



# 2023-24 Impact Report

**belonging**  
network

SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES & YOUTH



formerly known as

**Adoptive Families  
Association of BC**

# Belonging for all.



The Watters family  
Cover photo: the Kendrick family

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For almost **50 years**, the Belonging Network (formerly Adoptive Families Association of BC) has been there for the **adoption** and **permanency community** in BC.

We are dedicated to **finding families** for BC's waiting kids and providing **support, learning, and connection** for adoptive and permanency families and youth from government care.

Our work is made possible through the generous support of funders, partners, and community members.

## **What is permanency?**

When a child has permanency, they have a sense of belonging and lifelong connection to others. Adoption is the most well-known type of permanency arrangement, but guardianship and kinship care are increasingly common.

# Dear friends,

We did it! In fiscal 2023-24, we became the Belonging Network.

This significant change has been many years in the making. Sometimes it felt like we'd never get there, especially during the challenge after challenge of the COVID years.

But here we are today, thanks to the hard work of our staff and Board and the encouragement of our funders, partners, and many other supporters.

Together, we recognized that the world of adoption and permanency was changing dramatically. We saw we had a unique opportunity. If we could adapt, we could make a difference in the lives of even more children, youth, and families.

**“ If we could adapt, we could make a difference in the lives of even more children, youth, and families. ”**

Building on the history and strengths of the Adoptive Families Association of BC, we began a journey of transformation.

We wanted to continue to support adoptive families while extending our support to the increasing numbers of other permanency families out there. We wanted to formalize and expand our support to young people in and from government care. And, we wanted to work harmoniously with Indigenous peoples and make meaningful contributions to truth and reconciliation.

Like any journey into uncharted territory, the path hasn't always been straight or easy. The same could be said about the journeys of all those we aim to serve. And it is in their journeys that we find our inspiration.

We're inspired by all the adoptive and permanency families who provide lifelong love and stability to children and youth. These families need education, support, and connection with other families to meet their kids' needs and thrive.

We're inspired by the hundreds of youth in and from foster care and other forms of government care. They've had tough experiences in their young lives, but they're full of potential. They deserve every support as they navigate early adulthood. They need easy access to the full range of resources available to them. And they, too, need education, support, and connection with other youth and caring adults to reach their potential.

We're so grateful to everyone who has made our transformation possible. Special thanks to the Ministry of Children and Family Development and Indigenous Perspectives Society, who have walked alongside us every step of the way.

We hope you'll take a few minutes to read about all the great work we've done this past year.

## Chris and Anne



Chris Roy  
Board Chair



Anne Tower  
Executive Director

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- Chris Roy, Chair
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- Jennifer Randall Nelson, Director-at-large
- Kathleen Landry, Director-at-large

## Strategic Advisors 2023-24

- Cynthia Dyson



All photos are from our Faces of Family photo contest.



6,000+

families, children, and youth served in the 2023-24 fiscal year.

# Our new identity

“Your adaptability to meet the needs of all kinds of permanency families is important work.”

– Facebook community member

In March 2024, the Adoptive Families Association of British Columbia officially became the **Belonging Network**. We changed our name, brand, and website to better reflect the diverse audience we serve:

- adoptive families
- guardianship families
- relatives raising relatives
- Indigenous customary care families
- youth leaving government care
- adult adoptees
- birth families
- foster families
- child welfare professionals
- and more

The response to our new identity has been overwhelmingly positive. We’ve received many supportive comments from leaders of peer organizations and community members. Our brand-new online home welcomed over **6,500 new users** in its first month!

