



Children's Bridge

The Children's Bridge Annual Public Report

Presented at

The Annual General Meeting

Via Zoom

November 21, 2021

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The Children's Bridge Annual General Meeting

November 21, 2021

President's Report

This past year CB staff, families, and international partners, continued to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the on-going challenges this has brought, CB staff have continued to provide our member families have continued to receive the same professional and compassionate support they always have.

Children's Bridge currently holds licenses for adoption programs in India, South Korea, Thailand, and The United States. This year, a one-time license for Uganda was also issued for one family. During 2020/21 twenty-two families have been matched with children and have either arrived home, or will be traveling in the next few months. We also received signed retainer agreements from twenty-two families. Although latter number was less than the anticipated thirty retainers, CB remains in a strong financial position due to the restructuring of fees and cost cutting measures taken over the last couple of years. Given the ever-changing nature of international adoption, we have made more conservative estimates of retainers for the upcoming year.

This past year our staff further adjusted to the home-office model adopted last year. At this time last year, we were closing our Clyde Ave. office, thus making the move to a home-office based agency permanent. The lack of a physical office space has meant greater flexibility for our staff, and considerable cost-savings for the agency. To support the at-home model a security audit was undertaken by Baker-Tilly, who were able to provide valuable strategies and suggestions for securing agency data.

During this past year we said farewell to Bruno Jung-Millen, who had been our South Korea Program Manager. This program is currently managed by Lenore Cork-Lemay who took on the role after serving as our Office Administrator for just over a year. Taking over for Lenore is Emily Catton who now has a permanent position with CB. We are very happy to have been able to promote from within for these two positions, and are grateful for the willingness of Lenore and Emily to take on new these new roles and responsibilities. Our Executive Director, Karyn Arnauld-Bakelaar and Program Manager for Thailand and USA, Darlene Catton, have also provided the agency with leadership, experience, and organization knowledge that are invaluable to the on-going success of CB.

In the Spring, Our ED, Karyn was asked to join a Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services working group on updating the Provincial standards and guideline for on adoption. From the updates provided to the board by Karyn, it is clear her considerable expertise and child-centred approach are helping to reshape the broader standards and policies that shape adoption in Ontario. Congratulations, and thank you, Karyn!

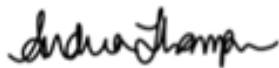
As mentioned above, the lack of a brick-and-mortar office has led to considerable cost-saving and surplus in in-coming funds. Not only has this meant we are in much better position to whether the inevitable ups and downs of international adoption, we were able to much of those savings into staff salaries. Under the leadership of our Treasurer, Raeanne Souliere, the board restructured the salaries for all DC positions to bring them in line with current industry standards. We have always appreciated

the dedication of our TCB staff, and are grateful to be in a position where we can compensate that dedication, knowledge, and expertise appropriately.

This year the CB Board of Directors says farewell to our long-standing member, Hanna Stewart. Hanna has served as Board secretary and sat on several committees and working groups during her term as a Director. On behalf of the Board, I thank Hanna for her service and wish her all the best in her future endeavors!

Looking ahead to the year ahead, the CB Board of Directors will continue to support Karyn and all CB staff as needed. Some projects on the horizon for the Board include hosting online meet-ups for our member families and revising CB policy documentation. And, as always, we will be here to support Karyn and all CB staff whenever needed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andy Thompson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Andy" and last name "Thompson" clearly distinguishable.

Andy Thompson
President, The Children's Bridge Board of Directors

Executive Director's Report

The Children's Bridge (TCB)

Annual General Meeting November 21st, 2021

Over the past year, The Children's Bridge's staff, in-country representatives, Board of Director's, and many volunteers have continued to navigate our every day work challenges, as well as new ones brought to us via COVID-19. As reported last year, our agency and team continue to not only survive, but find new ways to thrive during these incredibly challenging times.

Thanks to the many system upgrades and developments that were already being put into place before the pandemic hit, our staff was able to pivot quite quickly from working out of a physical office space to working entirely remotely. This shift was made permanent this year as we became the first Ontario adoption agency to close its physical office space and operate solely as home-based/remote working organization. We closed our Clyde Avenue doors one last time in November of 2020, and while a few tears were shed, we also reminded ourselves of the wise quote by author Mary Engelbriet when she stated, "don't look back, you're not going that way". And so, we set our sights forward, and focused on the exciting opportunities a remote-based operation brings to our TCB families and staff.

