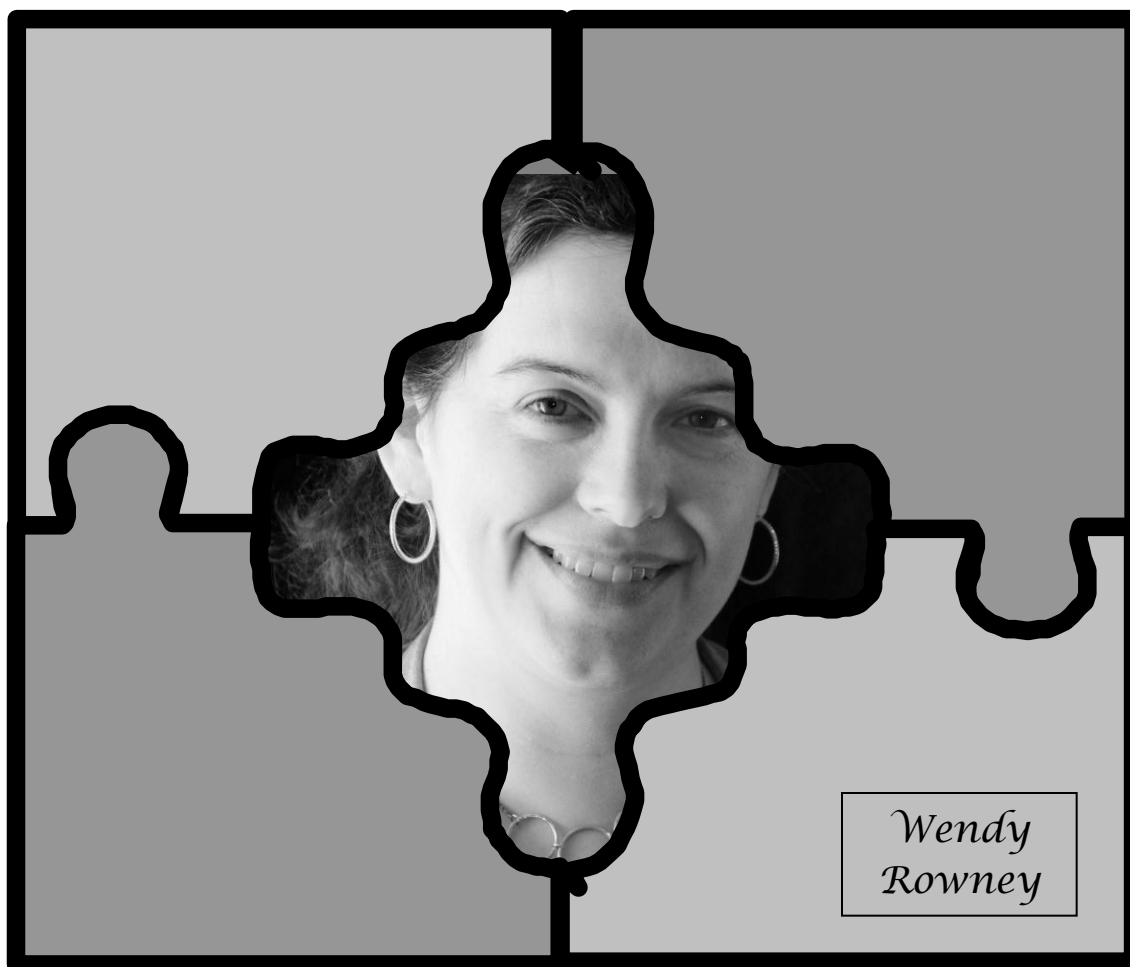


ADOPTION CIRCLES

Canada's Post-Adoption Quarterly

Issue #60 Winter 2012 \$3.50



*Wendy
Rowney*

Education

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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.

Happy New Year Everyone!

Welcome to our Winter edition of Adoption Circles. This issue is devoted to Education. Before I say anything more, I would like to thank Bernadette for her commitment to the AC and for keeping each issue focused on the topic that it is meant for. Bernadette volunteered to help with the AC, and before she knew it, it was her show, and I personally appreciate the mark that she has made on it.

Education...what a huge topic this is. Those who have not had adoption impact their lives most likely shake their heads and wonder "What education needs to take place?"



Presidents Message
Marnie Tetz

Babies were born, mother's couldn't keep them... homes were found. *A done deal!* Were these matches made in heaven? Mums from the baby scoop era and for many years after lost their babies to adoption and perfect families were formed. Or were they?

I think that we now know that these weren't perfect families. Taking a baby from her mother, and giving her to another mother was not a match made in heaven. The social workers of the time thought they were doing their job by placing what they thought were unwanted babies with couples who couldn't have children of their own. This was to be the Band-Aid that would make it all better for these couples that wanted so badly to have a family. One day baby is with mum and the next day baby is with a *new* mum. Baby wouldn't know, baby would be loved and cared for and grow up "as if born to." The new parents would never have their grief of not being able to conceive acknowledged, because they had this new bundle of joy to make them like everyone else. *The perfect family!* The new baby was a blank slate so wouldn't know that anyone was missing, because babies don't know anything. They are babies.

With education, we now know what babies really do know. They know that mum is now gone and a substitute is in place, but because babies can't talk they can't ask where mum has gone. The natural/first mum, could now go on with her life, free of the *burden* of caring for a child alone. Her family wouldn't be ostracized for having an unwed daughter. No one needed to be educated about adoption because it was perfect.

Just think if the social workers had have been educated about what lifelong impact adoption has on the natural/first/birth mother. This young woman was told that she couldn't keep her baby because babies need to have a two parent family. She couldn't raise a child alone because she couldn't provide the baby with what he needed. The best thing was to place this child in the home of a loving couple who could provide all the necessities of life and all the love this child could ever need. The selfless thing to do would be to surrender baby, and carry on with her life. She could go on to marry and have other children. She would forget this first baby. If the social worker had been educated she would have been aware that this

young mother would never forget her baby and that even if she appeared to carry on with her life, it would be a life filled with grief that was never acknowledged.

If the social worker had been educated she would have known that a baby is born to her mother, and is not a commodity that can be bounced from one mother to another without some kind of lasting effect. The social worker would have realized that babies aren't the blank slates everyone thinks they are. Babies know who their mother is. We must remember, baby has just spent nine months in the safe and loving comfort of their mum's womb. Baby knows how mum moves, what mum smells like and what mum sounds like. Baby knows where he belongs, and knows when that place of warmth and love is gone. New mum may be very loving and caring but she just doesn't smell, sound or move the same. Baby knows. If the social workers knew this, had been educated in this, they could have taught adoptive parents that this baby can never be raised "as if born too." This baby, toddler, child, adolescent and then adult needs to have the loss of their first mother acknowledged. If the social workers had been educated in this, they could have passed this kind of information on to the adoptive parent who would then have known that they would always have to be open and honest about where their adopted child came from. If the adoptive parents had have been educated in this way they would have encouraged their adopted child to ask questions without shame or fear of appearing disloyal. They would also support their child in their desire to search for their first mum when they were ready to do so.

Social workers weren't taught to try to keep mums and their babies together. Social workers were doing what they were told to do: Find babies for childless couples, and find childless couples for babies of unwed mothers. There was little to no thought put into helping mums keep their babies, no offers of what assistance was available to them, no suggestions of trying to find a way to keep the baby in the family of origin. The social workers also weren't given the tools to educate the prospective adoptive parents, weren't educated in trying to find options or about what baby would know. How would they know that baby would not be a blank slate, that baby shouldn't be raised "as if born to?" If the social workers had

been educated they would have known that from the beginning baby should always know that her adoptive parents love her and care for her, but that she has other parents as well.

Baby's loss should be acknowledged by her new parents. If adoptive parents knew to do that, if they had been educated to do this then the fear, anger and pain that the adoptee might have growing up could be talked about, and acknowledged. There would be no need for secrets that create insecurity and shame.

