



CFS Matters!

Spring/Summer 2015

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Child and Family Services of Western Manitoba



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*D*ear Friends,

As June comes to an end, many of our staff are looking forward to a vacation break, to spend time with their family and friends and to 'recharge the batteries' after a very busy and full year at the Agency.

In this newsletter, we highlight our recent Annual General Meeting (AGM). As a private Agency, mandated as part of the General Authority, our Agency has a real and vibrant connection with

the community we serve. The AGM is our opportunity to report out to the community - one of our 'stakeholders' - on our efforts over the past year. The newsletter highlights some of the topics presented at the AGM, especially the efforts of Agency staff to keep children safe at home. You can access a copy of our 2014-2015 Annual Report through our website (www.cfswestern.mb.ca/media) if you would like more information.

We also take time to remember the loss of **Marilyn Sterling Blanco**, who passed away last December. Marilyn was a

member of our management team and worked for the Agency for nearly 40 years. Marilyn had a tremendous impact on the Agency over the years in the various roles she filled. She is missed and fondly remembered.

Enjoy the weather and be safe!

Dave McGregor
Dave McGregor, MSW, RSW
Chief Executive Officer

Phil Shaman
Phil Shaman SHAMAN
President, Board of Directors



CEO **Dave McGregor** with outgoing Board of Directors President **Ramona Coey** at the 2015 AGM.

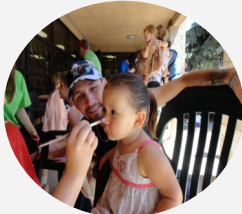
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Child and Family Services of Western Manitoba exists so that children are safe and nurtured in strong, loving families within a community of caring people.

Elsbeth Reid Family Resource Centre

255—9th Street
Brandon MB R7A 6X1
204-726-6280

Open 9 am—5 pm weekdays



Preschool Enrichment Program

2nd Floor
2227 Brandon Avenue
Brandon MB R7B 0S9
204-727-6650



Family and Community Development Centre

Unit 4, 613—10th Street
Brandon MB R7A 4G6
204-726-7033



Victoria Day Care Centre

1st Floor
2227 Brandon Avenue
Brandon MB R7B 0S9
204-728-9845



2015 Annual General Meeting Highlights

The 116th Annual General Meeting of CFS Western, held June 2, highlighted two important topics. One was CFS Western's children in care story, which has been a little more positive than what some of the recent newspaper headlines have reported. The other was the Agency's collaboration and engagement with families and communities.

"CFS Western is a progressive and well respected community based Agency, known for their responsive and collaborative work with families. Their innovation is noted through their work in the Westaway Bay project, child care centre, programming and their Elspeth Reid Family Resource Centre – to name just a few of the examples. They are an organization that puts caring for families and children at the forefront. Congratulations on yet another very successful year in strengthening families!"

Deb Besant, Executive Director,
The General Child and Family
Services Authority

"We had 139 children in care last year," said **Dave McGregor**, Chief Executive Officer, "which is less than the previous year.

"As well, our placement rate is seven children per thousand, which is below both the provincial and the Canadian placement rates."

McGregor also noted:

- CFS Western has not placed any children in hotels over the past two years.
- Forty-seven percent of the children brought into care last year left care within one month of entering it.
- Sixty-eight percent of the children who left the care of the Agency were returned to their parents care.

McGregor also spoke about the wonderful work of Agency staff and volunteers to keep children safe in their homes and out of Agency care.

"The part that doesn't get the media focus is our prevention programs and supports.

"They are part of why our Agency's child in care experiences have not been as difficult as those for other agencies."

These services include:

- Providing early intervention programs for the most vulnerable children and families.
- Offering a continuum of supports and services that are accessible to families and flexible to meet family strengths and needs.
- A practise approach that seeks to have active engagement and collaboration with families, networks and communities to address safety concerns.

"With all of our prevention program and support efforts to keep kids safe at home, 92% of the children in the Agency's protection and voluntary family services are receiving services while living at home."

