

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

Fostering Community Newsletter

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Issue: 62

Fall/Winter 2024

About Us:

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 caregivers.

Mission Statement:

A collective voice supporting diverse foster families.

Values:

Commitment - *We value integrity, respect, and humility in our relationships with families, foster caregivers, and community partners.*

Inclusion and Diversity - *We pursue equity in all aspects of our work. We act with courage in supporting the best interests of children in care.*

Stewardship - *We strive for excellence and are accountable and transparent in being the collective voice for foster caregivers in Nova Scotia.*



2025 AGM hosted by
Western Region
May 30-June 1, 2025
Save the Dates!

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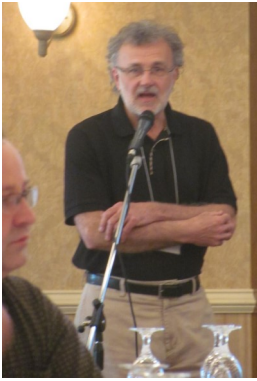
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Happy Retirement Gary!



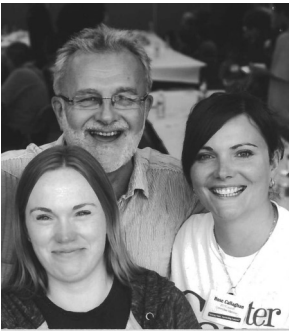
After 15 years as Executive Director for the FFFNS, Gary Landry will be retiring and his last day in the office will be December 19th, 2024.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, staff, and foster caregivers across the province, we thank him for his dedication and wish him well in his retirement.

I am proud to announce that Susan Pace will be our new Executive Director effective January 3rd, 2025.

Susan comes to the Federation from DCS with a wealth of fostering knowledge and experience. We are all excited to see her excel in this role.

Kind regards,
Rob Richardson
Board Chair, FFFNS



Foster Care Redesign is Demonstrating Benefits

Staff at DCS and MFCS were happy to see many of you at events for Foster Caregiver Appreciation Week! It's a great opportunity to express our thanks and support for the important role you play in the lives of children and youth in care.

Through the implementation of Foster Care Redesign, we've also been able to put in place changes that address many of the challenges foster caregivers had shared with us.

Caregivers Benefitting from MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ Constellations!

Foster Caregivers have all been part of a MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ Constellation since the end of April. While it takes time to build relationships and achieve all the benefits, we are hearing more and more stories of how constellations are having a positive impact on children/youth in care.

Benefits of Being in a Constellation:

- Improved stability and reduction of breakdown in foster homes
- A network of strong relationships and connections like an extended family
- Improved experience of peer support and sibling contact
- Improved process for planned and unplanned respite
- A resilient structure to support children, youth, and foster caregivers through times of crisis and transition

Some examples that we've heard are:

- Hub Home reaching out to youth while at Wood Street to be able to offer support when they returned to their kinship home.
- Foster caregiver was scheduled to go out of province and the respite arrangement fell through at the last minute. The Hub Home was able to provide the respite for the child during that time.
- A foster caregiver has fostered a child for many years and had previously struggled with trusting others for respite but since joining their Constellation, the foster caregiver has connected with the Hub Home and feels comfortable having them support with respite.
- A Satellite Home had an emergency while the children in their care were at school. The Hub Home was able to step in, pick the children up, and care for them until the Satellite Home was able to return home.
- A Satellite Home was not attending the gatherings; so the Hub Home attended the satellite home to talk about barriers to their attendance and worked together to come up with resolutions. Through this connection, they were able to identify a better location for gatherings, meet the two youth at the Satellite Home, and arrange for respite.
- Satellite Homes that have been struggling with parenting the child in their care, have identified that their Hub Home was able to provide respite to support the child and prevent a foster home breakdown.
- Hub Homes have been working together to maintain sibling contact. Three siblings have been placed in two nearby constellations and the Hub Homes of the two Constellations connect when they are providing respite for the siblings to ensure sibling contact.
- Two Satellite Homes in different Constellations each have a child with significant medical needs. The Hub Homes have been able to connect the two Satellite Homes, and one of the Satellite Homes has been able to support the other in the navigation of medical service and supports.

Our goal in implementing Mockingbird Family™ approach was to have more positive outcomes for our children in care; we are already seeing those positive impacts for both children in care and foster caregivers! Thank you for continuing on this amazing journey of Foster Care Redesign!

