



Interior
Community
Services

Enriching Lives, Strengthening Communities



SUPPORT TO FAMILY CARE NETWORK PROGRAM

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

*Skeetchestn (Savona) looking
towards Kamloops*



TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

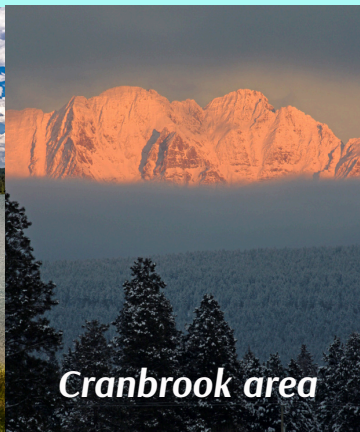
*We would like to acknowledge
the unceded and traditional homelands of the
Secwepemc, Tsilhqot'in, Nlaka'pamux and Ktunaxa Nations
on which the Support to Family Care Network Program
(Interior Community Services and Arc Programs Ltd.)
provides support. We also recognize
the Metis and Inuit people
who are our friends and neighbours.
It is our hope to become much better guests on this land
in the future than we have been in the past.*

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Williams Lake



Cranbrook area



Nelson area

PROGRAM COORDINATOR UPDATE

I was pleased in 2025 to have a solid staffing group, with the right people in the right positions! My top priority continues to be advocating for long term funding, within our contract, to be able to keep our virtual trainer, Marna Forsyth, as part of our team. She, along with Renata Bonthoux, are our senior Network Facilitators who continue to provide the bulk of the training for the CLN platform which provides training for Caregivers/Social Workers around B.C. (Provincial Support Agency Caregiver Learning Network <https://psacln.ca>). They are supported by the rest of our team – Jessica Galbraith (Kamloops/Ashcroft/Lillooet/Merritt/Barriere/Clearwater/Revelstoke), Tabitha Fournier (100 Mile House/Williams Lake), James Weir (Cranbrook/Invermere/Creston/Elk Valley/Golden) and Jane Wesko – ARC Programs Ltd. (Trail/Castlegar/Nelson/Kaslo/Grand Forks/Slocan Valley).

Interior Community Services – Support to Family Care Network program (Marna Forsyth and myself) along with Okanagan Foster Parents Association (Joan Kirkbride) and Caring Families Society (Dan Malone) came together for our biggest collaboration yet, as Administrators on the Caregiver Learning Network in November 2023. Over the last 2 years, and over 100 meetings later, we have helped to build a learning platform which as of January 30, 2026 has 2,571 members: 1,147 Foster Caregivers, 484 Contracted Agency Caregivers, 405 Social Workers, 266 Community Professionals, 213 Kinship Caregivers and 56 General Public registered.

We worked really hard with Sharon Armstrong (Director of Operations, Provincial Resources - Provincial Priorities Branch) and the Centralized Recruitment and Retention Team (Sarah Gallagher, Lisen Karlstrom, and Sylvia Asio) to raise the profile of the Caregiver Learning Network. We appreciate their diligent support to help build this amazing Caregiver recruitment and retention platform.

The CLN collaborated with the British Columbia Foster Parent Association (BCFPA) and in February 2025 I was featured in a video which explained the CLN and is hosted on their YouTube page (which has numerous informative videos): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AYca2rkVXRI>

In 2025, our team presented over 30 training topics, in over 130 sessions (over 335 hours) to over 1,550 people! The Caregivers in our SDAs, along with Foster Caregivers, Out of Care/Kinship Caregivers, Contracted Agency Caregivers, Social Workers, Community Professionals and the General Public in the province have never before had access to as diverse, free, timely and important training in all the years we have been in business!

In 2025, we also saw a huge increase in the number of hours spent on recruitment, with our team logging 599 hours on various recruitment meetings and events in and around the communities. We continued retention events engaging with Caregivers and the babies, children and youth that they support during our family events/drop ins/workshops.

With 2026 being the 23rd year of our program (and my tenure with the agency) we are honored and privileged to walk alongside the Caregivers, Social Workers and the many Community Professionals that we work with, as we all support those in their care and on their caseloads to thrive.

Kari Bëpple
Program Coordinator

Front cover photo - Tk'emlups te Secwepemc territory (Kamloops) within the ancestral, unceded lands of the Secwepemec Nation, Secwepemculecw

SUPPORT TO FAMILY CARE NETWORK PROGRAM YEAR AT A GLANCE

RECRUITMENT

599 hours

were spent on recruitment initiatives such as:

- Booths
- Social Media
- Posters & Postcards

RETENTION

Continues to be a top priority
Topics include:

- Frustrations with the complex MCFD system & changes that occurred with little notice
- Lack of communication with the MCFD / ICSFA teams
- Transitions
- Relief

CONTACTS

We had interactions with
**OVER 7,260
Caregivers
& over 3,467**

Social Workers &
Community Professionals
during 2025
(not unique numbers)

YICN

Youth in Care Networks

What do you like about the Kamloops YICN?

- "Talking with the staff & their support"
- "I get to hang out with people who have similar experiences"
- "Relationships with the staff & with the other youth"
- "I like the young adult support drop ins"
- "They don't have favourites here"
- "Feels like a home, not a center"
- "No cost"

Note: At time of this publication, the YICN funding has been **SIGNIFICANTLY** decreased

CLN

Caregiver Learning Network

2,570+ PEOPLE REGISTERED
(in the CLMS)

1,147 Foster Caregivers
484 Contracted Agency Caregivers
405 Social Workers
266 Community Professionals
213 Kinship Caregivers
56 General Public

