



AFKA Board Reports

REPORTING PERIOD: APRIL 1 – JUNE 30, 2023

ALBERTA FOSTER AND KINSHIP ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY REPORTS

REPORTING PERIOD: April 1 – June 30, 2023

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A. EXECUTIVE REPORTS

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Sylvia Thompson

Welcome to summer. It is great to be able to go out and enjoy the summer. After being evacuated because of fires, I truly appreciate my home. I am very grateful for the many people who worked above and beyond to save our town. I am very much looking forward to having many walks and outdoor activities with my grandchild and great grandchildren.

While summer is usually a quieter time, this year is continuing to be very busy. We are working on updating our by-laws and policy and procedure manual. We currently are seeking new board members in some areas of the province and are having conversations with interested candidates.

The AFKA is in the process of building better and more accessible support for all of the caregivers. This is an area that requires us to hear from our caregivers. What is meaningful support to you?

The Board of Directors is working diligently on becoming a Policy board which has a very determined focus. It is our intent to have board training at every in-person board meeting. As the liaison between the members and management, it is our responsibility to develop the policies that guide the work. The Board of Directors felt that this was the most productive and accountable way to go. The future looks good for us. We will keep you updated on our progress.

If you have any concerns, questions or issues, please feel free to contact your representative on our Board of Directors. They are all listed on our website along with many other important topics. Have a look at www.afkaonline.ca.

We are looking forward to keeping you posted about how things are going. Have a wonderful summer!

Sylvia Thompson

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Rene Rajotte

Hello to everyone. As I sit outside writing this report, there is a haze of smoke that is filling the air with the orange sun trying to peer through. This brings thoughts to me of those of you that have had to move out of your homes for safety or may have lost your home or property. When I was in Edmonton, I had the chance to talk with many that had been displaced and were staying in a hotel not knowing what you were going home to. I cannot imagine the hardship you and many are still going through, my thoughts and prayers go out to you.

We have many things going on in our association, which I am fortunate to be a part of. I have been able to spend time in the office and get to see our committed staff work so hard to make a positive change, for you the caregiver. I would like to ask if you can be involved in any way at your local level, it is a wonderful way to share with and support other caregivers like you. We can learn so much from each other! If you're unsure where to start, please call the AFKA and they'll put you in contact with the best person from your region.

I would like to remind everyone that we have a casino scheduled for the first quarter of 2024 in Calgary. We are not sure which casino it will be yet but will keep you updated. This is a wonderful time to meet other caregivers as well! So, if possible within your busy schedule, come out and join us. You will have a wonderful time. This event is our largest fundraiser. The last casino we raised approximately \$65,000 over a 2-day period.

For now, I would like to wish everyone the best, take care and THANKS for all you do.

Rene Rajotte

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

Melissa Jones

This last quarter has had some changes in the Ministry of Children and Family Services, the AFKA, and for caregivers across our province. Alberta's Ministry of Children and Family Services has a new Minister, the Honourable Searle Turton. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the outgoing Minister, the Honourable Mickey Amery, for the interest and commitment he had shown within his role to do what he could to listen to foster parents in Alberta, to work with the AFKA to ensure he had a good understanding of the challenges caregivers are facing, and to try to work toward the implementation of changes that would support some of the challenges. I now welcome Minister Turton into this role and look forward to building a collaborative, informed relationship. Minister Turton and myself had a virtual meeting to become acquainted with one another and to highlight items of importance to the AFKA and Alberta's caregivers, those we wish to discuss further and see how they can be addressed. An in-person meeting has been established with Minister Turton, myself, and the AFKA President at the end of July 2023. We will be raising the concerns we have been working at trying to address, as well as sharing with him the initiatives of our association and how they can support both Alberta caregivers and Ministry.

We continue to be involved in the provincial Caregiver Recognition Working Group, where a solid plan of various ways to recognize caregivers is shared. This is a dedicated group of individuals from each region who can help implement recommendations and is also a place for our team to bring forward ideas and concerns we may have with current recognition practice. This group helps hold regions accountable and provides them a space to be creative, hear the AFKA concerns with current recognition practice, and to learn from one another. The AFKA team is also working on developing ways we can recognize caregivers for the work they do, to highlight the world of foster and kinship care, and to celebrate those doing great things; these are ever evolving and we hope to be doing more in the future.

