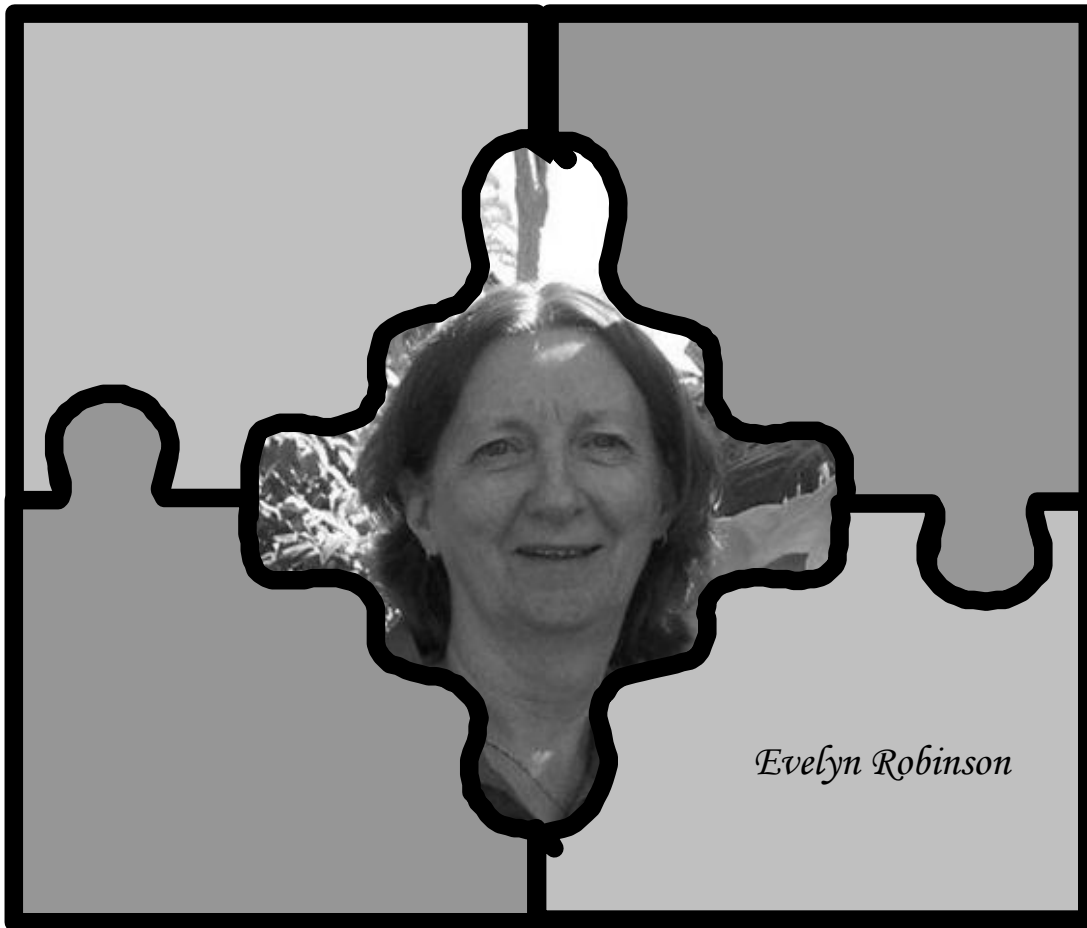


ADOPTION CIRCLES

Canada's Post-Adoption Quarterly

Issue #61 Spring 2012 \$3.50



Evelyn Robinson

Activism

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ADOPTION CIRCLES is published quarterly by the Forget Me Not Family Society, a non-profit organization.

Annual Memberships:

Single: \$30.00

Couples: \$50.00

Corporate: \$65.00

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Residents of the U.S. - please send U.S. funds.

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Please send editorials and letters to the Editor, Bernadette Rymer at:

bjrymer@telus.net or by mail care of the Society at the address noted above.

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.

President's Message

Once again it is Spring! I can't believe how fast a year can go by! I am totally enjoying the new growth on the trees and the shrubs in our garden. Overnight the dull brown backyard is full of fresh green and the robins are *almost* waking me in the morning. I say 'almost' because it's actually the alarm clock doing that job. But once up and putting on my face, I can hear the robins, and how I love their song!



Marnie Tetz

Another thing that I love is the AC (Adoption Circles) Newsletter. Again Bernadette has chosen a topic that has inspired many to write their thoughts: Activism. What an awesome topic, and to have it follow immediately behind the topic of Education is a perfect fit!

I remember when someone first referred to me as being an “anti-adoption activist”. I thought, ... huh? Activist ... *me*? Anti – adoption activist???? Wow. When looking in the dictionary for the meaning of the word ‘activist’, it says “*someone who takes part in activities that are intended to achieve political or social change*”.* So I suppose I am an activist. I do want to bring about political change in how government sees adoption and how they handle it. I believe that past adoption practices have been disrespectful to all affected. Adoptive parents weren’t educated, first parents weren’t given choices or options, and adoptees were treated as if we were cabbage patch kids, plunked into a new life with no regard for what we were losing. Records should be open to all of those who have had their lives affected:

*MacMillan Dictionary

Mothers, fathers, siblings, grandchildren, aunts and uncles who wish to find a missing family member, and those adopted adults who want to find where they come from. I also believe that moving forward we need to have legislation in effect so that records are open from day one, unless there is a danger of harm to the child. I also believe that society needs to know what adoption does and how it affects those who have had adoption change their lives. Mothers and fathers do want to know where their lost children are, they didn’t forget. There should have been no shame in an unplanned pregnancy. Thankfully, society is finally figuring that out. Adopted adults deserve the respect to be able to receive their information without “gatekeepers” keeping it from them. Adoption isn’t the be all and end all. Yes there will always be children in care who do need a safe and stable home and family, but not at the expense of losing who they are.

And so, I will now step off of my soapbox and encourage you to find a cozy spot, with your favorite “drop” and lose yourself in this issue of the AC.

Rymer Writes

I HAVE A DREAM



“I have a dream.” The words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. still ring with authenticity and vitality. At the time he delivered this speech on August 28, 1963, his vision and his actions were met with both enthusiastic support and stubborn opposition. Yet Dr. King did not waver in his determination to advocate, work for and fight for the advancement of civil rights and equal freedom for all. Few people today would oppose him, or argue his purpose. Most people accept the concept of civil rights and equal freedom for all to be self-evident.

That is of course **except** for those of us in the adoption loss community who did not have the right to parent our children or the right to live and be raised by our biological parents and family. Even today, 49 years after Dr. King’s famous speech, too many of us still do not have the right to know where are our children are, or where we came from and who our parents and biological family are. From this I believe it is reasonable to extrapolate that we therefore are not equal, or that we are less equal than parents and children who are not in the adoption loss community.

I am here to tell you that I have joined the ranks of many brave souls who are not taking this sitting down. I cannot and will not accept that we are less equal, although we have certainly been treated as less equal by our families, our churches and society in general. While the reality of our situation was what it was, and in many ways still is what it is, this is by no means a reason for acceptance of the status quo.

Thus the theme of this issue of Adoption Circles: **Activism**. So what is Activism? It is a doctrine or practice that emphasizes **direct vigorous action especially in support of or opposition to one side of a controversial issue**. An activist is someone who takes part in activities that are intended to achieve political or social change, especially someone who is a member of an organization.

This issue of AC includes three feature articles specifically related to activism. You will meet some people who did not take the status quo sitting down. These are very visionary and courageous people who have, like Dr. King, said "ENOUGH ALREADY!" and have been moved to speak up and write about their experience of adoption loss and reunion, and then to act, advocate and lobby all levels of federal and local governments and church representatives. Some of these you will meet continue to work on the national level, while others work on the individual level.

