



Annual Report

September 2023

Welcome Message

Conor Sketchley, Board Chair

HELLO TO ALL members, colleagues and Board Members. What a year: 2023 has brought a lot of good, a changing society, complex challenges, and hardships for some. The world is quickly changing, and we are all here doing our best trying to help people cope with the ever-changing world.

The year at Youth & Family has been a busy one, that's for sure! A big milestone this year was another CARF survey. The team at Youth & Family scored nearly perfect, 99.7%! We then hosted a CARF wrap-up party, an evening celebration at River City Coffee with hors d'oeuvres, champagne, all staff, supervisors, and the Board of Directors.

In other news, the Orca Bus is going strong and has scheduled weekly visits including Tla'amin, Oceanview, Texada, Kelly Creek and Willingdon Beach. The Foster Appreciation Support and Training Program launched to offer support in person and online for foster parents/caregivers. The YRC ran several different weekly programs including *Pride Circle YRC*, *YRC Club* and *YRC Zone*. In addition, Youth & Family hosted a well-attended BC Youth in Care Week event at Willingdon Beach in May, as well as a summer art program during July and numerous other events through the year.

On top of all the amazing programs that the team at Youth & Family organize and run, it was great to see other events like the Gabor Maté book club, following the community conversation hosted this past Fall at the Patricia Theater and the *Internet Use and Online Safety* and *Bullying and Building Resilient Kids* community sessions.

As 2023 progresses we take on more change and growth. Our long-serving Executive Director (ED) Heather Gordon is retiring from her post. Anyone who has worked with or known

Heather truly knows her great shoes, talent and warm soul will definitely be missed by each person at Youth & Family. From everyone, everywhere all at once: we wish you much success and happiness in your future endeavours.

With change at the helm, we welcome our new Executive Director. Someone who knows Youth & Family very well, has a masterful understanding of all operating practices of the society and has positively impacted countless youth, young adults, parents and colleagues. It is with great pleasure that we announce the promotion of Collette Sinkewicz. Congratulations

Collette, we cannot wait to work with you and follow the upward trajectory that is this wonderful society.

Thank you to everyone who has made 2023 a successful year; thank you to the staff and supervisors for all of your hard work and dedication to youth, parents, foster guardians and our community—we simply could not do this without you.

You all make the world a little better each day. ♦



Greetings from the E.D.

Collette Sinkewicz

GREETINGS AND WELCOME to the 2023 Annual General Meeting! This past year has felt tremendously busy and has gone by so incredibly quickly. It has been a very productive year and the Youth & Family Team has achieved many successes as you will learn from the highlights shared by the Y&F Team. In addition to the individuals we have served, we've continued to offer several community-based programs and have worked hard in preparation for what turned out to be a very successful CARF Survey!

This past year is not without some sadness in having to say farewell to our YRC Facilitator Sarah Bacon in December of last year. More recently, we have also had to say goodbye to our ED Heather Gordon-Young after 13 years serving this agency. Heather has been an amazing leader and has been a valuable mentor as I transition into my new role as Executive Director. I appreciate the opportunity to take on this new role and I am genuinely grateful for the support I have received from the Youth & Family Team and Board of Directors as I navigate through this learning process.

Looking forward, I anticipate that the coming year will be equally busy, and I am confident Youth & Family will continue to be successful in future endeavours. As many of you already know, Powell River will be one of two new locations for Foundry. As a previous Family Enhancement Counsellor working in the Youth Engagement Support program, it thrills me to remain involved in supporting youth in this community. The Youth & Family Team is eager to



begin working alongside such amazing community members and agencies, all with the common goal of enhancing services and support for youth and their families. ♦

May we always be grateful for the past, find joy in the present, and remain excited for the future.

— Unknown

Family Support client:

"I feel like I just took my first real breath since [event] and I have some hope again. I am sobbing so hard with relief because I am so grateful to have someone I can trust and know will be a good advocate and support. Thank you so much from the bottom of my heart... appreciate you so much."

