



*The Pimentel family  
Photo by Clair Beth Photography*

# IMPACT REPORT 2022-23



Adoptive Families  
Association of BC

The Doornbos family  
Photo by Wenda Sikma

# Family for every child.

For more than 45 years, AFABC has been there for adoptive families, children, and youth.

We believe **everyone needs to belong**.  
We find families for BC's waiting kids and provide support, learning, and connection for adoptive and permanency families and youth transitioning out of government care.



More than **6000** families, children, and youth served in the 2022-23 fiscal year.



# Dear friends of AFABC,

In fiscal 2022-23, we emerged from COVID into a time of new beginnings and growth.

**We embarked on a new, multi-year core contract with the Ministry of Children and Family Development**, enabling us to serve BC's adoption and permanency community better. **Our restructured Family Support team is meeting its goal of providing accessible, provincewide support**, including more intensive parent and caregiver coaching and clinical referrals: they have responded to almost 1,000 inquiries and provided over 340 1:1 support sessions. We added a new Child Specific Recruiter on Vancouver Island to increase our ability to find "families that fit" for BC's waiting kids. And we continued to deliver the Adoption Education Program with our experienced group of facilitators while conducting the first full review of AEP in over a decade in preparation for a major update.

November 2022 was renamed "Adoption and Permanency Awareness Month" to include both adoptive families and those providing other forms of permanency, such as guardianships, relatives raising relatives, and Indigenous customary forms of care. **While adoptive families remain our original and core audience, we have much to share with permanency families of all kinds.**

**We also have much to offer young people in and from government care and those who care for them.** Our AgedOut.com website now has more than 7,000 registered users (up 12%) and more than 4,000 monthly views (up 10%). An increasing number of youth-serving organizations are using our Stepping Stones life skills curriculum, and the creation of an Indigenous version is well underway, with an Indigenous curriculum writer and advisory group. Our BC Orca Bursary Program provided financial support to 19 young people pursuing careers from social work to science. And we worked with Vancouver Film Studio to offer bursaries to Indigenous youth.

Behind the scenes, we tackled some big projects. **We downsized and moved our office to an accessible downtown location** to facilitate team meetings while continuing to support a primarily remote work model. We began to migrate AgedOut.com from a platform that was

itself "aging out" to a current one. We undertook a data improvement project to understand better who we're serving and how well we're doing it. **We continued work on our new website, which we look forward to launching with our new name and brand in the year ahead.**

**Our new name, The Belonging Network, reflects the diversity of those we serve today and our desire to work harmoniously with Indigenous peoples.** We thank the many stakeholders who helped us arrive at "belonging," which expresses our hope for every child and young person. We love this word and hope it resonates with you, too.

**Credit for all this work belongs to many:** to our committed Board, our hardworking staff, our collaborative partners, and our generous funders, large and small. We are grateful to the provincial government for their essential support, to BC Gaming and the many foundations and families who provide program-specific funding, and to individuals whose personal generosity is so important to fully cover our costs. **Heartfelt thanks to you all.**



Chris Roy  
Board Chair



Anne Tower  
Executive Director

## Board of Directors 2022-23

- Merel Veldhuis, Chair *to November 2022*
- Chris Roy, Chair *at November 2022*
- Marla Chandler-Soanes, Vice Chair
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## Strategic Advisors 2022-23

- Cynthia Dyson
- Lydia Elder

# Siblings together forever

## *The power of professional collaboration*

Names have been changed

Imagine being five years old and never having lived with your two older siblings. Or being one of the two older siblings and not being able to be there for your little brother. Now picture being only seven or nine years old and enduring the heartache of living in eleven different homes.

That was the reality for the Brown siblings. They needed a forever home where all three could grow up together.

Ben, the youngest brother, had complex medical needs. Dan and Noah, the older brothers, had high energy levels and behaviours that challenged their caregivers. Their team affectionately describes them as "tornados—amazing and fierce in the best way."

It's not easy to find families for sibling groups with multiple support needs. They often wait a long time for a family. Sometimes they never find one at all.

