

P. Bewan-Baker
6-12-17
emol

November 28/2017

To the PEI legislative assembly,

In 2005 April 22, my niece (Ava) was born. She was a beautiful healthy little girl. My brother and his girlfriend at the time were thrilled with her arrival. Over the next year they made regular visits with her to her grandparents house and of course to visit me at my home. My brother, his girlfriend and Ava lived in Charlottetown at that time but would travel up west frequently to visit with her or to allow us to babysit her and spend time with her as we were thrilled that she was born.

My brother had addiction issues and was in and out of jail over the years prior to having Ava. His girlfriend also having addiction issues made for a not so great relationship between the two. After a year or so Ava was taken away by child protective services for the first time. As I recall they had to get their act together before getting her back in their care. After the mom (Ava's mom) got her back in her care it wasn't very long until they lost her again and she went to foster care.

Immediately my parents (Ava's grandparents) obtained a lawyer to see what they could do to get this child in their care. Thousands of dollars later my parents were told by the system : THEY WERE TOO OLD TO ADOPT HER, AND THAT BECAUSE MY DAD WORKED OUT WEST FOR SEVERAL MONTHS OF THE YEAR that wasn't in the best interest of the child (Ava).

Immediately the news crushed us as a family. My common law partner and I decided we would fight for custody of Ava and take her into our home and raise her like our own. We love this child very much and had kept her and babysat her in the past. The child was very familiar with us and our home. We both worked full time, we had one child already and would provide a loving and safe environment where all her needs would be met .

Again we got our lawyer involved and it was all set up they would do a home assessment of our home over the next months to follow. Two social workers from the west prince area were to do this assessment with us. While we went through the process we continued to visit Ava in Charlottetown each week for open visits set up by the social worker. Our family would celebrate birthdays, Christmas, whatever holiday was up coming at the time of our visits. We brought presents, treats and lots of love each week to this little girl we dearly love and longed for. It was very hard each week to leave the visits without her.

Each time the social workers came to our home as part of the home assessment the visits went very well. As I recall the home assessment lasted about six to eight months. Every question, each part of the assessment was met up to standard . During this assessment I thought there would be no way the system would NOT let us take her. We had done everything we needed, everything asked of us, passed the home assessment and then waited for the phone call to give us the answer we had been waiting so long to hear.

Well the phone call didn't take to long to come telling us that WE COULD NOT HAVE HER !!! They, the system, thought it wouldn't be in Ava's best interest to place her with her aunt and family because Ava's parents would have access to her. The system thought it would be better not to have her mother or

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father interrupting her life is what I was told at the time. I had reassured them on several occasions that I would never allow that to happen, although Ava's mom and dad were no threat to her. They love her very much they just were not capable of raising her properly because of their addictions. Ava's mom and dad both agreed the best place for her was to be with family.

Complete devastation for all of us. We had lost again with excuse after excuse from the system . I had always believed in the system, believing that children in need even when things in the home were bad that the first people the system would contact would be the blood family , grandparents, aunts etc, by placing children with their loved ones that could raise them, love them and care for them. I had never thought back then Ava would be adopted out to some random family when she had so many of her own family to love and care for her.

Some time after we had got that devastating phone call , the social worker had contacted me again telling me Ava is going to be adopted to a family but would not tell me if it was on the island . She said it could be on PEI, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia that they could give me no details at all. She asked me if I wanted to come and visit Ava one last time before she was adopted. I can remember breaking down on the phone and asking the social worker how I could go and have one last visit with her and say goodbye. How do you do that to a child? I declined the last visit because I knew emotionally I couldn't handle saying good -bye to someone I love so deeply and knowing I wouldn't see her again, I knew it would upset Ava seeing us so upset.

As the months passed by we tried getting our lives back in order, although there was a huge hole in my heart that has always left me feeling there was something missing in my life and I knew that something was her (Ava). After a few months I called the social worker to ask if I could have a letter and a picture once a year letting me know Ava was loved and happy and telling me how her life was going . The adopted parents declined this. They did not want to update us at all. The social worker told me that the adoptive parents have the right to make that decision. Again nothing!

