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## FACTSHEET

November 2011

Ministry of Children and Family Development

### **Adoption Awareness Month**

The Government of British Columbia has proclaimed November as Adoption Awareness Month. The Ministry of Children and Family Development is taking this month-long opportunity to raise awareness about children in care who are waiting for an adoptive home, and to recognize adoption as a valued way to build a family.

#### **Key Facts:**

- Children in the permanent care of British Columbia's Ministry of Children and Family Development may be placed for adoption through the ministry. Permanent care occurs when the courts have determined that the child cannot return to the care of their birth parent(s) and a Continuing Custody Order has been granted.
- For children in continuing custody, the ministry makes plans for permanency. These plans can include:
  - Adoption (including foster caregiver adoption: long-term caregivers are encouraged to adopt).
  - Transfer of custody: this transfers custody of a child to someone with a significant tie to the child.
  - Ensuring a child has lifelong connections with significant adults in their lives if adoption or other permanency options are not in the child's best interest.
- During the past 10 years, an average of 271 children have been adopted annually. Last year, 263 children and youth in care of the ministry found permanent homes. Still there are over 1,200 children with adoption as their plan of care who are waiting for a permanent family.
- Many of the children available for adoption are school age. They may be siblings who need to stay together. Some may have special placement needs due to difficult early childhood experiences, prenatal exposure to alcohol or drugs, learning delays or other developmental challenges.
- Potential adoptive parents come from diverse backgrounds and have a range of life experiences. Anyone who is interested in providing a loving, nurturing home is encouraged to apply to adopt.
- The ministry strives to place children with families that preserve a child's ethnic and cultural heritage. As culture is essential to a child's positive identity formation and preservation, adoptive parents who reflect British Columbia's cultural diversity and adoptive parents who are willing to maintain lifelong connections with the child's cultural community are needed.

- The number of Aboriginal children being placed with Aboriginal families is on an encouraging trend upward and was 68 per cent in 2010/11 – up from 27 per cent in 2000/01.
- In 2007, the Cowichan Tribes on Vancouver Island became the first delegated Aboriginal agency to handle adoptions in British Columbia. They have since held two cultural adoption ceremonies with the second in November 2010 bringing the number to 18 for adoptions for children in their community.
- The ministry works with community partners (including the Adoptive Families Association of BC) to increase the number of approved adoption homes for children in care. The Adoptive Families Association is contracted to provide both pre- and post-adoptive support. They also provide assistance with recruitment initiatives such as answering the 1 877 ADOPT-07 phone line.

#### **Post-Adoption Assistance Program:**

- The Post-Adoption Assistance Program supports families in meeting the unique needs of their adopted families and makes adoption possible for many families that, otherwise, would not have the financial means to give a child a home and family.
- The Post-Adoption Assistance Program supported approximately 1,200 families in British Columbia with a budget of over \$18 million for 2010/11 – up from \$2 million in 2000/01.

#### **Adoption Reunion Registry:**

- The Adoption Reunion Registry (ARR) has been in operation since 1991 and is legislated to provide search, intermediary and counselling services to those who have been affected by a B.C. adoption.
- The ARR is available to adopted adults, birth mothers and fathers, siblings of an adopted adult, relatives of an adopted adult and the children or grandchildren of a deceased adopted adult. Adoptees that are searching or being searched for must be at least 19 years of age.
- Since 1991, approximately 17,000 applications for both passive and active searches have been filed with the registry, resulting in approximately 5,000 searches connecting people together.
- The ARR can be contacted in the Victoria area at 250 387-3660 or toll-free within North America at 1 877 387-3660. The ARR website can be found at <http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/adoption/reunion/index.htm>

Contact: Cindy Rose  
 Ministry of Children and Family Development Communications  
 250 356-1639