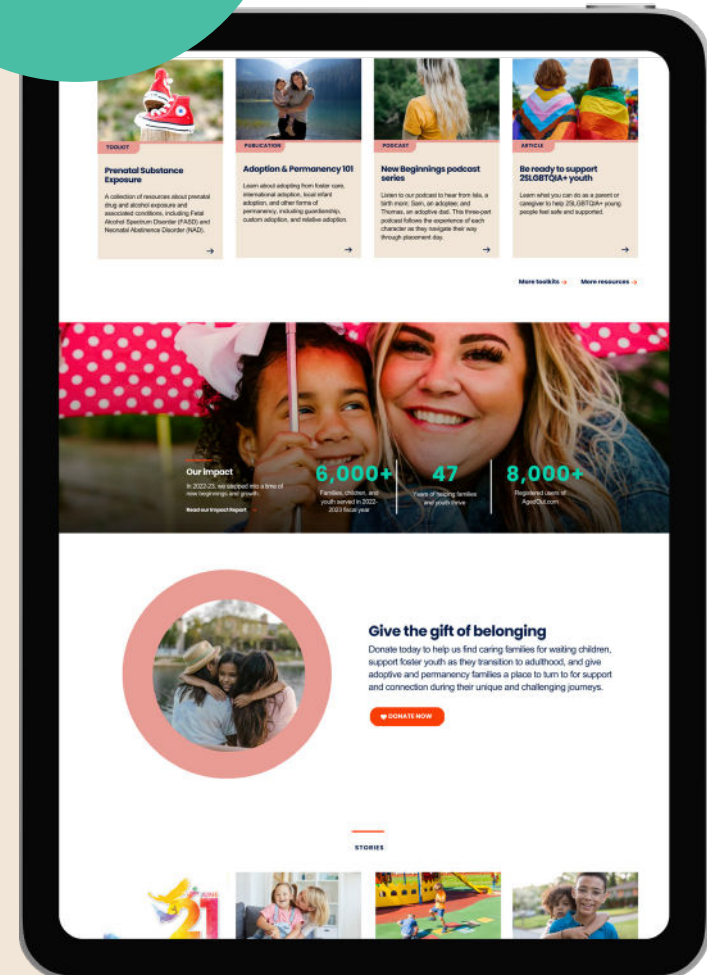
This change reflects our commitment to supporting all members of our community. They turn to us during the most intense, challenging, emotional times of their lives. They deserve to see themselves represented in our branding, materials, and plans.

We’ve been supporting adoption for almost 50 years and that won’t change. We’re still here for adoptive families, just like always. **Adoption was our start, and it’s still in our heart!**

New name  
New brand  
New website

“I think your new website looks great.”

– Angela Marshall,  
Dave Thomas Foundation



[belongingnetwork.com](https://belongingnetwork.com)



The Levesque family



## Indigenous-focused projects

As part of our organizational commitment to truth and reconciliation, we are working on a number of projects with a growing circle of Indigenous partners and consultants.

### For families:

Every module of the foundational course we're creating (Learning for Everyone in Adoption and Permanency) is reviewed through an Indigenous lens and will reflect the recent legislative changes that recognize the inherent right of Indigenous peoples over their children's welfare.

In the recent consultation we undertook in partnership with Indigenous Perspectives Society, community leaders told us we could contribute by developing

Family Finding Tools. We're excited to share our experience finding "families that fit" for children and youth.

### For youth:

Youth-serving organizations who tried out our Stepping Stones life skills curriculum liked it so much, they asked for an Indigenous version. We did, and are now ready to pilot Stepping Stones – Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Teaching with Indigenous partners in the year ahead.

We're thrilled to have renewed our arrangement with Vancouver Film Studios to administer bursaries specifically for Indigenous students. Our other bursary programs are open to Indigenous youth, as well.

## Heartfelt thanks

We are honoured to work with many wonderful Indigenous individuals and organizations, who help us ensure our programs are welcoming for Indigenous children, youth, and families. This year we especially want to thank:

**Rachelle Dallaire** and her team at **Indigenous Perspectives Society** for their ongoing partnership and guidance. All members of our staff and Board benefit from IPS's foundational Cultural Perspectives training, and additional role-specific training.

**Montana Livingstone** and **Everett Willier** for their review and feedback to make the new Learning for Everyone in Adoption & Permanency (LEAP) course relevant for Indigenous participants.

**Linda Lucas and Associates**, whose consultation work with 16 Indigenous child and family-

serving organizations led to the Family Finding Tools project, now underway.