Many of you will meet for the first time, Australian Evelyn Robinson, who was and continues to be instrumental in bringing about change in Australian adoption practices, public apologies issued by those involved in the adoption industry, development of a national public inquiry into forced adoption practices and so much more. You will hear from Karen Lynn of the Canadian Council of Natural Mothers, who, with the support of the CCNM Executive and members, have developed a submission to the Australian Inquiry. On the personal/individual level, we continue our conversation between our president Marnie Tetz and Brian Stanton, writer and presenter of BLANK, who will be our Fall (Nov. 3rd-4th) workshop presenter. These three articles are

lengthy and are presented in full for your information. There is also an article on world news which will update you on adoption activism activities.

In this issue you will also read about our FMNFS activists, Marnie and Audrey who share with us their experience at the American Adoption Congress Conference in Denver, held in April. We also share with you our Annual President's Report, some happy news about members in *Members Out and About* and sadly we say farewell to three dedicated Board members. Even though they will no longer be sitting on the Board this awesome trio will continue to volunteer to do some very important work for this organization that they so love and support.

As with the previous issue of AC, Education, the articles and information on this AC are not for the faint of heart. This issue may be a *several session read* for you as some of it is heavy duty. We sincerely welcome your input as it helps us to continually evolve in our thinking and understanding about what you, our members, want our AC to look like.



So it is with the deepest respect and sincere appreciation for the courage and commitment of activists like Dr. Martin Luther King, and Gandhi, Nancy Verrier, Joe Soll, Evelyn Robinson, Nancy Kato, Marnie Tetz, Karen Lynn, Brian Stanton and so many other 'brave souls' that I share with you my dream for all members of our adoption loss community.

To My Friends in Adoption Loss: As we have faced the difficulties of yesterday and continue to face the difficulties of today and tomorrow:

I HAVE A DREAM that one day soon mothers and fathers and children who have lost each other to adoption will have full and equal access to all their identifying information.

I have a dream that one day soon we will be truly equal and free to parent our children and to be loved and raised by our biological parents and families.

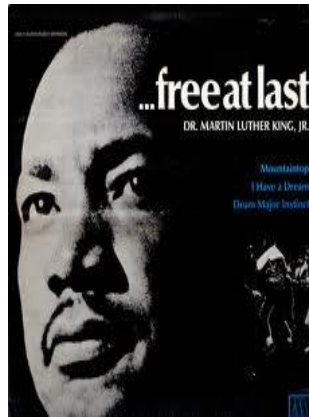
I have a dream that one day soon all children who were lost to adoption will know **how much they were and are loved by their biological parents**, and that they will have the courage, the generosity and the support they need to prepare for and enter into a meaningful and lasting reunion process.

I have a dream that one day soon all mothers who lost their children to adoption will recognize and accept that **they did not have a choice, that they did not give their baby away** and that they will be able to let go of the guilt and shame that has plagued them for far too long, and thus enter into a meaningful and lasting reunion process.

I have a dream that one day soon, all parents who had the honour of raising our children will understand their child's need to know who they are and where they came from and will be supportive of their child's need to reconnect with his/her biological family.

I have a dream that one day soon federal and local legislators, church representatives and private adoption agencies will be open to listening to our stories, will recognize the role they played in

separating us from our children and parents causing long term traumatic pain and suffering, and that they will apologize for their forced adoption practices which separated us from our loved ones.



I have a dream that one day soon educators at universities, colleges and high schools will understand the truth about adoption loss and trauma and will include content in their course work which will prepare future educators and clinicians for the realities of working with students and clients who are suffering from adoption loss and trauma.

I have a dream that one day soon, as viable and loving alternate ways develop to support biological parents and children

to grow as families together, that adoption practices will cease altogether.

And when this happens, when we are truly equal and free to know who we are, where we come from and where are children are, when we are free to love and be loved we will, in the words of Dr. King, be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"



Personality Profile

Evelyn Robinson

Reunited Mother

Activist ~ Educator ~ Author

Introduction: Australia is the first country in the world to recognize the harm caused as a result of Australia's forced adoption policies, to apologize to mothers and babies who were separated at birth because of these policies and to set up a national inquiry into past practices. Credit for the Australian apology and subsequent inquiry goes to you, Evelyn,

and to mothers all over Australia as you have committed much of your adult life to adoption reform. In an article entitled "*The Times They are a Changing*" published in the Australian Journal of Adoption, November 2010 you stated: "Who would have thought that I, a mother who had been separated from her child by adoption would be sitting in a

Parliament building, with other mothers, who had also experienced adoption separation, looking and listening, as politicians wept while describing our loss and grief?" says Evelyn.

Evelyn, your work and the work of many mothers in Australia is very encouraging and brings hope to hundreds of thousands of mums, dads and adoptees in North America.

How would you describe yourself and why are you so committed to adoption healing and education?

In terms of how to describe me, I'm happy with 'reunited mother,' as I think it's important for readers to know that first and foremost, I am a mother who was separated from my son by adoption. Stephen was born in 1970 and we were reunited in 1991, which means that he has now been in my life for the same number of years that he was missing from my life. We continue to enjoy a close relationship.

I'm not comfortable, however, with being described as an 'adoption reformer' and I'll explain why. I have made it clear for many years that I would like to see an end to all adoptions.

In a paper which I presented at the American Adoption Congress Conference (and many other venues) in 2001, I included a paragraph called *The Future* in which I said:

What I am proposing is not "adoption reform" nor is it a "new approach" to adoption. I should like to make it clear that what I am saying is not that I want to see a change in the way adoptions are currently arranged. I am emphatically not saying that we must find a BETTER WAY to conduct adoptions. What I am saying very clearly is that we must find a way to care for children who are unable to remain with their families of origin that is BETTER THAN adoption. What is wrong is not the way that adoptions are managed. There is something wrong with adoption itself. Those opposed to capital punishment, for example, would not be concerned with the competing merits of hanging versus the electric chair. Similarly, I am not concerned with how adoption is managed or

whether it is "open" or "closed". I wish to see an end to adoption in any form.

I've never really been concerned with labelling myself and haven't really thought about myself as an activist. However, I looked up **activism** in a dictionary and it said: ***'the attitude of taking an active part in events, especially in a social context'***. Well, that certainly fits me and so ***I guess I am an activist***, although I didn't ever make a choice to be one.

I've really thought of myself more as an **educator**. Initially my work focused on healing and that has always, for me, been the core of my work. Through my work to promote healing, it became clear to me that I wanted to focus not only on repair but also on prevention. I believe that *if only we could educate people about the realities of adoption*, then they would see that we must devise better alternatives.



Evelyn Robinson and Nancy Verrier

How and why did you come to be sitting in that Parliament building on that day?

My history is, briefly, that I started to address my own buried adoption issues, firstly on my own and then with professional help in the 1980s. This process was so effective that I wanted to share it with others. I returned to study, in the 1990s and completed a social work degree, in order to give my experience some social context and also to learn more about how to help others. I found that the most effective way to share my knowledge and experience was by writing about it and distributing my work. I have also made many personal speaking appearances in different countries for the purpose of educating both those who have experienced adoption separation and those who

try to assist them. Over the years, I've found myself responding to media items about adoption, again, with the intention of educating people and drawing their attention to aspects of adoption which seemed not to be adequately addressed. At times, this has also involved contacting politicians, when I felt that legislation was not promoting healing and needed to be changed. I've taken many opportunities to present conference papers, to contribute to studies and research and to submit articles to journals and newsletters. All of this can be defined as "taking an active part in events" and so I suppose that what I thought was an educating process was also my version of activism.

