

# Origins Canada

supporting those separated by adoption



## National Inquiry

Origins Canada has been working on your behalf to build on the momentum created by the Australian Inquiry report handed down on February 29, 2012 (See page 2).

We continue to work towards a National Inquiry similar to that which was held in Australia.

Origins Canada has been in contact with a number of MPs and Senators to make them aware of our issues and to request an inquiry. We have contacted the office of Rob Nicholson, Minister of Justice on several occasions, who continues to assert this is a provincial matter.

Origins Canada has been invited to meet with Members of Parliament in November (Adoption Awareness Month). Natural parents and adoptees from across Canada will be attending this historic meeting in Ottawa.

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

1. Write to Rob Nicholson [here](#) to request a National Inquiry into Forced Adoption in Canada
2. Make an appointment with your MP and share your adoption experience. Ask your MP to attend the meeting in November on Parliament Hill. [Find your MP here](#).
3. Register for a Canadian Inquiry at [our inquiry page](#).  
If you need help, an Origins Canada volunteer can assist you.

## Adoption Conference 2012

On October 19-20 2012, Origins Canada will host the first conference in Canada for those separated by adoption.

Speakers include:

- Ann Fessler – author of "[The Girls Who Went Away](#)"
- Rickie Solinger – author of "[Wake up Little Susie](#)" and "[Beggars and Choosers](#)"
- Raven Sinclair – Aboriginal 60's Scoop expert
- Peter Dodds – author of "[Outer Search Inner Journey: An Orphan and Adoptee's Quest](#)"
- Karen Balcom – author of "[The Traffic in Babies](#)"
- Mari Steed – [Justice for Magdalenes](#) committee director (USA)
- Marilyn Churley – open records activist and former Ontario MPP
- Joe Soll – therapist and author of "[Adoption Healing](#)"
- Karen Wilson-Buterbaugh – "Baby Scoop Era" researcher

Other workshop highlights include Sharon Pedersen, Janine Vance and Jenette Yamamoto ([The Vance Twins](#)), Graig Moriarity and Leslie Wagner, Esther Segal, Erin Sandercombe, and Valerie Andrews. You may be interested in this conference if you were separated from a family member by adoption, are a supportive friend or family member, or are a helping professional who wishes to learn more about adoption issues.

**Date:** Friday October 19 to Saturday October 20, 2012

**Location:** [Hilton Garden Inn](#) (Vaughan location)

**Register today to secure the workshops of your choice.**

To register go to: [www.adoptionexperience2012.ca](http://www.adoptionexperience2012.ca)

**Contact:** Phone: (416) 400-5730 Fax: (905) 884-3899  
Email: [2012adoption@gmail.com](mailto:2012adoption@gmail.com)

## NEWS from Australia: Inquiry into Forced Adoption Hands Down Report

On February 29, 2012, the **Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs** handed down the report of its investigation into forced adoption practices.

The report, "**Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practice**" was compiled after Committee representatives travelled

throughout Australia listening to the accounts of mothers, adoptees, and family members who were forcibly separated by adoption policies and practices. Thousands of pages of submissions and evidence were also received.

Green Party Senator Rachel Siewert presented the report to the house of the Senate Click [here](#) to read Senator Siewert's presentation on forced adoptions or go [here](#) to view the video.

[Visit the Senate Committee website](#) for more information.

### Related news articles:

["A nation's shame: 'It was the most horrific thing I've ever seen'"](#)

["Australian Senate calls for apology on forced adoptions"](#)

["Australia urged to compensate, apologize to unwed mothers forced to give up newborns"](#)

["Adoption practices deeply flawed"](#)



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Origins Australia Executive Director Lily Arthur speaks to the Australian Senate at the presentation of the Senate report, February 29, 2012. Featured are Origins logos from all over the world.

## The Campaign for Open Records across Canada

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

To assist in pushing forward the open records mandate, Origins Canada has formed two new groups: **Coalition for Open Records (COAR) PEI**, and **COAR Nova Scotia**. Origins also joined with **COAR New Brunswick**, an organization independent of Origins which is working to open records in that province.

Issues for adoptees include:

1. Your lack of rights as a citizen to have your personal documentation,
2. Your right to know your genealogy and heritage,
3. Your right to have medical information about yourself,
4. Your right to freedom of association with any person including your natural family,
5. Your right to be treated as an adult and not a perpetual child.

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

Volunteers are needed to help with letter writing campaigns and other local initiatives to further the cause of Open Records in these provinces. GET INVOLVED!! Email [admin@originscanada.org](mailto:admin@originscanada.org) or go to these Facebook groups:

- [COAR-PEI on Facebook](#)
- [COAR-NS on Facebook](#)
- [COAR-NB on Facebook](#)

## Active in the Media in Representing the Issues of Separated Families

➔ Origins Canada sends Press Releases to all major Canadian newspapers on a regular basis regarding various issues of importance to us. Releases were sent all over Canada on February 28, 2012 to announce the Inquiry tabling in Australian Parliament on February 29, 2012.

