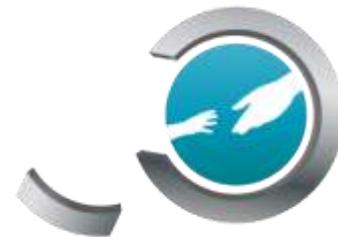


Origins Canada

supporting those separated by adoption



National Inquiry



On November 26, 2012, Valerie Andrews and Marlee Gold travelled to Ottawa to meet with Mme. Francoise Boivin, MP, Justice Critic for the Opposition in our effort to secure a National Inquiry.

The meeting was extremely positive and productive. We presented evidence from research, accounts from members across Canada, evidence of national involvement, and showed videos of the Australian Parliament in action.

To follow up, Mme. Boivin will contact the office of Rob Nicholson (Justice Minister) and others; and assured us that she will pursue this issue on our behalf after Christmas.

Adoption Conference 2012

On October 19-20 2012, Origins Canada hosted a national Conference in Toronto for those separated by adoption.

Ann Fessler – author of "[The Girls Who Went Away](#)" showed her new film "A Girl Like Her".

Rickie Solinger – author of "[Wake up Little Susie](#)" and "[Beggars and Choosers](#)" spoke about the systemic history of adoption post WWII and Reproductive Justice

Raven Sinclair – Aboriginal 60's Scoop expert shared adoption in Canada with us through the lens of First Nations.

Peter Dodds – author of "[Outer Search Inner Journey: An Orphan and Adoptee's Quest](#)" spoke about International Adoption. [See Peter's presentation here](#)

Karen Balcom – author of "[The Traffic in Babies](#)" and Esther Segal spoke about the Montreal Black Babies.

Mari Steed – [Justice for Magdalenes](#) Committee Director (USA) educated us about the Magdalene Laundries in Ireland and the quest for justice for those women.

Marilyn Churley – Former Ontario MPP – Open Records

Other workshop highlights included Barbara Estabrooks, Janine Vance and Jenette Yamamoto ([The Vance Twins](#)), Graig Moriarty Leslie Wagner, and Valerie Andrews.

The Conference was well attended and by all accounts a great success! The participants shared adoption experiences, renewed and created friendships, and were truly the most caring, sharing group. The courage of our Mother and Adoptee Panels was admired by all. Many attendees also participated in the Origins Oral History Project. (See pictures page 4)

We thank everyone who filled out our Feedback Questionnaire.

National Inquiry

Origins Canada has been working to build on the momentum created by the Australian Senate's "Inquiry into Forced Adoptions" which handed down its recommendations on February 29, 2012. ([Visit the Senate Committee website](#) for more information.)

We continue to work toward a National Inquiry similar to that which was held in Australia, and we also push provincially in Ontario for an Inquiry as well.

We are often asked why Origins Canada has chosen to push for National/Provincial Inquiries, we believe:

a) An Inquiry would **reach** those mothers and adoptees who may still not understand the full impact of what happened to them, and who may not know about support and services available to them.

b) An inquiry would **uncover** the illegal, unethical and human rights abuses perpetrated against unmarried mothers and their children in Canada

c) An inquiry would **create awareness** in Canadian society of adoption policies and practices, past and present.

d) An inquiry would **acknowledge and validate** those who have suffered, and continue to suffer because of past and present adoption policies and practices.

e) An inquiry would **create accountability** for those separated by adoption who were affected by illegal, unethical and human rights abuses in adoption policies and practices.

f) An inquiry would **open records** of Maternity Homes, Services Agencies, and others as has been done in Australia.

g) An inquiry would lead to the **removal of fees** for accessibility of adoption records, or reunion services by Provincial Governments.

h) An inquiry would **provide reparation** to those affected by illegal, unethical and human rights abuses in adoption policies and practices.

i) An inquiry would **provide funding** for professional counselling and services to those affected.

j) An inquiry would **provide affirming National and Provincial government apologies** based on the Canadian Law Commission report "Apologizing for Serious Wrongdoing" which was included as a Recommendation in #4 of the Australian Inquiry recommendations as follows:

- Acknowledgment of the wrong done or naming the offence
- Accepting responsibility for the wrong that was done
- The expression of sincere regret and profound remorse.

