

ADOPTION CIRCLES

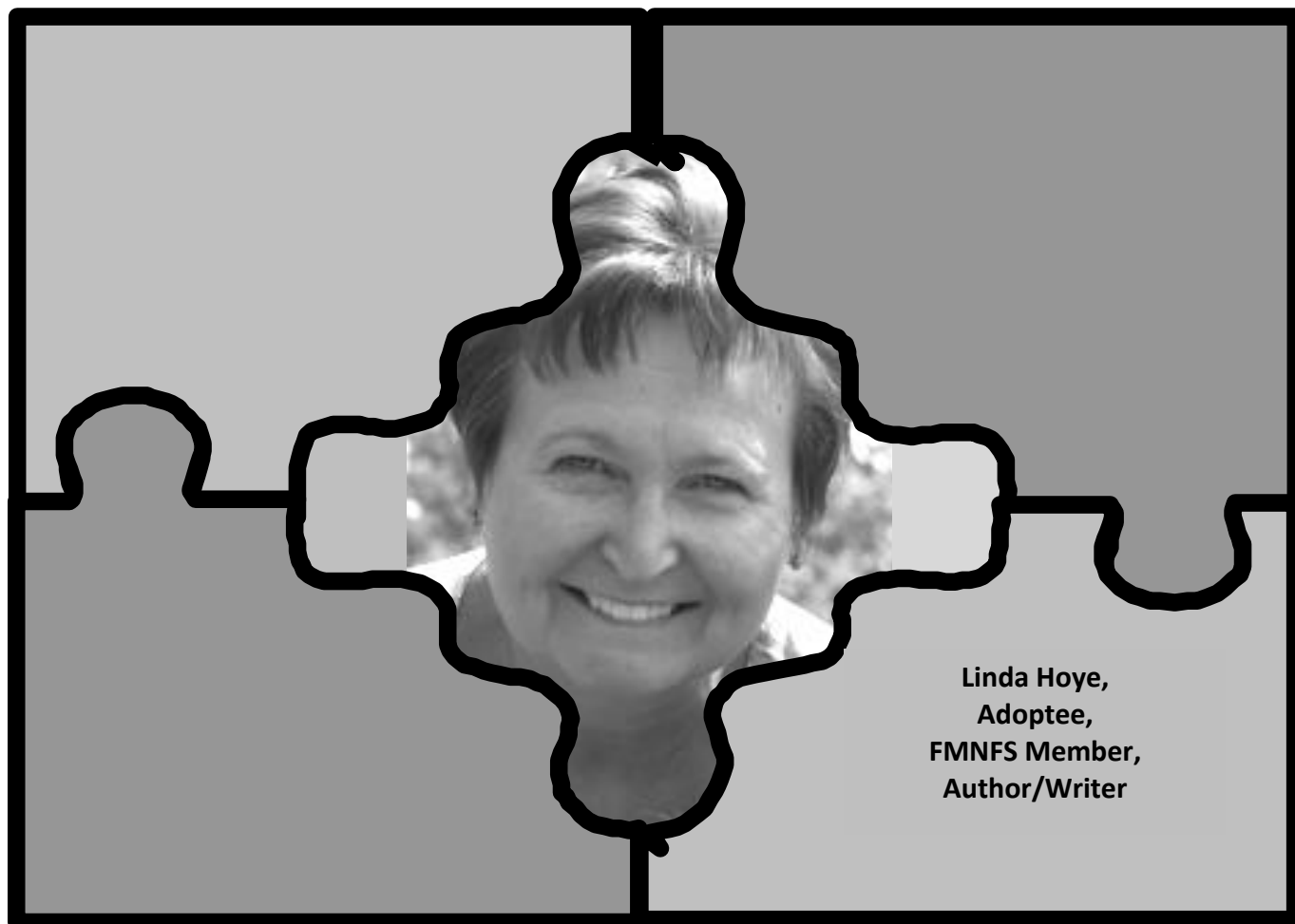
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Linda Hoye,
Adoptee,
FMNFS Member,
Author/Writer

Write from the Heart

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ADOPTION CIRCLES



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FMNFS FACTS:

Forget Me Not Family Society is a provincially registered, non-profit society and a federally registered charity (#88908 4869 RR0001.) Tax receipts are issued for donations over \$25.00. 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 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, Cloverdale and Kamloops, B.C.
- Individual peer support
- Resource library
- Referrals to professionals and other service groups
- Speakers Bureau to educate groups on post-adoption issues
- Quarterly Newsletter
- Annual weekend workshops

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 Family 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

by Marnie Tetz

Hi Everyone!

I hope that you had a Merry Christmas, and best wishes to each of you for 2014. I cannot believe that another year is over! Time flies far too fast the older I get.

Welcome to the 67th issue of Adoption Circles, focusing on writing from the heart. This is an apt topic as it follows our annual Fall Workshop "Releasing our Voices...Sharing our Stories".



Once again we had a fabulous workshop that was attended by those who were meant to be there. Sharon Jinkerson (Sharon lead the Healing Circle at the end of the workshop on Saturday) and I had had a conversation prior to the workshop and this is what she had said “those who are meant to be there, will be.” Our presenter Ray McGinnis gently lead us through the day as we discovered our stories, how to start writing about them and how to share. Many of us uncovered stories we didn’t know we had inside us (some adoption related and

some not) and found a need to share them. And share we did, in a safe way with safe people. Thank you to all who were there! For me personally, your love and support meant the world.

I hope that you are in a cozy chair with your favourite drop so that you can enjoy this issue of the AC as Bernadette and Amy lead us to “Write (or is it Right?) from the Heart.

~ Marnie

Feedback ☺

We were very happy to receive this comment about our last issue, AC #66 Anger:

“What an amazing newsletter again! I don't know how you guys just keep pulling off such outstanding issues. I look forward to them and am always blown away by the content and the professionalism. Every issue is better than the one before. How can you keep this up?”

~ Kathy Chambers

From your Editor ~ Rymer Writes

by Berndette Rymer

By the time you read this it will be 2014. I hope that you and yours had a joyous and restful Christmas season, however you perceive and celebrate the season.

Our theme “Write From the Heart” was chosen for two reasons. First we wanted to continue the theme of our annual workshop and share with you about the event. Our second reason is to encourage you to consider writing as one of the tools / activities in your healing journey.