Greetings from the Board Chair

With the Holiday Season quickly approaching, have you started your gift shopping yet? Are you a last-minute shopper or do you start buying presents in July? Does your Amazon driver know you by name?

Is your Christmas tree up yet? What are your decorating preferences? Do you put your tree up in November at the first opportunity, or do you wait until close to Christmas to do so?

Do you count down the days until the Hallmark movies come on TV or are you more of a Christmas comedy fan. In our home, our two favorite holiday movies are National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation and Elf.

What about holiday music, do you have Mariah Carey's "All I want for Christmas" on repeat or do you cringe every time you hear it?

Do you buy your tree from a local tree stand, cut one down, or are you an artificial tree fan?

What about ornaments, do you dread trying to search your attic or the dusty depths of your basement storage to haul up Tupperware boxes full of ornaments? So many questions over the holiday season!

In our home, our family treks the woods outside of our house to find the biggest Christmas tree to cut down. It's our family Christmas tradition. Every year, we try to outdo the outrageousness of the previous year's tree. This year's tree is 19' tall and it was an Olympic sport just to get it inside the house and standing vertically in the tree stand.

I must admit, I dread tree decorating. We have an disproportionate amount of Christmas ornaments for a family of our size (we could outfit a small department store). I'm a "throw the Christmas lights haphazardly onto the tree type of guy", while my wife on the other hand must meticulously fasten each strand of light to the branch. Can you identify with my peril?

In those Tupperware boxes are ornaments that are very sentimental in nature. As we decorate the tree, memories flash back to the children who were in our care previously when we come across their hand made ornaments – ones they made with their own hands and gave to us with pride in their eyes. My wife knows the origin of every ornament and these ornaments are priceless to us. Some of these children are adults now and will join us over the holidays for a meal, some have been adopted and some we have no longer have contact with.

I know that the Holiday Season evokes many emotions and may look different across the province. I hope you can spend some time with those you care about the most.

Thank you all for your willingness to open your homes to children in need across the province. I recognize that this season may bring difficult conversations, and I want to personally thank you again for your willingness to navigate these questions and emotions.

As your board of directors, we are here for you. Please reach out to your local board member or myself and we will help or assist you.

Once again, thank you for all that you do!

Rob Richardson
Chair, FFFNS



Executive Director's Report

Wishing all Foster Caregivers best wishes for the upcoming “Holiday Season” and beyond.

To begin, I would like to thank the 2024 Provincial Launch Committee for their great work in organizing this year's “Foster Family Appreciation Launch” in Port Hawkesbury on Oct. 20th, 2024. This was a well-organized event, which included many activities for children/youth, great music, and the food was delicious. All attendees of various ages appeared to be having a wonderful time. Next year, the Launch will be hosted by Northern region, who always does a great job as well.

As of the past few months, the monthly Hub Home virtual meetings have been facilitated by FFFNS staff member, Jill Martin. As Hub Home caregivers, please try to attend these meetings whenever possible as it gives you a great opportunity to ask questions of each other, offer suggestions in what has worked for you, and to simply support each other in this very important but demanding role.

The FFFNS and DCS are working closely on creating the upcoming Ambassador program, which will be delivered by the FFFNS. It is our hope that this program will be rolled out in the Spring of 2025. This program will hopefully help with the recruitment and retention of Foster Caregivers and is part of the Foster Care Redesign. We will keep you updated as time moves on.

We recently concluded with the Fall Regional Focus Meetings. The Mi'kmaw Focus Meeting (Cape Breton & Mainland) took place in person in Antigonish in October. The other four Regional Focus Meetings took place using a hybrid model, whereby attendees could participate in person or virtually. Thank you for all of you who participated. Overall, these meetings went well, however we need to tweak the online portion of these meetings in order to make them more participation friendly for the virtual users. The Coordinator of Foster Care and I will be meeting to work on this issue.

This will be my last report for this newsletter as I will soon be retiring. The FFFNS is very fortunate to have Susan Pace as my replacement. She has worked in the child welfare system for many years and brings many foster care related skills with her.



In closing, there are a few groups that I want to thank. First, I want to thank the wonderful FFFNS staff, who have always been so helpful and supportive to me over the many years. I truly appreciate this support and friendship.

Also, thank you very much to the FFFNS board members especially board chair, Rob Richardson, whom I have worked with very closely over the last few years. Rob is certainly very dedicated to the Foster Caregiver community and always willing to offer support. I will miss his humor and teasing.

