



The General Child  
and Family Services  
Authority

# *Hope in Changing Times*

*Annual Report  
2013/2014*

# GENERAL AUTHORITY DIRECTORS' LEADERSHIP TABLE

## COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP VALUE STATEMENTS

The General Authority embraces a strengths based approach as the philosophical framework that will guide its work. Consistent with this perspective, the General Authority's Directors' Leadership Table adopts the following as core values:

### THE DIRECTORS' LEADERSHIP TABLE

believes in promoting hope, optimism and capacity building through a strengths focus that cultivates, appreciates and enhances the talents, skills, assets and success of the individuals and groups that are part of the General Authority service system.

### THE DIRECTORS' LEADERSHIP TABLE

believes in inclusiveness where diverse and unique opinions are welcomed; where staff, youth, families and stakeholders are empowered to have a "voice", invited to participate in the planning process and given the opportunity to influence decisions.

### THE DIRECTORS' LEADERSHIP TABLE

believes in transparency where plans and decisions are communicated in a timely manner and in that communication, the rationale, expected results and connection to best practice principles are clearly evident.

### THE DIRECTORS' LEADERSHIP TABLE

believes that plans and decisions should clearly reflect the best and most current available evidence derived from research, proven practice and other sources known to result in positive outcomes for children, youth and families.

### THE DIRECTORS' LEADERSHIP TABLE

believes that outcomes for children, youth and families are more likely to be positive when staff feel engaged, valued, respected and supported in their work environment.



# Overview of the General Authority

With proclamation of *The Child and Family Services Authorities Act* in 2003, there was a significant shift of powers from the Director of Child Welfare to each of the four new child and family services authorities. Most powers directly related to the operation of child and family services agencies were transferred from the Director to the four authorities. The authorities are responsible for mandating, funding and overseeing the services provided by child family services agencies throughout the Province of Manitoba. Within the General Authority, these services are provided by the following agencies:



Jewish Child and Family Services



Child and Family Services of Western Manitoba



Child and Family Services of Central Manitoba



The Department of Family Services provides services through Winnipeg Child and Family Services Branch and four rural and northern service regions (Interlake Region, Eastman Region, Parkland Region, and Northern Region).

## General Authority Board of Directors for 2013/2014

Nicole Chammartin, Laura Crookshanks,  
Doreen Draffin, Cheryl Dyer-Vigier,  
Guy Jourdain, Karen Kost, and  
Jan Sanderson (Ex-Officio Member)

## General Authority Staff for 2013/2014

Kathleen Baxter, Del Bruneau, Patti Cox,  
Thomas Ens\*, Jennifer Fallis,  
Jeanette Grennier, Laurie Gulowaty,  
Jan Henley\*, Christy Holnbeck,  
Kathy Kristjanson, Janine LeGal,  
Duncan Michie\*, Laura Morton, Anne Pratt\*,  
Janice Rees, Jay Rodgers, Lisa Schmidt,  
Careen Simoes, Kim Thomas, Cathe Umlah,  
Patti Wawyn, Laura Wilson,  
Jan Christianson-Wood

\*Left the employment of the General Authority during 2013/2014

# Creating Hope...

Doreen Draffin and Jay Rodgers



Hello and welcome. This is the eleventh annual report from the General Authority (GA). We hope you enjoy reading about another exciting year. We continue to find innovative ways to strengthen the services and supports for children, youth and families across the Province.

We are trying something new in this report. For the first time, the Board Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer prepared this report together.

It can be difficult to work in child welfare: a system that can find itself under intense public scrutiny and criticism. While this is a reality in this type of work, the last two years have been unusually challenging. After many months of hearings with almost constant media attention, the Phoenix Sinclair Public Inquiry concluded in July 2013 and Commissioner Hughes released his report in January 2014. Throughout this process our agencies/service regions showed their resiliency and as a system, we continued to make many positive service enhancements. The support

shown by our agencies/service regions to their colleagues from Winnipeg Child and Family Services was amazing and truly shows the strength of the collective responsibility felt within the General Authority service system.

It was during the Public Inquiry where we heard a worker testify that for those of us in the child welfare field, we are “in the business of hope”. When we thought about it, there can be no clearer, more succinct, powerful and true statement about what we are ultimately trying to accomplish. So we chose “creating hope” as the theme for this year’s annual report. But what does this mean? This seems to contradict the public perception of the child welfare system. It is time for this perception to change.

How does a system like ours create hope? Removing barriers to a post secondary education for current and former youth in care through scholarships and a tuition waiver program creates hope. Being able to say to a young adult leaving our care that “this system won’t abandon you, we will help create opportunities for you to succeed and there is help and support there for you if you need it”: these programs create hope.



We do this by inviting leaders and members from newcomer communities to partner with us: to think about child welfare differently; to work cooperatively to build community capacity as we collaborate to strengthen families. Transforming practice and the way we engage, communicate with and support families to provide a safe and caring environment for their children: this too creates hope. It is these types of innovations that you'll read about in this report. Will the report by Commissioner Hughes bring more positive changes? We believe it will. Commissioner Hughes recognizes that the system has made substantial improvements which he refers to as a "good start". We agree with this and his comments that, when implemented, the recommendations in the report will "enhance and further the positive path Manitoba's child welfare system is taking". While these are encouraging words, we can only go further down this positive path if our workers are not overloaded with excessive caseloads. We have proven how effective our system can be in protecting children and preserving families when caseloads are manageable. Commissioner Hughes agrees.

As a system, we cannot become complacent with what has been done: we must continue to innovate and implement practices known to be successful; we must continue to offer training for our staff that is meaningful and supportive of their day to day work; we must continue to partner with government, communities and service providers to focus on prevention and most importantly, we must continue to engage with families and animate the voice of our youth. But let's talk about hope from a different perspective. Our dream is that no youth turns 18 in the care of our service system. At the General Authority we have over 600 children and youth who are permanent wards. Why can't these children and youth grow up with a forever family? We need to invest new resources to find adults who have a connection with our children; we need to strengthen the supports available for new adoptive parents and we need to establish a custom adoption strategy. Other jurisdictions have done it with great success. It is time. Our kids deserve forever families.

We would like to sincerely thank the Department of Family Services for their ongoing funding and support. We would also like to thank the Dave Thomas Foundation for funding a Wendy's Wonderful Kids Recruiter within the General Authority as well as the Royal Bank, Scotia Bank, Children's Aid Foundation and the Winnipeg Foundation all of whom support specific innovative initiatives.

Should we be hopeful about the future? With so many professional and competent staff at the GA and our agencies/service regions; with such great leadership shown by our Directors, and with the sound guidance of our Board of Directors, the answer is unequivocally yes!

"There is reason for optimism based on what is being done."