Why write? Well again there are several reasons but first let me describe one image I have of what our adoption healing journey feels like. For me it is very much like wandering through not only the wilderness but also uncharted wilderness. If we go unprepared we are likely heading for disaster. It is always better to be prepared, and never journey alone. While on this journey we each find those tools and activities that are meaningful to us to help us wade through the quagmire that can feel like quicksand (a bad or dangerous situation from which

it is hard to escape). Sometimes we can detect the quicksand and avoid it, but not always. If and when we get stuck we can get ourselves out if we are prepared, very resourceful and have the right tools at the ready. However, it is so much easier to get out of the quicksand if we have others to help us who understand what quicksand is and how to get out of it.



So why consider writing as a healing tool? Perhaps it can act as a rope or ladder so our journey partner can pull us out. But why writing?

While I have found writing a meaningful tool in my healing journey, I wanted to know what is it

specifically about writing that makes it such a powerful healing tool and again I referred to internet research sites. It seems that the guru in the field of writing to heal is a Dr. James Pennebaker from the University of Texas at Austin, who has been conducting research for more than 20 years into why and how writing heals. He states "Writing can help us face our most difficult challenges...when we write we can gain perspective on our circumstances, we provide information to our body, and we engage our internal healing resources." According to Dr. Pennebaker, when we translate a traumatic experience into language we essentially make the experience graspable.

Another pioneer in the field is John Evans, MAT, MA, Ed.D who described in detail how writing can transform our physical, mental, and spiritual health. He explains that among the many benefits, writing has been shown to decrease the heart rate, lower blood pressure and strengthen the immune system so that it can better fight off infection, improve self-esteem and help manage stress.

In this issue of our AC you will read stories from member authors and writers, and others whose lives have been affected by adoption. You will also read about our fabulous workshop in October and hear from our presenter Ray McGinnis about how and why he uses writing in his healing journey. Sharon Jinkerson-Brass will share with us about the items used in the Healing Circle.

We have also included some information about the history of our FMNFS society and a list of AC topics from 2006 to present. We, your Directors, thought it might be interesting especially for new members to see where we have come from and our work so far. We are always asking how we can make the AC more relevant to your needs, support your healing and stretch your thinking.

We always love to hear from you. The AC is here for you so tell us what matters to you.

Writing to Heal

by Linda Hoye

Here are the facts: I was adopted as an infant in 1959 in a closed adoption. My adoptive parents died when I was in my early twenties. I have reconnected with some members of my birth family. I have four brothers and three sisters; I've met five of them face-to-face. My birth parents died before I could meet either of them but I can trace my birth family back to the 1600s. I know the truth surrounding the circumstances of my birth and how it came to be that I was adopted. I have a measure of peace regarding the facts.

Finding peace about my *feelings* about adoption has been more of a challenge. For the better part of my life I denied that being adopted had any emotional impact on me. Ever the obedient adoptee, I bought into the unspoken expectation of my adoptive parents



that it wasn't okay to be curious or ask questions about my birth family. I smiled and accepted a compliment when someone remarked how much I looked like my adoptive mom. I convinced myself that it didn't matter who I was biologically related to or where my ancestors came from. Adoption was an event - it didn't define my life.

Still, I was attracted like a moth to a flame to all things adoption-related and I made life-altering mistakes in my quest for family. In the 1980s I sobbed uncontrollably as I watched talk shows broadcast "surprise" reunions between adoptees and birth parents. I read Betty Jean Lifton's *Lost and Found* and found confirmation for what I had always known but had become expert at ignoring: many adoptees

face very real and unique psychological issues and ignoring them won't make them disappear.

In the 1990s I went deep into the abyss during the darkest time in my life as I grieved for the loss of, not one, but three families. When I emerged I called myself healed, but underneath the façade and insistence that I had done the work, I still harbored anger toward my birth mother. My grief was hidden just barely below the surface, and I was adamant: the fact that I was adopted had nothing to do with my life today.

It was with the birth of my granddaughter that I finally acknowledged the need to be honest with myself about my adoption issues. The word *legacy* came to mind as I held that newborn baby for the first time and realized that my legacy was hers as well. In my new role as grandma I found a reason to take better care of myself. I began to pay more attention to my physical health and I began to think about my emotional health too. I knew that unless I dealt with my adoption issues I would not be able to be fully present with that precious child.

So I took myself on a journey. Over the course of the next four years I pored over photographs of myself as a child, I re-experienced pivotal events in my life, and I allowed myself to feel emotions I had long kept suppressed. I obtained my original adoption file and read an account of the events that culminated with me being placed for adoption; I read the actual words spoken by my birth mother when she surrendered me in court. Eventually I was able to internalize my own truth, to allow myself to feel, and ultimately to have empathy for the woman who gave birth to me. I crafted my story into a book and as I wrote I felt the healing settle deeper.

Today I'll tell you in an instant that, of course, having been removed from my family of origin and adopted in the closed system affected me. I have found a measure of healing but I've still got cracks and sometimes tears and ugly emotions seep through allowing me to release some of the pain so I don't implode. I am

hyper-sensitive to anything that whispers of rejection. I struggle with detachment issues. I'll pull away from you before I give you a chance to pull away from me. It's easier for me to keep my distance where I'm safe, where you can't hurt me.

Usually, I'm able to recognize when I'm falling into old patterns of taking things too personally, feeling rejection and abandonment where there is none intended. I can't always stop the pain; sometimes I still spin out of control and my grief threatens to be my undoing. I know I need to feel the pain so it doesn't become a toxic poison, but it's hard to avoid the temptation to stuff the discomfort down and put on that trusted façade.

Sometimes I feel angry that I still have to deal with these things. I worry that I'll be perceived as having a victim mentality to those who don't understand adoptee issues but I know I'm no victim. I'm a strong woman who has overcome hardship, done the work, and come out the other side. When grief rises up, as it does sometimes, I allow it. I feel it, I weep, I rage, and then I deliberately and purposefully wipe my eyes and carry on.

I know now that there will always be that pain. I also know that writing is a powerful tool that will help me stay rooted in this place of peace and gratitude that I have found at long last.

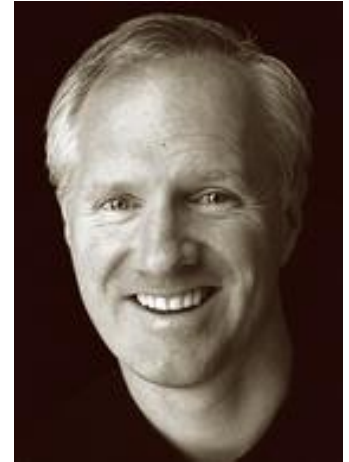
Linda Hoye is a writer, editor, adoptee, and somewhat-fanatical grandma whose work has appeared in assorted publications in Canada and the US. Many years ago someone advised her that she could allow circumstances to make her bitter or better. She chose a path of working toward releasing bitterness and being thankful for all she has gone through that shaped her into the woman she is today.