It's sad that even in the year 2012 so little education about adoption exists. Most people think it's a wonderful solution to a problem of what to do with unwed mothers and their babies. Most also think that it's the only way for childless couples to make their

family. Adoption can be a solution when there are children in care that are desperately in need of a family as long as the child is allowed to always know who they are and where they came from. Adoption isn't a solution when it tears a mother and child apart. When one mother needs help to keep her baby, the system needs to be educated in how to help her.

This issue of Adoption Circles is full of amazing articles, stories and views about how more education needs to take place about how adoption has impacted the lives of first/natural/birth parents, adoptees and adoptive parents. As always, find yourself a cozy chair and your favourite "drop" as Bernadette would say, and enjoy this issue of Adoption Circles.

Marnie Tetz

Rymer Writes



It Is Time!



As my title suggests and as you will read in this issue of Adoption Circles, I am very passionate about the topic of Education. I firmly believe that it is our individual responsibility to educate ourselves, formally and informally, about those things which matter most to us, and I believe that it is the responsibility of educational institutes, community learning centers, colleges and universities to provide state of the art learning opportunities for us in topics that make the world a better place to live for us all.

Before reading further in this issue, I want to draw your attention to the disclaimer on page 2 which appears in all our Adoption Circles Newsletters:

"....the material published in this newsletter, including the views and opinions of the Editor, do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of the FMNFS." I also want to prepare you that while in past issues of the AC I have not adamantly expressed my views and opinions about the theme, I do so here because *it is time!*

Marnie's Presidential Message has eloquently introduced the topic on the need for all partners in the adoption constellation to be better informed about the real fall-out from adoption. Our last Adoption Circles which focused on the theme of *Communication* contained an article by Val Andrews entitled *The Collective Unconscious of Society: 1945-1985 Crimes Against Unmarried Mothers*. This article is truly

educational in that the author details for us the history of the development of practices which were used to manage **the dual problems** of unmarried mothers who were viewed as being **unfit** to keep and care for their babies, and how to provide healthy babies for **deserving** couples who were infertile. If you have not read this article I urge you to do so. The facts it presents are in my view, stunning!

In preparing for this issue I have searched out and begged for authors to write articles which represent their views and present various aspects of the current state of 'adoption education.' In addition, I emailed the Social Worker programs in more than 20 universities in Canada (e.g. UBC, universities in Kamloops, Ontario and Alberta) the U.S. (e.g. Harvard, Cambridge, Johns Hopkins) and Australia to inquire if they offer any programs or course work in the effects of adoption, loss, trauma, grief, search and reunion, or are they considering offering such courses in the near future. Eleven universities responded with a 'No.' Nine universities did not respond. Only UNBC in Prince George invited me to create a 3 credit self-directed course under the supervision of a professor. Not much of a response, but as this is a relatively new university (founded in 1994) this response at least demonstrates openness to new thinking.

I also emailed Nancy Verrier, Joe Soll and Evelyn Robinson (Australian author and adoption reform pioneer) to ask them the same question. All three responded that "No - to their knowledge, there are no universities anywhere that offer or are considering offering such courses."

So I think it is accurate to say that the understanding and current knowledge of educational institutes about adoption is sadly lacking. Perhaps it is more accurate that the current state of adoption education in our society presents to us and to future sufferers, a clear and present danger! Fighting words indeed! "Heck" you might say, "what fired this lady up?"

Answer: Both my personal experience with adoption loss including the lack of understanding shown by those who 'guided' me, and results of the university survey.

So I have to ask: How can it be that when so many millions of people have had their lives irrevocably changed by adoption, that our educational institutes are not aware of the true fall-out from adoption? It isn't that nothing has been happening to raise awareness. Since the mid-1970s pioneers in adoption reform (B. J. Lifton, Nancy Verrier, Joe Soll, Val Andrews, Evelyn Robinson and many others around the world) have worked tirelessly to research and write about the effects of adoption, and to support those affected by adoption loss in their healing and reunion. Also, many birth mothers and adoptees have had the courage and tenacity to step up to the plate and write and publish their stories. There are many adoption healing related groups across North America, and in Australia and England. One would think that given the **mounting irrefutable evidence and personal testimonies**, that educational institutes would get the message and understand that *it is time!*

So it is precisely because formal educational institutes aren't aware and don't acknowledge and listen to us, that we must continue our work in raising awareness and supporting those whose lives have been irrevocably changed by adoption!

In this issue of AC, a few insights into why there isn't an understanding, awareness *and acknowledgement* of adoption fall-out in educational institutes are provided by Joe Soll in his article *Why Don't They Listen to Us*. Our Personality Profile is Wendy Rowney who has dedicated many years to educating herself and others, including law makers. If you have not heard of her you are indeed in for a treat. One unsolicited article *Learning to Be Enhanced* was submitted Joan Lawrence. I was amazed that her timely article fit so well into our theme and discussed the importance of educating ourselves when she states: "We all have a stake in enlarging our viewpoint in order to honour our place on this planet." Then you will read in Anne Walmsley's article *Together at Last* a beautiful and inspiring example of one woman who did just that. "It was time I educated myself on adoption," she states rather emphatically. I suggest you read Anne's article in a quite cosy corner with a box of tissues and a kazoo. When you have finished reading it you will know why you need a kazoo!

We invite you to listen in on a conversation between Marnie and Brian Stanton, and to join in the conversation to be continued on our Spring issue of AC (Theme: *Activation* May, 2012). Celebrate with us the wonderful news our members share with you in *Members Out, About and Over the Moon* and continue to reflect and learn about our 2011 workshop in *Workshop Response* by Kimberley-Ann Jandl. Even our Announcements in this issue are all Education related. Big events to plan for are our Annual General Meeting (May 5th), Annual Fall Workshop (November 2nd-4th). New directions for the FMNFS are the pilot presentation of our six part Education course (Kamloops April and May), and the founding of a new Interior Support group.

Again we offer most sincere thanks to all our authors and contributors. Your time and willingness to share your thoughts and stories with us add so much to our understanding of adoption and much appreciated support in our healing journeys.

In closing I quote from the article by Joan Lawrence which perfectly encapsulates our vision for our newsletter: "Adoption Circles is an essential tool for learning which connects, intersects and reconnects us to ourselves and others in ways which both surprise and enrich our experience of our personal world and the larger universe."

Bernadette Rymer

Personality Profile

Wendy Rowney

How have you been personally impacted by adoption?

Before I was born, my grandparents, the parents of my teenaged soon-to-be-mother, decided that I would be placed for adoption. Like so many other young women of her generation, my mother was sent to a Home in Toronto to wait out her pregnancy and begin the transformation from **mother to birth mother*. Once I was born, she was sent away again, this time to Ireland to live with her grandparents and begin a new life where no one knew of my existence.

Less than two weeks after my birth, I was adopted and began life as Wendy Rowney. Like every other adoptee, I had my identity, ancestry, and birth certificate changed in order to fit better into my new family. And I did fit very well. I grew up feeling loved and no different from anyone else. Actually, I felt lucky because I had four parents to love me rather than the two that most people had. I was special.

I was also curious about the mysterious young woman with long brown hair who liked theatre, came from Ireland, and had given birth to me. Who was she? Where was she? I tried not to think about it because I could do nothing about it; it was the constant itch that I could never reach. Better not to try, I reasoned.



Until the day I knew that I had to try. I had to know. It took two years but finally the Children's Aid Society assigned someone to my case and she discovered that my grandmother (the same one who had decided 26 years earlier that I would be adopted) had approached them looking for information about me. My grandmother and I began exchanging tentative letters through the CAS; the letters arrived with strong black lines through the sentences. They had been censored so that I wouldn't yet receive personal information about my family. The letters continued and eight months later I found myself on a plane going to England to meet my mother. This was the single-most terrifying exciting, exhilarating, sad,

wonderful, guilt-ridden, fantastic thing I have ever done – or will ever do.

Fifteen years later, I am sitting here astonished that she has been a (known) part of my life for fifteen years. I am still in awe of the fact that I know her, who she is, what she looks like, and the story of my beginning. I would not trade that information for anything in the world.

Why did you become involved in education about adoption awareness and reform?