Commissioner Ted Hughes

"There are those that look at things the way they are, and ask why? I dream of things that never were, and ask why not?" Robert F. Kennedy

# Finance Report

Guy Jourdain



I am pleased to provide the report from the Finance Committee for the 2013/2014 fiscal year. The General Authority is a financially stable organization prepared to meet current requirements and future challenges. Our Auditor has provided an opinion that the financial statements for the period ending March 31, 2014 present fairly, in all material aspects, the financial position of the General Authority. The results of its operations and cash flow for the year have been prepared in accordance with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles. The Authority is in a positive cash position; and the cumulative surplus is unchanged from the previous year, as noted in the audited financial statements.

The General Authority currently uses two funds to manage its financial operations. These include the operating fund and the agency fund. The operating fund is used to support the staffing and operating requirements of the Authority, as well as new initiatives and one-time only expenditures.

In 2013/2014, the Board of Directors of the Authority approved the following initiatives:

- Continued support for Agencies and Regions including
  - critical incident stress management/worker safety strategies
  - Agency membership in PART (Practice and Research Together)
  - implementation of an Authority wide French language services policy
  - Adoption specialist and support for Wendy's Wonderful Kids Recruiter positions
  - (PRIDE) a foster parent training pilot project
  - Interlake integrated service pilot in partnership with Healthy Child
  - staff engagement initiatives
- Continued support for Youth including
  - pilot projects to provide support for youth transitioning from the care of agencies/service regions including the "Building Futures" Initiative
  - supporting agencies/regions to provide youth engagement activities
  - supporting agencies/regions to host age of majority celebrations for youth
  - a post-secondary education support fund to assist youth with expenses
  - digital stories and a youth retreat in conjunction with VOICES
- Refurbishment of the GA office
- A two year term quality assurance specialist at the Authority
- Continued support for the New Canadian Awareness and Education Initiative

- Permanency and Recruitment Initiatives.

The agency fund provides funding to child and family services agencies under the jurisdiction of the General Child and Family Services Authority to support the delivery of service including agency staffing, operating requirements and the delivery of support services.

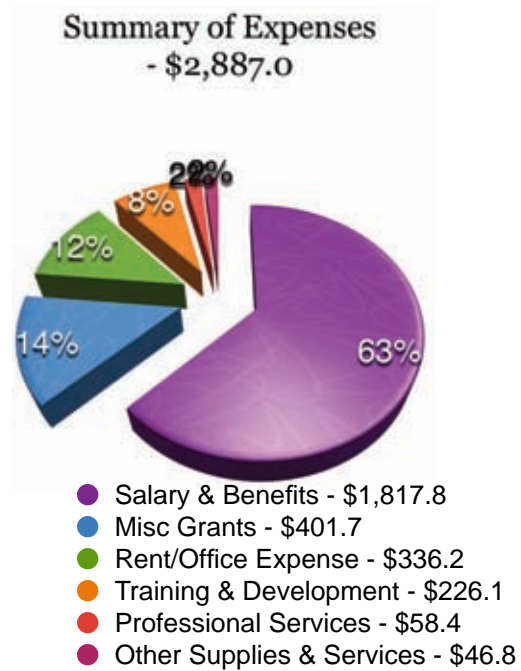
Thank you to the General Authority staff for their support.

## Financial Highlights

For the year ended March 31, 2014  
Expenditures by Fund



For the year ended March 31, 2014,  
a summary of expenses within the  
Operating Fund is as follows



**Janice Rees**  
Chief Financial Officer

# French Language Services

## Janine LeGal



Bonjour, ca va? As French Language Services Coordinator at the General Child and Family Services Authority I'm happy to report significant progress in the implementation of our French Language Services Plan. Manitoba's Active Offer, developed by the Provincial Government, has been in place at the GA for about a year now so any person calling the office can get an initial response in French, with bilingual staff available to handle inquiries in Canada's two official languages.

Our focus is always to increase accessibility of service in both official languages and one of the best ways to do this is to encourage French language learning.

For over a year, the General Authority has been offering weekly basic conversational French language classes for staff. We have a core group of motivated staff committed to increasing and improving their French language skills. An informal classroom has brought about a joie de vivre and a true appreciation for the French language. You can tell by all of the roaring laughter and animated gesturing. Classes have provided participants with an opportunity to work on verbal, reading and vocabulary building skills. With plenty of enthusiasm, improvement has been vast.

It continues to be a great pleasure to meet with staff from the Conseil Communauté en Santé du Manitoba (CCSM) to increase access to French Language Services in the workplace. The CCSM has provided countless resources for the General Authority office and is a great support to help facilitate French language learning and training, continued professional development and Manitoba's Active Offer in French.

I'm happy to represent the General Authority on the 'table des gestionnaires services sociaux', a committee of people whose job it is to offer opportunities to bring increased French language services into the workplace. The committee meets four times per year to network, share information and report on progress being made in various areas in the field of social services.

We are encouraged by the notable progress over the last year with staff making efforts to learn and speak French. Our goal is for the French language to become a more integral part of the GA's every day office operations and for staff and public to feel more at ease using the French language to communicate in the workplace.

C'est toujours un plaisir mes amis. A la prochaine.







# Les services en français

## Janine LeGal

Bonjour, ça va? À titre de coordonnatrice des services en français de la Régie générale des services à l'enfance et à la famille, je suis heureuse de signaler des progrès importants dans la mise en œuvre de notre plan de services en français. La politique d'offre active élaborée par le gouvernement du Manitoba est en vigueur à la Régie générale depuis environ un an. Elle signifie que toute personne qui téléphone au bureau peut désormais recevoir une réponse initiale en français grâce à des membres du personnel bilingues qui peuvent traiter les demandes de renseignements dans les deux langues officielles du Canada. Nous cherchons toujours à accroître l'accessibilité des services dans les deux langues officielles et l'un des meilleurs moyens d'y arriver est d'encourager l'apprentissage de la langue française.

Depuis plus d'un an, la Régie générale offre des cours de conversation française hebdomadaires à son personnel. Il existe un groupe de base de membres du personnel motivés qui se sont engagés à rehausser et à améliorer leurs compétences linguistiques en français. Les cours informels ont suscité une joie de vivre et une appréciation réelle de la langue française. On peut le remarquer dans les éclats de rire et les gestes animés des participants. Les cours ont donné à ces derniers la possibilité de renforcer leurs aptitudes verbales, leur aptitude à la lecture et leur acquisition de vocabulaire. Grâce à l'enthousiasme débordant des participants, l'amélioration a été importante.

Je continue de prendre plaisir à rencontrer le personnel de Santé en français en vue d'accroître l'accès aux services en français au travail. Santé en français a offert un grand nombre de ressources au bureau de la Régie générale et joue un rôle de soutien important pour faciliter l'apprentissage de la langue française et la formation en français, le perfectionnement professionnel continu et l'offre active de services en français.

