



A NEW YEAR OF FOSTERING

President report for March CFFA Newsletter 2016

I hope that everyone's New Year has started off on a positive note. We are now through the winter and I am sure everyone is looking forward to Spring!

At our 2015 National conference, a decision was made to start holding regular board meeting via conference calls. This has proven to be very successful keeping everyone informed of the work that is being done, or in need of doing.

Some of the work that has been completed or being worked on is:

Website - has now been upgraded with our new logo and a different look, and hopefully more user friendly.

Board Biographies - To introduce the Board, biographies are now posted on the website.

In This Issue

President's Letter

Pages 1-2

1st VP's Report

Page 2

CFFA Conference Announcement

Page 2

Provincial and Territorial Reports

Pages 3-7

CFFA Contact Info/ Mission Statement

Page 8



SPECIAL FEATURE ATTACHMENT:

Growing up in families that foster:
*Insights from the sons and daughters
of foster parents and neuroscience
(Part 1 of 3)*

Email addresses - The Executive and Provincial and Territorial Directors now have a CFFA email address to work from. These can be found on our website.

New CFFA Logo – A new logo has been approved and is now being used.

Safeguarding Manual - Revisions are now complete. The Committee is hoping for Board approval in May. It will then be available for distribution.

Spring Board Meeting/Training - We will be holding our face to face board meeting and training May 18 & 19/16, in Sundry, Alberta.

2016 National Conference – the New Brunswick Foster Parent Association will be hosting the 2016 conference Sept. 18 – 25, 2016 , in St. John, New Brunswick. Further details will be posted on our website when available, and included in our next newsletter. It is hoped that we have a good turnout of foster parent's and others at his year's conference. It is an opportune time to network with others from across Canada and to increase our knowledge by attending the various informative workshops offered.

Hoping you have a great Spring.

Sheila Durnford,
President CFFA

1ST VICE PRESIDENTS REPORT

This will be a short report as it has been a quiet winter.

The Fundscrip program was put in place this winter and has had a bit of a slow start. We would love to see more of our members participate! To sign up you can visit fundscrip.com/support-a-group and enter the CFFA's Invitation Code: **M9G4DQ**.

This was a project backed by the Board so we are looking forward to having participation from our members.

Apart from that all is quiet until our next meeting in May which will be held in Sundre Alberta at the beautiful camp location donated by the Alberta Foster Family Association.

Mary Smith,
1st VP CFFA



SAVE THE DATES!!!
September 19 - 25th, 2016

2016 CFFA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
St. John, New Brunswick

Watch for registration and conference details in our next CFFA newsletter and on our website.

BRITISH COLUMBIA FEDERATION OF FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATIONS

Greetings from sunny BC! Buds on the trees are starting to come forth ready to burst into full bloom, sorry about that -35 areas of the country

We have had a quiet winter thus far.

We continue to see challenges throughout the province for our foster parents, with a seemingly ever-increasing call for support. A continued concern for foster parents are around such issues as mileage, interpretations around contracts and the on-going respectful working environment.

Continuing projects well underway we now have a comprehensive committee structure and draft framework for the new Foster Caregiver Education and Resource Worker Training. In addition, the province is embarking on a fostering awareness campaign to increase visibility and professionalize the image of our province's caregivers and to bust some of the common myths about fostering. This will be followed in Spring 2016 by a caregiver recruitment push.

Our board is gearing up for our AGM in 2016 and the push to make this a great one in Nanaimo is on. Continued chat on the 2017 AGM in Whistler happened at our face to face, and now with a committee in place we are so excited that it will be one of the best ever.

BCFFPA's partnerships remain strong across the province and we continue to be invited to new meetings. With our presence back on the island we have received many calls on how we will be presenting ourselves to the islanders. We see our presence as a compliment to the strong FPSSS

association, and look forward to continue work at building a stronger fostering community.

The Ministry has given us another pocket of funding to assist foster parents to come to our AGM in 2016. The continued support to bring Ministry and foster parents together, benefits the whole community.

Family day brings another day to be able to share the diverse meaning of the family here in BC, with goal of the media recognizing the varied families we have in BC.

