



Fraser Valley Aboriginal Children and Family Services Society

Board of Directors

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FVACFSS BOARD CANDIDATE BIOGRAPHIES

Tammy Bartz

I would like to be able to continue the work we have started. There are many inequities in terms of funding for prevention services for our off-reserve families between MCFD and FVACFSS. I was a part of trying to resolve these issues back in 2010 with the Chief's Coalition, and they still need to be resolved. I care deeply about our children and our families and have worked for over 30 years in advocacy for our people. We still have a lot of work to do, and the new Legislation through Bill C-92 gives us many opportunities to make things better for our people. It is important to me to always remember that we must make all our decisions in "the best interests of the child". This is not always easy, but it means we must continue to fight for the voices of our children to be heard, and to support the parents through whatever means necessary. This may include counselling services, treatment programs, community support, family support or inclusive fostering. We must support our children and families to overcome the residual effects of the residential school system and the 60's scoop that damaged so many of our people. I believe our Agency has made some incredible strides forward with the creation of the on-reserve staffing and programs and the involvement of our community delegated representatives in hiring for these positions, but there is still a lot of work to do to bring equality to our off-reserve families.

I have a social services diploma and a Degree in Adult Education and have been an advocate for children and families for over 30 years. I have been a foster parent (outside of the system) since my children were young. In those days, you just took the kids in and helped where you could without getting the Ministry involved. I was involved with the creation of the Executive Leadership Team, which is the current structure of FVACFSS, when we realized there is too much work to place on the shoulders of one individual. I have been a care committee member for my community since 2004, and the delegated representative for the last 5 years. I have worked closely with Molly Willie to advocate for our off-reserve members, and I continue to advocate for our caregivers and our children to the best of my ability. I worked for my own community for over 20 years and strongly believe that the children are our future, and we must do everything in our power to support those children and their families to have a bright, healthy future.

Helen Joe

Throughout Helen's life, there is a running narrative of a passion for children, health, justice, and culture.

Helen sits on the Xyólheméylh Board of Governors. She is from the Skagit First Nations in Washington and her Halq'emeylem traditional name is Melileqthet. Helen moved to Stó:lō Territory to marry her

husband Herb Joe from Tzeachten First Nation, in 1967. They are still together, have four children, 13 grandchildren, and thirteen great children and two more greats on the way.

Helen studied linguistics and Halq'emeylem, in the late 1900's and was a member of the provincial parole board for six years and has worked extensively in the corrections system for 9 years. She was also employed by Xyólheméylh for 11 years.

"When she went to work for Correction Services Canada, she found that a majority of the people she worked with had been children in care, either living in the big city, living away from their communities, they didn't know who their families were and they didn't have any place to belong so that's when a number of them joined gangs," says Helen. "I've always had an interest in the wellbeing of children, they need to feel like they belong and need to be loved."

She is currently a project coordinator with the Sesiyomelh or Matriarch Project which is working on Bill C92 for the communities. The project will inform the communities of the government moving forward with the legislation to see First Nations have more autonomy over the child welfare system. Building a relationship with Xyólheméylh for the safety of our children in all communities.

"The communities need to be involved in the decisions when it comes to (their) children. Historically the grandmothers and grandfathers guided the families. A lot of our children were brought into foster care, families didn't have any say, once the children were removed, which left a big gap in our family systems. We as matriarchs need to have a say in what happens to children, the children need to know their culture and families," says Helen.

Helen is concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on Indigenous communities, particularly the loss of lives and mental health, the isolation and abuse of Elders, domestic violence, and the loss of traditional death protocols.

"People are hurting because of what we need to do to be safe ... Our people are not used to being isolated, we were always inclusive," says Helen. She references gatherings, ceremonies and supporting people who are in need. "There is a lot of upset in our communities, we have to try and help people."