Il me fait plaisir de représenter la Régie générale à la Table des gestionnaires en matière de services sociaux, un comité dont le travail consiste à accroître l'offre de services en français au travail. Le comité se réunit quatre fois par année afin d'établir des réseaux, échanger de l'information et faire rapport des progrès accomplis dans divers secteurs des services sociaux.

Nous sommes encouragés par les progrès notables accomplis au cours de la dernière année et par les efforts du personnel pour apprendre la langue française et l'utiliser. Notre objectif consiste à intégrer davantage le français dans les activités quotidiennes du bureau de la Régie générale et de faciliter l'utilisation du français par le public et le personnel pour communiquer au travail.

C'est toujours un plaisir de communiquer avec vous. À la prochaine!



# Building Futures

Cathe Umlah and  
Jennifer Fallis



For the first time in Manitoba, a network of Community partners have come together to offer a variety of services and resources for youth who have left care. Young adults can now call one number to access this support. Through this collaboration, Building Futures is ensuring smoother paths for young people leaving care. With new supports to handle daily challenges and new opportunities to achieve goals, Building Futures is creating hope and helping to make dreams happen. There's so much to be excited about.

**58**

The number of youth and young adults from all Authorities who received assistance as part of Building Futures in 2013/2014.

**23**

The number of young adults who received financial support through the GA Post-Secondary Education and Training Support Fund.

**34**

The number of students currently or previously in the care of a GA agency awarded a tuition waiver.

**6**

The number of post-secondary institutions offering tuition waivers in 2013/2014.

**“Receiving the tuition waiver has been essential to my success academically and socially. With rates of high school graduation so low among foster children, providing a sense of achievement and something to strive for is essential. The tuition waiver did that and more, facilitating less stress about funding and finances so that I can remain focused on doing the best I am capable of in my post-secondary education.”**

**Dylan**

Joining the University of Winnipeg, Red River College, Winnipeg Technical College, Brandon University, Assiniboine Community College, and Université de Saint-Boniface, the GA is delighted that the University of Manitoba and Booth College will begin offering tuition waivers in the fall of 2014.

The tuition waiver information night last November was a huge success. Thank you to the University of Winnipeg for hosting this event.



**"I have worked with many youth over the past several years that have been lost in the shuffle when leaving care and it has been great to be involved with a project that is focusing on bringing these agencies together to work towards a common goal."**

**John, Building Futures  
Youth Services Navigator**

**Big thanks to our community partners:**  
*Youth Employment Services,  
Community Financial Counselling  
Services, Canadian Mental Health  
Association Winnipeg and Big  
Brothers Big Sisters Winnipeg.  
Special thanks to the Royal Bank of  
Canada for their generous funding  
support.*

**"The General Authority has helped me in my journey by supporting me with a scholarship, a tuition waiver and counselling services. I am immensely thankful for the General Authority's support and guidance throughout my academic and life journey."**

**Amanda**

# Scholarships & Awards

Laurie Gulowaty

The General Authority has been working in collaboration with the Children's Aid Foundation for the past seven years to provide monies, given by generous donors, to vulnerable children and youth served by our agencies and service regions. Monies for programs such as the CIBC Miracle Fund and Scotia Capital Funds have been renewed annually, while various one-time-only funding opportunities such as the Johnny Reid Campaign and the RBC National Diversity Program have been welcome additions. The Children's Aid Foundation continues to advocate for continued and increased funds for these programs directly with the donors, as well as regularly canvas the General Authority for feedback and ideas on areas of need to explore for further funding opportunities.

As the Fund Manager with the responsibility of administering these funds within the General Authority, I look forward to being able to provide social workers with the opportunities to positively impact the lives of the children and youth they work with.

One agency social worker refers to me as the 'fairy godmother who grants wishes' by making money appear for the children and youth on their caseload. I only wish it were that easy. It's the commitment of the Children's Aid Foundation and the generous donors that make it possible. In reality, when family circumstances are challenging, and difficult things are happening to children, it is nice to be able to provide social workers with the opportunity to brighten their day.

**"I would like to take a moment to thank you for awarding me the Scotia Capital Stay in School Award. As you may already know, life has been difficult with my mom's illness. My hopes are to help find a cure for cancer so others don't have to experience what I have. I have invested my \$300 award to help with my future education." K.**

**"The past two years have been extremely hard on many levels. Receiving this award means the world to me as obtaining an education is vital to succeed in my future. I have deposited this award into an RESP account to assist with my future goal of going to college. My dream is to become a caring nurse like mom and hopefully one day get a masters degree in nursing." B.**



## Social Capital Funds

Funds	Number of Awards Issued	Amount of Funds Issued
Leap to Learning Tutoring Fund	12	\$11,496.42
Graduation Award	65	\$5,400
Stay in School	86	\$25,800.00
<i>Total Amount</i>		\$42,696.42

## CIBC Miracle Fund

Funds	Number of Awards Issued	Amount of Funds Issued
Miracle Fund	30	\$7,399.90
<i>Total Amount</i>		\$7,399.90



# GA Practice Model



Child and Family Services social workers are passionate about keeping children safe and supporting families. It can be challenging to work effectively with families during difficult and stressful times. This is where our skills of engagement become so important. Our goal is to keep children safe in their own homes even though they sometimes need to come into care.

During 2013/14, guided by the Director's Leadership Table, the General Authority continued to implement a new child welfare practice model. The members of

the Leading Practice Specialists Team continued to provide practice model training to front line child welfare workers and supervisors throughout this year. Our practice model uses family friendly ways of having conversations, to talk about what our worries are and encourage families to work with us. Through these discussions, we can make more accurate and consistent assessments about the safety of children, the level of risk and how we can work collaboratively with the family and other service providers to make sure families receive the support they need.

Embedded in the practice model is the use of Structured Decision Making (SDM) tools that help workers to thoroughly assess how safe children are in their home right now and what the level of risk is that some harm may come to them in the future. The SDM tools assist workers to gather the most relevant and important information to make these critical decisions. We also look at the family's strengths as well as what the caregivers might need to be effective parents. Through engaging dialogue with families, we become partners in doing everything we can to ensure child safety.

Workers and supervisors have discussions about how to organize the information about families and to bring out some of their best critical thinking about next steps. A consultative process called "mapping" is an integral component of our new practice model training. Mapping is framed around three essential questions.

**"Given that SDM relies on quality information to guide decision-making, another innovation...was introduced....to help ensure that the information gathered by social workers would be full and accurate."**

**Hughes Report**

Our goal is for social workers and families to understand child safety in the same way. The language we use must be clear for caregivers and highlight that we will partner with them. This is why we have conversations with families about safety 'at the kitchen table'. Everyone should have a shared understanding of what the worries are and what needs to happen next to make sure children are kept safe. Families need to be included in the planning and to be clear about what they need to do. Building trust between a worker and a family is imperative. This is at the heart of our new practice model.