*The National Post* contacted Origins the next day to follow up on our press release. From that, a series of stories followed from mothers and adoptees all over Canada. Here are a few featured stories:

["Senator joins growing call for probe into forced adoptions"](#)

["Curtain lifts on decades of forced adoptions for unwed mothers in Canada"](#)

["These women didn't know their options': Ontario urged to consider inquiry into coerced adoptions"](#)

["Your baby is dead: Mothers say their supposedly stillborn babies were stolen from them"](#)

["Presbyterians to probe maternity homes in wake of Post forced adoption revelations"](#)

["What the #!%\\*? Is anybody investigating the allegations of forced adoptions across Canada?"](#)

➔ Origins participated in a national documentary on the Global News program 16X9 called "Torn Apart." This documentary was aired across Canada on

Saturday May 5, 2012. [Follow this link](#) to watch this video online.

➔ Origins Canada has conducted interviews with various media including the *Ottawa Citizen*, *London Free Press*, CBC's *The Current*, the online news blog "[Land of Gazillion Adoptees](#)" and many others to bring our issues to the forefront.

## Provincial News: Ontario

On April 25, 2012, Origins Canada met with the Director of the Child Welfare Secretariat in Toronto and presented our issues. Discussed were present and past adoption policies and practices. We were encouraged by the open and compassionate response to our presentation and were promised that our concerns would be presented to the Minister of Social Services, Dr. Eric Hoskins.

Since that meeting, we have contacted the office of the Ontario Minister of Social Services, Dr. Eric Hoskins on several occasions and Origins is working with a number of MPP's on these initiatives including Reza Moridi, Monique Taylor and others.

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

Contact the office of Dr. Eric Hoskins the Ontario Minister of Social Services [here](#) and let him know that you want a Provincial Inquiry in Ontario with respect to past and present adoption practices.



## Maternity Homes in Canada

Historically, unmarried mothers in Canada have been ostracized in society and often incarcerated in institutions. Earlier institutions include Magdalen Asylums, Houses of Refuge, Homes of the Friendless, Door of Hope and many others.

From this past, the Maternity Home or “Home for Unwed Mother” emerged. Most were run by religious organizations in conjunction with the provinces. The Salvation Army and the Misericordia Sisters were the most prominent, but most Christian denominations had their own facilities for the “unwed mother”

In her book *Wake Up Little Susie: Single Pregnancy and Race Before Roe v. Wade* (1992) p.103 Rickie Solinger gives us a sense of the maternity home environment:

*“Maternity homes... served to further stigmatize pregnant young women by removing them from their families, friends and neighbors... these “homes” could create an austere and frightening atmosphere for the mother, whose freedom of movement was strictly curtailed by these instant chaperones and guardians. Typically, mothers were expected to help out in these homes with chores such as cleaning, dishwashing, and so on... while the mother’s physical needs were met, seldom were her emotional needs addressed...”*

Origins Canada has compiled a [list of Maternity Homes in Canada](#). We welcome your input.

## Origins Meeting with the Salvation Army

The Salvation Army ran several “Maternity Homes” in Canada.

On April 12, 2012, Origins Canada met at the Salvation Army Headquarters in Toronto with Officers of the Army to discuss our cause and to encourage them to work with us to find a path to acknowledgment and healing for mothers and adoptees affected by past policies and practices.

At this meeting, we advocated for mothers and adoptees and shared accounts of experiences within maternity homes run by the Salvation Army.

Our Inter-Church Meeting initiative was also presented at this meeting.



## Origins Meeting with the United Church

On April 26, 2012, Origins Canada met with the United Church of Canada.

A number of issues were discussed at this meeting including working with the United Church to help guide them in their research into their role in Maternity Homes and coerced adoptions during the Baby Scoop decades.

Also discussed were adoption practices today, our National Inquiry initiative, and strategies to move forward to find healing for our

mothers, adoptees, and family members.

At this meeting Origins presented our Inter-Church Meeting Initiative.

## What Mothers and Adoptees Want

As a follow up to these meetings, and in preparation for the Inter-Church initiative, Origins surveyed our associate members, asking them “What do you want from the Churches?” The responses fell naturally into five categories.

1. Awareness
2. Acknowledgement, Validation, and Accountability
3. Records
4. Reparations
5. Apologies

A document was created to serve as a discussion document and presented at our inter-church initiative.



*Victor Home, circa 1910*

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

If you were in a Canadian Church run maternity home, we would like to hear from you.

# Historic Inter-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 meeting was put together by Origins Canada and hosted by the United Church at their Headquarters. In attendance were high level executives of every major Canadian church. Included were three Executives from the United Church, two top ranking Salvation Army Officers, two Catholic Church representatives, and the General Secretary of both the Presbyterian Church and The Anglican Church of Canada. The Pentecostal Assemblies declined attendance.