The project team that worked diligently to create the Stepping Stones – Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Teaching curriculum:

**Tim Harris (Stz'uminus First Nation) – Lead Project Manager**

Advisory Group Members:

- **Shauna Harris (Namgis First Nation)**
- **Carly Foster (Nanaimo)**
- **Duck Paterson (Ladysmith)**
- **Darian Harris (Stz'uminus First Nation)**
- **Sarah Howlett (Nanaimo)**

Youth Advisory Members:

- **Kaitlyn McMahon-White (Snuneymuxw First Nation)**
- **Alex Thomas (Snuneymuxw First Nation)**
- **Frankie Shaw (Stz'uminus First Nation)**



The Franco Cea family

**215**

graduates of the  
Adoption Education  
Program

**101**

attendees at  
Adopt BC Kids  
info sessions

**540**

members of our  
Waiting Parents  
Facebook group

**10,000**

views of the  
Adopt BC Kids page  
on our website



The MacPherson family

# Waiting kids and youth

**“Kirsty [Permanency Support Specialist] has treated me nicely. I always feel safe with her.”**

– Waiting youth

To help children and youth find loving families, we work directly with them, run the Adopt BC Kids info line, and offer info sessions and support for prospective families.

Our vision is a world where every child and youth has the love, stability, and support they need to thrive.

Our expanded Permanency Support team works on behalf of specific children and youth. In 2023-24, they made 15 adoption and permanency matches!

# Youth finds a forever family

## A success story

*The youth's name has been changed.*

Liz is 18 years old. For more than a decade, she has moved between foster homes. She has also had to face the sadness of being separated from her sister, who found permanency with a family located far away.

Traditional methods to find a family didn't work for Liz. Social workers from the Ministry of Children and Family Development determined that the homes available couldn't meet her needs. Thankfully, in 2022, Liz was referred to Brie, one of our Permanency Support Specialists.

Brie began by getting to know Liz and connecting with her foster family and the professionals who worked with her to understand Liz's unique needs. Brie also conducted a network search, but none of the adults close to Liz could offer a permanent home.

Over time, Brie developed a strong relationship with Liz, seeing beyond the paperwork to recognize her as a wonderful, teachable teenager who sought love and connection. Recognizing Liz needed a lasting connection,



*Stock image*

whether legal or not, Brie began exploring the idea of finding a mentor family. This different approach aimed to build a relationship based on mutual care and respect, free from the pressure of legal permanency.

Brie believed one effective approach to finding mentors was to leverage our network, so she asked our communications team to post a mentorship call on social media. The post included Liz's interests and non-identifying qualities, as well as the skills needed to support her effectively.

Shortly after the post was published, Brie was contacted by a couple who felt a strong connection with Liz's profile. They were introduced virtually, and their relationship with Liz grew over the next few months. As trust deepened, it became clear that Liz had found more than mentors – she had found a family.

By early 2024, their mutual desire for permanence led to the decision to pursue adoption.

**Today, Liz is shaping her future with a family who cherishes**

**her. If another year had gone by, she would have aged out of government care.**

At the Belonging Network, we believe that all children and youth deserve belonging and lifelong connections. This story highlights our commitment to finding loving homes for waiting children and youth and nurturing meaningful connections for them.



# 335

registrants in  
on-demand webinars

# 634

responses to requests  
for adoption and  
permanency support

# 443

members of our  
Connecting and  
Supporting Families  
Facebook group

# 279

participants in  
online workshops  
& support sessions



The Kendrick family

## Permanency families

“ Looking back, I don’t know if my family could have stayed together without the support you gave us.

– Adoptive parent

We offer personalized support, education, and opportunities to connect with others.

Our goal is to ensure that families feel supported at every stage of their permanency journey.

This past year, we focused on updating our programs. The Adoption Education Program has been revamped to meet the needs of our diverse audience and will launch in the year ahead under a new name: Learning for Everyone in Adoption and Permanency (LEAP)!

# Baby arrives tomorrow!

## Updating our programs to meet families' needs

Meet the Altizer family. After ten years of marriage without conceiving, the couple turned to adoption. They explored options with both the Ministry of Children and Family Development and an adoption agency, but things didn't unfold as they had hoped.

In 2017, out of the blue, a friend contacted them about a potential adoption opportunity. Skeptical but willing, they shared their phone number. They didn't believe anything would happen, but to their surprise, the mom reached out when she was three months pregnant.

The couple kept the adoption under wraps, unsure if it would work out. Fortunately, everything fell into place. The day after their daughter was born, they shared the joyous news on Instagram.