Work on the Registered Disabilities Savings Plan continues and is aimed at any foster child with challenges. Parents have been asked to have the doctors fill out the form to submit to see eligibility, this is great news for CIC's with challenges.

Moving through 2016 will continue to bring challenges for us here in BC, as of course the big challenges in our budgets still exist. We are all waiting to see what they may bring if any for our province. Foster parents have not seen an increase in several years, but more importantly we continue to see the erosion of respect. We the board wish to continue to work with the Ministry to build new and stronger relationships, ensuring foster parents that we truly are a part of the team and indeed deserve respect for all that we do in the community.

Happy Spring everyone!!

Russell Pohl

British Columbia Director, CFFA

NEW BRUNSWICK FOSTER FAMILIES ASSOCIATION

Greetings from New Brunswick! An upcoming project in May is the presentations of Dr. Bruce Perry who is arriving in Saint John for May 26th & 27th.

Dr. Bruce is a Senior Fellow at the ChildTrama Academy in Texas and is a clinician and researcher in children's mental health and the neurosciences. He is the author of *The Boy Who Was Raised As A Dog: What traumatized Children Can Teach Us About Loss, Love and Healing* and *Born for Love: Why Empathy is Essential-and Endangered*. I'm sure all our foster parents will enjoy his presentation.

At the present time we are quite busy working on the CFFA conference being held September 18 – 25 in Saint John. I have a good committee working with me, as well as lots of support from the NBFFA & Social Development. Our committee meets each month & things are moving along nicely. I will keep you informed, as time moves on and will have more of an update in our July issue of *The Bulletin*.

Our president, Kevin Kyle has been hoping to meet with our Minister, to discuss the foster care but no date had been set, as yet we will provide an update once he does.

The next NBFFA meeting will be in April. I'll have more news to share with everyone then.

Judy Smith

New Brunswick Director, CFFA

FOSTER FAMILY COALITION OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Greetings ... I am Chris DeWolf, the new CFFA Director from the Northwest Territories. I have been living in Fort Smith, NWT for many years and have my own graphic arts/art creations/promotional business, DeWolf ArtWorks. I have been fostering since 2012 and I am on the board of directors for the FFC-NWT representing the Fort Smith region. I look forward to meeting the rest of the CFFA board in May at the face-to-face meeting.

There have been a number of changes with the FFC-NWT since the fall. Firstly, we moved to a new office space that has street access and some windows; this is extremely important when we only have daylight for a few hours in the dead of winter. After barely unpacking our office space flooded which meant we were forced to have everything packed up and stored while it was cleaned up and renovations took place. We continued on a usual with business but had a couple other temporary locations. We are not back in the office and have unpacked for the second time.

We have been working hard over the winter on setting up the online portal so what we can deliver P.R.I.D.E. training online. We have been working with Governor State University on the project and it will be piloted in early spring and will then be available to the public after that. We are really excited about having the training online because the Northwest Territories is really spread out and it is very hard to access everyone, especially the fly-in communities. We will be working in partnership with the regions to support us by having computer access to individuals that do not have it. We will have a training centre set up in our office in Yellowknife as well.

We hopped for, packed and shipped 200 backpacks full of items that would be comfort for children and youth that are entering foster care. This was a project in partnership with the Children's Aid Foundation. The Ted and Loretta Rogers Transition program is a fairly new initiative what we were invited to join.

November meant traveling to Montreal for the Executive Directors Meetings. We continue to work researching topics of interest gathering and information to be made accessible to others in the country; the next full day meeting is at the CFFA conference in Edmonton in June.

We continue to work with the Department of Health and Social Services, Government of the NWT, on areas that are crucial to successful fostering in the north. Our working relationship has really grown over the past couple of years and we will now be entering into a multi-year funding agreement that will continue to have admin support in the office. WE have been checking off some of the items that we had on our wish list which include Foster Parent Legal Defence Insurance, increases to per diems and increases to the adoption subsidy. These will all take place in the new fiscal year.

We are also gearing up for Camp Connections to begin, this is a major project for the FFC-NWT that provides a week-long outdoor adventure for children and youth ages 7-18 who are involved with social services.

