

ADOPTION CIRCLES

Canada's Post-Adoption Quarterly

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Marnie Tetz and her Mum,
Helene Jorgenson

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FMNFS FACTS:

Forget Me Not Family Society is a provincially registered, non-profit society and a federally registered charity. Tax receipts are issued for donations to our Society Charity number 88908 4869 RR0001. Our Society was formed for education, consultation, peer counseling and to offer support to all those touched by adoption: adoptees, birth parents, adoptive parents, and concerned professionals. Our primary source of income is through membership fees. These funds go directly towards printing, postage, telephone, wireless expenses and supplies.

WHAT WE OFFER:

Experience shows that at various times in life, the issues and concerns of adoption need to be addressed. We provide our members with opportunities to gain further understanding of adoption issues through:

- Conducting monthly support groups in New Westminster and Cloverdale
- Individual peer support
- Resource library
- Referrals to professionals and other service groups
- Speakers Bureau to educate groups on post-adoption issues
- Quarterly Newsletter

OUR MANDATE:

- To encourage and develop a recognition of the benefits of family preservation and openness in adoption practice.
- To establish and operate a Post Adoption Resource Centre providing education, consultation, counseling and support to those touched by adoption: adoptees, birthparents, adoptive parents, and concerned professionals.
- To provide community education programs, panel presentations and workshops on post adoption issues for any members of the community who wish to learn more about adoption and reunion issues.

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER:

ADOPTION CIRCLES is published quarterly and is available by subscription to our Society. Membership is open to anyone who is interested in adoption and post-adoption issues. Comments and contributions are always welcome. Please mail submissions to our office or forward to the Editor at: bjrymer@telus.net

The Forget Me Not Society reserves the right to edit all material submitted on the basis of space, relevance, and suitability. **Please note that the material published in the Newsletter, including the article by the Editor, does not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of the Forget Me Not Family Society.**

Summer has arrived, or has it? Maybe those of us on the west coast of B.C. are going to experience it finally in the Fall. Hard to say... This issue of Adoption Circles has its roots in 'Reunion'. Honestly... what is reunion and what does it mean? Is it the end all and cure all? Once we are reunited are we all better? Will we skip happily off into the sunset with our found person? Perhaps this is a hope and expectation. At times this is the dream that does become the reality. However my thoughts for anyone starting a search or in the beginning stages of reunion is that reunion isn't the destination, it's one of the ports of call. We should be aware that the work begins after reunion takes place as to how we will make this new relationship work. It is hard to imagine that a relationship between a mother and child can be regarded as a new relationship or



President's Message
Marnie Tetz

ADOPTION CIRCLES



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Publisher

Forget Me Not Family Society

President MARNIE TETZ
marnietetz@shaw.ca

Vice-President
AUDREY HARRINGTON
ahhfashionsathome@shaw.ca

Treasurer
GAIL DAVIES
g.davies@telus.net

Secretary
GLORIA SWEDER
gsweder@shaw.ca

Directors
AMY NEWMAN
info@nrsfind.com

HEATHER ALBRECHT
chacha2@shaw.ca

BERNADETTE RYMER
bjrymer@telus.net

Newsletter Editor
BERNADETTE RYMER

Newsletter Layout
LYNN MAYHEW

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Please send cheque payable to the **Forget Me Not Family Society** at:
#102 - 1860 Southmere Cres. E.,
Surrey, B C V4A 6Y7
Telephone: 604-828-9577
Residents of the U.S. - please send U.S. funds.

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that between siblings or father can be regarded the same. It's sad that most people (the general public) have no idea that what they experience daily is anything but the norm for those of us in the adoption constellation.

This issue of Adoption Circles will introduce you to those who were instrumental in changing the Adoption Act in British Columbia in 1996. I think that it's very important that the work of these individuals, along with others, not be forgotten but rather be remembered and appreciated. Adoption reform advocates had the help of politicians in the mid-1990s to change the Adoption Act of B.C. and

open adoption records in British Columbia, the first province in Canada to do so. I am honoured to introduce you to these courageous individuals who worked tirelessly to achieve open adoption records. We can't forget what they did for us and it is our duty to continue the fight that they took on before us.

Please take the time to cozy up in a comfy chair with a cup of tea... embrace the history of how the Adoption Act was changed in B.C. and think about how you can help in making the next contribution.

Rymer Writes



reunions.

In my case it was actually a 'winter' holiday as my husband and I travelled around Australia, my homeland. While there I engaged in the act of reunion over and over, in many different places and settings. As this was my husband's first trip to Australia, for him it was not about reunions, but about meeting family and friends and accompanying and supporting me as I did a walk through time, sometimes pleasant and sometimes very painful. One very pleasant experience was when I reunited with three girlfriends whom I have known since I was eight years old (1958) and chummed about with them until I moved to Canada in 1972. I had not seen two of these 'girls' in 39 years. However, the years melted away and we connected on a very deep level. It was almost a mystical experience, as though we had never been separated.

Maybe that is exactly what we long for as we think about and prepare for a reunion with the loved one we lost to adoption too many years ago: to have the years melt away, to connect on a very deep level and I suppose to somehow - magically and perhaps mystically - to carry on as if we were never separated. There are some of us who are fortunate to have that kind of reunion, however for most of us this 'utopia' does not happen.

Well here we are almost at the end of summer, and time to prepare another editorial to set the stage for this issue of our Adoption Circles which focuses on the theme of Reunion. In planning for this topic we thought about what many of us do during our summer vacation: we visit family and friends and often it is a time for small or large family

The reality of reunion with our lost loved one is not a onetime event as was the visit I had with my school mates. Rather, adoption reunion is a process that begins when we meet again, and continues on throughout the following years. Reunions can be a time of great joy or great sorrow, or a mixture of joy and sorrow. For many of us it is a time of extreme anxiety, where we come face to face with the reality of who we are, what we want from the new relationship and what we have lost that can never regain no matter how terrific is the relationship. For most of us over time the anxiety decreases and the joy increases. Some are not so fortunate, as they find a relationship that does not work for whatever reason, or perhaps they find a birth parent or child who does not want contact, or most sadly, who have passed away.

If you are in reunion you will probably agree that the ride is like an emotional rollercoaster, but a ride we would not miss for the world!

I did not prepare for reunion (BIG MISTAKE). I did not know that I should prepare for reunion. I did not know that there was such a thing as support groups and I had never heard of the Forget Me Not Family Society. It was my precious daughter who invited me to attend with her my first FMNFS event, the Joe Soll workshop in 2008. I attended that very first event with profound anxiety and trepidation. The moment I walked into the room Nancy Kato (whom I had never met) came up to me and recognized me as my daughter's mother. At that moment my life changed forever: at that moment I began to prepare for reunion which had started 18 years earlier. Do not make my mistake. PREPARE.

In this issue of AC you will find articles by eminent and world renowned authors and lecturers, by a psychologist, clinical psychotherapist, social workers and adoption reform activists.

WHY?

We know from experience and from the work of authors in this AC and many others, that the better prepared you are, the more you are able to manage whatever comes your way. We hope the articles will help you to understand the need to prepare for Reunion, or if you are like me and entered a reunion process without first preparing for it, the need to do the healing work as your reunion process continues, or does not continue.

In this issue we have digressed from our tradition of profiling one person who has contributed greatly to adoption reform and healing/support. We have prepared for you *'Profiles in Persistence'*, a series of 5 mini-profiles of people, some who were instrumental in reforming adoption laws in the 1990s, and others who were pioneers in search and reunion and adoption healing and support. As I am only three years new to the FMNFS and indeed to the world of adoption healing, I found the information in these profiles very interesting and it helped me to understand not only what happened to bring us to where we are today, but also helped to set the stage for 'Where to from here?' As so many people have done so much work so that we could reunite with our lost loved ones, I have to ask myself, "OK

self, it's your turn. Now what are you going to do to continue the process and to support others in their search and reunion?"

