

Foster mother to take next step in fight for little girl

By IRENE GENTLE

The Champion

A much-anticipated hearing with the Catholic Children's Aid Society (CCAS) over the contentious case of eight-year-old Purple Butterfly didn't fly, a disappointed former foster mother said.

Young Purple Butterfly Woman is the native name for the full-blooded Ojibway child who was placed in foster care with Milton resident Sharron Fergus when she was just three months old.

The youngster is blind and mentally challenged with the mental age of about four years.

Last November, a police officer and three Toronto CCAS workers took Purple Butterfly out of her Milton school and permanently out of Ms Fergus' care.

Since then Ms Fergus has been allotted only one supervised visit. With the permission of the new foster family, she used it to videotape the care the child was receiving.

And she had hoped to show the tape in a hearing with the CCAS January 14.

The meeting took place, but the videotape, along with other evidence, wasn't permitted, said Ms Fergus.

"It wasn't the hearing we expected," said Ms Fergus.

In order to present her case for regaining care of the child, Ms Fergus' lawyer Dino Mazzorato of

"It wasn't the hearing we expected."

SHARRON FERGUS

Hutchinson, Thompson, Henderson and Mott had subpoenaed the principal and teachers from the child's former school.

But he learned shortly before the meeting that they wouldn't be permitted to speak.

And Purple Butterfly's mother, who can't be named to protect the child's identity, was also barred from the meeting after travelling from Sudbury with her band leader to champion Ms Fergus' cause.

"It's part of their internal process," explained Mr. Mazzorato. "There's a number of steps. This was more of a mediation process."

When the hearing took place it was with CCAS director Mary McConville and two care workers.

"We expected to be able to present evidence," said Ms Fergus. "They allowed me to answer allegations but not present evidence to prove them wrong."

But the next step is a meeting with the CCAS board of directors in which she and Mr. Mazzorato hope they'll be able to present their case complete with the videotape and other evidence.

But some good did come out of the meeting, said Mr. Mazzorato.

"It gave us an opportunity to see what their case is,"

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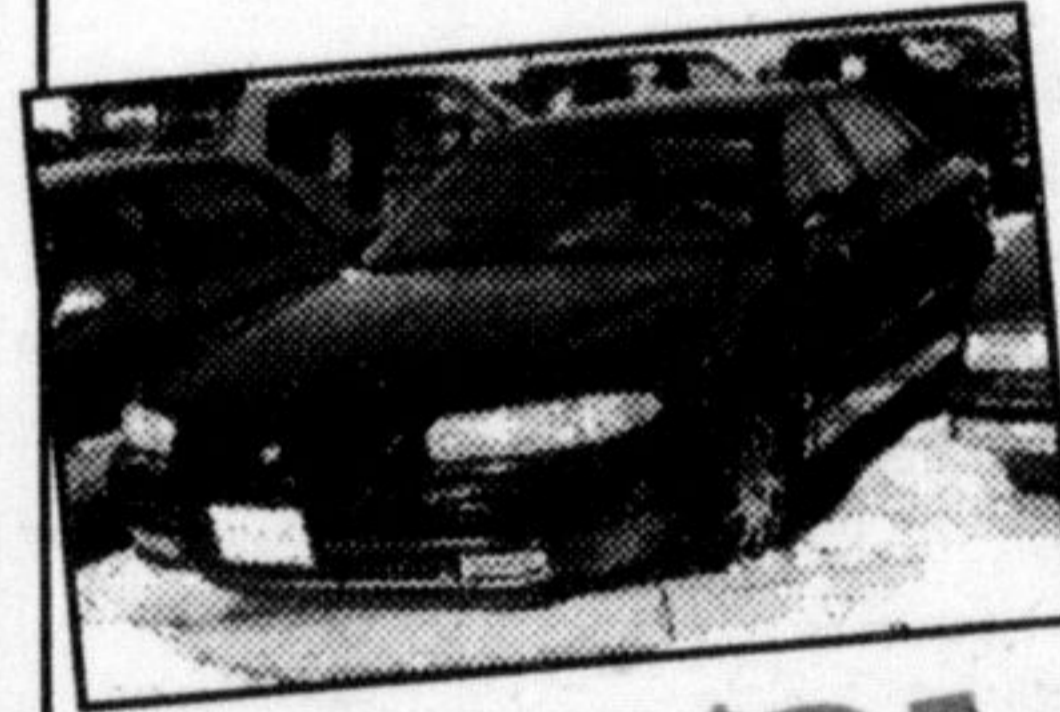
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