slave Lake January 23, 2023, for our monthly meeting, planning for a spring conference is on the agenda.

Planning for the Caregiver connections weekend in the spring will also start in January. The caregiver connection meetings are held monthly so come and join us. This is an opportunity for foster and kinship caregivers in the North Region to gather and connect in a safe setting to share successes and challenges.

The next meetings for the 2023 year are:

January 4, at 1:00 PM and January 11, at 8:00 PM

February 1 at 1:00 PM February 8, at 8:00 PM

March 1 at 1:00 PM March 8, at 8:00 PM

April 5 at 1:00 PM April 12, at 8:00 PM

May 3 at 1:00 PM May 10, at 8:00 PM

June 7 at 1:00 PM June 14, at 8:00 PM

Meetings are on Zoom and the link will be sent out prior to the meeting dates.

If you have any concerns, ideas, or upcoming events you would like me to bring forward please contact me at boardnorth@afkaonline.ca or text 780-498-2669.

On behalf of myself and our council, we would like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!! May the spirit of the season bring you much peace, love, and joy!

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR – NORTH REGION, EAST STREAM

Bev Towe

Not yet submitted

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR – NORTH REGION, WEST STREAM

Terri Forseille

Not Yet Submitted