We are sincerely grateful to our authors for their time and efforts in the work they do and in writing articles for our AC, and in some cases, allowing us to print articles they have written in the past. Each of our authors challenges us to consider where we are, how we can become healthier through doing the tough work of healing and preparing for your next step.

We hope you enjoy this issue of Adoption Circles, but more to the point, we hope the thoughts shared and challenges herein spur you into action to continue in your healing process.

Individually and collectively we ask you, "Where to from here?"

Bernadette Rymer

P.S. If you missed the Joe Soll workshop in 2008, 'dear me'! However, you have another chance as Joe will be our facilitator in our October 2011 workshop. See the notice inserted in this issue.

Profiles in Persistence

We are delighted and honored to present to you five people who have contributed so much to the reform of BC Adoption Laws and to adoption awareness, healing and support. We hope you will enjoy reading their profiles and learning about the history of how these five people worked tirelessly to help us get to where we are today.

Nancy Kato

President of FMNFS 1999 to 2010

Do you have a personal connection with adoption?

Yes – I am a birth mother who relinquished my right to parent my daughter.

Why did you become involved in the reform of adoption laws in B.C.?

I became involved because I believe everyone has the right to know who they are, their origins and their family history. Forcing people to live with adoption as some "dirty secret" was wrong.



What role did you play in the reform of adoption laws in B.C.?

I got involved with the Forget Me Not Family Society. I spoke at Forums with Margaret Lord who created the Lord Report.

How do you respond to those who continue to insist that birth parents have a right to refuse information and/or contact, and that the rights of the birth parents supersede the rights of the adopted person to have full access to their birth, genetic and family history?

If you have *not* walked in the shoes of an adoptee or birth parent, then you don't have the right to speak up for them. The decisions to refuse contact or give information are fear based (for the most part) or based on inaccurate information about the missing person ("your birth mother was a prostitute and didn't want you"). The best thing I can say is to tell my personal story of what it meant to have given birth and hand my baby over to a social worker, never to see her again; and what the impact of that decision meant to me as a person, and the rest of my life and relationships. The closed system was wrong and we have the opportunity today to fix it. At the end of the day, if someone is that adamant about not connecting, then the rest of us need to back off and not judge these people harshly. We need to empathize and be sad for them.

Profiles in Persistence

What do you see as the next step in the continuing process of adoption reform?

Joan Vanstone

I was born in Vancouver and adopted at 16 months. In my mid 30s the need to know my origins and find my medical history to protect my three children sent me to the Children's Aid Society of Vancouver for information. A very wise social worker named Honor Mowinckel urged me to start Parent Finders with two other adoptees. She supplied me with my very sparse information and urged me to start speaking out about the injustices adoption imposed upon adopted persons and birth parents. After a three year search I found both my birth parents deceased with cancer and heart attack problems and I found a half brother and sister. I established the Canadian Adoption Reunion Register of Parent Finders and entered most of the almost 59,000 records in a computer data base which has produced many reunion matches.

Parent Finders also does active searches for and helps adoptees and birth parents to successfully do their own searches and supports them in their reunion experiences. Parent Finders also successfully lobbied almost all the Canadian Provinces to change their archaic and outdated adoption acts. Today only Quebec and Nova Scotia have not brought their adoption acts into conformity with the Charter of Rights and Human Rights legislation in Canada and the international UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The last change that must be made to all Canadian adoption acts is to remove the Disclosure and No Contact Vetoes retroactively from the present adoption legislation. In October 2009, after 35 years of volunteering, I resigned



I see the next step being the removal of closed records, vetoes and more support for those relinquishing their right to parent, for whatever reason. Once a child is placed, services for the birth parents pretty much stops and yet we all acknowledge that adoption is a life-long process. Adoptees and adoptive parents can rely on life-long support and information.

How can we, who are not involved in politics or are not politically savvy, become involved and support continued adoption reform?

Speak up – share your personal story of adoption from an impact (victim) statement perspective. Get educated and informed about the issues of secrecy in adoption. Speak to your local MLA and get them on board.

as National Director of Parent Finders and handed over that responsibility to Monica Byrne of Parent Finders Ottawa who is doing a fine job. I am continuing to run Parent Finders of BC.

Why did you become involved in the reform of adoption laws in B.C.?

Initially I became involved in the adoption issue to seek medical history to safeguard my three children. When I realized how discriminatory and archaic the old Adoption Act was I felt compelled to try to make changes. With two other people I founded Parent Finders in 1974 and assisted adult adoptees, foster persons and birth relatives to find information about their lost birth history, their birth relatives and to assist them in seeking a reunion experience. Over the next 35 years I helped to lobby the BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland governments to reform their various adoption acts to give access to their adoption records of thousands of adult adoptees and birth parents.

What role did you play in the reform of adoption laws in B.C.?

Parent Finders members Sue Blanck, Jim Kelly and I all sat on the Adoption Advisory and Consultative Committee and gave input to the regulations governing the new Adoption Act proclaimed November 4, 1996. I give MLA

Joy MacPhail tremendous credit for spearheading changes to the old Adoption Act.

Profiles in Persistence

How do you respond to those who continue to insist that birth parents have a right to refuse information and contact, and that the rights of the birth parents supersede the rights of the adopted person to have full access to their birth, genetic and family history?

The adoptee has the paramount right to know their genealogical and medical history which was stolen from them at the time of the legal adoption. The child had no say in the process which robbed them of their birthright. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Canada signed on to in 1991, gives every child the right to their identity. There should be no legal right to allow any birth parent to block an adopted person's access to their genetic history. No government or birth parent must trample on the paramount rights of any innocent child.

What do you see as the next step in the continuing process of adoption reform?

In any Province where a Disclosure Veto or No Contact veto exists, these clauses must be extinguished from those Adoption Acts retroactively. Quebec and Nova Scotia must be lobbied to enact new open records Adoption Act legislation.

How can we, who are not involved in politics or are not politically savvy, become involved and support continued adoption reform?

All groups dedicated to opening sealed adoption records and extinguishing Disclosure and No Contact Vetoes must bring pressure on the Provincial Governments, pointing out that the current Adoption Acts are in violation of the equality provisions of the Canadian Charter of Rights and the Human Rights Act of Canada. Parent Finders learned how to lobby governments successfully and Forget Me Not Family Society can seek guidance from Jim Kelly who is one of the most knowledgeable persons in the law regarding adoption reform. I will be pleased to assist in any way I can.

Jim Kelly

Do you have a personal connection with adoption?

I was adopted shortly after birth, so in a sense I have been personally connected with adoption all my life.

Why did you become involved in the reform of adoption laws in B.C.?

Short answer: I wanted to find the truth about my birth event.

Longer answer: I visited a child welfare office in Vancouver when I was 16 (the late 1960s) and asked for more information about my adoption. It was a time in the adoption history of this province when to ask such questions was taboo and you were made to feel as if you were not normal. For whatever reason that day, a social worker pulled my file and allowed me to ask some questions. He would then read from my file and provide me with some tidbits of non-identifying information. Fast forward about 15 years, after hitting a life milestone I sought out a local adoption support group, Parent Finders and shortly after that I attended my first adoption conference in the States. (There were no local adoption conferences at that time.) Both of these events felt like a great weight had been lifted off my shoulders. I discovered that I was not alone in my quest and that it was not

abnormal for adoptees to be asking questions about their own personal history. These events were also very energizing.