The child's voice is of critical importance when we are planning for safety. This is why our practice model has training on techniques such as the Three Houses and the Safety House. The Three Houses is a way of framing our core practice model questions in child-friendly language so that we learn what children are worried about (the House of Worries), what is working well (the House of Good Things), and next steps (the House of Dreams). These are powerful messages that animate the voice of the child when engaging with families. The Safety House is another child friendly approach that encourages children to talk about what needs to happen in their homes for them to feel safe; such as who can be in the home, who can visit, and who should not be allowed in the home. This helps us to include the voice of the child when planning for ongoing safety.

Our workers are showing great creativity and innovation in their use of the new model in day to day practice. Over the next year, working in collaboration with the Children's Research Centre, we will continue to train and support the implementation of the new practice model and learn from our experiences.

**“What are we worried about?”**

**“What is working well?”**

**“What needs to happen next?”**

**“The General Authority’s practice model supports social workers’ engagement with families - even families who are not cooperative and are receiving involuntary services and may not trust the child welfare system. The goal is to build trust and redirect the focus from “parent blaming” to a collaboration that can help the family function better so that children will be safer, preferably at home.” Hughes Report**

# New Canadian Awareness and Education Initiative

Kim Thomas



For the last five years I've had the privilege of leading the GA's New Canadian Awareness and Education Initiative created to help raise awareness and provide accurate information about Manitoba parenting laws and the child and family services system. As communities and service providers take increasing ownership, this is truly becoming a shared collaborative venture. It's so exciting and gratifying to see an initiative that started out with a focus on raising awareness and education become so much more. It's about all of the relationships that have developed across communities and service

providers and child and family service staff. Through relationship we will provide better service for children and families. There is such generosity in this initiative, a generosity of spirit, time and commitment with all of the people who continue to work on this together. That's what I love about it. I so look forward to the new year.

335

**Cultural community members participated in discussions about Manitoba parenting laws and the work of child and family services over the past year. Some were co-facilitated by community members and CFS staff, in first language.**

50+

**Providers participated in presentations about the Child and Family Service Act and the work of CFS.**

**"There is a proverb that states, one finger can't wash the face but the hands together will. This is what I'm talking about. The New Canadian Initiative values all people and strengthens our communities and our families."**

**Catherine Biaya**

A Facilitator's Training Curriculum was developed using the video 'Sounds through the Wall: A Resource for New Canadians about the Child and Family Service System' available in Spanish, Swahili, French, Somali, Arabic, Low German and English. The Training will prepare community members, child and family services staff and service providers to co-facilitate engagements with a broad range of cultural communities.





The Sounds Through the Wall Facilitator Training will provide opportunities to build collaborative relationships between newcomer service providers, settlement agencies, child and family services staff and new Canadian communities. Having this Friendly Faces Network will improve communication and increase sustainable consultation.

Cultural communities have much to contribute to the development of the General Authority's strategic directions. The GA Board of Directors

has asked the Reference Group (a team of cultural community members who have been steering the New Canadian Initiative over the last 3 years) to broaden its advisory role to include all of the GA's strategic directions. The Board hopes to welcome two members of this group to the Board in the fall of 2014.

The General Authority is deeply grateful to all of its partners who have so generously committed their time, expertise, and honest commentary to move the initiative forward.

Immigrant Centre, Healthy Child Manitoba, Accueil francophone du Manitoba, Manitoba Interfaith Immigrant Council Inc. (Welcome Place), Graffiti Gallery, Prairie Theatre Exchange, Campfire Union, ANCR, PACCA, Child Protection Branch, Mount Carmel Clinic, Reference Group, Labour and Immigration, Private Refugee Sponsors, Winnipeg Foundation, RBC, Neighbourhood Immigrant Settlement Workers, The Children's Aid Foundation, Winnipeg CFS, and Martin Itzkow.

**"The New Canadian Initiative creates a restoration of confidence and trust within the newcomer community, a positive step showing that CFS works for and with the newcomer community, not against it. It's an all inclusive approach, solving misunderstanding and building trust for the well being of children and families." Mohamed Damsho Ali**

## Coming in 2014

**"Parenting as told Through Cultural Community Voices."** This project will affirm and celebrate parenting strengths, knowledge and skills through the development of material and products told through the voices of new Canadians.

Informational pamphlets about the child and family services system including parental rights and responsibilities will be widely available, in a variety of languages in winter 2014.

# Permanence for our Children and Youth

## Jeanette Grennier



As Adoption Specialist at the GA, my work over the last year has been exciting as we began to really take a look at the area of permanency planning and what we currently offer our children and youth. While we have some excellent programs to assist youth transition from our care, the reality is that a number of our youth transition without a permanent family. For those of us fortunate enough to have family supports, it is hard to imagine what our lives would be like without them. Who would come to our graduations, weddings, birth of our children? Where would we go for Christmas, Hanukkah, etc? Who would visit us in the hospital? Who would be grandparents to our children? Who would we call when we had a bad day – or a good day – or need money/assistance? Personally, I know that I would not be where I am today without my family, and the same is true for my daughter.

We recognize that we need to do more to ensure that our youth have permanent families/connections before leaving care. Some of the work we have done towards this goal includes:

- A statistical analysis of the number of GA children and youth in the permanent care of our agencies.
- Delivery of a presentation for internal and external stakeholders on the importance of permanency
- Ongoing advocacy with the Department of Family Services, including senior levels of government, for improvements to the provincial Adoption Financial Assistance program
- Research on family focused adoption recruitment, strategies to help children and youth resolve issues of loss and grief; adoption education programs for prospective adoptive parents and youth engagement.
- Grant approval from the Dave Thomas Foundation to hire a Wendy's Wonderful Kids adoption recruiter.

I am looking forward to the upcoming year to help build on these initiatives and work towards the goal of ensuring permanency for children and youth in the care of our agencies.

# Youth Speak Out

## July 2014

Currently there are active Youth Speak Out groups in Fredericton, Ottawa, Toronto, Edmonton and Vancouver and it is now coming to Winnipeg! This 2-day training focuses on providing youth with skills that help promote change in policies around child welfare.

Up to 20 youth, ages 15 and up, who are currently in care, have transitioned from care or have been adopted are invited to participate. They will be trained to speak in public, participate in panels and media interviews and create films, artwork, poetry, and postcards about why they need permanent families.

Stayed tuned to hear the voices of our youth in the fall of 2014!



**“Once you choose hope,  
anything's possible.”  
Christopher Reeve**





# Jamie's Story

"In spring 2013, I received a work placement at the General Authority as part of my Creative Communications studies at Red River College. During my time with the GA, I was able to use my photography, film, and video editing skills to create an appreciation video for their Emergency Placement Resources staff. My work placement was supposed to give me time and experience as a communications professional, which it definitely did. But it also left me with something unexpected. Previously, when I thought about CFS and the foster care system, my first reaction was to get a distrustful and sickly feeling in my gut. In foster care, I thought the social workers I only saw on scheduled visits didn't care about me or what happened to me. I imagined people in faraway offices who pushed paper around their desks and decided where we would go next but whom I had never met. It was my work placement at the GA that started to change those negative feelings.



