

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

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE...**

**Board of Directors**  
2

**Report of the Board  
Chair**  
3

**Executive Director’s  
Report**  
4

**Training Report**  
5

**Allegation & Support  
Services/ Coordinator  
of Foster Care**  
6

**PSS Program**  
7

**Board Reports**  
8

**Federation Staff  
Listing**  
12

# Fostering Community Newsletter

Issue: 54

Fall 2020

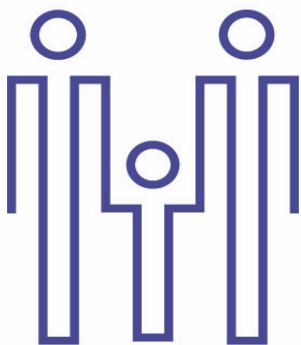
The Federation of Foster Families of Nova Scotia is a charitable organization funded by the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services and governed by a Board of Directors who are foster parents.

### **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



# 2020/2021 Board of Directors

## CENTRAL REGION:

MARINA KEEPING (902) 441-5294 m.keeping@yahoo.ca  
ANN JENNEX-ROBERTS (902) 448-2407 ajennexroberts@hotmail.com

## EASTERN REGION:

SHEILA HILL (902) 226-3778 bill\_sheila\_hill76@hotmail.com  
WENDELL FRASER (902) 574-3044 FFFNSpresident@outlook.com  
(Board Chair)

## NORTHERN REGION:

ROSE-ANNE WRIGHT (902) 899-0936 roseannewright1@gmail.com  
MARY ANN BURKE (902) 870-1254 maryannburke610@gmail.com

## WESTERN REGION:

JOY SWEENEY (902) 749-7342 lloydjoy21@hotmail.com  
(Secretary)  
ROB RICHARDSON (902) 637-8010 robandcrissyrichardson@gmail.com

## MI'KMAQ REPRESENTATIVES:

DARLENE ARSENEAU (902) 986-9112 darlenearseneau@gmail.com  
JUSTINE DENNIS (902) 549-5226 Justine\_Gould88@hotmail.com

## AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN REPRESENTATIVES:

IONA SMITH (902) 435-4539 no email  
ANITA MACMILLAN (902) 622-2196 ba.macmillan@ns.sympatico.ca

# Greetings from the Chair of the Board...

Hello Fellow Foster Parents,

Today we are in the midst of this pandemic that has really created havoc in so many lives. There is just nothing going on as per usual. All we can do is try to follow the safety guidelines and hope that those we come in contact with have done the same.

I want to advise that on October 25th I forwarded an email to the Minister of Community Services, Kelly Regan. As of the writing of this report, I have not received a reply. 35 days with no response is totally unacceptable and completely disrespectful. I requested updates on the following points: 1) a dedicated team to investigate all foster parent allegations 2) review of the per diem rates 3) what plans are in place to support foster parents during a second wave of COVID 4) review of funding children in places of safety and using these funds to better financially support foster homes 5) Foster Care Redesign - there has been many hours of work and meetings of DCS staff planning for improvements to our current system that require government support both figuratively and financially 6) I enquired if the Foster Care Coordinator position was still part of the program since our last coordinator retired in October 2019. I can't help but remember on September 19, 2019 when we last met with the Minister and I heard how we were such a great asset to the Child Welfare system of Nova Scotia and how grateful she was for all we do for the children in our care.

I am very pleased the position of Coordinator is part of our foster care program and the vacant position was filled with the hiring of Georgeina MacKinnon. She comes to us with many years of experience in Child Welfare and will be a great support for our foster families. Previous to her hiring, our Executive Director Gary Landry and I were able to participate with regular scheduled conference calls with Wendy Bungay, the Director of Placement Services, during COVID. Wendy is a huge supporter of foster families and does what she can to help us get through these difficult times, to which we are truly grateful. The calls had stopped when the Atlantic area was doing so well but have now been reinstated. If you have concerns, reach out to us to bring them forward.

