

*“A Communication  
Link with  
Foster Families  
Across the  
Province”*

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# Fostering Community Newsletter

Issue: 51

Winter 2019

The Federation of Foster Families of Nova Scotia is a charitable organization funded by the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services and governed by a Board of Directors who are foster parents.

### **Mission Statement:**

The Federation of Foster Families of Nova Scotia is a collective voice for all foster parents in Nova Scotia. In pursuit of this mission, the Federation will ensure assistance and support for foster families and Foster Family Associations.

### **Objectives:**

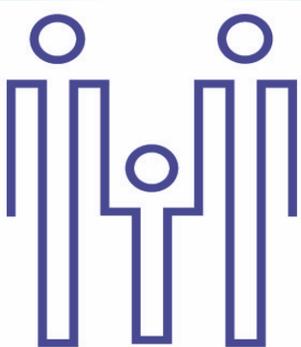
- To ensure the integrity of the Federation as the collective voice for all foster parents
- To better equip foster parents in the provision of the best possible child care
- To promote a positive profile of foster care
- To encourage the development of Foster Family Associations and Support Groups
- To continually work toward improving foster care in Nova Scotia

**Save the Date!**

**2020 AGM hosted by Mi'kmaw**

**May 29 - 31, 2020**

**Holiday Inn, Truro**



# 2019/2020 Board of Directors

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## *Greetings from the Chair of the Board...*

I want to begin by thanking the foster parents who attended the AGM meeting at The Best Western Chocolate Lake. We had some very good dialogue with you sharing concerns going forward as a foster parent in Nova Scotia. The information you shared enabled Board Members to hear first-hand so we could bring forth when meeting with The Minister of Community Services, the Honorable Kelly Regan.

The meeting with Minister Regan happened on September 19<sup>th</sup> and we discussed the following:

- \* Allegations – DCS has this marked as a priority to implement a new process. They realize the impact this can have on a person's life and the Department is engaged in making change. However, government change is a slow process due to the number of depts involved and the associated financial costs. They are trying to move forward knowing we have been patient and ask we be patient a bit longer. The end result we are requesting is to have a dedicated team looking after all allegations and they use Jill (Foster Allegation Support Social Worker from the Federation), as a member of the team developing the protocol.
- \* Post Custody & Care – the Board requested a pamphlet be developed allowing the youth and foster parent to be aware of expectations and deadlines. The Department is currently in the process of revamping this program. Associated costs for youth attending post-secondary was acknowledged. For a variety of reasons, some payments have been delayed causing anxiety for the youth and foster parents. We were fortunate to have Board Members who have gone through the process and could give great examples of improvements needed.
- \* Per Diem – The current rate is no longer adequate and should be indexed. All persons attending the meeting acknowledged the cost associated with maintaining a household has continuously increased and DCS staff understood our concerns.
- \* Special Needs Assessment Form – The Board requested a new form be developed to identify concerns relating to a child's behavior. The Department feels the PIC Tool can be used for this very purpose. There are many components to the tool that will help identify any behavior and or needs of children in care. Although the PIC Tool is still relatively new, they have confidence in its development.

Also attending this meeting were Associate Deputy Minister Tracey Barbrick, Wendy Bungay Director of Placement Services, Sue Giffin, Stacey Greenough and Leonard Dorian. Gary Landry and I also met with the Deputy Minister, Tracey Taweel, Wendy Bungay, and Tracey Barbrick on September 20<sup>th</sup> as the Deputy was unable to attend the meeting of the 19<sup>th</sup> and really wanted to hear our concerns. The Board Members felt very positive with our meeting and look forward to working closely with DCS Management to further discuss positive changes to the Foster Care System of Nova Scotia.

Sue Giffin, our Coordinator of Foster Care in Nova Scotia has retired. As of the writing of this report there has not been a replacement announced but we are aware the Department is actively interviewing for a replacement. We would like to thank Sue for her support to the Board of Directors and to the foster parents of the province. Wish her all the best in her retirement and hope she enjoys her travels.

A reminder, mark your calendar for May 29-31, 2020 for the next AGM, at the Holiday Inn in Truro. This AGM is being hosted by Mi'kmaw and the Committee has been putting together a program to meet the needs of current issues in the fostering community. Hope to see you there!!!!!!!

Another reminder, visit our website if you are looking for information that can assist you in your role as a foster parent. What you can find includes but not limited to a list of Board Members, Staff, Foster Parent Associations, recruitment info, info on training programs and forms, Foster Parent supports, resource information, news & events. A few moments to observe the website may be very helpful to you in your role as a foster parent.