I walked from office to office on my very first day of work placement and talked to everyone, some for as long as an hour. And each and every one of them genuinely and fiercely cared about who I was. I felt something flutter inside me then. Hope. Relief. Sadness. The realization that there are wonderful people, like the ones at the GA, fighting and working hard each day to make sure foster care experiences like mine don't happen again was like finding a small child inside me and wiping away their tears."

Jamie created a foundation in honour of her parents. The Verna and Stanley McKay Sr. Education Bursary for Aboriginal Students, established in 2013 is available at Red River College for Aboriginal students who cannot get funding from their bands. Jamie is currently doing contract work for the GA.

**"When you do nothing you feel overwhelmed and powerless. But when you get involved you feel the sense of hope and accomplishment that comes from knowing you are working to make things better." Maya Angelou**



# Wendy's Wonderful Kids

Laura Wilson



**“You have to be brave with your life so that others can be brave with theirs” - Dave Thomas Foundation.**

Becoming a Wendy's Wonderful Kids Recruiter has been one of the most challenging career choices I've ever made and most definitely one of the best! The vision of the Dave Thomas Foundation is that every child will have a permanent home and a loving family. The children that I work with are amazing kids. I am inspired by their bravery and hope. It gives me the determination to challenge the barriers, question the skeptical and remain hopeful so that we work towards permanency for children in the foster care system.

The Dave Thomas Foundation has generously approved another year of funding for this position in Manitoba. In the first year of the program as a recruiter my work has focused on educating others about the program to bring people on board about the importance of permanency for some of our longest waiting children. I have a caseload of children who I am developing relationships with, diligently searching for families to adopt, building custom recruitment plans for each child and preparing everyone for an adoption to ensure a family is formed forever.

One of the teens referred to the Wendy's Wonderful Kids program told me “Every kid deserves to have a family and not to be in foster care. I want to be adopted.” I couldn't agree with her more and so when the family who adopted her younger sibling five

years ago asked her to join their family I was

honoured to be part of helping her find a forever family too. I am certain there will be many more children who achieve permanence through this program.



**The Dave Thomas Foundation believes “every child deserves to live in a safe, loving and permanent family. No child should linger in foster care or leave the system without a permanent family of his or her own. Every child is adoptable.”**

# Building Capacity through Training

Lisa Schmidt



The General Authority continues to prioritize training for social work staff, foster parents, support workers, respite workers and volunteers. Last fiscal year, GA training was attended by over 3,000 participants. We continue to work on providing relevant and impactful training with the goal to improve service to the children and families with whom we work. This includes training in the fields of Structured Decision Making (SDM), attachment, child abuse, domestic violence, trauma, standards, practice model, addictions, mental health and more. The General Authority Practice

Model continues to be a priority as it rolls out across all GA agencies. Over 1000 staff attended training in this area. By the end of the 2013/2014 fiscal year, most agencies were halfway through implementation of the modules.

**3647**

**The number of participants in all GA Training**

**Spring  
2014**

**The GA Training Centre opens at 604 - 180 King Street in Winnipeg**

**“The training has given me the tools to understand and look after our children in a better way and to feel more confident in guiding their lives in the right direction so they can be more independent.” Esther**

I am proud to be a part of a program that I feel can affect positive change for the families who receive services from our hardworking staff and foster parents. I believe that training is a critical mechanism by which this positive change can happen. The training calendar continues to be sent out monthly, directly to agencies, with the additional option of accessing it on the GA website. Stay tuned for the new fall 2014 training calendar.

**“The GA’s Training has impacted my practice by providing me with new information and new tools to help walk alongside our youth. This training helps you to understand that every little bit counts; it encourages you, as a worker, to keep trying with the positive, brief interventions, giving you hope and encouragement that every little bit does help.”**

**Breanna**

# Training for Families affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

Cathe Umlah



As the GA FASD Specialist, I am amazed by the knowledge and case work of agency workers and foster parents with children and families affected by FASD. The knowledge of FASD is building in the CFS system because of training as well as case consultations and the experience of the workers. The best part of my job, besides FASD training, is working directly with workers and families, applying the FASD lens in case planning and seeing the difference that this can make. By trying differently rather than harder, and making some environmental adaptations for the child, caregivers and workers can help children with FASD reach their potential.

**15**

**FASD Team Leaders within the GA agencies continue to participate in advanced training on FASD as well as case consultations.**

**72**

**Individuals participated in FASD generalist training. This past year, a particular focus has been placed on ensuring that new staff within the agencies as well as foster parents have access to FASD training as part of their work with CFS.**

**142**

**Staff participated in FASD Standards training. Within the last year, the FASD Specialist has been providing FASD Standards presentations and training to all agencies within the GA to ensure workers are familiar with the standards and can apply them to their case work with children and families.**

# Review of Services after Child Death

Patti Cox

Under Subsection 8.2.3(1) of *The Child and Family Services Act*, the Office of the Children's Advocate (OCA) is required to conduct a review of services after the death of a child who had received services through the child welfare system at any time within one year prior to the death. The purpose of the review, referred to as a Special Investigation, is to identify ways in which services may be enhanced to improve the safety and wellbeing of children receiving those services, and to reduce the likelihood of a death occurring in similar circumstances. Special Investigation reports may contain recommendations for changes to standards, policies or practices.

In 2013/2014, the General Authority (GA) received eleven (11) Special Investigation Reports. Of these, only one contained recommendations. This report made two recommendations related to safe sleeping for infants and the importance of training staff, parents and caregivers on these practices. The GA completed a detailed response to these recommendations, which included all the actions taken by the agency to provide staff and others with up to date reference information and opportunities for training on safe sleep environments for young children.

Since 2008, when the OCA began child death reviews, the GA and our agencies/service regions have received a total of 24 recommendations on ways to enhance services. We are pleased to report that the GA has responded fully and consistently to all 24 of these recommendations since they were issued, implementing new and promising practices and offering supports to our agencies with the goal always of service excellence.

While all deaths of children are tragic no matter the cause, the review of the services provided to a child and their family helps the GA and its agencies/service regions to demonstrate accountability; to address any concerns which have been noted about service delivery and to acknowledge and encourage continuous improvement in our work with children and families.

