

December 2015

▶ Volume 14, Issue 4

# The Networker



*"Fostering Connections"*

## Message from the Board

The winter boots and snowsuits are out and we are officially in the swing of things for the winter season. We are also in full-swing of school and extracurricular activities that sometimes we forget to make time and care for ourselves, especially during this season.

It might mean a bit of time away or, like myself, some sort of training to remind myself how fostering can impact our lives. Sometimes, we do not realize that the experiences of the children we have in our care make an impact on us and therefore, bettering ourselves only means a better quality of life for them.

Within my area, I am very excited about the preparations being made for our first annual one-day training session which focuses on the below topic:

"Caring through Trauma: Understanding the Impact of Trauma on Foster and Kinship Homes."

This year, the annual training session in Southern Manitoba will be held in Gimli on Thursday, May 26, 2016.

Gimli is an amazing spot in Manitoba and if you cannot make it out for the training session, I hope to meet you and your family at our free Kinship/Foster Family Fun Night that same evening for some food, fun and friendship.

Whether the children in your care have been with you for a short period of time or for a long period of time, this season can be a difficult one when the focus is on family. As a kinship or foster caregiver, we must remind ourselves that we have become an *extension* to this child's family.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and myself, we wish you a happy holiday season filled with an abundance of love, laughter and compassion.

**Rowena Herana**

Vice President, Southern Region

## ▶ Inside this issue:

Executive Director's Message	2
Peer Support Report	2
Greetings from the North	3
Mentorship	4-5
Balancing the Holidays	6
Training	7
Call for Board Members	8

## Executive Director’s Message

Hello everyone! I am very pleased to take this opportunity to tell you all of some new changes to our organization. First and foremost, I would like to welcome Terri McNaughton-Wright to our staff. Although Terri has been with us for nearly a year, it has been on contract. We have now hired her on a permanent basis. Terri brings a wealth of knowledge of fostering and training. She will be our Education Coordinator and we are very excited to have her. If you have any questions about our education programming, please contact her at our office.

We are also happy to announce that our Mentorship Program is now being delivered provincially! This program is designed to deliver training and help create community supports. If you are interested in having the program delivered in your community or if you have questions about it, you can contact Terri for that as well.

In this issue you will also find a call for Board Members. As a grassroots organization, we look to our Board of Directors for guidance in the direction the Manitoba Foster Family Network takes. All of our board are licensed foster parents who work with us on a volunteer basis. As with every year, there are 6 positions that will be up for election. If you or someone you know would like to be involved at this level, please see page 8 for more information.

In preparation for the upcoming holiday season, please note that our office will be closed at noon on December 24<sup>th</sup> and will not reopen until 8:30 am on January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

Finally I would like to take a moment to wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season. With family gatherings, work functions and shopping for that perfect gift, it is easy to lose track of the important things in our lives. Hold your family close, enjoy every moment with them and take the time to create memories that will last a lifetime.

Warmest wishes,

**Shawna Normand**

---

## Peer Support Report

At this time we have 11 Peer Support providers that actively answer almost all of the calls that come to our office for support and/or information. This is huge considering when I first started working here in 2006 there were 5 providers that answered messages.

Our providers take calls from people that are looking to foster. They give information about the process and give a first-person perspective on the impact of fostering on the family home. They also answer calls from people that are seeking information or support for: conflict with their agency, rates, allegations, children’s behavior, communication with their agency, removals of foster children that they feel is not in the child’s best interest and other reasons too numerous to mention.

People that call have reported they felt heard and left the conversation feeling better for having connected with someone that was living a similar lifestyle to theirs.

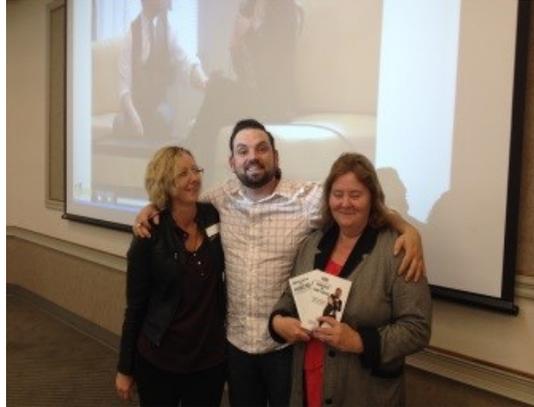
We are always looking to expand our team so if you or someone you know would like to explore this a bit please call our office and we would be very happy to give you information about the ways Peer Support can be provided.

**Lisa Moxam**

Greetings from The North :)

## **FASD Workshop with Jeff Nobel**

**The Pas, Manitoba**



Our Northern Board Member Marion Brading and I attended the FASD workshop in The Pas with Jeff Noble. We both felt that it was worth the drive to hear such an informative and funny speaker. If you would like to hear Jeff Noble you can find him on YouTube, or you can find his Facebook page. He has tips, quotes and a community of followers sharing advice!!