A few years later, another B.C. adoptee successfully filled a *Freedom of Information* (FOI) request for all non-identifying information in his Ministry adoption file. The Forget Me Not Family Society was an Intervener in that case. If you want to get a sense of what it was like just trying to get your personal non-identifying adoption information at the time, you may want to read the summation of the case (see the following reference):

Introduction, Lex Reynolds, McIsaac and Co., for the Adoption Council of Canada. Portfolio Officer's Fact Report. In the matter of the Inquiry between Andrew... http://pages.infinit.net/orions/textes_divers/Freedom-of-information-request.doc

So naturally I followed his lead and I then filed an FOI request to get a copy of my adoption file in non-identifying format using the same process. However, the documents which I eventually got back contradicted the information which had been read to me from my file in my teens. The Ministry had either lied to me in my teens or they were lying to me now about my adoption history. I was furious, I wanted the whole truth! To me these highly censored Ministry documents were just fuel on the fire of injustice.

If I hadn't been motivated to help with the reform of the adoption laws before, I most certainly was at this point!

Profiles in Persistence

What role did you play in the reform of adoption laws in B.C.?

In the early 1990s we had a B.C. government which both built social policy based on consensus and understood that people come before profits. An adoptive father, lawyer and child and family advocate had the foresight to see the potential for adoption reform legislation at the time. He then applied to the Law Foundation of B.C. for a grant and was successful in getting funding to bring together adoption organization representatives from across the province in order to lobby for adoption law reform. This ad-hoc group which came together called themselves the *Adoption Advisory and Consultation Committee* (AACC) and it was composed of members who spanned the adoption constellation; birth mothers, birth father, adoptees, adoptive parents, foster parents, the native community and the gay community. The AACC existed for a brief two years.

During the first year our goal was to advocate for adoption law reform. After the committee was successful in achieving that goal during the second year we focused on assisting the Ministry with the drafting of the new adoption law regulations. I had the honour and privilege of being an AACC committee member for both of those years. Unfortunately this ad-hoc group existed before the Internet as we know it today, so you will not likely be able to locate any reference to it online.

The person who was largely responsible for facilitating the process of *reforming* adoption laws was Lex Reynolds, who is referenced above: his achievements have also been recognized in a previous Adoption Circles edition:

FORGET ME NOT FAMILY SOCIETY
PRESIDENTS REPORT For the period February 1,
2009 to January 31, 2010: Presented 24 April 2010
<http://www.adoptioncircles.net/cms3/presidents_report>

How do you respond to those who continue to insist that birth parents have a right to refuse information and contact, and that the right of the birth parents supersedes the right of the adopted person to have full access to their birth, genetic and family history?

This is actually two questions, one about the right to identity and the other about right to contact so I will address each of them separately.

The first question is about the right to identity issue. Every Province and Territory first endorsed and then Canada

ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This

international human rights covenant guarantees every child, "without discrimination of any kind, including birth or other status," "the child's right to preserve his or her identity". What is more, the Supreme Court of Canada in numerous cases has repeatedly recognized the human rights contained in UN Conventions which Canada has ratified. In my opinion the human right to identity for every child, including adoptees and donor offspring is inalienable, unassailable and non-negotiable. Any notion that the right of a birth parent supersedes the right of the child to his or her biological identity is totally without merit.

The second question is about the right to refuse Contact. As far as I'm aware of, nobody has been charged with a breach of the "no-contact" veto-provision of the B.C. Adoption Act. While it may be disheartening, I can speak from personal experience about this, but any adult is within their right to refuse contact with any other adult. There are also non-adoption laws which legally prevent contact if one party does not want it and these laws apply equally even if one adult is a birth parent and the other is an adult adopted person. On the other hand, just because one birth parent does not want personal contact with an adult adoptee they do not have the right to speak for anybody else but themselves. If an adult adoptee wants to approach the other birth parent, and they have not filed a no-contact veto, then there is nothing to bar the adult adoptee from contacting that person.

What do you see as the next step in the continuing process of adoption reform?

First, due to a recent successful court case in which Olivia Pratten, a donor offspring, won the right for donor offspring to know the identity of his/her father, the B.C. Adoption Act must now be revised, see:

Pratten v. British Columbia (Attorney General), 2011
BCSC 656 2011/05/19
<<http://www.courts.gov.bc.ca/jdb-txt/SC/11/06/2011BCSC0656cor1.htm>>

I believe that the next step for adoption reform is to take advantage of this opportunity in order to purge the B.C. Adoption Act of the "disclosure veto" clause. Adoption reform advocates should start to lobby their MLAs on behalf of both donor offspring and adoptees, for a new Adoption Act which explicitly recognizes the rights contained in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, including both the right to equality and right to identity provisions.

How can we, who are not involved in politics or are not politically savvy, become involved and support continued adoption reform?

To answer this question I would again recommend that members read the Forget Me Not Family Society PRESIDENTS REPORT, 2010, which is referenced above:

"As many of you are aware, this was my final year on the Board of Forget Me Not Family Society. I have decided to retire after 19 years of being involved in the adoption reunion reform movement. It has been an amazing journey to say the least! From my first conference where I wouldn't even tell people my name, to where I stand today outspoken, advocate, speaker, conference organizer, reunion specialist, peer counselor, confident, media contact, writer, fund

Profiles in Persistence

raiser, and reunited mom and grandmother. I have seen the opening of records in British Columbia....."
Nancy Kato, President.

Every person's path is different. Clearly those who came before you were not involved in politics, were not politically savvy and were not public speakers at the time they began their journey either, but they learned to become adoption reform advocates, they overcame their fears, they worked with allies and they took action. We are where we are today because we stand on the shoulders of those who came before us. The torch has now been passed to you.

The real question is, ***will you rise to the challenge?***

(See Jim Kelly's MLA letter on page 14 "Putting a Face to Adoption")

Sue Blanck

Do you have a personal connection with adoption?

Oh yes, I am a re-united Adoptee and a recovering Birth Mom.

Why did you become involved in the reform of adoption laws in B.C.?

I felt they were totally archaic, how dare ANYONE tell me I can't know who I am?



What role did you play in the reform of adoption laws in B.C.?

I served on the A.A. and C.C. from its beginning to the end, and also lobbied and had the privilege of working with Parent Finders, served two terms as a Canadian Director of the American Adoption Congress, and was a Canadian Rep. for Concerned United Birth Parents.

How do you respond to those who continue to insist that birth parents have a right to refuse information and contact, and that the right of the birth parents supersede the right of the adopted person to have full access to their birth, genetic and family history?

I believe that everyone should have a choice, but Birth Parents have a MORAL obligation of to be available to supply all pertinent information of medical history and family history. It was not the Adoptees choice to be adopted, and the Adoptee should not be punished for this. Most of us when re-united realize that it is NOT like running slow motion through a field of daisies. You may or may not like what you find, but I believe you have the right to search and find and be mature enough to deal with it.

What do you see as the next step in the continuing process of adoption reform?

I would like to see totally OPEN RECORDS, and open re-union registry, and counselling available for those who request it. We do not need social workers once again deciding who gets what information.

How can we, who are not involved in politics or are not politically savvy, become involved and support continued adoption reform?

We all need to constantly push for more reform, send letters to our MLAs and also to newspapers - the media has always been very helpful.

Sharon Jinkerson-Brass

Do you have a personal connection with adoption?

I am a First Nations reunited Adoptee.

Why did you become involved in the reform of adoption laws in B.C.?