Linda's book, *"Two Hearts: An Adoptee's Journey Through Grief to Gratitude"* is available in print and ebook format at major online retailers like Amazon and Barnes & Noble. Connect with Linda on her blog, *A Slice of Life Writing*, at <http://lindahoye.com>

Write From the Heart

by Ray McGinnis



When I look at the blank page of a notebook or journal I can face the blankness in myself. I wonder: Do I have anything to express? Can I get to the heart of what I am feeling or thinking about a topic that's been on my mind? Can I write for five or ten minutes without judging what I am writing? What is my hesitation?

It is easy to begin the opportunity to take some time to write by stepping back, resisting that I am a unique person with a unique story to honor and be curious about. Old habits of inhibition, perfectionism, judgment, anxiety or distraction stand like guards at the cover of my journal. They tell me: "don't open your journal, you'll lose control, you'll feel emotions, you won't always be rational or even logical. It will be a mess." It is only when I stare down these old habits, these thoughts in my head, that I pick up the pen and say to myself, "just do it."

And then I begin to write about something, anything. For the first few minutes I might find myself judging myself, wondering where this writing is going. And then some thread, some memory or something I feel passionate about presents itself. I get in touch with the reality of my life experience. I start to write about something that has been bugging me, or something that I am longing for or want to express. I start to write from my heart to the heart of what matters to me. It might be about something I fear or something I love. But whatever way the writing takes shape it moves me closer and closer to what matters to me.

Sometimes I take a minute to re-read what I've written after ten or fifteen minutes. I might ask myself, "Are you telling yourself the truth? Are you leaving anything important out? Are you being fair to yourself or anyone else you are including in what you've written about?" Often these kinds of questions invite me to be sort of like Sherlock Holmes and pull out a magnifying glass. I look again at what I've written to be curious about the places I may have

glossed over something that needs further details or information, to help me remember, to help me to tell it like it is.

Writing to the heart is not about writing for anyone else, although I might share something I've written to another person at another time. Writing from the heart is taking time to listen to my heart, to listen to my emotions. It is a time to tell my heart that what is on my heart matters to me. It is a time to let my heart know that when it is burdened by something I am not going to let that fester. I am going to take time to be still and write it all down. I often find that when I clear a space to write what is on my heart I actually feel better after I put the pen down. This might not be immediately after I put the pen down. But a day or two later I re-read my journal entry and I feel an inner validation and that helps put my heart at ease, knowing that I have listened to my heart.

One way I sometimes write to the heart is by actually writing a journal dialogue to my heart. This is where I write both parts: one part of the dialogue is what Ray has to say to his heart. The other part of the dialogue is what Ray's heart has to say to Ray. Here is an example:

Ray: Hello heart, how are you doing?

Heart: Hello Ray. I've been feeling tired lately. Now that Dad is in palliative care, I know he doesn't have much more time left to live. I feel so many things: gratitude for his life, sadness that he is dying, admiration for his sense of peace after three years of a journey with cancer. And I know that you will miss him. I feel for you too, Ray.

"You can, you should, and if you're brave enough to start, you will." — Stephen King, *On Writing*

Tears are words that need to be written." — Paulo Coelho

Ray: Sometimes, heart, I feel you take up my whole chest. When I was in the hospital talking with Mom and Dad, I felt so full of compassion for Dad. He is looking so weak from all the cancer treatment. I know I will miss him and at the same time I am grateful that he seems to have surrendered and is at a place where he is ready to die.

Heart: I sense you are being very practical and pragmatic as each day unfolds.

Ray: Yes, with each day there are things to do: nurses to speak with about medication and routines in palliative care. There are people at the bank and insurance companies to check in with and the Memorial Society of BC. And there are lots of friends of the family asking how they can be of help.

Heart: This is such a sacred time with you and your Dad, and your Mom and your brother.

Ray: I know

Heart: I want you to know I'll be here for you to help you feel all that you feel when your Dad dies.

Ray: I think that is when I'll need you most.

If you wish, you can try writing a dialogue with your heart. Find out what emotions, wisdom, questions, perspectives your heart has to share with you; And you with your heart. Take time to write for five, ten, fifteen or twenty minutes or more. Let it out. Write it all down. What you have to say to your heart and what your heart has to say to you. And if you need, make an appointment to have another check-in with your heart for a future dialogue and conversation.

Ray McGinnis is the author of "Writing the Sacred." He teaches writing workshops, journal writing workshops and poetry workshops across North America. He lives in Vancouver. Visit his website at: www.writetothetheheart.com

Whatever way the writing takes shape, it moves me closer and closer
to what matters to me. — Ray McGinnis

My Adoption Story

by Wendy Barber

At last the letter came. It felt like I had waited all my life, well in reality I had. The letter from the government was a non-identifying letter, as they call it, meaning that the letter acknowledged my adoption but did not give any names, places or clues to who I am.

My search began twenty five years previous when I approached the Children's Aid Society. However I did not search in earnest until my adoptive father passed away. Out of loyalty to him and gratitude for the good home he had provided me, I felt pangs of guilt whenever I searched for my birth family. Upon my adopted father's death my mother gave me secret papers from their safety deposit box. She was no

longer interested in keeping the secret: she was preoccupied grieving the loss of my father. Now the search progressed to a determined mission. I was armed with a name and a number and I felt free to search for my heritage.



As an adoptee I made it my personal quest to find my true heritage and create my own identity and this search occupied more than half of my life. I did not know to what I could compare my lack of identity

the loneliness is impossible to describe. The government treats us adoptees in a shameful and degrading manner. At birth they take our birth certificate and all history from us, lock this information in sealed files and turn us into social orphans. At one point in my life I had a number and no name on my government documents. Some philosophers have said that life is only a perception, not a reality. Most of my life I perceived myself as an orphan, a ship lost at sea. However an adversity such as this can sometimes motivate us to find our reality.

My determination paid off, I found my birth family. I missed meeting my mother as she had died at age thirty seven in a house fire in Nanaimo. My first meeting with family was with her younger brother John. Talk about a life changing moment, when I walked up the stairs of my Uncle John's house he said to me, "There is no mistaking who your mother is". That is the first time in my life that anyone has indicated to me that I looked like someone else. That moment in time is frozen in my mind and it seems like yesterday.

I found a sister in Toronto; she is a nurse at the sick kid's hospital and has four children like me. I met my birth mother's oldest sister Lorraine, who I was named after, Lorraine was my name at birth. My maternal grandfather was the oldest of fourteen children so I have a huge search ahead.