Paula Olmstead

I am a member of the Sumas First Nation. I joined the Fraser Valley Aboriginal Children and Family Services Society (FVACFSS) Board in November 2017. I was raised with strong cultural teachings and have worked closely with the Elders of Sumas First Nation as well as various other Elders within the Fraser Valley. Since January of 2021 I have been helping my son care for his 2 sons full time. I want to continue helping the agency and complete the work that has been started with our cultural committee along with the other important work that has been happening with the agency.

Currently I am an Appointed Board of Director for the Abbotsford Police and am part of the Governance and Policy Committee, I am also employed as a Housing Assistant for Sumas First Nation and completing my First Nation Housing Manager Course through Vancouver Island College. I was employed with Abbotsford School District as an Aboriginal Cultural Support Worker. I was employed with FVACFSS in 2012 for approximately 3 years within the administration team. I have taken youth on the Pulling Together canoe journey with the Abbotsford Police Department.

I am excited for the future work with the FVACFSS, learning new things, being an advocate for the youth which I have been for years and sharing my teachings with family and community members.

It has been a privilege and an honor to be part of a wonderful Board of Directors since 2017 for Xyolhemeylh. I would like to finish the work we started a year ago and I love working with the Board of Directors. We have accomplished so much in the short time I have been in this seat and would love to continue with the future work with our Agency. I am part of the Communication Committee, Cultural Committee and previously was part of the Finance committee and the AGM Committee.

Jolene Irons

I am a member of Deninu K'ue First Nation in Fort Resolution, NWT. I have resided in the Ts'elxwéyeqw Tribes traditional territory for 20 years. I have had the honor and privilege to not only raise my own family in Stó:lō Territory but have worked in various capacities in these traditional lands. I was fortunate to spend 10 years of my professional life working at Xyolhemeylh leading the administration teams and term positions as the Prevention supervisor in the East Region. I have spent the last 5 years with Tzeachten First Nation which has been my most enjoyable role to date and has highlighted for me the importance of collaborating with community members in a meaningful way. I bring a perspective to the Board that I feel is currently missing. Most families served at any given time are away from their own communities, as an urban member of this board I would bring a fresh pair of eyes and a valuable frame of reference that I feel would be beneficial to those we serve.

It is paramount that we preserve the connection between Family, Community and Culture. I have witnessed the innovative strength based, safety organized approach to Child protection and how grounded it is in partnerships and collaborations. Utilizing strength of family, strength of community and strength of individuals in ways that help to stabilize and support a child's and family's situation. I want to be a part of the excellent work that is going on with this Board while maintaining our people's rights and supporting them in a holistic way. Our children need to maintain their connections to culture, and family and we can honor this by focusing on healing and empowering families.

I am a Certified Aboriginal Professional Administrator with focus on governance, leadership, and financial oversight. My extensive background in Business and Administration has allowed me to continually enhance my decision making, process management, attention to detail, flexibility, communication, leadership, and business acumen skills.

I have been fortunate to attend many trainings such as:

- First Nation Historical Impacts Training Series
- Signs of Safety Training - Andrew Turnell
- Circle of Courage - Dr. Martin Brokenleg
- Understanding addiction – Gabor Mate
- Trauma and Healing – Gabor Mate

Jade Victor

Growing up near my family and community members has been the most crucial part of my life. It is something I am forever grateful for and is something I believe all children need in their life. I want to sit on the board so I can help other Indigenous children to remain within their community and with their families. I am very blessed to have had my family as my main support and would now like to use the strength and wisdom they have given me to support other Indigenous youth.

I have lived on reserve my whole life and have been immersed within my culture. I grew up going to the longhouse, cultural gatherings, and sitting with my elders. This knowledge is something I am very grateful for and am excited to be able to use to help other Indigenous families and children.

I have a bachelor's degree in political sciences and Indigenous Studies from UFV. Through my undergraduate degree I studied various Indigenous topics that I would not have known about through my family, such as child welfare. I believe my bachelor's degree will be a great asset to my work on the board.

I have also sat on the Skowkale youth committee for the past 4 years as well as I have been a youth representative for the Solh Temexw Stewardship Alliance Board. I have done lots of work within Stó:lō Governance as well as recently I have been working within language revitalization.