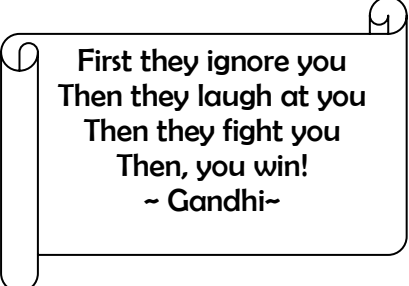
I'm also happy to be described as an author. Writing my books and articles has been a very important component of my education work. I'm sometimes described as a post-adoption counsellor, which is fine in some ways. I don't actually work as a post-adoption counsellor at present, although I have done in the past, but it does advise that, as well as my personal experience, I also have professional experience and professional qualifications – not that I want to boast about that, but my qualifications do give me some credibility in the world of academics and I think one of the reasons I have been able to be so effective is that I am able to present both the personal and the professional perspective and rather than competing with each other, they actually complement each other. I first met Nancy Verrier at the 1997 Australian Adoption Conference. She encouraged me to expand my conference paper into a book, which I did. My first book was published in 2000. I've always taken a DIY approach to my work. I took steps to address my issues, I educated myself and I've published my books myself. I published my fourth book in 2010.

Moving on to the history of change and awareness in Australia, I should like to stress that many, many people have contributed in many different ways to the way Australian society views adoptions, both past and present. Everyone who talks about their experience to another person, who writes a letter to a newspaper

editor, who volunteers with a support group or who contributes in any way towards educating the community is assisting this process. Over the years we have become discouraged at times and certain people have had to withdraw from being in the public eye, to care for themselves (which is vitally important), but there has always been someone to keep the flame burning and all that hard work is finally coming to fruition. Following is a summary of the efforts of those people, from my perspective. I can't guarantee that I have included every significant event and hope that I have not inadvertently overlooked anything of importance. Other people may, of course, tell the story differently.

The very early work began in the early 1970s with an organization called *The National Council for Single Mothers and their Children*. They are still active today and their Australian headquarters are here in my home city of Adelaide. At that time they fought for government financial support for single mothers and for the removal of the term *illegitimate* from birth certificates. It was largely through their efforts that the Sole Parent Pension was introduced in 1973 by the federal government. In the 1970s also Jigsaw was formed in Australia and still has very active branches in some states. Jigsaw supports all those whose lives have been affected by adoption separation and has assisted in many reunions. In 1982 *The National Council for Single Mothers and their Children* organized an Australian Adoption Conference, here in Adelaide. It was attended by many mothers who had lost children to adoption and through the contacts made at the conference, they began to organize their own support groups. Some of these support groups are still active.

The first significant change to adoption legislation took place in the state of Victoria in 1984, when adults who were adopted as children were granted the right to access their original birth certificates when they reached adulthood. This was followed by legislation in South Australia which went one step further and allowed equal rights to access identifying information to those adopted adults and also to their



**First they ignore you
Then they laugh at you
Then they fight you
Then, you win!
~ Gandhi~**

original mothers and other significant family members in some cases. All other states and territories over the next few years followed South Australia's example. Sadly, Victoria has not yet updated its legislation to bring it into line with the rest of Australia. From that time onwards, there have been regular adoption conferences in Australia and so there has been a regular sharing of ideas in the adoption community. Of course, there is a range of opinions and there have been divisions and competitiveness, unfortunately, but overall, there has been steady progress towards education and openness. This has resulted, over the years, in the provision in some locations of government funding for valuable post-adoption support services.

Australians were generally moved and supportive when the federal government apologized to the Stolen Generations of Aboriginal people in 2008 and to the Forgotten Australians (who had grown up in care) and the Child Migrants in 2009. After these events members of the adoption community began to consider whether it would be appropriate for an apology to be issued to those who had been adversely affected by past adoption policies and practices. Some mothers contacted hospitals and religious groups who had managed homes for unmarried mothers and explained to them how they had suffered as a result of their adoption separation experiences. The result was that in some areas, apologies were obtained from some of those organizations, which was very encouraging. The fact that they were able to acknowledge the hurt that had occurred and the ways in which their behaviour as organizations had contributed to that hurt was quite significant.

One very significant event which occurred in the state of Western Australia was that a mother there contacted her member of parliament and also a journalist and found them both to be interested and willing to support her in her request for a state government apology. The resulting apology, which took place on the 19th of October 2010 was attended by many people from around Australia, including my son and me and was a very important step in the

journey towards a national apology. The apology was worded to make it clear that it was for all those people who felt that their lives had been adversely affected by past adoption policies and practices. This apology could not have happened, of course, without the efforts of many people over many years. As a result of the Western Australian apology, the Australian Senate Community Affairs Committee undertook their enquiry into the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices*, which lasted eighteen months and was extremely thorough. Their report was presented on the 29th of February 2012. Other organizations also translated their interest into action. The Australian Institute of Family Studies is conducting a *National Research study on the Service Response to Past Adoption Experiences* and Monash University in Victoria is also conducting a history of adoption project entitled *The Search for Family: A Social and Political History of Adoption in Australia*. When the Senate Community Affairs report was issued it included

**There is no failure more tragic
Than the failure to try!**

recommendations that there be a federal apology and also state and territory apologies. I immediately contacted the Premier of South Australia and the Minister for Education and Child

Development, who is responsible for adoptions in South Australia. The Premier announced recently that South Australia will issue a state apology on the 13th of June this year. We are the first state to announce that an apology will take place. I have already been approached by the Minister's staff, as they wish to consult with me regarding the content of the apology. A first meeting has taken place.

Not everyone, of course, agrees that an apology is appropriate and the senate report stressed that an apology is not enough and should occur alongside other measures to assist those whose lives have been adversely affected by past adoption policies and practices. Some mothers object to the term "forced adoptions", as they feel that they did make the best choice for their children and some of them feel that the apology is not for them. I have coined the term "forced by circumstances" which will hopefully allow those people to feel included. Others feel that their lives have not been adversely affected by their

adoption experiences. I am hoping that our state government will understand that the apology needs to be inclusive and should be worded in such a way as to honour a range of adoption experiences. My view of apologies for past adoption-related experiences is that it is a way of validating and acknowledging the truth of what happened to people and is a very valuable way to educate the community to the realities of life for unmarried mothers in the twentieth century and the enduring legacy of their adoption separation experiences.

Evelyn, I know you are aware that this move toward truth and healing about adoption has now begun in Canada. The coalition of groups who support those who have lost a loved one to adoption has begun working with the United Church and other churches in Canada . Could you add a short comment about the healing power of telling our stories and, when the time is right for each of us, the importance of speaking out and being actively involved in this truth and healing process?

It's vitally important that those of us who feel able tell our stories, as we are the only ones who can provide

this information authentically, because we are the ones who have lived it. Sadly, some of us have gone to our graves without sharing our adoption experiences and so those of us who remain can hopefully take the opportunity to educate the community about what we have lived through and what we live with. We don't want other people telling our stories for us, as we are the ones who fully comprehend the depth of our feelings around our adoption separation experiences. Taking ownership of our experiences and using our own language to describe them has the power not only to educate others and increase their awareness, but also to assist in our personal healing, as well as our understanding and acceptance of our life's journey. In the past most of us felt disempowered and sometimes helpless. Now is the time for us to empower ourselves and take responsibility for our own healing, as well as telling our stories from a position of enlightenment and understanding.