## **Creative Spirit Cultural Eco Workshop**

**Barrows, Manitoba**



I was so grateful to attend an outdoor workshop learning about the Cree culture. We were taken on a nature walk and introduced to many plants, the benefits and use, along with the Cree name. A wonderful resource for anyone wanting an exceptional learning experience!

**Charlotte Sauder**

## Mentorship

The Mentorship program is up and running. Two groups have been established with the third ready to begin in January.

So what is the Mentorship Program? It is, or will be, a Foster/Kinship parent to Foster/Kinship parent training and support opportunity in the communities of the participants. There is a process in place for training Foster and Kinship parents to be the primary trainer for the modules and facilitators of the ongoing support groups. The trainer facilitators will be from the region and will understand the benefits and challenges of the area. Repeatedly we have heard that having someone or a group in your geographical area would enhance the foster/kinship experience.

The current Winnipeg group meets Tuesdays at the office, Brad and Lisa are managing the training and support. I will join Lisa the first week of December to see the group to the finish.

The Birch River/Swan Valley/Sapotoweyak group have been meeting Mondays and Tuesdays and will complete their sessions by the end of November and begin their support group December thru to March with Charlotte's support.

The Morden/Winkler group was stalled due to weather initially, and since has been changed to begin the 7th of January, the times also changed to reflect the requests made by the registered participants.

See the Network's calendar for dates, times and places. There is still space available in the Morden/Winkler group.

Plans for a group in Thompson or The Pas in January are also in the works. We have learned that it is important to have as much input as possible from the foster and kinship parents regarding dates and times. The Birch River group advocated for changes to times and dates. I will not be deciding the times and dates again without this input!

When travel is involved, and especially in the northern regions, these considerations are very important. The safety of the foster/kinship parents is a primary concern. Although the Birch River group do seem to be road warriors!

Personally I am really enjoying the groups, and learning so much from the discussions and sharing that happens.

I look forward to the new groups in the New Year.

Thank you to everyone who has helped to get the Mentorship Program up and running.

**Terri McNaughton-Wright**

Education Co-ordinator



### MENTORSHIP IN MORDEN

Mentorship in Morden/Winkler will take place at the Morden Alliance Church (located at 181 15 St, Morden) from 9:30 am-2:30 pm on the following dates:

January 7	February 4	March 3
January 14	February 11	March 10
January 21	February 18	March 17
January 28	February 25	March 24

## Mentorship (continued)

### **Mentorship Program is up and running in the North**

We are just finishing up the first Mentorship program in Birch River, we plan to have our celebration and certificates handed out by the end of the month :)

The program consists of 9 modules with 3 support sessions built into the program. The Mentorship Training;

- Creates communities of kinship/foster parent peer to peer support groups

- Provides opportunities for parents to share and enhance their knowledge & understanding of the care they provide to children, families and their communities

- Teaches and shares skills to support parents who provide care which is in the best interest of the children and their families

The 9 modules are;

- Child Development

- Relationships and Attachment

- Fostering Family Connections

- Understanding Misbehaviour

- Presenting Behaviours

- Guiding Behaviours

- Teaching Life Skills

- Observing, Recording & Reporting

- Fostering Self Care

We are happy to provide training in your communities Please Call us to explore when and how this can work for you :) (204) 940-1280

**Charlotte Sauder**

---



“You might be temporary in their lives.  
They might be temporary in yours.  
But there is nothing temporary  
about the love or the lesson.”

Tonia Christle



## Balancing the holidays

December can be both a challenging and complex time for foster and kinship homes. My wife and I fostered for many years and raised many children and adolescents. Those individuals who shared this time of year with us left us with many memories. As a foster parent I can say it was challenging because we often vicariously experienced, along with the children we cared for, their heightened sense of wanting to be with their own families. The season reminded them of their families they longed to be connected to. They dreamed of the perfect holiday season. The one they saw in their schools, communities and on television. I recall the children, who moved through our lives, watching those perfect movie endings they all wished for and the sense of turmoil each movie gave them.

What all too often happened for them were brief family reunions which sometimes turned out well but more often seemed to leave them with wanting so much more. As temporary partners in their young lives, foster or kinship parents, join with them in feeling the turmoil of unfilled wishes which no gifts or dinners shared diminishes. It was often a time of heightened expectations which exceeded their present reality. We did what all temporary parents do, we worked hard to provide them what we hoped would be a holiday time which offered them a part of what we had learned this season could offer.