The AFKA is working on building relationships with DFNAs throughout Alberta, as well as with those who have come into their own coordination agreement with the Federal Government through Bill C-92. Once those nations have this coordination agreement in place, they are then referred to as Indigenous Governing Bodies (IGBs); therefore, if you hear that term being used, those are the nations being referred to. IGBs, through their own coordination agreements, have complete responsibility for their own child intervention practice through their own laws that guide their work with policy and practice. We are working at developing a list of contacts that will be important to have in the future should a caregiver sign an agreement to provide care through and IGB. If you are in this position and need someone to talk to, please do not hesitate to reach out to myself at the office (780-701-4090).

Part of our relationship building with DFNAs, agencies, and IGBs is participating in collaboration and learning days together; the most recent was called "Walking the Children Home – Part 1

and 2". The AFKA has made significant connections with several individuals and are proud that we are walking together in a collaborative way to develop a common understanding of those impacted by these transitions, as well as to develop a common language to describe what is happening within these changes and transitions as a result of Bill C-92.

The AFKA was invited to speak to many Alberta Public School Board Trustees at their spring symposium in Calgary. These trustees are members of the Public School Board Association of Alberta (PSBAA), and were able to listen and be engaged in conversation and consideration of action regarding doing more for children and youth in care. This presentation was very well received and left many in the room with a new or renewed awareness of the world of children and youth in care, as well as those who are caring for them. I do hope that you start to see more engagement and understanding at the school district level; this may be a slow process, however we will continue to work on these conversations as they are important in creating a real team who understands these vulnerable children and youth, and their families.

Other community connections we have made and are nurturing, or continue to nurture, includes the University of Calgary's Social Work Program (Edmonton Campus), Shiloh Youth Camp, Fort Edmonton Park, the Injury Prevention Centre, Little Warriors, and Alberta Health Services. We will continue to reach out to other community organizations or businesses as we are able to do so.

The AFKA Board was involved in a "Strategic Sprint", to follow-up from the strategic planning done in the fall of 2022. This was important to the AFKA, as there was a need to narrow the focus of strategic planning goals for the next 12-18 months. The results of this activity will see some of our goals evolve over time.

We have hired 2 more part-time employees throughout the province to support caregivers in their regions. We now have a part-time employee in each region to support caregivers through assessment of care concerns/allegations, and dispute resolution. To reach these individuals, please contact the office directly to be matched with the appropriate Caregiver Support Team (CST) member.

We have a new part-time Administrative Assistant to support the work being done in the office; welcome to Serena Widynowski. As well, I would also like to welcome Tara Shearer, our new full-time Finance Officer. We are so fortunate to have the skills and passion these two ladies bring to our team.

We are near completion in the development of our new CRM (Customer Relationship Management) database. We are excited for this new system of supporting and tracking memberships. In addition to this, we are developing a member portal through our website where information can be shared and received with members more effectively. The member portal will hopefully be in use by the end of this calendar year.

The AFKA was given an opportunity to review a draft plan being developed for Special Rates assessments, policies, and practice. It does appear the Ministry is working very hard to create a system that is fair and consistent for practice throughout the province. We have no timeline for when this will be officially put into practice, however will share more information as we receive it.

Our Caregiver Support Team (CST) is regularly meeting the regional Placement Concerns Response teams (PCR) throughout the province. PCR teams are those who do the work of assessing homes who are highlighted with a “care concern”. Our Caregiver Support Team supports these families through these experiences and can collect valuable information to share about the practice (successes and challenges). During these regular meetings between the AFKA CST and PCR, the teams come together to review practice and express concerns that may exist within that region.

The AFKA’s Caregiver Support Team (CST) continues to host their “Caregivers Matter Chat” every month. Please visit our website to sign up for a time that works for you! We are working on increasing the amount of these chats, as they’ve been proving to be a valuable place for caregivers to go and connect with a community of people with similar experiences and challenges.

The AFKA was able to award 4 bursaries of \$750 each, for post-secondary education financial support. We are certain those who received the bursaries are going to do great things for others, ranging from children to adults, and supporting a way to better the lives of those they impact.

The AFKA Awards nominations are now closed. There was an update to the titles of the awards, specifically those in the category of staff within Children and Family Services, as we wanted them to be more reflective of the work being done and those we are recognizing for a job well done. Although submissions are closed for this year, please take some time to review our website for the awards that are open for recognition and truly consider recognizing someone next June!

With regards to awards, foster and kinship caregivers in Alberta are recognized for their time providing care through the receipt of a Citation Award. These are given out for every 5-year increment; if you believe you are to be recognized, please let your support worker know to ensure you are included on the lists the region sends to the Ministry in the month of July.

