November 1, 2011

Her Worship Mayor Kerry Cook and Council  
City of Williams Lake  
450 Mart St  
Williams Lake BC V2G 1N3

Dear Mayor Cook and Council:

November has once again been proclaimed as Adoption Awareness Month in British Columbia. This month provides an opportunity to highlight the need for every child to have a stable and loving forever family – and to celebrate the many families in the province that have been created through adoption.

In your community and across the province, there are children who are waiting for a permanent family to call their own. Over the past five years, 1,443 children have found homes through adoption, but there are still over 1,200 children in government care who are waiting for their forever family - with over 500 children who are ready to be adopted today. Some of these children are part of a sibling group, some have special needs and some are teens. Regardless of age or need, all children deserve a family to belong to - someone to celebrate their achievements and milestones, support them through the challenges of growing up, and to rely on for assistance, advice and encouragement. Adoption is about families, unconditional love and a deep, lifelong commitment.

During Adoption Awareness Month, the Ministry of Children and Family Development places a special emphasis on enhancing adoption awareness and heightening recruitment efforts to find families for children in our continuing care. Potential adoptive parents are ordinary people residing in neighbourhoods across our communities. They come from diverse backgrounds with various life experiences but they all share the capacity and commitment to love a child. Single people, married couples and non-traditional families can all become adoptive parents to a child in need of a loving home.

In communities across British Columbia, there are a variety of events and displays to promote the need for more adoptive parents and to celebrate our many adoptive families. The Adoptive Families Association of British Columbia representative in your area can provide you with more information on these exciting events; a contact list is enclosed. There are also five licensed adoption agencies in British Columbia who contribute to both adoption awareness and the placement of children. A contact list of these agencies is also enclosed.
I also encourage you to find out more about adoption and the celebrations throughout the province by visiting the Ministry of Children and Family Development’s Web site regularly throughout November, at: www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/adooption.

If you are interested in learning more about adoption, please contact the ministry’s Regional Deputy Director of Adoptions for your community. For your assistance, I have included a list of contacts for all five regions.

On behalf of the Ministry of Children and Family Development, thank you for helping us find safe, nurturing and loving homes for British Columbia’s children and youth.

Sincerely,

Mary McNeil
Minister

Enclosures (4)
CONTACT LIST
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Licensed Adoption Agencies in British Columbia

The following agencies are licensed to operate an adoption agency in compliance with the Adoption Act (1995) and Adoption Agency Regulations.

Family Services of Greater Vancouver – Licensed Adoption Agency
1616 West 7th Ave
Vancouver, BC V6J 1S5
Attn: Cathy Loptson, Administrator
Ph: 604 736-7613
Fax: 604 733-7009
Toll-Free: 1 866 582-3678
Email: adoptionservices@fsgv.ca

Sunrise Family Services Society
102 - 171 West Esplanade
North Vancouver, BC V7M 3J9
Attn: Natasha Chalke, Administrator
Ph: 604 984-2488
Fax: 604 984-2498
Toll-Free: 1 888 984-2488
Email: Natasha@sunriseadoption.com

The Adoption Centre
255 Lawrence Ave
Kelowna, BC V1Y 6L2
Attn: Jennifer Wall, Administrator
Ph: 250 763-8002
Fax: 250 763-6282
Toll-Free: 1 800 935-4237
Email: adoptioninfo@kcr.ca

CHOICES Adoption and Counselling Services
100 - 850 Blanshard St
Victoria, BC V8W 2H2
Attn: Cheryl Fix, Executive Director
Ph: 250 479-9811
Fax: 250 479-9850
Toll-Free: 1 888 479-9811
Email: CHOICES@choicesadoption.ca

Hope Services
200 – 2979 Gladwin Rd
Abbotsford, BC V2T 5T4
Attn: Christene Buchanan, Administrator
Ph: 604 850-1002
Fax: 604 852-1045
Toll-Free: 1 800 916-4673
Email: christene@hopeadopt.org
CONTACT LIST

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Adoptive Families Association of BC: Adoption Support Co-ordinators

The Adoptive Families Association of BC (AFABC) has a provincial support network that provides direct support to adoptive families in every British Columbia community. The adoption support co-ordinators work one-on-one with families, promote awareness of the Waiting Child Program, and arrange pre- and post-adoption information sessions, workshops and social activities. They also work closely with community groups and organizations supporting children and families.