I didn't set out to educate people about adoption. I set out to offer support around reunion and reconnection and to advocate for legislative change. As I became more involved with both a local support group and our provincial legislative team, I became increasingly aware that there is a fundamental misunderstanding about the adoption experience in the minds of most people. Since adoptees and their parents live in the same world with the same books and movies and TV shows as the non-adopted, they share many of the same (mis)understandings about adoption. It seemed that they could not effectively receive support or work through their feelings about reconnection without a better understanding of the social issues that had brought them there. Politicians would not change the law until they understood why law changes were necessary. Education was the key.

What adoption issues and organizations have you been involved with over the years? Why?

Shortly after my reunion I joined the local Parent Finders group because I needed to connect with other people going through the same experience. I was so relieved to discover I was not alone in my feelings! After volunteering with the organization for a few months, I joined the board because I wanted to get involved with the fight to open records in Ontario. After a couple of years, a few of us joined together to create a new adoption support group in Toronto. We called it Adoption Support Kinship or ASK and focused on providing support rather than search tips. Around the same time, I joined with Karen Lynn and Michael Grand to create the Coalition for Open Adoption Records (COAR.) Over the next decade, we organized the Ontario fight to open adoption records. Through these years, I remained involved with ASK and also joined the boards of the Adoption Council of Ontario and the Infertility Network. For several years, I acted as Secretary and then Vice-president of the

Adoption Council of Canada. In all of these organizations, I worked to promote the viewpoint of adopted adults and their need to know their original families. In 2007, I became the Canadian Liaison to the American Adoption Congress (AAC.) Today, I continue to represent Canada on that board and also serve as Education Chair and Vice-president for the AAC along with my role as President of ASK.

What do you see as the current issues about which those impacted personally by adoption need to be informed? Of what benefit is it to us to become informed about these issues?

The answer to this question could fill a book! Here is one issue that we all need to consider more deeply.

For years, the adoption community has been saying that the "need to know" is normal. It is of course. It is as natural and normal to want to know who you are and where you come from just as it is natural and normal to want to see the face of your adult child. The "need to know," however, is not just about the need to meet and learn information but includes the need to reconnect in a meaningful way and build a relationship. That need is also normal. As a community, we have been almost exclusively focused for years on our right to meet missing family members and we have been reluctant to talk about our very real need to fit back into these families. The "need to know" is not only about information; it's also about relationships and family. And that is ok. The need for a person to be a part of their family is normal as is the need to integrate a lost child into a family.

All adoptees have two families; we have two mothers, two fathers, often several siblings, and lots of grandparents. We usually feel connections to our adoptive families and to our families of origin. This is reality and it is our normal. Many women who surrendered a child to adoption have raised other children. Their feelings for all these children may be different or may be similar but their reality is that they are the mothers of all these children. That is reality and it is normal. Rather than trying to change the words used for family in the world outside adoption, we have to redefine what these words mean. *Mother* in the adoption world is not an exclusive term but encompasses many permutations as does child or family.

What do you see are the current issues in which politicians, law makers and professionals in the adoption field need to be informed?

There is so much misinformation about adoption that everyone “knows” to be true that it is difficult to know where to start educating politicians and others with the influence to make a change.

A simple idea that is often unknown to people not immediately impacted by adoption is that adoption is a lifelong journey. It is not a one-time event that occurs when a child joins a new family but rather something that unfolds over a lifetime and will impact adoptees and their parents by birth and adoption for the rest of their lives.

It is often quite a new idea to lawmakers that women who surrendered children to adoption want to know these children as adults. Most people “know” that these women went on with their lives and do not want these lives disrupted. It comes as a shock to learn that most women want to be found, choose not to file vetoes, and have spent their entire lives since the surrender mourning the loss of their child.

Many people, including some adoption professionals, see adoption solely in terms of its positive impact on families and forget that there is a downside to adoption as well. When professionals fail to acknowledge the pain that often accompanies adoption, reunion, and reconnection, adoptees and their parents often question the legitimacy of their feelings. We all need to recognize that for many people there are some positives and also some negatives associated with adoption and that seeing adoption solely through rose-coloured glasses does not help the very people it is meant to serve.

Politicians need to understand that no one was promised secrecy and no one wants secrecy. Neither adopted adults nor any of their parents need or want additional protections than those afforded to every citizen of a jurisdiction.

For those of us who do not have the time or experience to be as actively involved as you are, what can we do to raise awareness of adoption related issues in others, specifically law makers and professionals in the adoption field?

We can all be open and honest about our adoption experience. Talking about our truths helps to educate

those around us. Most people have learned everything they know about adoption from television. If we want them to understand more truthful information about adoption, we have to share it with them. If we want them to understand that we are not ruled by secrets and fear, we have to prove it.

You never know who you are speaking with. Politicians, lawmakers, judges and other who have the power to change the adoption world all have lives where they are not working. A simple truthful statement can help them reformulate their own thoughts.

Even if you are talking with people without immediate power to change laws or makes changes, we have to remember that politicians and policy makers respond to public opinion. Public opinion changes as people are educated about issues. We all have the power to educate and change minds.

To what extent has your adoption connection shaped your life choices?

That’s a tricky question since I have never been anything other than adopted. It’s like asking me how being a woman has shaped my life choices. Some choices are obviously a direct result of my adoption experience but I am sure there are many others that aren’t known to me.

Certainly, I have chosen to devote a great deal of my spare time to adoption issues. I have traveled, met people whom I would never otherwise know, spoken to politicians, stood up at rallies, been interviewed on television, in the radio, and the newspaper, written letters to the editor, been involved with a constitutional challenge, shared personal feelings publicly, and done a myriad of other things that I might never have done if adoption was not part of my life.

My own personal experience with adoption, reunion, and reconnection has shaped my worldview and influences all my relationships with other people. I find I consciously try to listen when people tell me about their own life experiences that have nothing to do with adoption rather than make assumptions based on what I believe to be true. I want to understand their truth just as I want them to understand mine.

Wendy Rowney ~ January 2012

*In our society, I believe, we view mothers and birth mothers differently and understand their role in the lives of their children to be quite different. A birth mother is someone who gives birth and has little/no emotional connection to the child. A mother has an ongoing relationship with the child, whether or not she gave birth to

that child. A birth mother is someone that society invests a lot of energy in un-connecting with the child. Now, I don't personally believe this but mainstream society does and did. So, the homes began that process of turning young mothers into birth mothers.
Wendy Rowney

Learning to be Educated

by Joan Lawrence

For the adopted person, education is an ongoing process. From the primal disconnect to the lifelong search to hear the mother's voice once more, the quest is ongoing. I see this as a bonus since the drive to learn, even if it is about one's lost identity, provides the seeker with the opportunity to be open to new ideas and ways of experiencing the world.

There is a story I read about a spiritual teacher who overheard her students arguing among themselves as to how the world had begun. One believed this, another believed that, a third had a different opinion, a fourth still another. She listened for a while as they debated more intensely and then she interrupted them with a question. "Are you sure you are all talking about the same world?" she asked. Then she suggested they write down what they meant by the word "World." You guessed it! Back came four very different definitions. "Well, it is not surprising you cannot agree," she discerned "since you are all coming from different worlds!"

I have recently been inspired by an ongoing email conversation with George Robinson/ Leo Burg which was prompted by his fascinating article in the Fall 2011 (Communication) issue of this quarterly. I was intrigued by his interest in the French philosopher Simone Weil's perspective on social justice. I wanted to understand more fully how he interpreted her ideas. This led to a conversation in which literature, philosophy, psychology and lived experience were

shared. Practical ways of using this information were offered to me as well. Dialoguing in this manner - drawing out of new shared ideas - is the essence of ongoing education. Adoption Circles is an essential tool for learning which connects, intersects and reconnects us to ourselves and others in ways which both surprise and enrich our experience of our personal world and the larger universe.

The lived experience of the adoptee gives us a unique way of understanding our world because of our situation. However, we all will have a different perspective on the multi-faceted dynamics which continue to ensue, enriching and enlarging our interpretation of our world view through the lens of our experience.

