

Kids These Days – Thank you, CFSA Board Members  
By Dr. David Rideout, CEO



From left to right: David Rideout, CEO; Gayle McKenzie-Findlay; Robert Lyons; Wendy Huggan; Caren Mueller; Claudette Sheremata; Patricia Palenchuk; Penny Vasseur; Florence Gladue; (front) Audrey Franklin, Aboriginal Co-Chair; Trevor Thain, Co-Chair.

At the end of 2013 we said goodbye to some important people who have dedicated many years to helping children and families. They are the team of devoted community members who made up the Board of Directors for North Central Alberta Child and Family Services Authority (CFSA). In their governance role, Board members were responsible for overseeing the CFSA's performance; supporting strategic planning; monitoring an annual budget of nearly sixty million dollars; reporting on results each year; and ensuring services were delivered effectively in accordance with legislation and community needs.

Those Board members were respected individuals within their communities. Some have also served as school trustees, members of the Chamber of Commerce, Aboriginal advocates, social workers, teachers, youth workers, volunteers, and a

former mayor. Half of them were Aboriginal, bringing a valuable cultural perspective to various decisions, which is important since nearly two-thirds of the people we serve are Aboriginal. All of the Board members were parents, grandparents, or foster parents who came from all walks of life, but shared one common goal—to make a positive difference in the lives of children, youth, and families.

These dedicated individuals have regularly traveled across North Central Alberta, which spans the 656 kilometres from Jasper to Cold Lake, to meet with community members and service providers. They have participated in countless community consultations to ensure that programs and services for children were tailored to meet the needs within their communities. They have supported and attended many, many celebration events for CFSA staff, foster and kinship parents; and joined in various forums to help build connections with the Aboriginal community. We are grateful for their important contributions over the past 14 years and have no doubt that they will continue to serve their communities in some capacity.

As a CEO, it has been my privilege to work directly with those people. So I can speak to their contributions with confidence, because I have seen it firsthand. The nature of their governance role meant much of their influence was not always readily seen in the public arena. However, they helped shape the culture and priorities of the CFSA in ways that will continue to produce positive outcomes for years to come.

The New Year brought legislative changes that build upon their foundation and introduces new Family and Community Engagement Councils to ensure the continuation of vital community collaboration. These new councils will continue the important dialogue with community partners in the search for local solutions to social issues. I trust some Board members will consider applying to serve in this new role.

As we turn the page to 2014, we look forward to the exciting potential within the many changes before us, realizing that those previous Board members have done so much in paving the way for a new and vibrant process of community support. It is only appropriate that we give thanks to those individuals who have helped build the foundation for that bright future.

(Note: More information on the new Family and Community Engagement Councils, and the recruitment for members, can be found at <http://humanservices.alberta.ca/department/family-and-community-engagement-councils.html> .)

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Feedback or comments are welcome and can be sent via email to [david.rideout@gov.ab.ca](mailto:david.rideout@gov.ab.ca)