



Families Helping Families

Foster Family Appreciation Month

October was Foster Family Appreciation Month across the province of British Columbia. It is so very important to thank and honour our remarkable foster families. Each year in British Columbia 5,257 children and youth are cared for by 3,121 foster families. These families' contributions to some of the most vulnerable members of our communities need to be remembered and applauded.

The city councils of Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, and Fort Nelson all made proclamations heralding October as the month to show our appreciation. Although it is also important to remember that you are

thanked year round. B.C.'s Lieutenant Governor, Judith Guichon, also made a province-wide declaration. Check it out at http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/foster/pdf/2013_proclamation.pdf

Stephanie Cadieux, the provincial minister for MCFD travelled to our region to meet with local foster families. Teas with the minister were held in both Fort St. John and Dawson Creek. A big thank you to those of you who managed to attend on short notice. I know that she enjoyed meeting with you and hearing your concerns.

Each of the communities of Dawson Creek, Fort St.

John, and Fort Nelson thanked their foster families through such things as messages of appreciation, home visits, gift certificates, and mints for your commit"mint". Lucky parents in Fort Nelson even received a home cooked meal delivered to their door!



Thank you! Thank you!
Thank you!

Foster Family Recruitment

More foster families are needed in our communities, and in some locales, an urgent call has gone out. Fort St. John resource worker, Clovette Chandler, has set a goal to double the number of foster parents in her community to help reduce the strain on FSJ's foster families. Fort Nelson would

also like to see an increase in the number of families available to take in children and youth. The most urgent need is for those families that can take teenagers. So if you know of anyone who has expressed an interest in fostering, please direct them to your local resource worker or to myself. The

best recruiter is a fellow foster parent!



Foster Parent Recruitment, Retention, and Support

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Special points of interest:

- ☺ Foster Family Appreciation
- ☺ Recruitment
- ☺ Foster Parent Meetings
- ☺ Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents AGM
- ☺ Needing a CPOC
- ☺ Tips for Christmas

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Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents (FAFP) AGM

At the end of September I had the good fortune to travel to Penticton to attend the annual FAFP AGM. FAFP is a provincial organization that was formed to meet the unique needs of caregivers of Aboriginal children, and the needs of communities for targeted development, recruitment, and training of Aboriginal foster families.

There were a number of talented and passionate speakers who spoke on a range of topics regarding traditional Aboriginal family structure, fostering experiences, and psychologically assessing a child's level of

functioning. A quick assessment tool was described to determine whether a child was ruled by chaos, fear, guilt or blame, and then what to do about it. (Contact me if you want to learn more.) Dr. Cindy Blackstone was the keynote speaker and she gave an impassioned presentation on the root causes of why children come into care and the continued need for advocacy for funding Aboriginal children that is equal to the government funding of non-Aboriginal children.

A special foster family was hon-

oured for their contributions to fostering with a blanketing ceremony, and Gary Mavis, the Executive Director of FAFP, was also honoured in an emotional blanketing ceremony. He has decided to step away from FAFP after 12 years of service. Artemis Fire is stepping in to fill his position.



Foster Family Gatherings and Training Opportunities

One of the main goals of the Foster Parent Support program in the north-east is to create opportunities for foster parents to meet with one another, socialize and provide each other with peer support. With that in mind, each month has provided an opportunity for a gathering to happen. Picnic gatherings in each of the communities of Fort St. John, Dawson

Creek and Fort Nelson took advantage of the late summer sun and fine weather. In October there were teas with Minister Stephanie Cadieux, and in November there was the opportunity for each community to meet and listen to a talk on brain development and trauma. We do hope that as time goes on more foster parents will take advantage of this opportunity to meet

and support one another. Finding times that work for everyone's diverse schedules is challenging, but I am very open to feedback and suggestions. Additional training opportunities are available covering topics such as stress, attachment, and FASD. Please let me know what you would like to learn more about.

Comprehensive Plan of Care (CPOC)

Every child that comes into care needs a comprehensive plan of care. It should be what guides their time in care. This plan needs to be holistic, relevant and current to the child's unique needs and circumstances. The child's family,



community and developmental needs all must to be taken into consideration. Changes to the plan need to be made on an ongoing basis as significant changes in the child's life occurs. The stated goal of MCFD is to have an initial CPOC in place within 30 days of the child coming into ministry care. Each plan is to be

developed in consultation with the child, the caregiver, and where possible, the child's parents. Please be aware of what is in your child's CPOC and ask your social worker if you have questions. Also, help assist and encourage the children in your care to participate in the development of their own CPOC.

Making the News!