I felt so fortunate to find my family due to an underground system of disclosure carried out by Aboriginal Civil Servants with access to the infamous 'A List', the list of all legally adopted Aboriginal people so they maintain their status but they cannot identify the band they are from. I thought "This isn't right, why should I and others not be allowed to know who we are especially when I began to learn about our history." I also met many Aboriginal people who never knew about the underground system and I thought this is wrong. I was also touched by the fact that people were risking their jobs to hand over confidential information. For me this was another injustice that needed to be righted.

What role did you play in the reform of adoption laws in B.C.?

I co-chaired the Adoption Legislation Review Committee. I wrote letters and articles, educated the public and participated in efforts to reunite families.

How do you respond to those who continue to insist that birth parents have a right to refuse information and contact, and that the rights of the birth parents supersede the rights of the adopted person to have full access to their birth, genetic and family history?

This is a big complex question. I believe everyone has a right to know who they are but, I also believe a Birth Mother has the right to file a "no contact order." I believe this achieves a balance although I sympathize with adoptees who are faced with this reality. I believe extended kin should be given the choice to reunite with an adoptee if the Birth Mother refuses.

What do you see as the next step in the continuing process of adoption reform?

I believe we need community resources and Education. The emphasis is on creating resources for Adoptions to take place but very little is done to reconcile the past or to educate the public about this complex social issue.

This imbalance is unacceptable.

How can we, who are not involved in politics or are not politically savvy, become involved and support continued adoption reform?

There are many ways a person can be supportive in their family and community. When I speak about my adoption experiences I am aware that I could be talking to someone who is carrying around a secret or a person who is unaware consciously of the impact adoption may have had on their family, friends or community. This mindfulness can be very helpful in bringing forward changes in our communities. Social change begins with our mindfulness which eventually filters energy into the bigger wheels of legislation and politics!

Profiles in Persistence

I See You

by Sharon Jinkerson-Brass
Originally printed in the AVID ART Magazine

Witnessing is an important part of Anishinabi Culture. This tradition can be described as beholding a person's essence and telling them exactly what you see and feel. In the recent blockbuster film Avatar, the hero is finally and totally accepted by the Na'vi people when Princess Neytiri says to Jake the foreigner "I see you" and she gently touches the center of his chest. This is what my people would call "witnessing."

When I was very young I was placed in foster care and later adopted so when I met my Grandmother twenty-seven

years later, I was completely ignorant of my ancestral traditions. I was a little leery even afraid of my meeting my people so once I received information about my birth family I put off contacting them for many months. The first time I met my partner Victor Reece he said something that really struck me, "your Grandmother will remember you."

I had never thought about my Grandmother before this and the possibility intrigued me, even comforted me enough to make that first call to my reserve. I spoke briefly to my

Chief who promised to make inquiries around the community to see if he could find my family. The very next day the phone rang and I heard an elderly woman's voice on the line saying "Is that you Sharon?"

My Grandmother got straight to the point (she wasn't one for chit chat) she said "I am going to come and see you." My heart raced at the thought of meeting a blood relative for the first time. I felt terror and curiosity as I fumbled around trying to find my calendar to select an agreeable date for her to visit. "I am leaving on the bus tonight at 5:00 p.m." she announced. I stopped looking for my calendar.

Several times I rearranged everything in my apartment while I waited for her bus to arrive. Her journey took nearly a day. The moment I embraced my Grandmother I knew everything was going to be alright because she had a natural warmth and gentleness about her. We spent the evening getting to know each other and I found conversation flowed easily as we shared stories about our lives. The moment came for us to settle in for the night and I politely asked if my Grandmother would prefer the couch or my bed for the night.

My Grandmother looked at me and said she had been a midwife for nearly fifty years. "I brought most of your relatives into this world and I always slept with those babies on their first night on this earth." I was emotionally spent and tired and I had no idea why she was telling me

Profiles in Persistence

this story or where she was going with it. "I am going to sleep with you tonight because you were born far away from your people," and that was that.

When I crawled into bed, I was a little apprehensive because we were never very intimate in my adoptive family. This closeness was something I longed for my whole life and now, here it was. The connection with my Grandmother was so strong that it only took a few moments for me to settle in. My Grandmother began to caress my face and she softly chanted in my ear "you are so wise, so smart, so loving and kind." For the first time ever, I exist, I am truly alive, and someone can see me. I weep.

My Grandmother had a phrase for her impromptu witnessing ceremonies, she would say "Come here, I want to love you up." This meant that she was going to praise you to high heaven so your spirit would dance inside. My people understood the importance of "seeing" people for who they truly are and taking time to really behold the glory of every human being.

Sharon Jinkerson-Brass
Community Health Liaison
Pacific Association of First Nation's Women
2017 Dundas Street,
Vancouver, BC V5L 1J5
Phone 604-872-1849 Fax 604-872-1845
<http://pafnw.ca>

"You Will Get Over It," They Said *Strategies to Encourage Mothers to Reunite*

By Monica Byrne and Karen Lynn

Many Faces of Adoption Conference
American Adoption Congress
Orlando, Florida April 2011



Karen Lynn, Gail Davies (FMNFS) and Monica Byrne

UNDERSTAND WHY SOME MOTHERS REFUSE CONTACT

Understand the trauma. In most cases, a surrendering mother is still deeply traumatised by the treatment she received during and after her pregnancy, the well of feelings involved in the loss of her child, and the abrupt imposition of a very cruel adult world on a girl child.

Understand the effects of blame. When a mother is blamed for surrendering her child—a situation that was

usually beyond her control, whether she knows it or not—it is very, very painful. She will retreat. Most of us remember such instances of blame clearly for all our lives.

Understand that there is a continuum of mothers ranging from those who are aggressively eager to find and reunite with their lost children to those who are fearful of being found, and even those who have consciously forgotten their experience.

Understand coping strategies.

Mothers cope differently with the trauma, but coping is always about self-protection:

- **Some women, like any group of human beings, survive by denial.** If I don't believe that I was damaged when I gave away my child, then I'm not. It's the past and I have gotten over it. Adoption is always good for children—their new families were chosen by professionals. My child was given the best, etc. **The past is past.**
- **Some women survive by being 'practical'.** Get on with your life—that's the 'smart' thing to do—and if this route is chosen she will create her own private minefield of denial and feel entitled to do so. **The past is past.**
- **Some women survived by facing the problem directly,** searching for their lost children, identifying the systemic issues and fighting for change. **The past is present.**

Understand the shame. If the shame has been internalized deeply, and if the mother has not had the opportunity to deconstruct it, she may be encasing herself in an impenetrable bunker, deep in her consciousness. Shaming and blaming a mother in the *present* will confirm her feelings of worthlessness, causing her to become entrenched in her secrecy.

Understand the sell. Adoption was sold to all mothers as “in the best interests of the child.” It is *news* to most surrendering mothers that adoptees have issues about adoption. Ideas about identity, needing to know one's original mother were never suggested to mothers caught in an unplanned pregnancy. Finding out about this increases their burden of shame. The adoption sell was so powerful that institutions—people from all walks of life—accepted it without question.

Understand the adoption industry. Post WWII, a market for babies for adoption developed. Social workers honed their professional skills, and coercion in many forms became endemic to convince mothers to surrender their

babies. They were rarely informed of their own rights. Read books such as *The Stork Market*, *Wake up Little Suzie*, and *Pregnancy and Power*.

Understand the fear. She may fear rejection from those who are important in her life now—fear of having to deal with the whole experience and of the possible outcomes. For some mothers it all just seems too hard. Some mothers are afraid to talk about the father, especially if there is more than one possible father and/or there was a rape situation.