As the months followed I got another phone call from the social worker wanting to know if I could give a background history of any health issues in our family so the adoptive parents would have some background information. I gave them what they needed because I knew it was for the best interest of Ava to have this.

In closing I'm happy to share my story after ten years, I'm hoping someone will hear me and help change the way the system works so children can be placed with loving family before taken and given to strangers. Every situation is different I understand that, but in my situation the child had family that could care for and love her . Every day that goes by I think of her and hope one day that I will find her and be able to tell her how much she is loved and how hard we fought for her.

We look forward to the time when Ava is an adult and with the open records we will be able to find her when she is of age.

Sincerely, Laurie Ann Waite

141 Oliver Road Alberton PEI (902) 856-2931

laurieann_waite@hotmail.com

Dear Sir or Madam,
Members of Legislation Assembly
Petition to Open PEI Adoption Records

I am an adoptee born in Charlottetown, PEI in 1960 and adopted to the states. Unfortunately I can not sign the petition but I want to have my voice heard on the issue of 'Open Adoption Records' on Prince Edward Island, Canada.

Who am I? Who do I look like? Probably the two most 'I wonder' questions for an adoptee. My search to find my biological mother started in 2008. As far back as I can remember I always wanted to find my biological mother. I stumbled across a site while googling adoption in PEI. It was an Adoption Registry that allows you to create a post with the information you have about your adoption. I had no paperwork, no passport, and no surname. The only information I had was a Birth Certificate (record of birth on file) with my adopted name dated three years after my birth and my baptismal certificate also dated three years after my birth. My adopted mother said she has no other information or documents on my adoption. It seems odd to me an adoption from Canada to the US can occur with no paperwork and a child can remain in the US for three years with no record of entry or birth certificate. I have recently found I had an Alien number and have paid and sent off the completed forms to US Immigration to obtain whatever I am legally entitled to as an International adoptee.

I knew my date and place of birth. I was adopted at 16 months and my adopted parents kept my first and middle name (Carina Marie). I was told the name Carina meant 'little dear one' in Italian and since I was adopted to an Italian family in the states I gather it fit. I was told I was in an orphanage and then foster care. I was adopted along with a boy who was eight months younger than me and in the same foster care that I was. (Where was I the first 16 months of my life?) I was born with a cyst on my upper right thigh. Sister Mary Henry and Catholic Charities (CC) handled my adoption.

I wrote my search post, entered my email, hit send and was hopeful I would get a response. I reposted twice a year and was contacted in 2010 by someone who offered to search for me to the tune of \$1,500. As tempting as it was I turned the offer down. I then contacted Family Services in PEI to obtain the paperwork to register in case someone was looking for me. I filled out the required paperwork and mailed it off. I recall phoning Family Services and got a bit of a run around and was told they would call me back. I was married and a busy working mother of two and didn't have the time to follow up. I continued to post in the Adoption Registry twice a year until I received a message in January of 2014. It was then I was made aware of the PEI Adoption Search group on Facebook and that there were Search Angels who would help me search. Wow, was I excited to say the least. I was going to find my family. By this time I had taken a leave from work and started my 24/7 search along with the help of Search Angels. I contacted Family Services again and I was told there was a 'Post it' in my file from 2010 to assign someone to help me. I remember saying 'That was 4 years ago, Really!'. I was told that because my adoption was finalized in Virginia that I had to contact Catholic Charities to obtain my non-identifying information. My Search Angels and I spent day and night from the end January, February & March searching with only a first & middle name and were getting nowhere. By April 10, 2014 I was exhausted and let my Search Angels know I wanted to take a break from my search. I wasn't giving up I just needed a break. On April 11, fate would have it and I received an email response from my post in the Adoption Registry that I had been posting in since 2008. The message said she was a nurse in training in 1961 and she had a picture in her photo album of a little girl in foster care named Carina Marie. I couldn't believe it. I immediately messaged her back and received this message.

Hi Carina,

I am sorry I don't have more information for you, all I remember is being at the foster home with Sister Mary Henry and seeing the little girl that was being adopted. Student nurses were not given much information. When I saw the name "Carina Marie" born in 1960, I nearly fell off the chair. I don't know if you have contacted the agency in Charlottetown.