Education has suffered from being too prescriptive - i.e., teaching us rules and regulations - rather than widening our lenses. With all the new information technology and, even sometimes in spite of it, there is still a deep longing to touch base with our personal stories. New modes of learning offer the student creative ways of discovering how our world works and why. We all have a stake in enlarging our viewpoint in order to honour our place on this planet. It might just be possible that we, who are adopted, live on the edge of a quest which could be a source of a fuller and richer educational experience whether we realize it or not. From my perspective, I am choosing to define my world, in the words of Louis Armstrong, as "wonder-full"!



I cannot teach anybody anything. I can only make them think. ~ Socrates ~
Education is an ornament in prosperity and a refuge in adversity. ~ Aristotle ~

Whatever is good to know is difficult to learn. ~ Greek Proverb ~

Teachers open the door, but you must enter yourself. ~ Chinese Proverb ~

Tell me and I'll forget. Show me, and I may not remember. Involve me, and I'll understand. ~ Native American Saying ~

Why Don't They Want to Listen to Us?

By Joe Soll조살, LCSW, DAPA

When I graduated from shrink school in 1990, I wrote letters to all the graduate schools in the New York Metro area suggesting that adoption issues need to be taught to all students as a core course or at least as an elective. I received no responses at all. I went to the Dean of my school and asked her about my teaching such a course. She hemmed and hawed, avoiding my eyes. I pressed and she finally told me that there were a lot of trustees and faculty who were adoptive parents and if such a course were taught it would mean there was something wrong with adoption and the adoptive parent trustees would stop helping the university with their funding efforts. To my knowledge no university in the U.S. or Canada teaches adoption issues yet, here in the U.S., adoptees, adoptive parents, natural parents and all four sets of Grandparents comprise about 100 million people which is about 30% of our population. And this figure does not take into account any siblings. The societal hype trumps the truth.

Adoption is glorified in the media. To say anything negative about adoption is looked at as subversive, anti-societal. Those adoptees and moms who are still in denial, and I think they are in the majority, praise adoption, talk about how wonderful it is. Their voices are the ones most heard and promote the societal belief that adoption is wonderful and causes no trauma, no pain. When one of us who are aware speaks out, we are looked at as a bit off, an anomaly. I was once on a Sally Jesse Raphael Show and another one of the guests was a social worker who said, "Any adoptee that searches is mentally ill!" I was appalled and tried to argue the point but Sally loved what the social worker said and shut me down.

When we can talk in numbers, when enough of us can find a way to speak out in ways that other people will listen to, we can make a difference. If each of us wrote letters to the editor to our local newspapers on a regular basis, if each of us contacted our local legislators and told them our stories, if each of us told everyone we come in contact with our truth, things would eventually be different.

What does it take for us to speak out?

We may be terrified of the exposure, the shame of being adopted, or the shame of being a mother who lost a child to adoption. If we are afraid and do some inner child work and/or discuss this in our support groups, we can learn that there is nothing wrong with us. In fact, we can learn to be proud that we are strong enough to speak out, that no one can hurt us unless we let them. We can learn that it IS safe to speak out, to tell our truth.

What can we gain individually by speaking out?

- Each time we tell our story, we are healing a bit more.
- Each time we tell our story and nothing bad happens to us, we are proving to our inner core that it's safe to do so and we are getting in touch with more of our core strength, the strength that helped us survive our trauma.
- Each time we tell our story we are on the way to being proud because, in doing so, we are facing our demons and only the bravest of the brave face their demons.
- Each time we tell our story we are educating someone who might turn around and educate someone else.
- Each time we tell our story to another person who suffered adoption trauma we are giving them a gift that, if they unwrap it, may help them begin their healing journey.
- Each time we tell our story we are, hopefully doing something that may help others join our efforts to make societal change.

In the words of Margaret Mead, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

One thing is for sure. If we do not speak out, if we do not try, nothing will ever change. **Joe Soll조살**

Together at Last

By Anne Walmsley

In the last issue of *Adoption Circles* I made my first submission to the *Member Out and About* section. A number of people have expressed interest in hearing more about the story. Just as I have been encouraged by reading stories of people on this journey I hope that my story will bring hope and ideas to others. Whoever you may be looking for please let this story be testament to the fact that all things are possible.

As I look back over the events since May of 2010, I am amazed to see how incredibly my life has changed. I grew up here in Vancouver with a great Dad and Mum and had a really happy life. I was their only child and was quite content with our family group even though most other children I was friends with had brothers and sisters. I always had a favourite dog or two and spent lots of time adventuring in the woods, reading, feeding the birds, and helping around the house. I was encouraged to have friends over, think about others and work hard at my studies.

In high school I met my soul mate and we married in college. We celebrate our 35th anniversary this year and have a wonderful son Anthony and terrific daughter in law Mimi. As in all lives we have had our share of financial, health and other challenges but have always weathered the storm with love, humour and the help of long time caring friends and family.

My Dad died when I was only 29 which was very difficult and I was so close to my Mum that when she passed away in 2007 it was devastating. At that point I was an ORPHAN and felt like one. No parents, no brothers and sisters. My best friend Wanda encouraged me to go back east where my Mum was born and meet cousins I had not known. I started emailing one cousin Roberta and in May 2010 my life was forever changed by her email.

She casually asked whatever happened to my brother Toni whose birth she had recently seen noted in the family bible? I remember sitting stunned at my computer reading and rereading her question? Of course my first reaction was that obviously there was some mistake. It couldn't be possible. Over the course of several emails and phone calls I found out that I did

in fact have a sibling but it was a sister (Roberta hadn't realized that TONI was the feminine version of the name). My parents had a little girl born in BC in December 1950 five full years before I was born. No one knew what had happened to her but they thought she had been killed running after a ball.

I can honestly say that the great book of life really does not prepare you for these moments. The gamut of emotions was unbelievable: disbelief, elation, sadness, loss, heartache, hope. Immediately I forged ahead trying to find some record of Toni. I had to search down birth and death records of my parents in order to request information. I went down to Vital Statistics in Vancouver to search for a birth and /or a death record and came up completely empty handed. It was as if the information had to be wrong and she didn't exist. I searched the internet tirelessly joining site after site hoping to find some thread of information. It was frustrating and disheartening but at the same time I kept digging and digging. My friend Wanda encouraged me (even gave me her Air miles) to go back east to see if I could track something down.

In September 2010 I set off on my journey of discovery not knowing what to expect, hopeful that I would find something about Toni. I was nervous and excited but sure that some tidbit of information would be discovered that would bring some answers. Nothing in the world could possibly have prepared me for the BOMBSHELL that was about to drop. I drove from Nova Scotia with Roberta [the cousin who had initially asked me about Toni] to New Brunswick to meet another cousin and his wife. Such a welcoming, friendly and lovely couple we were greeted with open arms and hearts. David shared stories of my Mum growing up and family members, he had a scrap book of Mama's and photos. At the bottom of the pile of photos was a very handsome man with a great smile. David shared with me that it was my brother Rick, who my Mum had lost to adoption as a baby after she became pregnant at 18. In the late 1980's Rick had come to New Brunswick searching for Mama and that's when the picture was taken. The family there asked him to promise he would not look further and as a testament to his great character Rick kept that

promise. I remember sitting at their kitchen table staring at the picture tears streaming down my cheeks unable to speak. I had traveled thousands of miles in search of some snippet of information about my sister and here I was staring at a picture of a brother. I gave David the biggest hug ever, now feeling like I had actually won the 649. A sister AND a brother for a 54 year old 'only' child!

From that point on the search was in high gear. I had no time to waste. Fifty four years was quite long enough to not have my siblings. If I had anything to say about it, it wasn't going to be a moment longer than necessary. Since I now had a photo and a name for my brother, his wife and children I started a search on the internet. I posted on My Life.com and found he had a popular name with infinite possibilities in the US, which is where his adoptive parents were from. I used Ancestry.com. I posted on adoption sites. I did everything I could possibly think of to find out more. Suddenly I was tossed into the world of adoption and all of its hidden details. I found out that New Brunswick does not have open adoption records but I sent for anything they might give me.[only last month did I finally receive some non identifying information almost 18 months after my initial request.] Not being one to sit back and wait for results I kept on with the internet search contacting people on Facebook with the same name etc. I found people to be very caring and helpful even though they had no connection to my search. Often other people would tell me that their life had been touched in some way with adoption and would share ideas.