Another person I will miss is Margaret MacMillan, Coordinator of Foster Care Services, whom I have also worked closely for the past few years. She also is very passionate with helping the Foster Care Community and I have very much appreciated her support and friendly personality.

Respectfully Submitted,
Gary Landry

CHRISTMAS RECIPE

This is our easy, emergency fudge recipe – for those times of unexpected guests or when you require a Chocolate fix!

1 can of condensed milk

2 cups semi-sweet chocolate chips

1 tsp vanilla

Spray or line a 8x8 pan with wax paper.

Pour the condensed milk into a saucepan over low heat. Add in the chocolate chips and stir until just melted. Remove from heat. Mix in vanilla.

Add in your families' favorite things like: chopped nuts, mini marshmallows, candies, crushed cookies, etc.

If your in a hurry throw it in the freezer to chill instead of the fridge

Submitted by Rob Richardson



Training Department

Fall Training Recap: What a Season!

This Fall, we kept busy with an exciting lineup of training opportunities for foster caregivers—including two brand-new courses designed with your needs in mind!

First up, our **Sensitivity Program** got a major refresh! We've condensed it into a 1-day session (goodbye, 2-day commitment!) and ran it on a trial basis to fine-tune the content and see how it resonated with caregivers. The feedback? Fantastic! We're thrilled to say you can expect more sessions this Spring.

To save you time, we also introduced a **blended online Non-Violent Crisis Intervention course**. This new format combines a 3-hour online session you can complete at home with a 3-hour in-class portion. This trial run allowed us to test the waters, and we're excited to roll it out across all regions in the Spring.

Of course, we're still offering the **2-day Basic Non-Violent Crisis Intervention training** for new caregivers. It's a cornerstone of our program, ensuring every new caregiver feels supported and equipped for success.

Thank you for your participation and feedback! Stay tuned for Spring, where even more training opportunities await.

Shirley Howard
Coordinator of Training

Foster Caregiver Stories

The 14 yr old in my care never laughs and rarely smiles. He has double trauma due to adoption breakdown so I give him lots of grace. So many hilarious things happen here at home on a regular basis that I just know he will laugh again....I just know it!!!

We are driving my tiny granddaughters home when the 6 yr old states :

"NANA LOOK AT THAT BARD POOP ON THIS WINDOW!!! THAT IS SO YUCKY!!!"

Nana: "Yes honey I will clean it later. I am driving right now"

Granddaughter: "LOOK AT ALL THESE CARS WITH BARD POOP ON THE WINDOWS!!!"



By now the 14 yr old is rolling his eyes and waiting for the continuing bird (or bard as she calls it) poop saga to FINISH.

Granddaughter who has been deep in thought :(with a big sigh) "You know why there is bard poop everywhere, Nana? Because there is NOBODY to potty train them. Poor, poor bards!!!"

Drumroll please....

The 14 yr old is in spasms of laughter.

Submitted by Sandi Brown

Northern Region

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!

From our kitchens to yours we would like to share a favorite recipe to try with the children and youth in your home this festive season:

Gingerbread boys/girls

1/2 c. shortening
3/4 c. sugar (I use brown)
1 1/2 c. molasses
1 egg
1 tsp. vinegar

Cream together. Then add alternately:

1 heaping tsp. baking soda dissolved in 3/4 c. boiling water
with:

5c. flour - add a bit more if the dough is sticky
2 tsp. ginger
1 tsp. cinnamon
1/4 tsp. salt

(can add extra 2 tsp. cloves and 1/2 tsp. nutmeg to make them "spicy")

Chill dough, roll and cut into gingerbread boys/girls and bake at 370 degrees for 10 minutes. Cool and decorate.



Candy Cane Crinkle Cookies

3 whole candy canes, crushed
1/2c. butter, softened
1c. white sugar
1/2 tsp. vanilla
1 egg
1/4 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. baking powder
1/8 tsp. baking soda
1 1/2 c. flour
1/2 c. icing sugar

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease or line with parchment 2 cookie sheets.

Crush candy canes in a bag with a rolling pin. Cream butter and sugar. Whip in vanilla and eggs. Stir together dry ingredients (except icing sugar) and add to wet ingredients, mix to combine. Add crushed candy canes. Roll into heaping tsp size balls, roll in icing sugar. Bake 9-11 minutes or until bottoms barely brown and top matte not shiny. Cool on pan for 3 minutes.

Happy baking!

