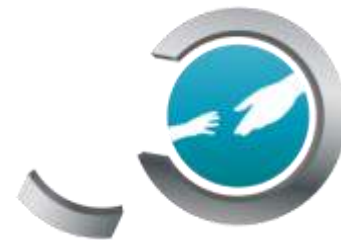


# Origins Canada

supporting those separated by adoption



## Happy Mother's Day!

**Origins Canada wishes all mothers a Happy Mother's Day...may all your dreams come true!**

### Origins Canada Position

Origins Canada does not support "Birthmother's Day," but instead supports the celebration of Mother's Day to honour ALL mothers.

The promotion of two separate social celebrations, "Mother's Day" and "Birthmother's Day," has become popular in recent years as a tool of marginalization for natural mothers.

"Birthmothers Day" marginalizes natural mothers and undermines their recognition as mothers in Canadian society.

Mothers separated from their children by adoption have the same right as all other mothers to be honoured on Mother's Day.

Mother's Day is rightfully and equally their day to reflect upon, celebrate and acknowledge their motherhood as they choose to do; and to stand equally with ALL mothers on that day.



### National Apology for Forced Adoptions

Following the tabling of the Australian Senate Inquiry in 2012, on March 21, 2013 the Prime Minister of Australia gave a historic national apology to those separated by adoption for adoption policies which included illegal and unethical practices as well as human rights abuses.

The policies and practices uncovered by the Inquiry mirror those experienced by over 350,000 women in Canada separated from their children simply because of their unmarried status.

For twenty years, Origins Australia has worked for Inquiries, first obtaining two State Inquiries, and finally, the National Senate Inquiry.



*Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard*

- Official Website: [National Apology for Forced Adoptions](#)
- Apology video: ["Gillard delivers apology to victims of forced adoption"](#)
- Senate Inquiry Report ["Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices"](#)
- AIFS Report on ["Past Adoption Experiences"](#)

## National Inquiry

We continue to work towards an Inquiry similar to that which was held in Australia and which handed down their recommendations on February 29, 2012. **Visit the Senate Committee website** for more information.

Once a Government Inquiry is secured, it would be open to all mothers, adopted persons, family members, groups, or other interested parties to make submissions to the Inquiry. Any person or organization can make a submission to a Senate Inquiry. All voices would have an opportunity to be heard.

After working closely with the office of Mme. Boivin, Federal Justice Critic for the NDP and many others, Origins has confirmed a non-partisan meeting on Parliament Hill for later this year where we plan to bring a contingent of mothers and adopted persons.

More about **Ottawa** in our next Newsletter!

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

1. Register for a Canadian Inquiry [at our homepage](#)
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.

## Provincial Inquiry

As you are aware, Origins Canada works on several fronts at the same to achieve best results. This is why we also push provincially in Ontario for an Inquiry in that province.

Since [our last Newsletter](#) a team of members including **Joyce Ramer, Eugenia Powell,** and **Marlee Gold** sent an information package to every MPP in Ontario...a great day of collating, stuffing and...coffee...chatting...



L-R Eugenia Powell, Valerie Andrews, Joyce Ramer

We are starting to receive replies from Provincial MPPs, many of them supportive. We will continue to follow up with the MPPs in the coming days.

### MANY THANKS TO OUR ORIGINS VOLUNTEERS!!!



## Also ... Provincially speaking ...

In May, Origins Canada will host a meeting at the Ontario Legislature with the NDP caucus to ask for support for a Provincial Inquiry. This initiative has been championed by MPP Monique Taylor and her Parliamentary Assistant.

### Historic Church Meetings Continue "A WAY FORWARD"

This month Origins will reconvene our ongoing meetings with Canadian churches...this time the Salvation Army will host the meeting at their headquarters.

As we have done previously, Origins will meet with high level executives of Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian, United, and Salvation Army churches. All had Maternity Home involvement in Canada.

