



FROM GRIEF TO ACTION  
REPORT TO ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
JUNE 6, 2015

Greetings.

One of the main on-going activities of this past year has been the creation of a new website which we will be able to update and change ourselves fairly easily. This has been a huge job, which is very very close to being finished, and we will be launching the new website in the very near future. Great thanks go to Chris Richardson, a past board member, who has been tireless in helping us out with this task, off the side of his amazingly busy desk. Alongside this work, our communications whiz, Maia Gibb, has got us into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with updates in social media including our own Face Book page. We have plans in the next year to reach out to all those who connect with us via our website and send out newsletters, articles and current information found on our website.

We have also been kept busy distributing the latest edition of *The Coping Kit*. Although many people download this from our website (at least one a week), it is still proving extremely useful for counsellors and other people working with families to have a hard copy of the Kit to give out. Through a connection on the BC Alliance on Mental Health and Addictions we were able to distribute hundreds of copies to local branches of the RCMP, from whom we've had very positive feedback. Vancouver Coastal Health Authority have been eager to accept copies for distribution through their Family Support and Involvement coordinators. The Coping Kit has also served as an excellent resource to distribute at various conferences directors have attended (eg FAC Annual Conference, Vernon MH&A Conference, Chilliwack Annual Conference etc.)

Your FGTA Board members have been very busy as usual representing families with addiction in many different places and on many different bodies. We have also spoken to a wide variety of groups, including classes of students at the University of the Fraser Valley and the Douglas College Concurrent Disorders program (in person) and University of Calgary (via Skype). In August Anita Haidar took part in an announcement by Terry Lake, Minister of Health to spend \$3 million to help health professionals with the treatment of addiction. Our President, Mae Burrows, addressed the John Howard Society AGM in September, and a meeting of the staff of Providence Health in October.

Evan Wood (co-director of the Urban Health Research Initiative at the BC Centre for Excellence, and Canadian Research Chair in Inner City Medicine at UBC) is in the process of establishing a

BC Addictions network (which will be part of a larger national network), with a number of local initiatives in the area of knowledge translation, pilot research and guidelines development. FGTA supported Evan's application to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research for funding for this initiative, and will now be an active member of the network.

Anita Haidar represents FGTA at monthly meetings of the Vancouver Coastal Health Family Advisory Council. In May FGTA joined with Parents Forever in having a booth at the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Conference. Designed to promote awareness and understanding of mental illness and addiction and to promote family involvement in Mental Health and Addiction services, the Conference is sponsored by VCH Vancouver Family Advisory Committee, BC Schizophrenia Society and Mood Disorders Association of BC. This year there were a number of speakers who spoke on topics related to recovery-oriented care, and Anita and Frances Kenny gave a very well attended workshop entitled *Family Toolkit* which outlined both the support and advocacy roles in which family members may take part.

The Community Action Initiative (on which FGTA is represented by Nichola Hall) has had another busy year with grants being given out for capacity building scholarships in social innovation, as well as several training grants. A two-day strategic planning session in early May established the goals and objectives of the Leadership Council for the next few years.

The special CAI Task Force on Substance Use Recovery Houses expanded its membership and meets often. The initial "scoping report" is finished, and meetings have been held with many stakeholders, including Surrey City Council and their Stakeholders Group. Consultants have also visited Prince George and met with many people there. A report has been compiled of intended investments in the next couple of years, which has been submitted to the Ministry of Health. (See CAI website for more information: [www.communityactioninitiative.ca](http://www.communityactioninitiative.ca).)

FGTA partnered this year in a program funded by the CAI and developed by CMHA (BC Division) called *Helping People with Addictive Behaviours*. This online training course was originally developed for people working in the addictions field and the idea of this pilot project was to find out whether it could also be helpful and useful for families and friends of people struggling with addictive behaviour. The program is self-paced and accessible through any computer. Participants (including FGTA board members and several Parents Forever members) had three months to work through eight lessons at their convenience, and at the end of the program they participated in the evaluation process.

FGTA is also represented by Nichola at monthly meetings of the BC Alliance on Mental Health and Addictions. The Alliance continues to monitor the implementation of the "Healthy Minds, Healthy People" Provincial plan, address existing and emerging justice and privacy/information sharing issues, and advocate for actual integration of the mental health and addiction communities, among other things. The strategic plan for the next year has been finalised; however at this point the most pressing issue for the Alliance is future funding.

Unfortunately a very sad event this year has been the closing of Portage's The Crossing at Keremeos. As you know, From Grief to Action, particularly past board members Susie and Rob Ruttan, were instrumental in getting this long-term residential treatment centre for youth off the ground in the first place. The background to the closure is complicated, but as we pointed out in a letter written to Terry Lake, the Minister of Health, "BC youth who need a reasonable length of time (6-12 months) to adequately deal with their addiction are now left without any options in this province". The Provincial Government is supposedly setting up a working group with representatives from both the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) and the Provincial Health

Services Authority (PHSA) who have been looking at how best to build on the enhanced model of care that was developed for the Crossing and “aim to have a plan for replacement services developed by early this summer”. FGTA is asking to be included in this working group, along with other members of the Youth Alcohol and Drug Agencies group (where Ray Hall sits at the table on our behalf), and Central City Foundation who own the land at Keremeos.

We have also been sorry this year to lose our erst-while President, Mae. We thank her for all her efforts with FGTA and we hope to be able to collaborate with her in the coming year as she continues to lend her passion and experience to advocating for families who are struggling with addiction and concurrent disorders. We also bid “goodbye and good luck” to Maia Gibb, who is going to take on a lifelong dream of writing and producing a one-woman show, but hope to continue an association with her with regard to communications. Meantime we welcome a very distinguished new Board member in the shape of Bev Gutray, Executive Director of Canadian Mental Health Association (B.C. Division), and look forward very much to a new year enriched by her expertise.

We thank all our members for their support, and are heartened by the many messages of appreciation we receive on our website every month. As we always say, remember that

“You are not alone”.