Dave McGregor, CEO

Partnerships are also key in helping CFS Western keep kids safe and in their home. One example is the *Westaway Bay* project, a joint venture with Healthy Family Brandon, the Brandon Friendship Centre, Manitoba Housing, Brandon Police Services, Brandon School Division, Public Health and others. Together they created a mini resource centre in a Manitoba Housing development community to provide accessible supports and services to a vulnerable population.



(l-r) Victoria Day Care Centre staff
Shaelynn Kendall, Child Care Assistant,
Patricia Ross, Early Childhood Educator, and
Eileen Czerkowski, Director

McGregor reported that since Westaway Bay opened in December 2013, there had been a significant increase in family and community engagement as shown by participation in programs and activities organized in the Centre.

He also said the school division noted a huge increase in school participation and engagement by parents and children, and Brandon Police Services reported a significant decrease in crime rates in the area.

The Westaway Bay centre also caught the eye of new Mayor Rick Chrest, who recently visited for a tour and chats with some of the parents and children who attend.

Continued on page 3...



Table decorations for the evening were created by the children who attend CFS Western's Preschool Enrichment Program.

McGregor then talked about Brandon's *Community Mobilization Project*, of which CFS Western is a key member along with police services, education and public health. The community safety initiative launched April 1 and seeks to bring various agencies together to effectively intervene and support families and individuals who are assessed at elevated risks.

Traditionally, agencies can struggle when trying to work collaboratively because each has different mandates and realities that can get in the way. The result can be a disjointed, inefficient effort with cracks through which the family or individual can fall.

With agencies working together, families can be connected much quicker to services, resources and supports which can hopefully change the outcomes and make communities stronger.

Another piece to keeping children safe and in their homes has been CFS Western's successful implementation of the *Safety Focused Practice Model*.

Components of the model include a clear focus on safety and assessment of family strengths and needs to develop household safety plans; families understand why the Agency is involved with them and what the worries are. More about the Practice Model can be found on page 5.

"As you can imagine, all of these efforts take commitment and dedication – real hard work!", said McGregor.

"It doesn't just happen, and we need to recognize the efforts of staff and volunteers to build upon those family and community relationships."

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Ramona Coey, Past President
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(l-r) United Way of Brandon & District Board Chairperson **Luka Amona**, Chief Executive Officer **Cynamon Mychasiw**, and Campaign Director **Janis Evans**

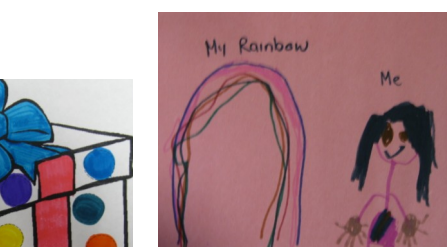
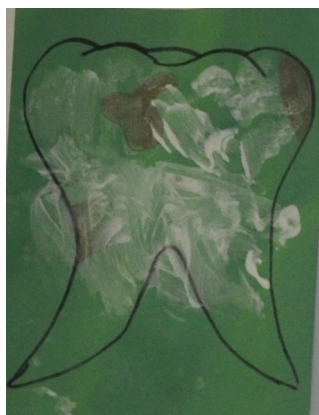
"United Way's focus area 'All that Kids Can Be' can only be accomplished through our investment in organizations like CFS Western, who provide frontline impact each and every day. We are honoured to have the opportunity to be a funding partner with the Agency's Preschool Enrichment Program and their Elspeth Reid Family Resource Centre. To strengthen the community, we first need to strengthen the people within it. CFS Western does that every day by putting the needs and safety of children and families first."

Luka Amona, Chairperson,
Board of Directors, United Way of Brandon and District



Honourary Life Member and long-time CFS Western supporter **Mrs. Bea Jolly** (left) congratulates Director of Programs **Laurie Jackson**, who was recognized for 35 years of service to the Agency.

The hall where the AGM was held was decorated with crafts and artwork created by the talented and artistic children who attend CFS Western's Preschool Enrichment Program, Victoria Day Care Centre, and Elspeth Reid Family Resource Centre. Below is just a sample of the hundreds of pieces they made.