Understand social amnesia. Many people have no memory of the *pressure* that was applied to a young woman with an unplanned pregnancy. Imagine being told that you were unfit to be a mother, that you had brought shame on your family, that if you truly loved your child you would give her to more deserving—married—people. Imagine then what it feels like, 30-40 years later to hear “I would never give up my child.”

ADVICE TO ADOPTED ADULTS TRYING TO CONNECT

- Join a support group of peers.
- Make your mother feel safe, respect her fears and boundaries, reassure her that you won't reveal her secret.
- Do not make her feel that she has been stalked.
- Be very patient she may just need time. Perhaps the circumstances in her life will change. Big obstacles may move away.
- Give her an assurance that she does not need to tell the world her story – keep it private if she wishes. Do *not* “out” her.
- Try to normalize the experience, encourage connection with other mothers.
- Do not criticise her for protecting herself.
- Remove the shame & blame, get her to look at her socio-political situation, her lack of options. Unravel the story carefully, building the castle of your reunion.
- In tough cases where the mother is severely afraid and refuses contact, make infrequent contact on birthdays and holidays if possible. Try to make her comfortable rather than having expectations of her.
- Avoid involving adoptive family members in your outreach—invite them into the reunion later after you feel prepared.
- Read, read, read books by mothers. Prepare yourself, not only with knowledge about what to expect yourself, but how to help your mother.

Identity and Relationships

by Nancy Verrier

What is identity and what makes it so crucial when speaking of adoption? I believe it is something that makes adoptees feel a kind of alienation all their lives, beginning with their adoptive families. Adoptees call it genetic confusion.

This confusion begins when the baby is separated from the first mother and begins his life with his adoptive mother. At birth a baby knows his mother through his senses: smell, touch, sight of mother's face, tone of voice, heartbeat, resonance. No matter how wonderful the adoptive mother, she doesn't pass the sensory test. The baby is confused, terrified, angry; then sad, helpless, hopeless, alone. Where is mom? Although the cutting of the umbilical cord separates the mother and child physically, they are not yet separated psychologically. They are what Eric Neumann calls "the mother/baby." The psychological separation is an intrapsychic process that happens gradually during the first year of life. So the relinquished baby feels, not only the loss of the mother, but also the loss of part of the Self.

From the moment the baby is separated from the first mom and gives up hope of connecting with her again, she begins to cope with that loss. These coping mechanisms are outlined in my first book *The Primal Wound*: the effects of separation trauma on her attitudes, feelings, and behaviour. Those behaviours, which emanate from the child's early experience of separation and loss, do not give an accurate picture of who the child is. Many adoptees have written to me after having read *The Primal Wound* and said something to the effect: "You know me better than anyone." Yet, I don't know them at all. What I *do* know is how they may have responded to being separated from their first mothers. What I know is how they coped. This coping behaviour is most noticeable in the adoptive home. Sometimes others—neighbours, teachers, strangers—actually see more of the true identity of adoptees than their own families.

Why is this? It seems crucial for the adoptee to fit as well as possible into the adoptive family. Since he doesn't have any genetic cues, he has to find all his cues from his environment. In many cases adoptees are basically so different from their adoptive parents, it is a wonder they survive in those families. However, to survive is to adapt, so every day the adoptee tries to figure out *how to be* in that family. But because he is basically different, he always may feel somewhat of a failure at this. First of all



he failed to keep first mom, and now he is failing to truly fit into this new family. What do you suppose this does to self-esteem?

Life goes on and the adoptee is struggling on two fronts: trying to figure out how to be a part of her adoptive family without any genetic cues, and how to deal with all the feelings she has about what has happened to her, while trying very hard not to be abandoned again. Fear of abandonment is a driving force (or a paralyzing agent) in the life of every adoptee. Although not consciously remembering that devastating event, the

experience is imprinted on every neuron/cell in her body. Something happened which changed her life forever and she has to make sure that it doesn't happen again. Because she doesn't know exactly what that event was, she has to be very, very vigilant.

The crucial event of separation happened before most adoptees achieved long-term memory, so they begin to believe that their coping mechanisms *are* who they are: They are "bad kids," acting out all over the place without understanding why; or they are very good, trying not to rock the boat. Often parents define them this way and they begin to do the same thing, even though they may know that *someone else* dwells inside.

There are some parents who seem to understand that their children may not be like them. They support and encourage the child's unique interests and talents. However, there are some parents who, because of their lack of understanding or interest in their child's talents, fail to go to the track meets or the piano recitals.

Even though some biological parents are just as blind or uncaring, there are other ways in which these children know that they belong: what they look like, how they stand, how they walk, mannerisms, gestures, tone of voice, shape of lips, height, weight, smile, eyes, etc., etc. Something reminds them that they belong. Adoptees, however, are super observant. They notice every discrepancy. They are trying to find likeness, but notice every difference. They notice this much more than their parents do. Unlike children in biological families, who go from sameness to difference, adoptees go from difference to sameness, as they adapt as best they can.

It should be noted that this isn't easy for the adoptive parents either, especially the mother who from the beginning was the one who failed the sensory test. She,

too, has to figure out how to be with her child without any genetic cues. In addition, she is dealing with a child who was traumatized by the separation from the first mother. So it is indeed a dance that goes on between the adoptee and her mother over and over again. The general public doesn't understand how difficult it is to interact with someone where there are no genetic cues to help with the understanding of what is needed, or how to interact with someone who is afraid to get too close (or afraid to let go).

The discrepancy between what the adopted person thinks he must do to fit in and how he feels inside is a dilemma for him. As one adoptee put it, it is like being a dog in a family of cats. This genetic confusion is evident even for adoptees who found out they were adopted late in life. The feelings are there; the confusion is there; something is wrong. However, there is no context for their feelings or confusion.

Remember that the initial confusion of wondering what happened to mom was the first identity problem for the adoptee. The second crucial time is adolescence when again the adoptee feels alienated from her family. In most families at this time, the child first identifies with either mom or dad, then pushes off into being somewhat different. It is difficult for adoptees to do this because they haven't yet achieved that sameness that seems to be required. After having blamed themselves most of their lives for not having done so, they now seem to turn the blame around and blame their parents, especially mom, for this problem. Of course, they don't know they are blaming her for this; they are just blaming her for everything else. So, in order to avoid the constant reminder of those differences, many adoptees try to stay away from their parents during this time. They spend lots of time with friends, stay in their rooms, try to avoid family get-togethers, and so forth. This causes problems, unkind words, and hurt feelings. Some kids will delve into drugs and alcohol as they try to anaesthetize themselves from the pain of it all. Because this causes such pain and consternation in the whole family, the parents may feel helpless and send the child away to a treatment center, triggering another feeling of abandonment in the adoptee, further alienating her from her family.

I believe many of the problems between the adoptee and his parents are rooted in two things: the parents' ignorance of their child's loss and the differences in their DNA: their identity. And I believe this problem of identity and of feeling misunderstood causes the adoptee to be secretive with the parents. Adoptees become very withholding and accuse the parents of being intrusive if they ask a simple question such as "How are you doing?"!! (Adoptees, be honest!) Unfortunately, some of these resentments last into the adult relationship because neither parent nor child realizes that many of the problems between them are

caused by the natural differences between them. If this can be recognized and acknowledged by both sides, the relationship can flourish even if they are quite different from one another. If not, resentments continue and the relationship continues to be problematic.