Keep up the good work and it's great that we can all share and work co-operatively around the world.
Cheers, Evelyn

News From Around the World

AUSTRALIA

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



The transcript of the Adelaide senate enquiry hearing has been put on the web site:

http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/clac_ctte/comm_contrib_former_forced_adoption/hearings/index.htm

October 31, 2011: As Australia's first charity, The Benevolent Society has a long history of supporting the most vulnerable members of our community. It is because of this commitment that we wish to make a public statement of apology about past adoption practices we were associated and involved with.

November 30, 2011: Publication: *Adelaide Now*
The Uniting Church in South Australia has accepted responsibility for past practices of forced adoptions.
<http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/news/south-australia/uniting-church-admits-to-forced-adoption/story>

May 17, 2012: email from Evelyn Robinson

The Premier of South Australia announced that the official apology date has been moved to the 18th of July. The reason for this is that they want to make sure that they get everything planned thoroughly and take more time about it. It's good that they understand that this is a major undertaking and they are keen to ensure that the planning is thorough.

CANADA

April 19, 2012: Article by Kathryn Blaze Carlson

The Presbyterian Church in Canada has launched an internal review of its historic maternity home practices, becoming the third church to do so since the *National Post* last month began an investigation into coerced and forced adoptions targeting unmarried mothers between the 1940s and 1980s. Stephen Kendall, the clerk of the Presbyterian assembly, said the review was sparked by a concern for mothers who have recently alleged they were coerced or forced by social workers, medical professionals, and maternity-home staff into surrendering their children because they were not married. "[We're concerned] about any mothers whose children went for adoption that might have concerns today," he said. "Our archivist is compiling a list of documents and doing a review of them."

April 21, 2012: Publication: The *United Church Observer* Article: *United Church Addresses Concerns about Forced Adoptions*.

The United Church of Canada is currently in conversation with the following support groups that have contacted the church's national office: Origins Canada, Canadian Council of Natural Mothers, Forget Me Not Family Society (Adoption Circles), and Parent Finders Canada. The United Church of Canada is actively trying to reach out to any women who attended maternity homes operated by the United Church. "The United Church of Canada is committed to hearing the stories of women and others affected by forced adoption," says the Rev. Bruce Gregersen, General Council Officer, Programs. United Church has also begun an extensive review of its archival records. "We believe this research will not only help us determine the church's role in this story, but will

also provide much-needed information for women seeking access to historic records that may be housed in our archives across Canada," says Gregersen.

U.K.

Tuesday, May 22, 2012 There is currently a motion before the British Government to recognize and apologize for the suffering caused by forced adoptions during the 1950s to 1970s. For more information, google "Movement for Adoption Apology."

U.S.A.

April 24, 2012: Statement from Rev. Larry Snyder, President of Catholic Charities USA in response to request from "Dan Rather Reports" regarding Adoption Services:

"Catholic Charities agencies have a long history of providing support to birth parents and finding loving homes for children. While some of the personal experiences reported by birth mothers in the 1950s and 1960s are heartbreaking, as the social stigma of being an unwed mother has changed, so have adoption practices. Our practitioners have always utilized the best practices of the day in their dedicated work supporting birth parents and our agencies remain focused on the best interests of the child while supporting birth parents and adoptive parents in their decision making process.

Snyder said: "We must not lose track of the tens of thousands of adoptive parents who will be forever grateful to birth parents for the sacrifices they make to ensure that their children's lives will be filled with the love and opportunity they may otherwise not have received."

SPAIN

March 16, 2012: Publication: *The Guardian* Spanish baby-snatching investigators accuse 80-year-old nun. Sister María Gómez named as suspect in one of more than 1,500 cases of suspected trafficking of babies from hospitals.



Canadian Council of Natural Mothers
Submission to the
Committee Secretary Senate Standing Committees
on Community Affairs

Australia, March 28th, 2012

Dear Committee Secretary:

We would like to commend the Senate of the Government of Australia for being the first in the British Commonwealth of Nations, and in the West, to investigate the real effects of adoption on the mothers, fathers and children who suffered loss in adoption. In our view, in this effort you are representing a highly evolved, altruistic and ethical society by valuing the opinions of those who have experienced adoption from a position of loss, not gain.

We believe that our countries share elements of a common history and culture. From our many contacts in Australia, and from scholarly works, we are aware that adoption practices in our two countries have been similar from the beginning, and most definitely post-World War II. Therefore, we anticipate that in sharing our thoughts and conclusions, the vast majority of Australian mothers, fathers and adopted people will have experienced similar events and situations, and most likely come to the same conclusions.

We greatly appreciate the opportunity of sharing the experiences of Canadian mothers and fathers who surrendered children to adoption through the coercive practices of governments and those enabled by government. The attached list comes from CCNM members and documents the experiences of single mothers, natural fathers and their children lost to adoption in Canada, and in some cases in other countries, such as the United States of America and Great Britain, for those members who lost their children in those countries. It is not an exhaustive list, but indicates the areas which need examination if a full accounting of the costs of adoption to natural families is to occur.

Please accept our submission: *Areas for Consideration of the Inquiry into the Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices*.*

Sincerely,

Karen Lynn
President, Canadian Council of Natural Mothers

*From the Editor: The submission contains a list of 61 items under the topics: Forms of Coercion; Inadequate Medical Care; Breach of Duty; Complicity of Societal Institutions-Churches, Social Agencies, Legal, Police, Psychology; Governmental Neglect; and Human Rights Abuses of both Mothers and Children.

A PDF with the complete text is at:

<http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=clac_ctte/comm_contr_b_former_forced_adoption/submissions.htm>

Or google: Australia "Commonwealth Contributions to Former Forced Adoption Practices and Policies" / click on "Submissions Received" / scroll down to #244 Canadian Council of Natural Mothers.

FORGET ME NOT FAMILY SOCIETY AGM PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT

by Marnie Tetz

Presented 5th May 2012

I can't believe that another year has gone by. Since the AGM in May of 2011 your Board has met consistently on an almost monthly basis to discuss what we need to do for the members of the Forget Me Not Family Society. Many thanks go to the membership who support the Board as we continue to hold our support groups and publish the amazing Adoption Circles newsletter. The Board has continued to work on offering our annual fall workshop and at least one movie night a year as a way of continuing the support that we believe our membership needs.

In the past year we have been busy as beavers. We have been concerned about members who haven't renewed their memberships and because of that have sent out a "Where are you?" letter. The support from our membership is important and so we do need to know what we are doing right and if members aren't returning, we'd like to know why. We do understand that people are busy and sometimes just are... where they are... in their adoption journey and may need to just move on, and leave our family...I get that. I hope that they will return for a visit.

We were very pleased to have produced a Forget Me Not Family Society pin that was designed with help from a co-worker of Audrey's. Another item that had been on the agenda finally came to be in the form of business cards. Whew! This all takes time and hard work, and I thank Audrey for all of the time she spent making both of these happen.

At our last AGM we had a fun workshop that was very telling. Those who participated learned about their personalities represented in colours. Thanks to Betty Conroy I know that I am an organized, people oriented personality: gold and blue. I am not at all an orange, not spontaneous, nor am I analytical, one of the traits of a green person. Perhaps both of these colours would be



a good thing to add, but "I yam what I yam, and that's all that I yam" as Popeye would say!

In April 2011 Bernadette and Gail to Orlando represented us at the American Adoption Congress's Conference. They were both hugely impacted by who they met and what they experienced. And thanks to their attendance our workshop this fall will be presented by someone they met there: Brian Stanton.

Last summer we held a movie night: Jean Strauss's *Adopted for the Life of Me*. This event was well attended. A special thanks to Diane Willcott for donating the goodies, and goodies they were. Popcorn, pop and the favourite, liquorice, at least mine! Diane, many thanks for your support. The movie was well attended, with a great conversation afterwards.