Hope you have a Very Merry Christmas and a prosperous 2020,

FFFNS Board Chairperson, Wendell Fraser

# Executive Director's Report

Hoping all of you reading this are having a great Fall season and had the opportunity to take part in fun activities during "Foster Family Appreciation Week." The Launch, which took place at Hatfield Farms in the Central Region, this year turned out to be a fun filled day for all who participated.

The Holiday Season is fast approaching and hopefully you will be able to attend the Annual Children's Christmas Parties taking place in various locations usually organized by your local Foster Parent Association.

The Federation (Foster Parents and Staff) and Senior Regional DCS Staff continue to meet for our Regional Focus meetings three times a year. These meetings also take place between the Federation and the Mi'kmaw Child Welfare Staff.

The Peer Support Program (PSS) continues to work with newly approved foster homes in providing them with a PSS mentor during the initial period that they are entering the foster care system. The PSS "After Hours Call in] Service" is still available to all foster parents who have questions, concerns, etc. during times when the DCS offices and Federation office are closed. The phone number to call is 1-888-845-1555 and the service is available on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday evenings from 4:00pm to 10:00pm as well as on Saturdays and Sundays, from 10:00am to 10:00om. Please do not hesitate to call.

The Allegation and Support Program provides support to the Foster Parents who are going through an allegation or those who simply want to discuss a troubling issue related to fostering, The Allegation and Support Program has access to a translator should a Foster Parent be from the Mi'kmaw Community and feel more comfortable speaking in their native language.

The FFFNS Board of Directors is made up of 12 Board Members; 2 representing each of the four regions (Western, Central, Northern, and Eastern) as well as two representatives for the Mi'kmaw Foster Parent Community and two representatives from the African Nova Scotian Community Foster Parent Community.

Please visit the Federation Website for more information on the Board Members, Staff Members, Training Programs, Allegation and Support program, links to DCS programs, etc.

For the past few years, The Federation Office has been attempting to communicate with you via email as much as possible. Please remember to check your emails periodically as not to miss out on important news and information from the FFFNS.

Next year's FFFNS AGM is scheduled to take place on May 29<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup>, and 31<sup>st</sup> at the Holiday Inn in Truro. It will be hosted by the Mi'kmaw Community and plans are already well under way. This promises to be a great weekend of information sharing, training, and fun. Please mark this date down on your calendars.

The FFFNS Board Members work very closely with the Minister of Community Services and Senior DCS Staff in order to continue to improve the Foster Care System. DCS Senior Staff meets with the Board Members on a regular basis in order to give an update on Foster Care Redesign.

In closing, I want to thank the Board of Directors, Association Presidents, PSS Volunteers, Trainers, and FFFNS Staff for your continued hard work and dedication.

Happy Holidays!



Gary Landry  
Executive Director, FFFNS



## TRAINING REPORT

**“The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart.” – Helen Keller**



Happy holidays from the Training Team at the Federation Office. Michele and I appreciate the time you have given to be participants in the Federation's Training Programs! We wish you all the best for the upcoming Holidays and the New Year!

This year's NVCI Refresher, "The Brain Architecture Game", has been so much fun to teach! The Federation has received a lot of positive feedback about the content and the process of training! Learning can be so beneficial when content is presented in a fun and engaging manner!

The Federation continues to update the information presented in the Sensitivity Training Program for Foster Families. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of Kimberly Berry. She is a wonderful researcher and she has developed some new content and activities for this training. Although it does not require a Refresher, you are more than welcome to attend again if it has been several years since you participated in this program. The material and the exercises have been updated and we have been able to engage some new Guest Presenters!

Just a reminder that the Federation continues to partner with St. John Ambulance to provide the 2-day Standard First Aid/CPR Level "C" to foster parents throughout the province. Level "C" offers training in CPR for Infants, Youth and Adults. It is more in depth than the 1-day Emergency First Aid and it is the program funded by the Department of Community Services.

It is the Federation's Training Department's 'holiday wish' to begin a Recruitment for Trainers Process in January or February. Information will be shared when this recruitment begins. If you are not a member of the Federation of Foster Families' Facebook Page, you may wish to become one. Updated information from the Foster Parent Associations, the Federation and the Department of Community Services is posted on this page on an ongoing basis.