When Stephanie Cadieux, the provincial minister for the Ministry of Children and Family Development, came to Fort St. John to meet with local foster parents, a number of families took the opportunity to talk with her. The local media was also on hand to meet with some of our families. An interview with Trudy and Wolfram Korfman was printed in the Alaska Highway news entitled, "Opening Their Home", describing their 20+ years of fostering experience. The full length article can be found at <http://www.alaskahighwaynews.ca/article/20131001/>

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Trudy and Wolfram Korfman's picture in an Alaska Highway News article that described their 20+ year experience being foster parents.

Trudy and Wolfram's story serves as a wonderful testament to the positive impact that fostering can have. In the article Stephanie Cadieux had high praise for foster families saying, "Foster families are tremendous human beings. They open their homes and heart to some of the province's most vulnerable kids. They offer stability and love and the ability for those kids to have normalcy in their life. It's so important they get that ability to thrive as young people, and part of thriving as a young person is having a stable, caring place to live."

Tips for Celebrating Christmas with Your Foster Children

The following list of suggestions is from an article by Carrie Craft, entitled "Before You Celebrate the Holidays with Your Foster Children".

Parenting foster children can be a challenge at any time of the year, but holidays seem to be extra stressful. There are a ton of parties to attend, gifts to buy, and the financial strain can really bring a person down. Get 8 quick ideas of things to get done in your foster family before the holidays get here so you can have time to enjoy a cup of hot chocolate.

Remember all of the Little Things that Make the Season Fun

Do you have extra stockings for foster children entering your home at the last minute? It's not uncommon for a child to arrive on Christmas Eve. How about extra gifts for Hanukkah or Kwanzaa?

Help Your Foster Children Understand the Season

Most of the foster children that have entered our home have not understood the Christmas holiday. Take time to read a few books. Explain your feelings about the season and help a child learn to enjoy the season on a different level.

Plan any Gifts for Birth Family Whether from You or the Children

Are you going to give the birth parents a

simple gift this holiday? I have given photo albums of their children or framed photos. What about bus vouchers so that they can get to work or to visits? What a great way to help with the reunification efforts. Keep in mind that some foster children have not experienced giving gifts to others. The concept may not even cross their minds, so be there to lead the way.

Discuss the Dates for Holiday Birth Family Visits

Contact your worker early in the season. Keep an open mind, but also advocate for your family's needs. Remember your holiday schedule and the child's behavior after visits. Remember, most workers need about a two week notice to make any major change.

Watch for Signs of the Holiday Blues

Holidays can be a difficult time for many foster families. This is traditionally a time for family and for a child who is not with his/her birth family, a time for remembering the ones they've had to say good-bye to. All families have their good moments, even if they are few in number. These moments mean the world to foster children in the system. These memories are sometimes the only thing they have left of birth family. It can, however, be a great bonding moment for foster families - a time to sit down and share memories.

Contact Your Worker about any Travel Dates

If you're planning on leaving town for the holidays, contact your worker well in advance. Most require at least two weeks notice. There needs to be plenty of time for the workers to arrange travel vouchers for the child, or if needed respite if the child is unable to attend.



Plan Activities for the Kids to Enjoy During the Break from School

This could be a great time to work on life-books when homework is not a burden. If you start to get a bit cabin crazy look for activities away from home such as attending the YMCA for a swim or the library.

Prepare Extended Family and Your Foster Children for Family Gatherings

Holidays or big family gatherings are a tough situation for introducing your foster children to your extended family. Your extended family may feel uneasy about your choice to be a foster parent in the first place. Meeting the foster child/ren may help this situation or confirm their fears

North Peace Community Resources Society

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We are dedicated to providing support for foster parents. We are here to listen, help answer questions, and find appropriate community agency supports. We are committed to providing relevant and ongoing training opportunities and facilitating local peer support networks. We wish to promote the incredible rewards of being a foster parent and enlist new families into the fostering community.



Foster Parent Recruitment, Retention, and Support- North Peace Community Resources Society

Interesting Foster Care Facts...

- ◆ 5,257 children are cared for in foster homes
- ◆ 3,121 foster families live in British Columbia
- ◆ 46% who leave the care of the Ministry return to their parents within a year
- ◆ 1,355 youth live under out-of-care agreements where children and youth who are not able to stay with their parents are supported to live with extended family or live independently
- ◆ 35% of adopted children in care are adopted by their foster parents'
- ◆ 16% of all children in care are waiting to be adopted
- ◆ 11% of foster parents in British Columbia are Aboriginal
- ◆ 52% of children in care are Aboriginal
- ◆ 47% of Aboriginal children and youth in care are in the care of a Delegated Aboriginal Agency
- ◆ 0.91% of British Columbia's population under the age of 19 are in Ministry care.