I will try and get the picture scanned and send it to you.

Good Luck

Signed by the nurse

I received the scanned baby photo and IT WAS ME.

Close to the end of April 2014 I received a letter from Catholic Charities and was sent the forms to fill out and mail back with a \$100.00 payment to receive non-identifying information or a \$400.00 payment for someone to search up to a certain number of hours with no guarantees. It was tough to fathom I had to pay for my own information. I also declined the offer from CC.

After many hours of searching, on April 30th, my Search Angel made contact with a cousin, confirmed who my mother was and phoned me. It was as if the weight of the world was instantly lifted from my shoulders. A feeling of relief passed through my body like nothing I had ever felt before. Within 24 hours I had spoken to many cousins and 5 of my siblings. I had seen photos of them all including my mother. I found my PEI Roots and my identity at the age of 54. A quest I endured from when I was old enough to understand that I was adopted and had another mother somewhere out there from 'a tiny island in Canada'.

What is not understood by non-adoptees is the heartache you endure all your life not knowing your true identity. Sure you have documents with your adopted name but WHO ARE YOU! Who are your ancestors and where are they from. Filling out forms and not knowing your family history. Having children and hoping you do not pass on a hereditary disease. Answering questions about your adoption from most often ignorant people and feeling different. Not looking like anyone.

Growing up and even as an adult, until I found my biological family, when I was asked do I know my 'Real' parents I would answer 'As opposed to my Fake parents'. That would usually lead them to follow up with 'well you know, the parents who had you'.

Of course I know my parents. They are my Mom & Dad. They are the people who raised me, but unfortunately I do not know my biological mother or father. Going through life enduring ignorant questions or comments such as why didn't my mother want me or having a college professor say to me 'Your mother could have been a whore'. Feeling ashamed of being adopted because I could not answer any of the questions asked of me about where I was from, who was my mother, what ethnicity I was etc. I've always wondered if my birth mother thought about me on my birthday.... do I look like her... who did I get my artistic and musical ability from...do I have older or younger siblings. I always assumed I may have younger siblings since I was told by the nun from PEI who handled my adoption that my birth mother was 16 when she had me. My birth mother was actually 36 years old when I was born and I have six older siblings. Out of the seven of us, six were given up at birth. Three remained on the island and four adopted to the states. One of my older sisters was lost in the foster care system in PEI and lived a horrible childhood. She was made to sit at a different table along with another foster child. She was called derogatory names by her foster family based on her 'Black Islander' ethnicity. She was sent into the field when social services made a visit. She recalls being brought to the steps of a church to say goodbye to a brother she never met or knew.

Was there not a system in place to try and keep the children of unwed mothers or children removed from unfit homes together? There were four of us born after my sister that were adopted to the states. Could my sister not have been adopted along with one of us. One of my older brothers recalls his nightmare at age 6. He was taken from his foster home in Johnson River, forced into the backseat of a black car by two men and driven to The Bronx, New York. Another sister was told at a young age she had a sister living in the country. Another brother who was adopted at seven and was told he only spoke French when he was adopted but has no recollection having ever speaking French. Shame on the nuns for not keeping at least some of these children together. It's a shame the government didn't have more control over the children in foster care and make an effort to keep siblings together or at least monitor the foster care home conditions. In addition, I have three adopted siblings from PEI. Yup that's right, I am one of 13 children, 11 of us born on the island and affected by the closed adoption system on PEI. Never knowing our identity. Living a life not knowing our PEI Roots or ethnicity. Never knowing we had siblings out there.

'You should be grateful you were adopted.' Seriously! This was often said to me growing up. No child should be made to feel grateful having been adopted let alone born. 'Your mother could have aborted you.' True, but if that had been the case I wouldn't be here telling my story. Being thankful to have loving and caring parents is every child's right. There's a difference between being grateful and being thankful. 'How can you and your brother be 8 months apart?' Yet just another awkward moment growing up and being 8 months older than one of my adopted brothers from PEI.

