

**President's Report
Annual General Meeting
November 5, 2018**

A. Optimism Grows

While drafting my report for this year, I looked back over the past ten years of FamilyNet and the reports of the President. At last I see more than a glimmer of optimism for community living. As with many things, the evolution of human services moves slowly – but now perhaps in the right direction which has not been the case for a long time.

I quote from last year's report following our October 2018 meeting with Hon Shane Simpson, Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction:

" We felt welcomed and attentively listened to and feel that our concerns and suggestions were heard. We had a frank and open discussion on a number of issues, including service delivery and improving the Home Share service system. We believe that the Minister is very sincere in his intentions to improve services, supports and systems to the benefit of the people that it is intended to serve."

In May, Minister Simpson called self-advocates, family members and service providers together to help identify a new path. Along with written feedback from organizations, the result of this information gathering is a project known as *Refocusing Community Inclusion*. This project, managed by Tim Agg, will work over six months to set community inclusion on a new path.

The major vehicle for carving this future for community living is six, full-day, in-person sessions with representatives from many organizations serving people with developmental disabilities, including family members and self-advocates. FamilyNet has three representatives at the table.

The stated purpose and objectives of this exercise are as follows:

Starting from a shared belief that every person with an intellectual or developmental disability has the right and opportunity to live a good life, across all domains, and to the best of each person's unique abilities and interests, this process will engage stakeholders in discussions of what more complete, more fulfilled lives look like. How might the system evolve to make those aspirations a reality within the context of enabling social and economic environments?

The facilitator will work with a Partnership Table drawn from key stakeholders to develop a statement of shared vision, rooted in the lived experience of persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities, for collaboration and a system-wide approach to the provision of community living supports and services for the next ten years. Specifically, the objectives will be to:

- *To re-affirm and update our shared vision for community inclusion;*
- *To achieve consensus on a road map to guide detailed planning for the evolution of supports and services over the next ten years; and*
- *To improve collaboration and trust, and to build robust and durable partnerships amongst the key stakeholders.*

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While we are in early days having had only one session so far, it is heartening that there appears to be a consensus in the room from most of the stakeholders that the goals and dreams and needs of the people served by community living must be paramount.

While this is very early in Minister Simpson's tenure, we believe there is conviction on the part of the Ministry, and an air of optimism. In the spring, Dr. Michael Prince, Social Policy professor at the University of Victoria, was appointed Chair of Community Living BC. And in August, members of FamilyNet were able to meet with Dr. Prince to share the goals, values and history of BC FamilyNet, and most importantly our concerns for people with developmental disabilities. We were well-received.

B. FamilyNet Goals Unchanged

We continue to outline, advocate, and work toward what we believe are the elements of an effective and responsive service system:

- **Person-centered** services and supports
- **Respect** for families and **inclusion** in planning and decision-making
- **Accessibility** in that the system is simple and understandable
- **Openness and Trust** that all relevant information is clearly communicated in a timely way
- **One point of contact** such as a case manager
- **Proactive Planning** for times of transition
- **Safeguards** built into the system, and
- **Accountability** to the individual, family, and government.

C. Remembering

In September of this year, the community living movement lost one of its brightest stars. Our much-loved, admired and respected Vice-President, Maria Squance passed away leaving a bereft family and community. She was a life-long and tireless advocate and friend for people with developmental disabilities in BC. Maria was a persuasive writer – drafting many of our letters and documents in a compelling and eloquent way that helped to affirm FamilyNet as a force to be listened to and respected. She was a talented photographer and dedicated environmentalist.

In all that she has done, Maria was guided by her unwavering principles and values. She brought a rare wisdom and common-sense approach to all issues.

She has made a difference. She will be greatly missed.

Linda Derkach
President, BC FamilyNet Society
November 5, 2018