- The assurance or promise that the wrong done will not recur: and
- Reparation through concrete measures

Origins Canada had planned to meet with Members of Parliament. This meeting was originally planned for November, "Adoption Awareness Month," however due to the workload of our Conference we were unable to pull this together for November.

However, Origins Executive Director Valerie Andrews and Ryerson Social Work student Marlee Gold did travel to Ottawa on November 26, 2012 to meet with Mme. Boivin for a preliminary meeting to explore how we can move this initiative forward. We are now working on scheduling for this historic meeting which will be attended by natural parents and adoptees across Canada.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

1. Register for a Canadian Inquiry at our homepage at www.originscanada.org
2. Write to Rob Nicholson [here](#) to request a National Inquiry into Forced Adoption in Canada
3. Make an appointment with your MP and share your adoption experience. [Find your MP here](#).
4. If you need help, an Origins Canada volunteer can assist you.

NEWS from Australia:

On February 29, 2012, the **Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs** handed down the report of its investigation into forced surrenders for adoption purposes. This report has resulted in state apologies, funding, and other developments.

The report, **“Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practice”** was compiled after Committee representatives travelled throughout Australia listening to the accounts of those forcibly separated by adoption-related policies and practices.

Related:

- Visit the [Senate website](#) for more information and to read submissions
- View [Senator Siewart’s presentation](#) (Video)

SEE APOLOGIES and funding prompted by the National Inquiry in legislative assemblies of Australia:

New South Wales - [“Apology for Forced Adoption Practices, the Premier”](#) (Video)

Victoria State - [“Government apologises for forced adoptions”](#) (Video)

Tasmania – [“Premier’s apology speech to victims of forced adoptions”](#) (Video)

Queensland - [“Newman says sorry in Parliament for forced adoptions”](#) (Article) [“Newman issues adoption apology”](#) (Video)

AIFS Study Published

The Australian Institute for Family Studies published its report on “Past” adoption practices. The study is [available here on the AIFS website](#). Here are the voices of some of the study participants:

“The hospital experience was horrendous, resulting in post-traumatic stress disorder. Because of the fact of being denied the baby, not being given any information about her sex or anything like that I was put in a ward with mothers and their babies - so everybody else had a baby and I had nothing. And I consider that part of the punishment ... The whole hospital experience - I was nothing and no one. I literally think I ceased to exist after I had the baby, because the baby was earmarked for this deserving married couple.”

“Negotiation with governments and negotiating systems is not easy. And they re-traumatise people, I think, in having to get through what can be a difficult system, when people are already traumatised.”

“My child was stolen from me at birth and I was denied access and information as to her whereabouts or details about her. I was told my baby was gone ... And I was made to believe that I was worthless and I deserved to be punished. I believed that I had no rights - indeed, I did not know what rights were. I was just sixteen and a student. My parents were prevented from visiting me and were told I was sedated. It was standard practice to keep family members out of the hospital.”

“As an adopted person, you grow up with a feeling of insecurity and abandonment. As an adult, you can rationalise, but as a child you can't and you don't understand”



Origins members Rosalie, Theresa, Lonie, Angela, Pam, Kathleen, with Lily Arthur at the Queensland Apology



Adoption Experience 2012 Conference

Historic Church Meeting: “A WAY FORWARD”

On June 15, 2012, Origins met with the major Canadian churches at a historic meeting entitled “A Way Forward.”

The goal of this meeting was to “start a dialogue and forge a path for healing” for those separated by adoption.

This was an Origins Canada initiative which was held at the United Church Headquarters earlier this year. In attendance were high level executives of every major Canadian church involved in Maternity Homes in Canada including Catholic, Presbyterian, Anglican, United, and Salvation Army. Pentecostal Assemblies declined our invitation.

During this meeting, a panel of five mothers of various denominations gave their accounts and experiences of adoption to church officials.

Origins also provided the following: Surrender Experiences Involving Religious Organizations in Canada, Canadian research on maternity homes, etc., Australian Senate Inquiry Tabling & Recommendations, “[Apologizing for Serious Wrongdoing](#)” (Law Commission of Canada report), Images of maternity homes, and religious staff with babies, Verified Canadian adoption statistics, impact of past adoption practices: from research

We also provided the document “What Mothers and Adoptees Want” which was created by working with our many members.