The Board Members have not been able to have an in person meeting since the beginning of COVID but have been able to stay in contact using email and conference calls. Although not as effective, we are able to discuss current issues and concerns of foster parents. You must remember, the Board and/or board members cannot change any policy of DCS but we can bring forth concerns any foster parent in Nova Scotia have of policy. You may not receive a favorable response to your concern, but you will receive a response. I want to congratulate Darlene Arseneau for being re-elected as representative of Mainland Mi'kmaq and both board members of our African Nova Scotian Region, Anita MacMillan and Iona Smith. New board members Robert Richardson Western Region, Marina Keeping Central Region, Mary Ann Burke Northern Region, Sheila Hill Eastern Region, Justine Dennis Cape Breton Mi'kmaq, WELCOME TO THE BOARD. Please reach out to congratulate them and/or with any concerns you feel they or the board of directors can help you with. This will also be the final year for our other four board members so we will be looking for new representatives in the Spring of 2021. You may have to review our Federation website to see who and maybe you would be a great board member to support our foster families. Why not give this some thought?

Hey, hats off to the recent announcement by Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax offering free tuition to former foster children. We all know what a shortfall in education can mean. Lack of opportunities, lower income levels, poorer health incomes which could lead to drug and or alcohol abuse. Programs are expected to start in January for a maximum of 10 as a pilot and then expanded in September 2021. This is a very classy initiative by whomever the decision makers were.

Thank You to all our staff members who have been coping with the pandemic. There had been a lot of work done from home in the early stages, then they returned to work from the office and now with the second wave in progress, they may be returning to working from home. We all need to take necessary precautions to win against COVID.

I want to THANK YOU, our Nova Scotia Foster Parents. You do remarkable things for those in your care and YOU are making a difference in the lives of so many. I wish you all a Very Merry Christmas and a back to normal New Year and all the best to you all in 2021.

Best Regards, Wendell Fraser



# Executive Director's Report

Greetings from the Federation Office,

Hoping you are all doing well and coping the best that you can during these very challenging times. We, at the Federation office, are adapting to the fact that we have to work differently than we used to prior to the pandemic. On March 16<sup>th</sup>/2020, all staff began working from home, following the provincial directive. On July 6<sup>th</sup>/2020, we returned to working from the office, again following the provincial directive. As advised, office staff do not all work from the office at the same time, in order to limit our exposure to each other. The Federation Office closely follows the Department of Health guidelines as well as our office building's management guidelines. We want to keep all staff members and visitors safe. Whether we are physically working from the office or from home, our office phones are transferred to our cell phones, therefore all your calls will be received and answered.

Except for the last few months, since March 16<sup>th</sup>, the O.H.S. committee had been meeting by conference call on a regular basis in order to discuss the health and safety of the FFFNS staff, visitors as well as general office procedures. These conference calls will resume now that we are going through the second wave.

As of September 2020, the "Fostering Focus Team Meetings" have also resumed, now taking place with the use of the Microsoft Team platform. As of December 1<sup>st</sup>, a Focus Team Meeting has been held for each region, including the Mi'Kmaq Agency.

I want to thank the "Provincial Launch Committee" for organizing this year's Virtual Launch. I'm sure many hours went into preparing for this event and I heard many positive remarks coming both from Foster Parents and DCS/FFFNS workers. Also in the month of October 2020, DCS and the FFFNS teamed up to send a \$50.00 gift card to all open foster homes to show our appreciation and to thank you for all your extra efforts during this time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The FFFNS Virtual 2020 AGM was held on October 25<sup>th</sup> /2020. Thank you to Rose, Debbie and Denyse for organizing this event. It did come with its challenges, however it did finally take place. We are presently in the process of getting the 2021 AGM underway. It will be hosted by the Mi'Kmaq community and what it will look like will all depend on what stage of the pandemic we have reached in the Spring of 2021.

The FFFNS Training Program started again this fall and the Allegation and Support program continues to be available for any Foster Parent who requires the service. Hopefully, when you get a few spare minutes, you will look at the FFFNS Website and Facebook site, for "up to date" information from our office as well as from DCS.

I want to thank all my coworkers as well as all the board members for your continued support during these times of uncertainty. I also want to acknowledge Wendell (Board Chair) and Wendy (Director of Placement Services for DCS), for their many hours spent during our regular conference calls, attempting to make improvements and provide support to Foster Parents during the pandemic. Also, a big welcome to Georgeina MacKinnon, in her new position as the Coordinator of Foster Care Services for the province. We, at the Federation, are looking forward to working with you.