In October we held our annual Fall Workshop with the crowd pleaser Joe Soll. Despite his health issues, Joe was amazing. I believe that this was our best workshop ever with Joe. Thanks to all of the Board who gave more of their time to choose the new venue and make it all work. Even though the venue wasn't great, we at least took the chance on changing locations. The Richmond location is perfect. It's easier for our members who fly in, with access to public transportation. Thanks to Gloria for helping me in checking out a new venue for the workshop this year. Glo, I think we have a keeper in this choice!

And now, I would like to thank this amazing Board who work behind the scenes to make the Forget Me Not Family Society the organization it is.

Heather: You are doing an amazing job of putting together the history of the FMNFS. I look forward to seeing what you have done archiving our past. I know it will be an A-1 job!

Amy: Bernadette and I are so grateful for your editing expertise with the newsletter. Your attention to detail has for sure made Bernadette's job so much easier. I also appreciate the help that you have given to those who are searching for the ones they lost to adoption.

Bernadette: Sigh, where do I start? The newsletter is amazing! I love how you are so focused on keeping the focus. Your decision to keep each issue on topic I believe is making Adoption Circles even better! The time that you take to research the topics and then make it all come together is making each issue a stronger statement as to what is important to those of us in the adoption "tribe". Also your tireless efforts in regard to the Education Program I know is going to make this something huge. The FMNFS was already on the radar, but I think this program is going to put us on the map! Thank you!

Audrey: Again I sigh! What can I say about my right hand "woman"? You are my go-to: "Audrey I need this, Audrey... I need that." And ... what do you do? Produce it or help make it happen. Not to mention the fact that your enthusiasm for the Society is just plain awesome. Thank you!

Gail has been with the Society since before it was the Society. Gail has done the books, taken the minutes, and then done the books "only." Believe you me, I don't minimize for one second that doing the books is an "only" task. Gail, you have once again been patient with me and explained what is what. I may never be a bookkeeper or accountant, but I am starting to catch on. Gail, thank you for what you do, and your willingness to produce what is asked of you.

Gloria: I thank you for all that you have done and for what you do to make this Society workable. You have always made sure before a Board meeting is over that we have a date for the next one. Many thanks for that because by the end of a Board meeting we are all tired, and forgetful (at least I am) and so you have always made sure we have a date to meet again. I don't ever have to think about our members receiving the newsletter, as you do this effortlessly. I am sure that when the AC arrives in their mailboxes that our members haven't thought about how it got there. Please note, it's thanks to Glo. Do you know when your membership is due? If not, it's Glo who has sent you that reminder. Oh yes, just one more job that she effortlessly does for us. Now, do you want a T-shirt or a Forget Me Not pin? Oh yes, go to Glo. Do you want to borrow a book from our library? Yes, go to Glo.

So, to each and every one of you on the Board, I thank you for all that you do, and all that you have done. Because of all of your efforts it appears that workshops just happen, newsletters are produced and sent. But I know the real scoop! It's because of each of you that it has all happened.

We all have busy lives outside of the Forget Me Not, and for the Board to take the time from their lives to do what they do requires time and commitment to this amazing Society.

To those of you here today, I thank you for your continued support, and for your willingness to give up a Saturday to spend time with your Board and your fellow members.

Marnie Tetz, President
Forget Me Not Family Society

AGM Movie: Mother and Child

Fifteen participants viewed the movie *Mother and Child* after our AGM May 5th and discussed what it movie meant to them. Also on May 26th, five mums gathered in Kamloops to view the movie, share their stories and responses. I think the writers and producers/directors of this movie must have first had experience with adoption loss as they presented each perspective so well. I recommend watching it with a friend or a loved one who understands you, knows your story and "gets it".

~ Bernadette Rymer ~

This year's annual meeting was the best I've ever attended! A surprise visitor from out of town shared their story and some exciting news: they were about to meet mom for the first time the next day! It is an honour to be able to help them reunite. We hope to hear more of this happy event in a future issue of AC!

~ Amy Newman ~

Thank You to Audrey, Gloria and Heather

We wish to thank three former Directors of the FMNFS for their time and commitment to the Society in recent years. Due to personal reasons Audrey Harrington, Gloria Sweder, and Heather Albrecht decided not to stand for election as directors for the 2012-2013 term.

Heather will continue as our archivist. Although they are stepping back, Audrey and Gloria intend to continue with their favourite Society projects, giving their time, experience, administrative and organizational skills as they are able. We are very grateful that they will continue to work with us to meet the needs of our for our FMNFS family.

I must admit that I will miss Mr. T at the Board meetings. For those of you who don't know who he is, he's Gloria's four-legged furry friend who was notorious for stealing whatever he could get his teeth on. Pens... papers... you get the idea! ~ Marnie Tetz ~



Gloria Sweder and Mr. T

American Adoption Congress Conference “Mile High Expectations”

Denver, Colorado April 26th – 29th, 2012

Reflections by Marnie Tetz

In April our past Vice President Audrey Harrington and I attended the AAC's Conference in Denver. It was an honour to represent the Forget Me Not Family Society. We were there in full FMNFS attire, our purple t-shirts as well as the FMNFS pins. Armed with issues of the newsletter, brochures and business cards, we were a force to be reckoned with!

Our first morning we attended AAC 101: Preparing for the Conference Experience. This workshop was well worth attending for us novices. It gave us a chance to interact with other “newbies” and become comfortable with one another. The last part of the workshop was time spent in groups of three where we each made a statement about adoption. The male adoptee in our group summed it up by saying “it's a crashshoot!” I think there is some validity to his

comment because babies aren't blank slates to be molded into the biological children that so many adoptive parents were looking for.

The first keynote presentation we attended was by Clarissa Pinkola Estes, who has written such bestsellers as “Women Who Run With the Wolves”. Clarissa was mesmerizing, and what I took away from her were some new terms that I like and for me will be easy to use. For instance, instead of the word *triad* she prefers the term *tribe*. I like that it sounds more inclusive for all of us who have be affected by adoption. Another term that she uses is *life mother* - mothers are mothers for life...no matter what!

That afternoon Audrey and I both attended the *tribe* support group and we both felt that it just didn't work for us. For me this support group didn't work because I didn't think the facilitator was a strong one. Even

though we had a very small group, and she ‘gets’ the anguish that adoption causes, the dynamic of the group wasn’t there. It seems to me like too much advice was being given and too much story telling went on. I wanted to hear feeling statements about what the participants had experienced during their first day of the conference. How was what they were learning and hearing making them feel? What we both were wanting was to have the comforting arms of our FMNFS support groups around us!

Our second day couldn’t have started any better as we had breakfast with Nancy Verrier. What a treat! She is such a delightful woman, so warm and real. This day was full of workshops. I choose the ones about mothers, the reality of their reunions and the expectations of reunions. Very emotional stuff! Again we attended support groups, Audrey trying the one for mums and me the one for adoptees. Although the group was well facilitated, once again it just wasn’t working for me. After a long and emotional day I needed warmer arms around me. The highlight of the day for me was meeting author and film maker, Ann Fessler. Her movie *A Girl Like Her* was amazing. I hope that everyone will get a chance to see this film.

Day three began with a legislative panel that was very interesting. To hear these lawyers and judges talk about the passion that they have for those of us in the “tribe” gave me such hope that one day there won’t be any such thing as sealed records. We then had lunch with our “peeps,” the Canadians and International attendees had a chance to chat in a room set aside for us. It was fun to chat with Monica Byrne, Michael Grand, as well as two adoptees from England. (Yes there were only six of us!) The American delegates of course were a much larger group, and so were split by the location of their states. Following this we attended our final workshop for the day. As far as support groups go, I sat this one out. I went for a nice walk to get fresh air and to also have some alone down-time to reflect on what I had experienced.