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

We also presented the following:

1. Natural Mothers of Adoptees: Surrender Experiences Involving Religious Organizations in Canada
2. Quotes from Canadian research
3. Australian Senate Inquiry Tabling & Recommendations
4. [“Apologizing for Serious Wrongdoing”](#) (Law Commission of Canada report).

5. Images of maternity homes, and religious staff with babies
6. Verified Canadian adoption statistics
7. Impact of past adoption practices: from research

Participants were also presented with the document “What Mothers/Adoptees Want” as a discussion paper.

Origins was encouraged by the tone of the meeting, the openness of church officials, and the compassion and caring shown to the mothers who attended.

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

The meeting concluded with a mandate to reconvene later this year to work towards implementing recommendations based on the “What Mothers/Adoptees Want” discussion document.

After the meeting, the United Church hosted a luncheon to meet with their new researcher, Melanie Pothier, who will be working closely with us as she researches newly discovered Victor Home files and others.

If you were in a United Church Maternity Home in Canada, please contact Melanie at [pothier.mc@gmail.com](mailto:pothier.mc@gmail.com)



L-R Sandra Jarvie, Annette Stokes-Ayers, Melanie Pothier (UCC), Valerie Andrews, Barb Estabrooks, Amy Crawford (UCC), Sharon Pedersen

## Barbara's Experience of Adoption: Humewood House, Toronto, 1964

Disgraced, scorned, shunned. The lowest form of woman – Unwed Mother. Society and propriety proclaimed us loose, easy, filthy women. Physical and verbal threats were common. A young girl was threatened with an icy bath. Another punished for sharing her food. That was my crime. Each crime was punished. Bare sore knees to floor, I scrubbed the stairway leading to Matron's third floor rooms. We never had enough to eat. We were never ever to appear at a window, shielding the public from our sinful pregnancy.

The Priest. Vitriol sermons. A new girl sat next to me in the sanctuary, weeping. I whispered some words to comfort. The Priest ordered me out of his sanctuary and told me to walk with my head down. I remember thinking perhaps I had gotten a lucky break...a complete ban from his dark territory. The Priest had other plans. I was isolated and shut in my room for three days. Food arrived. It was never

enough. I experienced my first anxiety attack. Anxiety would soon become a constant companion. Pregnancy and anxiety never do well together. I respected and honoured the other woman confined there. Most were very compliant. I bless their poor bruised hearts. I just could not be servile. I saw and heard too much.

At the hospital we sat apart from the other pregnant women. The Doctor told me he was sick of seeing whores like me. His physical exam was cruel and painful. I fainted. I woke on the floor as he stepped over me and out the door. My child's birth also took place there. My labour was on my own in a dark room. I cried for help many times. A nurse came in and shut the door. For my child's birth my head was physically restrained when I begged to see my baby. I was not allowed to see my own sweet child.

Six weeks later I was summoned to the Children's Aid in the nearest city. I

was to sign the papers. Hours dragged by. The woman behind the desk finally became angry. She pushed my hand to the papers and I committed my baby to another Mother. I want the reader to know I weep as I read these words.

Humewood House kept us ignorant of labour and birth. We were however reminded that it was going to be the worst pain a person could endure. We were rarely outside. Never taken to a pool or the theatre or a tour of the city as they claim. I know that our stories are frequently dismissed as false or magnified. The web site history of Humewood includes a brief summary of incidents that made us feel the shame.

Humewood House is celebrating 100 years of care with a Gala on April 28th. A party. Ghosts of Humewood; legions of Mothers debased and now deceased will also attend, invisible now as they were in 1964 ... reminded of their shame and sorrow while trapped at that terrible place. Listen to our stories. Hear the cries. Take a little time out at your Gala Celebration of 100 years helping unwed Mothers to put into perspective the ever lasting damage we live with. – Reprinted with the permission of Barb C.



*The nursery at Humewood House (archival photo originally published in the Toronto Star, April 09, 2012)*

### A call for stories:

*Are you the natural mother of an adoptee? A natural father? An adopted person? In each issue of our newsletter, we will be highlighting the adoption experience of someone who has been separated from a family member 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.*



## 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 encourage and promote research into adoption practices, consequences, and social issues associated with separation.

**REDRESS:** To seek acknowledgement, validation, accountability and redress for 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,

### Origins Scotland

'Rowanlea,' 18 Amochrie Dr.,  
Paisley, PA2 OBE Scotland

### Origins International

info@origins-international.org

### Affiliated Organizations:

#### Alliance for Forgotten Australians

Ph: (02) 6273 4885

#### Baby Scoop Era Research Initiative

email: bseri@babyscoopera.com

#### Stolen Generations Alliance

Ph: (04) 0891 7133

## Volunteer With Us

Origins Canada is a nonprofit 100% volunteer organization. Would you like to volunteer? We need help in the following areas:

**Peer support:** 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? Assist with the website, mailing list, and other projects.

**Researchers:** Research adoption laws and policies in your province, develop reform proposals, and find resources to help families stay together.

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

**Fundraising:** Are you an experienced fundraiser? We would like to hear from you.

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

## Contact Information

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