



"Fostering Connections"

Manitoba Foster Family Network

The Networker

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Message from the Board

I hope this finds you enjoying this totally awesome fall.

I know for a lot of us, we spend most of our fall and winter in arenas. Our lives are filled with hockey, ringette, or at the school with volleyball and basketball. We really need to make sure to spend some time outside before that snow falls (if it hasn't already).

Soon we will be getting ready for the holidays where, as foster parents, we try to do it all ourselves. Make sure to slow down and enjoy the season.

The Manitoba Foster Family Network is working hard to finish projects in the north before winter really sets in. Many wonderful things are happening through our office so be sure to check it all out, some of which is featured in this newsletter.

We will be holding our next conference and forum on January 17th, 2017 in Winnipeg. We hope to see you there.

Wishing you all the best as the 2016 year closes down.

Sincerely,

Sharon Joyal

Vice President of the Southern Region

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Acting Executive Director's Report

Hello everyone,

I am excited to say that this has been a wonderful year at The Network. We have been all over the province delivering training and making more and more connections with foster parents and agencies. We have also been working on some exciting collaborations.

We have included a conference brochure for you in this newsletter. It will give you information about the work being done between the Office of The Children's Advocate and the Manitoba Foster Family Network. We have completed the first of three presentations of the OCA's report *On the Edge Between Two Worlds: Community Narratives on the Vulnerability of Marginalized Indigenous Girls*. It was wonderful to connect with the foster and kinship parents of Swan River and surrounding communities on this important topic. A huge thank you to Dr. Marlyn Bennett and Ainsley Krone for their participation. We are looking forward to the next presentation and focus group in Winnipeg January 17th, 2017.

While in Swan River, we also hosted a Family Fun Night. We had a wonderful dinner prepared and served by The Northern members of the Manitoba Foster Family Network's Board of Directors. After dinner we were rewarded with an amazing talent show. Local children in care took to the stage and treated us to entertainment that included a video presentation, a Rubics cube performance, a guitar performance, a solo choral performance and a group choir performance where every child in attendance participated! Amazing!

Last but not least, on behalf of the Manitoba Foster Family Network Board of Directors and Staff we wish you much happiness and celebration this holiday season!

Jennifer Karaim

Acting Executive Director



Douglas Gerrard, Vice President of the Winnipeg Region, cuts the cake for foster parents at our Foster Parent Appreciation Open House held on October 19th, 2016 in Honour of National Foster Family Week.
Thank you for all of the hard work you do for the children in your care.

Thank you to our donors for supporting our conference and forum!

The Manitoba Foster Family Network would like to express its gratitude to Dr. Marlyn Bennett and Ainsley Krone, our Northern Board Members, as well as local businesses who thoughtfully contributed door prizes, listed below.

Adventure Outdoors

Bee Gee's

Buds and Blossoms

Fit 24/7

Swan Valley Coop

Westwood Inn

We would also like to thank the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, the Office of the Children's Advocate, and the Canadian Mental Health Association for their resource tables.

Peer Support News

Please join me in welcoming two new providers to our team, Vinnie and Sandy. Both women are seasoned foster parents with incredible compassion and knowledge.

Vinnie and her husband foster in the Southern end of the province. She comes with a ton of fostering experiences and is well connected to the fostering community.

Sandy is returning to us from a few years hiatus. She and her husband foster in the Interlake area. Sandy has fostered for many years and has a wealth of knowledge to share.

Recently some of our providers attended Vicarious Trauma as presented by the General Authority. This is an essential training for those of us that provide support to others. Hearing stories of sadness or pain can be harmful over time if the person is not aware of the impact of those stories.

Our Peer Support providers take calls live Monday to Friday from 8:30 am - 4:30 pm. They also answer messages left on the phone line from 9:00 am - 9:00 pm on weekends and holidays.

When you call us for support or information we strive to be as knowledgeable as possible so you feel less isolated and better informed. To this end, all providers attended training about Alternate Dispute Resolution meetings. They learned about the purpose of these meetings and the role of support in the appeal process.