Karen Madeiros
Executive Director
Adoptive Families Association of BC
Ph: 604 320-7330 ext. 109
Toll-Free: 1 866 900-7330 ext. 109
Email: kmadeiros@bcadoption.com

Sherrie Jones
Adoption Support Coordinator
North: Peace River
Ph: 250 786-5370 (Dawson Creek)
Toll-Free: 1 866 902-7330
Email: sjones@bcadoption.com

Cheryl Piddocke
Adoption Support Coordinator
North: Central and Northwest
Ph: 250 963-8553 (Prince George)
Toll-Free: 1 866 303-4591
Email: cpiddocke@bcadoption.com

Sarah Reid
Adoption Support Coordinator
Lower Mainland: Vancouver/Coastal
Ph: 604 320-7330 ext. 105
Toll-Free: 1 866 900-7330 ext. 105
Email: sreid@bcadoption.com

Jennifer Hillman
Adoption Support Coordinator
Lower Mainland: South Fraser
Ph: 604 320-7330 ext. 101
Toll-Free: 1 866 900-7330 ext. 101
Email: jhillman@bcadoption.com

Dianna Mortensen
Adoption Support Coordinator
Interior: Okanagan, Kootenays, Thompson-Cariboo
Toll-Free: 1 866 694-1222
Email: dmortensen@bcadoption.com

Cathy Gilbert
Adoption Support Coordinator
Vancouver Island: Central and Upper Island
Ph: 250 722-3032 (Nanaimo)
Toll-Free: 1 866 334-3873
Email: cgilbert@bcadoption.com
Adoption Awareness Month

The Government of British Columbia has proclaimed November as Adoption Awareness Month. The Ministry of Children and Family Development is taking this month-long opportunity to raise awareness about children in care who are waiting for an adoptive home, and to recognize adoption as a valued way to build a family.

Key Facts:

- Children in the permanent care of British Columbia’s Ministry of Children and Family Development may be placed for adoption through the ministry. Permanent care occurs when the courts have determined that the child cannot return to the care of their birth parent(s) and a Continuing Custody Order has been granted.

- For children in continuing custody, the ministry makes plans for permanency. These plans can include:
  - Adoption (including foster caregiver adoption: long-term caregivers are encouraged to adopt).
  - Transfer of custody: this transfers custody of a child to someone with a significant tie to the child.
  - Ensuring a child has lifelong connections with significant adults in their lives if adoption or other permanency options are not in the child’s best interest.

- During the past 10 years, an average of 271 children have been adopted annually. Last year, 263 children and youth in care of the ministry found permanent homes. Still there are over 1,200 children with adoption as their plan of care who are waiting for a permanent family.

- Many of the children available for adoption are school age. They may be siblings who need to stay together. Some may have special placement needs due to difficult early childhood experiences, prenatal exposure to alcohol or drugs, 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 apply to adopt.

- The ministry strives to place children with families that preserve a child’s ethnic and cultural heritage. As culture is essential to a child’s positive identity formation and preservation, adoptive parents who reflect British Columbia’s cultural diversity and adoptive parents who are willing to maintain lifelong connections with the child’s cultural community are needed.
The number of Aboriginal children being placed with Aboriginal families is on an encouraging trend upward and was 68 per cent in 2010/11 – up from 27 per cent in 2000/01.

In 2007, the Cowichan Tribes on Vancouver Island became the first delegated Aboriginal agency to handle adoptions in British Columbia. They have since held two cultural adoption ceremonies with the second in November 2010 bringing the number to 18 for adoptions for children in their community.

The ministry works with community partners (including the Adoptive Families Association of BC) to increase the number of approved adoption homes for children in care. The Adoptive Families Association is contracted to provide both pre- and post-adoptive support. They also provide assistance with recruitment initiatives such as answering the 1-877-ADOPT-07 phone line.

**Post-Adoption Assistance Program:**

- The Post-Adoption Assistance Program supports families in meeting the unique needs of their adopted families and makes adoption possible for many families that, otherwise, would not have the financial means to give a child a home and family.

- The Post-Adoption Assistance Program supported approximately 1,200 families in British Columbia with a budget of over $18 million for 2010/11 – up from $2 million in 2000/01.

**Adoption Reunion Registry:**

- The Adoption Reunion Registry (ARR) has been in operation since 1991 and is legislated to provide, search, intermediary and counselling services to those who have been affected by a B.C. adoption.

- The ARR is available to adopted adults, birth mothers and fathers, siblings of an adopted adult, relatives of an adopted adult and the children or grandchildren of a deceased adopted adult. Adoptees that are searching or being searched for must be at least 19 years of age.

- Since 1991, approximately 17,000 applications for both passive and active searches have been filed with the registry, resulting in approximately 5,000 connecting people together.

- The ARR can be contacted in the Victoria area at 250 387-3660 or toll-free within North America at 1 877 387-3660. The ARR website can be found at [http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/adoption/reunion/index.htm](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/adoption/reunion/index.htm)

**Contact:**

Cindy Rose
Ministry of Children and Family Development Communications
250 356-1639
CONTACT LIST
Ministry of Children and Family Development

Deputy Directors of Adoption in British Columbia

If you are interested in finding out more about adoption, please contact the Ministry's Regional Deputy Director of Adoption for your community.

Coast/Fraser Region (South and East Fraser)
Bruce McNeill
Executive Director of Service
Ph: 604 586-4123

North Region
Robert Watts
Executive Director of Service
Ph: 250 565-4367

Coast/Fraser Region (North Fraser, Vancouver/Richmond, Coast/North Shore)
Sheila Robinson
Executive Director of Service
Ph: 604 660-2433

Interior Region
Anne Kishiyama
Community Services Manager
Ph: 250 371-3665

Vancouver Island Region
Tom Weber
Executive Director of Service
Ph: 250 334-5820