The 2nd annual AFKA Art Contest was a success, with many wonderful submissions received. The committee that reviews these submissions are a group of individuals outside of the AFKA. They chose 4 pieces of art (one from each age category), which will be used in notecards to be given to caregivers by CFS staff. The artwork will also be displayed in the AFKA office and used for promotional activities. Please watch for the 3rd annual AFKA Art Contest to open early next year and share the talent of those children and youth in your home!

The planning is well underway for the 49th Annual AFKA Conference in Jasper, AB. There are some exciting changes to the layout of our upcoming conference to watch for! Registration will open mid-late August, so keep your eyes open for the email to come with more information. If you are not on our email distribution list, please visit our website to be added www.afkaonline.ca .

The AFKA sends out surveys at various times throughout the year, for various reasons. If you receive a survey from us, please take a couple minutes to complete it as it provides us with valuable information regarding support, planning, and advocating to the Ministry for additional supports. Thank you for this consideration!

I would like to close by giving my sincerest thanks to the greatest team I could have. The staff we have working for the AFKA are so dedicated to and passionate about the work of the AFKA and doing the best we can to support the caregivers in ways that are needed. Thank you, also, to our Board of Directors, who also are extremely committed to doing what they can to help the AFKA succeed in supporting foster and kinship families in Alberta. I would also like to give a thank you to the external stakeholders and organizations who consider the AFKA a partner and do what they can to support our association in supporting our members in ways that are needed.

May you all have a wonderful, safe summer with your families!

Melissa Jones

B. DIRECTOR REPORTS

DIRECTOR – TREATY 8

CARLY MORTON

Happy Summer! I hope you and your family are enjoying the break after the hustle and bustle of the year end events for our children as the school year came to an end. Summer is a time where we can all come together, for us it feels far more laid back. This is a time where myself and my family can attend many festivals, ceremonies, pow wows and family gathering within the province. What are some of the activities that you participate with you your kinship and foster children? What are some of the traditions you honour over the summer? I would love to hear some of gatherings and ceremonies you attend or host!

I have had a very enlightened quarter this year. Attending a number of meetings that have given me more insight into the achievements, succusses and struggles kinship and foster families are experiencing. These meetings have helped me meet the needs of the families that have reached out. I have also met with and reached out to more Nations within Treaty 8 and listened to ideas, suggestions and the strides forward they are making to meet the needs of children with in this region.

I look forward to the summer, as I am participating in meetings along with training to understand how I can and learn better support kinship and foster families. This role has helped me grow as kinship mother, a director and over all a more understanding person. Thank you all who have helped and continue to help me on this amazing path to assist in any way I can. I look forward to hearing about your summer break.

Masi chok (Thank you)

Carly

DIRECTOR – CALGARY REGION

Carmen Legge

The CFPA hosted our Annual General Meeting on June 19th. This event is an opportunity for our members to learn more about what the CFPA does and to provide feedback on what sort of programs they feel would benefit the membership. This year we hosted our AGM virtually, to encourage participation from our members. We are excited to announce that Linda Anderson and Laura Morland were elected as new directors on the CFPA board. We enthusiastically offer a heartfelt welcome to them as we look forward to enthusiasm, new ideas, and unique perspectives they will bring.

We want to extend our appreciation to outgoing board member, Debbie Mastel, who has been committed to building our community partnership program over this last year. I will be stepping down from the board at the CFPA and as such will be stepping back from the role of AFKA representative. This will be my final board report as the representative of the Calgary region.

The CFPA is excited to welcome new staff member, Amanda Preston, to the Foster Calgary team. Amanda is joining the team as our foster parent recruiter. Amanda has 17 years of experience as a foster parent and has experience and knowledge of the challenge and rewards of being a foster parent. We extend our best wishes and thanks to Kim Hammond who has been in the role of foster parent recruiter these past 4 years. Your dedication and commitment have had a lasting impact on countless children and families in our community.

The CFPA has launched a new program called CFPA Coffee & Connection. Foster and Kinship Caregivers are invited to meet in person once a month to connect, learn and grow together. These meetings are hosted in the community space at a local church and children under five are invited to join.

The next CFPA board meeting will be on September 18th. Members are always welcome to attend.

DIRECTOR – CENTRAL REGION

Danielle Gouchie

Hello from Central Region. The last few months have been hot and dry. Caregivers in multiple regions have been dealing with evacuations, fires, and hot, dry conditions. It has been an interesting start to summer and highlights the difficult and unexpected conditions that caregivers continue to parent through.