During his 20s, when the adoptee has moved out of his parents' home and is more independent, he should be able to explore his own identity. However, he has to be careful not to be the chameleon, whose tendency is to adjust his personality, values, or opinions to whatever group he is in. After all, he is so used to doing this in his adoptive family that it is the familiar thing to do and seems like the right thing to do to be liked, to fit in, to belong. He doesn't know how to look inside for the answers even to questions about personal preferences. I used to believe adoptees were afraid of being wrong, but they corrected me: "*It is because we don't know!*" This not knowing who they are is a huge problem when forming adult relationships.

As an adult she will need to blend the nurture and nature aspects of her life in order to become more authentic. As the adoptee moves into new relationships in adulthood, this becomes crucial. How can one have a relationship with a false self? In the beginning of a relationship the two are still strangers and the adoptee can be more authentic (because it doesn't matter). He can take the risk of allowing more of himself to be seen—coming from within. The other person genuinely likes or falls in love with the essence of the adoptee. However, as the relationship progresses and the friend or partner becomes more important to him, fear takes over and sabotaging begins. The expectations of being abandoned by the important person in his life cause behaviour which will lead to that very thing. The adoptee becomes the scared, frustrating child. (See the top of page 324 of *Coming Home to Self* for testimony to this.)

If a mature, adult relationship is desired, a constant vigilance is required to answer: "*Am I acting as an adult or as a child? What is true about me? How can I truly know?*" The coping mechanisms the adoptee believed would keep him safe while growing up are not very helpful in adult relationships. They are just that: coping skills, not true personality. Each adoptee is a unique individual, yet those coping skills are quite predictable. Gradually replacing coping skills with the true self should be a goal. If some of the principles and values from the adoptive family seem congruent with what they believe about themselves, adoptees can adopt them, while bringing forth the genetic truth available in their DNA. Although difficult to discern, the DNA is all there. It didn't go anywhere. It can be accessed. This is often easier if it is possible to meet biological family members because the mirroring and sensory aspects of oneself are available. But what if this isn't possible? What if the adoptee came from a different

race, culture, or country? Although this adds another dimension to the puzzle of identity which needs to be addressed, all adoptees deal with identity issues. For foreign-born adoptees an added burden is that, although their parents don't understand it much of the time and just see them as their children, the rest of society identifies them by their nationality, and they have to deal with the fallout from that. When minority adoptees, who are adopted by Caucasian parents, move away from the home, they have to deal with cultural identity for which they may not have been prepared. Parental support, rather than denial, is needed. For many adoptees, the environment in which they were reared may have been very different from that of the biological parents, so finding bio families, although helpful, doesn't completely answer the question: "Who am I?"

There are many roads to an authentic identity. After years of adapting and denying the true self, it is not easy to find that road. However, remembering that coping skills, childhood behaviours, and the false self do *not* qualify, the search must change from the environment to within the self. Do I like, dislike, feel neutral about that? What feels true? How can I blend nature and nurture to become complete? It is time to begin!

Nancy Verrier is an eminent clinical psychotherapist, author and lecturer who lives in LaFayette, California. She is the mother of two daughters, one who is adopted. Her books include *The Primal Wound* and *Coming Home to Self*. Nancy was the guest speaker at our October 2009 workshop.

Putting a Face to Adoption

The Adoption Act in British Columbia was changed to make records open in 1996. This meant that unless a disclosure veto was filed, identifying information was available to those adopted or those who placed a child for adoption in British Columbia. Unfortunately the disclosure veto is still an option in BC and many people struggle with not being able to access their personal history. Jim Kelly (who is one of the profiles in this issue of AC) has provided us with the sample letter that can be used to contact your local MLA in regard to revisiting the Adoption Act in B.C. to remove the disclosure veto.

Recently I visited my local MLA to discuss this issue. His advice was that those of us who have been impacted by adoption should put a face to the cause. He said that when visiting with our MLA we should either leave them a short article about how adoption has impacted our lives or we could arrive with a prepared short version of our adoption story. Personally I felt that when I shared with my MLA what it meant to me to finally know my nationality/heritage, was when he 'got' it. This is what we mean by "Putting a Face to Adoption" and this is what is needed to get our point across with our politicians about the importance of removing the disclosure veto.

Please consider putting a face to adoption with your MLA in whatever manner you feel comfortable. Feel free to use this letter as is, or adjust it with your own wording, in order to raise awareness of the importance of removing the disclosure veto from BC adoption laws.

Suggested wording for a letter to your MLA:

MLA Name and address:

Date:

"Dear _____ I am a constituent in your riding and this is an issue of interest to me. I would like to be kept informed about when any hearings are held about Adoption legislation reform and when the revised Adoption legislation is going to be tabled.

On May 19th of this year the B.C. Supreme Court struck down provisions of the Adoption Act and Adoption Regulations because the legislation has denied donor offspring the same right to identity as adopted people. This Act was found to be discriminatory and contrary to what the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms had set out as a guarantee of equality.

During this Adoption legislation amendment the Legislature must also revisit the discriminatory "disclosure veto" which was part of the 1996 B.C. Adoption Act in order to ensure that the amended Act complies both with the Charters guarantee of equality and with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, right to identity. This human right guarantees every child, including donor offspring and adoptees, "the child's right to preserve his or her identity".

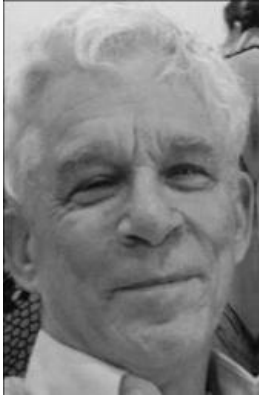
Thank you for your attention in this matter and I look forward to your earliest reply.

Signed _____

Preparation for Searching: Why is it so necessary?

by Joe Soll, LCSW, Psychotherapist

Author of *Adoption Healing... a path to recovery*, *Evil Exchange* and *Fatal Flight*



When people come to me for search help, the first thing I say is that for me to guide them, they must prepare.

“Prepare for what?” they ask.

“For whatever happens... in that way it will be a ‘win-win’ situation.”

Then I hear responses like:

“How can I know what to prepare for?”

“I’m prepared; I’ve been waiting for 20 years.”

“When I find my mom or my child, all will be well.”

The fact is that no one can just be prepared for search and reunion. It usually takes four to six months of concentrated effort. Part of the preparation is to work on our own pain, anger and sadness first. Reunions won’t end our suffering, only hard work will.

I am obligated both ethically and legally to not help anyone who will not prepare. The reason is simple: Non-preparation can be both hurtful and dangerous. The searcher can be hurt emotionally and so can the person found if we do not handle ourselves well. The search and the person found can be so emotionally moved as to do something physically self-injurious.

I say this not to scare but to forewarn. Those who prepare will always be all right. The fact is that to have survived the trauma of the loss of a mother or child, we all had to bury a myriad of very painful thoughts and feelings. Searching will open us up to those very thoughts and feelings that we had to hide from. If we talk about what we feel before we search, talk through our pain, anger and sadness, then we will be ready for anything that occurs.

We need to read about our ‘other.’ We adoptees need to understand the experience of our mothers and mothers need to understand the experience of adoptees. We need to talk with other adoptees and moms. Share with them and learn from them.

We need to do our inner child work. We all have a hurt younger self that is very vulnerable and needy. Search is not the answer but our inner child usually thinks it is. Our healing has to come from our adult self nurturing our inner child.

We need to understand our obligation to those whom we find. We need to understand how they might react and why.

We need to grieve the loss of our ‘other’ in advance. Admittedly it is difficult to grieve in advance but we can do it by helping our inner child to express her emotions.