Practice Model by Nancy Hunter, Leading Practice Specialist

Putting a vision and some very goal directed people together resulted in the implementation of the **Practice Model** for and by our social workers.

The *Practice Model* helps social workers find ways to:

- Engage with families when they are at their most vulnerable.
- Hold parents accountable for being the safest parent they can be.
- Ensure children's voices are front and centre while holding firm to the safety expectations that rest on the shoulders of those involved in child welfare.



We began 12 three-hour model training sessions in fall 2012 and completed our formal training in spring 2015. During the sessions, we built in layers the moving parts of the *Practice Model*, including inserting the researched, evidence-based assessment tools of Structured Decision Making (SDM) into focused, purposeful conversations with families that pulled on their capacities, resources and motivation to get to safety that are reflected in exposure to the Signs of Safety practices.

What a journey!

We believed the opportunity to learn within our units and hear and practice together - cemented by the sharing of experiences when social workers went to our families and tried an approach - was pivotal to our uptake.

One of the learning highlights that stands out is *Mapping*. It asks *Three Questions*:

- What are we worried about? ('We' stands for our Agency, the family members including the children as well as their network of support, and our collaterals.)
- What is going well?
- What are the next steps?

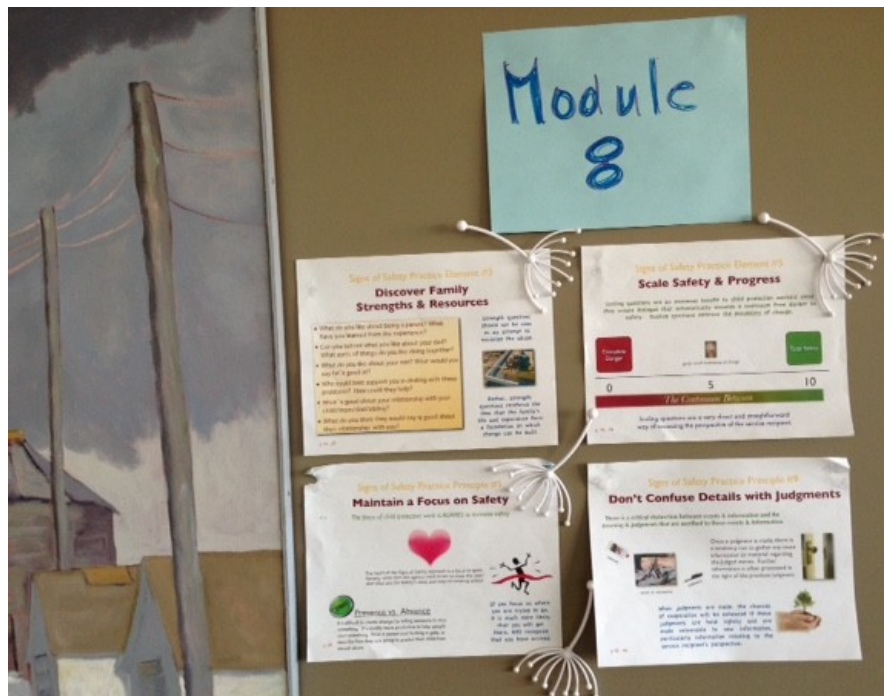
Not only do we use *Mapping* in the office, we organize our conversations with a family using the same questions to be clearer, describing and eliciting from them what the next steps would look like in their family home.

Our goal to help build workers' capacity, confidence and amplify skills already at play have been realized beyond measure.

The modules were intended to lay that ground work. We experienced the power of workers trying on new skills and ways of working with families. The biggest impact is in the ripples, creating depth in practice and assessment.



As we move forward, adding new staff and orienting them to this practice, we have a solid foundation to grow from individually and as an organization.