Most of all, on behalf of all the FFFNS Staff members, we want to thank all the Foster Parents, for your dedication, perseverance and patience during this past year. Hopefully 2021 will be good to all of us!

Hope you all enjoy the Holiday Season!

Gary Landry



# Training Update

Despite the challenges of Covid-19, the Federation was able to present quite a few Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Training (NVCIT) Refreshers and several NVCIT Basics. As previously indicated, we are presenting the Nonviolent Crisis Intervention -2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. The Federation would like to thank all the foster parents who have graciously embraced the Covid-19 protocols including wearing masks, gloves and practicing social distancing!! As I am writing this report, it has become necessary to cancel several training workshops in the Central Region in order to follow Public Health Protocols as gathering limits have dropped from 10 to 5. Every effort will be made in January to present these programs when it is considered safe to meet once again in person.

Debbie Thibault and Marina Keeping have been asked by the Crisis Prevention Institute to be Administrators for a new networking group for NVCIT Trainers in all organizations in the Atlantic Provinces. This group will be called The Atlantic Chapter and it will meet once a month virtually with topics of discussion being based upon the needs of the group. The purpose/value of this Chapter will be:

- Provide an opportunity to meet with Certified Instructors who share a common commitment to CPI's philosophy of Care, Welfare, Safety and Security,
- Support one another in training implementation successes and challenges of Certified Instructors' experience and
- Learning/Growth as a Certified Instructor through themes of meetings that will increase recognition for the value of the contribution to their organizations by networking and ongoing professional development.

Although the priority this Fall has been the NVCIT Training, the next step will be providing the Sensitivity Training for Foster Families for those who require this training. The Federation is exploring the option of virtual training and work will begin on this concept in December with the hope of presenting this training as a pilot project in January. As such, staff members will be participating in professional development opportunities which will provide knowledge of Zoom and Microsoft Teams as proposed platforms for virtual training.

As we move through the second wave of Covid-19, the Training Staff would like to thank you for your attendance during a difficult time and we want to wish you a wonderful and safe holiday season!

Debbie Thibault & Michele Roberts



## Allegation and Support Services

Greetings foster parents throughout Nova Scotia!

For those who may be new to fostering or those who missed our summer newsletter, I just want to take the opportunity to let you all know that allegation support is still available, even though it is looking a little different these days! I resumed in-person meetings over the summer and into the early Fall (with social distancing of course!), however, now that winter is fast approaching and there has been an increase in COVID case numbers, I will be transitioning back to more telephone and virtual meetings. I can be reached at 902-424-2711 or by email at [jill.martin@novascotia.ca](mailto:jill.martin@novascotia.ca). I can email consent forms and the *Protocol* and arrange a conference call for meeting with DCS social workers (or a virtual meeting if everyone has access to the needed technology). Please don't hesitate to reach out if you are notified of an allegation, I will support you in any way that I can while also doing my best to keep us all safe!

Since early 2020 I have been part of a project with DCS that is working on implementing a dedicated team for foster home investigations. I am very excited about this project as I feel it will increase consistency in how investigations are completed as well as shorten timelines as the social worker will be able to focus on these investigations without interruptions from other caseload demands. Stay tuned in the next couple of months as the hope is to get started in early 2021.

All the best to you and yours over the upcoming holidays. Take care of yourselves and each other!

Regards,

Jill Martin, MSW, RSW

Foster Allegation & Support Social Worker

## Coordinator of Foster Care

As the new Coordinator of Foster Care for Nova Scotia I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. My name is Georgeina MacKinnon and am a registered Social Worker with the Nova Scotia College of Social Workers. I have worked within child welfare for the last 19 years and have supervised the Foster Care Program for Eastern Region for the last 11 years. I am committed to the best interest of children in care, and treating all members of the professional team with dignity and respect. The foster care program is my primary focus and my hope is that my previous experience supervising foster care will assist in supporting and coordinating the program. I am very excited to be in this position! I have and will continue to join in on the Foster Parent Focus Groups to hear any concerns or positives you may have to share. Also looking forward to meeting you all whether it be virtually or in person.

