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For Immediate Release

Recognizing Grandparents Day and Shining a Light on Kinship Care Families with Parent Support Services Society of BC

This Sunday September 12th is International Grandparents' Day. Parent Support Services Society of BC marks this day by celebrating all grandparents, and shining a light on kinship care families – families where grandparents are raising their grandchildren (or others are raising a relative's child) full time.

An estimated 13,000 children in British Columbia are being raised by their grandparents or another relative because their parents are unable. Reasons include: physical and mental health issues, addiction, and death. These numbers are growing. Parent Support Services Society of BC works closely with kinship caregivers, and the unique issues that they face, through services such as Support Circles, a Support Line, education, respite, and resources.

"These families often feel invisible...what we know is that often both the grandparent or relative and the children are experiencing grief and loss. Many of these families experience financial hardship as well; they may use up all their retirement savings for child-raising," says Parent Support Services Executive Director, Carol Madsen.

76% of children raised in kinship care have experienced 4 or more adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) prior to entering kinship care. This leaves them 12x more likely to suffer from negative health outcomes and other issues later on, compared to the general child population.

"It is unexpected," Executive Director Madsen points out, "Grandparents do not expect to be parenting again at this stage of life. Grandparents raising grandchildren deal with a range of legal issues, many related to access and guardianship." Many of these families receive little or no government support. They also face isolation, stigma, and poverty, with grandparents experiencing increased levels of stress and deterioration of health due to aging and the complex systems they must navigate.

Yet the grandparents and other kinship caregivers continue to tell Parent Support Services that while it is hard, it is a choice they would make again.

"To see her making friends at school, learning to read, and do math. These were things I thought were not possible."

"Sure, it's hard. Hell, it's exhausting. But I'd do it all over again."

Madsen states, "There is ample evidence that children and youth raised by their kin have increased positive outcomes. These children are able to maintain a connection to their community and family attachments, and a lifetime sense of belonging." A positive child-caregiver relationship, stable

environments, and relationships with extended family members all help children overcome childhood trauma.

Jane Bouey, Lead Project Manager – Kinship Care Research states, “Grandparents and other kinship caregivers tell us they believe that ‘all children raised in kinship care should receive, at minimum, the same supports and services as those in foster care’.”

Parent Support Services Society of BC continues to raise awareness and funds – with Grandparents Day as an annual highlight – for these kinship care families, as part of a larger mission to protect the safety and well-being of children, and promote healthy families through peer-based support, education, advocacy, and research.

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- Our acclaimed documentary “Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: Telling Our Stories” can be found here: bit.ly/grgfilm and more on our Youtube channel youtube.com/user/parentsupportbc

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