Respectfully submitted,  
Debbie Thibault, Cert.A.Ed., B.S.W., R.S.W.  
Coordinator of Training & Peer Support Services

# Happy Holidays!

from Peer Support Services

Winter 2019

## Recipe: Chewy Molasses Spice Cookies

RECIPE ADAPTED FROM MARTHASTEWART.COM

These cookies have become a holiday staple and favourite in my family over the year. The 36-cookie yield makes it an efficient choice for cookies swaps.

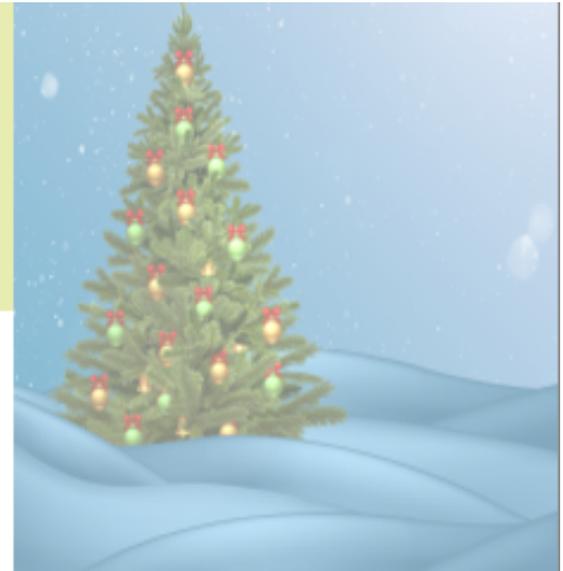
### INGREDIENTS

2 cups flour, spooned and levelled  
1 tsp cinnamon  
1/2 tsp salt  
3/4 cup butter, softened  
1/4 cup molasses  
1 1/2 tsp baking soda  
1/2 tsp nutmeg  
1 1/2 cups sugar  
1 large egg

### DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350F. In medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking soda, and spices. In a shallow bowl, set aside 1/4 cup sugar.
2. With a mixer, beat together butter and remaining cup of sugar. Beat in egg and then molasses. Reduce speed to low; mix in dry ingredients gradually, just until a dough forms.
3. Roll dough into 1 tbsp balls, and coat in reserved sugar. Tip: consider refrigerating dough for 20 minutes prior to this step, and keep your hands cold and clean.
4. Arrange on baking sheet about 3" apart. Bake one sheet at a time until edges are just crispy, 10-15 minutes. Cool 1 min and transfer to cookie rack to finish cooling.

*Peer Support Services is possible through the time and dedication of our team of experienced foster parent volunteers.*



## Peer Support Services

1-888-845-1555

### On-Call Support Schedule

*Wednesdays*  
4pm to 10pm

*Thursdays*  
4pm to 10pm

*Fridays*  
4pm to 10pm

*Saturdays*  
10am to 10pm

*Sundays*  
10am to 10pm

On-Call Support is available on the schedule above, including Christmas Day, Boxing Day, and New Year's Day.

## From the Vault

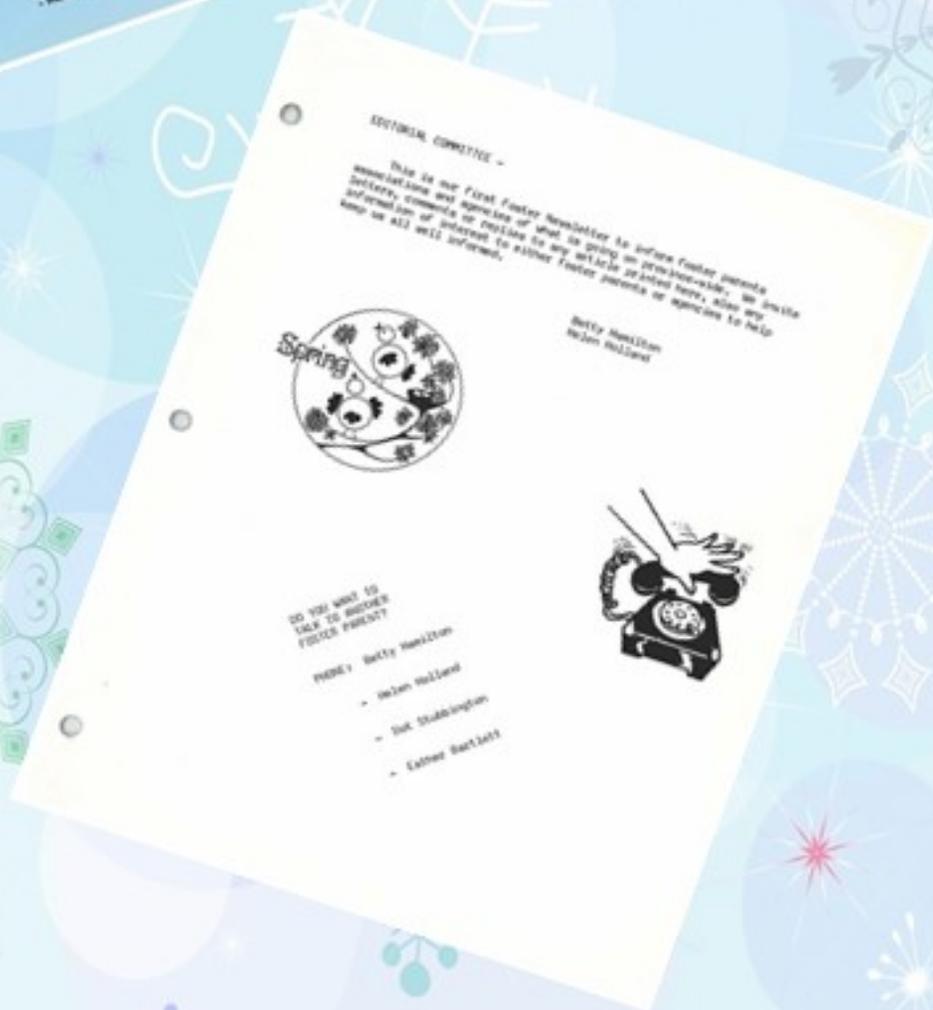
Did you know the first edition of the newsletter came out in April of 1983?