Note: For 2025, CLN funding was decreased by **25%**

TRAINING

30+ Topics

130+ Sessions

335+ Hours

1550+ People Trained

OVER

99%

of all participants would recommend the training to others

DROP-INS

170

drop-ins offered with
346 hours

SERVICE ACCESS INFORMATION

	Community	Agency	# of FC's	# of OOC Providers
Thompson/ Revelstoke	Ashcroft	MCFD	4	10
	Barriere/Clearwater	MCFD	10	14
	Kamloops	MCFD	65	117
		Secwepemc	77	54
		Lii Michif Otipemisiwak	6	43
	Lillooet	MCFD	6	10
	Merritt	MCFD	4	4
		Scw'exmx	10	29
	Revelstoke	MCFD	0	6
Total			182	287
Cariboo	100 Mile House	MCFD	29	21
	Williams Lake	MCFD	28	55
		Denisiqi	7	9
		Knucwentwecw	8	22
	Total			72
East Kootenay/ Golden	Cranbrook	MCFD	8	26
		Ktunaxa	24	43
	Creston	MCFD	0	4
		Ktunaxa	20	14
	Elk Valley	MCFD	2	11
		Ktunaxa	0	2
	Golden	MCFD	2	5
		Ktunaxa	0	0
	Invermere	MCFD	0	2
Ktunaxa		4	2	
Total			60	109
West Kootenay	Trail	MCFD	8	14
	Castlegar	MCFD	4	13
	Nelson	MCFD	6	12
	Slocan Valley	MCFD	3	4
	Kaslo	MCFD	3	3
	Grand Forks	MCFD	11	11
	Total			35
Grand Total			349	560

PROGRAM INFORMATION

The Support to Family Care Network program (STFC) provides education, training and support services to Foster Caregivers, Out of Care/Kinship Caregivers, Contracted Support Agency Staff, Social Workers and Community Professionals throughout the Interior East Kootenay SDA and Okanagan West Kootenay SDA of British Columbia. Our service delivery area covers the Thompson, Cariboo, Revelstoke, East and West Kootenay areas. The two tables (from the previous page) are reflective of Ministry of Children and Family Development homes as well as Caregivers from Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies (ICFSA) or First Nations bands. This is the 5th year that we have supported Out of Care/Kinship homes in our service contracts.

In 2025, there continued to be a decrease in the number of Ministry Foster homes and Foster Caregivers served, which a number of different factors contributed to:

1. The direction of MCFD for Out of Care/Kinship homes rather than Foster Care homes.
2. Aging population of Foster Caregivers – natural attrition.
3. Some Foster Caregivers are dealing with higher needs of those coming into care which make it challenging for them to take on the care for the amount of remuneration. As well, the increased costs of living (housing, food, utilities, etc.) continues to be a burden for them to meet.
4. Some Foster Caregivers have chosen to transfer their resource file to the ICFSAs.

Another concern is the application process which takes so long to get new homes on line - and recruitment is down due to not as many people applying to be Caregivers; as well, there is a lack of completion with the PRIDE Pre-Service training, which, in our opinion, took a big hit since MCFD made the decision to stop in person training, where folks were connected immediately night one with other Caregivers, the Contract Agency Staff as well as guest Resource Social Workers. People have expressed feeling isolated and the often difficult materials covered leaves no time to debrief with other Caregivers and support staff.

We don't have as many Foster Caregivers currently recruiting new Caregivers. Foster Caregivers continue to share with us that they often don't feel supported/respected by the various Social Workers they work with; and for some, the kids in their home currently are going to be their last. Many of them have questions about what retention initiatives are happening for them as they watch efforts to recruit new Caregivers.

Some of the common issues throughout 2025 with current Foster Caregivers continue to be conflicts with MCFD/ICFSAs due to family care home investigations/quality of care/resolution of issues as well as those Caregivers that felt disrespected/not part of the team/lack of communication due to short-staffed offices and changing staff in different positions. Fostering levels have reached a critical all time low. Our staff team (supporting all areas except the West Kootenay areas) continue to attend a reoccurring Recruitment Committee monthly meeting attended by Acting EDS Nadine Ryan - Interior East Kootenay SDA, Tamara Lawrence - DOO Shuswap/Revelstoke/Adoptions, Nicole Eichenberger – DOO Kamloops and Rural Resources, Alaina Hawken – DOO East Kootenay, Lori Simpson – Acting Associate EDS, and Erika Barten - DOO Cariboo.

STFC staff worked hard at retaining Caregivers who are struggling with feeling unsupported or lost after a negative experience with MCFD/ICFSA. Our goal is always to come to a win-win solution and in the high majority of these cases, we were able to obtain a positive outcome for all involved. Everyone working within the childcare system, whether Caregiver, Social Worker or Agency Support Caregiver have a crucial role to play in seeking positive outcomes for the children in care in British Columbia; lack of resources, staff on leaves, changeover of Social Workers, no new funding coming into support contracts – all contribute to a strain on the system.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

The number of Out of Care/Kinship homes again increased significantly this past year. Through our twice monthly newsletters, as well as monthly calls, we encourage Caregivers to attend trainings and drop ins (both in person and virtual) and to connect with Network Facilitators, who continue to report conversations taking 2-3 hours in length, even after the initial meeting (in-person, Zoom or over the phone). Once connected we see these Caregivers engaging with our program in a variety of ways. One of our main priorities continues to be a support group for Kinship Caregivers, both virtually and in person. A small number of Caregivers see us as connected to Ministry and want nothing to do with us, while most others are grateful for the support.

Once Resource Social Workers understand what supports we can offer, along with the skillset of our Network Facilitators, they have been good to connect us with Kinship Caregivers.

Event Feedback:

"Thanks for putting this event on. Its nice to be able to bring the kids and meet other Caregivers."
(Foster Caregiver)

"I got to see one of my old foster homes and got to tell them how I am doing and it was really good to see them again"
(Adult Youth)

"I love these events when we can connect with some former kiddos in care and keep that connection with them"
(Foster Caregiver)

"I love these events because we get to see how many people out there are doing what we are doing and what their families look like"
(Foster Caregiver)

"Thank you for getting us all out together for an evening of food and fun!"
(Foster Caregiver)

"Anytime I don't have to cook is a win!"
(Foster Caregiver)

Drop-In Feedback:

"Thanks for being here and allowing me to vent, I feel better now."
(Foster Caregiver)

"Thanks for listening. I had a hard week."
(Foster Caregiver)

"When I have attended the coffee/breakfast group, I find I get more out of it than I expected to. My Network Facilitator is very patient and understanding. A safe place to share and learn."
(Foster Caregiver)

In 2025, we connected with many more homes due to:

- We worked diligently with the Resource and Out of Care Social Workers to share our brochures (including our Out of Care/Kinship brochures),
- Social Workers have obtained consent to share Kinship Caregiver contact information
- Our website (including our dedicated Out of Care/Kinship website page),
 - Was populated with more resources
 - Had reciprocal referrals with the Caregiver Learning Network
- Additionally, we informed Social Workers and Caregivers (where we had contact information) about:
 - Our twice monthly drop-ins,
 - Training (including Out of Care/Kinship specific training), and
 - Our support services that we offer.