Over the past year we have continued to develop education and training that were modified and adapted to suit video conferencing platforms. Our team, which in this case included long-time consultant Kara Eusebio, developed a course aimed at adoption professionals under the umbrella of the Adoption Council of Ontario (ACO) entitled *Adoption, Anti-Racism & Social Justice: Tools for Adoption Professionals* (January – March 2021). We also recreated our *Information Sessions* for pre-adoptive families to be hosted via Zoom, and now offer the opportunity for prospective adoptive families to attend a *General Information Session* and/or *Country Specific Info Sessions* hosted by each Program Manager. Our long-standing educational weekend workshop, *AdoptTALK*, is also held solely via Zoom, allowing us to reach families around the world. Last year we had participants joining us from across Canada, the USA, Hong Kong, and even Saudi Arabia!

As always, we were fortunate to be very well supported by our committed, forward-thinking, and volunteer-based, Board of Directors (BOD). We particularly are grateful for the leadership of our BOD President & Chair, Andrea Thompson, and the rest of our executive team of Directors, Raeanne Souliere (Treasurer), Hanna Stewart (Secretary) and Martha MacLaine (Vice-Chair).

The Children's Bridge (TCB) currently holds a license to facilitate intercountry adoptions from South Korea, USA, Thailand, and India (Mainstream and Special Needs). We also continue to maintain a program that offers families the opportunity to adopt children living with HIV via our HIV+ Kids Adoption Program. We also continue to explore new program possibilities on an ongoing basis.

The Children's Bridge is proud to state that we continue to take our ethical practice very seriously. Our organizational goal is to provide adoption services with a mission to work in the best interests of the children we serve, by creating a sustainable and ethical adoption practice. From start (intake) to "finish" (life-long) we strive

to ensure that every aspect of prospective applicants' values and ethics are aligned with our core beliefs, and that each family's adoption process reflects these values.

South Korea:

TCB continues to work in partnership with the Korean Welfare Society, Inc. (formerly Social Welfare Society – SWS) in the Republic of South Korea to facilitate intercountry adoption for adoptive families in Ontario. The average age of a child at time of proposal is approximately 8 - 18 months, and the average age of most children at time of placement is 18 – 24 months.

South Korea has re-opened for travel and families who have received double vaccinations may now apply for quarantine exemptions with Korea. We have had four families travel to Korea this year and currently have four families either in Korea or on their way shortly. Thankfully, we have experienced a much faster processing time of Part Two approval in the IRCC process, or Confirmation of Permanent Residency (COPR), which takes place in Manila, Philippines. Many of our families are now opting to stay in Korea for the duration of time between Court and Placement.

Our agency continues to receive child proposals, as well as news of court dates for families who have been matched with waiting children.

India:

Our India Program has grown rapidly over the past two-years, and we are thankful to have the opportunity to work with many wonderful families in both the mainstream and special needs program. This year our agency successfully applied for, and was granted, our re-accreditation with the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) in India which is valid for 5-years.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, India imposed a strict lockdown which included the closure of international borders on March 24th, 2020. A third-wave hit India hard in the summer of 2021, but since then we have seen restrictions slowly being lifted as it became safe to do so. TCB was able to support three families this past year to travel to India and meet their children (November 2020, February 2021, October 2021). We look forward to our program moving forward as India continues to slowly lift restrictions.

TCB currently has 39 families across Canada who are in process to adopt from India. Since the last Annual Report, we have had two families receive child proposals for India, and one of those families is now home in Canada with their daughter. The second family received a proposal for siblings, and is awaiting news of a court date. Our agency also matched one family through our special needs program, but unfortunately the family was unable to accept the proposal. The remainder of families are either waiting to be matched or working on completing their homestudy/dossier for submission to relevant authorities. Our agency also works with 13 families who continue to work on post placement reports and finalization.