That evening we attended the performance of comedienne, Pekitta Tynes. I hadn’t expected to enjoy her performance, for me comedy just wasn’t going to fit. Pekitta proved me wrong as she was

very funny and shared her own heart wrenching story which is truly a testament to the survival skills that a little black girl and her sister had in the early 1960s.

Did I have fun? That was the question from a fellow attendee in the shuttle bus en-route to the airport. I didn’t hesitate to say no. I didn’t have fun. Dealing with adoption and the issues surrounding it isn’t fun, no matter if you have had the privilege of attending an amazing conference like the Mile High AAC conference. This conference was an unforgettable opportunity to make new acquaintances and perhaps some new life long connections. But fun? No. Overwhelming? At times most definitely! Enlightening? YES! It will take time to digest it all, but I will always be grateful for the opportunity that I was given to represent the FMNFS. An adoptee who attended one of the workshops made this statement, “We are like extension cords...running around trying to find the right family to plug into.”



Photo: Monica Byrne, Marnie Tetz, Michael Grand, Aileen Mackenzie, Audrey Harrington, and Leon Clowes. Aileen and Leon are both adoptees from England.

Reflections by Audrey Harrington

As Marnie and I were sitting in the Super Shuttle to start our journey back to Vancouver, we were asked by another conference attendee if we’d had a fun weekend. The three days spent at the American Adoption Congress conference in Denver was not what I would call a fun weekend!

There were moments of joy as I listened to Mary Gauthier *Exploring her Journey*. There were moments of profound sadness as I learned about those in the American foster system while watching Matt Anderson’s *From Place to Place* or as I relived the

adoption scenario from the 1950s to early 1970s while watching Ann Fessler's *A Girl like Her*. There were moments of extreme interest in the Legislative Panel sessions *Living with the Law: Ambiguous Language, Unintended Consequences, and Slippery Slopes* and *Dismantling the Barriers to Identity Access*.

- I learned *How to Internet Search for Family* with Marilyn Waugh.
- I had a *Reality Check* with Nancy Verrier.
- I gained insight into the *Spiritual Paths of Adoption Recovery* from Nicole Burton, Patrick McMahon and Nancy Verrier.
- I laughed listening to Pekitta Tynes as she told her story *Still Searching...Still Laughing!*
- From John Sobraske, I learned about the *Accidental and Intentional Steps leading to Closed Adoption* and the *Political, Economic and Ethical Realities Affecting Legislative Action*.

I now know that my calling is not as a political activist for changes in adoption laws - I have too many emotions colouring my thoughts - but I will

help in any way I can to promote open adoption records!

I enjoyed the light heartedness around sharing meals with old and new friends, sharing my impressions and reflections with Marnie as we coped with processing all we heard and saw and the opportunity to meet others within the Adoption Circle from every corner of the USA and beyond, to learn their stories and to share the experience of the conference with them.

Thank you, Forget Me Not Family Society, for giving me the opportunity to represent you in Denver. Thank you, American Adoption Congress, for a well-rounded, fascinating and well-organized conference. What was most memorable? That's so hard to decide as there were many "Aha!" moments. The best I can do is to urge you to attend a conference if and when you can, to keep reading others' stories and to keep sharing your story.

The last word from the Conference is: **Adoption: No Secrets! No Fear!**

Conversation with Brian Stanton - Part Two

By Marnie Tetz

Continued from AC issue #60, Winter 2012

Marnie: Since I was raised in a family with another adoptee my sister and I were both very different from our A-parents and each other. We knew that we were loved, and we knew we didn't talk about adoption. My sister is five years older than me and so we were never really close growing up. Thankfully as adults we are very close.

I think what you said about what you knew, or what babies can know on a cellular and emotional level is very valid. How can a baby in utero *not* know what's going on with Mum? Maybe some of us are more in tune than others, then again this is scary stuff and not everyone will allow themselves to "go there". It's about synchronicity which I believe is alive and well in our

lives with our B-mums. Your mum named her son Bryan, wow! Mine had a best friend whose name was Marnie.....go figure!



like with them? What do your siblings that you grew up with think of all of this?

Brian: My relationship with my half-brothers is very on the surface. It's a distance thing. I live on the West Coast, and they are in the Midwest. We live

completely different lives. When I'm lucky enough to see them, we talk and laugh, but it's mainly small talk. It's really amazing!! But we just don't see each other.

My adoptive siblings are extremely supportive. They absolutely love BLANK, and they believe in everything that I'm doing with it. I think they're also very secure in our sibling relationship. They also very much appreciate the honesty that I've had with the entire family about my journey. They realize it's hard sometimes on my parents, so they've let me know that my honesty has really helped. I'm tired of secrets and mysteries, so I've done my best with telling my parents the truth about my relationship with my B-mom. The honesty is not easy! I'm still frightened to have conversations with my A-mom about it, but I force myself to talk with her. I'm sure I sugarcoat sometimes! I really try to keep the communication going. I know too many adoptees who go behind their parents' backs when it comes to the B-mom or B-dad, and I see the utter horror in their eyes whenever I or someone asks about the adoptive parents' involvement or knowledge. We're so scared of hurting our parents. I figure that if I want them to be honest with me, I need to be honest with them. Trust is most important in a family. With trust, we reach truth. And isn't truth what we all want?

Truth is not easy. It's not easy at all.

So many people can't handle the truth, so they'll disappear or push it under the rug and never talk about it. Personally, I don't think it's a healthy way to live. I think with secrets comes shame. When we hold shame, we can't evolve to the person we have the potential to be. I see some shame right now with my B-grandparents. They don't want to talk about or deal with what happened to their daughter during the time of her pregnancy. Granted, it was a very difficult time, and I fully understand why they don't want to revisit that time emotionally. But now, here I am coming back into their life, so they're naturally faced with that time again. I feel that since they don't want to talk about it, our relationship suffers. Unfortunately, I feel I'm the source of that shame, like I'm something not to be discussed. I think they thought that once I was relinquished for adoption, they wouldn't have to deal with it or me again. But, again, here I am. It is hard

for me to talk about things with my B-mother and my A-parents, but I have to do my best with it. Dealing with the truth will set us free. We can't control how other people are going to react to the truth, but we can control whether we're honest ourselves. By accepting our own truths, I believe we can inspire others to accept theirs.

Marnie: What you say about your relationship with your half-brothers sounds so familiar with others I've been in touch with. You say that the distance thing creates that, which does make sense, however I also know of some reunions where the half-bro's/sis's are within say 100 miles of one another and it still isn't like they want to do coffee every other week. Do you think that we expect more of each other because of the separation and then reunion?

Brian: Relationships are complicated. It's interesting who we choose to really spend time with, who we choose to simply stay updated with, and then those that we only see at family events. I say the distance thing gets in the way a bit because I've never been able to really spend the time with my half-brothers, let alone my own B-Mother.



Reunion relationships can get complicated also because we're trying to figure out exactly how we fit into each others' lives. Some relationships come very naturally. For others, we may try

to force some kind of relationship just because they are family. If you think about it though, we don't get along with all family members whether adopted or not; we don't speak with some family members for years and then we suddenly see them at a wedding or a funeral. Maybe some of us adoptees do expect more out of our relationships with birth families if that's what we're specifically looking for. Again, relationships are complicated. Sometimes we think the grass is greener on the other side, but then we get there and find it's not much different from what we already have. The cool thing for us adoptees is that we are connected to two families, and, if we're lucky, we have the potential to have a few great relationships on both sides. Of course, we all know that this is not always the case. Some adoptees have very

unfortunate circumstances with their adoptive families, and naturally they may look for that family connection that they never had. Geez! The more we talk about this subject, the more complicated this world sounds!!!