Board of Directors 2022 – 2023

Conor Sketchley	Board Chair
Mike Gormley	Vice Chair
Ken Day	Treasurer
Laurette Martinson	Director

An Overview of Programming

Rachel LeBlanc, Director of Programs

ONE OF THE highlights of this past year was being able to provide *Best Practice* examples (positive things we do here at Youth & Family) to the Social Sector Workforce Planning discussion between BC Family Services agencies and MCFD. There was an 80% increase in job vacancy rate in Social Services due to Covid 19 compared to 67% across all industries. We didn't experience that vacancy level here at Youth & Family. I believe, in part, this is because of the value we continue to place on workplace flexibility and autonomy and the wellness supports we provide, recognizing that it's hard to be motivated to provide meaningful care to other families if you can't do the same for your own loved ones or yourself. It also helps that we live in a beautiful place 😊.

On that note, I also love that we're talking more openly about workplace mental health in this field. It's no secret that this was a tough year for many



helping professionals, me included. In fact, a new term, "Post-Covid burnout," was coined to describe the experience of grieving the loss and changes we experienced while simultaneously trying to catch up after the heightened adrenalin associated rapid workplace adjustments started to subside. It feels like we're emerging, together, equipped with new insights, language, and practical tools to weather any storm.

Last, but not least, I continue to feel deep appreciation for every single member of this team and how their

different talents come together under the umbrella of Youth & Family. It's been a pleasure to watch everyone grow in experience and witness their ongoing compassion and service in action with their clients, community, and colleagues. We've got good people here, and for that, we are grateful.

I'm excited to see where we go this year with calm and competent Collette at the helm! ♦

In Support...

Rod Mailhot, Technology

IT HAS BEEN a real privilege to be asked to provide support for some of the events this year. It has finally given me the chance to see some of this team's great work in person. This includes the fantastic *Wisdom of Trauma* screening at the Patricia Theatre with a great Q&A afterwards, the awesome foster family community event, and the internet safety talks with Constable Perry.

I also can't overstate the great teamwork on display through the CARF survey. This was clearly reflected

in our results, which the whole team should be proud of. It's been great to see the lessons learned during preparation for the survey translate into actions almost immediately. ♦



All Pulling Together

Delyth Harper, Foster Appreciation, Support & Training

A FAVOURITE MOMENT from this past year at Youth & Family was when our team came together to listen to the CARF survey results. A lot of work went into preparing for CARF, and everyone pulled together as a team. It was amazing to see the hard work of my peers pay off and celebrate that victory together. The collective cheering after each result was announced, and seeing everyone so happy with the results, was a great thing to witness and be a part of.

Another highlight from the past 12 months here at Youth & Family,

was returning to work after maternity leave and being welcomed with open arms by our workplace family. I was expecting it to take me a little while to regain my footing, but thanks to everyone here, it didn't take long to feel like part of the team again. I very much enjoy the work environment here, and I always tell anyone who wants to listen that it's an amazing place to work. The staff are all so skilled at what they do, and you really feel like you are making a difference in the community. I also appreciate how understanding



and flexible our workplace is towards employees with young families. If they weren't, I don't think I would be able to do my job here. Youth & Family rocks! ♦

"Men Finding Balance" attendee:

I've met many men with different backgrounds that I've been able to relate to and start friendships.



Anecdotes

Gord Hoffman, Family Enhancement Counsellor

IT HAS BEEN an amazing year with Youth & Family, and as I reflect, I consider my cup to be full to the point of overflowing.

When we met last year for the AGM, we were in the final days of preparation leading

up to a very successful representation of our care and support to the community through our involvement with the Powell River Fall Fair. A biased view of the event would say that we were front-runners for the status of "centre-stage," maintaining a crowd with fun activities, games and plenty of smiles and laughter.