Everything happened so quickly that they had to complete the Safe Babies course during the adoption home study. We hadn't developed



The Altizer family

an online version of Safe Babies yet, so our team had to get creative. We conducted the course over the phone instead.

The Altizer's social worker not only covered the course material but also addressed their specific concerns. She offered advice on what to pack for the hospital and suggested books and toys.

Her support was reassuring and surpassed their expectations, especially considering that they were keeping it secret from most of the people in their lives

who could have provided support or advice.

**Babies and toddlers don't always come with a nine-month advance notice for adoptive, foster, and permanency caregivers. That's why we revamped our Safe Babies workshop this year.**

The new online format includes engaging videos, discussions, and journaling exercises that registrants can complete at their own pace.

With rolling registration and flexible completion dates, prospective adoptive parents can access the information they need when they need it.

Visit [belongingnetwork.com/learning-opportunities](https://belongingnetwork.com/learning-opportunities) to learn more about our programs.

**8,100+**

registered users on

**AGEDOUT.com**

**425**

gift cards earned  
by youth in and  
from care

**13,000+**

page views each  
month on AgedOut.com

**\$95,000**

awarded in bursaries to more  
than 30 fostered, adopted, and  
Indigenous youths

# Youth in and from care

**“ Students like me could  
not make it by without  
people like you.**

– BC Orca Bursary recipient

We offer an online resource hub full of information on transitioning out of care, life skills programming, and bursaries for post-secondary education.

Our goal is to support young people as fully as possible as they transition into adulthood and independence.

In 2023-24, we rebuilt AgedOut.com to improve its functionality; added more Indigenous voices to our youth advisory group; and created an Indigenous version of our Stepping Stones life skills curriculum.

Stock image

# Building community

## How our Facebook groups support adoptive and permanency families

We have Facebook groups for waiting parents, families with complex support needs, 2SLGBTQIA+ families, parents of Indigenous children, and adoptive and permanency parents.

These groups are incredible places where people from all over BC with connections to adoption and permanency can gather and connect. They're private and confidential, creating a space where people can feel safe and be honest.

Ever since COVID, it's been difficult for people to gather in person. Our Facebook groups have become even more important during this time, especially as we've moved most of our services online.

These groups primarily serve as platforms for peer support, where members can post questions and receive responses from others in the community. Moderated by our Family Support team, the groups are well-managed and foster meaningful conversations. Our team shares articles, training opportunities, and advice, ensuring



Stock image

members feel supported while respecting their space.

We get a wide range of questions and stories in these groups. Here are a few examples (shared without identifying details to protect confidentiality):

- A waiting parent seeking tried-and-true resources for adopting and raising teens.
- A member with adult children who wanted to adopt again, but their kids didn't agree. They were unsure of what to do.

• A family raising kids with intense support needs. They'd tried every resource they knew and wondered if the only option left was to put their child back in care. They were heartbroken, exhausted, and felt they had no one else to turn to without being judged.

These questions receive thoughtful and varied responses from the community. Members benefit from diverse perspectives and experiences, leading to encouragement, support, humor, and even reality checks – all delivered with

kindness and generosity.

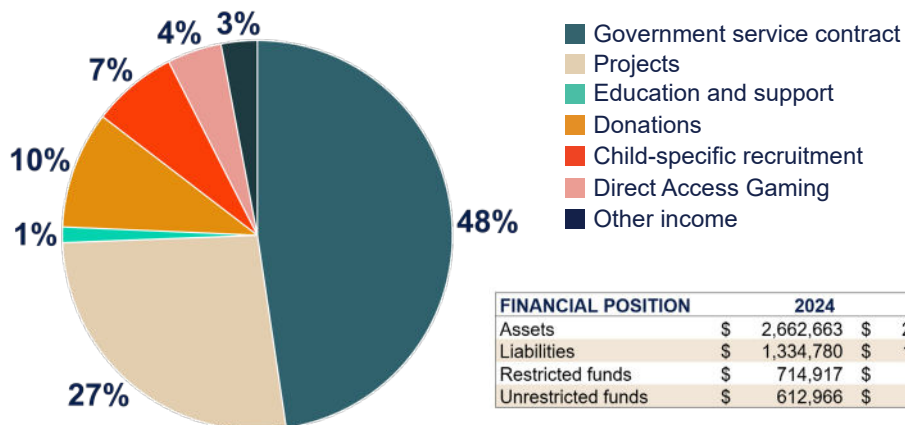
Even though we may not always see the long-term outcomes, it's clear that these groups help members navigate challenging times.