That's where AFABC comes in. Our child-specific recruiters use specialized techniques to find families for kids like Ben, Dan, and Noah. It's intensive, time-consuming work. And it's effective.

Their AFABC child-specific recruiter, Kirsty, collaborated with adoption

professionals at the Ministry for Children and Family Development (MCFD) to find a family for the Brown siblings.

Together, their dedicated efforts made what seemed impossible possible. They found a family that was just the right fit for the boys: a couple named Charlie and Teo, who had waited six years to become parents.

Kirsty made a life book to prepare the boys for adoption to help them understand their story and what was to come. She worked closely with MCFD and AFABC's Family Support Specialist, Sam, to create an intensive transition plan for the brothers.

When issues arose, the team worked together to problem-solve.

Kirsty and Sam provided support and resources, and Kirsty attended some visits and helped drive while the boys and their new parents got to know each other.

Charlie and Teo dedicated themselves to learning and preparing too. During their long wait to adopt, they eagerly attended educational workshops hosted by AFABC.

When the time came, they recognized the incredible potential in Ben, Dan, and Noah and were ready to make the life-changing decision to provide a stable and nurturing home for all three boys.

**Now they're drawing on the skills and knowledge AFABC helped them learn to help their sons heal, grow, and thrive.**

Today, the once-separated Brown siblings share the same roof, bound by their new family's unbreakable ties of love and belonging. Their parents provide them with a stable, calm environment where they're learning how to live together as a family—one that's finally forever.

Finding that forever took unwavering commitment from a whole team. Together, they made AFABC's vision of "family for every child" a reality for three little boys.

Their collaboration and dedication brought Charlie, Teo, Dan, Ben, and Noah together forever, and we at AFABC will continue to support them every step of the way.







The Gallant family  
Photo by Janayh Wright Photography

# Waiting kids

*Matching them with loving families*

Every day, children and youth in BC government care are waiting for permanent families.

AFABC takes an active role in finding families for them by hosting info sessions, running the Adopt BC Kids info line, offering guidance to prospective families, and undertaking recruitment for specific children and youth who wait the longest.

We are proud to partner with the Ministry of Children and Family Development in this work.

During our 2022-23 fiscal year, we added new staff and skills to our team, including another child-specific recruiter based on Vancouver Island.

# 221

**graduates of the  
Adoption Education  
Program**

# 81

**attendees at Adopt  
BC Kids info  
sessions**

# 538

**members of our Waiting  
Parents Facebook  
group**

# 19

**adoption and other  
permanency  
matches**

# A kinship family story

## *Barriers they face and how AFABC can help*

Names have been changed

Meet Hazel and her family: a unique blend of adoption, kinship care, and biology. Hazel is an adoptee, as is her husband. In addition to their biological daughter, they're permanent guardians to two boys, the sons of Hazel's brother—also an adoptee.

Because of their kinship status, Hazel and her family face unique barriers to accessing supports and services. Hazel can't work due to the children's complex support needs, and her husband's income is modest. Many of the resources and financial benefits that help adoptive families aren't available to them. They struggle financially, and often feel alone.

"I feel like I was someone who knew quite about trauma and kids in care, and I was completely blindsided," Hazel shared. "I was so shaken and taken off guard. I can't even imagine families who jump in [to kinship care] without the background that I have.



There needs to be so much more support for kinship."

When her brother's children came into her care, Hazel turned to AFABC. Our staff were there for her through every step of her journey.

We helped her find some supports she did qualify for. We listened as she grappled with complicated feelings about her own adoption. And we helped her process how becoming her nephews' guardian changed her relationships with the rest of her family.

AFABC was the only place where she felt she could talk about those feelings openly, without feeling judged or pressured to "always be grateful."

Several years later, Hazel is still an active participant in our Facebook support groups and relies on AFABC for resources she can't find anywhere else.

Stories like Hazel's are the reason we expanded our strategic vision to support permanency families of all kinds. Permanency families face

unique challenges, but they also share many needs and concerns with adoptive families. They can benefit from the resources, supports, and connections we already offer, and the new ones we will develop with them in mind.