These historic meetings have been branded "**A Way Forward**" and the goal of our meetings is to "start a dialogue and forge a path for healing" for those separated by adoption in Canada. This meeting will focus on hearing the Church reports to us with respect to their internal investigations, Task Forces, and other internal activities. We will also be asking the Churches to endorse Open Records for all Canadian provinces, and written support for a National Inquiry.





### National Apology for Forced Adoptions 2013

The Prime Minister, the Hon Julia Gillard MP, and the Attorney-General, the Hon Mark Dreyfus QC MP, invite you to attend the formal apology being made on behalf of the Australian Government to people affected by forced adoption and removal policies and practices.

Great Hall, Parliament House, Canberra | 10:30am, with official proceedings to begin at 11:00am | Thursday 21 March 2013

The apology proceedings will be followed by lunch from 12:30pm on the Federation Mall lawns of Parliament House.



## Something I Still Cry About



**By Amanda Transue-Woolston**

The other day I was at lunch with one of my favorite adoptee friends where we fell so easily into the rhythm of adoptee speak. I cannot put into words the catharsis of getting to talk to another adopted woman where you have common ground, an understanding of each other's perceptions of adoption, and a mutual admiration where you know you will not be judged for voicing your experience. There are no lengthy justifications for each story or opinion you share in these conversations, as an adoptee might find themselves having to do with someone who does not have this shared experience or one like it. You simply talk; you cross over an incredible amount of information in a short period of time without ever finding it daunting. I suspect no one at the surrounding tables or walking by would have any clue or be able to follow the conversation like we could. You talk like two people who have known each other their entire lives. It is simply amazing. You leave happy to have been able to talk to another person about something that a lot of people simply do not understand.

One thing we talked about was how, despite being in reunion, it was still very important to both of us to have any document and any piece of our history pre-adoption. Some might wonder why it would matter to an adoptee that they do not have their original birth certificate, adoption files, or any other concrete object or documentation from their life and history pre-adoption seeing as they are reunited and can ask both their

adoptive family and original family for information. Foremost: it just is. It just is something that is important to many adoptees which is what many of us activists keep trying to tell legislators et. al.

The quest for our history pre-adoption is not just about reunion or about reunion at all for many adoptees. Having a solid piece of evidence that puts you at a certain place at a certain time, a time that may have thus far been a mystery to you, and being able to hold it in your hands is simply a different issue entirely. Being allowed to obtain documentation that describes your history is about equality, respect, adulthood, and self-ownership.

My adoptee friend recently obtained more of her records from her adoption agency which she found very validating. During the conversation, I was thinking of things that I wish I too could have that were part of my experience pre-adoption. Like having the slightest clue of who my foster parents were, perhaps to ask them if they remembered what I was like as a baby, and see if they have any pictures. I would like to know where

in the world I was for the first 4.5 months of my life. I would like to know that I did not drop off the face of the planet, that someone real loved me and took care of me. Then a lump rose in my throat when the next thought came into my head.

*I want my bear. Where in the world is my bear?*

I first found out that I was supposed to have a teddy bear pre-reunion when I unsealed my uncensored adoption file from my birth state. I remember pouring through those records and stopping at the place where an adoption worker had recorded something to the nature of "the birth mother has purchased some things she would like to go with the baby. A small stuffed bear and a few outfits." I put the papers down and telephoned my adoptive mother. I probably shocked her when the first thing out of my mouth was "hello" and "mom, do you know where my bear and outfits from my first mother are? I never knew I had a bear, did you see it? Where is it?" She told me that they were never given a bear or any outfits that were specified as being gifts from my first mother. I realize now she was caught off-guard by how devastated I seemed about a bear and clothing from nearly 25 years ago.