It is not so much that my life changed with this experience, it's that I changed. Probably not visibly to others but I changed inside. I saw and felt differently not only about myself but also about other people as well. I was able to search myself, examine who I was and enjoy my journey from birth to the present. I no longer felt like a number - now I had a name a family and a history from birth. I felt and appeared to others to be a goal oriented person. I raised my four daughters alone; created and operated a successful business. However, I was only surviving in the moment because I could not look back and was unable to look forward. After finding my true heritage I could look to the future with ease. Harry Truman said, "I tried never to forget who I was and where I came from and where I was going back to." Quotes such as this had no meaning to me because I didn't know where I came from or where I was going and therefore did not know who I was.

I believe that many of us women are gifted with initiative and adaptability, with flexibility, humour, spirituality and intelligence and most of all strength. During my search I reached way down inside myself and there I found a strength I never knew I possessed. This strength enabled me to realize myself, to know who I am. Since finding my birth family I have never felt lonely, I feel strong and focused. We are born alone and we will die alone but those are only moments in time. I think it is the space in between when we live our genuine life that really matters.

"There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you." — Maya Angelou

"And by the way, everything in life is writable about if you have the outgoing guts to do it, and the imagination to improvise. The worst enemy to creativity is self-doubt." — Sylvia Plath

"Write what should not be forgotten." — Isabel Allende

"All you have to do is write one true sentence. Write the truest sentence that you know."
— Ernest Hemingway

There are No Words

by Susan Smith

My name is Susan Smith and I am a new member of the support group. My birth daughter came looking for me in February of this year-2013.

I have had a few get-togethers with Deborah, the first being on Mother's Day. Deborah shared her birthday with my two other daughters this year. She turned 44 in June; her sisters Rhonda and Robin both have their birthdays in June as well.

I was fortunate enough to spend a week with Deborah and her husband this past August. Then the first weekend in October I and my two daughters went to Kelowna, Deborah came from Nelson and we had a wonderful weekend of shopping, eating, laughing and just hanging out together.

I can't express the feeling that comes over me when I have my three girls together, there are no words... them together, it is everything I always used to dream it would be. They are so similar in their natures and personalities. We danced around the room while getting ready to go to dinner, four women just being themselves and having such fun. Not a quiet moment to be had as the conversation was flying around the room. We took silly pictures and proper pictures. We ordered appetizers and each had a fork and sat in the restaurants for at least three hours every time, even when we just had burgers. So much to share with each other. So many thoughts the same.

I spent 43 years pushing the memories and the sadness as deep inside me as it would go and it was a lot of hard work keeping them there. Then when Deborah came back into my life it was as if the flood gates opened up and I couldn't keep them down any longer. So that part of our journey has been difficult to go through, you have to relive being the 17 year

old that was pregnant, unmarried, scared, and angry that came from a family of six and only one person supported me in the last month or so. I am still dealing with those feelings and it is getting much better as the healing process continues.

Deborah and I have gotten so close so fast it really is amazing. I have always had her in my heart and as I have said to many people, she is not an addition to my family; she has always been a part of my family she was just missing for a very long time. It is such a freeing feeling to be able to say to anyone and everyone that I have three daughters, as I spent many years saying I had two daughters and in my heart and mind I would say three.



To all the birth moms out there that have yet to unite with their missing children, do not ever stop hoping because you never know when your babies will come back to you. And when you finally get to hug them and tell them how much you love them, well, that piece of your heart and soul that stayed with them slowly starts to come back to you. And for the adoptees my wish is for them to know they were not given up because they weren't loved, it is because they were loved.

Why I Write

by Therese Curtis

I can't remember when I wasn't writing. Sometimes the writing was only verbal. For example, when I was six and I had five younger siblings, I had all of them, except the baby, goggle-eyed as I told them stories of the 'fairy dreamer' who lived in her little house in the mini caves outside our house. I'd make little trinkets, which I announced were gifts for the younger children. Often I'd gather them in the big cupboard under the stairs, near the front hall, and whisper her messages.

Why did I do it? My motivation combined a child's love of magic and fantasy, with the desire to be the center of attention. I didn't know it then, but I was tapping into a tradition as old as humans themselves; to tell stories and to bring delight and diversion to audiences.

When I was fourteen I wrote a poem about the seaside. I was in that phase of creative development where my words had to be tactile. As I scribbled away, I could feel the spray of the waves on my arms and face. I could smell the salt and feel the sun's warmth. I didn't know the word 'euphoria' then, but I walked around glowing that I was able to create these word pictures.

I wrote then because writing was becoming as normal and as necessary as breathing. I created because I could; because I had to.

As the eldest of ten children by the time I was eleven, I was expected to help with the little ones. I would escape, literally and mentally in my own room, writing novels in little exercise books. My father allowed me to be busy at my desk, thinking I was engrossed in my homework. One day he found me scribbling the words that would never be on a

prize-winning short list. Outraged, he marched me to the trash furnace and made me throw them in.

What insights about writing did I learn from this? Writing and reading can be an escape. But writers have often been misjudged, marginalized and even persecuted. Many have died for their right, their need to write.

When I was writing exams and assignments in high school and university, often the experience would 'morph' from drudged necessity, to the exuberance of investigating, critiquing and hypothesizing about events, actions and other people's ideas. There were times when I finished a task with delight and pride. Writing can be a vital process in energizing the world with ideas.

Years later, around the time my mother turned 80, I began to write my memories and reflections about our family. My motivation at first was a desire to celebrate our mother's life. Our father had died by then. Because he was such a forceful person, he naturally loomed large in the early anecdotes. Any very large family is going to have complex, interweaving stories. They will be a mix of joy, success, love, failure, tragedy and recriminations.

Over the years, some siblings shared experiences about which I was unaware, or I was unaware of their feelings about these events. Gradually, the color and tone of my memories became more introspective, more critical and often more angry. I have written about many hurts and injustices some family members have suffered. Like when I was a child, the need to write was instinctive, almost involuntary. But where the child wrote from joyful fascination with magic, I was now writing to proclaim perceived wrongs, to honor those who had suffered, mostly silently, and to challenge the myth that ours was an ideal family, with saintly parents. A few siblings responded very positively. Some were



"Fantasy is hardly an escape from reality.
It's a way of understanding it."