Hazel believes **AFABC can support families like hers as they navigate their journeys.**





# Adoption and permanency families

*Helping them thrive together*

AFABC offers a wide variety of online parent learning, such as virtual workshops and on-demand webinars.

All programs and services have been developed to support and strengthen families throughout their adoption and permanency journeys.

This past fiscal year, we focused on making our offerings available to a wider audience, and accessible throughout the entire province.

*The Altizer family  
Photo by Tammy Gock*

## 364

responses to requests  
for adoption and  
permanency support

## 24

online workshops and  
on-demand webinars  
offered

## 433

registrants in online  
workshops and  
on-demand webinars

## 397

members of our All Ages  
and Stages Adoptive  
Parents Facebook group

# Indigenous relations

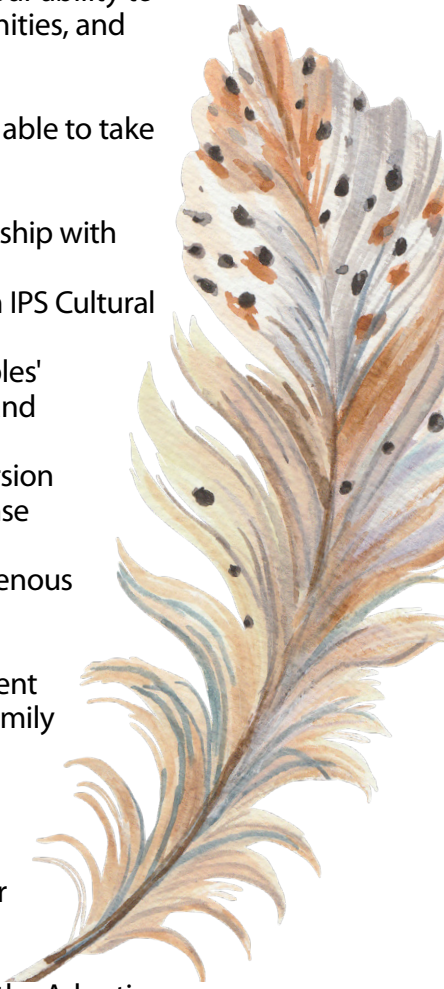
## Steps toward truth and reconciliation

AFABC is committed to participating in truth and reconciliation. A key question for us is, **"What role we should play in supporting the welfare of Indigenous children and youth?"**

Our journey starts with listening and learning from Indigenous advisors. With their guidance, we're developing our ability to work with Indigenous families, communities, and organizations in a good way.

During the 2022-23 fiscal year, we were able to take the following steps:

- Continued to learn from our partnership with Indigenous Perspectives Society
- Provided all our staff and Board with IPS Cultural Perspectives training
- Observed National Indigenous Peoples' Day and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation
- Began to develop an Indigenous version of our life skills curriculum, in response to demand from Indigenous youth-serving organizations, with an Indigenous consultant and advisory group
- Raised funds to activate the main recommendation coming out of recent Indigenous consultation: creating Family Finding tools to share
- Participated in the Gathering our Voices conference
- Created a new bursary program for Indigenous students with Vancouver Film Studios
- Started updating our materials to reflect recent legislative changes to the Adoption Act and the Child, Family and Community Services Act, respecting Indigenous communities' rights over their child welfare systems.



# National impact

## Advocating for all adoptive and permanency families

AFABC works to create positive change for adoptive and permanency families across BC and Canada.

In 2018, Adopt4Life, the Adoption Council of Ontario, and Western University launched the Time to Attach campaign, aimed at securing 15 additional weeks of Attachment Leave Employment Insurance Benefits for adoptive parents, kinship, and customary caregivers.

Recognizing the potential benefits of this campaign for children and families within the permanency community, AFABC partnered with them, together with our other peer organizations across Canada.

After five years of campaigning, a private Member's bill (Bill C-318) was introduced to the House of Commons in March 2023. This bill seeks to establish an attachment benefit of 15 weeks for adoptive parents and parents of children conceived through surrogacy—a significant step towards achieving equality in parental leave benefits.

In response to the introduction of Bill C-318, our team reached out to MPs in British Columbia, encouraging them to support the bill, and urged members of the permanency community to share their stories about the importance of having more **time to attach**.