I look forward to representing the Northwest Territories on the Board of the Canadian Foster Family Association!

Chris DeWolf,

Northwest Territories Director, CFFA

FOSTER PARENTS SOCIETY OF ONTARIO

Hello from Ontario!

We were glad to have so many of you back in our province for the 2015 CFFA conference. We hope you enjoyed Niagara Falls as much as we enjoyed having you. Our annual FPSO conference is the highlight of our year, as we gather to receive excellent training, as well as to network with our peers. This past year we appreciated networking with our fellow foster parents from across Canada, learning from each other about our strengths and our struggles, and getting a few ideas to bring home with us!

Recently we have concluded our regional meetings with our FPSO members, bringing leadership in from our fostering communities on a more local level, for a day of information sharing. We let our membership know of our activities, and in turn they let us know what is happening in their region. With our unique system here of 47 independent child welfare agencies, it can be challenging to keep abreast of issues as they arise in individual agencies, as well as to hear of best practices. Though our directors bring these topics to the table in our board meetings, these smaller local meetings have proven to be a good venue for discussions, and enable more local leaders to be a part of that discussion. And we avoid getting snowed in, as has happened before in our winter meetings! We continue to have our President's, Advocates and Directors (PAD) meetings, several times a year, to continue discussions at the provincial level as well.

The FPSO remains active in a multitude of areas, including involvement with the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS), the Child Advocate's Office, the Ministry of Child and Youth Services, and the Consortium (SAFE). We continue to

lobby for provincial standards for our foster parents, and to enable better futures for our foster kids. We assist agencies to strengthen or rebuild their foster family associations, and provide assistance in developing positive relationships between foster parents and their agencies. We pursue current and upcoming trends, issues and legislation that pertain to our foster families, and share and train our foster families about what we have learned, and how it may affect them. Currently, the Child Protection Information Network (CPIN), has been a high priority topic, as Ontario attempts to roll out its single information system for child welfare in our province. We will have to keep you posted about how it unfolds.

The work continues here in our province, and when spring arrives, we will meet as a provincial group again, with another PAD meeting. We will review our winter's work, and compare how our regions are evolving, as child welfare evolves in Ontario. And in September, we will meet with you again at our next national conference, in New Brunswick, to share our successes and struggles, as well as to learn from yours. And I look forward to seeing you all there.

*Gena Morrow,
Ontario Director, CFFA*

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND FEDERATION OF FOSTER FAMILIES

Happy Valentine's Day and hello again from the foster parents of PEI. Since our last contact we have received an increase in our Level fee to the tune of \$200.00 for each of the three levels. It is greatly appreciated by all the foster parents across the Island and very well deserved.

We have just been appointed a new Minister and her name is Tina Lundy. As one of her first acts as Minister she visited the homes of three of the Islands Foster Parents. This is first for any Minister that we have had. She appeared to be greatly interested in what and how foster parents in general were coping. She was very interested in our concerns and some of the ideas that we had in rectifying them. As this was our first encounter with the Minister, I'll have to reserve judgement and say that "the jury is still out" we'll keep you updated on our progress.

In addition the Province is reviewing its "Child Protection Act" and the Foster Parents were invited to do a presentation on any additions or amendments they felt were needed.

In February we had our annual Sleigh ride with a 42 persons attending, which is a great turnout. It is a great opportunity for all the children in our homes, be they bio, adopted, or in care, to come together, interact, and get to know each other better. Our next activity is going to be bowling & pizza party during the March Break.

We held our AGM on Saturday 26 October, at the Delta Prince Edward. The two positions that were up for offering were the President and Treasurer. There was no change as Donna Blue and I were elected by acclamation. Our workshop was on "Bullying in the Workplace" and was received with mixed results. The presenters were very knowledgeable, albeit not all was relevant to Fostering. But, it certainly was an eye opener for some and really identified the imbalance in power that we, as foster parents, operate under.

We've just released our latest Foster Parent list and we are down to 63 homes here on the Island. We have been seeing a steady decrease in numbers and we are really struggling with our retention as well as our recruitment Issues.