Marnie: Do your siblings get your fear of discussing your B-Mum with your A-Mum (their totally B-Mum)?

I'm not sure if my siblings understand the fear I have talking with my A-mom about my B-mom. That fear runs deep, and quite honestly I don't fully understand it. It's funny because my sister is one of the most honest persons I know. She'll say what's on her mind with no hesitation. It's great! I wish I could be like that all the time with my A-mom. It has taken me 12 years into my reunion to fully understand that the reunion has nothing to do with my parents. It has nothing to do with any of their shortcomings; my searching has nothing to do with whether they were good parents or not. It has to do with me. My parents are my parents, and, if they love me, they will support me. If they have defensive feelings or fears, it is not my fault. This is such a difficult thing for us adoptees, but we have to rid our guilt, be honest with ourselves and others, and do what we believe is right for us (not our parents). We have to find that strength. I think I finally found it!!

Marnie: What about your children, how do they respond to your B-family?

Brian: My children get it. When they were younger, they asked a lot of questions about which belly I was in and all that. It was actually very cute, and I enjoyed having those conversations with them. They understand now who raised me, and who gave birth to me. They now enjoy very much being with both grandmas. They've even played with my half brother's kids. We even put my B-Mom on my 2nd grader's Family Tree this year, and no questions were asked by her. I've never understood the remark, "It's too confusing for the kids." NO! It's not. Kids probably understand those things better than we do because we complicate things with our egos. Again, for me, it's the honesty thing. This is my life and who I am. I am certainly not going to hide any of this from my children who are also a large part of who I am.

Marnie: I agree that kids do understand this better than adults who complicate things. Kids ask honest questions, they want the truth and don't expect lies or games, just what is. Plain and simple! I love that your kids asked which belly you were in, and that they understand who raised you.

The family tree! Wow! I hated it as I knew it was all



a lie. Awesome for your 2nd grader that she could fill in the blanks, and be proud and have no questions asked. Then again, I'm sure that if someone had have asked questions she would have proudly been able to respond. How did the family tree thing work for you in school?

Brian: I don't recall any strong emotions towards my own family tree project when I was in grade school. I know it's difficult for so many adoptees. I was always very honest with people about my adoption growing up. I had no problem telling anyone and everyone that I was adopted. Or if someone ever asked me my ethnicity or nationality, I'd always say, "I don't know because I'm adopted, but my parents now are Italian and Irish." Even though I don't remember having a strong reaction against the family tree back then, I do know that it felt so good to put my B-mom on my daughter's family tree project. It was definitely for me and not my daughter. She really didn't know any different, but I was very excited and felt a little more empowered and complete that day.

Marnie: BLANK is a very unique way to share your adoption story. How did you come up with that concept and why did you decide to share your story? What made you decide to do your play BLANK?

Brian: As an artist, I've always been fascinated with the "one-person show." While I was in graduate school at California Institute of the Arts, I had a conversation with a director friend after watching a one-woman show. I admitted that I would love to do a solo show, and my friend asked, "Well, what's your story?" I thought for a second and I said that I don't have a story. I really thought I didn't have anything to

say, and that I definitely didn't think I had anything important to say. Honestly, I felt I was a nobody with no story. Suddenly, I fell into an identity crisis!! Why don't I think I have a story? Who am I?

Well, a few months after that conversation, I reunited with my B-mom. As exciting as the reunion was, it didn't answer all the questions about myself that I thought it would. I was still fascinated with identity just as much. I'm still an actor exploring characters and taking on other identities. I love studying mythology, religion, and philosophy which are all disciplines trying to explain who we are. Finally, five years or so ago, I began writing a solo show about identity and about me asking the age-old question "Who Am I?" As a back story, I wrote about my adoption and reunion as well. While I was writing, I realized that my adoption has a lot to do with my fascination with identity. So I put the two together and I wrote BLANK. The title literally refers to the name space on my Original Birth Certificate, and I set off on a journey to fill in that blank.

Marnie: I find it really interesting that you didn't think that you had a story to tell. Then again I guess that your story wasn't there yet. It was still evolving. I love the title BLANK. It can apply to all of us who have been impacted by adoption. It can take on different meanings. Our adoptive parents originally thought we were blank slates to be molded into who they hoped we would be. Our First/B-moms were given blank information about where we went. As adoptees we were given our information with so many blank spaces. So your title means a lot to each of us, in some ways differently and in some ways the same. Why are you so passionate about sharing your experience with the world?

Brian: BLANK started off as a thing that I had to do as an artist and as a human being on a spiritual journey so to speak. Call it a passion project if you will. I wasn't sure at all how people would react to it. In fact, I was very surprised how much the adoption community related to it. I heard from so many adoptees that I was able to put into words what

they've been feeling. I had adoptive parents thank me for helping them understand their child. I had a B-mom tell me that I helped to alleviate her shame. One B-mom came out to me for the first time after my show. She had kept it a secret for so many years! All of this motivates me to continue to perform BLANK. I feel it is important to tell my story. By telling my story, it encourages others to accept their own stories.

Also, quite honestly, the more I perform BLANK, the more I understand myself in this adoption world. I understand my play way more now, then I did 2 years ago. A lot came out of me subconsciously while writing. So when I converse with the adoption community, I hear things said, and I realize, "Oh! That's why I wrote that line!" Plus, beyond the adoption community, the general public has been inspired as well because we all ask the question, "Who am I?" I believe BLANK challenges people to

really look inside and ask the tough questions about the essence of who we are. My show is really about identity, not adoption, so really everyone can relate to the play and its theme. The general public, however, will understand the adoptee slightly more by seeing BLANK.



Marnie: I do think that your play is a passion project. It must be amazing to have people come to you afterwards and tell you how your play has made them feel. What a release for that B-mom who came out to you for the first time after seeing your show! I also like what you say about "BLANK challenging people to look inside and ask the tough questions about the essence of who we are." I agree that we do need to be challenged. I would bet that a lot of us in this place I call Adoptionland think "I am adopted," and then just stop at that. Other than being adopted who are we? And that can be a place that's just too scary to go. So with your play you are showing people that it's okay to go to ask the questions about who we are and where do we come from.

You have done it and you are still okay, you are teaching all of us that it's okay to talk about it, that by talking about it and sharing our own stories we are healing.

Upcoming Events

Saturday, September 22, 2012

An Afternoon with Shari Ulrich

Juno award winner ~ musician ~ songwriter ~ reunited mom

Location: Owner's Lounge, 7288 Acorn Ave, Burnaby, BC V5E 4H6
(near Highgate Mall) Limited seating Cost \$25



FMNFS Annual Fall Workshop: November 3 & 4, 2012 *"Releasing our Voices"*

Featuring actor, playwright and adoptee Brian Stanton
performing his one man play **BLANK**



BLANK
BY BRIAN STANTON

An entirely new workshop experience!

Following his performance, Brian will lead a fun and interactive workshop where we will learn to embrace our own stories and release our voices in innovative ways.

Location: Delta Airport Hotel in Richmond/Vancouver, B.C.
Early Bird rates (up to Sept 15) \$150 members, \$185 non-members

For further information on events please contact Marnie at marnietetz@shaw.ca

Book Nook

By Diane Willcott

Second-Chance Mother by Denise Roessle

I had read the book review in the FMNFS newsletter and it intrigued me. But, it didn't prepare me for the rip-roaring ride this book would take me on! Have you read it? From the first page, it takes you inside a reunion like no other!! I have read *many* books about adoption but nothing like this! Excellent book! I look forward to discussing it with you, if you've read it.