There is still way to go before the bill becomes law. Visit [www.bcadoption.com/time-to-attach](http://www.bcadoption.com/time-to-attach) to learn more.







# Youth in and from government care

*Preparing them for adulthood*

AFABC is dedicated to supporting youth in and from care across BC.

Our AgedOut.com website, our life skills programs, and our bursary programs give youth tools they need to thrive.

During 2022-23, we increased the sustainability of AgedOut.com by moving it to a more current platform.

**AGEDOUT**.com

**7000**

registered users on  
AgedOut.com

**276**

gift cards given to  
AgedOut users who  
completed learning quests

**575**

hours of life skills  
training provided

**23**

bursaries awarded to  
adopted youth and  
youth in and from care

# An invitation to belonging

## "All of us need to belong."

—Adoptive parent

Since our kitchen-table beginnings more than 45 years ago, AFABC has supported BC's adoption and permanency community. In recent years, seismic shifts have taken place in our world.

Four of BC's six licensed adoption agencies closed. International adoptions decreased. Complex support needs among waiting children and youth increased.

Today, the focus is on family preservation. Where that is not possible, adoption is still an option—but so are other forms of permanency such as guardianship, kinship care, and Indigenous customary care.

These permanency families need more support. Adoptive families have a great deal in common with them, so AFABC is already well-positioned to help.

That's why we're expanding our circle to include the entire permanency community.

We're also increasing and improving our services for youth who leave government care without a permanent legal family. They need support after they turn 19. We want to be there for them.

Our current name, brand, and website have served us well for many years, but it's time to change and grow.

That's why we've chosen a new name: **The Belonging Network.**

## "Belonging is what having a family is all about."

—Youth from care

We chose this new name to embrace all families who provide permanency for children and youth who need it, as well as young people from government care.

We also chose it because AFABC is committed to listening, learning, and participating in reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. The word "adoption" in our name is a barrier. It has painful associations for so many. Changing our name is a

necessary step to participate in reconciliation in the child welfare sector. We consulted with Indigenous partners and stakeholders throughout the process of selecting The Belonging Network as our new name, and it has been received with warmth and enthusiasm.

Over the next year, we will finalize our new brand identity—including a logo, brand colours, and fonts. We can't wait to share the results with you.

We're also developing a brand-new website that will be modern, accessible, beautiful, and useful. Our site is over a decade old; this makeover is long overdue.

People turn to us during the most intense, challenging, emotional times of their lives. They deserve to see themselves represented in our branding, materials, and plans.

We're excited to make these changes and hope they will help create a sense of belonging for everyone in our diverse and expanding community.

"Belonging means we are trying to connect as a family no matter where we come from."

—Youth from care

"The Belonging Network makes me think of connection, inclusion, being part of something bigger than oneself."

—Youth from care

"Belonging is inclusive and welcoming."

—Adoptive parent

"Everyone wants to belong."

—Adoptive parent

"Creating a deeper sense of belonging and connection for kids and youth is what underlies this work."

—Adoptive parent

"Belonging seems to encompass everyone and is very inclusive."

—Indigenous partner

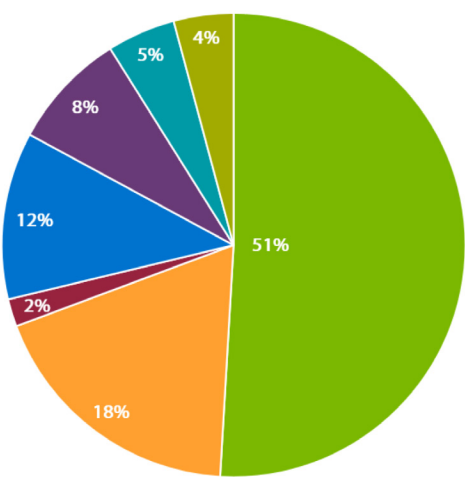
"Belonging speaks to a human emotional need and interconnectedness—both of which are critical for effectively supporting children, youth and families."