**"It will never be possible to prevent every tragic outcome for a child, but many of the interrelated factors that put Phoenix at risk are within our power to address and this is our collective responsibility." Hughes Report**

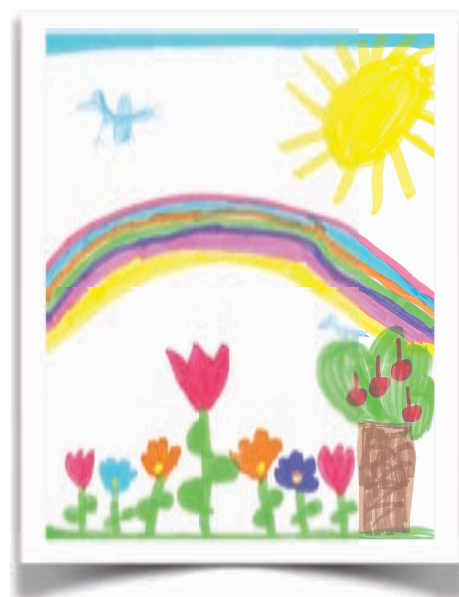


To promote transparency about our work in this area, the GA joined with the OCA and the other three Authorities in developing and implementing the Protocol for Review of Draft Special Investigation Reports. This Protocol established a forum for Authorities and agencies to:

- Review and comment on the OCA's draft report.
- Provide additional information on programs, initiatives or quality improvement activities relevant to the OCA's draft.
- Provide information to the OCA to assist in the formulation of recommendations and when requested, to review draft recommendations .
- Provide feedback to the OCA about additional topic areas in which recommendations would be helpful in improving the quality of service to children and families.

The General Authority would like to commend the Children's Advocate for taking the initiative to establish this protocol. With open and collaborative discussion taking place between the OCA, Authorities and agencies about draft reports, it is much more likely that recommendations will be meaningful and achievable by the child welfare system.

Building on the continued effectiveness of the Information Sharing Protocol and to ensure even greater transparency, the GA implemented a standard across all of our agencies for sharing OCA reports with staff. Reflective of our practice since 2011, this standard ensures continued consultation occurs with agency/service region staff. At minimum, the content, findings and recommendations of the draft and final reports will be shared with agency staff that had direct involvement in the case. Agency/service region directors also have the discretion to share this information with other staff to further promote transparency and accountability, to acknowledge and encourage excellence in service provision; and to enhance opportunities for further learning.



# Resource Development

Laurie Gulowaty & Laura Morton



We are Laurie Gulowaty and Laura Morton, also known as the GA Resource Development Team. As a service system we are continually challenged with the number of children and youth coming into care, children and youth who deserve safe and nurturing places to live. We are also challenged by the shortage of suitable homes to receive them.



As a Team, we try to meet this challenge by working collaboratively with our agencies and service regions to determine placement needs, assist in care provider recruitment efforts and partner with collateral service agencies to develop the needed placement resources. We also work very closely with our colleagues in the other three authorities.

One of our highest priorities is assisting agencies/service regions to find placement resources for high needs children and youth. Agencies often find it very difficult to identify an appropriate resource for a child or youth whose behaviours put themselves and others at serious risk or where the needs are so complex that service is required across many departments. In 2013/14, working in partnership with external agencies like New Directions for Children Youth and Families and Life's Journey, Inc, we successfully established long-term placement homes for many of these youth. We continue work with the Community Living disABILITY Services program on early identification and collaborative planning for complex needs youth who will require ongoing supports throughout their lives. We are committed to seeing beyond the immediate crisis in order that these individuals and their families can imagine a hopeful future.

The GA Resource Development Team works in partnership with the other CFS Authorities at the Alternative Care Subcommittee of the Standing Committee (ACS). It is here that foster care, residential care and other resource needs across the system are discussed with recommendations made to the Standing Committee. Recently members of ACS have been working on a Protocol for Complex Needs Children and Youth which will assist families and agencies in accessing services.

One of us (Laura) recently attended the WrapCanada training (March 2014) which may provide the structure for work across service sectors on behalf of children and youth with complex needs and their families. We look forward to a pilot project incorporating this wraparound approach with much-needed placements and services for this population.



Throughout 2013/14, with our colleague Jeanette Grennier, we were able to complete delivery of the foster care standards and legislation framework training. This is a one day workshop that provides a thorough overview of the process, regulatory requirements and standards related to the licensing of new foster homes. As part of this training, our agency/service region resource team members receive the much-appreciated Foster Home Framework Binder and Flowchart. All resource workers, supervisors and program managers from every agency/service region have now received this training. We were always welcomed into our agency/service region workplaces across the Province. The Resource Team will continue to train and distribute the Framework materials to our external agency partners over the next year.



In June 2013, it was our pleasure to attend the first Emergency Placement Resource (EPR) Staff Appreciation and Planning Event co-hosted by Winnipeg Child and Family Services and the General Authority. This included an afternoon and an evening session to best accommodate EPR shift configurations. This was the very first event of its kind with the primary purpose of expressing appreciation to all shelter staff for their hard work and dedication shown towards the children and youth they care for. This event also provided an opportunity to present Years of Service Awards to staff with 5, 10, 15, & 20 Years of Service.

# Quality Assurance & Outcomes

Jan Christianson-Wood, Patti Wawyn, Kim Thomas, and Patti Cox



One of the most important responsibilities of a child and family services authority is to ensure that the highest quality of services is being provided for our children, youth and families. The General Authority fulfills this quality assurance role through a continuous learning process that emphasizes leading practices, focuses on strengths and tracks outcomes. Each year we work in close collaboration with our Directors' Leadership Table to ensure that our quality assurance work provides the most meaningful and relevant evidence to help strengthen day to day practice. Highlights from 2013/14 include:

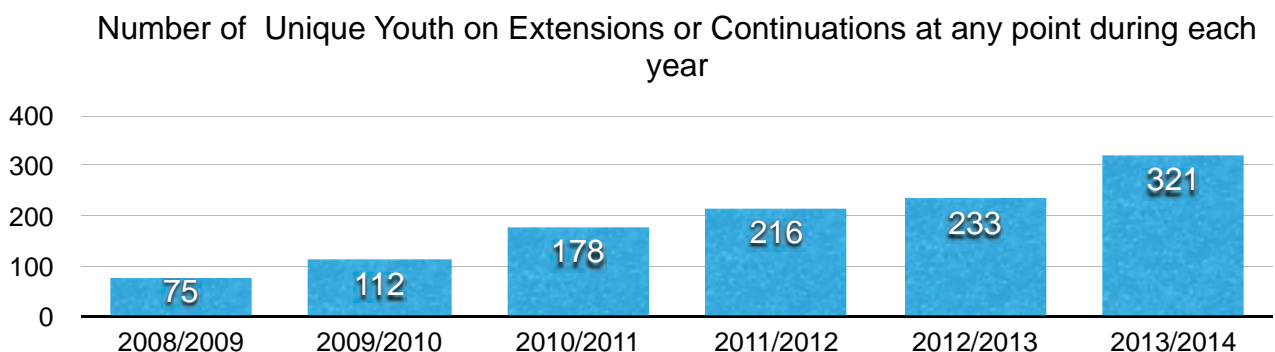
- Responding to Intakes - One of our key roles is to respond to concerns, complaints and inquiries (collectively referred to as "intakes") regarding the services provided by an agency/service region. These referrals can come from the community, directly from families, from collateral organizations or through the Department of Family Services. During 2013/2014, the General Authority responded to 504 intakes. While this volume is similar to last year, it remains higher than in previous years.

