

The Lex Reynolds BC Adoption and Permanency Trust Fund

2010 Annual Review

This fund is named after the late Lex Reynolds, one of the Trust's original Co-Chairs. Lex was a passionate advocate for children. As a lawyer and volunteer he worked tirelessly to improve the lives of children and provide them with opportunities to have permanent loving homes.

The purpose of the Fund is to offer a range of grants:

- ✓ to help support healthy permanent placements
- ✓ to encourage innovative research, projects and initiatives
- ✓ to develop a higher level of awareness of permanency options in our communities
- ✓ to facilitate adoption programs and services within BC

Message from the Co-chairs

The Lex Reynolds Adoption & Permanency Trust Fund was established in 2004. One of our main objectives has been to increase the number of permanent families for children in care in British Columbia. Although the numbers of adoptions and other permanent placements for infants and younger children in care have increased since the fund's inception, there are still far too many young people aging out of foster care without a permanent family. We have much more to do to raise the level of awareness in the community of the value and pleasure these young people can bring to a family.

To quote a young person adopted from care after many years in the foster care system

"So being adopted for me was one of the biggest weights ever lifted off my shoulders. I have someone there that I can always go home to or always call on for help..."

This year we were pleased to provide funding for a number of projects supporting teen adoptions. The *Rights of Children and Youth in Care - Connection to Family and Culture Roundtable* is an excellent example of just such a project. This successful event, which was organized with direct involvement of youth-in-care, served to increase understanding of children's rights and to build a stronger network of

support for implementation of rights-based practices and policies for foster care.

Given the high number of Aboriginal children in care, another focus this year was providing support to a number of First Nations and Métis organizations in their efforts to maintain and strengthen connections for their children to family and culture.

We believe that the funds have assisted in building capacity in several communities across the province. We will continue to look for ways to reach out to individuals and community organizations working to support healthy permanent connections to family and culture with the hope that the number of placements will increase.

In closing, we wish to acknowledge the dedication and hard work of Anne Keay, one of our founding Advisory Committee members. Anne retired from the committee in 2010 after 6 years of service. Anne was an insightful and determined champion for the children and youth our Committee serves. In particular Anne worked tirelessly in the creation of a website for the Trust Fund. We are very grateful for her contributions.

Sandra Scarth & Geord Holland, Co-Chairs

Grant Profiles

Speak-Out Youth Group Program

An integral part of the teen adoption program at the Adoptive Families Association of BC, this initiative supports and gives voice to youth who are or were in BC foster care by equipping them with hands-on leadership and life skills training including public speaking and communications that will assist them in planning and promoting adoption and adoption options.

The Speak -Out program encourages youth to accept adoption and permanence – a vital first step in finding a permanent family connection – and to develop materials that support efforts to find families for youth. The materials and presentations developed help adults and other youth gain a better understanding of youth perspectives on adoption and increase those that see adoption as a positive choice. The program also serves as a vital source of peer-support and provides a vital sense of permanence for members and participants.

Creating Awareness on Permanency Planning

This program of the Northwest Inter-Nation Family and Counselling Service involves the development and hosting of information sessions in a number of communities regarding permanency planning for First Nations children. The sessions will provide an overview of the various options available to families to provide adoption and permanency arrangements that allow First Nations children to remain within

their home communities and closer to their cultural roots.

It is hoped that this initiative will help to reduce the number of Aboriginal children in care by exposing First Nations communities to the numerous options and creative responses that are available to provide permanency for their children.

Forever Families Project

Funding has been awarded to the Addiction Recovery Coach Program to develop and test a volunteer training program that will equip volunteers to provide one-on-one support to mothers with children in care who lead complex lives due to poverty, mental health, addiction and/or other health and social issues. The Forever Families Project aims to assist these mothers to maintain relationships with their children or help them move towards permanent adoption – whichever is in the best interest of the child(ren). (continued on the next page)

2010

Trust Advisory Committee

Geord Holland, Kelowna (Co-Chair)

Sandra Scarth, Victoria (Co-Chair)

Dana Brynelsen, Vancouver

Shelly Johnson, Kamloops

Anne Keay, Victoria

Kelly MacDonald, Vancouver

Anne Clayton, Victoria

How You Can Help

Donations to this fund help support organizations and individuals who work to create lifelong connections for children and youth and to educate and support adoptive families and those considering adoption.