Elspeth Reid Family Resource Centre by Lisa Ramsay, Coordinator

The Elspeth Reid Family Resource Centre is located at 255—9th Street in Brandon, telephone 204-726-6280 (or toll free 1-800-483-8980) and is open Mondays through Fridays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The Resource Centre gratefully acknowledges the financial support of its many donors, including the:



and the



We've had another incredible year. There were many things to celebrate and challenges to face. As a team, we take time to honour our accomplishments and are grateful for each opportunity to support a parent to reach their goals. I am also proud to share that we helped one another through difficult times this past year. We are fortunate to have so many individual staff members who consistently express their dedication to our mission of family well-being. Our staff go out of their way to advocate for families, meet with parents in crisis, and encourage one another to cope with the frustrations this work can sometimes present.

"Our" children had another year of new developmental milestones. Through creative crafts, hundreds of story times, plenty of fresh air and natural play, our staff and parents gave the children lots of stimulating and fun playtimes. Parents and staff also celebrated families with older children and their accomplishments. Academic and athletic achievement, getting to a peaceful space within the family home, and/or finally having that important family conversation are just some of the examples that come to mind. Respecting that most precious relationship between parent and child is central to our daily work. Parents show courage to share their real story with us and it allows us to do meaningful work to strengthen the family. It is our privilege to witness and participate in the growth of parental capacity.



We continue to rely on the support of the community to be able to do our work. This year, funding seems to be a challenge for many community organizations – we've certainly found that true for ourselves. We consistently share our story and advocate for ourselves to access the financial support we need to remain available to families. We need to help potential funders see the returns in long term investments and the cost effectiveness of early intervention. We cannot always prove measurable outcomes, but when a mother shares that a program saved her life or when family reunification happens because of the work we collectively did to make their home safer, I know this is an outcome we all want. Your financial support is most appreciated.

Congratulations to each of you who have reached a special family milestone over this past year. We wish you a peaceful and safe summer. As always, I'd love to hear your feedback - call me at 204-726-6258 (toll free 1-800-483-8980) or email frc@cfswestern.mb.ca.

Lisa Ramsay



Congratulation and best wishes to **Barb Martens** on her retirement from the Parent-Child Home Program (PCHP), and to **Marilyn McKay** on her retirement from the child care team at the Resource Centre.



Barb Martens
with CFS Western
CEO **Dave
McGregor**.

Marilyn McKay
(right) with CFS
Western's Director of
Programs **Laurie
Jackson**.



Shawna Munro
takes over as PCHP
Coordinator so we
welcome her to
that new position.

We also extend a warm greeting to **Darlene Antonation**, the Resource Centre's newest child care staff member.



Just a reminder that we are no longer mailing the program calendar, so please send us your email address or stop by 255-9th Street, Brandon, to pick one up. You can also view the calendar on our website at [www.cfswestern.mb.ca/Family/Elspeth Reid Family Resource Centre](http://www.cfswestern.mb.ca/Family/Elspeth%20Reid%20Family%20Resource%20Centre). Our fall calendar will be available mid to late August. Register early as programs fill up quickly.



Thank you!

CFS Western greatly appreciates the financial support of these donors and the many others who contribute to our family strengthening programs!

**THE
WINNIPEG
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2014-2015 Parent-Child Home Program



2014 Parent-Child Home Program



2014-2015 Elspeth Reid Family Resource Centre



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2015-2016 Rural Family Strengthening Programs

2014 and 2015 Elspeth Reid Family Resource Centre and Preschool Enrichment Program



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2015 Parent-Child Home Program



In Memoriam

"What we have done for ourselves alone dies with us; what we have done for others, and the world, remains... immortal."

-- Albert Pike

Marilyn
Sterling
Blanco



As Always, Marilyn

She was creative, knowledgeable, caring, compassionate, resourceful, dedicated and committed. She could also be stubborn. And she was ours for nearly 40 years.

She was **Marilyn Sterling Blanco**, Supervisor at CFS Western. Sadly, she left us far too early after a brief but valiant battle with cancer.

Surrounded by her beloved family, Marilyn passed away peacefully on December 26, 2014, at the age of 59.

"When I think about Marilyn, what she meant to our Agency and the impact she had, I realized that for almost all of our current staff of 100-plus, there has never been a time when Marilyn wasn't part of our organization," said **Dave McGregor**, CEO of CFS Western.