—Indigenous partner from care



# Year-end financials

## Revenue

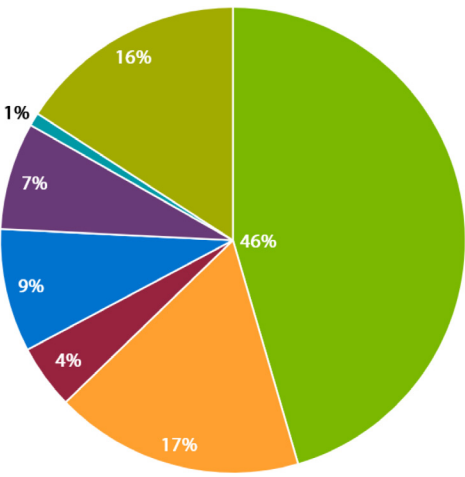


- Government service contract
- Projects
- Education and support
- Donations
- Child-specific recruitment
- Direct Access Gaming
- Other

FINANCIAL POSITION	2023	2022
Assets	\$ 2,559,983	\$ 2,201,615
Liabilities	\$ 1,251,359	\$ 883,483
Restricted funds	\$ 803,901	\$ 825,250
Unrestricted funds	\$ 504,723	\$ 492,882

REVENUE	2023	2022
Government service contract	\$ 1,119,683	\$ 1,238,040
Projects	\$ 404,401	\$ 261,493
Education and support	\$ 42,244	\$ 56,015
Donations	\$ 256,298	\$ 293,963
Child-specific recruitment	\$ 179,728	\$ 172,358
Direct Access Gaming	\$ 104,700	\$ 106,260
Other income	\$ 91,594	\$ 96,045
Total	\$ 2,198,648	\$ 2,224,174

## Expenses



- Provincial adoption support
- Projects
- Parent education and information
- Child-specific recruitment
- Youth programming
- Community awareness
- Fundraising and administration

EXPENSES	2023	2022
Programs, services, and projects		
Provincial adoption support	\$ 975,000	\$ 1,164,536
Projects	\$ 370,696	\$ 283,297
Parent education and information	\$ 95,478	\$ 90,406
Child-specific recruitment	\$ 183,019	\$ 176,349
Youth programming	\$ 159,804	\$ 123,540
Community awareness	\$ 19,716	\$ 45,241
Subtotal	\$ 1,803,713	\$ 1,883,369
Fundraising and administration	\$ 340,052	\$ 223,829
Total	\$ 2,143,765	\$ 2,107,198

# You made a difference!

Donations are critical to making our work possible—from finding families for children and youth, to supporting families at every stage, to helping young people in and from government care make successful transitions to adulthood.

Our year-end campaign included a generous matching donation of \$20,000 from the Telfer family. It was a great success, and we are so grateful. To all our donors: your ongoing commitment and contributions are a testament to how deeply you care about our community. Thank you again for the positive impact you continue to make for families, children, and youth.

If you are interested in making a donation or joining our monthly giving circle, please scan this QR code:



The Frederick family





Merel Veldhuis, former AFABC Board chair, and Tracey McVicar, founder of the BC Orca Bursary Program

# Thanks to our supporters

AFABC would like to acknowledge all the individuals and organizations who gave financial gifts this past fiscal year. We are extremely grateful for your generosity and support.

A special thank you to our Board of Directors for their gifts of time, expertise, and encouragement, and their financial contributions. We are proud to have 100% Board giving!



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\* Denotes AFABC Board members

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Anonymous (5)

Thank you to all donors who gave gifts of up to \$100.

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With special thanks to Tracey McVicar for her amazing work founding and fundraising for the BC Orca Bursary Program

We have done our best to include everyone who made a contribution between April 1, 2022 and March 31, 2023. We apologize for any errors/omissions and invite you to contact us with corrections at [info@bcadoption.com](mailto:info@bcadoption.com).





The Jolicoeur family  
Photo by Karen Ramsay



Adoptive Families  
Association of BC  
[bcadoption.com](http://bcadoption.com)

#408-602 West Hastings Street,  
Vancouver BC V6B 1P2  
1-877-ADOPT-07  
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