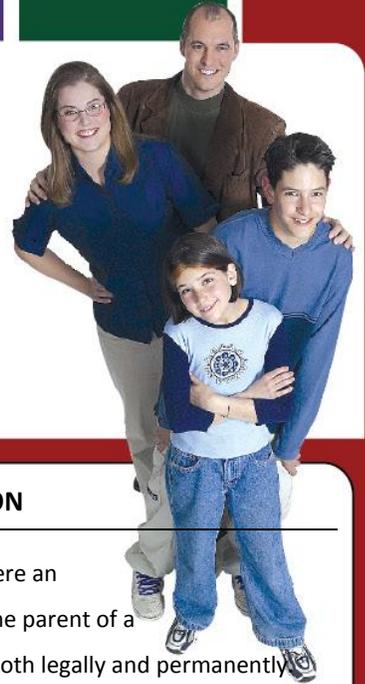


Spring 2011

The SPEC Family LINK Letter

LINKS

Community Information Center



ADOPTION

Adoption is the process in which a person assumes the parenting for another and in doing so permanently transfers all rights and responsibilities from the original parent or parents. The adoption process that is followed in today's society, largely was formed in the United States. After the over population of orphanages in the mid 1800's, a man named Charles Loring Brace started the Orphan Train movement. An estimated 200,000 children were shipped from busier parts of the country to more of the rural regions. These children were treated more like slaves than an actual member of the family.

After the Second World War, adoption became something different. With illegitimate births on the rise, the scientific community started pushing the dominance of nurture over nature. Adoption was a means to build a family. This led to new laws that severed the rights of birth parents thus passing it on to the new adoptive parents. Two key points were then stressed.

- Adoption was meant to ensure the best interest of the child
- Sealing adoption and birth records.

This is what presently shapes our model of adoption today.

INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION

This is the type of adoption where an individual or couple becomes the parent of a child of a different nationality both legally and permanently. The adoptive parents will not only meet the requirements of their own country but also of the country they intend to adopt from. Some country's laws accommodate international adoption whereas some simply forbid it. For example currently it is very common to adopt from countries such as China and Vietnam while the United Arab Emirates completely forbid it. It is said that Canadians today are as likely to adopt from another country as they are here in Canada.

There is much to think about when considering international adoption. Two issues to be aware of that may not be common but are possible is Child Trafficking and Child Laundering. While these are not the case for most of International Adoptions, it is smart to be aware that these problems do exist. Often when you adopt a child from a different culture his/her parents are unable to care for the child. This is different than say if the child was adopted from an institution. Also you may be saving a child from a life of desperation or abuse.

The SPEC Association for Children and Families

Community Cultural Centre

#101-327, 3rd Street West, Brooks, Alberta.

E-mail: infolinks@spec.ab.ca

403-501-5556 (direct line)

STARTING A FOSTER HOME

In order to make sure children are being placed in the best possible homes, you are asked to fill out forms, gather references and meet with someone to talk about yourself and your family.

STEP 1: MAKE THE CALL

Contact your local Child and Family Services Authority.
In Brooks call 403.362.1284

STEP 2: FILL OUT AN APPLICATION

Your intake worker will provide you with an application form and help you through the process. Your application must be accompanied by:

- three personal references
- medical reference
- criminal record check
- child intervention records check

STEP 3: TAKE CAREGIVER TRAINING

After your application has been processed, you will need to attend 24 hours of caregiver orientation. These classes will give you an idea of what to expect when caring for a foster child.

STEP 4: GET A HOME ASSESSMENT

The home assessment determines if you can provide a safe and suitable home for children and looks at a variety of topics such as family history, parenting skills and home safety. As part of the home assessment, you will need to fill out two questionnaires. One questionnaire is completed before your home assessment; the other is completed during your home assessment.

STEP 5: OBTAIN A LICENCE

Upon approval, you will be issued a foster home licence and assigned a foster care support worker who will provide ongoing support and help you get the training you need.

STEP 6: CARE FOR A FOSTER CHILD

After you receive your licence, your foster care support worker will approach you about a specific child. The decision for the child to be placed with you will be a mutual decision between your support worker, the child's caseworker and you.

CONTACT US

Alberta Foster Parent Association:

Phone: (780) 429-9923 or
1-800-667-2372 (toll-free in Alberta)
<http://www.fostercarealberta.ca/>

McMAN

YOUTH, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES ASSOCIATION

Since 1979, McMan has been providing quality care and services to children, youth and families in communities throughout Alberta. They are a responsive, regionally-based and locally-guided organization, one that initiates, delivers, and sustains the services and programs each community needs.