During 2013/14 the General Authority undertook a four month internal review to examine the volume, origin and nature of intakes. The goal was to address the workload associated with the increase in volume. As a result, a new pilot project was launched in the latter part of 2013/14. This new approach provides a formal way of prioritizing response times to certain categories of intakes and achieving a greater balance in workload distribution among the program specialists.

- Review of Services to Minor Parents - The General Authority receives a copy of the Notice of Live Birth or Notice of Maternity for any mother under the age of 18 being served by one of our agencies/service regions. We ensure that the service expectations set out in legislation and standards have been met and where the minor parent is under 16, that the agency/service region has followed the appropriate procedures to determine if an abuse investigation should be conducted. In 2013/14, the General Authority received 86 Notices (very similar to last year) with 25 related to mothers under the age of 16.



- Approving Variances and Mixed Facility Licenses - The *Foster Home Licensing Regulations* restrict the total number of persons cared for in a foster home and set limits on the number of children who can be in a foster home based on certain age categories (infants and under the age of five). These provisions can be varied with the approval of an authority. When in receipt of such a request from an agency/service region, we ensure that the appropriate services are in place to support the foster home should a variance be granted. In 2013/14, the General Authority approved 22 variances which is slightly higher than last year when we approved 18. The General Authority also approved 11 mixed facility licenses which is required when a foster home is caring for both children and adults.
- Approving Extensions of Care - Under legislation, an agency can request that services be continued for any permanent ward who has turned 18 in care. These are called an extension of care request and must be approved by the authority. We will review the request to ensure that the legislative requirements are met, the youth has agreed to participate in a plan and there are clear outcomes to be achieved at the end of the extension period. As shown in the table below, the number of young adults on extensions of care continues to increase within the General Authority. In 2012/13, the General Authority conducted an evaluation which demonstrated that extensions do increase the likelihood of successful life outcomes for young adults who turned 18 in care.



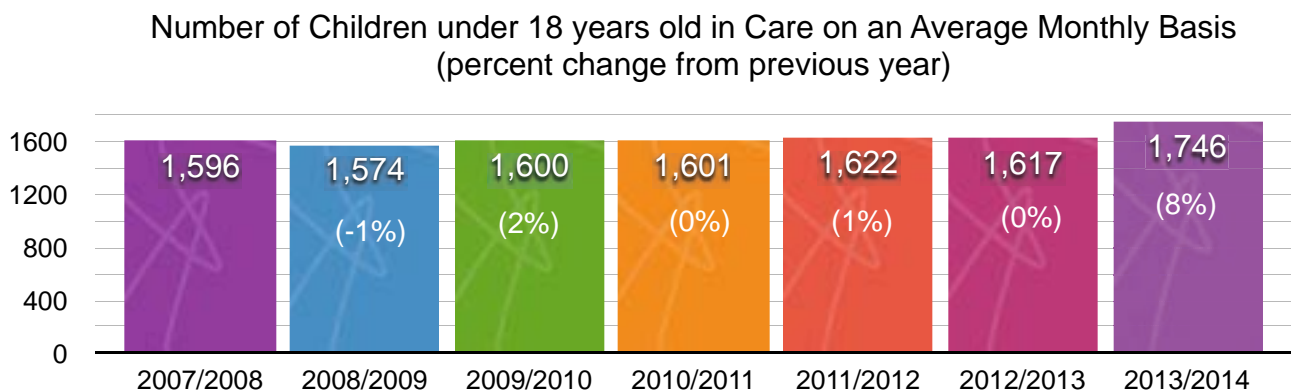
- Standards and Program Reviews - An important component of our accountability framework is the standards and program reviews we do each year. These are done to ensure services are being delivered consistent with province wide standards and that our programs reflect leading practice evidence. Based on our quality assurance cycle, different standards and programs are reviewed each year. During 2013/14, the General Authority conducted compliance reviews at two different times during the year on the status of foster home re-licensing, face to face contact with children in care and whether agency/region staff have the required checks in place (criminal record, prior contact and child abuse registry). We consistently found very high compliance with these standards.

In 2013/14, the GA completed one major program review and launched two others.

We completed a review of a specialized independent living program for female youth ages 16 to 21. This assessed the effectiveness of the services and the value of these services based on a cost comparison with similar programs. Through extensive interviews and surveys with both youth and placing workers, the review found that the program is highly successful from a quality of care standpoint. Workers indicated a high level of satisfaction with the program and youth described positive relationships with staff and growth in their educational, employment, social and emotional lives. The specific strengths of the program were identified by all sources as a consistent and highly supportive core group of “adults”, including the social worker and the presence of the administrator who have made it a priority to establish a home-like environment. Recommendations were made under the themes of administrative and financial accountability structures. Also in 2013/14, the General Authority initiated a review of the Structured Analysis Family Evaluation (SAFE) which is the formalized assessment used with prospective foster and adoptive applicants and an evaluation of the Parenting Resource Information Development Education (PRIDE) training for foster parents. These will be completed in 2014/15.

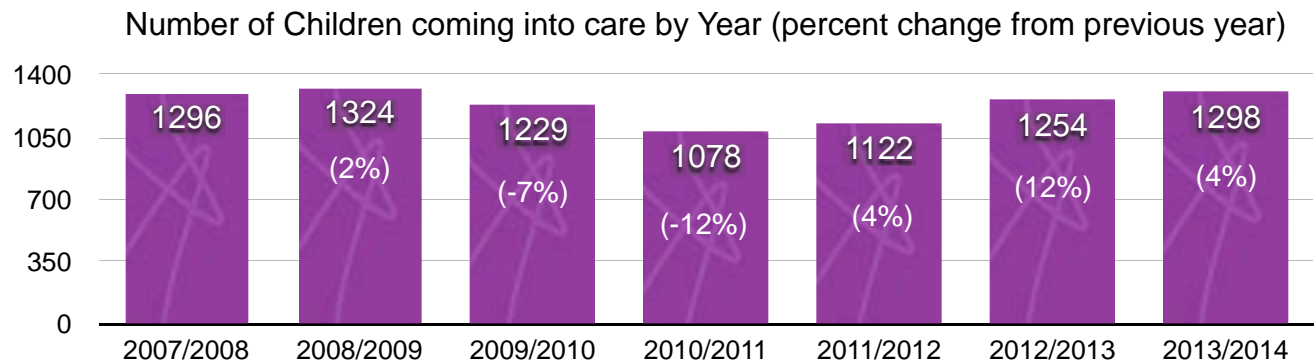
- Measuring Outcomes - In 2009, the GA implemented a comprehensive matrix for reporting on system-wide service outcomes. The GA Outcomes Matrix has five outcome domains and twenty-five individual indicators. The Board of Directors receives an outcomes report twice a year on the effectiveness of service delivery. This is critical to inform strategic and operational planning into the future. Following are examples of the key outcome trends being tracked over time.