One day early in October 2010 I hit pay dirt as they say. I stumbled upon a genealogy site that had a family tree with names that matched my brother and his family. I immediately contacted the girl who had set up the site and waited and waited for a response. As it later turned out she was in Germany for several weeks so I went back on the site and stared at the names KNOWING it must be him but not knowing how to find him in today's world. I started clicking on the different names on the site and discovered *lo and behold* they opened up with other family members. I found Rick had sisters who I immediately tried to locate. One sister had a more unusual name and I searched on My Life.com and found she lived in New Mexico. I called and explained I had family information Rick had been looking for years before.

She kindly gave me his phone number and I was on my way.

I remember sitting with my husband trying to figure out what to say, how to say it, wondering what he would say, all the while trying to muster my nerve to pick up the phone and call. It was a conversation I shall never forget!! I said "hello" and gave my name and asked if he had a minute to talk. Rick told me he was in Lowes department store in New York City picking out paint colors to help his son paint his new condo. I told him I had recently visited New Brunswick for the first time and while there had been told I had a brother and I believed it was him. There was an audible gasp/pause and he said "No Kidding!" He asked me a couple of questions about Mama and then yelled to his wife that he was talking to his sister in Canada. The conversation was nothing short of miraculous. There was an INSTANT connection between us that is hard to describe. Within a couple of weeks Rick made plans to come out and meet us. I made a special family book so he could get to know his incredible Mum, decorated the front of our house with Welcome signs, balloons etc and could hardly breathe as I waited for him to come through the walkway. Our four day visit was one of so many hugs, tears, stories and we discovered sooooo many unusual things he had in common with our Mum and with me. Our son got to meet his Uncle and thought he was pretty neat, and our friends loved him. Our bond was immediate. I told him about Toni and how I was searching for her as well but thought that she might have passed away as a child. We both hoped that wouldn't turn out to be the case.

Fuelled by the success of finding Rick I was even more determined to find Toni but felt that I had run out of options. I hadn't even considered adoption as an avenue I should be searching but decided to put in a request to both the BC and Alberta governments just in case that might be the case. In the last months of 2010 the puzzle pieces started to slowly fall into place. I got a response back from the Alberta government saying that my sister had in fact been adopted but as a sibling I was only able to obtain non-identifying information. It was about the same time that I stumbled upon a group called the Forget Me Not Society which dealt with all sorts of adoptions issues. Other than having two close friends who have never searched for family, I had not been involved with adoption in any way. Suddenly I had a brother

and sister who had been adopted. It was time I educated myself on adoption. Little did I know how multifaceted the topic was.

I joined the Cloverdale chapter of the FMNFS and came away from the first meeting wondering if I could continue. Being a person who wears my heart on my sleeve I wasn't prepared for the raw and heartfelt stories of mothers losing their babies and children losing their parents. I could actually start to feel my own Mum's pain through listening to the different stories. The pain, torment, hope, anguish, anger, guilt was palpable in the room. Marnie, the facilitator of the group, was wonderful in helping everyone feel safe and encouraging each person to share anything they needed help with. Several people in the group made suggestions as to people to contact in Alberta such as Ray Ensminger, Shannon Cherkowski and Lynn Carrier and slowly but surely I started to build a network of people that might be able to help in my journey to find Toni. Also at this time an agent with the Alberta Adoption Registry started to help guide me in whatever way she was able. Fran Kuefler Josey was instrumental in my search. She would take the time to personally call me and encourage me to keep trying every avenue I could think of. As my sister's 60th birthday approached I ran a display ad with pictures in both the Calgary and Edmonton papers and I wrote a letter to my sister which read:

December 18th, 2010

Happy, Happy Birthday to My Sister

Somewhere in this big beautiful world you are celebrating your 60th birthday today.

Are you surrounded by family and friends? Do you love chocolate, vanilla or lemon cake? Are you a fan of icing or prefer something less sweet?

Do you have laughing eyes and a great smile? Do you give great hugs and wear your heart on your sleeve or are you more practical and analytical?

Do you love strong colors like pink and purple or softer colors like mint and blue?

Do you love the creatures of the earth and nature? Are you a cat or dog person?

Are you an enthusiastic and optimistic person by nature or quiet and reserved?

Do you like the movies? Mysteries, dramas, comedies?

What is your favourite flavour of ice cream?

All of these things I wish I knew and hope with all my heart that I will soon. I want so much to find you and know that you are happy and I pray that you have a space open in your heart for a sister.

I promise I will continue to search no matter how discouraging it may get or how many road blocks I run into because I BELIEVE that we are meant to be together when the time is right. Please enjoy this special day and know that I am sending a big bouquet of love and hugs your way, where ever you may be.

XXOOO Anne"

Although my ad did not elicit any direct responses, Fran took the time to let me know it jumped off the page when she saw it and the lady at the Edmonton paper gave me a couple of leads to follow up on. Every month I attended the Forget Me Not meetings and learned more and more about adoption and its effects on people. I followed up on every piece of information from the non-identifying paperwork from the government in every way I could think of. I had the encouragement of family, close friends, Fran and my group. I believed with every ounce of my being that it wasn't a question of 'if' but 'when' I would find my sister. As a result of the success of one of the members of FMN finding her Mum using Newman Research Services I decided this past summer to hire Amy Newman. I contacted her and when I found out she did this work because of her own personal adoption search I knew I had hired just the right person. The search skills used by Amy and Shannon in Alberta were nothing short of amazing. You must remember that we still did not even have so much as a name to search for, as Toni's name had been changed when she was adopted. Everyone agreed that this was truly the 'needle in the haystack' search. They updated me regularly and tried many avenues to search. Whether it was our Mum guiding me or God or some other explanation I 'decided' they should look for a girl named Margaret. On Sept 29th around 4 o'clock I came home to a message on our phone that Amy and Shannon had found who my sister was and

were working on where she was in today's world. I have to say I was STUNNED.

Although I truly believed that I would find her I had felt that it would be a long search. Her name **was** Margaret and she lived in Edmonton. It was only a couple more days before we found her family and shared with them the story. Her son went and told her and the next day she called me and it was like magic. Again there was an immediate connection, a bond, a love that you wouldn't think was possible between two people who didn't know one another. In October, 2012 I attended a very powerful FMNFS workshop with Joe Soll to

further prepare me for meeting my sister. I had learned that her adopted life had had many challenges and I wanted to approach her gently. In mid November I flew to Edmonton with my friend Wanda to meet my sister and the whole time was amazing. I

also made Margie a special family book so she could remember back to the parents who had loved her so much for the first couple of years of her life. We shared so much: so many hugs, tears, laughter and stories of our lives apart, our dreams for a life together.

We called our brother Rick and all three of us were together at long last.



The task of the modern educator is not to cut down jungles, but to irrigate deserts. ~ C. S. Lewis ~

Education is the movement from darkness to light. ~Allan Bloom

To penetrate and dissipate these clouds of darkness, the general mind must be strengthened by education. ~ Thomas Jefferson ~

2011 Workshop Response

By Kimberley-Ann Jandl

I have to admit that I rarely read the Adoption Circles newsletter when I first get it. I don't know why. Maybe I keep the adoption related 'stuff' to be dealt with only at meetings (now that it is no longer all consuming). Shut down shortly after I get home after the meeting, usually after sending an email to my mom – I always feel the need to touch base with her after meetings and let her know how much I love her. Maybe it is the only time I allow myself to fully FEEL my feelings; then I can continue feeling 'normal' until the next month.

However, this month I have kept the newsletter handy and have been reading it in bits and pieces. I just finished reading about our workshop last October with Joe Soll. Thanks to Barb for her poignant account of the first evening and capturing and expressing the overall atmosphere of that room for the rest of the weekend.