McMan's foster care programs support children and youth who require alternate living arrangements for various periods of time. We provide safe, caring homes when, where, and for whom they are most needed, thanks to the efforts of highly skilled and experienced staff and committed, compassionate foster parents.

Our foster care services place the highest priority on ensuring the various individual needs of the children are met, until a return home, adoption, a kinship home, or other permanent situation can be arranged.

It's a tough job and it's not for everyone. But few careers could be as rewarding. If you or someone you know is interested in fostering please contact our local office at:

#4, 941 South Railway St. SE
Medicine Hat, AB
T1A 2W3
Telephone #: (403) 527-1588
Fax#: (403) 526-8249
Email: medicinehat@mcman.ca

ADOPTION PROCESS

PUBLIC DOMESTIC ADOPTION

- Attend an information session
- Complete police clearance and medical report
- Attend adoption classes
- Complete family and social histories
- Provide references
- Get adoption practitioner assigned and complete home study
- Have a child placed with you
- Probationary period (follow-up visits from adoption practitioner)
- Submit post-placement report to ministry in charge of adoption
- Receive adoption order from court

ADOPTION RESOURCES

1. <http://child.alberta.ca/home/600.cfm>
The Ministry of Children's Services
2. <http://www.familyhelper.net/fh/fhdom.html>
Domestic Adoption
3. <http://www.familyhelper.net/fh/fhmoney.html>
Adoption and Money
4. <http://www.familyhelper.net/ad/adguide.html>
Intercountry Adoption
5. <http://www.parentbooks.ca/Adoption.html>
Online Bookstore

ONLINE VIDEOS

1. <http://www.photoshow.com/watch/YE3cW3Aq>
Adoption Recruitment
2. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDX9LBTPs2o>
Adoption and Truth
3. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JNkA6yoKzH0>
Birth Mothers Never Forget
4. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wme8UpTqcZY>
Adoption Reunion
5. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dcP22VtclXs>
Adoption and Family
6. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PU19xA8h3FQ>
Just Like Me

WHEN YOU WISH UPON A STAR....

A Story of Adoption.

CRYSTAL HANCOCK – LINKS INFORMATION COORDINATOR

Imagine being on the playground in a small town and one of your playmates picking on you hurtfully says "my mom told me your mom isn't your real mom, you have no parents and you're adopted!" Adopted. A word that most children don't really understand or get the concept of. Questions arise like "what do you mean you're not my real parents?" "do I have to go back?" "who are my real parents?"

My mom didn't want me to go through the same situation. I was adopted at birth and had been their child my whole life. But living in the community of Lethbridge, Newfoundland (yes there is also one there) with a population of less than one thousand, my mom felt that I would surely hear it through the grape vine someday, and this is something she did not want. She felt it was best to tell me as young as possible, because she could already see that when I got older, being as curious as I was, I may over analyze the situation. This may not be the best option for everyone but I respect my mother for telling me when she did.

When I was four years old, I had just finished watching an episode of Degrassi Junior High that had talked about adoption; I absolutely loved this show and hung on every word

(mostly because of Joey Jeremiah) so I really paid attention and sort of, as much as a four year old could, understand. My whole family sat me down and told me I was like the character in the show and that when I was born I was given to my parents.

Being a four year old was quite a long time ago, but I still remember this like it was yesterday. I ran to the coat closet and cried because I thought my parents would have to give me back. This is such a vivid memory that when I close my eyes I can still see my dad's green jacket that smelled like fish from working in our local fish plant. My family ran to me and explained that they were never going to give me away to anybody and I was one hundred percent their little girl. My parents did have an older biological daughter and I thought that she was also adopted and being taken from us. They explained my sister was theirs biologically; I was their special child, given to them by a miracle, as my mom couldn't have any more children after the age of twenty one.

To this day that situation is the only thing I remember about my parents telling me about being adopted. When I got much older, I didn't have any recollection of my mom telling me who my biological parents were, I just always knew. So one day I asked her. She replied "you walked up to me one day a little while after we broke the news to you while I was washing dishes and flat out asked me, I told you it was my sister who is your aunt and that was the last of it. You went along on your way playing with your toys." It must not have been a big deal to me because, like I said, I have no recollection of this conversation at all.