Collaboration in 2025 increased through meetings (both in-person and virtually) regarding recruitment (monthly Interior East Kootenay SDA meetings as well as with local Ministry offices/ICFSA), trainings, workshops, along with drop-ins and events.

Left to right: Shirley Malberg, James Weir, Lorraine Daley, John Seminowich, and Evelyne Seminowich



East Kootenay Caregiver Luncheon Event Spring 2025

COLLABORATION

We had interactions with

OVER 7,260

Caregivers and

over 3,467

Social Workers, and Community Professionals
during 2025 (not unique numbers)



In 2025 we increased our contacts by: **OVER 50%**

In 2025, STFC Network Facilitators held trainings and workshops, both virtually and in person, which continued to strengthen relationships built with our team and participants outside their SDA. Caregivers expressed they appreciated being able to access different members of the team, especially when staff are off, or when a Caregiver is needing extra support or information/resources on specific topics. This has helped create a stronger team dynamic, and has helped foster learning and growth in our newest team members, who have been with the program now for well over a year. They have benefited both from sharing their ideas and knowledge, as well as being mentored by long tenured employees. They are stepping up and taking on facilitation pieces and leading drop-ins/audio book club/supporting our lead trainers in various educational offerings.

2025 saw continued collaboration with Provincial Support Agencies - B.C. Foster Parent Association (BCFPA), Indigenous Perspectives Society (IPS), as well as other Support Agencies around the province. We worked together on trainings to extend our funding, and to reach more Caregivers, Social Workers and bio families, especially in areas of the province where there are no Contracted Support Agencies to serve their Caregivers. Important workshops like ICS's proprietary workshop, "Business Side of Fostering", as well as "Safe Babies" and "Safe Babies for Social Workers" filled up almost as soon as they were announced, with overwhelming feedback about how critical and necessary those trainings are.

Marna and Kari, along with Dan Malone from Caring Families Society (CFS) on Vancouver Island and Joan Kirkbride from Okanagan Foster Parent Association (OFPA) who covers the remainder of the Interior East Kootenay Region, continued to administer the contract for the CLN. As well, Kari sat on a committee with other Contracted Support Agencies from around the province, the BCFPA and IPS as well as the Provincial Director of Residential Resources (MCFD). We work together to ensure we are meeting the needs of the Foster Caregivers, Out of Care/Kinship Caregivers and Social Workers we serve. This relationship has prospered over the last 22 years and continues to be an asset to our working relationships as we continue to grow our programs. The BCFPA hosted Kari in a video for Caregivers explaining the CLN in February of 2025.

Additionally, the exponential growth of the CLN (Provincial Support Agencies Caregiver Learning Network - PSACLN) in 2025 has been extraordinary. Marna (ICS), Zoe and Krista (CFS) worked extremely hard to respond to the need for training; attending to the back end/administrative side of the CLN learning platform. ICS received some partial funding for Marna's position as a result of her programming/admin work, and for being part of the duo (with Renata) who did more training around the province than any other trainers. We ensured the Caregivers, Social Workers and Contracted Agency Caregivers from our SDAs had access to a variety of diverse trainings in a timely manner. Our motto for the CLN is "together we thrive", and in 2025 we did just that.

CHALLENGES

Foster Homes

Children and youth in care rates continues to decline. In 2024/2025, there were 4,795 children and youth in care.¹ Of these, 68% were Indigenous (3,260) and 32% were non-indigenous (1,535).¹ While the provincial rate of children/youth continues to decline across all groups, “the latest 2024/25 data suggests a gradual slowing of declines, particularly among Indigenous children, where rates decreased only slightly from the previous year. Non-Indigenous rates remain consistently low and stable, while total rates continue their long-term reduction.”¹

The steady decline in the number of Foster homes, along with the ability to recruit new relief homes for our current Foster Caregivers were two of the biggest struggles in 2025. According to MCFD statistics about 82% of all active Foster Caregivers under the age of 64 on March 31, 2024 were still active twelve months later.¹ We continue to advocate for supports for Foster Caregivers as we know that typically children and youth do better in home environments. Additionally, a child/youth in a Foster home on average costs MCFD \$28,700/year (as of March 2024), whereas a child/youth in a Contracted Resource costs MCFD \$322,000/year (on average). Contracted Agency Homes’ costs continued to increase such that Contracted Resources were responsible for most of the residential cost increase for non-support needs CYIC.¹

Another big challenge is the time it now takes to support our Caregivers. Our program is finding that supports are longer, more complex and are often very intense. There have been several long and complex supports including family care home investigations, quality of care reviews and resolution of issues. Our team has also found that phone calls and in-person meetings are longer, and Caregivers are needing more resources for the children and youth in their home – that often come with very high support needs. Additionally, staff are finding that the number of Caregivers attending drop-ins vary and often times, when the group is smaller the conversations are more in-depth, and folks tend to stay longer. Support topics vary but have some recurring themes such as:

- Changes to the contracts with little to no notice;
- The changes that occurred in 2025 with no advance notice (such as the change in how mileage amounts are calculated)
- Frustration with Social Workers (who are also overworked); this included
 - Not returning phone calls/emails, etc.
 - Lack of communication between the Caregiver, Resource Social Worker and the Guardian Social Worker;
 - Short notice from Social Workers to Foster Caregivers around appointments/schedule change for child/youth
- Grief and loss over transitions to adoption/54.1/54.01/parents - often these transitions are:
 - Too fast
 - Not well planned out
 - Do not take Foster Caregivers’ suggestions into account
 - Decisions that are made that do not always seem to be safe (returning to a home when not all of the people in the home are healthy yet)
- Relief - it is hard to find stable/trained relief
- Turn around time for reimbursements for travel, medical, expenses above the general expenses, whether they are in the contract or if they were previously approved.
- Funds for youth activities - these children/youth need to feel like they can do the activities that other children/youth who are not in care can do - but there seems to be very little funding for them. We are very concerned with the significant cuts to the Federation of BC YICN fundings for locals in 2026.