Church officials left the meeting with much information to download to their various committees, etc.

It is the plan to reconvene with Canadian Churches in Spring 2013. In the meantime we have been in contact with the Churches and have the following to report:



Update: United Church of Canada

Origins Canada has been advised by the United Church that they have completed their initial report on the development of Maternity Homes in Canada by the United Church. Following are areas that are in the initial report:

1. Section on research methods and terminology
2. Background information on the involvement of The United Church of Canada in maternity homes
3. Information from archives about: Victor Home in Toronto (now Massey Centre); United Church Home for Girls in Burnaby, BC; Church Home for Girls and McMillan House, both in Winnipeg; Elizabeth House and Bethany House, both in Montreal. Including policies, practices, administration, funding, statistics, etc.
4. Interviews with former residents of Victor Home, UC Homes for Girls in Burnaby, and Church Home for Girls in Winnipeg.
5. Information about other facilities that were not officially maternity homes, but may have housed pregnant women including: Mount View in Calgary, Maritime Home for Girls in Truro, NS, Interprovincial Home for Young Women in Coverdale, NB, Frances Willard Home for Girls in Toronto, and Cedarvale School in Georgetown, ON.

Next steps to be taken internally by the United Church...

1. Approval of proposal to establish a Task Group to advise on next steps of The United Church of Canada in regards to adoptions from United Church maternity homes."
2. Call for nominations of members of the Task Group
3. Task group to meet sometime in 2013 to disseminate report and begin to consider next steps by the Church.
4. Continue communications with Origins Canada and other interested parties.

Anglican Church

We have contacted the Anglican Church, and have a follow up meeting scheduled with them on December 17, 2012 to review Archival research we have obtained.



Humewood House, Toronto

"assure you that we are diligently continuing an internal review of our records as it relates to the maternity homes that were run by The Salvation Army. Given the number of homes we had across Canada, gathering of information alone has in itself been a lengthy process.

The Christmas season is one of our busiest times and as we gear up for our kettle campaign, toy drives, and huge demands on our family and community services, we will not be able to give this review a lot of attention until the New Year."

Presbyterian Church

The Presbyterian Church reports that they are working through this issue and advises the following:

- They have held a number of internal meetings
- Identified Records
- Created a "finding aid"
- Created a Thematic Guide and Reference File
- Met with **Armagh** ("Home for Unwed Mothers" pic below now operating as a Teen Parenting Centre) for assistance in obtaining any records they may have.



Catholic

A Catholic Church official who was present at the Origins meeting advises that all information garnered at our meeting was uploaded to the Catholic Council of Bishops. We have contacted the CCB and as of the publication of this Newsletter have not heard back from them as yet.



Bethany Home Toronto



Rosalie Hall, Scarborough

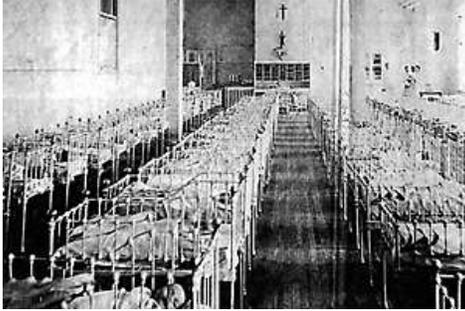
Salvation Army

The Salvation Army reports the following:

HOW YOU CAN HELP

1. Let us know if you were in a Church run Maternity Home and add your experiences to our records.
2. Origins Canada has compiled a [list of Maternity Homes in Canada](#). We welcome your input.
3. Help us prepare for our next meeting with the churches.

"TOO MANY BABIES...."



During the mid-1960s Social Service agencies and others realized their policies were flawed. Too many babies were being taken from mothers for adoption and there were not enough homes for them all...but did they stop? Here are some quotes from our research you may find interesting...

"But babies don't often leave the hospital after 14 days if they are born to unwed mothers. This is because there are not enough foster homes available and more children available than there are people here who wish to adopt them. Brigadier Everett explains, "some of the babies we have here now have been in hospital as long as 50 days...at Grace alone, according to records, one out of every 10 babies is born to an unwed mother." - Brigadier Everett, Grace Hospital, Winnipeg. Winnipeg Free Press, August 31, 1963.