With my clients, some files opened, others closed, with a mixture of successes and challenges, which all spoke to the dynamics of the community that we serve. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to facilitate several groups over the year, continuing with *Men Finding Balance*, *Circle of Security Parenting* and we have added a *Young Adventurers Council* to introduce some of our youth to connection and support through outdoor adventure and role-modeling (though at the time of writing, this has not yet started).

I am happy to be part of this team that have diligently served our namesake "Youth & Family" within our community with passion, empathy, and client-centred care. I am personally looking forward to the new adventures and changes that the organization will experience over the coming year. ♦

Reflections from 2022-2023

Roberta Welp, Youth Resource Centre

WORKING WITH YOUTH, both young and older, is always the highlight of my work. In my time at Youth



& Family I have watched some children grow from babies to toddlers to 'big kids.' I have enjoyed our group in the gym with the babies and toddlers, and have had several of those children 'grow up' and join our after-school programs at the YRC. It warms my heart when I am out and about in the community and hear "Roberta!!!!!" We are so lucky to be able to offer our community's children and youth a safe, comfortable and loving space. ♦



Heartwarming Moments

Debbie van Dok, Family Enhancement Counsellor

THIS PAST YEAR has been incredibly chaotic with some difficult changes, but also with many amazing highlights. Coming out of the challenges presented by the Covid pandemic has been one of the many factors that has uplifted my spirits. The ability to be present and assist the families that I support has given me many heartwarming moments. Having the ability to come together and secure resources, support children's development and to have in



person support has provided some balance in their lives.

We were able to restart our open gym program for 0 to 5-year-olds with a brand-new name, *Pitter Patter* and it is again meeting some important developmental needs for our young people. Coming back together as a staff and being able to support and rely on each other has given us valuable opportunities for learning and it has been a good reminder that work-

From a parent who received Family Support Services:

"[The program]... showed me that there are supports in my community that really care. It really helped me sort my life out".



ing for this agency is more than just a job but has amazing personal benefits. ♦



Support and Connections

Alice Ward Cameron, Family Centre Library

OVER THE PAST year I've had the privilege to witness many special moments shared between our team members and the families we serve.

Support • Many people ask what we do, and the answer is that we provide support to families and youth with welcoming spaces, activities and resources for children of all ages, including teens, and families at every stage of parenting. But it goes much deeper than that—we are also the place that people call when they don't know

where to go, or they need help and didn't find it elsewhere. I answer the phones here, and you can really hear in people's voices how much they want to help their children with the challenges they are facing. So, a highlight for me is giving them a listening ear and assurance that they are not alone, and we are here for them.

Feedback • Another highlight for me this year was compiling the client feedback. We have a team of caring, non-judgmental, counsellors who are highly trained and experienced. It was very moving to read client testimony about the positive, life-changing impacts of their work.

Connection • Last but not least, it was a joy to welcome families into our Family Centre Library. I saw friendships form between

newcomers to our town. I saw life in all its fullness from children laughing to mothers weeping. I saw youth grow more confident week by week. I also enjoyed the determined, satisfied expression when visitors found a book to take home, whether it was to share with their children, better their lives or feed their soul. ♦

The best moments in reading are when you come across something—a thought, a feeling, a way of looking at things—which you had thought special and particular to you. Now here it is, set down by someone else, a person you have never met, someone even who is long dead. And it is as if a hand has come out and taken yours.

— Alan Bennett,
The History Boys



Building on Strengths

Trevor Edwards, Family Enhancement Counsellor

THIS PAST YEAR has been an exciting and rewarding one for me with the youth programs at Youth & Family Powell River. Along with continuing to offer essential services to our Youth Engagement and Youth Justice clients, *Strength in Self* continues to grow and meet the needs of our community. As the 2022/2023 school year progressed, and the ongoing stresses of school, adolescence, and the unique challenges of these post-COVID 19 times became more apparent. More referrals came in, particularly from Brooks Secondary School. Though often difficult to hear their struggles, it has felt rewarding to be able to be there for youth.