Those of you who were there may remember that I talked about my upcoming birthday that first night – my fear of my feelings associated with the day I was ripped from my mom. That night, as I talked, those feelings threatened to consume me. I have had many horrible times dealing with those feelings on my own, and the terror never seemed to go away, just got stuffed. But that night, after giving voice to them, and having acknowledgment and support for feeling them, when I stopped talking and Joe moved on to the next person, I felt (as Barb mentioned) so much lighter. The feelings left. I was calm and no longer feeling panicked about my approaching birthday. And I didn't have any other trouble as my birthday approached last year.

As with Barb, I thank Joe and everyone there for providing that safe, supportive environment that allowed so many of us to truly feel our feelings and be able to let them go (for this time.)

BETTER OFF

Better off they said we'd be
Better off said society
Better off we'd be free
Better off we would see

Enduring days and nights we'd gain
Enduring days and nights of pain
Enduring days and nights of loss
Enduring days and nights the cause

Tattered lives, tattered souls
Tattered lives among the coals
Tattered lives could be free
Tattered lives what would be, would be

Torn apart, torn asunder
Torn apart, it is no wonder
Torn apart, we would be
Torn apart, so we'd be free

Emptiness, crying out in pain
Emptiness, crying nothing to gain
Emptiness, crying no one cared
Emptiness, crying no one's there

Ridiculed by society
Ridiculed what was wrong with me
Ridiculed because we never knew
Ridiculed because our rights were few

Overt coercion that was the game
Overt coercion what a shame
Overt coercion to take our child
Overt coercion, be meek and mild

Forget the child, forget the mother
Forget the loss, be torn asunder
Forget the pain, forget the loss
Forget, forget at what cost?

Forgiveness, a life in hell
Forgiveness, ring the bell
Forgiveness, who to blame
Forgiveness, live our lives in shame

Gail Davies
January 6, 2012

FMNFS Annual General Meeting and Spring Fling

May 5th, 2012
New Westminster Public Library

AGM 10:00am – 12:00noon

The FMNFS Board invites all members to our AGM.

We are required by the laws governing non-profit societies to hold an annual general meeting once a year to elect the Board of Directors and to inform our members of previous and future activities. This is an opportunity for you to receive copies of as well as review fiscal information for the past year, and to ask questions regarding the direction the society will take in the future. Come join us and hear about what your Board is doing on your behalf. We value your attendance and your input very much.

Please join us for a lunch hosted by the FMNFS Board: 12:00noon - 1:00pm

Spring Fling 1:00pm – 4:00pm

Movie Matters: Traditionally we have held a workshop on adoption related topics in the afternoon. This year we will be showing the movie *Mother and Child* which tells the story of adoption from many view points. A facilitated group discussion will follow.

All members who attend the AGM and the movie/discussion will be eligible to win one of many exciting prizes including: One gift certificate for 50% and one for 25% off the Annual Fall Workshop Fee ("Releasing our Voices" with Brian Stanton, who will perform his play BLANK), gift certificates to Chapters, Starbucks, and many other Spring Fling Surprises. Cost for the movie, to cover expenses for rental of equipment: \$10

Please reserve Saturday, May 5th for this event.

* * * * *

EDUCATION COURSE – Kamloops, BC

The FMNFS Board is pleased to announce the pilot presentation sessions of our continuing education course **Preparing for Adoption: Search and Reunion** will be presented at the Ministry of Children and Families Office, 125-1165 Battle Street, Kamloops BC V2C 2N4, on April 21st and 22nd, and May 12th, 2012.

The goal of the course is to prepare and support participants to search for their loved ones and to manage the reunion process. Participants will explore the dynamics of and will develop an understanding of adoption loss and grieving, loss of identity and family continuity, the rights and responsibilities, expectations, benefits and possible pitfalls related to search and reunion. This course is designed for all those whose lives have been touched by adoption: adoptees, birth parents, adopting parents and concerned professionals.

For more information and details about this course please contact Audrey Harrington at <audreyharrington@gmail.com> or Bernadette Rymer at <bjrymer@telus.net> and watch for the e-flyer which will be coming your way very soon.



BLANK
BY BRIAN STANTON

Forget Me Not Family Society

Annual Fall Workshop

November 2nd - 4th, 2012
Delta Hotel, Richmond, BC

Releasing Our Voices

Come join us for a totally different kind workshop experience. On November 3rd we will be entertained, challenged, dazzled and perhaps mystified by Brian Stanton in his award winning performance of BLANK. This will be followed by a half day creative workshop where Brian will coach us in innovative ways to share our story. By releasing our voices, we are able to embrace who we are and where we come from.

WHAT IS BLANK?

BLANK is an award winning, nationally acclaimed solo play exploring adoption and identity, written and performed by adoptee Brian Stanton. Upon receipt of his original birth certificate, Stanton is not only bewildered at the sight of the blank space where his name should be, but also strangely comforted with the reveal of his first mother's name. Playing 12 characters, Stanton embarks on a mythical quest for identity ultimately discovering the horrific truth of his birth, an instinctive love for his birth mother, and a grateful dedication to his adoptive family.

BLANK had its World Premiere in Los Angeles, CA in April of 2010. Since then, BLANK has visited Off Broadway New York, Dallas, Orlando, Kansas City and several cities in Southern California. His performance has garnered critical acclaim including a

"Best Solo Actor" award at the United Solo Theatre Festival in New York City and 2 Stage Scene LA awards: "Outstanding Actor in a Solo Performance" for Stanton and "Outstanding Director of a Solo Performance" for director McKerrin Kelly. Stanton has also reached out to the adoption community performing for events, workshops and national support organizations such as the American Adoption Congress, the Concerned United Birthparents, and the Alliance for the Study of Adoption and Culture.

November 2nd, Friday Evening

- Gathering & Hospitality

November 3rd Saturday

- Morning: BLANK (the performance)
- Lunch (cost is included in workshop fee)
- Afternoon: creative workshop
- Dinner (cost not included in the workshop fee)

November 4th Sunday

- Morning: Support group meeting
- Lunch (cost not included in the workshop fee)

Details about workshop content and format, workshop fee, guest room reservations and registration will be announced in the next Adoption Circles, Issue #61, May 2012.

I am still learning. ~ Michelangelo ~

He who opens a school door, closes a prison. ~Victor Hugo ~

What sculpture is to a block of marble, education is to the human soul. ~ Joseph Addison ~



A Conversation with Brian Stanton

by Marnie Tetz

I've been in email contact with Brian Stanton for several months now and have really enjoyed his suggestions for our workshop in November "Releasing our Voices." I thought it was time to learn more about Brian, other than he's an actor and an adoptee. As a fellow adoptee I asked Brian some questions about how it felt for him being adopted, how adoption impacted him.

Marnie: Brian as you know I am also adopted, I was picked up from the maternity home when I was 16 days old. Apparently I was a bit of a handful as a baby and young child. When I was around 4 years old I was told that I was adopted, that my mother couldn't keep me. For several days after that I distinctly remember saying to my A-mum that I didn't have to listen to her since she wasn't my real mother. Charming kid, eh? What are your memories?

Brian: Yes you are very charming!!! And I'm sure you said it in a very charming and lovable way!!! I don't remember actually saying those words to my A-mom. I certainly remember thinking it, and then the fantasies about my B-mom being an Anne Bancroft-type goddess would kick in! My biggest memory about growing up adopted, other than pestering my A-mom for B-mom info, was the reaction people would give me whenever I told them I was adopted. There were generally 2 types of reactions. Some would look at me like something was horribly wrong with me. They would say things like, "Oh! I didn't know. I'm sorry. Are you OK? How do you feel about that?" Only then would I grow overly self-conscious, believing that maybe something WAS wrong with me. But the main reaction that I got, and I joke about this in BLANK, was that no one ever believed me. My second grade teacher accused me of lying in front of the whole class about it after she read a story about a boy who was adopted! I even had to prove it to my best friends by having my A-mom tell them it was true. Now, I look nothing like my a-parents, but my brother, sister, and I could have passed for biological siblings growing up. We were white



and had brown hair, and I think that's what people saw. By the way, my a-parents ended up having 2 biological children after they adopted me, so I was the lone adoptee in the house.