In closing I would like to thank the Board of the PEIFFF for their continued support, without these dedicated members working behind the scenes we would not be where we are today.

Wayne MacFarlane,
PEI Director, CFFA

SASKATCHEWAN FOSTER PARENTS ASSOCIATION

It has been a busy year in Saskatchewan. We are pursuing a number of partnership that will benefit our overall goal of caring for children. The SFFA is aggressively pursuing a more active role within Saskatchewan with PRIDE. We have the privilege of providing office space for the Ministry PRIDE specialists in our office facility. Late last year the board of directors for the SFFA and the Management of the SFFA modified our policy for the provincial leadership teams with the intended outcome to be a revitalization of the leadership teams in enabling them to build and maintain better relationships between foster families in the respective regions. Our Provincial AGM is coming in early June and this year we hold our conference in conjunction with the AGM. Some exciting workshops are being planned.

Kevin Harris
Saskatchewan Director, CFFA

Contact

If you are now receiving your copy of *The Bulletin* by mail and you would like to have it sent to your new residence, you **MUST** send notification of your new address to Sharon Joyal - 3rd Vice President and CFFA Membership Chairperson. Addresses can be found in each issue of the newsletter.

Submissions

Do you have an article/report or fostering story that you would like to share with other foster parents? Please e-mail your articles/reports/stories to Tammy Roberts, Newsletter Chair at info@ffcnwt.com.



MISSION

The CFFA is a national organization that works in collaboration with the provincial and territorial foster family associations and other national organizations involved with children & youth in care to enhance foster care across Canada.

VISION

Canadian Foster Families will be respected and empowered in order to better facilitate the best possible environment for children in care.

VALUES

- Support positive change to fostering in Canada.
- Advocating for the empowerment of Foster Families in Canada

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Growing up in families that foster: Insights from the sons and daughters of foster parents and neuroscience – Part 1 of 3

by: Sarah Serbinski, PhD

Introduction

Practitioners, researchers, and foster parents have suggested that fostering positively impacts the sons/daughters of foster parents because they are able to hone their empathy abilities (e.g., Clare, Clare, & Peaty, 2006). Research and practice experience, however, also suggests that fostering may negatively impact sons/daughters, such as putting them at risk of physical, emotional, sexual, or psychological harm when children who are maltreated temporarily reside within their homes (e.g., Pugh, 1996). Thus, research is needed to provide further clarification about the well-being of this important group of individuals. In this three-part, mini article series, I will be sharing with you three theoretically sufficient findings from my dissertation research on the emotions of the biological and adopted, young adult sons and daughters of foster parents (sons/daughters). In this article, I will discuss how the participating sons/daughters sometimes developed difficulties connecting with some of their foster siblings. The second article (Part 2) looks at how the participating sons/daughters sometimes developed difficulties connecting with friends and romantic partners due to experiencing multiple relationship losses while fostering. The final article (Part 3) will discuss how the participating sons/daughters seek your assistance, as their parents, to help regulate their emotions while fostering.

In reading this mini article as a foster parent with your own children, you will hopefully gain some insights into your own children's emotional well-being and their perspectives and how you can continue to be there to support them while you foster. If you are a son or daughter of foster parents reading this article, you will find that you are not alone in your feelings or experiences related to fostering. Many of the sons/daughters I interviewed shared that they didn't know other sons/daughters and they felt that they were the only ones who felt this way. Hopefully this research will provide you with a window into the experiences of other sons/daughters.

I am the daughter of now retired foster parents from Ontario. I also have worked in the child welfare field for approximately seven years as a Child Protection Worker and more recently as a Research Project Coordinator. Currently, I teach neuroscience and mindfulness at the University of Toronto, and provide consultation and education services to the fostering community across Canada and internationally. One of the things I have noticed throughout my journey has been the limited information available on sons/daughters within practice, research, and definitely at the policy-level. That said, this research was conducted to learn more about sons/daughters. I am extremely grateful to all of the participating sons/daughters for the courage to share their stories.

Methodology

This qualitative, arts-based study used a variety of data collection methods, which commenced after an independent ethics review committee at the University of Toronto approved this study. Participating sons/daughters were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire, talk about their experiences, bring a non-identifying object that had meaning for them in relation to their fostering experiences, photograph their object, and write a caption for their photograph.