— Lloyd Alexander

angry, refusing to let their own (now adult) children read them. I believe in the biblical adage 'the truth will set you free' but not all people share this view. Some of my siblings believe that the past should be buried with those whom death has taken from our lives. My response is 'don't the living, particularly those who have suffered silently deserve the truth?' The 'past deniers' as I call them, cling to myths that are part of their psychological DNA. The 'rosy past' is the framework on which they have built their lives. Whether they realize it or not, they want to reverse Mark Antony's famous words at Julius Caesar's funeral:

*The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones.*

So now, I have begun a writing consultancy, to enable people to express their ideas, for whatever reasons and audiences they have. I love working with people who have stories to tell but don't know how to tell them. Maybe they lack the confidence or they feel too shy. I have written booklets that would initially be a speech. Sometimes I use a poem as a scaffold, depending on the cultural context or taste of the client. For example, once I wrote a speech for a mother to give at her daughter's wedding in Sydney. It was based on Australia's famous poem 'The Man From Snowy River'.

Eighteen months ago my son Joseph (one of five children) died suddenly at the age of forty. The eulogy I wrote for his funeral was the first writing I did to help me and others make sense of who he was and the tragedy of his untimely death. Here is an extract:

Each one of us here today could contribute thousands of words and this still would not be all of Joseph. There is a story of Joe in each of us. Some of those stories are now being, or soon will be shared: cried over, laughed over. Some stories will be whispered in the recesses of our hearts. Some will lay dormant memories, perhaps to emerge in decades to come. These stories are a mosaic of Joe's struggles, his failures, his successes, his play, his pain and his loves.

What are some of these multi-colored pieces that make up the mosaic of Joe?

A small child playing in sunny gardens in Vancouver.

A badly injured thirteen year old soccer player beginning high school on crutches, with his shattered leg. His leg mended and he loved playing soccer again. Even when, hoping he would be selected for the Firsts (top) senior team, he was asked to stay in the seconds to mentor other players and to referee the junior games.

Joe, whose rock music vibrated walls and weakened housing foundations, who cycled with his dad and his brothers through mountain roads.

Joe, who proudly showed his portfolio of photos of the dishes he learned to cook.

I will write more about Joe as time goes by. Why? Because he deserves it, because I need to.

Don't let your stories lie silent and ignored. — Therese Curtis

Therese Curtis B.A. (Sydney); M.A. (Michigan State University, USA); Creative Writing Course, U.B.C. (Canada) Therese is a mother of two adopted and three biological children. She is also the oldest sister of two FMNFS members: our editor Bernadette Rymer (first mother) and Elizabeth Christian (adoptive mother). Therese is an international writer/author and teacher/tutor and public speaker. She has written extensively on a diverse range of subjects including Intercultural Adoption (Adoption Circles, Issue #63 Fall 2012), Social Justice and Development, Society and Religion, High School Study Guides. Therese Curtis has taught a range of High School subjects, particularly English and Literature in Sydney, Australia; Vancouver, Canada; New Guinea; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and Jakarta, Indonesia. Now retired from teaching Therese focuses on her new venture, 'Untold Stories' working with adults on their oral and written skills for their professional development, and mentoring them in writing their stories. She lives in both Sydney and Vancouver.

Me Write? Right!

by Joe Soll 조 살, LCSW,
Psychotherapist & Author

Me write?
Right!

Our story, our life's narrative, needs to be said.

Writing it is one way to say it. It's too long to ever get completely said in your support group or to your friends or even your shrink.

It's not too long to write?

Right!

Just do it. Writing it helps validate your feelings and thoughts.

I don't have to be a writer to write?

Right!

Start now! It doesn't matter how long it takes. It doesn't matter if anyone but you sees it. Just writing it will have a therapeutic effect.

Write down all the things you want people to know. Everything that happened, everything that made you sad, mad, glad, afraid, shameful, guilty

and jealous. Everyone's inner child needs a voice, needs to be listened to. Writing your story is a way to do that for your inner core. Your adult self will be listening. Your adult self will have greater understanding of the truth. Writing will make some of the unreal things that have happened be real.

We may not like what we write but it will help us accept our lives for being what they truly are.

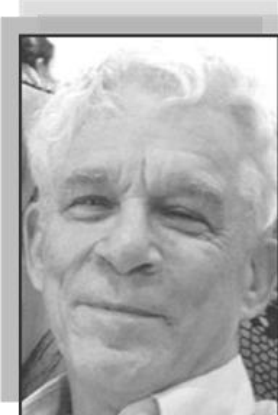
It will help us understand ourselves better and if we choose to share it, help others understand us better and have more compassion too.

Set aside some time each day to just let the words flow

Write?

Right!

Joe Soll is the author of "Adoption Healing... a path to recovery" (1 for moms, 1 for adoptees, 2 for both), Co-author of "Evil Exchange" and "Fatal Flight"



"After nourishment, shelter and companionship, stories are the thing we need most in the world."

— Philip Pullman

"I write to give myself strength. I write to be the characters that I am not.

I write to explore all the things I'm afraid of." — Joss Whedon

FMNFS Annual Workshop 2013

Description and Summary of Participant Evaluations

by Bernadette Rymer & Gail Davies

Presenter:	Ray McGinnis
Topic:	"Releasing Our Voices - Sharing Our Stories"
Location/Venue:	Executive Airport Plaza Hotel and Conference Centre, Richmond, BC



Our second interactive workshop in the "Releasing our Voices" series was a great success.

Workshop Description: The workshop was developed around the theme of sharing our stories through grief and loss. Ray led participants through a series of writing strategies aimed at helping us focus our thoughts and feelings, express them in writing and share them with others. Strategies were built around individual reflection and small group sharing time. Examples of strategies included "Naming Losses" which involved writing words or sentences to name or describe our losses in a page of leaves, creating an "Alpha Poem" using the letters of the alphabet to write a poem/story on what came up for us allowing us to freely express our emotions and thoughts, and "Unsent Letters" which allow for the "three Cs" – catharsis, completion and clarity.

After each personal writing time, participants were encouraged to form small groups and share their writing with others, if they were comfortable doing so. Groupings were flexible and we were encouraged to group with different participants each time, so we had the opportunity to share with most participants throughout the day. Participants seemed to really enjoy the day and were very willing to participate in all the exercises, encouraged by Ray's gentle, calm manner, sense of humour and engaging laugh. I had one participant tell me this was the best workshop out of the four that she has attended.

Our session with Ray culminated in an atmosphere of peacefulness and serenity. Participants found the exercises were very helpful and I was told that the day was not as intense as some of the past workshops so people did not leave feeling so drained and exhausted.