Marnie: Thanks for your kind words about me being charming, but I know that when I said that to my A-mum she didn't take it as charming. I was one of those adoptees that was just plain angry and acted out all the time. My older adoptive sister on the other hand was the pleaser, she was always so good. That's interesting about your fantasies about your B-mum. I just thought that mine was married, had the house with the picket fence and 2 kids and a dog. Then again you being an actor, it makes sense that you would have a fantasy that your B-mum was an actress! I don't remember telling many people that I was adopted, then again I was an adoptee in the late 50s and early 60s and it just wasn't talked about. How did it feel

having siblings that were 'natural' and you being the lone adoptee? Did you feel different from them?

Brian: I have a sister who is 1 year younger than I, and a brother who is 5 years younger. Both are biological children to my parents. I was definitely different than my siblings as far as interests, hobbies, likes, dislikes, talents, and all that go. But somehow we fit well together as siblings. The three of us are still very close. We laugh a lot together, we certainly learn from each other and without a doubt, we know how to have a good time together. I'm very fortunate to have them in my life. I was, however, the different child in the family. My choices in life never cease to bewilder my parents, although I think it adds some excitement in their lives!! I did feel I had to work a little extra hard to get their attention and understanding. Sometimes, I still feel I have to over-explain myself to them (and to others as a result) in order for them to understand and accept any of my choices. I think it's hard for them (and me) because they don't know anything about my interests in life. They both have admitted that they don't know how to help me; they don't know anyone in my field nor do they have any knowledge on how to

go down this road I've chosen. It took a while to really feel their support and encouragement, and really that's all I've ever needed. I really didn't feel treated any differently than my siblings. In fact, my A-mom didn't breast feed my sister and brother because she wasn't able to breast feed me. Funny huh! I do notice every now and then a natural bond that my siblings have with our parents that I know I don't have. It's hard to explain, and I honestly don't like trying to explain it because I love my parents and I know they love me. But I do notice subtle moments especially between my father and brother that suggest an inherent, natural bond. It's not that they're not giving me enough love; it's not that I'm not allowing their love; it's not a lack of give and take from either side; it's just some inner connection that is there, and I don't feel it. Again, I'm having trouble putting it into words, but there is something underneath that goes beyond "love."

Marnie: I started my search when I was in my late 20s. It was almost 18 years later when my brother put his name on the Post Adoption Registry. Did you decide to search or did your b-mom look for you?

Brian: I was extremely lucky as far as how searching for my birth mother went. I had always wanted to search, and I had always known that I would one day have some kind of relationship with my B-mom. Turns out that she wanted the same thing, so I was lucky on that front too! Everything was pretty much handed to me on a silver platter. Believe it or not, I was born in the closed state of Missouri, and was put up for adoption through the closed private organization of Catholic Charities. However, there was a sweet soul working at Catholic Charities that knew my A-mom, and she photocopied my Original Birth Certificate and gave it to my A-mom. My A-mom finally gave it to me when I was 23 over the holidays. Of course on the OBC was my B-mom's name. My A-mom also knew that she lived in Kansas City and to whom she was married. We looked her up in the phone book, and there they were!! Listed as husband and wife!!! Very easy.

Marnie: Wow Brian, your search and reunion did go very easily. Why did you think that you would have some kind of relationship with your B-mom? Was it intuition? Bless that sweet soul at Catholic Charities who gave your A-mom the copy of your OBC. You say that your B-mom wanted to reunite too, so the

reunion went well from the get-go? Did her husband know about you? How has she been accepted by your family and your A-mum? How many years since your reunion? Sorry for all the questions but this is so exciting to hear about your reunion.

Brian: Regarding my desire for reunion, I think it was intuition. My B-mom has admitted that she didn't want to relinquish me, and maybe I knew that on a cellular and emotional level. There are a lot of studies right now about how the psychological and emotional state of the pregnant mother affects the foetus in the womb. How do the effects then escalate when the child and mother are then separated after birth? Perhaps I was in touch with something on a cellular level that led me to believe we would reunite. Given that the search was easy, I can only believe that our combined energy really wanted this to happen. Plus, we've noticed a lot of synchronicity, the most obvious being that she named her son Bryan. It all really seems meant to be. Geez! How lucky have I been!!? That's not to say that reunion has been a smooth ride! It has definitely been an emotional roller coaster to say the least. Back then, I had no support group, no therapy, no real knowledge about the complexities of adoption and reunion. I just knew I wanted to meet her. The first several months, what they call the honeymoon period, were great and exciting. I knew I wanted to know her, but I didn't know how to fit her into my life. It's like I was looking for these puzzle pieces my whole life, and then, once I found them, I didn't know how to fit those pieces together in my life. My sense of identity was yet again challenged. How does this affect who I am? And does it affect who I am? In the end, I think we are who we are. It may not be that our identity is constantly changing, but that we may just be constantly discovering more about our identity and our selves. It's not that my B-mom just suddenly came into my life. She was already in my life. She is already a part of who I am, even though I didn't understand that yet on a conscious level. We were just separated for awhile. Now she returns, and it was time for me to get back in touch with that infant that I once was. It was and is time to accept who I am as a whole. Who I am as a whole includes my family by blood as well as my family through adoption.

OK! Told you I can get wordy! I even think that I mentioned above how I can over-explain things. Oh how we adoptees want so badly to be heard and fully understood!!! Back to your questions:

My B-mom's husband did know about me. In fact, he was the one who supported her as a friend through the pregnancy. He saw me in the hospital. I believe both of them looked at me through the glass only, no holding. So this reunion, which was 13 years ago, was certainly very meaningful for him as well. He's extremely supportive, and I consider him family. Both my mothers met at my wedding in 2000. My A-mom thought I was crazy for inviting my B-mom to the wedding, but I had to do it. It has been hard for my A-mom, even though she's the one who initially encouraged it. I think she was hoping I'd only get information, both medical and historical. When a relationship began to form, my A-mom became very defensive. We still deal with it today, but we talk more openly about it now. Since doing BLANK and getting involved with support groups, I've grown to understand myself and this situation more. I'm able to express myself a little better to my A-mom to help her understand, and I've learned not to be ashamed of what I want in this situation. There were a few years where I felt like I was walking on eggshells around this subject with my A-mom. Then, of course, my B-mom stepped back a bit for fear of stepping on my A-mom's toes. It was and will probably continue to be a complicated thing. Relationships are complicated enough without the adoption thing!!! I don't think my

parents will ever accept my B-mom as extended family to the point where we're having big family holiday dinners together and such. But I did tell my A-mom that I need her support in my relationship with my B-mom. It's a very validating thing to have your A-mom accept your B-mom.

Regarding my show, the name space on my OBC was blank, and that is where I got the title for my play. So, there is a literal meaning to the title as well as a metaphorical meaning regarding our mystery and the holes in our identity. You can see the clip from BLANK where my A-mom reveals my OBC on YouTube if you desire:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhwpJtcn6xk>

This clip was actually filmed almost 2 years ago, and things have slightly changed, but it is a good sneak preview if anyone's interested. Marnie: Thank you for sharing the link to the You Tube clip. I've watched it, and love it!!!

*Note from the Editor: if you have any questions about adoption, or for Brian about his work and about his presentation **BLANK** please share them with us by sending to Marnie. Your question may be submitted anonymously if you prefer. We will continue this conversation with Brian in our Spring AC #61 (May).

Members Out, About and Over the Moon



What put me over the moon? Well, not sure if you would say I was ecstatic, but my daughter turned 40 in January. 4-0!!! How

did that happen? We reunited 17 years ago so it just doesn't seem possible that I could have a 40-year-old daughter. I speak all the time to pre-adopting parent education groups about the birth of my daughter and her relinquishment to adoption and it is just as vivid today as it was.....apparently 40 years ago! And my eldest granddaughter just turned 14! That I kind of get as she has never known life without me – Grandma has ?????? always been there. So of course after all of this I have to look at me – how old does that make me? I don't feel old enough to have a 40 year old daughter – in fact, we had brunch together with some



friends of mine and they thought we looked more like sisters! Hmmm! Time passes so quickly and there just doesn't seem enough time to do all the things we want to do – like spend more time together, spend more time on yourself, spend time seeing and doing, well, everything else! My daughter is 40!