Also in 1983:

- The Honorable John Buchanan was premier of Nova Scotia
- Prince Charles & Princess Diana visited Halifax as part of their Royal Tour of Canada
- Dallas was the top rated TV show
- If you liked video games, chances are you owned an Atari or a ColecoVision



- "Return of the Jedi" was the #1 grossing film of the year
- "Just Go to Bed" by children's author, Mercer Meyer, was first published
- Some of the top selling artists at the time were The Police, Culture Club, Def Leppard, Lionel Ritchie, and Kenny Rogers
- And lastly, another Trudeau was in office as Canada's Prime Minister, Pierre Trudeau



## *Greetings from Your Board of Directors...*

### **Central Region**

Hello everyone! The holidays are fast approaching, and it has been a busy fall for the Board Members and the Central Region Association. With the upcoming DCS transformation, the Board has been looking at ways to improve how the Federation serves its members. We took part in a Strategic Planning session in October along with the Federation Staff. This was facilitated by Consultant, George Savoury. That same weekend was the kickoff to Foster Family Appreciation Week. As it was the Central Region's turn to host the event, it was held at Hatfield Farms. There was a great turnout, the weather was nice, and everyone had a fun time.

During the Fall, the Central Region Association held elections for a new President. Maureen Wickwire has taken over from Liz Burton. Thank you to Liz for all your work over the last few years. The children's Christmas party is coming up on December 8<sup>th</sup> and will be held at Alderney Landing just like last year. We look forward to seeing many of our foster families from the Central Region.

In closing, we would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, and a wonderful New Year.

Your Central Region Board Reps,

Ann Jennex-Roberts  
Patricia Cain

### **Northern Region**

Greetings to all foster parents in Nova Scotia, especially those in the Northern Region.

I hope everyone has had a good Summer. With so much travelling with our families at times, Foster parents are always keeping an eye on the weather. Let's hope the Winter isn't too bad this year

Your Federation Board continues to work hard on your behalf, addressing concerns and advocating for improvements in foster care. We have had another meeting with the Minister Kelly Regan, who seems to understand the concerns we bring forward, but may not always be able to address them as we would like. We have also had meetings with the Department of Community Services, both as a Board and also in the regions.

There are many changes happening with D.C.S. (many of them due to our advocacy) and, as well as seeing the total plan, the Department is keeping us up to date on things as they happen. I would like to thank the D.C.S. "team" for all the work they do for us and for including the Federation in their planning.

I continue to work on the Policy and Health and Safety Committees with the Board and have been able to attend all but one of the meetings in spite of my being "sick" this past Summer. We have a great Board that support each other and I would like to thank Wendell our chair and all the Board members for all their hard work.

The Federation also has a great staff team, headed by Gary Landry, who work hard on your behalf. I would like to extend our thanks to them.