In that regard, it has been professionally satisfying to be recognized by the teachers and counsellors at Brooks as an additional resource for students to ac-



cess. The demanding schedules of our local educators just do not allow them to always meet every need of every student in crisis, let alone cover the basic school curriculum. It has been rewarding to be trusted as a support for so many youths, to help them navigate difficult times, and to move forward through those times with more confidence. Because of this, our reputation as an organization in general, and through this program in particular, is in strong standing. I am pleased to report that when attending community meetings, *Strength in Self* consistently receives praise from our community partners.

Most importantly, the feedback we are getting from our clients validates our reason for offering the services we do. I am looking forward to continuing to support our local students in the upcoming school year. In 2023, *Strength in Self* was offered in a group setting for the first time, in partnership with the Explorer Program at Brooks and there has been interest expressed in having us back. Also, SD47 *Partners in Education* have inquired about having their students participate in the program in a classroom setting. In that regard, the possibilities of expanding the program look promising. I have enjoyed the opportunity to assist *Strength in Self* develop this past year and look forward to seeing it continue to meet the needs of our community youth in the future. ♦



From the parent of a youth who completed *Strength in Self*:

Just wanted to say that Y really enjoyed talking with you and may want to do the program again. It's been a little tricky finding a counsellor that she feels as comfortable with as you.

Helping Families to Succeed

Sarah Fitzgibbon, Family Preservation & Reunification

FAMILY PRESERVATION AND REUNIFICATION: looking through the lens of a Family Enhancement Counsellor working in the field.

I feel very honoured to be working at Youth & Family Powell River in the Family Preservation and Reunification Program. My highlight for the year is working with all the families I support within this program. I would like to highlight this program and how I do my work.

Family Preservation and Reunification is an intervention program that delivers respectful and responsive support to families experiencing many challenges and difficulties resulting in child protection concerns. This is a non-judgmental, collaborative support system that works with families to determine their needs, and how we can walk beside them to deliver service that is meaningful to them, impactful and helps the family stay



together. Often families accessing this program express feeling a total loss of control over their lives and can be experiencing elevated levels of stress, addiction issues, mental health challenges, poverty, shame, and loss of dignity.

My experience has taught me that the core of this job is building a helping relationship with people;

it requires compassion, connecting and truly meeting people ‘where they are in their lives’ without preconceived outcomes and/or notions, consequences, or judgment. It is treating people with respect and dignity, offering help if they want it. I really like the summary given in the book *Collaborative Helping*, by William C. Madsen and Kevin Gillespie. They state that collaborative helping can be defined as “walking and talking.” By this they mean stepping into a person’s everyday life to engage in conversations over time, while also assisting with routine needs; helping to solve problems and taking on life’s vexing dilemmas together. This is an excellent definition of practical helping with purposeful conversation—that is Family Preservation work. ♦





The Orca Bus and so much more

Savannah Stenberg, Family Enhancement Counsellor

THIS HAS BEEN a great year as a Family Enhancement Counsellor at Youth & Family Powell River. There were lots of exciting changes within the organization, and so much

growth supporting clients we serve. Here are some of my personal favourite highlights of the last year: Firstly, facilitating the Orca Bus! Alice, Tricia and I (and our wonderful volunteer bus drivers) teamed up to visit corners of qathet including Tla'amin, Texada, Lang Bay, Kelly Creek, and various Westview spots (Assumption School, 4 Pillars, Oceanview School, Willingdon Beach, and more) It was a blast to meet so many families on our big magic school bus.

As for youth services, Trevor and I facilitated the first group offering of Strength in Self to Brooks Explore Program Students. Thank you Chris Bratseth and Explore students for the opportunity! Trevor and I held several Monday afternoon sessions to speak about communication skills, resiliency, and mental health using the collaborative helping map framework. By our last session, we had really bonded with this class. Another Youth Services highlight was attending the SD47 Grade 7 Wellness Fair where Roberta, Trevor and I set up a booth to promote our youth services programming. As well, it was an honour being invited to various youth resource sharing meetings hosted by qathet Community Justice and having the opportunity to learn about all the wonderful resources available to youth in Powell River.