¹ MCFD statistics taken from their reporting portal: <https://mcfcd.gov.bc.ca/reporting/services/child-protection/permanency-for-children-and-youth/performance-indicators/children-in-care>

CHALLENGES

Foster Homes (Continued)

Additionally, we are working on just in time training for topics that seem to arise throughout the year including:

- FASD - including screening, assessments, diagnosis
- Information on Adoptions or 54.1/54.01
- Resources for picky eaters, cell phone use and tantrums
- Struggles with behaviors after kiddos had a family visit - the dysregulation that happens afterward can have a lasting effect on the child and Foster family

Bill C-92 (January 1, 2020), co-developed by the Government of Canada with Indigenous people, provinces and territories – to reduce the number of Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit and Metis) children and youth coming into care and to improve child and family services. As well, Bill 38 (November 25, 2022) the Indigenous Self-Government in Child and Family Services Amendment Act made B.C. the first jurisdiction in Canada to recognize an inherent right of self-government specifically in provincial legislation, which is meant to help keep Indigenous children and youth safely connected to their families, cultures and communities. Our program continues to support a number of Foster families who are non-Indigenous caring for, or who were in the process of adopting Indigenous children, prior to these Bills coming into legislation. This continues to be very difficult and crucial work to support the families, children, youth and Indigenous communities, and Foster families who are very invested in the lives of the children they care for.

Out of Care/Kinship Homes

According to MCFD, “since early 2018 there was a significant increase in the trend. The upward trend in this indicator is attributed to a significant drop in the number of Non-Indigenous and Indigenous children being admitted into Care, an increasing number of Indigenous children admitted into Out Of Care (starting in early 2020 MCFD admits more Indigenous Children to Out Of Care than In Care), and a relatively stable number of Non-Indigenous children being admitted into OCO over time (based on a rolling twelve month period). For the past 12 months, there has been an increase in the Indigenous In-Care admissions, while the Indigenous Out-Of-Care admissions have remained relatively stable.”²

The main struggle with providing Out of Care/Kinship Caregivers support is receiving their contact information to connect them to our program (due to their right to privacy). Yet, we have seen great improvements in this area during the last three years. We are finally in a position to support most of these Caregivers. One of the biggest challenges is that these Caregivers are feeling isolated and once connected, the meetings and conversations (via in-person, virtual and phone) are long, often lasting 2-3 hours. Similar to Foster Homes, they need resources, connections to local, regional and provincial professionals because the children/youth in their homes often come with trauma and high support needs. While our Out of Care/Kinship workshops are increasing, this group of Caregivers tends to be smaller allowing us to spend more time connecting, supporting and encouraging them, which helps these folks to reach out when they need to.

Those homes where Caregivers are grandmas and grandpas often struggle with: feelings of being too old to do this again, and grieving the loss of their grandparent role/relationships; navigating boundaries with their children (and grandchildren); navigating the often complex world of assessments and diagnoses; and trying to find support, strategies and tools to support the children/youth in their homes. Additionally, we have been able to support Caregivers by connecting them to respite and attending court as a support and taking notes, as a few examples. We have also been able to connect a few of them to other programs within our agency and have attending meetings with staff from other departments.

² MCFD statistics taken from their reporting portal: <https://mcf.gov.bc.ca/reporting/services/child-protection/permanency-for-children-and-youth/performance-indicators/children-in-care>

TRAINING

over 30 topics

over 335 hours

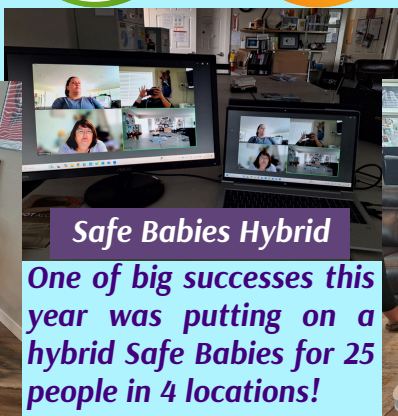


over 130 sessions

over 1,550 people trained



Alternate Safe Babies for Teens



Safe Babies Hybrid

One of big successes this year was putting on a hybrid Safe Babies for 25 people in 4 locations!



Safe Babies Hybrid

We believe training is a big component of keeping babies, children and teens in a stable placement. By offering in-person training (where possible), Zoom webinars, video resources and articles on our website, as well as books to sign out, we are meeting the unique needs of the Foster Caregivers and Out of Care/Kinship Caregivers we serve. Our introduction of our Audio Book Club (with 7 books presented) was a resounding success with Caregivers. Many Contracted Support Agencies throughout the province are now doing their own versions of Audio Book Club.

Benefits of virtual training :

1. We continue to see Caregivers on-line who we never see in-person;
2. We continue to see connections being forged with Caregivers throughout our SDA that would never have met if the training was only offered in person;
3. For folks that care for some of the most vulnerable and challenging children, youth and babies in our province, the ability to multi-task while being able to participate in virtual training from the comfort of their home is a must;
4. STFC staff have been supporting and covering in other parts of our SDA and have gotten to know Caregivers outside of their working area. As a result, Caregivers are comfortable speaking with other members of the team whom they have been interacting with throughout the last several years;
5. The majority of our workshops have a recording, and replays are available, from anywhere from 2 weeks to two years.

As a result of our team's efforts, we had a lot of trainings attended by Foster Caregivers, Out of Care/Kinship Caregivers, Contracted Agency Caregivers, Social Workers, bio parents and Community Professionals. Training took place during morning, afternoon and evening offerings, as some of our Caregivers work outside the home and very much **appreciated the flexibility in our training schedules.**

OVER

99%

OF ALL PARTICIPANTS
WOULD RECOMMEND
OUR
TRAINING/
WORKSHOPS TO
OTHERS

TRAINING FEEDBACK

OTHER TRAINING TOPICS OFFERED TO CAREGIVERS INCLUDED:

- Permanency Options When Parent Reunification Cannot Take Place
- Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking
- Learn & Connect for New Caregivers
- Caring for the Roots (with Tracy Azevedo)
- Preparing Youth for Adulthood
- DBT Skills
- Becoming a Behavioural Detective
- Why Children are Addicted to Gaming
- Caregivers and the Court Process
- Mental Health First Aid
- San'yas

This is wonderful thank you so much!!!!
(Foster Caregiver)

Great course. Even though I am a very experienced caregiver, I still learned a lot and appreciate the handouts. (Kinship Caregiver)

Thank you this was very informative
(Social Worker)

I wish this was mandatory. Such useful information. Thank you, I will be suggesting all the new FP take your course. (Social Worker)