Northern Region FFFNS Representatives:

Brenda Pettis

Mary Ann Burke

Central Region

To Our Foster Caregivers,

As the holiday season approaches, we want to take a moment to reflect on the joy and connection we've shared throughout this year as a foster care community. From our Hub Home gatherings and PRIDE training sessions, to the AGM and association meetings, each of these moments has strengthened the connection between us, and we are grateful for your continued engagement and feedback.

Each of you has opened your heart and home to children in need, and during Christmas, that takes on even deeper meaning, and often can come with challenges - which you are continuing to meet. Whether you're helping with school projects, baking cookies, comforting kids after visits, driving kids to activities, or simply offering a listening ear, your care is a true gift. The love and stability you provide during this time of year not only brings joy to the children in your care but also gives them a sense of security and belonging—something they may not have experienced before. Your work is invaluable and leaves a lasting impact, not just at Christmas, but throughout the entire year.

As we wrap up this year, sending massive thanks for everything you do. Your dedication to providing a safe environment, stability, and hope to the children in your care is what makes the holiday season truly special.

May you and your families have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

With gratitude as your Central Board & Association Representatives,

Allie & Ann



To spread a little extra sweetness this season, we're sharing a VERY simple and delicious recipe for 3-Ingredient Shortbread Christmas Cookies. These treats are perfect for baking with the kids (and hard to screw up!).

**A Little EASY Christmas Treat:
3-Ingredient Shortbread Cookies**

Ingredients:

- 1 Stick (115g) Salted Butter
- ½ Cup (60g) Powdered Sugar
- 1¼ cups (175g) All-Purpose Flour
- 1 tsp Vanilla (Optional)

Instructions:

1. Preheat your oven to 350°F (175°C).
2. Cream the butter and powdered sugar together until smooth.
3. Gradually mix in the flour (and vanilla, if using) until a dough forms.
4. Roll the dough into small balls and flatten slightly with a fork or your hands.
5. Bake for 12-15 minutes or until the edges are golden.
6. Let cool and enjoy!

We hope you enjoy these sweet treats as much as we do



Eastern Region

Cape Breton-Victoria
Foster Family Association

Greetings Fellow Foster Parents!

In case you are not aware, our Executive Director, Gary Landry is retiring. Gary worked for the Department of Community Services for many years before accepting the position of Executive Director of the Federation of Foster Families of Nova Scotia. I have been privileged to work alongside Gary during my years as a board member in a time when, in my opinion, many really good changes happened within our foster care system. Gary supported many parents/caregivers when called upon and was never afraid to speak up in someone's defense. Gary has a strong TEAM at the office who I am quite sure will assist our new E.D. transition into their new role. I am sure there will be an announcement about this person, most likely before this newsletter is distributed. I want to congratulate Gary on his decision to retire and wish you the very best going forward my friend.

Our association is currently in preparation, at the time of this writing, preparing for our upcoming Christmas Gathering scheduled for December 15th at the Sydney Holiday Inn. This day is always special in our fostering community and we are hoping everything falls into place to make this once more a special time. The organizing committee is working on having new activities in place so the children in attendance will have more fun. I want to THANK Ashley, Joesph, Anita, John, Sandi, Charlene, Liam, and Pius for your ongoing support. I also want to give a huge shout out to the Holiday Inn who are always very supportive of our association.

Wishing Everyone a Merry Christmas and a prosperous 2025!

Wendell Fraser,
Cape Breton-Victoria
Foster Family Association President



Inverness-Richmond Association &
Hill's Hub Home and Constellation

Our Hub & Constellation Gathering took place on November 30th. The kids all played while the adults chatted and ate. All the families really enjoy and look forward to getting together. We get to support each other and discuss issues we may be having.

Our Association meeting was suppose to be December 4th, but because of sickness it had to be postponed until a later date.

It has been a year now since Bill and I became a Hub Home, and everything seems to be falling into place. It has been very beneficial to the kids and the foster families.

I want to say a big "Thank You" to all of my families. It has been a pleasure working side by side with you

Here's looking forward to a healthy & prosperous 2025.

Love you all,
Sheila Hill



Merry Christmas

*Joyeux
Noël*

*HAPPY
Holidays!*

*From our families to
yours, we wish you all
a holiday season filled
with love, happiness,
and peace!*

*Happy
Winter Solstice*

*The Staff and Board
of Directors of the
Federation of Foster
Families
of Nova Scotia*

*JOYOUS
KWANZAA*



*HAPPY
Hanukkah*

*Blessed
Yule!*