Red Deer continues to have monthly support meetings for area caregivers. Please follow the Central Region Foster Parent Facebook group for updates regarding activities for caregivers.

If you have anything happening in your region that you would like highlighted in my reports, please reach out to me!

I continue to hear about challenges in regard to inflation, food prices, and childcare costs. I also hear about challenges regarding respite rates and how difficult it is to find respite/relief for the provided rates. Challenges in regard to lack of communication with case workers and support workers regarding children in your homes, and lack of planning when it comes to transitioning children into other homes.

As AFKA Board Director for Central Region, I would love to understand the barriers for caregivers to attend networking and support meetings put on by local associations. I would also love to increase the participation and attendance of caregivers within their local regional associations. If you have any ideas you want to share, or any barriers that may be affecting your ability to attend, please send me an email! Boardcentral@afkaonline.ca

DIRECTOR – EDMONTON REGION

Bernadine Grant (Acting)

We have had monthly coffee talks where foster and kinship caregivers can meet other foster and kinship caregivers to share ideas, concerns, and experiences. We have also posted to the Facebook page any upcoming events hosted by not-for-profit organizations and Indigenous organizations and communities, so that foster kinship caregivers are aware of events they and their children may participate.

I have heard from one foster parent that she has been granted guardianship of her Indigenous foster son whom she has parented since he was a baby. She is an Indigenous foster parent and gained guardianship after a lengthy process and many court dates.

Still hearing about barriers to getting supports for behavioral issues of some children in care, and supports for mental health. Hearing about problems with reimbursements on expenses. Still hearing about cost of food and inflation of everything, but no increase to foster maintenance.

I would like to become the Metis Director for the AFKA Board of Directors. I have ideas to help bridge the MNA to the Board, as well as help advise on how the AFKA can fill in services areas not covered by the MNA under Bill C92.

DIRECTOR - NORTH REGION

Patricia Mensink

June 16, 2023, 1-3 PM is the annual AGM and council meeting. We are looking for interested people to join our council and share their time, talents, ideas, energy, and wisdom. Positions that need to be filled are AFKA representative, Treasurer, Adoption Representative, and Kinship Representative. If you are interested, please contact Stephanie at s-l-larsen@hotmail.com.

The caregiver connection weekend has been cancelled due to the lack of registrations. The caregiver connections meetings are held monthly, come and join us. This is a great opportunity for all foster and kinship homes in the North Region to gather and connect in a safe setting to share successes and challenges. The meetings are on Zoom and the link will be sent out prior to the meeting dates.

On behalf of our council, we wish you a safe and fun-filled summer!

Patricia Mensink

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR – NORTH REGION, EAST STREAM

Bev Towe

Hi northeast caregivers, I am your representative for our region. Please reach out anytime, my cell is 780-207-1041 and email is bev.towe@hotmail.com or boardnortheast@afkaonline.ca.

I know life is busy, but I am here to support you. It has been hard for me to organize support meetings, but I will keep trying as we all can use the support.

The north region is working hard to get the staff in place, organizing /restructuring etc. We hope to be fully staffed soon.

Summer is fast approaching, make sure to communicate with your worker your summer plans. I am personally going on a well-deserved vacation, respite is all in place, but I am so nervous to leave for two weeks. This is the first time I have gone away for this long, so hope I can make it and not want to jump on plane to come home sooner, lol.

With that being said, we still need to work through the rest of the summer building working relationships with the department.

Enjoy your summer.

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR – NORTH REGION, WEST STREAM

Terri Forseille

We had many challenges with fires in our area. Watching neighbors and communities coming together to help one another has been beautiful though. It sure has been nice to see the grass and flowers growing, especially where the fires had been through earlier this spring.

The Northwest Council has rescheduled their AGM to September 20th in Peace River. We will be having elections for Secretary and Treasurer. If you are interested in or know of someone who is interested in either of the positions, please watch for information on where to send nominations. It is great to see the support groups throughout the zone getting together regularly. If you would like more information on any of the support groups, please reach out to me or any of the names listed below.

We are very hopeful that the new Minister will follow through with promises from the previous Minister to have Town Halls with caregivers. Many caregivers have a lot to say, I am hopeful they will be heard.

Important Dates

Northwest Council AGM September 20th @ 11am in Peace River

Caregiver Connections

Watch for information through email.

Support groups

Valleyview & Slave Lake – Terri Forseille, Grande Prairie – Dawn Buhler (3rd Tuesday of the month), Lacrete – Ronalda Wolfe (2nd Wednesday of the month)