It was good to hear it twice though; I caught a lot more the second time around! Thanks again for a great course. (Foster Caregiver)

Thank you. I appreciated having the opportunity to attend as I keep recommending it to Caregivers. it feels better to know what I am recommending. (Social Worker)

This course came at a great time for me and my child. I appreciated the handouts to review along with the time the facilitator spent with me. (Kinship Caregiver)

So grateful this course is required. It makes so much sense, and I feel more prepared in the big picture and feel a deeper compassion and awareness of the level of patience and affection it will require to foster little ones. Thank you all so much!
(Foster Caregiver)

Really enjoyed this class. There were many ah ha moments. Thank you! I still would like to know what happened to the family years ago in the old video from Spokane. It was amazing. Module 2 blew my mind. Finally realized our adopted daughter has FASD. She's 23. (Foster Caregiver)

Fantastic information! What a privilege to hear you this morning. I have great appreciation for the work you do!
(Social Worker)

As a foster mom the workshops are really helpful and informative
(Foster Caregiver)

Thank you so much for your inspiring work!
(Community Professional)

Thank you for this powerful information!
(Foster Caregiver)

This is all super great stuff and would definitely be interested in signing up for more!
(Community Professional)

This was so great. Thank you!!! I hope you put on more training
(Foster Caregiver)

Thank you so much!!!! You are absolutely wonderful! learned so much
(Foster Caregiver)

Thank you for this information, it was really needed and there is a lot to reflect on.
(Foster Caregiver)

Thank you. I hadn't signed up for the next presentation until you were talking about it today. Looking forward to it now.
😊
(Foster Caregiver)

Thank you so much for having Robyn! She is amazing
(Community Professional)

This has been sooooo wonderful! Thank you so much. So excited to dig into the resources!
(Foster Caregiver)

Thank you so much Robyn I am really looking forward to changing the dialogue I am having with my kids to help shift their stress response. You work is truly amazing! I feel inspired.
(Foster Caregiver)

"The Safe Babies Training was highly professional and exceptionally well-delivered. The sessions were very educative, providing valuable knowledge and practical guidance that will be useful in real-world situations. The training was interactive, allowing participants to engage, ask questions, and learn collaboratively. The Facilitators were knowledgeable, supportive, and skilled at creating a positive learning environment. Overall, it was a well-structured and impactful training experience."
(Foster Caregiver)

I love having the discussions & the variety of the topics.
(Foster Caregiver)

I wanted to take a moment to express my sincere appreciation for the Safe Babies Training. Thank you for the time, knowledge, and dedication you put into delivering such an important program. The training was informative, practical, and deeply impactful. I walked away with a better understanding of how to create a safe, nurturing, and supportive environment for infants in care. The real-life examples, resources, and guidance you shared will definitely help me in my role. Thank you again for your commitment to safeguarding children and for equipping us with the tools we need to do so confidently.
(Foster Caregiver)

Thank you very much once again for all the wonderful information and resources. It all certainly helped make things much less daunting!
(Foster Caregiver)

I enjoyed the training and it's variety. My favourite parts were hearing from Robyn and the Foster Parent panel. I think its invaluable to hear first hand experience/knowledge/stories/ etc. Thank you!
(Foster Caregiver)

Absolutely amazing! Well done and well delivered!
(Foster Caregiver)

This course was very helpful. I appreciated the time the facilitator spent with me.
(Kinship Caregiver)

Dr. Cindy Blackstock

Navigating the Maze

Business Side of Fostering

Coping with Grief & Loss

Circle of Security

Safe Babies

Book Club

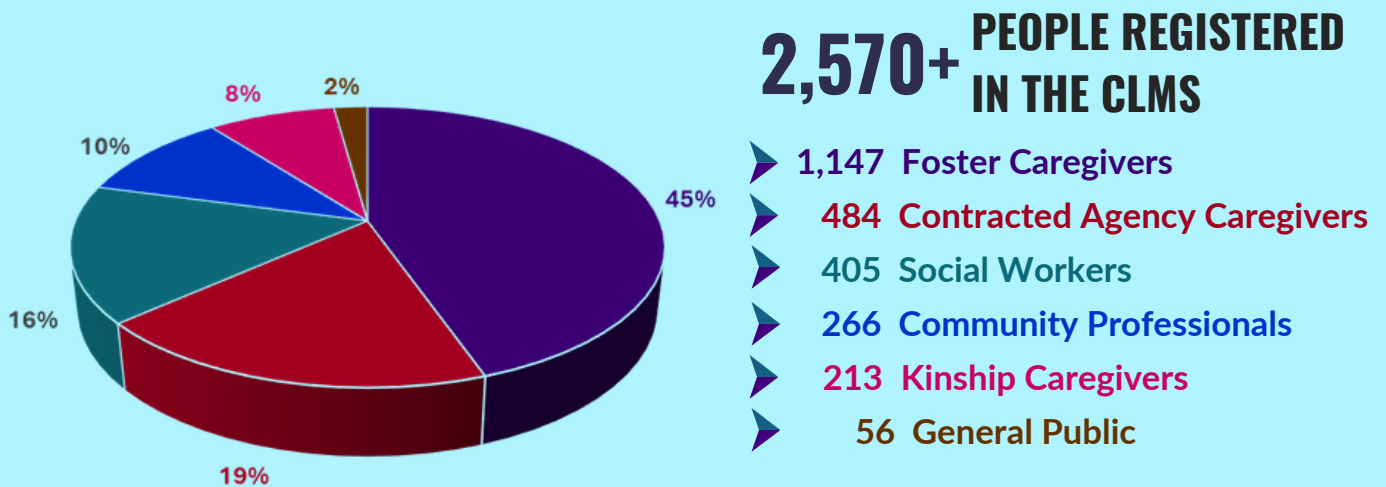
Learning Challenges & School Advocacy

Robyn Gobbel

Difficult Conversations

CLN TRAINING STATS

The Caregiver Learning Network, established in November 2023, has grown beyond anyone's expectations in the past year! **Marna Forsyth and Renata Bonthoux, Interior Community Services' Senior Trainers**, presented the majority of all training offered to the Caregivers of B.C. in 2025.



50+

WORKSHOPS

There were
51
workshops
offered during
2025

180+

SESSIONS

There were
182
sessions
offered during
2025

580+

HOURS

There were
over
580
hours
of training
offered during
2025.