The table below shows that, after five straight years of little or no increase in the number of children in care, the GA experienced an 8% increase in 2013/14.

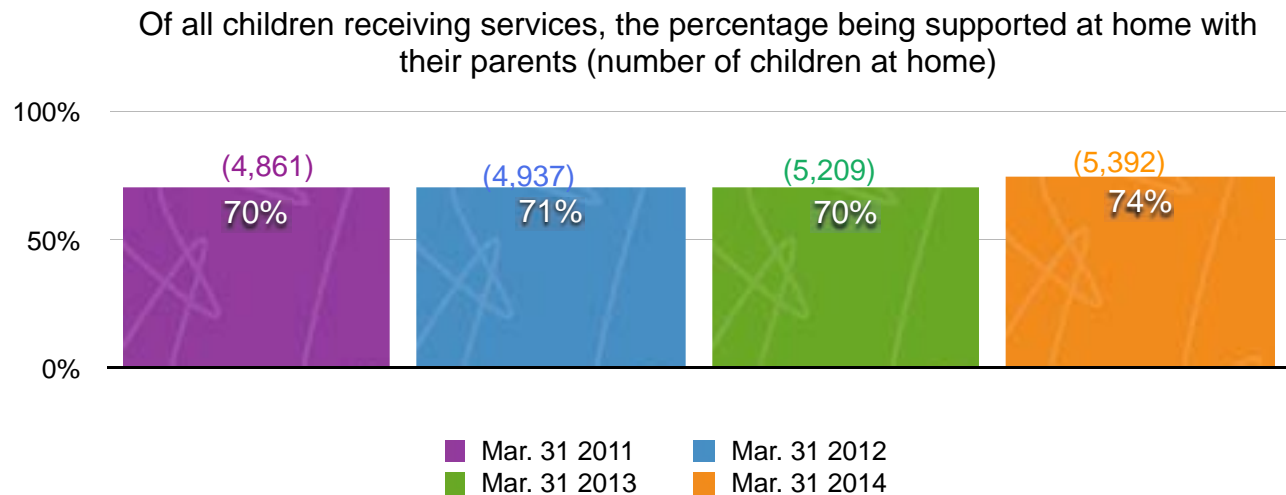


The following table shows the number of new children ages 0 to 18 being brought into care of a GA agency/service region during each of the last seven years. After two years

of substantial decreases, the General Authority has now experienced three years of more children coming into care than in the prior year. It should be noted that the number of new children brought into care in 2013/14 is still about the same as the baseline year of 2007/08.



The next table looks at the number of children and families where services are being provided to support those children living at home. This is an important indicator of how successful agencies/regions are in keeping families together. This table shows a very positive trend continued into 2013/14.



**80%** for the third year in a row the percentage of children and youth in care placed in a home like setting either with family or in foster care

**80%** the three year average for the percentage of children and youth in care who did not experience a disruption in school as the result of a placement change.

# Communication

Janine LeGal



Communication relates to every area of our lives, that's how big it is. We do it every day. In one form or another. All of us. We communicate. All the time. As a child I wrote in my diary every day. In my later years I wrote for a living. Stories, anecdotes, web content, columns, editorials. And in the last decade, I've grown particularly fond of script tattoo art so parts of my body are covered in words - that way people who are so inclined will read me to find out more. All of that perhaps an attempt to be understood, one of the things all of us have in common. Every single one of us needs and wants to be understood.

And so as Communications Coordinator for the General Child and Family Services Authority, I see everything through that lens. And this past year has been all about that - getting important stories out, distributing information through a variety of ways, finding more and more avenues to connect with people internally and externally. To listen. To learn. To inform. To inspire. To educate. To understand and to be understood.

The GA News has become an important medium to get the word out on a number of critical issues and news stories. This past year included coverage of Child and Family Services of Western's annual conference and their youth engagement work, Child and Family Services of Central Manitoba's opening of the Family Resource Centre, the contribution being made by the Critical Incident Stress Management Teams as well as a first hand narrative of one youth's experience in foster care and his work with the General Authority's Youth Engagement Strategy. These stories represent a mere fraction of the countless stories yet to be written about the important work being done in the child welfare field - work that fosters hope for the children and families served by a system often misunderstood.

So for us at the General Authority, we're thinking more along the lines of doing a whole lot more of that. Communication that is.



A number of child welfare stories were featured in the media over the last year. On radio, television, in newspapers and online. Our continually evolving and expanding relationship with media is important and signals a growing increase in the building of trust required to bring awareness to the broader community about child welfare. We will continue to work with media to educate the public and maybe even begin to break through some of the stereotypes about the child welfare system.



Plans are under way to redesign our website making it more interactive and user friendly. Our new site will incorporate a focus on e-learning, skill development, and public education, all of which are fundamentally important to an increase in understanding. We're excited about opening doors to more and more dialogue, creating a more effective and accurate flow of information.

So it's all about communication. It's important to continue to share as many stories as possible not just in the GA News, but on our website, in the media, in our communities and with each other. We've got to continue to talk to each other, to learn, to educate. That's the only way we're ever going to understand each other. And who doesn't want that. We all want that. All of us. Big. Or small. Short or tall. In every colour, shape and size. It's a universal thing. So let's keep talking. And listening. That's how a better world will be made.

**"Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less." Marie Curie**



## Special Thanks



The General Authority has Critical Incident Stress Management Peer Support Teams (CISM) in every agency. The primary purpose of an internal CISM Peer Support Team is to ensure that staff are supported and assisted in a compassionate and professional manner following the occurrence of an incident. Big thanks for the invaluable support to all those who stand alongside their colleagues.



Anne Pratt, Administrative Officer retired from the GA in March 2014 after 28 years of service. Her contribution remains forever etched in the minds, hearts and walls of the GA.



Thank you to Cheyenne, Colin, Kara, and Kaitlyn for your drawings. Your beautiful, thoughtful and colourful art makes this report even more about hope, and about children and families.



**A great big thank you to our administrative team - Kathleen Baxter, Del Bruneau, and Caren Simoes. These are the people who keep things moving like a well oiled machine, flowing like the most stunning of waterfalls, and looking after all of the details that contribute to the quality of work produced at the GA. We couldn't do it without them.**



Left to Right: Caren Simoes, Erica Wood, Kathleen Baxter and Del Bruneau




**A special thanks to our new Office Manager, Erica Wood who joined us on May 1st this year. Erica mastered the Pages Design program in order to bring to you the Annual Report you hold in your hands. We hope that you will find it as visually appealing and reader friendly as we do. Thank you Erica.**



**A special thanks to Christy Holnbeck and Kathy Kristjanson, Senior Managers for their continued leadership and ongoing support.**





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