I wish you all a very happy, stress free Christmas...with lots of blessings.....Patricia Norman

## African NS Region

The past few months have been busy for us as Board Members. We have met with the Minister of Community Services in October as well as the head office team working on the foster care re-design. As you know the re-design of foster care has been worked on for the last number of years and the Board has had opportunities to give input on some of the very important issues that affect foster care. A number of committees comprised of youth and foster parents have also been created and consulted with to give a comprehensive view by all parties involved in foster care. We believe the issues of importance from a foster parents point of view has been communicated very strongly. One issue that is very concerning to all of us is allegations and how they are handled. We have asked the Minister to create a team of seasoned Social Workers to handle these matters and create a specific protocol in attending to these matters. We feel some changes should come about very soon as a result of this meeting.

Recently we invited Winnie Grant (Advisor on African Affairs) to our board meeting to explain to everyone about her newly created position with Dept. of Community Services. A series of meet and greet meetings have been held in Halifax in October which Iona Smith has attended and she reported that a number of information booths were set up to promote and advise the African NS community about services available to them.

The coming months will be very busy for many of us and Christmas is right around the corner. On behalf of Iona Smith and myself we would like to wish all of you a Happy Holiday Season and a New Year filled with Peace and Good Health!! The following is a super easy recipe for Salsa Chicken which is very tasty and a big hit with the kiddies!

### Salsa Chicken (Crock Pot)

1 Large jar of Salsa (I use the ones from Costco as they are very big) If not add 2 large jars from grocery store.

8 Chicken Breasts ( Boneless)

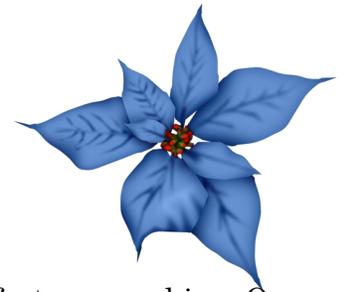
Add to slow cooker on High for 4 hours. Shred with fork and knife when done and serve on a bed of rice. Leftovers make great wraps!!

Enjoy!

Anita MacMillan and Iona Smith



## *Association News...*



Greetings to all Foster Parents, especially those in our region.

I hope you have all had a good Summer. Fall is here, but Winter seems to be fast approaching. Our Association has continued meeting every last Monday of the month at the Antigonish Superstore. Although we do not have many attend, the discussions are always good and it is great to hear how our foster families are getting along. It would be nice to hear if there were any camps that your children were able to attend and any other events or changes over the Summer. The Association meeting is always a good place to hear about the latest news from your Board and updates in fostering in Nova Scotia. This is also a place where concerns can be discussed and if necessary brought forward to the Board meetings and / or the Focus meetings with the D.C.S.

You can contact me at any time. I will always answer messages if I am not at home. There have been more changes with D.C. S. and they are keeping the Board up to date with the progress they are making. With Christmas approaching and the expectations of everyone, especially the children, it can be a busy, stressful time. Don't forget to take care of yourselves so that you can take care of the children.

I wish you all a very happy and peaceful Christmas....with many blessings,  
Patricia Norman ( Association President....863 8351)



One of the Federation's Board Members, Ethel Wentzell (right), ran into the Federation's former Executive Director, Phyllis Parker (left), on Sunday. Phyllis retired in the spring of 2003 after approximately 11 years of serving foster parents throughout the province of Nova Scotia! Phyllis was ED during the days of the implementation of the Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Training, the development of the Sensitivity Training Program for Foster Families and the Foster Allegation Support Program, the implementation of the P.R.I.D.E. Program and the transition from an Administrative Board of Directors to a Policy Governance Board of Directors. Phyllis is a 'Federation Legend' and we wish her a wonderful Holiday Season and all the best for 2020!

## **I'm From**

***By Alex Reeves***

**I am from playing outside in the grass with my pets.  
Snuggling, petting and getting licked.  
A family with pets is where I'm from.**

**I am from a new bedroom with a T.V., yummy food, new Fitbit  
and freshly painted walls.  
A better family life is where I'm from.**

**I am from great times with my new parents. Long walks,  
swinging in the backyard, trips to the movies and  
being looked after.  
Family fun activities is what I'm from.**



**Federation of Foster Families of Nova Scotia**



*“A Communication Link with Foster Families”*

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Fax: (902) 424-5199

**We're also on the web!**

[www.fosterfamilies.ns.ca](http://www.fosterfamilies.ns.ca)

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**Do you have any news or articles you would like to see featured in this newsletter? If so, please contact our editor Rose Callaghan at (902) 424-3071 or [rose.callaghan@novascotia.ca](mailto:rose.callaghan@novascotia.ca)**