We need to do this work in a safe way. We need to go to support group meetings, participate in chat, read the books, talk, feel, journal and do inner child work at a speed that is comfortable. Private therapy cannot prepare one. Private therapy can be a good side dish but cannot take the place of interacting with other moms and adoptees. This work needs to be done with “enlightened witnesses” or “loving witnesses” who are there for us when we get into pain anger and sadness.

We must not watch the clock. It takes as long as it takes. I look at this work as climbing a mountain of recovery and each person’s path up the mountain is different. Each person’s path has gullies, canyons, dips and rises but those down turns are not failures, just part of one’s particular path up the mountain.

In many ways, the journey is more important than the end result since the answers do not heal us, only the journey can and will. If we do it!

I look at preparation as being in flight school, learning how to fly. No one is allowed to fly until they have completed ground school and performed the check lists along with their co-pilot. The prep work is ground school. Your enlightened witnesses are you co-pilots. No prudent pilot tries to take off without doing the check list. Those who do not perform their check list before searching are likely to crash and burn. In almost 30 years of helping others, I have never once heard anyone who prepared for search and reunion say they wished they had not searched... NOT ONCE!

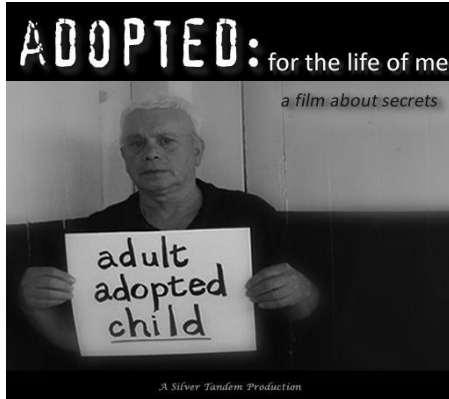
FMNFS Cloverdale Movie Night:

August 16, 2011

ADOPTED: for the life of me - Jean Strauss: Director

Article by Bernadette Rymer

We were delighted to have 20 people attend the first movie night held in Cloverdale. Of the attendees, 7 were birth/natural/first mothers, 10 were adoptees and 3 were adopting parents.



This documentary is about secrets, and what secrets cost people when they are imposed over a lifetime. It traces the life of a few adopted adults who share with us their struggle to find out who they are, and what the pain of not knowing feels like. It is filmed in the States where adoption laws are different, and adoptees have much more difficulty accessing their own personal information.

The film poses gut wrenching questions:

- What if you were told you had no right to your original birth certificate?
- What if you were told you had no right to know your own name, to know your own medical history: Even if you are 70 or 80 or 90 years old?

The documentary points out how much we value the pedigree of dogs, yet many adoptees have no right to their history and personal information. One woman said "I am 93 years old and I do not know who I am and where I came from." One man Dave, who was in his 60s, found his birth information only to discover that his mother had died. He then found his mother's best friend, who had taken in his mother's dog. This man drove for hours to meet his mother's best friend, and to meet, cuddle and play with his mother's dog. Dave admitted that when he went to meet his mother's friend, he had some very negative thoughts about his mother. However after the meeting he realized that his negative thoughts were in error, and that prior to meeting his mother's friend he did not have all the

information. We then see Dave standing at his mother's grave saying. "I hope she knows how much I love her."

One message of the movie was, when we don't have all the facts it is best to error on the positive side rather than the negative side.

Our FMNFS group discussion following the movie was somewhat subdued as participants appeared to be digesting the message of the movie. Following are some of the comments about the movie and how it made them feel:

Comments from Adoptees:

- It is so frustrating not being able to get information.
- I don't think a disclosure veto should be a (parent's) right.
- Your birth right is a human right.
- Birth certificates are such a lie: on the back is stated 'Not to be amended' yet adoptees birth certificates are already amended.
- Who am I? I don't know. I play all these different roles but I don't know who 'I' am.
- You do what you need to do so they don't get rid of you, like your birth parents did.
- Why did they toss me away?
- My life has been 'whited' out.
- From one adoptee who was recently reunited with her mother: "Finally, someone I look like!"

Comments from Mothers:

- So sad to know that a lot of adopted think they were not loved by their birth mothers.
- So sad that we so treasure the heritage of our dogs but Adoptees can't get their own information.
- So angry at the system.
- Reasons for not being able to access information include confidentiality for the mother: I was never promised confidentiality- it was never mentioned.

Comments from an Adopting Parent:

- I have to find my daughter's mother. She thinks her mother didn't love her.
- My daughter says she isn't interested in looking: I feel so sad for her.

While the movie and discussion had a sombre tone, participants were very grateful for the opportunity to share their feelings and they especially enjoyed the treats of pop, water and juice, and popcorn generously provided by Diane Willcott. Although some participants left early, many continued the discussion and camaraderie over

coffee and more treats at Tim Horton's. Thanks so much to Diane for our treats and to Marnie for arranging the event. We certainly hope this is the first of many such events.

Members Out and About

Margaret, who grew up as an only child, told us she has had a great reunion with 11 on one side of her adoptive family and will be spending a couple of weeks with her birth mother for the third time. Her birth mother's cousins want to have a family gathering as there are still cousins who have not met Margaret. She spent some time continuing research to find her birth father and is making good progress. She is grateful for all the abundance which has come into her life in the past 4 years.

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Laura Barnes-Marsden of Nelson, B.C. traveled to San Antonio for the annual Adoptee Rights Demonstration at the NCSL Legislative Summit, to protest for the rights of



Photo: Laura Barnes-Marsden holding the banner

many adoptees who were born in states where they have no access to their Original Birth Certificates (she's a Washington State adoptee). This was the second year Laura has attended and marched for Equal Rights for Adoptees. She finds this extremely empowering and a great time to spend with other adoptees and Mothers of loss. Laura now looks forward to the FMNS conference in October which she will be attending. Laura is also in the process of legally changing her name, back to her original (birth) name.

I met my birth parents over 30 years ago and for a number of years I have wanted to meet my cousins on my father's side of the family. It seems there were "problems" between the families and so meeting my father's niece and nephews never seemed to happen. Even after the problem was "fixed" and some of the family had gotten together amicably, my biological brother ignored my continued requests to meet my biological cousins. So I decided to ask my father's cousin Teddy (my father passed away in 2001).

Although no one supposedly knew about me until after I was reunited with the family, my paternal grandmother had known and when I was about 10 she had asked her nephew Teddy to see if he could find me. Well 50 years later, Teddy immediately said yes to my request to meet cousins and this past spring, he took me to meet my cousin Dianne. The two boys weren't available - perhaps because one of them had had a fight with my father about me years ago (no one knew about me, you know).

My reunion with Dianne went really well and I was amazed to learn that she was born only 13 days before me. Her mother and father had gotten married four months into the pregnancy - so of course I doubt my birth mother wanted me to find out that my aunt had chosen another option when she discovered her pregnancy. The records from the home where I was born indicate that my mother and father had been engaged before she went into the home over three months before I was born. What tangled webs we weave.