To learn more, visit www.connectingforlife.ca.

Grant Profiles continued...

It is anticipated that appropriately trained volunteers, equipped with relevant materials and resources, will be able to encourage the personal growth that will enable these involved mothers to address issues that inhibit their ability to make healthy choices regarding their children.

The project will culminate with the release and wide distribution of a tested training manual for volunteers working with mothers of children-in care.

Today's Child

The Today's Child initiative will work to raise public awareness of the need for adoptive families by advertising non-identifying profiles of children on

television, through local newspapers, and various other First Nations publications.

The project, which is a collaborative effort between CHOICES Adoption and Counselling, Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services, and the Ministry of Children and Family Development, aims to reduce the number of children and youth-in-care, and reduce the time that children wait to be adopted by informing the public about the need, value and importance of adoption.

It is hoped that through this direct promotional effort, families will consider adopting after viewing the profiles of actual available children – particularly those children who are older and harder to place.

Adoption Facts

- There are currently over 1200 children and youth in-care awaiting adoption in British Columbia;
- Of those awaiting adoption, almost 400 are over the age of 12.
- In 2009/10 only 24 of the 294 adoption placements made were for children over the age of 12.
- Many of the children available for adoption are school age. They may be siblings who need to stay together. Some have special placement needs due to difficult early child experiences such as prenatal exposure to drugs or alcohol, learning delays or other developmental challenges;
- Potential adoptive parents come from diverse backgrounds and have a range of life experiences. Anyone who is interested in providing a loving, nurturing home is encouraged to consider adoption;
- As culture is essential to a child's positive identity formation and preservation, adoptive parents who reflect BC's cultural diversity and adoptive parents who are willing to maintain life-long connections with the child's cultural community are needed;
- Today, the number of Aboriginal children placed with Aboriginal families is between 40 and 50 percent which is a significant increase since 2000 when the rate was closer to 25 percent.

2010 Grants

Mini Grants (\$1500)

Adoptive Families Association of BC:

- ❖ FASD Family Camp;
- ❖ 2010 First Nations Camp;
- ❖ Adoption Education Session: Building Permanency for Teens;
- ❖ FASD Retreat;
- ❖ FASD Support Group Conference Calls;
- ❖ Parents Need to Know Workshops;
- ❖ Teen Adoption Conference;
- ❖ Teen Support Project;
- ❖ Zawadi Playgroup;
- ❖ Strategic Family Life Skills Workshop;

Afro-Canadian Adoption Network Support Group:

- ❖ Akoma Ntoaso Mentorship Program

Kelowna Community Resources:

- ❖ Getting It Together Project

Laichwiltach Family Life Society:

- ❖ Cultural Connections Phase I

Lalum'utul'Smu'eem Child & Family Services

- ❖ Aboriginal Adoption Recruitment Strategies – Promotional Materials

University of Victoria

- ❖ Policy Outcomes Workshop

Wachiay Friendship Centre

- ❖ FASD Retreat

Full Grants (\$20,000 Maximum)

Addiction Recovery Coach Program:

- ❖ Forever Families Project

Adoptive Families Association of BC:

- ❖ Speak-Out Youth Program

CHOICES Adoption & Counseling:

- ❖ Today's Child Program

Gitxsan Child & Family Services Society:

- ❖ Gitxsan Cultural Kits & Life Books

Haida Child & Family Services:

- ❖ Haida Connections

Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society:

- ❖ Reclaiming Our Aboriginal Heritage

Northwest Inter-Nation Family & Community Services:

- ❖ Creating Awareness on Permanency Planning

Total Granted in 2010:

\$153,000

Total Granted Since Fund Inception:

\$636,300

The Lex Reynolds BC Adoption & Permanency Trust Fund is a fund of the Victoria Foundation and operates under the direction of a Trust Advisory Committee. The Fund was established in 2004 by a grant from the Ministry of Children and Family Development— Province of British Columbia, in association with the Adoption Council of Canada

