

Update

from the
AFKA Executive Director



January 2023

Dear AFKA Members,

Happy New Year to you all!

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.

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. 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).

Our Caregiver Support Team has welcomed new staff from other parts of the province. 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 support within your region, please connect with our in-office staff to be matched with the appropriate support person. (1-800-667-2372, info@afkaonline.ca)

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. 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. 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. For a list of regional/local associations and their contact individuals, please visit:

[Regional and Local Association Presidents - Alberta Foster and Kinship Association \(afkaonline.ca\)](#)

As always, please follow us for more information sharing, training/event opportunities, and engagement with members on our Facebook Page

at: <https://www.facebook.com/Albertafosterandkinshipassociation>

If you'd like to become a member of the AFKA, membership is free for all licensed foster caregivers and approved kinship caregivers across the province!

Sign up here:

<https://www.afkaonline.ca/membership/>

Wishing you all the best in 2023,

Melissa Jones, BEd, MEd, CPC

Executive Director/CEO, AFKA