Thailand:

The Department of Children and Youth (DCY) advised TCB that we could not send any files in 2021 except for those adopting a child over the age of 4 or with special needs. We did not receive any quota from the Thai Red Cross Children's Home (TRCCH). To date (from end-November 2020), TCB has sent 4 files to Thailand (2 to the DCY and 2 to the TRCCH). We have 3 families working on their home study or dossiers.

We have 1 family who accepted a child proposal and will be travelling in December 2021.

In 2021, 8 TCB families came home with their children.

There have been 6 families who have withdrawn from the program this year. They have withdrawn for various reasons including financial pressures and expanding their families in other ways (pregnancy, surrogate, etc.).

At this time, families who are double vaccinated and have a negative Covid test are not required to quarantine upon arrival in Thailand.

We currently have 21 family's files in Thailand waiting for child proposals. Proposals continue to be received by TCB, but we have noticed a slight increase in the timeline in some cases (close to 4 years for the DCY).

There are 8 families who continue to work on post placement reports and finalization.

USA:

TCB completed two adoptions with Heartsent Adoptions, Inc. (HAI) over this past year. Neither of these two adoptions have been finalized in court, but we anticipate this happening within the next few months. Both placements took place in Michigan.

We currently have 5 families waiting to be chosen by an expectant mother/family. HAI continues to be an excellent Hague-accredited agency for TCB to work in partnership with as has the other 3rd party service provider, AdoptHelp.

Uganda: The Children's Bridge received a limited, one-time license to facilitate an adoption from Uganda. This adoptive family has completed their process and is now home in Canada with their daughter.

Staffing:

A special thanks is extended to our amazing staff, who remains a strong, committed, and dedicated team of professionals who continue to support our adoptive families throughout their adoption journey. This year was not without challenges, but our team weathered each challenge and continued to do their utmost to support our families through each hurdle COVID-19 sent our way.

We said good-bye to our South Korea Program Manager, Bruno Jung-Millen, as he left our agency to pursue a career in his field of study. We are thankful to Bruno for his service and time dedicated to our agency and families, and wish Bruno all the best in his future pursuits.

I would like to take this opportunity to send a special thank-you out to our team, who work long hours, and often go "above and beyond" in ensuring our families are well-supported throughout their adoption journey.

- Darlene Catton (Thailand, HAI/USA) whose expertise, commitment to our families and children, and steady presence (not to mention her extensive expertise in the field of adoption) ensures our families are supported and well-equipped throughout their entire adoption journey.
- Lenore Cork-Lemay, who moved into the position of South Korea Program Manager and India Program Administrator. Lenore's excellent communication skills, patience, organization, and professionalism has

been a genuine asset to our team. Her ongoing expression of innovative ideas and compassionate approach to problem-solving helps to strengthen our services and programs on a daily basis.

- Emily Catton, who is the newest member of the TCB team, and is now our fulltime office administrator. Emily approaches learning and challenges with a calm and yet confident demeanour, which has benefited our agency in countless ways. We look forward to Emily's ongoing contributions to ensuring our agency runs smoothly, efficiently, and effectively.
- Our financial department is well-run Mosher Booking, under the leadership of Wendi Mosher and her team. We remain thankful for their flexibility as we worked through COVID hurdles, and their ongoing commitment to our agency's fiscal well-being.

Each of our staff members are dedicated to the well-being of *The Children's Bridge* as a whole, as well as to the families and children we work with and support. Each contributes countless hours of their time, expertise, and personal experience to ensure families are supported from the moment they commit to growing their family by adoption, until these children reach well into adulthood. This past year I was particularly in awe of the flexibility, resilience, and ongoing commitment they demonstrated to our agency, programs, and families and children. Our strong, capable, and committed team remains our greatest strength, and I continue to look forward to working with each of these amazing individuals in the years to come.

Adoption Placements (November 2020 – November 2021):

South Korea: 8

USA: 3

India: 3

Thailand: 8

Uganda: 1

Total Number of Placements: 23

Our agency retained a total of 17 new families between November 2020 and the end of October 2021.