Once I found my family I phoned Family Services in PEI to tell them I had found and met my mother and that I would like my information. I told them who my mother was, her birth date, and where she was born. I told them my grandmother's name and my grandfather's name yet still I got push back. I told them my name... My Birth Name, yet I was told I needed my mother to provide a non-disclosure form in order to obtain my information. I pretty much said I'm not thinking that will happen, she's 91. On a side note my mother is finally at peace now at 94 years of age knowing her 7 children have reunited and are thrilled to have finally found each other. That they have had six family reunions, four in PEI, since August of 2014. That we all are trying to make up for lost time...the oldest being 72 and the youngest, me at 57. A cloud of shame instilled upon her and carried the better part of her life is now lifted. I'm not grateful, I'm thankful for the Search Angels who helped me. Who kept me strong and supported me throughout my journey to find my PEI Roots. And I'm truly blessed to have found my mother alive.

On my most recent trip home to PEI, in early November, I was able to spend time with my mother. For the first time in my life we spent pre-holiday time together. I set up a Christmas tree in her apartment and decorated it for her. We spent quality time chatting about our lives and she said I'm her daughter and that she loved me. Words I never thought I'd ever hear. She said it was as if we'd known each other all our lives. Memories created that I will always cherish.

I'm thankful for the nurse who held on to that photo in her album for 54 years, wondering 'what ever happened to that little girl in foster care'. We met for lunch when I came home to my beautiful island of Prince Edward in 2014.

With only non-identifying information, given to adoptees and birth mother from Family Services on PEI, many of us are finding our roots through DNA and the help of Search Angels.

I could go on and on as to how being adopted and not having the right to know who you are has affected and molded me into who I am today. I am now actively searching for my paternal roots.

If adoption records were open from the start so many adoptees would have the opportunity to know who they are and reunite with their birth mothers/fathers and possible siblings.

Birth mothers/fathers would be given the opportunity to know the fate of the child they gave up.

Members of legislation, Please make Prince Edward Island an open province and allow all of us separated through adoption reunite.

Sincerely,

(Carina Marie)

Born February 10, 1960

Charlottetown, PEI

Carina Martinelli Jackwood

Hon. Chris Palmer

Nov. 26, 2017

Liberal MLA District 21

Summerside, PE

Dear Hon. Chris Palmer

I am writing this letter to you to address the issue of opening the Adoption Records on Prince Edward Island. I believe it is essential for all people who have been affected over the years of putting a closure to their past or opening a door to an Adoptee to connect if desired, to the blood relations for medical history or just to let them realize where they actually were born and the family history.

I believe there was a Freedom of Information Act passed in Parliament and wouldn't this suggest information to whatever pertains to an individual's life being pertinent information an Adoptee or Parents' of Adoptees would have access to receive. I believe that Social Services and the Catholic or Protestant adoption services should not have such control over the past situation.

I had to give my boy up for adoption as I was 18 years old and lived at home with my Catholic parents and seven siblings. I was in grade 11 and had a boyfriend 21 years old for a year and half and thought we were in love and someday get married. I got pregnant and through many months of living at the Home for Unwed Mothers in Charlottetown and lots of time to consider what would be the right thing to do; I chose to give my son up to a responsible loving family who really wanted a baby.

I think of him a lot and have left identifying Information with Social Services that if he ever comes searching we could possibly meet if we both agreed. I later find out that he went to New Jersey and they changed his name. My daughter is 45 and he would be 47 and she would love to meet him too. She is an only child. This has always left a void in my life and hopefully the records will be open soon and being we are all adults I cannot seem to think of any negative effects. I am asking you to please consider us in the upcoming Assembly Meeting to representing The Coalition for Adoption for open records in PEI after all this is 2017.

I will also be sending a copy of this letter to Hon. Tina Mundy, Minister of family and Human Services.

Thanking both of you for your time and consideration to this very sensitive topic to address at the next Assembly Meeting.

Sincerely

Elizabeth MacLean

J225 Linden Ave. Apt 28

Summerside, PE

To whom it may
concern,

November 27th 2017

I am writing in regards to opening adoption records and not keeping them a secret.