"We hope we won't have to resort to encouraging girls to keep their own children. We still can't prove that the baby gets the best of the deal when it's raised by its own mother"

Sister St. Augustine, Director, Rosalie Hall. *Toronto Star*, December 20, 1965.

"Mrs. Doering reports that during recent conversations with Children's Aid Workers she has been advised by them no longer to counsel a girl that the unselfish thing for her to do is to place her child for adoption as the Society can no longer assure placement." - "Consultation on Counselling," Victor Home for Girls, June 7, 1965.

"The Children's Aid Society may have fallen into the trap of accepting adoption as the sole solution for children born out of wedlock. If this trend continues there will not be adoption homes for all our illegitimate babies." - Walter W. Blackburn, Assistant Director, Children's Aid Society of Metropolitan Toronto. Toronto Star, February 17, 1966.



"It is perfectly clear that if the illegitimacy rate continues at anything like the present, we will not have adequate number of homes available." - Professor Mary Taylor,

University of Michigan. United Church Observer, February 1, 1966. "This is a blow to ministers and social workers who, for a generation, have told girls that giving up their babies was the unselfish thing, best for them, for the babies, and for the childless couples begging for them" - Allan Sherlock, Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto. United Church Observer, February 1, 1966.



"This afternoon we were told there were 600 children born out of wedlock in B.C. for whom there were not adopting homes available...for a generation, social workers, and to a degree, clergymen and parents and other people had been strongly encouraging girls who were pregnant to place their children for adoption ... we are faced at this moment with the need to re-evaluate this advice because of the realities that face us...but, until we find some other alternatives, we'd better not separate children from their mothers, with no assurance that we will have any other mother to give them." - Mary Taylor, MSW, PhD, Professor of Social Work, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Living With Shame: Barbara's Experience of Adoption St. Martin's Manor, Hamilton, 1965

I was 19 in May 1965, madly in love with the man I believed I would marry one day, graduating from high school, applying to universities and I was on my way to a happy productive life - my cup runneth over – or so I thought... I soon was facing a very different reality.

Over the next three months, my boyfriend broke up with me, I discovered I was pregnant, I lied to my parents and I turned down acceptance to University. I used the excuse that I wanted to take a year off to "find myself". The thought of telling the truth was much too frightening and humiliating.

Meanwhile, my father washed his hands of me because I had turned down acceptance at University and my baby's father took no ownership of our situation.

I couldn't eat or sleep and had no idea where to turn. I was abandoned. In my third month of pregnancy I decided to confide in my two older sisters. One was a nurse and the other a married teacher living in Hamilton. They collaborated and then told me that the Catholic Children's Aid Society in Hamilton would accept me at their maternity home if I agreed to give up my baby for adoption.

The CCAS would only take in unmarried mothers who were compliant regarding relinquishment of their unborn babies.

Shunned by my beau and my parents, I felt powerless for any form of help. I had no power, no resources, no support and no other option. I was broken so I surrendered.

I was virtually held prisoner at St Martin's Manor, a maternity home. run by the Catholic Church, from November 4, 1965, until Feb 4, 1966 when my son was born.

I was a woman bearing the evidence of an act of love that was scandalous outside of marriage. The man who fathered my child walked away unscathed. I was filled with shame and fear.

A social worker was assigned, rules were defined and I did whatever I was told. No contact with the outside world was allowed except a weekly visit from one designated family member and/or a weekly phone call which was dialed by the house mother in her quarters. Letters were censored to protect the adoption plan.

We got up, ate, did chores, and went to bed at an appointed time. We were allowed to walk around the block but only alone or in pairs wearing fake wedding bands to hide our shame. It was a bleak and lonely existence.

We were not allowed to have any food other than that which we prepared on site.

When a priest came in every week to hear confession, I acceded to his fondling just like the other

girls. It was humiliating and I hated him for it but I didn't say anything because I felt subservient, worthless and unfit as a human being. To complain would cause trouble and I was already in enough trouble.

I believed that I deserved what was happening to me and I believed that co-operation, acceptance and humility were my only hope for redemption.

I have never been to confession or participated in any religious organization to this day. I completely lost my faith at that point.

