

## **B.C. woman sues parents, province over allegations of sexual abuse**

<https://vancouver.sun.com/news/local-news/woman-sues-parents-province-over-allegations-of-sexual-abuse>

The plaintiff claims that as a child she was sexually abused by her parents and that social workers were negligent during investigations launched into the case

**KEITH FRASER**

Updated: November 7, 2019

**A woman is suing her parents and the B.C. government over allegations she was sexually assaulted and that social workers did not conduct a proper investigation.**

The woman was just under three years old in October 2001 when social workers and RCMP opened an investigation of her parents regarding a complaint made by an unknown individual alleging that she and her sisters needed protection from potential emotional harm and sexual abuse, according to the B.C. Supreme Court lawsuit.

The mother of the girl was interviewed by social workers and indicated that the family engaged in “nude rituals,” that she and her husband shared a bedroom with the sisters and that the children witnessed the couple having sex, says the lawsuit.

During the investigation, “sources from the community” told social workers that the father stated that he would be the first person to have sexual intercourse with the girls, the lawsuit claims.

A risk assessment from April 2002 had social workers reporting that there was insufficient information available to assess a number of things including the severity of abuse due to the fact that the children had been removed from the community and were being home-schooled by the parents, says the lawsuit.

Social workers remained concerned that the father might be abusing the children but could not prove allegations from members of the community that the dad was an “evil man” and allegedly involved with drugs and engaging in immoral sexual practices.

The social workers reported that there were concerns the children, including the plaintiff, were socially isolated and that despite there being cause for “grave concern,” there was no actual evidence of abuse and on April 23, 2002, the first investigation was closed, according to the lawsuit.

Four years later, in April 2006, social workers and RCMP opened another investigation into similar allegations as well as a suggestion that the conduct was related to a religious sect and a temple in the home where ceremonies were conducted, that the sisters were controlled in how they would think and that they had to walk around the family home naked, says the suit.

The mother was arrested and the children were removed and placed in the home of foster parents with the provincial director of Child, Family and Community Services assuming guardianship over the plaintiff.

Two weeks later, the father, who had been away from the family home at the time the children were removed, was himself arrested. In December 2010 the father was convicted of sexual interference and sexual assault relating to the arrest and sentenced to four years in prison. He was released in August 2013.

The lawsuit claims that during the time the plaintiff lived in the family home, the parents repeatedly sexually assaulted her and exposed her to “ritualistic” sexual practices involving the temple in the home.

It says the parents owed a duty of care to the plaintiff and breached that duty of care.

The director should have known that the plaintiff was at risk and in need of protection on account of the parents’ history with the ministry and breached the duty of care and was negligent by failing to remove the plaintiff from the home prior to 2006, says the suit.

The plaintiff, who is now 20 years old, claims that she has suffered developmental delay, mental distress and anguish, loss of dignity and self-esteem, humiliation and embarrassment and lasting psychological and emotional trauma.

The lawsuit also claims that the plaintiff endured mental suffering at the hands of a foster parent who cared for her from 2006 to 2015. It alleges the director was also negligent in failing to intercede in that case.

No response to the suit has yet been filed and the allegations have not been tested in court.

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# Former foster children sue B.C. government for leading them to lives of crime

<https://vancouver.sun.com/news/local-news/former-foster-children-sue-b-c-government-for-leading-them-to-lives-of-crime>

Bre-Anne Buhler and Kael Svendsen filed matching lawsuits last week naming as defendants the Ministry of Children and Family Development and its director of child welfare

**JOE FRIES, PENTICTON HERALD**

**Updated: August 28, 2019**

PENTICTON, B.C. — Two former foster children are suing the B.C. government over claims their time as wards of the state set them up for lives of crime as adults.

Bre-Anne Buhler and Kael Svendsen filed matching lawsuits last week in B.C. Supreme Court in Penticton. They both name as defendants the Ministry of Children and Family Development and its director of child welfare.

Both are seeking unspecified damages, plus additional compensation for loss of earnings and future earnings.

Penticton lawyer Michael Patterson, who is representing both Buhler and Svendsen, declined comment Monday, except to say his clients are “the tip of the iceberg.”

Svendsen’s notice of claim says he was placed with an alcoholic foster parent, who provided him with booze on multiple occasions. Svendsen says he was later removed from the home by the RCMP, but had become an alcoholic himself by then and later turned to drugs.

The director of child welfare is at fault, alleges Svendsen, because he was placed with an unsafe foster family and there was no plan in place to ensure Svendsen’s continual well-being.

“As a result of the director’s failures, the plaintiff suffers from alcohol addiction, criminality and a continuous transient homeless lifestyle,” the lawsuit concludes.

“The plaintiff has suffered from psychological and emotional trauma as a result of being homeless (and) being involved in criminality to support his drug and alcohol habit.”

Buhler’s notice of claim covers much of the same ground as Svendsen’s, but adds the director failed to ensure she had all of the supports she needed, including trauma counselling related to an episode she experienced in care, and failed to apply for unspecified benefits or entitlements on her behalf.

She also claims the director “failed to put in place any future planning of care for the plaintiff to assist the plaintiff in dealing with living independently as an adult exiting the care of the director.”

Neither the ministry nor the director of child welfare has filed a response to the claims. The ministry declined comment Monday.

Buhler is currently serving a 28-month sentence handed down Aug. 12 for twice leading police on drug-fuelled chases in stolen vehicles last year. The case made headlines because the judge rejected the 17-month sentence proposed by Crown and defence.

Svendsen is also in jail, but awaiting trial on a multitude of charges, including break and enter, assault and escape from lawful custody. He has been behind bars since his arrest in November 2018, shortly after police in Osoyoos issued a public appeal for help finding him. At the time, he was wanted on eight warrants related to 21 charges.

### **Former child in care sues ministry, social worker for 'reprehensible' treatment**

<https://www.msn.com/en-ca/news/canada/former-child-in-care-sues-ministry-social-worker-for-reprehensible-treatment/ar-BBYtFIX?ocid=spartandhp>

VANCOUVER — The British Columbia government and a former social worker in Kelowna, B.C., are facing a new civil lawsuit by a former child in care who accuses the social worker of stealing her money to pay off his mortgage and other personal expenses.

The allegation is just one of a string of accusations in the legal action by the one-time foster child, who details a series of failures by the authorities charged with her care, forcing her into homelessness and exposing her to sexual exploitation.

The woman, who is now 19 and living in Vancouver, cannot be named as a former child in care.

Documents filed with the B.C. Supreme Court on Dec. 20 allege she was apprehended from her mother at age three, placed in a series of unsafe and abusive homes and then had her own two children apprehended.

The statement of claim says the failure of the social worker, Robert Riley Saunders, and other provincial officials to respond to the risks and harms she faced in a timely way was "reprehensible and outrageous."

None of the allegations have been proven in court.