**They provide resources, foster a sense of belonging, offer new perspectives, and support parents and caregivers in continuing to show up for their children in meaningful ways.**

It's just one way we're making a real difference through the power of virtual community.

# Year-end financials

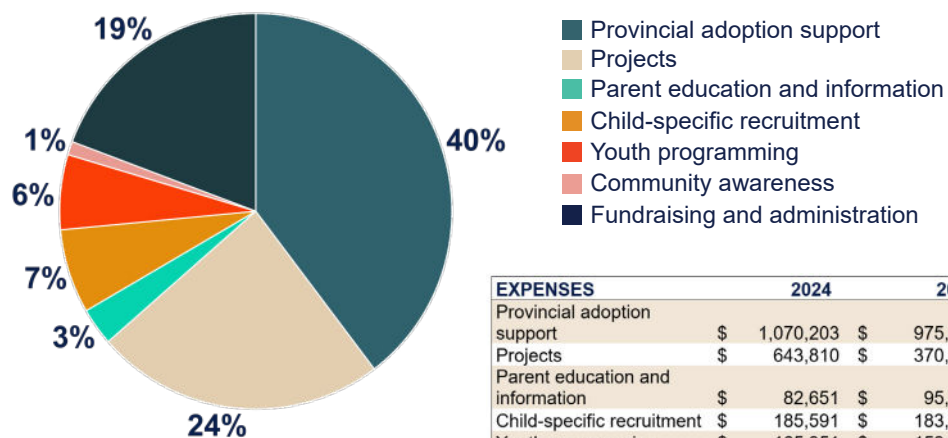
## Revenue



FINANCIAL POSITION	2024	2023
Assets	\$ 2,662,663	\$ 2,559,983
Liabilities	\$ 1,334,780	\$ 1,251,359
Restricted funds	\$ 714,917	\$ 803,901
Unrestricted funds	\$ 612,966	\$ 504,723

REVENUE	2024	2023
Government service contract	\$ 1,266,061	\$ 1,119,683
Projects	\$ 711,141	\$ 404,401
Education and support	\$ 34,385	\$ 42,244
Donations	\$ 258,724	\$ 256,298
Child-specific recruitment	\$ 187,952	\$ 179,728
Direct Access Gaming	\$ 120,000	\$ 104,700
Other income	\$ 79,657	\$ 91,594
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 2,657,920</b>	<b>\$ 2,198,648</b>

## Expenses

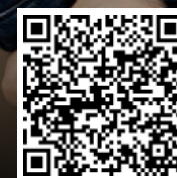


EXPENSES	2024	2023
Provincial adoption support	\$ 1,070,203	\$ 975,000
Projects	\$ 643,810	\$ 370,696
Parent education and information	\$ 82,651	\$ 95,478
Child-specific recruitment	\$ 185,591	\$ 183,019
Youth programming	\$ 165,351	\$ 159,804
Community awareness	\$ 29,619	\$ 19,716
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 2,177,225</b>	<b>\$ 1,803,713</b>
Fundraising and administration	\$ 519,980	\$ 340,052
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 2,697,205</b>	<b>\$ 2,143,765</b>

Give the gift of belonging

Donations make our work possible.

To make a one-time or monthly gift, scan this QR code:





The Andres family

# Thank you

The Belonging Network 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, encouragement, and for their generous financial support. We are proud that every member of our Board is a donor.



\*Denotes Monthly Donors

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(\$25,000+)

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- Seedlings Foundation
- The Walsh Foundation

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**BC Orca Bursary Program**

- Golf for Good
- Jon Perry
- Louis family
- Peggy Howard\*
- Peter & Joanne Brown Foundation

*Special thank you to Tracey McVicar for her ongoing support for the BC Orca Bursary Program.*

*We have done our best to recognize donors who made a contribution between April 1, 2023, and March 31, 2024. We apologize for any errors and invite you to contact us with corrections at [info@belongingnetwork.com](mailto:info@belongingnetwork.com).*

*The Peters family*



**belonging**  
**network**

SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES & YOUTH

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