During my confinement, waiting until the day I would lose my baby, I had one, and only one, request. I wanted to be treated like all the other mothers while I was in the hospital. I wanted to see my baby freely and I was adamant about that.



My social worker made the commitment to me and in return I agreed that I would not try to leave the hospital with him. She also promised that I would be able to find my son when he was 18. Those false promises were all I had to look forward to and they sustained me.

I had a long painful labour at St Joseph's Hospital on Feb 4, 1966. My son was in a breach position and no amount of pushing helped. I was awake and remember the nurse holding my baby by his ankles while his little feet turned blue. The resident on call who was trying to deliver him, frantically called for forceps. By the time he was born I was ripped to pieces and my son was in serious distress. His APGAR reading was 4 out of 10 and I could barely walk for 10 days.

My son was whisked away immediately at birth and the hospital staff refused to bring him to me over the next 5 days. I begged and pleaded. I told them what I had been promised. They said they would look into it to appease me, but it never happened.

I was released from hospital and put into a taxi without my baby on my 20th birthday...February 9, 1966.

I worried and wondered for 38 long years if my son had been permanently damaged during his birth from oxygen deprivation.

When we finally met, I was relieved that he was healthy.

As it turned out, I was the only one with permanent damage.

After the hospital and a week back home in shame and seclusion, my parents sent me 500 miles away to Kitchener Waterloo to find work until school started in September. Not a word was mentioned about my experience or my son. No one shared my grief.

I started University that fall and two years later I was married to the first man I dated. I was very grateful (as were my parents) that someone wanted to marry me and so desperate to feel valued that I didn't consider that we had little in common.

Ten years and two daughters later I went through a nasty break up...another shameful failure. For the next twenty years I went through several more bad relationships. My judgement was seriously flawed by my lack of self-esteem and my history. I was consumed by grief. Although I had a very successful career my personal life was a train wreck.

I knew I had to find my son. I needed desperately to tell him how much I loved him, how powerless I was when he was born and how sorry I was that I was not able to prevent our separation. The legal system that was complicit in his abduction continued to keep us apart with sealed records.

I did everything I could to find him. I registered with the ADR, advertised in the Hamilton Spectator on his 30th birthday, scoured for hours through microfiche at the library in Hamilton for clues, joined support groups, lobbied for open records, told my story on National TV, and hired a private investigator.

38 years of my son's life were lost to me and I knew that I could never get them back. It made me feel cheated and depressed. It still does.

Finally, in 2004, as the result of my tenacity we were reunited - the

beginning of a whole new stressful and emotional journey.

Although we have a very loving relationship today, the grief and the scars are still there. We have both missed so much. I expected to find my baby but instead I found a grown man. He expected to simply find a woman who gave him life but instead he found a mother who always loved and wanted him. Yet we were strangers.

It takes a long time to build trust and create a history. It has been very hard to accept that my baby no longer exists.

When he was born, I was perceived as unworthy to mother my child when in fact I was simply being punished for being an unmarried mother. Several weeks after his birth, the CCAS filed a court petition and a judge ordered my son to become a crown ward. I was now legally labeled unfit.

Through the lens of church groups, social services, and infertile couples, my only value was in producing a healthy white baby for a married man and woman.

Through my lens, once the task was completed I had no value and became invisible.

One of the hardest things I deal with now is hearing others marginalize my experience. They say "that's just how things were back then" or "well it's different now" in an attempt to dismiss culpability.

I point out the days of slavery. Do we dismiss the injustice because "that's just how things were back then?"

Discrimination, oppression and abuse are never ok no matter the time frame. Ignorance does not mitigate the offense through the lens of the victims.

With an unhealed wound, I could never be the best mother, the best wife or the best friend. I have been mistrustful, fearful, anxious and often depressed. I had a complete breakdown in 1988 and spent 10 days in the crisis ward of my local hospital. I wanted to die. After 6 months of psychiatric treatment I was able to function again.

I have lived my whole life with shame.

But wasn't it wrong and shameful to prey on my vulnerability? Wasn't it wrong and shameful to deny my rights as a mother? Wasn't it wrong and shameful to coerce me into accepting adoption? Wasn't it wrong and shameful to treat me like a criminal?

Did I deserve a life sentence?