I really was devastated. Being upset that I did not have this simple, sweet gift from my mother, a piece of her to hold while I was growing up, was not just about me. It was about my sensitivity to her as one of my mothers and how I, personally, identified as a mother. It was about how I chose every last thing that was purchased for my son before he was born with love and care. I wanted



him to touch every blanket, hug every stuffed animal, look at every picture, and be surrounded by the warmth of every outfit knowing without a doubt that it all spelled out his parents' love for him. I wanted his room and our home to radiate love and warmth for our family. As a mother, I knew the thought, the love, the anguish she must have put into selecting this bear for me and with her very best effort, trying to make sure it made its way to me. I imagined the faith she had put into this bear that it would comfort me on our journey; a companion for a journey she couldn't accompany me on. I knew in the very depths of my heart that this bear had meant something to her. When my first mother had our face-to-face meeting of our reunion I worried that she would ask me about the bear.

She nearly immediately asked me about the bear.

She opened her bag and pulled out a small plastic bag. Sealed inside for protection from the years, was a picture of me as a newborn. It was the only picture of me that she had. Next from the bag, she pulled out a small bear. It was my bear's "twin." She had carefully selected two bears, one that I would have, and one that she would keep, so that we would always be connected no matter where we were. She always kept her bear with her and took it everywhere; she had assumed I was doing the same. I had to be honest with her and tell her that I never received my bear; it broke my heart. She seemed very unhappy at this news; I am sure I will never know how unhappy.

I cannot even fathom why my agency would not give me the bear

from my mother. Over the years that I have read adoption-related literature, I have come across, on many occasions, the revelation that conventional wisdom at the time said it was not appropriate for the adoptive family to accept gifts and items from the original family. Such a thing was thought to be disruptive.

One source even said it was OK for adoption workers to tell the adoptee's first mother they would give an item to the adoptive parents to appease the mother. However, to actually do it was not acceptable because it was thought to be disturbing to the adoptive family to actually pass it along. Despite the fact that this was indeed probably conventional wisdom at the time, it still seems like it should have been obviously wrong. *Why is it that lying in adoption isn't seen as wrong? Why didn't anyone think it was wrong to tell her they were going to pass it along and then not do it? How disturbing can a beautiful little bear be to a family who adopted and loves the little girl holding onto it?*

Of course, I wanted to share this with my friend at lunch but this is the one thing about my adoption that I cannot talk about without crying (something I did not want to do in the restaurant). I am unsure if not having my bear bothers me more as the child whom it was destined for but never received it or as a mother who thinks other mothers should be treated with respect and honesty. What's worse is that I am aware of how insignificant this must seem to outsiders looking in and perhaps how trivial it seems for me to be upset about, of all things, a stuffed bear. When I look around the world, at my community, the clients I see, and the faces of women in the

pictures of organizations helping them, I know how small and insignificant not having my bear is in comparison. I am thankful to have what I have and that my problems aren't catastrophic as those around the world. But I cannot help how I feel; I cannot stop the tears from coming to my eyes when I think about my bear, the little baby that went without it, and the very young mother who put every hope and prayer in that bear to love, protect, and comfort me. The untruths, the lack of trust in women--the trust in my mother who felt that having this bear was what was best for me, the second-guessing of women and mothers, the disregard for adoptee truth in adoption and our society: it stings me to my core. I am reunited, I have my records and my original birth certificate. But in an inexplicable way that perhaps isn't understandable or even reasonable to most people, I want my bear.

- Reprinted with permission from Amanda Transue-Woolston, author of "[The Declassified Adoptee](#)."

### **DENIED - By The Government**

I plead though they ignore my cries.  
The record's sealed is their reply.  
Time and time again I ask.  
I'm told to put it in the past.  
I can't get them to try and see.  
They have what belongs to me.  
I beg for truth but no one hears.  
It only falls upon deaf ears.  
I get no matter how I try.  
The same stone cold response  
**DENIED.**

From [Assembling Self](#), a book of poems  
by Karen Belanger

# The Campaign for Open Adoption Records Across Canada

In Canada, only four provinces and one territory currently have open adoption records.