The Canadian Foster Family Association, Foster Parents Society of Ontario, League of Ontario Foster Families, and various child welfare agencies in Ontario kindly agreed to distribute the recruitment flyer to their foster families (*You may have seen the flyer yourself!*). In the end, the sample within this study included 15 participants; of which, twelve were daughters and three were sons of foster parents. The majority of the sons/daughters were 20-25 years old, but participants ranged in age from 20-35 years. These individuals experienced a range of 3-289 foster siblings, with an estimated average of 30 foster siblings each (excluding respite and relief placements). The description of the sample appears to be similar to the recent national study on foster parent retention and recruitment (see Leschied, Rodger, Brown, den Dunnen, & Pickel, 2014).

Data obtained within this study was analyzed using a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006). Meaning that information from one participant was coded/analyzed and then reviewed by itself, as well as with other participant data. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, the study included prolonged engagement with the participants, triangulation of data, peer debriefing, reflexivity of the researcher, member-checking, negative cases, audio-taping the interviews, and an audit trail (see Serbinski, 2014 for a comprehensive review of the study methodology).

Finding #1: Sons/daughters develop difficulties connecting with some foster siblings due to the high turnover of foster siblings in and out of their homes.

The 15 participating sons/daughters are repeatedly exposed to multiple foster siblings entering and exiting their homes. As a result of the constant arrival and departures of foster siblings, sons/daughters repeatedly activate their emotional state of mind and this leads to the sons/daughters creating a fostering schema - “*You can get attached to individuals, but only up until a certain point.*” This fostering schema is repeated several times throughout the course of the family fostering, as foster children enter and depart from the sons/daughters' homes. A simplified version of this fostering schema includes: their foster sibling arrives, their foster sibling lives with them, and then their foster sibling leaves. Sons/daughters indicated several emotions felt while developing a relationship with their foster siblings. Some sons/daughters want to spend quality time with their foster siblings, they share similar interests, and include each other in their family units. As well, the sons/daughters indicated some factors that could hinder their relationship with their foster siblings. Some of these factors include: sons/daughters are temporarily or permanently moved out of the fostering home, sons/daughters and foster siblings do not have similar interests, foster siblings display violent and/or aggressive behaviours to members of the foster family, foster siblings steal from the sons/daughters' family, foster siblings are disrespectful to sons/daughters' parents and home, and sons/daughters' own behaviours may prevent a relationship from developing with their foster sibling. Most likely this isn't new information for you, as this finding has frequently been noted within previous research on sons/daughters (e.g., Sutton & Stack, 2013).

Implications for sons/daughters

The identified fostering schema suggests that fostering impacts sons/daughters because it is another life experience for them. Cozolino and Santos (2014) stated that “the birth, growth, development, and connectivity of neurons are the basic mechanisms of all adaptation and learning. All of these changes are expressions of neuroplasticity, or the ability of the brain to change in response to experience” (pp.167-168). Thinking, feeling, events, objects, persons, tasks, and the alike, cause changes to the brain (Farmer, 2009). In other words, the experience of reading this article is actually changing *your* brain. As you foster, *your* brain is changing. So, it makes sense that sons/daughters are impacted and *their* brains change with fostering too. Fostering physically and emotionally impacts sons/daughters by virtue of fostering being a life experience. If you are wondering, ‘*Is fostering a good thing for my child?*’, you wouldn't be alone (e.g., Lemieux, 1984; Poland & Groze, 1993; Watson & Jones, 2002). Unfortunately, this study can't answer this question. It can, however, suggest that if sons/daughters develop a fostering schema of “*You can get attached, but only up until a certain point*”, it might be useful to explore this notion further with your own children. The participating sons/daughters suggested that it was helpful to have a secure connection with a supportive individual (such as yourself, or sibling, grandparent, neighbour).

Additional findings: Part 2 and Part 3

This study produced a lot of information about sons/daughters. There were two more theoretically significant findings and these will be discussed in the next Canadian Foster Family Association newsletters.

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