Georgeina MacKinnon

## Peer Support Services



Peer Support Services would like to introduce you to our new  
**monthly Lunch and Learn event!**

The monthly Lunch and Learn sessions will be held online via Zoom  
on the last Monday of each month, starting January 25, 2021.

Come share virtual space with fellow foster parents, right  
in the comfort of your own home!

Each month's Lunch and Learn will feature a topical discussion  
facilitated by FFFNS, and will also offer space for foster parents to  
hear and be heard.

In January, we welcome you to come online and "meet" Georgeina  
MacKinnon, DCS's new Coordinator, Foster Care Services.

*Happy Holidays to you and your families from*

*Peer Support Services*

## Board of Directors

Hello African NS Foster Families!!

Are you still hanging in there? Its been tough I know! Now for the second wave to get through.....but we are strong together. The fostering community has shown amazing resilience through all of this and that's because we are made of good stuff!! We have sent a wish (or shall I say a needs list) to the Minister and as of this writing, nothing has materialized. It's not that the board hasn't delivered a strong message outlining what is needed to continue caring for the children in care in the province of NS. Our Board Chair Wendell Fraser has delivered the message on behalf of all foster families in the province more than a month ago and we still have had no response. Costs of living have escalated and so too have the tasks being asked of us in order to keep our children safe during these unprecedented times. Thank-you for remaining true to the safety and well being of the children . I have heard recently that cleaning kits are available to Foster parents transporting children to visits. Perhaps ask your foster care social worker where these may be obtained from. Also, if you need to purchase masks for your children please add the invoice to your expenses for reimbursement. In our home we find that masks can be like gloves and socks....they disappear never to found again!! I want to emphasize the importance of self care at this time and if you know anyone who is struggling, reach out to them, even if it is just to check in and see if they are ok and have a chat. The holiday season will be here soon and I see a lot of people have put up their decorations early. As I was driving home this evening and looking at everyone's decorations I couldn't help but feel good !!

I wish for everyone a safe and happy holiday season and remember the best gifts cannot be bought. They are in our hearts!!! Please know that the board is made up of foster parents just like you and we are working hard on your behalf!! Even during pandemic times we are sending out messages and asking the province not to forget us.

The following is a tried and true recipe for a coating I use for chicken.

It is relatively inexpensive and everyone loves it!!.

1 cup flour

1/2 cup corn starch

1 Tbsp. baking powder

Chicken spice of your choice, (2 Tbsp. more or less)

Dredge your wings, drumettes, thighs, or breasts in the coating and put on a parchment lined cookie sheet. Turn up the heat like 425 and cook till crispy !! It tastes like fried chicken!!

Use a dipping sauce of your choice I like Dave's hot sauce!

Happy Holidays!! ♥

Anita Sheppard MacMillan



Western Region

Hello everyone,

I first want to thank you all for your continuing commitment to children in care. The care you provide does not go unnoticed!

I realize as we approach this Christmas season (and these times of uncertainty) that foster families will experience additional stresses and strains this year.

As your new board member for the Western Region, it is my pleasure to serve you. Feel free to reach out to me at any time.

Maybe this year will be a good time to add something new to your family holiday tradition.

Some ideas could be:

- Making DIY Christmas ornaments together (I still have a tattered felt snowman that I made as a toddler)
- Christmas movie nights as a family (Elf is a favorite at our house!)
- Gingerbread houses - from scratch or a kit.

As 2020 comes to a close, please don't underestimate the impact you and your family are having to children in care.

Looking forward to representing the voice of all foster families in the Western Region in 2021.

Rob Richardson

Hello Everyone!

WOW has this ever been a very difficult time in our history, with the rise in Covid-19 Pandemic cases throughout our Province and sister Provinces. The mask wearing , the hand washing, and social distancing. Foster Parents YOU are very resilient in following the protocols put before you., and we are very proud of you! Thank you for all your hard work in keeping everyone safe.

Your Federation Board continues to advocate for you, to the Department of Community Services, our Chairperson Wendell Fraser has regular meetings with Wendy Bungay every two weeks via phone, he expresses your particular concerns. If anyone of you has any concerns please reach out to us, or contact the Federation office. Although we have not had any face to face Board meetings, we continue to have conference calls to express any of your concerns that have been relayed to us.

