



Kids These Days: The Village Walls

In my world of child welfare, I am frequently reminded of the truth in the popular saying that “it takes a village to raise a child.” I recall hearing one recent example of a troubled youth who hitchhiked across our province and arrived homeless and alone in a small, northern Alberta community. A concerned mom, who was not his own mother, gave him a safe place to stay. Other youth in the community invited him to play hockey and loaned him some equipment. Another community member noticed the boy’s mismatched skates and raised a few dollars to buy him new ones. Now able to hone his skating skills, that young man has become an excellent hockey player - and was recently scouted to a junior league.

Another story that comes to mind is about a young mother who had experienced a brain injury. Tasks that used to be effortless—reading, writing, shopping and caring for her young daughter—had become difficult. Not surprisingly, this young family was struggling. Our Child and Family Services connected with the local Friendship Centre in their community to assign a Family Support Worker to help them. That worker helped the family to access services such as daycare subsidies, financial assistance for prescription coverage, Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped, and home-life training. The arrangements even included literacy training to help the mom re-learn her own reading skills, just as her own little girl was starting kindergarten. Bit by bit, this family is growing stronger and more independent.

Stories like these remind us that everyone can have a role in raising the children of our villages. To care for them and keep them safe. To equip their families with what they need to better care for their children. To empower them to fulfill their dreams. When children and families are safe and empowered, they are free to reach their highest potential.

These stories also show that communities understand the social issues they’re facing, and that it takes connections to find solutions.

There are new regional Family and Community Engagement Councils planned for Alberta this fall to give communities a direct avenue to identify and discuss social issues that are important to them. The new councils will focus on building relationships and conducting meaningful engagement that supports communities, governments, business, non-profits and families in solving social challenges at the local level. With eight to 10 council members from various backgrounds and areas of expertise, the councils will help determine what’s working and where more support is needed. It’s really about the whole village coming together to determine how best to raise our children and support our families. We all benefit because strong families nurture healthy children who grow up to become healthy

parents, capable citizens, and community leaders. It's a positive ripple that benefits all of society.

You can find out more about the new Family and Community Engagement Councils at www.humanservices.alberta.ca/fcec .

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Feedback or comments are welcome and can be sent via email to david.rideout@gov.ab.ca