Origins Canada continues to advocate for adoption disclosure legislation that provides adopted adults unrestricted access to their original birth certificate, and unrestricted access to identifying information on their natural parents ; and that provides natural mothers unrestricted access to the original and amended birth certificates of their daughter or son, and provides natural parents unrestricted access to identifying information on their son or daughter.

This month Origins launched websites for Open Records in PEI, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan and will be launching more in the coming months.

The FB groups and websites have been created to assist and empower those “on the ground” in those provinces and to provide them with the tools and support they need to work towards Open Adoption Records in their respective provinces.

Origins Canada will continue to provide resources and support for those working for Open Adoption records across Canada.



**Vickie McPhail**

Many thanks to Origins volunteer **Vickie McPhail** of Helping Hands Administrative Services in New Brunswick for all her work on the new websites for Open Records.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

Volunteers are needed in Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Saskatchewan to help with letter writing campaigns, getting signatures on petitions, and other local initiatives to further the cause of Open Records in these provinces.

### GET INVOLVED!

Email [originscanada@gmail.com](mailto:originscanada@gmail.com) or go to:

**COAR-PEI** [on Facebook](#)  
Website: <http://www.coarpei.com>

**COAR-NS** [on Facebook](#)  
Website: <http://www.coarns.com/>

**COAR-NB** [on Facebook](#)  
Website: <http://www.coarnb.org/>

# ORIGINS: STATEMENT ON OPEN RECORDS

## DISCRIMINATION

Personal documentation regarding one’s birth is available to the majority of members of society, except, to our knowledge, people who were adopted and mothers who surrendered their babies for adoption based on their being ‘separated by adoption’.

This would constitute discrimination to a segment of the population.

The original birth certificate acknowledging and validating the birth of the person adopted and the natural process of giving birth for the mother has been denied to both adoptees and mothers.

Openness and transparency must be the foundation of all government practices, in particular when it impacts the lives of human beings; members of society.

## FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION/ RIGHT OF CONTACT

Members of our society have the right of freedom of association with any person, including their natural families. At Origins, we are not aware of natural families or persons adopted contacting each other for any nefarious purpose. Usually contact is made to offer love, support, exchange information, or to initiate family contact with hopes of a relationship.

Citizens of Canada receive unsolicited calls to their homes from a variety of sources and have the choice as adults on whether or not to interact with those people. Further, all citizens are protected by law in cases of harassment or unwanted contact.

A “special law” enacted by the State for “those separated by adoption” sets them apart from all others in society, appearing to suggest they are a suspect group.

Adoption records are open in many jurisdictions in Canada and around the world without negative consequences.

Natural parents and persons adopted do not have the same right of freedom of association as other citizens in Canada under current legislation.

### SEALING OF ADOPTION RECORDS

Adoption records were originally closed for several reasons which do not apply today.

Single mothers were often told adoption would protect their children from the socially and legally constructed stigma of ‘illegitimacy’. Adoption records were sealed to protect the interests of adoptive parents from any possible interference by natural families and to perpetuate the “as if born to” myth.

Contrary to popular belief, adoption records were **not** sealed to protect natural mothers.

In modern society, it is not socially or legally acceptable to stigmatize single parents and their

children with “illegitimacy,” and with the trend today for openness in adoption practice and law, past reasoning to keep the records closed no longer exists.

Further, it must be noted that adoptive parents are **not** stakeholders in the case of adopted adults.

### CONFIDENTIALITY

In many jurisdictions the matter of mothers’ ‘confidentiality’ or ‘privacy’ from their daughters or sons is used not only to blame mothers for legislation they had no part in creating, but also as a condition of their surrender.

To this point in time, we have not seen a law or document signed by a mother that afforded her ‘confidentiality’ or ‘privacy’ from her son or daughter. We also have not seen any evidence that anonymity was a ‘choice’ for young mothers through a law or document signed by a mother where she was allowed to refuse ‘confidentiality’ or ‘privacy’ from her daughter or son at the time of surrender.