Lynn Carrier

~~~~~

My daughter that I raised and her two boys went to spend some time with her brother (who we have been reunited with since 2004) in Toronto this summer. My son also sent me a nice email a few weeks ago.

Sharon Gillis

News Update

Catholic Church in Australia apologizes for forcing mothers to give up their babies.

On July 25th, 2011 history was made. The Australian Catholic Church issued an apology to the victims of forced adoption practices from the 1950s to the 1970s. They also offered counselling to those affected and a pathway for complaints.

The apology was made through a Senate committee, which is inquiring into the past practices of hospitals and social workers employed by government, churches and charities, who forcibly removed babies from unwed and teenage mothers and adopted them out.

The adoptions often occurred against the wishes of the mothers, who sometimes signed consent forms under duress or the influence of sedatives and other medication. In some cases no birth records are available.

In their apology the church stated "We acknowledge the pain of separation and loss felt then and now for the

mothers, fathers, children, families and others involved in the practices of the time," and "For the pain and suffering that arises from practices of the past, we are genuinely sorry. These practices of the past are no longer tolerated, nor allowed by today's law, and are deeply regrettable."

If you would like to read more about this apology, you can read the full report and responses to this apology on Google Australia then type "Church to say sorry for forcing single mothers to give up babies."

Evelyn Robinson, a prominent long time adoption reform activist, lecturer and author states: "I don't think the influence of religion at that time can be overstated. I'm in touch with mothers in the UK who are trying to get an apology there. Let's hope that Australia has started a trend which will be repeated around the world."

Notes from the Editor

Couples Membership Correction

In the last three editions of our AC we made an announcement about our new Couples Membership for two people at \$40 per year. This membership option was created to encourage spouses and significant others to become members. The announcement stated that by also becoming a member of the Society, the spouse or significant other would benefit from the Society's supportive services. This is correct. The error was in the statement that the spouse or significant other would also receive their own personal copy of the newsletter. We would like to correct this error and clarify that one copy of the newsletter will be sent to each household. Thanks for your understanding, and we apologize for any confusion this may have caused.

FMNFS Board Members

Correction and Apology from the Editor

In our last issue of Adoption Circles we printed a copy of a cartoon with permission from CREATORS SYNDICATE. However I forgot to include the credits with the cartoon. I sincerely apologize for this oversight.

Please note that the SPEEDBUMP cartoon in Issue 57 Spring 2011 on page 17 was printed "By permission of Dave Coverly and Creators Syndicate, Inc."

Adoption Circles Future Focuses

EDITION	FOCUS	DEADLINE	DISTRIBUTION
Fall	Communication	November 15 th , 2011	December 15 th , 2011
Winter	Education	February 15 th , 2012	March 15 th , 2012
Spring	Activation	May 15 th , 2012	June 15 th , 2012

If you have a topic you would like to see as a focus for our Adoption Circles, please send your ideas to Marnie or Bernadette

WRITERS WANTED: Adoption Circles is created by volunteers who have their own adoption stories and who feel a commitment to help others.

- Do you have some original writing relating to adoption that you would like to submit for publication?
- Are you itching to share your story and experiences?
- Do you have ideas about how to improve our AC to better meet your needs?
- Is there a specific topic you would like to see explored in our Adoption Circles?

We would love to hear from you. Please contact Marnie or Bernadette if you would like to contribute to our upcoming Adoption Circles Newsletter. Writing and editing support are available for your convenience.

Email the Editor at: bjrymer@telus.net

Support Groups



Forget Me Not Family Society

The FMNFS holds two support groups a month, for adoptees, birth/natural/first parents, adoptive parents and those in a supportive role.

Cloverdale meets the first Thursday of each month September through June from 6:30 - 8:30 pm.

Cloverdale Public Library 2nd floor

5642-176 A Street, Cloverdale, B.C.

Contact Marnie Tetz at <marnietetz@shaw.ca> or (604) 535-4434

New Westminster meets the second Tuesday of each month, year round from 7:00 - 9:00 pm.

New Westminster Public Library 2nd floor, Plaskett Room,

716 - 6th Ave, New Westminster, B.C.

Contact Nancy Kato at <katosan@telus.net> or (604) 777-2920

Other Support Groups

Abbotsford: Hope Services hosts a support group for new birth mothers.

The group meets bi-weekly in either Abbotsford or Langley. Please contact Hope Services for information by telephone @ 1-800-916-4673 or <hopesupport@shaw.ca>

Vancouver: The Adoptees Association holds a discussion group for adopted adults the third Tuesday of each month starting at 7 pm at the Rhizome Cafe, 317 East Broadway (near Main Street). Please email Catherine for more information at <katiesue@shaw.ca> or visit <www.adopteesassociation.ca>

Please note that the "Other Support Groups" do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of FMNFS, but are listed above for your information only.



LEAN ON ME

Telephone/E-mail Support List



Reunited Adoptees:

Cecelia Reekie (cecelia_r@telus.net)	(604) 857-2125
Betty Anderson (bettboop@telus.net)	(604) 531-4074
Dan Carson (ariete_132@hotmail.com)	(604) 557-0230
Marnie Tetz (marnietetz@shaw.ca)	(604) 535-4434
Kimberley-Ann Jandl – Abbotsford (kajandl@yahoo.ca)	(604) 852-9663
Judy Lanyon- Courtney (juriah@shaw.ca)	(250) 338-2429
Leanne Neighbour – Kamloops (neighbourhoodz@shaw.ca)	(250) 374-0990
Lynn Carrier- Edmonton (carrierlynn@hotmail.com)	(780) 455-8528

Reunited with Siblings:

Michael Hodgson (tigerboots@telus.net)	(604) 524-3686
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Reunited Birth Parents:

Nancy Kato (katosan@telus.net)	(604) 777-2920
Susan Wiesendahl (susanwiesendahl@yahoo.ca)	(604) 275-3243
Alice McKinnon – Chilliwack (chkekray@shaw.ca)	(604) 858-9970
John Post - Castlegar	(250) 365-5991
Diane Herbert – Abbotsford	(604) 870-1821
(dalendi@shaw.ca)	
Bernadette Rymer - Ashcroft (bjrymer@telus.net)	(250) 453-2360

Searching Step-Adoptee:

Edith Archibald (earchibald@shaw.ca)	(604) 583-7792
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Interested Professionals:

Judy Archer, MSW, RSW, (250) 758-1275 Counselor and Consultant in Adoption (judyarcher@shaw.ca)	
Lee Crawford, M.Ed. R.C.C. (leecrawford@shaw.ca)	(604) 875-9957
John Thomas - Quesnel	(250) 992-5688
Christine M. Gatzke, M.Ed., CPAC/ARC Psychotherapist (christine.lachaine@clc-apathtohealing.ca)	(306) 352-4069

Genetic Attraction:

Anne Tasko, M.A. R.C.C. (anntasko@shaw.ca)	(250) 721-5995
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This is a peer support service.
Please contact our office if you wish to be included on the LEAN ON ME Support List.

Forget Me Not T-Shirts and Pins now available

T-Shirts \$15.00 includes taxes ~~~ Sizes small to 2XL

Choice of purple with mauve logo or mauve with purple logo

New pewter pins \$7.50 or 3 for \$20.00 taxes included

Plus shipping charges if applicable

Contact Gloria Sweder

604-271-4303 gsweder@shaw.ca

To place a sponsorship ad, please call: 604-828-9577. Business card size is available for \$40. Please note that advertising is limited to members of the Society, which reserves the right to determine the appropriateness of the proposed ad to the purpose of our publication.

Membership to the **Forget Me Not Family Society** includes:

- ✓ Subscription to **Adoption Circles**, a quarterly publication
- ✓ Reduction in workshop fees
- ✓ Information on books and support groups

Name: _____

Address _____

City/Province/State _____

Postal/Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

Email _____

Birth Parent _____ Adoptee _____ Adoptive Parent _____ Sibling _____ Reunited? Y _ N _

Couple _____ Prospective Adoptive Parent _____ Adoption Professional _____ Other _____



Individual membership is \$25 per year, couples \$40 per year. Corporate membership is \$60 per year. Please send a cheque payable to the

Forget Me Not Family Society
#102- 1860 Southmere Cres. E.,
Surrey, B.C. V4A 6Y7
Telephone: 604-828-9577

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send U.S. funds.