Lisa Moxam

South Update

Now more than ever in the history of fostering, foster parents need to know stuff. It isn't good enough these days to simply take in a child and care for them as if they were your own. Foster children come with increased needs – both emotional and physical. Foster/kinship homes need to know and understand the impact of multiple generations of people not being able to raise their children. We need to know how to respond to mental health difficulties. We need to know how to parent children regardless that they might have experienced trauma historically. We also need to know how to juggle several children with myriad medical and behavioral challenges while we prevent head lice, bed bugs, engage in extra-curricular activities and get everyone to school, therapy and doctors with a minimum of upset. At the Network we do a number of things to address these challenges and more. We provide no charge quality training to foster parents, we provide support to fostering families as they raise children that are not theirs and we help connect foster parents to each other to name a few.

One of the ways we provide connection is through regional events. This past summer we held a BBQ in St Malo and at this time we are planning for a winter event in the Winkler area. We are researching community clubs for a skating party so keep an eye out for more information.

Training is in full swing in our area. We hold Mentorship programs in both Winnipeg (Tuesdays from 10:00 am - 2:00 pm) and in Steinbach (Wednesdays from 10:00 am - 2:00 pm). This is free training to foster parents and provides hands-on practical information that can be used every day and in all parenting circumstances. At this time training is conducted by a staff member and a foster parent with the ultimate goal being for this training to be delivered directly from foster parent to foster parent. It is our hope over time to be able to provide Mentorship in all areas on a regular basis. This will create a common thread of information for the fostering/kinship community that can then be relied on by the larger system. It increases the foster parent's ability to communicate information effectively to the children's agency both in and out of formal meetings. It also helps foster/kinship homes develop strategies that can increase the effectiveness of their parenting and at the same time increase the child's ability to reach their potential. This information can be transferrable when the child is reunified to their families and as well can be utilized by other people that interact with the children such as respite.

Our Caring through Trauma presentation is currently under re-write. It will be ready for delivery in January and will be a 3 part training covering ways to define trauma, what it can look like in your home and the effects of caring for a child that has experienced trauma as well as some ways to engage in self-care to reduce the possibility of vicarious trauma for the caregiver.

Lisa Moxam

Northern Report

Recently, Northern Community Development Worker Christopher Thompson has resigned his position at Manitoba Foster Family Network. We wish Christopher well in all his future endeavours.

The Mentorship group in Flin Flon has recently completed their training. Mentorship training is currently well underway in Bellsite. They meet every Wednesday evening from 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm. For more information about Mentorship, please contact the office at manfost@mffn.ca or 204-940-1280.

In October, the Manitoba Foster Family Network held the first (of three) Fostering Connections Conference and Forum in Swan River. There was also a Family Fun Night which featured a kids talent show. See page 3 for a complete list of donors. The conference and forum will also take place in Winnipeg on January 17, 2017 and in Southern Manitoba in May 2017.

At the Manitoba Foster Family Network, we have been working to reach out to many Child and Family Services agencies to let them know about the kinship and foster parent skill development trainings we are offering. It is very important that everyone involved work together in supporting children and their families in our communities.

Currently we are providing;

- * Introduction to Kinship and Foster care
- * Mentorship Program (9 sessions of basic level skill development training)
- * Guiding Behaviours
- * Skills for Life
- * Writing your Parenting Milieu
- * Caring through Trauma

Contact us by email at manfost@mffn.ca or by phone at 204-940-1280 or toll free at 1-866-458-5650 if you are interested in learning more about the trainings we offer or when we will be providing a training in your community.

Here is a helpful exercise for kinship and foster parents

Who is involved?



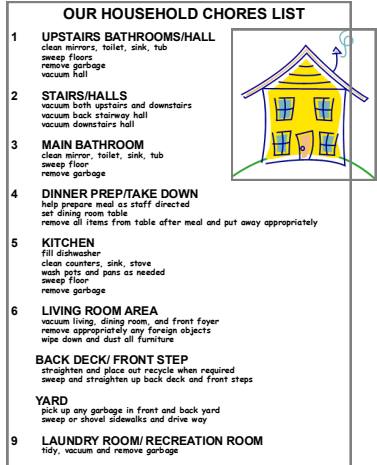
Make a list of the people who are in your parenting family. While your family maybe be small or large consider those individuals who are being parented or are acting as a parent within your family.