The Search: A Memoir of an Adopted Woman by Titia Ellis

It's an excellent read. You can check out her website to gather more in depth information about the book. I thought you might be interested in her website. Tip: scroll down the website page to discover a little gem - an interview with the author. Website: <http://all-one-family.org/titias-notebook/>

Any Skeletons In The Closet? by Ann E. Fedeli

Ann is a Natural Mother and an Adoptive Mother. She wrote a memoir about relinquishing her daughter to her aunt and uncle. Sounds like a positive start, but the secrecy within the family made it just as traumatic as any adoption. She composed ***The Woman of My Dreams*** in honor of her daughter and all adoptees that have been unsuccessful in reconnecting with their birth parents. I think it's beautiful. I hope you do too! ~ Diane ~

The Woman of My Dreams By Ann E. Fedeli

Long ago and far away, I dreamed I was floating in a warm, peaceful bubble of water. I was tethered to the bubble by a long rope, and I sensed that that rope was in some way my lifeline and my connection to whomever was carrying that bubble. I think that person was like a mother, but I can't remember all the exact details. However, I remember some of them. When I was extra tiny, oh what fun I had bobbing up and down like a cork, especially when this mother ran. WHOOPPEE!

One day I noticed these tiny hands with itty bitty fingers on them. I decided to send a message to the mother and see if she responded...sort of like Morse code. Splash, splash, splash I went, creating little waves. I felt the mother jump, and I knew that she knew I was there. It was a most blessed day.

Hi Mom! Can I call you Mom? It seems like the right thing to do as we are so very, very connected.

I began to recognize when this mother was speaking. Her voice was a little gurgly since I was underwater, but her gurgle sounded different than anyone else's. I came to prefer hers to all others. Sometimes her body would shake and I would hear strange sounds that I later learned were called sobs. When Mom shook like that, a sadness came over me and my bubble didn't feel as peaceful and as safe. I felt like a little fish in a storm being tossed about in an erratic way.

I grew and grew. It was starting to get a little crowded in that bubble. I had these long, scrawny legs that were all tucked tightly to my tummy. They became very, very helpful when I needed to send a Morse code message. Sometimes I wanted to be rocked and only Mother's movements could do that for me. I was often a real stinker and would kick and kick with those long, scrawny legs as soon as Mom laid down to rest. She would eventually relent and get up and walk or sit in her rocking chair. I was already having such an impact on my mother and I hadn't even seen the light of day. Mother had the most wonderful smell. That was one of the first things I noticed about her. Her essence floated

all around me and wrapped me in a warm, sensual blanket. I miss that.

One day, the bubble apartment just got too crowded, and I decided it was time to move out. The walls were closing in on me like vice grips, and I felt gravity pushing me out of my little-little nest. I heard Mom moaning and groaning and even yelling. I hope it wasn't my moving out that was hurting her. I would have loved to stay, but I simply didn't fit in there anymore.

Suddenly, I saw a light at the end of this tunnel. It was too bright and cold-looking. I already missed the dark chamber from which I was exiting. For the first time ever, I felt cold, and I did not like it. I let out a loud whelp to let Mom know that I was not happy with these new developments. I smelled strange and unpleasant smells and heard loud voices, as there was no more water to muffle the sounds. In newborn speak, I was yelling, "Where's my mother?" Suddenly,

I heard her voice and smelled her smell, and I was comforted. I breathed a sigh of relief. We were together again, even though no longer tethered by that rope. Somehow I knew we were tethered by something even stronger.

Suddenly, I was whisked away, and just before my mother handed me to this strange woman, I felt a gentle kiss on the top of my head and my mother's salty tears running down both of our cheeks. I think I also heard another one of those sobs.

It has been many years since I heard her voice, moved with her movements, reveled in her smell, sent her Morse code messages and shared her emotions. I miss her. I have missed her since the day of that last kiss. She has become the woman of my dreams.

Sometimes this woman is blonde and blue-eyed like me. Sometimes she's a school teacher, and sometimes she's a drunk. I wonder, does she remember me like I remember her? Is she athletic like I am and a whirling dervish on the dance floor? Is she timid and shy or bold and brassy? In my dreams she is all these things, yet mostly... she is just missing.



Fetal development photo

Members Out, About and Over the Moon



Margaret and Her Mum



In February my natural Mum Marjorie, came to celebrate our first ever birthday together. It took 65 years for this event to happen. Until five year ago, I didn't even know she existed. We attempted to cram 64 years into the short time we had together.

One highlight of our time together was going to the Forget Me Not Family Society pre-meeting dinner then to the support meeting in Cloverdale. Mum said that hearing the stories of other birth mothers and adoptees helped with her healing. We are so much alike that it was like living with myself for two weeks.

In July I will be going to my first ever BIG family reunion which will fulfill a life-long dream fulfilled. Mum's last family reunion was in 1989

and there were over 150 people there in the 2nd to 4th generations. Now it will be the 3rd to 6th generations and will be held near the original family farm. I am NOT going to miss this one – I already have the kitty sitter booked.



Margaret Ferguson with Mum Marjorie
Welcomed and embraced by Marnie Tetz



Thirty years ago I started to look for my daughter, who was given up for adoption fifty years ago. Thirteen years ago we met, I was rejected and had not spoken to her until two years ago. My 50 year old daughter has just flown here from Ottawa and is now taking a nap in my spare bedroom. ~ Bob ~



YIPIEE!! In August I am going with my daughter and granddaughters for 2 weeks holiday in Florida. This will be our first holiday together- ever! The next time you hear from me I will be jumping with GLEE! ~ Bernadette ~



I am recently engaged to my high school sweetheart. We reconnected via Facebook. We will be getting married June 29, 2013. ~ Jacqueline Edwards ~



I will be spending two weeks with my son and grandchildren in Ontario this summer! Thanks to the tireless dedication of activists who fought for open adoption records in BC, I was reunited with my son in 1993. I am very grateful to all those who participated in changing the legislation, including the original members of the Forget Me Not Family Society. Thank you! ~ Amy ~

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
Summer	Wellness	August 30 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 three support groups a month, for adoptees, birth/natural/first parents, adoptive parents and those in a supportive role:

Cloverdale, B.C. 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, B.C. 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.

Kamloops, B.C. NEW Interior Support Group meets the last
 Wednesday of each month from 5 - 7 pm.

For information on location contact Bernadette Rymer at
 (bjrymer@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.

Lucky Winners

FMNFS AGM May 5, 2012

Cathy Gaddes:	50% off gift certificate for the Fall Workshop
Michael Hodgson:	25% off gift certificate for the Fall Workshop
Margaret Ferguson:	\$25 Chapters gift card
Elizabeth Christian:	\$25 Starbucks gift card.

Adoption Circles is your Newsletter ~ Your Voice!

We love hearing from you. What is on your mind and in your heart?

What topics and issues would you like to see explored?

The focus of our next AC Summer issue will be **Wellness**. We in the Adoption loss community are always on a journey of self-exploration into who we are and where we are in our healing, and for some, the search and reunion process. How do you stay healthy? What do you do to keep your sanity? We know that to heal and to grow, we must do three things: tell our story, become part of a support group and educate ourselves: Read, READ and READ some more. Tell us your story of adoption loss, reunion, healing in a support group or about great adoption healing books you have read. Editorial support is available.

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 _____

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Prospective Adoptive Parent _____ Adoption Professional _____ Other _____

Individual Membership \$30.00/year
Couples Membership \$50.00/year
Corporate Membership \$65.00/year

Please send cheque payable to the
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