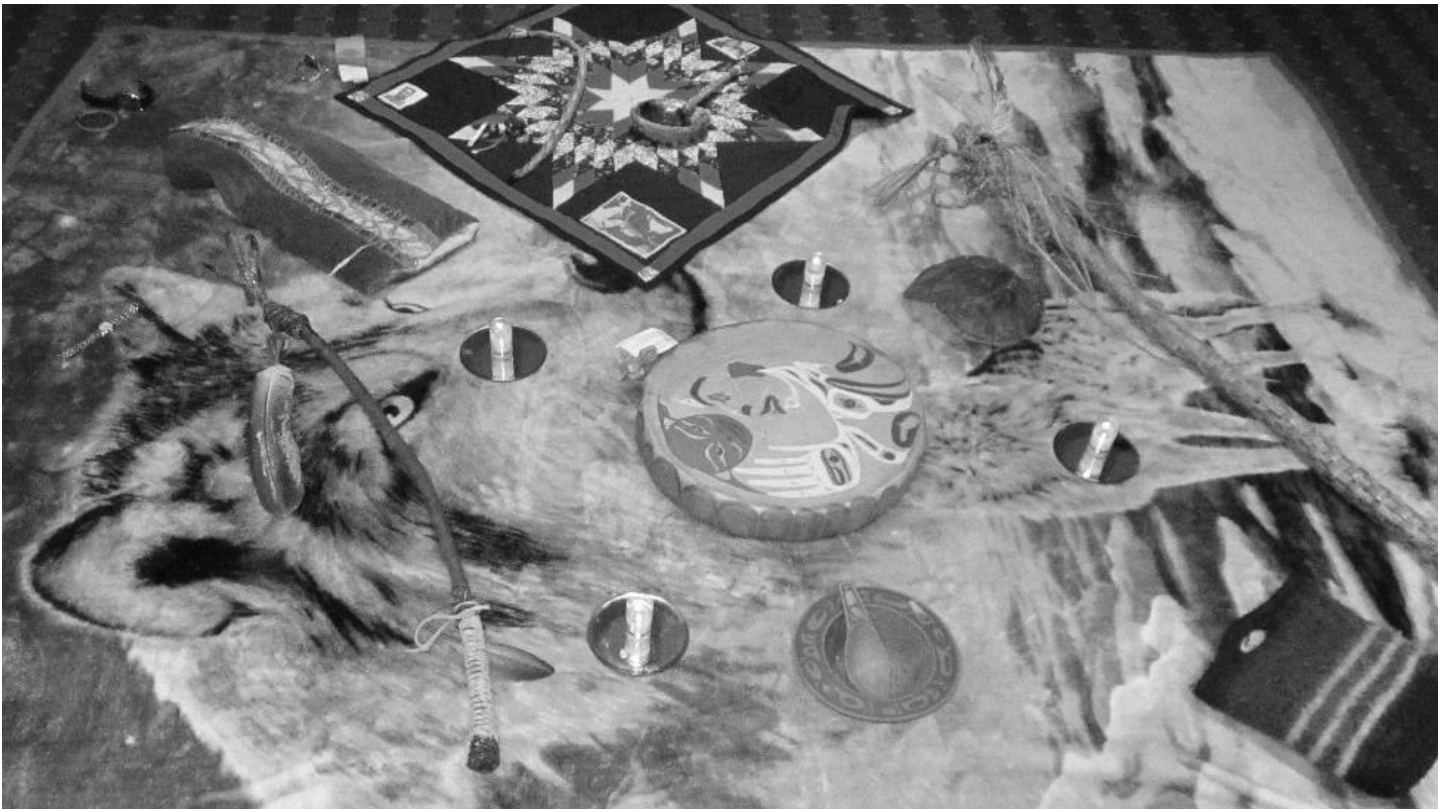
Healing Circle: Following the workshop and a short break we were invited to join in a Healing Circle facilitated by Sharon Jinkerson-Brass and Brenda Ireland, both adoptees. Cecelia Reekie, Past-President of our Forget Me Not Family Society also attended and helped Sharon with the healing circle. Brenda's drumming and singing went straight to the heart and Sharon's work of dealing with the emotional and spiritual wellness of all peoples, not only First Nations peoples, was very powerful. Each participant had the opportunity to be cleansed by a smudging ceremony*. Then an eagle feather was passed around and held by the person whose turn it was to speak. Participants were encouraged to listen respectfully and allow each participant the time to express their own feelings. Cecelia added a poignant touch to the

day especially when she spoke about her first/birth father sharing his story about his experience at a residential school at the recent First Nations Truth and Reconciliation Event in Vancouver. Sharon believes that those of us involved in the adoption triangle share a common bond with the First Nations people who were taken from their families and placed in residential schools.

***smudging** - in Native American medicine, the ritual of purifying the location, patient, healer, helpers and ritual objects by using the smoke obtained by burning sacred plants, such as sage, sweetgrass, and cedar. It is believed to alter the state of consciousness and enhances sensitivity. Cleansing often initiates healing sessions.

Blanket of Light

by Sharon Jinkerson-Brass



I was asked by Marnie to write a few lines about the symbolism in the healing circle blanket I assembled for the FMNFS Annual workshop in October. First Nations people who have a circle tradition set up a small altar in the center, some are

simple while others more elaborate. Everyone's circle is like an artist's painting, there are no set rules, each is a unique reflection of the person who is asked to facilitate the gathering.

The blanket was a gift from my uncle, given at the Vision Quest on my reserve last May. This blanket is precious because it is adorned with wolves, a very powerful matriarchal tribe of creatures who are beautiful and mysterious. At the centre of the blanket is a drum painted especially for me, by my late partner, Victor Reece. The symbols on the drum depict my traditional name, White Thunderbird Woman. I miss my partner so and today this drum holds so much more meaning for me than ever before.

Above the drum is a turtle shell, a symbol of the feminine in my culture because on the back of the shell is a woman's calendar. If you count the plates on the back they equal the amount of days we have in our cycle, the days in between and the number of moons each year, to name a few!

The blue bag is called a moss bag, which originally fit on a cradle board. This particular bag was a gift from my grandmother when my son Solomon was born.

Rebecca came into my home shouting "Where is he, I am going to tie him up like an Indian!" I was a little flustered when she said this, but then with eyes twinkling she pulled out of her bag this beautiful traditional gift. When Solomon fit in it, he was quiet and contented. First Nations people thought babies felt like they were in the safety of the womb when tightly bound.

The feast bowl, knitted bag, talking stick and eagle staff are all gifts from beautiful people who have blessed my journey. The little star blanket I made myself and the braids of sweet grass are medicines used for our purification ritual called a smudge. The scattering of jewellery and watches are on the blanket because we ask people to take off symbols of their worldly wealth to remember the fact that we come into the world with nothing and we leave with nothing. We do this as a sign of respect and humility before we smudge.