Another woman's lifelong joy was at the expense of my lifelong grief.

Barbara Estabrooks, 2012.



Barb Estabrooks and Ann Fessler

A Call for Stories:

Are you the natural mother? A natural father? An adopted person? In each issue of our newsletter, we highlight the adoption experience of someone separated by adoption. If you have lost a family member to adoption, please email your account to newsletter@originscanada.org. Let us also know if you would consent to having your story reprinted on our website as well

Origins in the News

"United Church of Canada to hold mirror to its role in forced adoptions as families push for national inquiry" (Kathryn Blaze Carlson, *National Post*, October 9, 2012)

"It was so painful': Forced-adoptions conference calls for federal inquiry" (Sarah Boesveld, *National Post*, Oct 20, 2012)

DENIAL

*I have lived my life with something on my mind
'though never knowing what it was.
A life disconnected – distracted.
Never giving too much
Never getting too close
Never quite fitting in.
I seem to have lived only on the perimeters of my existence.
Never feeling quite whole.
Until the day came when I realized
My mind had been protecting me
From the pain of remembering.*

- Unknown Author, Courtesy of *Origins Australia*

Announcement



Sandra Jarvie, Director

We are pleased to announce the appointment of Sandra Jarvie as a Director in Origins Canada. Sandra has been involved in various aspects of adoption reform for over a decade with particular concern for past and present adoption practice, process and law.

A long time supporter of Origins, Sandra worked to open adoption records in Alberta, from 2001 to 2004; has provided support, acknowledgement and validation for those separated by adoption, and promoted family preservation. In the past, Sandra held a number of positions with the Canadian Council of Natural Mothers including Vice President, Director and Alberta representative. She also founded KINnect, a support group for people separated by adoption, in Calgary.

Please join us in welcoming Sandra to the Origins team!

ORIGINS PHILOSOPHY

The sacred bond between mother and child is of paramount importance to Origins. We seek acknowledgment of the need for healing the emotional damage caused by adoption separation and secrecy, and work towards ensuring that needless separation no longer occurs.

Aims and Objectives

SUPPORT: To provide confidential support and resources to those separated from their natural families by adoption in safe and secure environments.

HEALING: To promote the process of healing emotional damage caused by adoption separation and secrecy.

REUNION: To assist in reunion of family members separated by adoption.

AWARENESS: To promote community awareness and understanding of the lifelong consequences of family separation and secrecy.

RESEARCH: To undertake and promote research into adoption policies, practices, and consequences, past and present.

REDRESS: To seek acknowledgement, validation, accountability and redress for illegal and unethical adoption practices.

REFORM: To encourage and promote legislative, social, and administrative reforms in adoption that honour and respect the mother-child bond, support the preservation of natural families, and that meet needs of those already separated by adoption.

Origins Around the World

Origins America

Post Office Box 3705, Sedona AZ
86336, (928) 203-1770

Origins Australia

Post Office Box W18 Fairfield West
NSW 2165, (02) 9604 9352,
www.originsnsw.com

Origins Healing and Recovery Project for Forgotten Australians

www.originsharp.com

Origins Scotland

www.originsscotland.org.uk

Origins International

www.origins-international.org

Affiliated Organizations:

Baby Scoop Era Research Initiative

www.babyscoopera.com

Stolen Generations Alliance

<http://www.sgalliance.org.au>
Ph: (04) 0891 7133

Alliance for Forgotten Australians

www.forgottenaustralians.org.au
Ph: (02) 6273 4885

Volunteer With Us

Origins needs volunteers across Canada:

Peer support: To welcome and give support to new members in-person, via email, or telephone, or facilitating our confidential online forum.

Computer assistance: Are you computer savvy? Origins is always looking for IT assistance with the website, mailing list, and other projects.

Researchers: To research adoption laws and policies in your province, develop law and policy reform proposals, and find resources to help families stay together.

Office Assistance: Letter writing, mailing, bookkeeping, filing, etc.

Please contact us at if you are interested in any of these areas

Contact Information

Origins Canada: Supporting Those Separated By Adoption

Post Office Box 144,

Richmond Hill, Ontario L4B 4R4

Ph: (416) 400-5730 Fax: (905) 884-3899

Website: www.originscanada.org

Email: admin@originscanada.org