Growing up already knowing that I was different and adopted was not really a big deal to me. I didn't ever look up at the stars and wish for a different life like a lot of kids often do. I was so happy that I had my parents, and appreciated them since I was very little. I understood why my mom told me at such a young age because children were starting to talk, and everybody knew everybody's deep secrets. I learned that the best way to handle this was to let people know I was adopted. That way they couldn't ever think they had one up on me. In the 3rd grade, after our teacher finished explaining to us what adoption was, she asked did we know anyone who was. I raised my hand proudly and said "I am!"

My aunt (bio-mom) lived far away. She did visit on occasion but respected the role that she had chosen with me and that was "Auntie." I never did have a burning need to find out who my father was. My mom told me that he had been a boyfriend of Auntie's and it didn't work out, so Auntie had given her the best present anyone could ever ask for. She said he was very smart, handsome, and he came from a great family. I believed my mom, so this answer was enough for me. I kind of thought of it like my bio-mom only gave me up because she loved her sister so much she wanted to give her the one thing she could not have.

As I got into my teens, I was so relieved that my mom had told me about not being biologically theirs because by that time I already towered over all my family (including my dad, and trust me I am not vertically blessed by no means!) and they all had blond hair, fair skin and blue eyes. I would have definitely figured it out, being dark skinned, dark hair and dark eyes, I looked and acted nothing like my parents. I was their special daughter and I felt extra love every day of my life, and still do to this day.

When I was about 17, my mom dropped another family secret on me that she had wanted to tell me forever but could not because it wasn't her place to do so. My bio-mom had another child four years prior to me and had given him for adoption in New Brunswick. This was a striking blow. What I had known to be my family all these years suddenly had another person added to it, someone who I would have a lot in common with (being that we shared common DNA and family situation).

Right away I desperately wanted to find him but didn't even know how to begin. Because I am a sibling and not a parent, I have no legal right to his information. I begged my bio-mom to contact the adoption agency and she agreed she would. The rule with this type of adoption in New Brunswick was that information was only released if both parties had contacted the adoption agency requesting information. My older brother, who may not have even known about his own adoption, had not contacted the adoption agency. So just as fast as I had him, I lost him. That's when I started wishing on a star. Some girls wish for that boy they like to notice them, or to be the popular girl in school, or even to meet a Backstreet Boy! I was wishing to meet him, the brother that I never knew. I wanted to know what it was like to have a big brother.

Eight years later I was living in Brooks, Alberta (followed my big sister). I was a long way from home and I would often still think of him. What does he look like? Does he like the same things as me? I had a picture that someone took

of him in the hospital the day he was born, my only memento which I kept all those years hoping to give it to him one day. I still, at this point, had somewhat of a relationship with my bio-mom, the same that you would have with any other auntie. As didn't really have anything in common, I was hoping someday to find someone that did.

One day out of the blue, my bio-mom called me to say that my brother had finally contacted the adoption agency in New Brunswick. They were ready to release information to both parties, if we wanted. I was over the moon! I would finally get to meet my big brother, who I had been wishing to meet for so many years.

Now I hope you are sitting down because here's the kicker. When the adoption agency released our info we were both listed as living in.....BROOKS! He grew up in Nova Scotia, me in Newfoundland and we come to live in the same little city. I still can't believe it and it's been two and a half years. We probably passed each other in the grocery store or stood beside each other at the bank! It didn't take long that day to set up a meeting. I didn't recognize him from anywhere but I felt that connection the very same day I met him.

Two and a half years later I feel I have a complete life. I have the best parents a girl could ever ask for, who actually forget most times that I was not actually conceived by them. My sister and I are true soul mates. She is everything I am not and I would be lost in this world without her. And now I have a big brother, and because we have lost twenty five years, we have to catch up on making memories. He does all the things a big brother is supposed to do (be protective, and fix my car haha!). He has a little girl and two beautiful little boys who called me auntie. My brother and I look nothing at all the same, and we often joke that we are so happy we didn't unknowingly date! I don't feel like I am missing anything in my life. I have always counted myself lucky to get such great parents and have the upbringing I did. The only wish that I have wanted came true. I guess that star finally pulled through.

At LINKS Community Information Centre, we are committed to improving and maintaining the well-being of children and families in our community.

As parents and community members, we recognize that parenting is a difficult, yet rewarding, 24-hour a day, seven-day a week job. But parenting is also the most important job we will ever have. The Family LINK Letter has been developed to provide information on timely concerns and suggested resources. We hope you enjoy this issue.

If you would like future issues of the Family LINK Letter delivered to your home or place or work, contact LINKS at 403-501-5556.



It's all SPEC!

LINKS

Parent LINK Centre

Boys and Girls Club

Connections

Family Support