Governance/Board of Directors

The Children's Bridge is governed by a membership-elected, volunteer Board of Directors. Directors' terms are three years and Directors can serve for a maximum of two-terms (6-years in total). Elections take place during the Annual General Meeting (AGM) every November. Each Board member has been instrumental in lending their time and expertise to ensure that TCB is a well-governed and sustainable organization now, and well into the future. I would like to take this opportunity to extend a heart-felt thank you to each Director on our Board:

- Andrea Thompson (President/Chair)
- Martha MacLaine (Vice-President/Co-chair)
- Raeanne Souliere (Treasurer)
- Hanna Stewart (Secretary)
- Rebecca Manga
- Lisa Cameron
- Colleen Clarke
- Barbara Leung
- Jonathan Pribaz

- Peter Blaser

We will say goodbye and thank you for your service and dedication to Hanna Stewart, who will be stepping down from the Board following this year's AGM. We also said good-bye to Rebecca Manga, who stepped down from her role as Director earlier this year. We truly appreciate all of the time, hard work and dedication it takes to serve on the Board and to ensure TCB remains viable and sustainable in the quickly shifting environment of international adoption. We look forward to welcoming new Board members to our slate of officers in 2021/2022.

It has been an exciting year to be a part of TCB as we continued our ongoing work of creating growth and sustainability in everything we do. I continue to remain proud of being a part of this organization, and to work alongside so many committed individuals. Our agency, as always, continues to thrive due to the commitment that remains firmly in each of our minds as we tackle each new task – we are here to work in the best interests of the children we serve. We do this by continuing to maintain professional relationships with our in-country partners, strengthen our existing adoption programs, investigate new potential adoption programs and new ways of doing our work more efficiently and effectively, and build on our pre and post adoption services. This ensures our work reflects our core values, which is to continue to provide ethical adoption programs that focus on serving children and maintain best practices for all families who choose to build their family through adoption.

Respectfully submitted by,



Karyn Arnauld-Bakelaar
Executive Director - The Children's Bridge
November 21st, 2021

The Children's Bridge
Annual General Meeting
November 21, 2021

Treasurer's Report

To the Members of the Children's Bridge,

Despite the impact on international travel throughout the pandemic, the Children's Bridge (TCB) remains diligent in uniting children with their forever family. Throughout 2021, the agency and its Board of Directors continued to work through challenges and operate with a passion for connecting families, a focus on affordability, and the ability to provide a wide range of services that go above and beyond the needs of their adoptive families.

For the fiscal year ending July 31, 2021, The Children's Bridge generated a surplus of \$326,492 (unaudited) compared to \$322,831 in 2020 (audited). This positive result is mainly due to the increase in facilitations from India, as well as a clean up of subsequent year admin fees that were not previously collected. This clean up is a continuation from 2020, which is necessary to maintain the integrity of the current year's bookkeeping records.

The large excess in revenue enabled the organization to continue to build its cash reserve, which is in place as a level of protection in case of an unforeseen shut down. TCB is proud to be one of the only organizations that has a contingency fund in place. The cash and contingency fund increased year over year by 34%, with a value on July 31, 2021 of \$1,112,884 compared to last year's \$831,575. The Board placed \$250,000 of its cash into a high interest GIC in 2018 to generate interest income to support any unexpected deficits in future years. This amount has grown to \$258,326 as at July 31, 2021. The Board will be adding funds to this high interest vehicle upon maturity in June 2022 and will be implementing additional cash management strategies to increase its level of financial security.

Other initiatives for 2022 relate to TCB taking a proactive approach in expanding our reach to families across Canada, developing programs, and building relationships within the countries that our programs exist in. Through virtual information sessions, the agency has been able to reach a larger number of individuals in the East and West coasts of Canada, which has allowed us to help more Canadian families through the journey of adoption. For the F2022 budget, the Board continues to put emphasis on seeking licenses to expand the number of programs that we offer, as well as the need to travel to the countries in which we have programs in, as travel plans were put on hold in 2021 and 2020.

Thank you to everyone for contributing to the longevity of the Children's Bridge. May we continue to serve our community and work in the best interest of the children waiting to meet their forever families.

R. Souliere

Raeanne Souliere
Treasurer

2021 Governance Report

This year, the Governance Committee focused its attention on our valued staff and finding better use of technology to facilitate the home-based office environment.