1,790+

PARTICIPANTS

There were
over
1790*
participants
who attended
182 sessions
offered during
2025

*not unique numbers

***“Thank you for having the CLN - it was the best thing ever done!”
(Foster Caregiver)***

YOUTH IN CARE NETWORKS

The Kootenay Krew was very active in 2025 we had 10 events and 15 unique individuals that participated in the events with the grand total of 55 youth and young adults participating over the year. The activities included, Ainsworth Hot Springs, laser tag, kayaking, bowling, pool, campfire supper, end of summer dinner, pizza at the park, karaoke and Chinese food, and a holiday party at the youth center. The activities allowed the youth/young adults to have a fun activity every month with peers and possibly try out something new in a safe, encouraging environment. The favorite activities were laser tag, kayaking and the year end holiday party. Due to the lack of public transportation in the Kootenay area all the youth were picked up and dropped off which led to connection with the leaders and some fun conversations and music in the vehicles.

Some of the comments the youth have said are:

- “Wow I never knew laser tag was so much fun!”
- “I feel spoiled when I come here”
- “We should go camping as an event”
- “ I made a new friend.”
- “Bowling can be fun even if you don’t get a strike.”



YICN Stats					
January - December 2025					
	# of unique youth	# of youth	# of events	YICW event #s	Christmas Gift Bags
Kamloops	18	85	23	70	24
Cariboo	5	10	6	15	15
West Kootenay	15	49	10	0	0
*East Kootenay			1	14	
Totals	38	144	39	99	39

*While the East Kootenay does not have a local they had an event to celebrate BC Youth in Care week.

Christmas Presents for Cariboo Local (100 Mile House & Williams Lake)
Similar gift bags were put together for the youth in the Kamloops Local, as well as the Kamloops Youth Shelter (4 bed resource for youth under 19)



The Cariboo YICN is still trying to get traction. We have tried a bunch of different events and have had very little consistency in attendance. We tried some new activities at various locations and had some success! In May and August, we hosted a couple of bowling nights and had 6 youth in total attend. This was awesome to see youth come out for these events, lots of fun and laughs were had by all! During Child and Youth in Care Week, we gave out gift bags to all youth in care in 100 Mile House and Williams Lake, which were given out at the Youth in Care Week event that MCFD was hosting. During Christmas, we did not host an event, but the youth who came to events and the youth in the youth agreements in both communities were given Christmas gifts. The hope is that once we get more consistent youth to attend, we can start doing more things that they express they want to learn and do. We hope that 2026 is the year that we see our Youth in Care Events take off!

RECRUITMENT ALMOST 600 HOURS WERE FOCUSED ON RECRUITMENT

FOSTER PARENTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Our
community
NEEDS
caregivers!



Have you ever considered becoming a Foster Caregiver?

- Can you provide a loving, supportive, and nurturing environment?
- Do you have patience and are you able to mentor a young person?
- Can you open your home and your heart to a child or teen in need?
- Can you work with the child's family and social worker?

If you answered 'yes' we want to hear from you!

Our program will help connect you to a resource social worker in your area to get your application started. While the requirements vary in each community, there is a need for Foster Parents wanting to work with: children and youth with support needs, babies, youth and sibling groups. To find out more, scan the QR code.



YOU
CAN
BE A
FOSTER
PARENT!



Don't rule yourself out because of myths!

MYTHS vs REALITY ABOUT FOSTERING A CHILD / YOUTH

- MYTH:** You have to own your home.
- REALITY:** Whether you rent or own your home makes no difference to your ability to give a child a safe, secure and nurturing home environment.
- MYTH:** Only people who are married and have parenting experience can foster.
- REALITY:** Parenting experience is not a requirement. What matters is that you are willing to attend and learn from foster caregiver training. Single and partnered people are all welcome to apply to become Foster Parents.
- MYTH:** You have to give up your job if you want to foster.
- REALITY:** There are many Foster Parents who manage to balance fostering alongside work. It depends on the flexibility of your job and the needs of the children you are caring for.

In 2025, our STFC team continued meeting monthly on recruitment efforts for our respective SDAs with Nadine Ryan, Tamara Lawrence, Nicole Eichenberger, Lori Simpson, Alaina Hawken, and Erika Barten, along with Okanagan Foster Parents Association Coordinator - Heather Lessard. We continued to share and collaborate with each other around recruitment materials, promotional opportunities (e.g. Blazers Hockey Games) in-person and in-print. In 2025 our staff team spent 599 hours on recruitment.

Recruitment needs continue to vary in each community - teen homes, Safe Babies, children and youth with support needs (CYSN) and homes that can accommodate sibling groups, are still in high demand. Our Safe Babies trainings continue to have waitlists on a regular basis. We continued on-going support to the various MCFD and ICFSA offices who need help around recruitment. In specific areas, the length of time it takes for applicants to become Foster Caregivers seems to be a deterrent. We have reached out to MCFD and through the collaboration with the CRRT team and local offices, we were able to get a list of current caregivers in our areas that would like support as they go through the application process and PRIDE Pre Service training. In 2026, we started our first virtual support and connection meeting.

Word of mouth from our current Foster Caregivers continues to yield the most success in recruiting new Caregivers and Relief homes. Everyone knows, a happy Foster Caregiver is by far the best recruitment tool (over radio, social media, tv, bus ads and print ads).



Recruitment Booths:
Left: James with Mrs. Claus
Top: Tabitha at Winter Fair
Right: ARC Booth Summer Park Fair

RECRUITMENT



**Recruitment Booth at the Kamloops Blazer Game
Kari, Jessica and Digger**



**Recruitment Booth at Boogie the Bridge (approx. 3,000 participants)
Jessica and Renata**

RETENTION



Left to right: Kari Bepple, Darlene Lewis, Debbie Manke, Betty Ann McDonnell, and Renata Bonthoux

Today in Merritt we celebrated Debbie Manke's 43 years of service in Fostering! With over 400 children, youth and babies in her home, Debbie has been an amazing Caregiver, mentor and friend to many!

In an effort towards retention we created a new feature in our newsletter, entitled "Foster Caregiver Spotlight". We wanted to showcase our amazing Foster Caregivers in a way that hopefully makes them feel valued. Every month we spotlight a new Caregiver with a bit of their history and any advice they would offer a new Caregiver. We include a photo of the Foster Caregiver(s) as well. When a Caregiver is featured we print out a copy and frame it and deliver it to them with a Tim Horton's gift card as a small token of our appreciation. We will continue to do this every month indefinitely.