- Write down the names of the people who make up your parenting circle.
- List just the names and current age of the children whom you are currently parenting.
- Then list the names of all adults who are involved with parenting those children.
- Can you decide what role each person holds within the family?

Chores

There are many life skills parents teach children and adolescents in their care. Completing household chore is one skill which teaches how to maintain a healthy environment when later in life they are living on their own in their adult community. Having a pattern for teaching chores helps everyone know what needs to be done around the home and when it needs to be done. If you have a pattern and routine for teaching this important life skill everyone will know what is expected.

1. A chore list can be used to clarify household chores responsibilities for all family members.
2. The chores on the list should be numbered to show that moving from one chore to the next follows a pattern.
3. Agree upon the time period which an individual will be responsible for their assigned chore.
4. Individuals can shift down the list to the next chore when the time period is completed. Using a weekly rotation is the most common.
5. Use point form to list the chore responsibilities. The points should clearly state what is expected for each chore. Pictures of what is involved with each chore maybe helpful.
6. The steps for each chore can be written on a separate tool which can be attached in a convenient location where the chore is to completed. This step assists the person to review the responsibilities as they are completing the chore.
7. Place the Chore List in a convenient location in your home.



Parents need to remind themselves that completing chores is a learning experience for their children. Be aware of your Geography of Support position and be certain to be beside or in front to teach the chore until the child has a strong understanding of what is expected.

Brad Wright

Mistakes

“I hope that in this year to come, you make mistakes.

Because if you are making mistakes, then you are making new things, trying new things, learning, living, pushing yourself, changing yourself, changing your world. You're doing things you've never done before, and more importantly, you're Doing Something.

So that's my wish for you, and all of us, and my wish for myself. Make New Mistakes. Make glorious, amazing mistakes. Make mistakes nobody's ever made before. Don't freeze, don't stop, don't worry that it isn't good enough, or it isn't perfect, whatever it is: art, or love, or work or family or life.

Whatever it is you're scared of doing, Do it.
Make your mistakes, next year and forever.”

Neil Gaiman

Resources

The Manitoba Foster Family Network has been asked to share or have come across the following resources which may be helpful for you or the children in your care.

Mental Health First Aid for Adults Who Interact with Youth

This is a 14 hour course that focuses on mental health problems and first aid for youth ages 12-24. While it is not intended to replace consultations with a doctor or mental health provider, it will provide you with information about mental health difficulties. The goal of this course is to give you some tools to help preserve life if the person might be a danger to themselves or others. The material is also intended to help prevent a mental health problem from becoming more serious and to promote the recovery of good mental health.

"I am better prepared for the next time I encounter children who may have mental health issues"

"I found this session extremely important. Well planned and the presenter was fantastic. Lisa was passionate and enthusiastic"

If this sounds like something you could benefit from, please contact Lisa Moxam at 204-952-5241. Class size is limited to 25 participants. Cost is 100.00/person plus books (\$30.00).

West End 24-Hour Safe Space



The West End 24-Hour Safe Space is located at 430 Langside. For more information about their program, check out their website at <http://www.spenceneighbourhood.org/west-end-24-hour-safe-space> or their Facebook Page at <https://www.facebook.com/WestEnd247/>

Check out our Facebook page: Manitoba Foster Family Network for more resources, articles, trainings, etc.

As always a complete list of the trainings offered directly through the Manitoba Foster Family Network can be found on our website at www.mffn.ca or by calling the office at 204-940-1280 for more information.



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Our Mission
To encourage, promote, assist, and educate foster and kinship homes to enhance the quality of life for children in care.

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 prior to **February 1, 2017**.

Area	Term
Winnipeg	AGM 2017 (2 year term)
Winnipeg	AGM 2017 (2 year term)
Winnipeg	AGM 2018 (1 year term)
North	AGM 2017 (2 year term)
North	AGM 2017 (2 year term)
North	AGM 2018 (1 year term)
South	AGM 2017 (2 year term)
South	AGM 2017 (2 year term)

After many years of dedicated service to the Manitoba Foster Family Network Board of Directors Norm Johnson has resigned. We would like to thank Norm for his time and dedication to the foster families of Manitoba.