My brother and I were both Sister Mary Henry Babies adopted by a wonderful couple that we considered our parents and love them like crazy.

But there was always these unanswered questions that bothered us both.

Who are we? Who did I come from? Who do I look like, act like; do I have any biological sisters or brothers? Do we look alike? Do we act alike?

What was my story. Was I given up freely or forced to be given up ... I was named Catherine Defino after adoption and my birth name was Diane Mary Doucette my brother was David Andrew Hope re named Salvatore Defino after adoption. Bihler is my married name .

We all have the right to have these questions answered.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter.

Catherine Bihler
Hauptstrasse 2
87776 Sontheim Germany

Dear Open Adoption PEI,

As an adult adoptee born in PEI, I would like to share a few of the ways that closed records have affected me, in things that most people take for granted.

I'll start at the beginning... As a grade school child, one of my assignments was to write a paper about my genetics, and to explain who in my family I take after in looks and personality. I was ready to tell my teacher that I could not do the assignment, but my parents convinced me to pretend, and so I wrote how I must take after my maternal grandmother because we had the same eye color and were both short and chubby. It was true, but I felt like a fake. Don't get me wrong, I loved my grandmother and my whole adoptive family like crazy, and I had a wonderful childhood. But I began to wonder, who DO I look like? What were they like? I wanted to know more.

My parents, who never hid the fact that I was adopted from me, shared with me the name that was on my passport as an infant, although they said they were told the name was made up so that the passport would go through by the time my parents came to get me in PEI, just weeks after my birth. I cherished that little piece of information, as that was all I had. They showed me seven black and white photographs of the convent and the nuns, the hospital where I was born, the church where I was baptized, the corner store where my formula was bought, and the motel where my parents stayed until they could bring me home to the United States. My parents said they were told that my birth mother had good teeth and was not insane. So here is what I had: a made up name, two random pieces of health information, and seven old photographs of the town where I was born. This was my history. My entire history.

As a high schooler, I began to develop closer friendships and I began to date boys. I remember telling one of my closest friends the name on my baby passport. She wrote in my yearbook that she was so glad we were so close that we could tell each other anything, even that. My parents saw the note, and were very upset. They thought I didn't love them anymore, and I assured them that I did, but that this was something that was all my own, and that it was a part of me. I have wonderful parents, but I was an only child and wondered if there were sibling or half-siblings out there somewhere, something I'd never known. But now I felt funny bringing it up, and after that, I didn't talk about it much, even though it was always in the back of my head. When I began to date, I wondered how I would know if I were really not related to someone when it came time to marry. I met a boy at 15 who told me that he was adopted too, and the relationship was over before it began. Neither of us knew anything about our pasts. Another serious boyfriend a few years later told me we would never get married because he didn't know my family background or what to expect as we grew old together or what things his children might inherit from my side of the family. That hurt. Then a man I dated in my 20s told me he traced his genealogy back to the Mayflower, and I just cried. I traced my genealogy back to me.

I moved on, met my husband, and started a family. Because I was older, I saw a high risk obstetrician and he said I had to go through additional genetic testing because I didn't know my family health history. I worried that there was something I didn't know I might be passing on to my children. But as my pregnancy progressed, what really became my obsession was that finally, I would have someone in my life who looked like me! It sounds silly, but something as trivial as a family resemblance, and I didn't feel complete because I didn't experience that. Well, turns out my first two children looked more like my husband. It hurt so much when people would say "oh, that one is Jimmy's little clone!" While I was happy for him, my husband already looked like his his mom and sister. I didn't look like anybody. I'd grit

my teeth and change the subject, not telling anyone how alone I felt. I kept searching, hanging onto the small detail that although they looked more like him, one child might have my chin or another my hands. Finally, my youngest came along and had my coloring and some of the same facial features as me. I was ecstatic. By then I was 42.

Once, my uncle took a picture of a girl he'd seen in the crowd on vacation in Louisiana, and he swore it was me until he got closer and realized she was taller. I saw the picture; we could have been twins. I wanted to find that girl, whoever she was, talk to her, see if she was adopted too. But I didn't know who she was, she was just a girl in the crowd hundreds of miles away.