That means that we are in fact getting older so what the heck are we waiting for? I'll be old before I know it, my daughter will be old before she knows it, and my granddaughter will be a full grown adult with her own life in....in no time. Guess this makes me realize we have to make the time to appreciate the important things and people in our lives – it could all be over before we know it.

I mean, 40! Where DID the time go?!

~ Nancy Kato ~



I went to a Healing Weekend with Joe Soll in November. I flew into Newark, NJ, airport, avoiding the major New York airports. Luckily, a childhood friend of mine, living in the area, picked me up and drove me North to Nyack, where I stayed one night at a Comfort Inn. The next day I took a cab to Joe Soll's place in Congers at 4 p.m. (after spending most of the morning and early afternoon shopping at one of the largest malls in America, Palisades Mall---fantastic shopping, but an ugly-ish, built-on-a-marsh mall. Not very crowded right before American Thanksgiving and Christmas. Stores: Lord and Taylor, Ann Taylor, Target, Sonoma-Williams....but I digress...off topic, sorry).

Joe's Healing Weekend was great. I would recommend it for anyone who is willing to do "the work." Some people were there who didn't want to know their feelings, but I got a lot out of it.

Also in November, I launched my website searching for my mother who is possibly still in the Philippines: www.constanciatibayonherandez.com

Life is busy, as always. I keep on journaling (almost daily) and find it is THE most helpful. Journaling and talking with Joe, and reading books by Alice Miller, and others, constitutes my therapy and I am feeling more at peace with my adoption situation. TTFN (ta ta for now)

~ Mary Anne Hernandez Dubeski~



In January 2010 the Cloverdale Support Group started with a great turnout, and now starting our third year we continue to have many supportive mothers, adoptees and adoptive parents come to share their experiences in the hope of helping one another and gaining the much needed support that is needed on this journey we have all courageously embarked on. Lots of questions are asked, reunion stories shared and new searches that

are starting are encouraged by the group. With the shared experiences that we have, we can help the searcher with what we have learned from our own searches and reunions by recommending books, suggesting journaling and just being there for each other. It's huge to know that we aren't alone with our thoughts and feelings...we are normal! For most of us this has become like our second family.

~Marnie

Tetz~



I love my family. Every itty bitty piece of it! ~ Randi Zanca ~ (Audrey Harrington's daughter)

OOPS ~ From the Editor



Being editor of Adoption Circles is very educational. Sincere thanks to all our contributors as I have learned so much from you. Being editor is also challenging, so thrilling and at times rather embarrassing because of errors that come to light only after many read-throughs and the final printed copy is in my hand.

Apologies for our Fall 2011 AC (Communication) errors go to:

- Anne Walmsley for dropping the 'e' from Anne;
- Diane Willcott for dropping one 'l' as it is Willcott- not Wilcott;
- However the award for my funniest mistake goes to Val Andrews for announcing the title of her article on the cover page (no less) as 'The Unconsciousness of Society' when the correct title is 'The Collective Unconsciousness of Society'. Perhaps this was a Freudian slip!

Many thanks to Val, Anne and Diane for being such good sports.

Book Nook

Second-Chance Mother

by Denise Roessle

Book Review by Linda Hoye

From the first sentence I was captivated by Denise Roessle's account of reuniting with her son twenty-six years after giving birth to him and relinquishing him to be adopted. This is not a sappy-sweet reunion story; this is a real, sometimes raw, view into the experience of a woman who gets a second chance to be part of her son's life only to find there are not always happy endings in reunion. The family Roessle's son was placed with shortly after birth did not turn out to be the storybook family she had wished for him and as a result, she meets a tormented, angry, and needy young man with secrets of his own.

This is more than just a story of adoption and reunion. *Second-Chance Mother* is a layered tale of multi-generational wounding beginning with the author's grandmother who, after her husband died, "scattered her children to the winds" giving them to an assortment of other families to raise. Most of the nine children managed to keep in contact with one another, but Roessle's mother moved away as soon as she could, cutting off all contact with her family. She led



her husband and children to believe she had no family of her own.

This is a complex story of relationships between the author, her stoic parents, and the young man who so desperately wants a relationship with his birth mother yet struggles to get past his anger toward her. It is a compelling story that reads almost like a mystery novel at times as details about the extended family Roessle learns about soon after reunion are revealed and the unpredictable and unstable life of her son and the many women who pass through his life is told.

The author doesn't gloss over the truth in this book as a result, in addition to a compelling read, *Second-Chance Mother* is a resource that educates the reader not only about the impact secrets can have on an entire family, but also and the deep, perhaps irreparable, wounding caused for both mother and child when they are separated by adoption.

Reviewer: Linda Hoye

Find me on the web at "A Slice of Life Writing"

Email: linda.hoye@gmail.com

What we have learned from others becomes our own reflection. ~ Ralph Waldo Emerson ~

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. ~ Nelson Mandela ~

The only person who is educated is the one who has learned how to learn and change. ~ Carl Rogers ~



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, BC (604) 852-9663
 (kajandl@yahoo.ca)
 Judy Lanyon- Courtenay, BC (250) 338-2429
 (juriah@shaw.ca)
 Leanne Neighbour – Kamloops, BC (250) 374-0990
 (neighbourhoodz@shaw.ca)
 Lynn Carrier- Edmonton, AB (780) 455-8528
 (carrierlynn@hotmail.com)

Reunited with Siblings:

Michael Hodgson (778) 395-0206
 (tiggerboots@shaw.ca)

Reunited Birth Parents:

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

Searching Step-Adoptee:

Edith Archibald (604) 583-7792
 (eearchibald@shaw.ca)

Interested Professionals:

Judy Archer, MSW, RSW, (250) 758-1275
 Counselor and Consultant in Adoption
 (judyarcher@shaw.ca)
 Lee Crawford, M.Ed. R.C.C. (604) 875-9957
 (leecrawford@shaw.ca)
 John Thomas - Quesnel, BC (250) 992-5688
 Christine M. Gatzke, M.Ed., CPAC/ARC
 Psychotherapist (306) 352-4069
 (christine.lachaine@clc-apathtohealing.ca)
 J. Amy Newman, Newman Research Services
 Genealogist/People Finder, Burnaby, BC
 (info@nrsfind.com) 1-877-521-3463, (604) 521-3463

Genetic Attraction:

Anne Tasko, M.A. R.C.C. (250) 721-5995
 (anntasko@shaw.ca)

This is a peer support service.

Please contact our office if you wish to be included on the
 LEAN ON ME
 Support List.

Adoption Circles Future Topics

EDITION	FOCUS	DEADLINE	DISTRIBUTION
Spring	Activation	April 25 th 2012	May 25 th 2012
Summer	Wellness	August 25 th 2012	September 25 th 2012
Fall	FOCUS ~ YOUR CHOICE: What topics you would like as the focus of our AC?		

Forget Me Not Family Society

Support Groups



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

Cloverdale, BC 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 (marnietetz@shaw.ca) or
 604-535-4434.

New Westminster, BC meets the second Tuesday of each month year round from 7 – 9 pm. New Westminster Public

Library 2nd floor 716 - 6th Ave, New Westminster, B.C.

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

Interior Support Group: This NEW support group will meet once a month in Kamloops. For information on dates, time and location contact Bernadette Rymer at bjrmer@telus.net or 1-250-453-2360.

Other Support Groups

Vancouver, BC: 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 contact Catherine at (katiesue@shaw.ca) or visit www.adopteesassociation.ca for more information.

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

Forget Me Not T-Shirts and Pins now available
T-Shirts \$15 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 taxes included
Plus shipping charges if applicable

Contact Gloria Sweder
604-271-4303 gsweder@shaw.ca

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 Editorial support is available.

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 Couples membership is \$50.00 per year.  
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