Darlene Lewis, from Merritt, was our first spotlighted Foster Caregiver in September 2025; she has been Fostering for 39 years!

Left – taking time to celebrate with these 3 Caregivers who have had over 1,000 children, youth and babies between them! This is only one example of the many times we spent with Caregivers and families to ensure that they are connected, feel appreciated and heard!

CAREGIVER SUPPORT

Foster Homes

According to the BC Foster Parent Association (BCFPA), there are approximately 1,500 Foster homes in BC. This does not include most of the Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies (ICFSA). In the last three years, we have lost almost 200 homes. According to the BCFPA, this number has been steadily declining since Out of Care/Kinship placements have been the focus.

As in previous years, supports continue to increase in length and complexity. The supports range from family care home investigation, quality of care, resolution of issues, as well as ongoing support in communication with agencies. We have several cases that have lasted years in length.

When Network Facilitators are calling Caregivers, they are finding that often they will end up talking to Caregivers for over an hour or two. Often when problems arise, our team then gets permission to follow up with MCFD or ICFSA to assist with communication and getting to a win-win solution. We frequently connect Caregivers with resources, community referrals and ensure thoroughness in finding solutions. Our team has great diversity in resources, education and personal/professional experience, which allows for richer brainstorming sessions. In team meetings we discuss generalities of theoretical challenges so as to assist everyone in what the best outcomes can be to support Caregivers.

Support Feedback

Thank you!!!
I appreciate all that you have done for me. You make things more understandable and clearer.
(Foster Caregiver)

Out of Care/Kinship Homes

In late 2021, we started supporting Out of Care/Kinship homes in the East and West Kootenay areas. Midway through 2022, we began supporting Out of Care/Kinship homes in the Thompson/Goldtrail, Cariboo and Revelstoke contract areas. Our current key struggle is getting connected with these homes as we typically are not given the resource lists for Caregivers in this category due to FOIPPA. We have had considerable success this year in connecting with many more Out of Care/Kinship homes. Once connected, we find that some Caregivers willingly attend events and are grateful for the support. These supports range from simple phone calls to long complicated supports during court proceedings. (We do not provide legal advice, but rather are there to listen, give resources and connect with other agencies.)

“The number of children in Kinship and out of Care arrangements has more than tripled since 2008.” As Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth, Representative for Children and Youth, stated in her address in September 2024; Kinship Caregivers deserve access to the same supports and trainings that Foster Caregivers have.

In 2025, we continued to increase offerings of our Foundational Training: “*Navigating the Maze of Kinship Care*” along with the “*Neurodiversity and School Advocacy*” workshop and the “*Circle of Security Parenting™*” to those Kinship Caregivers that were interested in taking it. While most of these trainings are lower in attendance, in 2025 we saw an increased uptake in registration (and are continuing to do so in 2026). We held our twice monthly drop-ins across the province for all Kinship Caregivers in an effort to increase communication and their sense of community. Our “*Support Report*” newsletter went out to these Caregivers 24 times throughout the year highlighting our Drop-ins and relevant training, along with resources that are of particular interest. Brochures, magnets and business cards went out to Caregivers at least once last year. With our connection thru the CLN to the Provincial CRRT team, we have increased our profile for both training and supporting of not only Kinship Caregivers, but Foster Caregivers as well. Our Network Facilitators continue to make monthly calls to all Foster Caregivers as well any Out of Care/Kinship Caregivers we have contact information for.

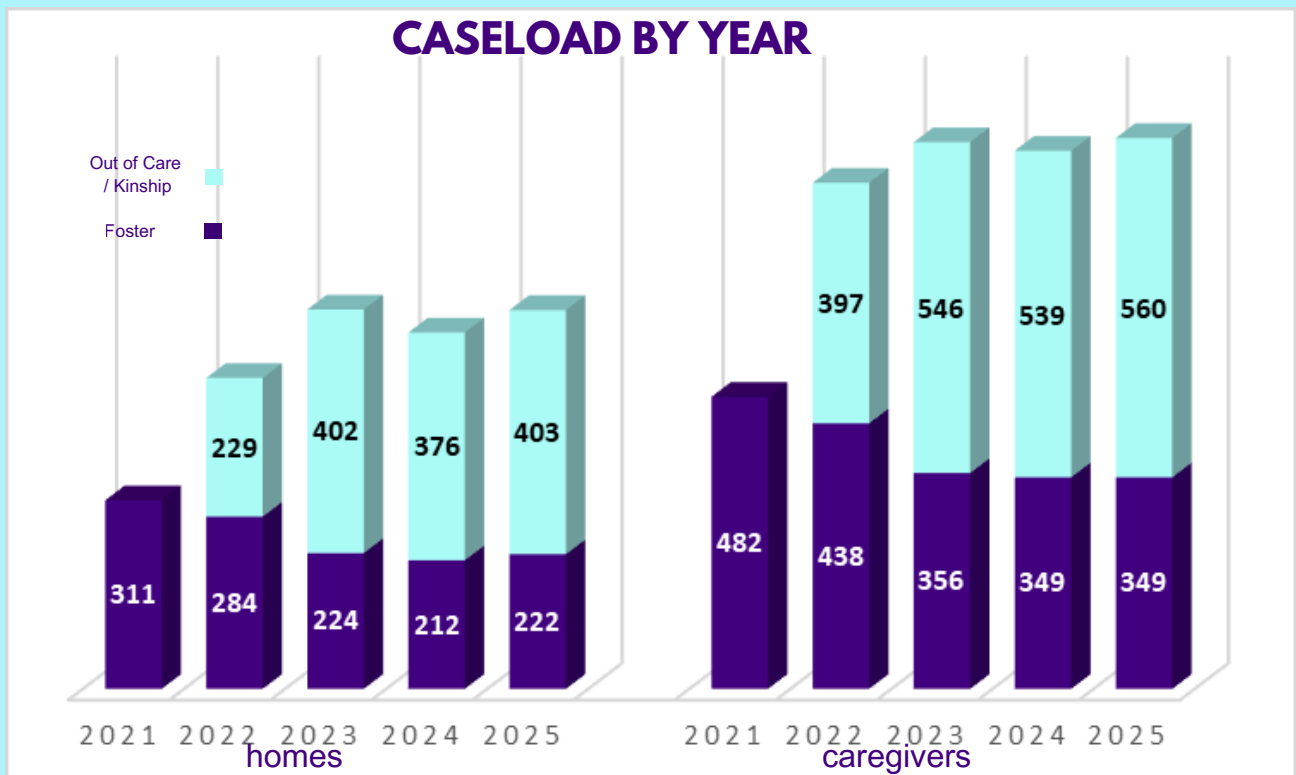
PROGRAM GOALS

Our main goals throughout the Support to Family Care Network program continue to be:

- ✔ Offering Foster Caregivers and Out of Care/Kinship Caregivers relevant and timely training opportunities (both in-person and virtual) while being sensitive and responsive to the needs of each community;
- ✔ Creating mentoring/networking opportunities, especially for new Caregivers as well as seasoned Caregivers;
- ✔ Connecting Out of Care/Kinship Caregivers through drop-ins, training opportunities and one-to-one support.
- ✔ Provide timely communication through our website, newsletters (Weekly Communique for Foster Caregivers and bi-monthly Support Report for Out of Care/Kinship Caregivers), drop-ins and direct contact (via phone, text, virtual and in-person)
- ✔ Once we are given a Caregiver's contact info, we connect with them within 30 days; typically, it is much quicker than that (depending on the Caregiver's schedule). It is important for us to receive regularly updated lists from Resources to ensure Caregivers are on our radar as soon as possible.
- ✔ Offering confidential support to Caregivers when they are experiencing a care home investigation, quality of care review or resolution of issues. The staff work hard during the 24/7 support to create a safe and nurturing environment, which can aid in the retention of Caregivers.

In the 23 years of our program, we have found that Caregivers who engage in training and networking opportunities (especially as new Caregivers), take regular self-care breaks, as well as accessing supports, when necessary, are less likely to burn out, have a care home investigation or quality of care review of their home (in cases of Foster Caregivers) and/or leave the sector.

170
Drop-ins:
346 hours



2025 SUCCESSES

2025 GOALS AND SUCCESSES IN PERCENTAGES



“The Network Facilitator is readily available when needed and easy to talk to. I have enjoyed working with them.”

“All my interactions have been positive with the Network Facilitators”

“I appreciate the programs offered and I like the weekly newsletters.”

“The Network Facilitator has gone above and beyond providing assistance with seeking legal advice. It was something I didn’t know where to start. They did all the leg work; sourced out supports... which provided answers I was looking for.”

“Yes, the Network Facilitators have always been very helpful and professional.”

“I certainly feel positive about the program and staff in general.”

“I really appreciated the Network Facilitator adjusting their schedule to help support me.”

2026 GOALS

Caregivers have opportunities to increase their knowledge from attending trainings:

- Goal - 80% of Caregivers who respond to surveys, feedback forms and sampling calls indicate opportunities to increase their knowledge.

Caregivers have increased networking opportunities with other Caregivers from attending events, meetings and drop-ins:

- Goal - 80% of Caregivers who respond to surveys, feedback forms and sampling calls indicate they are connected well with other Caregivers.

Caregivers have access to relevant and timely resources and training from the STFC program:

- 80% of Caregivers who respond to surveys, feedback forms and sampling calls indicate they find the resources and training relevant from the STFC program.

New Foster Caregivers will be contacted by STFC staff within 30 days (once STFC has received the contact info) and invited to attend trainings, events, meetings and drop-ins:

- Goal - 80% of new Foster Caregivers who respond to surveys, feedback forms and sampling calls indicate they had opportunities to connect with other Foster Caregivers and STFC staff.

Out of Care/Kinship Caregivers will be contacted by STFC staff within 30 days (once STFC has received the contact info) and invited to attend trainings, events, meetings and bi-monthly drop-ins and given information on our resources, newsletters, website and support available to them:

- Goal - 80% of new Out of Care/Kinship Caregivers who respond to surveys, feedback forms and sampling calls indicate they were invited to attend trainings, events, meetings and bi-monthly drop-ins and given information on our resources, newsletters, website and support available to them.

Caregivers accessing formal or informal support from STFC staff indicate they are confident in the level of support received:

- Goal - 80% of Caregivers who respond, who use STFC staff for formal or informal support indicate they are confident in the level of support received.

Caregivers (that staff have contact information for) in all areas of our SDA are called on a regular (monthly) basis:

- Goal - 80% of Caregivers who respond to surveys, feedback forms and sampling calls indicate they have heard from the Support to Family Care Network Facilitators or Program Coordinator on a regular basis.

Youth in care (in and from care 14-28) accessing local Youth in Care Networks (YICN) identify they feel connected to other youth/supports:

- 80% of youth in care who respond to feedback forms and Facebook polls indicate they feel connected with other youth/supports.

Caregivers and Community Professionals accessing Zoom training indicate they found the on-line training was flexible and fit well within their schedule:

- Goal - 80% of Caregivers who respond to surveys, feedback forms and sampling calls indicate they found the Zoom on-line training was flexible and fit well within their schedule.

Foster Caregivers who leave fostering, will be contacted and acknowledged by STFC staff, within 30 days of staff being made aware; as well as they will be offered an exit interview carried out by STFC staff:

- Goal - 80% of Foster Caregivers who leave fostering, will be contacted and acknowledged by STFC staff, within 30 days of staff being made aware; as well as they will be offered an exit interview carried out by STFC staff.

MCFD and Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies (ICFSA) staff experience effective and timely responses from STFC staff:

- 80% of MCFD and ICFSA staff who respond to surveys, feedback forms and sampling calls indicate they are experiencing effective and timely responses from STFC staff.

STFC TEAM

Kari Bëpple
Program
Coordinator



www.icsfp.info

**Renata
Bonthoux
Thompson /
Shuswap
Network
Facilitator**



**Jessica
Galbraith
Thompson /
Shuswap
Network
Facilitator**



**Marna
Forsyth
(virtual
support)**



**Jane Wesko
(through ARC
Programs)
WK Network
Facilitator**



**Tabitha
Fournier
Cariboo
Network
Facilitator**



**James Weir
EK Network
Facilitator**





**Respectfully submitted
for the STFC team
Marna Forsyth
&
Kari Bëpple**

**“You cannot change
any society unless
you take
responsibility for it,
unless you see
yourself as
belonging to it and
responsible for
changing it.”
~ Grace Lee Boggs**