In the absence of specific legislation regarding confidentiality for mothers, adoption facilitators did not have authority to suggest to some mothers there would be ‘confidentiality’ from their daughters or sons.

There are studies, and our experience indicates that a high percentage of mothers want to know about and have contact with their now-adult children. With the introduction of the internet and

social media, there have been increasing numbers of people searching for each other, often resulting in positive reunions.

### RIGHTS OF PERSONS ADOPTED

Those who have been adopted have every right to unfettered access to their original birth certificates, just as it is a right for all other members of society. It is a fact and not a secret they were born to mothers.

Not every province in Canada denies persons adopted their original birth certificates.

Not every province in Canada denies them unfettered access to identifying information on their natural families so they may discover their medical history; genealogical background; their ancestral heritage; immediate and extended family members; grandparents; siblings; nieces; nephews; aunts; uncles; brothers; sisters; mothers; and fathers.

Not every province in Canada denies people adopted direct access to their own personal information and their right to keep it private and to themselves, or if they choose, to search for and find out more of what is part of their lives, their history, their experiences, and theirs to experience.

### MOTHERS’ RIGHTS

Mothers who gave birth to babies who were lost to adoption in the past have also been denied the right to have the original birth certificate even though it was most often the mother who gave the

information for the registration of birth. The birth of her baby has not been acknowledged and validated as is the right of all other mothers who give birth in our society. It is not a secret from her. The mothers gave birth, it cannot be denied.

Although single and unsupported mothers were unable to raise their children, this does not preclude them from having a relationship with their adult children once they reach the age of majority; adulthood.

There is no logical reason today, where openness in adoption is the norm, to preserve the archaic consequences of the closed adoption system of past decades, in present day legislation.

## ADULTS

Adopted adults, natural parents and siblings should have direct access to identifying information on their family members.

Adopted adults are no longer children, but are competent adults capable of making decisions and connections for themselves, or to ask for assistance if necessary.

## OTHER JURISDICTIONS

Not all countries have closed or mediated adoption records. Nations such as France, Saudi Arabia, Mexico, Norway and Israel have never closed their adoption records.

Adoption records have been open in Scotland since 1930, in Great Britain since 1975, in Australia since 1991, and in New

Zealand since 1985 with no negative consequences.

In fact, Canada is the last remaining Commonwealth nation that continues to have some closed records in some provinces. Currently in Canada, four provinces and one territory have Open Adoption Records including Newfoundland, Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia and The Yukon.

## ON BEING ADOPTED...

### Books

*Adoption Healing*, by Joe Soll  
*Primal Wound*, by Nancy Verrier  
*Journey of the Adopted Self*, by Betty Jean Lifton

### Websites

[Land of Gazillion Adoptees](#)  
[Bastard Nation Adoptee Rights](#)  
[The Vance Twins](#)  
[Adult Adoptees Advocating for Change \(AAAFC\)](#)  
[Transracial Abductees](#)  
[Adopting Back/ Terminating Adoptions](#)  
[Canadian Search Registry](#)

### Films

["Adopted: The Documentary"](#)  
["Special, Chosen, and Lucky"](#)  
[WatchAdopteeFilms.com](#)  
["Adopted: for the life of me"](#)  
["Off and Running"](#)  
["In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee"](#)  
["Mercy Mercy"](#)

## Announcement



**Marlee Gold**, our Placement Student from Ryerson University will leave us this month after an incredible year. Many of you know Marlee from our recent conference.

Marlee made a ground breaking presentation to the third year class of Social Work at Ryerson University about the policies and practices used by Social Workers post WWII.

As well, her final essay was entitled "An Anti-Oppression Analysis of the Professionalization of Social Work, and the Experience of Unmarried Mothers during the Baby Scoop Era."

We can't thank Marlee enough for her many contributions to Origins Canada. She will be greatly missed as a student, but luckily for us, she has chosen to continue as an Origins volunteer!