Early in the year, the South Korea Program Manager, Bruno Jung-Millen, decided to move onto new adventures. We saw this as an opportunity to promote from within. Lenore Cork-Lemay, who had been supporting other adoption programs, was asked to take on the Program Manager role for South Korea. With the guidance of our Executive Director, Lenore was able to reach out to all of our South Korea in-process families to ensure a smooth transition.

This, however, left a void in administrative support. We are grateful that Emily Catton accepted a permanent full-time position as our Administrative Assistant.

Our dedicated, experienced Executive Director and CB staff are the backbone of the Agency; the Board firmly believes their compensation should reflect that accordingly. With immense effort from our Treasurer, the Governance Committee undertook a detailed salary rationalization review. The result was salary increases that balanced our financial position, the need to retain valued human capital, Cost-of-Living adjustments, and fair market value that is in line with not-for-profit organizations.

We also saw the need to leverage technology to better support our staff in their home-based office environment. Baker Tilly KDN LLP was contracted to conduct a cyber security assessment. Vulnerabilities, while minor, were addressed immediately. Implementation of broader recommendations related to the file management process and legacy systems are ongoing. We thank Baker Tilly as they had volunteered additional time and resources to assist us.

This year, we welcomed three new board members who joined mid-year: Peter Blaser, Jonathan Pribaz and the undersigned. We bid farewell to Rebecca Manga and our wonderful secretary, Hanna Stewart as the two pursue new opportunities. Their insights and perspectives have created meaningful dialogues at Board meetings.

In 2022, we look forward to implementing more efficient file management processes that leverage the use of technology. The Governance Committee will explore new opportunities and projects as they arise to ensure the CB keeps up with the evolving landscape of international adoption.

B Leung

Barbara Leung
Chair, Governance Committee



Post-Adoption Committee 2020-21 Annual Report

Over the past thirty years, The Children's Bridge (TCB) has reached a level of maturity and excellence in delivering a strong and supportive program for families as they proceed through the stages of adoption and bringing their children home. Our significant history has resulted in a large and growing community of both families and adoptive children/young adults who are living the unique experience of adoption. Over the past few years, and in particular with the recent challenges of the COVID health crisis, it has become increasingly evident that post adoption support would be an addition to our service portfolio that would be welcomed by both staff and clients alike. Thus, the Post-Adoption Committee was created to research, propose and subsequently develop a program of services to be offered to our existing client base.

Post-adoption programs have been on the forward agenda of the Board of Directors for a number of years, however as an addition to an already demanding portfolio of service offerings and Board priorities, the committee has had a slow start due to other challenges and the need to focus attention on more urgent demands. During this past year however, a strong base plan has been created from which to build and we anticipate further development to continue at a slow but steady pace over the coming year.

There will be two main areas of focus, support for adoptees themselves, and support for parents and families. Content for both groups will combine education, sharing and support modalities. The committee will continue to meet over the coming months to develop and finalize content for our first priority groups and the committee's plan is to communicate and launch the first group offerings beginning towards the end of the 2021-2022 fiscal year.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to our Executive Director, Karyn and to the members of the committee who have contributed their valuable time and expertise. We continue to welcome participation and input from all Board and staff members.