Gail Davies, Ray McGinnis, Cecelia Reekie, Brenda Ireland and Sharon Jinkerson-Brass

Sunday Morning Support Group: On Sunday morning we gathered for our support group. Marnie really brought the whole weekend together and the support group was an extension of the day before. Marnie used the teddy bear that is always present in our Cloverdale support group meetings in a similar way to the eagle feather from the healing ceremony.

It was passed around and those who wanted to talk and share did so. Participants were able to more fully express their thoughts and feelings when they were listened to without judgment or interruption. It was interesting to watch how each person held the teddy bear and I believe we all felt more grounded.

Summary of Evaluations:

1. Workshop topic, relevance and organization.

- Collated ratings for 4 questions: Good = 11; Excellent = 27
- Comments: very good, very informative, helpful, perfect, right on the point and gave me tools, holistic
- FMNFS executive very welcoming and responsive; “A big thank you for all your work - wonderful workshop.”
- One comment reflected an expectation of more personal processing time.

2. Presenter knowledge, organization and interaction.

- Collated ratings for 4 questions: Good = 4; Excellent = 33
- Comments: good, well balanced; no pressure; thought provoking material; his flexibility gave me confidence; encouraging; down to earth; clear approach

3. Healing Circle:

- Good = 1; Excellent = 11
- Comments: Great; interesting; enlightening; loved the honoring of grandmothers wisdom and strength; intense ending pulling it all together; really appreciated the space to share in a welcoming non-judgmental atmosphere.

4. Venue location, catering and hospitality.

- Collated ratings for 4 questions: Good = 2; Excellent = 33
- Comments: easy access, great location, meeting room fantastic.
- One comment requested a ‘cheaper location’ and felt cost was too high.

All in all it was very healing, insightful, enlightening and thought provoking.



Ruth Huber, Triss Matthews, Gail Davies and Margaret Ferguson

FMNFS Annual Workshop 2013 Reflections

Elaine Jones: My first workshop was really good. It was a great learning experience with a great atmosphere. I learned that I have lots to do to prepare for my reunion with my son. I enjoyed Ray's teachings. I enjoyed meeting



everyone and I can hardly wait until next year's workshop so I can meet with some or all of you again and maybe others. Thanks for a great workshop. Elaine.

D'Arcy Mahoney: It was a wonderful weekend – my first workshop with the society, and it was amazing. I've done a lot of personal growth workshops over the years, and this one just hit the nail on the head for me.



profoundly healing happened to me there, as I was able to release some grief, shame and longing. The feeling of being victimized has been replaced by a renewed energy to be my own person, rather than what others expect me to be, and it feels awesome.

My story in brief: I am an adoptee – and some members of my birth family sought me out about a year ago. My aunt, my birth mother's sister, was the only one in the family who knew I existed. Imagine carrying that secret for 45 years – I have huge compassion for her. Unfortunately, my birth mother died in 1990, but it is still wonderful to know more of her story and connect with at least some blood relatives. It's fun to see where we're alike and what we have in common, and to see pictures of her.

The big take-away from the workshop for me was having the opportunity to be heard in an accepting, non-judgmental, loving atmosphere, by people who **get** it. It was transforming for me – I feel more solid and grounded in who I am than I ever have. I have clarity and focus and an ability to be present for others that I didn't have last week – something

I'm attaching a poem that I wrote as one of the exercises in the workshop (based on the alphabet) – it's a goodbye to my first mother Lorraine. I have a sense that she would want me to let her fly and be free now. It's as if her job is done, and I can now grow up and be the woman and mother I'm destined to be.

To note: my adoptive parents named me D'Arcy after my aunt, and I'm definitely a D'Arcy. I sign off the poem as Julie Anne, as that is who I was to my first mother. Julie Anne will always be a part of me, too

Thanks!

With love & hugs,

D'Arcy

Heads Up! 2014 & 2015 FMNFS WORKSHOPS

FALL 2014 – Rich Uhrlaub, M.Ed. Dates are not yet finalized (probably Oct 25 - 26). Rich serves on the boards of the American Adoption Congress and Adoptees in Search – Colorado's Triad Connection. He is a frequent speaker at conferences and a contributing author to *Finding Our Place: 100 Memorable Adoptees, Foster Persons and Orphanage Alumni* by Nikki McCaslin, and *Adoption and Mothering*, edited by Frances Latchford.

FALL 2015 – We are in discussion with **Ann Fessler**, author of *The Girls Who Went Away* and the producer of several short films on adoption: *Cliff & Hazel*, *Along the Pale Blue River* and *A Girl Like Her*. She is a visual artist and a Professor at Rhode Island School of Design.

Kisses for Lorraine

by D'Arcy Mahoney
October 2013

Lorraine, you beautiful woman and

Mother -

Now I remember you.

Out of the

Prison your life had become to you, having always

Queried, "What am I doing here? What is this all about?"

Reading and

Shakespeare were your passions, and your escape from

This confusing and frightening world,

Until you sought the ultimate and final escape,

Vanishing from this

World, finally flying free as a spirit in the Big Dream

Xpressing yourself freely, spontaneously, with all the love you felt in

Your heart but couldn't easily show, with the

Zeal and enthusiasm that you wish you could have shown to

Albert, Doris and Caroline – your family.

But they couldn't support you in the way you needed and wanted,

Couldn't understand who you really were -

Desperate in their own pain, unable to

Express it and heal

From it – But the new

Generation, starting with me, and continuing through my son Nathaniel, will have

Hope, love, peace,

Inspiration and

Joy – because we have faith and draw strength from your courage.

Kisses and love from your daughter, Julie Anne xoxox

Alpha Poem for First Mothers

by Brenda Stengel
October 2013

Adoration of
Babies, DENIED
CANCELLED OUT,
DAMNED and DAMAGED, because I dared to
Experience SEX, in hopes of
Forging a bond with a
Handsome older man who noticed me
In the romantic foolishness of my childhood.
“**K**NOCKED UP”
“**L**OOSE”
“**I**MMORAL”
No longer a prized daughter.
One to be HIDDEN away,
Purging from memory the baby boy.
Quietly, silently so no one would notice or
Recoil in HORROR at my indiscretion and the
SHAME heaped on my family.
To BURY ME DEEP,
Under a life of ANXIOUS perfectionism
Voicing no ANGER
Working hard to live up to the
EXpectations of “good woman”, while ever
Yearning to know, to be, your mother.
Zephyr ever flowing through my heart and mind.