"Marilyn was a true support and mentor for so many of us; the phrase 'I'll go ask Marilyn' could be heard several times daily."

She affectionately dubbed new workers as "newbies" and for many years took them through orientation to the Agency. She led the Intake team and the Rural Family Services team at different points in her career. At the time she took ill, she'd been at the helm of the Resource Development team.

She signed every email, memo and note with 'As Always, Marilyn'. It was her way of letting whoever she was communicating with know that she was there for them any time for any reason.

"She had awesome photography skills and was our resident shutterbug who brought her own camera to Agency events from casual staff lunches to Annual General Meetings," said **Diane Martin**, a dear friend and co-worker who started work at the Agency on the same day as Marilyn.



One of the photos shutterbug Marilyn took on one of her many trips.

"And within hours of an event, Marilyn had hard copies of the pictures printed and on display for everyone to see."

She was resourceful. A lot of work in child welfare is about problem solving and Marilyn often played a critical role in not only identifying problems but also in helping resolve them. She had common sense, practicality, and great wisdom. She expressed her opinion respectfully yet firmly and challenged values and assumptions.

Marilyn was an excellent role model for staff as she practised in a manner that was consistent with the Agency's values of respect and compassion for the families we serve. She was also flexible throughout her career. Many times she took on a change in role and responsibilities as the Agency responded to altering needs and conditions. Marilyn was always up for the challenge and she jumped in with enthusiasm and success.

She was also well known and respected in the community. Marilyn represented the Agency on many coalitions and committees as part of CFS Western's engagement with the community. She believed in community and that child welfare needed to be a part of and work closely with the community in supporting and strengthening families.

"Her impact and her legacy will live on," said Dave.

"The number of new staff she has helped through orientation and by mentoring will continue to have an influence on the work of CFS Western for many years.

"I know for sure that at our management team table, we will all think 'what would Marilyn say about this?'"

"Her passing is a great loss to her family, her community and to CFS Western.

"In her memory, let's be inspired to practise with her example of respect, caring, and compassionate service toward the families, children and fellow staff we work with."

As Always, Marilyn!



In the world of social work, mapping is an important part of dealing with families. To honour Marilyn, Diane came up with a mini-mapping message to her:

- *What's going well?*
Your impact is profound and permanent.
- *What are we worried about?*
You have left very big shoes to fill.
- *Next steps?*
You will live on in our hearts forever.

As Always, Marilyn

Lisa Jackson, who worked under Marilyn's supervision for three years, remembers Marilyn the family woman.

"She was a very private person and in the decades of working with her, many of us knew almost nothing about her life outside of the office."

But for those of us who were observant enough and who paid close attention to her subtle references, it was clear that Marilyn's family was everything to her.

The pictures on her filing cabinet of her beautiful grandchildren were evidence that Marilyn thought of them often.

The pictures would change from time to time, and each time I would comment on the new photos, Marilyn would smile proudly and comment briefly on their newest achievement or activity.

Marilyn welcomed our unit on one occasion to her amazing cabin on Pelican Lake; a place that she shared held many memories for her. She never did share what those memories were, but she hinted on more than one occasion that there were a lot of special times, a lot of rowdy moments, and a lot of general fun!

She had lots of stories about her own children growing up, from how they were born, to a number of parenting stories congruent to whatever tale I was sharing about my own child. Marilyn would say to me that raising kids is hard, but worth it in the long run.

Marilyn would express excitement at going to Arizona to visit her 'favorite husband'. She didn't share a lot of details about him, but her endearing description tells me that he was very special to her indeed.

No, Marilyn didn't do a whole lot of talking about her personal life, but she didn't have to for me to know that her family were so special to her. She EXUDED family.

Marilyn's work family misses her greatly. She was an incredible, formidable, compassionate woman.

Marilyn was a mentor to me and to so many others, and I know I am not speaking out of turn to say that we feel blessed to have known her."



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Kathleen Friesen "Waxwing Pair" Brandon, MB

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