

AFFIDAVIT

I, [REDACTED], Intake Legal Assistant, of [REDACTED] in the City of Vancouver, in the Province of British Columbia, MAKE OATH AND SAY AS FOLLOWS:

1. I have personal knowledge of the matters included in this affidavit except where statements are made based on information and belief, in which case I verily believe them to be true.
2. I am a 47 year old Gitksan woman. I currently have a 14 year old grandson who resides with me. I am his primary caregiver as a single woman.
3. I also have a nearly 10 month old grandson who was apprehended at birth and remains in the continuing custody of the Director of Child, Family and Community Services. My daughter, his mother, lives in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver and struggles with ongoing addictions issues. She loves her kids, but she is just not able to care for them. My grandson is currently in the care of a non-Indigenous foster family living in Langley, British Columbia.
4. Since my youngest grandson's birth, I have been trying to get him into my care. In order for that to happen, I have been told by the Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society ("VACFSS") that I need to secure child care for him.
5. I need to secure child care for my grandson because I work full time as an intake worker and I will need to continue to do so if he comes into my care.

6. I have been trying to comply with VACFSS staff's request that I obtain child care for my grandson, but it has been very difficult. I got a list of approximately 50 child care providers from the West Coast Child Care Resource Centre and I applied to all of them. All but two had a waitlist and I was told by some child care providers that their waitlist could be as long as two to three years.
7. In my search for child care, I was not able to find an available child care space close to my home. Both child care spaces I was able to secure would have required me drive to work because I live in South Vancouver and I work in downtown Vancouver. I cannot afford to park downtown, so I would need to park at a park-and-ride, which would cost about \$200 per month.
8. I have been searching for a child care for my grandson since the fall of 2015. Since then, I have been able to find a child care space for my grandson three times. First, in October 2015, I secured a space in a licensed child care facility with a monthly fee of \$1,800. I earn approximately \$47,000 per year and I take home approximately \$2,550 per month, so I cannot afford the full cost of child care for my grandson without help.
9. It has been a very confusing and stressful process to try to find a way to cover the cost of child care. I need to have child care in order for my grandson to be able to live with me, but I cannot afford to pay the full cost to hold a child care space. As a result, after there were delays in my grandson being placed in my care, I had to let the child care space go.
10. I was initially told by VACFSS social workers that child care would not be covered through the child protection system and that I would have to apply through the Child Care Subsidy Service Centre. However, the Service Centre told me that they needed a request from child protection to grant me a subsidy. VACFSS staff then told me to apply to the Service Centre for a subsidy for employment and not in relation to child protection issues. I found the subsidy application forms very confusing. I did not know what I was

supposed to be doing and no one seemed to be able to tell me what I needed to do to get the financial support I needed to get my grandson into my care.

11. Between October 2015 and March 2016, I was trying to sort out the process for getting financial assistance with child care. It was only the last time I met with VACFSS staff that I was told that the Ministry of Children and Family Development might be able to cover the full cost. Even the Child Care Subsidy Service Centre staff did not seem to know that was possible.
12. In March 2016, VACFSS staff told me that they were again getting prepared to place my grandson in my care, so I contacted the same child care provider and was able to obtain a space for \$1,800 per month. I was also able to find a space with an unlicensed home-based child care provider, with an expected cost of \$1,600 per month. However, despite being told to expect a court date on March 30, 2016 to place my grandson in my care, no hearing occurred. I could not afford to pay to hold the spaces, so as of the beginning of April, both child care spaces were gone. I am back at square one and my grandson is still separated from his family.
13. In early April 2016, VACFSS staff again told me that they were getting ready to place my grandson in my care and that I could expect a court date to finalize that arrangement on April 27, 2016. I am now again trying to find child care for my grandson as a condition of getting him placed in my care. I have been told that if I cannot find a space by the court date, the court application would be adjourned to a later month and my grandson will remain in state care.
14. Because the cost of child care for my grandson is so high, I am forced to try to get him into my care through the child protection system. It is the only way to get the financial assistance I need to be able to support him. If I apply for guardianship through the family law system, I will only be able to get a child care subsidy that pays less than half of the cost of my grandson's child care. I may not even be financially eligible for a regular subsidy, I do not know. I also

would not get any financial assistance with the other costs of caring for my grandson if I get guardianship through the family law system, but I can get monthly financial support through the child protection system.

- 15. I have guardianship of my older grandson who resides with me and he came into my care through a very smooth process. He was never apprehended; instead, we registered him in the Child in Home of a Relative Program (“CHIR Program”) and he came to live with me. The CHIR Program allowed my grandson to be cared for by family (me), I received and continue to receive financial supports to help me with the cost of his care, and the full cost of his child care was covered. That program no longer exists so my younger grandson cannot take advantage of it.

- 16. My grandson is now nearly 10 months old. The process of trying to get him into my care has been devastating. I cannot understand how this happens, although I know other Elders who have to fight to get their grandchildren. I try not to think about it, but it feels like a loss, almost like a death in my family. My grandson is my child, my family, and I am heartbroken that he still is not living with me.

- 17. I consent to the use of this affidavit in any court proceedings.

AFFIRMED BEFORE ME at the City of)
Vancouver, in the Province of British)
Columbia, this 13th day of April, 2016.)



_____)
A Commissioner for taking Affidavits)
within British Columbia)
Kendra Milne)
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