When I think back through those memories I realize each season taught us a little more about what was important in how we shared that time. It took us a few years to recognize we needed to change our holiday pattern to support the best possible experience for those young people. I am not sure when, but at some point, we started to celebrate our home and family holiday dinner on Christmas Eve rather than on Christmas day. Every member of our home was invited to be part of that time together. All our family members were also invited to share that time with us. Over time fewer and fewer of our family members attended but that was just a part of being a foster parent. We also learned to decorate our home not too early in the season so as to not make the build up to the holidays too exhausting for the children.

We had our holiday dinner the night before Christmas day because that meant Christmas day was the time to be in the van, on the road, driving the children in our care to visit their families for their holiday celebrations. Not always, but often, we opened presents on Christmas Eve so that we were all ready to head out early in the morning. When we had connections with the families of the children in our home we spent time with their parents, before the holidays, helping them to purchase presents from the allotted money the child and family services agency provided.

However, through our best efforts to support the children or adolescents in our care, we all too often asked our own son to share in the time-consuming life we had chosen. So, very early in his life, we started our own family tradition of coming together, after everyone else was in bed, to join and be his only parents for a brief time before he went off to bed. Over the decades, which we fostered and opened our home to so many others I know he stepped aside from many special occasions because of the path we chose.

Balancing the holidays in a foster or kinship home can be complex and challenging. It is a unique time of the year in which foster and kinship homes learn to weave through for themselves and their families. I hope all of you can experience all the special joy of this season which can be found in the uniqueness of your home, your family and those special young people you are caring for.

**Brad Wright**

## Training

I was raised in a fostering home. From my earliest memories, other people's children lived with our family. These children were oftentimes infants and pre-schoolers that had experiences far beyond those of my parents. These children impacted my home and the lives of my family forever and we are richer for it.

I do wonder, though, how my parents would have parented differently if they fostered today. The children that come into care today have more demands placed on them; more placements, more expectations to be able to cope with situations beyond their control, more resources, and more exposure to experiences beyond those of their caregivers. Foster parents are also expected to be more than in the past. It is no longer good enough to raise foster children as if they were your own. You are expected to be a therapist, disciplinarian, teacher, probation officer, addictions counsellor, and trauma expert to name a few.

In our office, we often hear stories of grief and hurt and uncertainty. We hear foster parents wanting to do the very best for the children in their care and not feeling they have adequate tools in their pockets to do the job right. This, then, leads to foster parents giving up and walking away from fostering with a profound sense of failure.

One of the ways we provide support to foster parents is through education. We believe if a foster parent feels they can positively impact a child, they will continue to foster regardless of the challenges. To that end we have changed the training we provide here. It is still free to foster parents and it still provides good referenced material but it now also ensures there is a practical parenting component; strategies and tools you can put into motion right away. We think this element distinguishes us from other trainings.

If you are interested in attending any of our training, please contact Ashley in our office and she will arrange for you to be put on our registration list.

Aaaaand – just so you know – we are actively planning for our annual conference. It will look a little different from previous ones in that it will be a one day event, but it will be held a few different dates in different locations throughout the province so you won't have to travel as far as in the past to attend. The conference will be held, first, in Gimli on May 26, 2016. The topic is Caring Through Trauma – understanding the impact of trauma on foster and kinship homes. My co-worker Charlotte and I will be delivering the information. We are looking forward to seeing you there!

**Lisa Moxam**



### MFFN TRAINING

Check out our calendar on our website or like our Facebook page for training dates and other events to be announced.

[www.mffn.ca](http://www.mffn.ca)

Manitoba Foster Family Network



*"Fostering Connections"*

90 Terracon Place  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R2J 4G7

Phone: 204-940-1280  
Toll Free: 1-866-458-5650  
Fax: 204-940-1283  
E-mail: [manfost@mffn.ca](mailto:manfost@mffn.ca)  
Website: [www.mffn.ca](http://www.mffn.ca)

Have you considered joining the Manitoba Foster Family Network's Board of Directors?

Joining the board of directors would allow you the opportunity to:

- Work with fellow foster parents to grow your Network.
- Bring forth relevant information to guide programming.
- Work with a dynamic, and energetic group of people.
- Grow and develop new skills.
- Contribute your time in a meaningful and rewarding way.

### Call for Elections

The following is the list of Board Positions we are currently seeking nominations for. If you or someone you know would be interested in serving on our board of directors or if you have any questions, please contact the office at 204-940-1280 or by email at [manfost@mffn.ca](mailto:manfost@mffn.ca) prior to **February 1, 2016**.

Area	Term
Winnipeg	AGM 2016 (2 year term)
Winnipeg	AGM 2016 (2 year term)
North	AGM 2016 (2 year term)
North	AGM 2016 (2 year term)
South	AGM 2017 (1 year term)
South	AGM 2016 (2 year term)
South	AGM 2016 (2 year term)
South	AGM 2017 (1 year term)

### Our Mission

The Manitoba Foster Family Network encourages, promotes, and assists in the development of healthy foster homes to improve the quality of life for the children in care.