I Was so Alone

by Colleen Rud

Alone - I was so, so alone with my pregnancy and her birth
Betrayed by my family, by the adults in my life
Child - my child vanished, my arms were empty
Devoid of the power to take control
Emotions unacknowledged
Forgiveness - Forgiving my young tender self for allowing this to be done to us
God meant us to be Mother and Child
How could anyone possibly think we could be okay without each other?
It is unnatural
Just think about the lunacy of it all
Krazy making
Lost to the system
Mom - I will always be her Mom
No one can deny us our primal bond
Oppression at its finest
Powerless over those who took over control of our destiny
Quiver at the thought of it all
Rivers of tears
Separated
Today I am free of the judgement
University, the big question - "What about your education?" p.s. – Nothing happened to my brain!
Very grateful for the connection to my first born
Weary from the journey
eX-scaping - There is no escape from abandoning your kin!
YOU - getting to know who you were meant to be
Zeal for life

FMNFS History and AC Themes Over the Years

by Bernadette Rymer

We thought it might be interesting especially for new members to see where we have come from and our work so far. As adoption healing is an ever-evolving process, we are always asking how the FMNFS can support your healing, how we can make the AC more relevant to your needs and stretch your thinking. The more input we receive from you, the better we can be here for you.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FORGET ME NOT FAMILY SOCIETY (FMNFS) and the BC ADOPTION REUNION REGISTRY (ARR)

The Forget Me Not Family Society (originally Missing Pieces Thru Adoption Society) was started with two birthmothers (Donna Doogan and Marge Beddington) talking and having tea at a kitchen table. The Society was instrumental in changing the legislation to open adoption records in British Columbia, Canada. The first president was Alison Anderson, then Kathryn Vea, Sandi Blackie, Cecelia Reekie, Nancy Kato, and now Marnie Tetz.

Date	Event
1987 June 26	Legislation passed for a Passive Adoption Reunion Registry under the British Columbia Adoption Act.
1991 May	British Columbia's Adoption Reunion Registry (ARR) opens the passive registry for adoptees and birth families wishing to reunite. Both parties had to be registered in order to make a connection.
1991	Adoption Circles newsletter started by Millie Strom.
1991 Oct. 2	BC Adoption Act was amended to provide for an Active Adoption Reunion Service. Persons registered in the Passive Registry are notified.
1991 -1994	Support groups started at homes in Panorama Ridge, Abbotsford, North Surrey, Delta, as well as Ladner United Church, Cloverdale Public Library and New Westminster Public Library.
1992	The first Active Adoption Reunion searches through the Ministry of Social Services & Housing are underway, providing intermediary counselling and support.
1992 Jan. 9	Missing Pieces Thru Loss Society was incorporated as a non-profit Society.
1992 June 23	Name officially changed from Missing Pieces to Forget Me Not Family Society.
1992 Nov 11	FMNFS became a federally Registered Charity #889084869 RR 0001.
1993 - 2000	The FMNFS's first conference "Let's Talk About Reunions" was held at the Sheraton Inn Guildford on February 6 and 7, 1993 and was Canada's first reunion conference; The FMNFS participated in major conferences held 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1999 and 2000.
1996	B.C. Adoption Act [RSBC 1996] was amended to provide greater openness in adoption processes. Adoptees and birth parents may obtain a copy of the adoption order and the original/replacement birth registration.
2006 onward	FMNFS organizes annual workshops regarding adoption search and reunion.
2013	There are currently three monthly FMNFS support groups in New Westminster, Cloverdale and Kamloops. Adoption Circles newsletter is published quarterly.

The Forget Me Not Family Society's purpose: (a) to establish and operate a post-adoption resource centre providing education, consultation, counselling and support to those touched by adoption: adoptive parents, adoptees, birthparents, and concerned professionals; (b) 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; (c) to encourage and develop a recognition of the benefits for family preservation and openness in adoption practice.

Topics for AC Newsletter 2006 - 2012

Year	Issue	Season	Topic
2006	#38	Winter	Siblings
	#39	Spring	International
	#40	Summer	Alternatives
	#41	Fall	Families
2007	#42	Winter	Images
	#43	Spring	Grandparents
	#44	Summer	Humour
	#45	Fall	Music
2008	#46	Winter	The Dark Side
		Spring*	<i>No publication</i>
	#47	Summer	Male Perspective
	#48	Fall	Spirituality
2009		Winter *	<i>No publication</i>
	#49	Spring	Celebrity
	#50	Summer	Youth
	#51	Fall	Sexuality
2010	#52	Winter	Disabilities
	#53	Spring	Ethics
	#54	Summer	Undisclosed
	#55	Fall	Suffering
2011	#56	Winter	Belonging
	#57	Spring	New Life
	#58	Summer	Reunion
	#59	Fall	Communications
2012	#60	Winter	Education
	#61	Spring	Activism
	#62	Summer	Wellness
	#63	Fall	Culture
2013	#64	Winter	What's In a Name?
	#65	Spring	Blame & Shame ~ Reframe
	#66	Summer	Anger
	#67	Fall	Write From the Heart

What other themes would you like us to explore in future issues of Adoption Circles? Possible topics include: renewal, laughter, hope, searching, expectations, stalemates/reunion limbo/hiatus from reunion, regression, addiction, tips for composing letters/scripts for phone calls, birthdays, Mother's Day. Tell us what you think!

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 (604) 557-0230
 (ariete_132@hotmail.com)
 Marnie Tetz (604) 535-4434
 (marnietetz@shaw.ca)
 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)
 Kathy Chambers (604) 541-6267
 (chattycats@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 in the
 LEAN ON ME Support List.

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.
 year-round 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. Interior Support Group meets once a month
 (days and times vary). For information please 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.

Adoption Circles is Your Newsletter ~ Your Voice!

Our next topic is “**Holidays**.” What issues come up for you around holidays? Whether it is Christmas, long weekends, vacations or special family occasions, expectations around relationships, visits and gifts may be on our minds. Let us know your opinions on our topics, tell your story and news. Editorial support is available. Send to <bjrymer@telus.net> or by mail c/o the Society.

Issue	Topic	Submission Deadline	Distribution
Winter AC 68	Holidays	February 4	February 28
Spring AC 69	(send us your suggestions!)	April 16	May 15

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## Have you renewed your MEMBERSHIP?

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 \_\_\_\_\_

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

Please send cheque payable to the  
 Forget Me Not Family Society  
 #102-1860 Southmere Cres. E.,  
 Surrey, BC V4A 6Y7

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

Birth Parent \_\_\_\_\_ Adoptee \_\_\_\_\_ Adoptive Parent \_\_\_\_\_ Sibling \_\_\_\_\_ Reunited \_\_\_\_\_

Prospective Adoptive Parent \_\_\_\_\_ Adoption Professional \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Change of Address \_\_\_\_\_