

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**B.C. Child and Youth in Care Week: The Therapeutic and Interactive Village**

**Surrey, British Columbia** Children in foster care face challenges that most young people could never imagine. They endure crises, family breakdown, and perhaps see people they love and depend on abusing drugs and/or alcohol or suffering mental health problems. Maybe they have been abused themselves, physically, mentally, or sexually, and their childhood has been a living nightmare.

**In British Columbia, the first week of June is Child and Youth in Care Week, and SOS Children's Village B.C. is pleased to be a national trailblazer in advancing a more effective model of care for foster children and youth.** Indeed, British Columbia is home to the only SOS Village in all of Canada. With shocking news articles being published virtually every week about what critics are calling a 'broken' foster care system, SOS B.C. envisions a better way. British Columbians have said "Yes to the Village, No to the Streets!" through their passionate support of the charity's two year capital campaign for transition suites.

The five timely topics for this year's B.C. Child and Youth in Care Week are: caregiver training; the therapeutic & interactive village; transitioning to adulthood; the grand opening of suites for youth aging out of care; and a new Cirque du Soleil program – SOS B.C. will be the second SOS Village in the world to launch it.

**SOS Children's Village B.C. only has a single government contract which provides 6% of their revenue, allowing the freedom to move forward with their founders' unique vision, leading by example.** In 2015, with the leadership of Dr. Lise' DeLong, Ph.D, CPCRT, CCCM as clinical director, the charity began making structural changes in their programming to create a therapeutically-intensive and interactive village that is trauma-informed.

For the last 66 years, four fundamental pillars have successfully assisted millions of foster children and orphans in the 568 SOS Villages in 134 countries around the world. These four pillars are:

**1. Mom as the heart of the home.** The first of the pillars is the caregiver or the SOS Mother (as the majority are women, we refer to them as SOS Moms, but we also have SOS Dads) as a professional in the area of caregiving to traumatized children. SOS B.C. will be striving to assist their SOS Moms and Dads to become highly trained child care professionals.

**2. Siblings groups should be kept together, or a mix of genders/ages creating a sibling dynamic is of primary importance to the healthy social development of a child.** SOS in B.C.

is a third party in the relationship between the caregivers and the Ministry of Children and Family Development (or Ministry designated agencies), however the organization strives to work with the caregivers and Ministry/Agency Workers to have sibling groups in long-term care placed in the village.

**3. Home.** The very word conjures up images of peace, harmony, love, and safety. The third pillar is the creation of a physically safe home for SOS Moms and Dads to create a nurturing family structure to allow a child's basic needs to be met, which will allow them to open up to the healing and growth programs offered in the village.

**4. Finally, the Village.** A community of professional caregivers working together and supported by a core of highly trained, dedicated, and dynamic SOS professionals providing individualized programming for the children and caregivers. **Loving and nurturing, from a trauma-informed perspective, the organization is creating the first therapeutic and interactive village in the SOS federation.**

SOS Children's Village B.C. recognizes that once a child or youth is removed from their home they experience immediate trauma that cannot be overlooked (and yet it often is). Children in care need support and counselling to move on with their lives – this should never be optional.

In the environment of the therapeutic and interactive village, foster children can recover from their trauma and become emotionally healthy once more. **The park-like atmosphere of the 2.5 acre Surrey village site is very nurturing to its inhabitants, with staff on-hand for support and caregivers looking out for each other's children when they are playing outside.**

The services provided to the foster families – free of charge thanks to donations from individuals, corporations, and foundations – **include cognitive remediation and behavioural counselling, art and play therapy, cutting-edge Neurofeedback training, and narrative therapy.**

Dealing with the mental and emotional health of foster children is core to the SOS model of care, however like any parent SOS Children's Village B.C. wants to give these children every opportunity, therefore they provide recreational opportunities, camps, music lessons, academic assistance, and cultural engagement to help them become well-rounded caring adults.

**The final substantial benefit of the therapeutic and interactive village is prevention.** If the professionals at SOS B.C. notice red flag behaviour they can address and prevent it from escalating further into other adverse issues.

A video illustrating the ingredients that shape the therapeutic and interactive village can be viewed at [https://youtu.be/5LV\\_uueTHy4](https://youtu.be/5LV_uueTHy4).

**About SOS Children's Village BC**

SOS Children's Villages is the world's largest non-governmental, non-denominational child development organization for orphaned and abandoned children. It has existed for over 65 years with presence in 134 countries and 568 Villages. British Columbia is home to the only SOS Children's Village in Canada. SOS Children's Village BC provides stable homes, a supportive and healing Village environment, and community-based family care programs to help foster children and youth in need grow into caring, self-reliant adults.

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**We hope that you will be inspired to pick up our 'Say Yes to the Village, No to the Streets!' press release series over B.C. Child and Youth in Care Week.**

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