In closing I would like to wish ALL Foster Parents in Nova Scotia a very Merry Christmas , Happy New Year, stay safe.

Thank you again for the wonderful work you do for children, REMEMBER you are the shining light in this world we live in!

Your Western Region Board Rep

Joy Sweeney

Hi I am Sheila Hill.....New Eastern Region Board Representative

Sending out a Merry Christmas to all the Foster Parents out there, Who are so, so needed , I can't thank you enough. Looking forward to helping you in anyway I can, In the year to come , feel free to contact me anytime, Contact info... 902-226-3778 [Email...bill\\_sheila\\_hill76@hotmail.com](mailto:bill_sheila_hill76@hotmail.com).

#### ADVENT WREATH ( Our Advent Family Tradition)

I would to share one of our families Traditions that have been passed down through our family over the years. ....We have changed it and modified to suit the children's ages, so it is always evolving.

.....Billy makes the Wreath , like you see below.

....some years we say a little prayer ,pray for Family,pray for all Foster Parents.

And anyone who asks we include.

We tell or read a story pertaining to Christmas ,or a message.

....we start lighting one candle each week leading up to Christmas, so that by Christmas they are all lit.

This year our son wrapped 25 books, and each night his daughter opens a new book And he reads it to her by Candle light, it's a win-win , She learns to read and love books, and what can replace your dad reading to you by candlelight.

It's still a memory he has at 36, hopefully she will do the same with her children.

And by the way, when I am a great- grandmother I still plan on being around to see this come full Circle.

So there is still a lot of hope in the world , we can make a difference as parents, grandparents, and foster parents.

Be a light,

Love you all ,

Sheila



December 2020

Hi to all Foster Families in the Central Region! Hope you are all keeping well and staying safe!

We haven't been having any "face-to-face" due to Covid protocols and restrictions. There have been a couple of conference calls and of course, the AGM. Speaking of the AGM, we were finally able to bring our newest board member on for Central Region. Please welcome aboard Marina Keeping!

Hoping we can gather soon.

So, from Marina and myself, we hope you all have a great holiday season and are all able to share with family and friends.

Take care everyone, stay safe and enjoy!

Ann Jennex-Roberts  
Marina Keeping



happy  
HOLIDAYS.



**Federation of Foster Families of Nova Scotia**

*“A Communication Link with Foster Families”*

99 Wyse Road, Suite 350

Dartmouth NS B3A4S5

(902) 424-3071

Toll Free: 1-888-845-1555

Referral Line: 1-800-565-1884

Fax: (902) 424-5199



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

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

**Federation Staff**

<b>GARY LANDRY,</b> Executive Director	(902) 424-2043	<a href="mailto:gary.landry@novascotia.ca">gary.landry@novascotia.ca</a>
<b>DENYSE MACKENZIE,</b> Assistant to the Executive Director	(902) 424-3071	<a href="mailto:denyse.mackenzie@novascotia.ca">denyse.mackenzie@novascotia.ca</a>
<b>ROSE CALLAGHAN,</b> Comptroller	(902) 424-3071	<a href="mailto:rose.callaghan@novascotia.ca">rose.callaghan@novascotia.ca</a>
<b>JILL MARTIN,</b> Foster Allegation & Support Social Worker	(902) 424-2711	<a href="mailto:jill.martin@novascotia.ca">jill.martin@novascotia.ca</a>
<b>DEBBIE THIBAUT,</b> Coordinator of Training & Peer Support Services Program	(902) 424-2314	<a href="mailto:deborah.thibault@novascotia.ca">deborah.thibault@novascotia.ca</a>
<b>KIM BULGER,</b> Project Assistant, Peer Support Services Program	(902) 424-0092	<a href="mailto:kim.bulger@novascotia.ca">kim.bulger@novascotia.ca</a>
<b>MICHELE ROBERTS,</b> Assistant to the Coordinator of Training	(902) 424-5665	<a href="mailto:michele.roberts@novascotia.ca">michele.roberts@novascotia.ca</a>

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