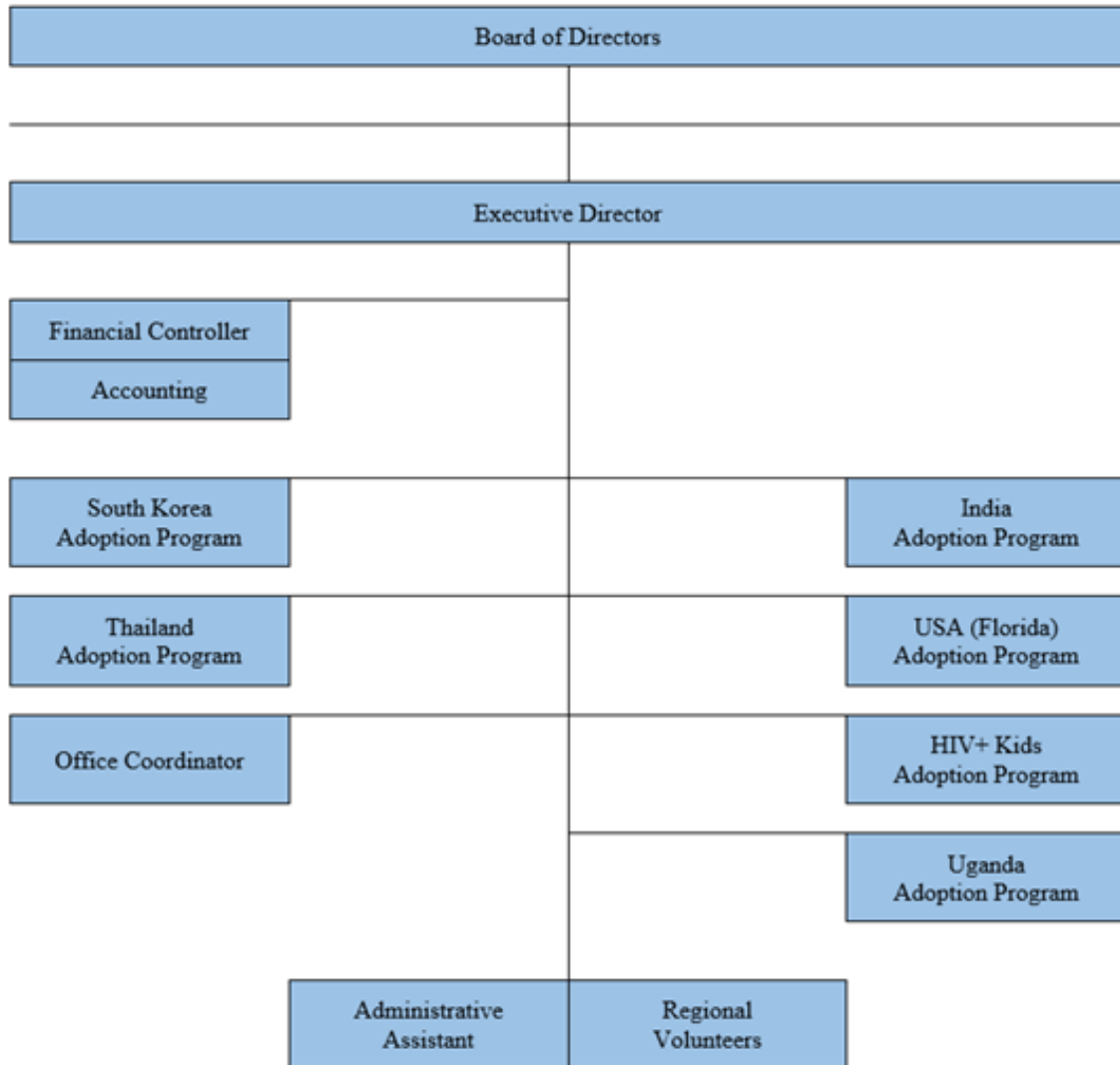
MJMacLaine

Martha MacLaine
Chair, Post-Adoption Committee

Staff Directory

| Staff | Phone Number | Email |
|--|--------------|--|
| Karyn Arnauld-Bakelaar Executive Director, India, Uganda and HIV+ Program Manager, Pre and Post Adoption Services | 613-226-2814 | karyn.arnauld-bakelaar@childrensbridge.com |
| Darlene Catton Thailand and USA Program Manager, China Homeland, Pre and Post Adoption Services | 905-836-6776 | darlene.catton@childrensbridge.com |
| Lenore Cork-Lemay Office Coordinator, South Korea | 613-226-2112 | lenore.cork-lemay@childrensbridge.com |
| Emily Catton Administrative Assistant | 905-392-8044 | emily.catton@childrensbridge.com |
| Wendi Mosher-and-Beth Roberts Bookkeeping | 613-293-4853 | accounting@childrensbridge.com |

Organization Chart (2020)



The Children's Bridge Board of Directors

2021/22 Proposed Slate of Officers

Executive

Andrea Thompson, Chair/President

Martha MacLaine, Vice-Chair/Vice-President

Raeanne Souliere, Treasurer

Caitlin Park-Dowing, Secretary

Directors (Executive included above)

Peter Blaser, Director

Lisa Cameron, Director

Colleen Clark, Director

Barbara Leung, Director

Jonathan Pribaz, Director

Karyn Arnould-Bakelaar, Executive Director, Non-voting representative