Also, many thanks to **Victoria Arshad** and the [Institute of Leadership for Women of Ontario](#), our training partner.



# Sandy's Story of Adoption

## Full Circle: by Sandy

Imagine...

Adoptees, imagine being born in the same place where your natural mother dies.

Imagine meeting your natural mother and not knowing you had met her!

Imagine witnessing your natural mother's passing ten days after you do finally get to meet her.

Imagine your adopted family accusing you of betraying them; feeling like your heart has been torn in two, causing you to hit the biggest "rock bottom" in your life.

Imagine not being able to grieve your mother or meet all those who came to her memorial service because your adopted mother was having a temper tantrum in the back room of the funeral home. Imagine during this temper tantrum she verbally attacks you; and demands that the photograph of you and your natural mother being displayed in the reception room be taken down because it is hurtful for her. Imagine your cousin saying "well, your mother is just wondering whom you will be spending Christmas with now" because she is feeling threatened by your natural aunt and three first cousins.

Imagine your sister (who is also adopted, but from a different family and who has been reunited with her natural mother and family 15 years before) turns on you and supports your adopted mother and

father. It appears that she is the good adopted child, and I am the bad one. By the way, it was okay for *her* to look up her natural family in the phone book and spring it on our adopted mother by calling her out of the blue, and saying she had found her biological mother. It was, according to your adopted parents, okay in the end because she invited your adopted mother and father to accompany her when she went to meet her natural family. (So they could present her as theirs' and satisfy their feelings of possession.)

I am a 50 year old adopted person who met my natural mother eight years ago and lived to tell this tale.



*Sandy and her Mother*

My life has been a series of difficulties including...a divorce, job instability, bouts of crying and nausea with intense anxiety, feelings of doom and hopelessness, inadequacy, a self-deprecating attitude with self-sabotage to everything I did, I sought out a behavioural therapist to try to stop this crazy cycle of near nervous breakdowns. Where did all this come from?

I know it was the trauma of adoption. Finally after eleven years of therapy, I found my way through. The world became a completely different place and I felt like I was surfacing above the dark waters, with some hope of stabilizing myself, and finally managing my life.

I feel very thankful that I met my natural mother. Despite all that has happened, I feel stronger with this piece of my puzzle in place, and look toward the future with hope and anticipation.

I continue a relationship with my natural aunt, my mother's sister, and continue to harbour feelings of anger toward my adoptive parents for not supporting me, or understanding my need to search, my need to find that part of myself....that part that was always missing.

(Thank you to Sandy for sharing her story, and our condolences on the loss of her mother...)

## 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](mailto:newsletter@originscanada.org). Let us also know if you would consent to having your story reprinted on our website as well.*

## The 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

[www.originsamerica.org](http://www.originsamerica.org)

#### Origins Australia

Post Office Box W18 Fairfield West  
NSW 2165, (02) 9604 9352,  
[www.originsnsw.com](http://www.originsnsw.com)

#### Origins Healing and Recovery Project for Forgotten Australians

[www.originsharp.com](http://www.originsharp.com)

#### Origins Scotland

[www.originsscotland.org.uk](http://www.originsscotland.org.uk)

#### Origins International

[www.origins-international.org](http://www.origins-international.org)

### Affiliated Organizations:

#### Baby Scoop Era Research Initiative

[www.babyscoopera.com](http://www.babyscoopera.com)

#### Stolen Generations Alliance

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

#### Alliance for Forgotten Australians

[www.forgottenaustralians.org.au](http://www.forgottenaustralians.org.au)  
Ph: (02) 6273 4885

### Interested in Volunteering?

**Volunteer Coordinator:** To help recruit, train, and support volunteers

**Peer supporter:** Welcome and give support to new members in-person, via email, or telephone.

**Forum Moderator:** Co-facilitating our confidential online forum.

**Website and Software Specialist:** I.T. 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

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Email: [admin@originscanada.org](mailto:admin@originscanada.org)