Client highlights include having five active youth graduate from Brooks and attend their grad! One of my clients has secured housing and has been admitted to the university of their choice! Two clients received scholarships to help fund their future goals.

Finally, highlights as an organization include getting through the CARF survey—no explanation needed. Celebrating our new Executive Director, Collette Sinkewicz, and the biggest news of all is the new exciting endeavour of a Foundry Centre coming to town! Hooray, what a great year! ♦



From a Youth Engagement Services participant:
I wouldn't be the man I am today without her.

Engaging Young Learners

Tricia McTaggart, Family Enhancement Counsellor



THIS HAS BEEN an exciting year for the *Early Years Program!* We have begun offering services on the Orca Bus three days a week. These services extend out to the South qathet area, to Tla'amin Nation, Texada Island and in town. The Orca bus provides an exciting

opportunity for young learners to engage in creative and educational play! We have also started two art programs: *Aspiring Artists* and a weekly drop-in art class. Additionally, we hosted a fabulous Art and Photography Program called the *Wonderful ME Project* where we combined social emotional learning,

art and the kids' taking pictures of themselves and nature. It was an amazing class that already has a waitlist for the next one to be offered. The Early Years Program also offered the *Kidz Zone* at the fall fair—it was a wonderful opportunity to be a part of the entire community!

I also enjoyed offering the Gabor Maté *Myth of Normal Book Club* to two groups, and have a waiting list for the next book club! This opportunity gathered people from the entire region and all walks of life, including Tla'amin Nation, local firefighters, a musician, a nurse and others. The book, activities and discussions that followed allowed people to learn about what role trauma plays in our society, families and in our own lives. It was a powerful experience.

As always, I enjoy working with the clients that I am fortunate to share space with. Everyone travels on a different journey, and I have learned a lot.

I am looking forward to beginning several new projects in the upcoming year! ♦



From a family who attended Early Years summer programs:

Just wanted to thank you for your great work. We really appreciated your drop-in activities for toddlers at Willingdon and Oceanview. My daughter loved it so much and it was also such a great opportunity for her to see other kids...

From a Women's Wellness Book Club attendee:

Having this book club is amazing. It's an invaluable resource for people looking to connect on topics around trauma, healing, growth etc.



Parents who attended "How to Talk so Little Kids Will Listen" group:

It has been very welcoming. It showed me that I am welcome here with my children or by myself. Have made several friends here.

Parent who attended Circle of Security parenting support group:

There was no judgement. Everyone was focused on learning how to get better instead of the mistakes we've already made. It helped being able to hear what the other parents were experiencing, and that I wasn't alone in how I was feeling.



THANK YOU!

Carlson Community Club

Chris Weekes

City of Powell River

First Credit Union

FreshCo

jehjeh Media

Jolene McGill • Yoga

Keely Sills • Circus/Aerials Camp

Lisa Heavenor • Pacific-Care

Panago Pizza

Paperworks Gift Gallery

Powell River Climbing Co-op

Powell River Community Forest

Powell River Fire Rescue

Powell River Kings

Powell River RCMP

Powell River Recreation

Putters Mini Golf

qathet Regional District

Quality Foods

Royal Canadian Legion Branch #164

Save-On Foods

Everyone at School District 47

Springtime Garden Centre

Starbucks Powell River

Texada Aerospace Camp

Timberlane Quilters' Guild

Tla'amin Nation/hehewsin

Travelling Llamas • Powell River

United Way

Valley Building Supplies

Vancouver Coastal Health

Robert Dufour • Works Printing & Design

Yumi Ball

ORCA BUS VOLUNTEER DRIVERS:

Brian Hasselback

Jim Hoffman

Joe Cameron

Eric Stenberg

Don Edwards

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