After my father passed away, I moved back to live with my mom. She and I went up to PEI for vacation one year when I was about 30. I had not yet met my husband, so it was just the two of us, a wonderful, bonding vacation, and we drove around until we found the church and the hospital in those old pictures. We could not find the convent, and of course we could not get any information, but I felt something those few days I was there. I felt a connection somehow, a clarity, I can't explain it. But it was real, and it spoke to me. I hope to bring my own children there to see PEI one day, too. I want to be able to say, "this beautiful island is where we are from."

When the Internet came around, I began to search for the name on my passport there, with no luck. I found a website for adopted children and birth parents, and signed my name to the list, but never heard anything. Every so often I'd see something about PEI and I'd do another search. But I never found anything. Then, this past summer, for my 52nd birthday, my mother surprised me with a subscription to Ancestry.com, and I sent in the DNA kit. I have to tell you, I have not been this excited by anything in a very, very, very long time! After a month or two, my results were in. I am an Acadian. As yet, the DNA test has not brought me in contact with my birth family. In fact, the closest matches were two names at about 200 cM, and both names at that 3rd-cousin level have not returned my emails. I wonder if they speak French and didn't know what I was saying, or if the email address has changed, or if they are just not interested in finding more family. It can be frustrating. But I keep looking.

Through Ancestry, I did find the names of thousands of other people who are more distant cousins, several of whom I've written back and forth with, some of whom have family trees they've shared, and several who pointed me in the direction of online groups of people who are looking for birth families in PEI or tracing their own genealogy on the island. There are some wonderful people in the province, working hard to bring hundreds of adult children of adoption back to their roots, and I've been fortunate to meet some amazing people with their own amazing stories. Since this most recent journey began, I've learned a lot about genealogy, and I've also learned about the hundreds of young mothers on PEI over several decades, who were shamed into giving up their babies. So many, from that one small province! I don't know if my birth mother was among them, or what her circumstances might have been. But I do want to have the chance to thank her for giving me the precious gift of life, to let her know that I think of her, that I pray for her, that I have had a great life so far, and that I'd like to know more about her life, and those of my father, siblings, and extended family, if she's willing to share that with me. I want to know my medical history. I want to know where I came from. I want to know about my ancestors and what brought them to PEI. When you have nothing to go on, you want to know everything.

A month or two ago, I thought I might have found out who my birth mother was. The woman had passed away ten years ago. Her family and friends spoke very highly of her. I imagined knowing her,

and I also imagined if I too might have the same diseases she had. It turns out, it wasn't her after all. The surname is a very common one, and there are many people on PEI with that name. So no, I didn't find my birth mother, but I did come to the realization that I don't have a lot of time. My real birth mother might be in her late 60s if she was a teenage mother when I was born, but she might also be as old as 90, or maybe even be gone by now. And if that is the case, I would never have had a chance to speak to her. Ever. So I keep searching.

If any of this has touched you in some way, please, rule for open adoption records in PEI. The parties involved can still choose to keep their privacy if that is what they want, but if they do choose to connect, they should have that right, just like anyone else. Adopted children should have access to their family medical history at the very minimum, but imagine how much more complete these adult children of adoption could feel if they knew where they came from in this world. I've only been actively searching for a matter of months, but I have spoken to others who have been searching for years, decades even, and still do not know their history. Please - take this into consideration and vote to open the records.

Thank you,

Colleen Craig

Manasquan NJ

Dear Sir or Madam,

I have recently been made aware of plight to open adoption records on PEI. I was one of the thousands of babies that was born with PEI roots, and swiftly removed to another life in the states.

To say that I am excited of the chance, even if is just a glimmer to maybe get to know my roots; I am excited, to say the least.

There are details surrounding the process of my adoption that are conflicting.

There are facts that I was given knowledge of about my biological parents, given to me by my adopted mom. They have now been possibly found to be incorrect, by new information found in my recent query of my non identifying information.

Facts most importantly surround my health as an infant. A possible serious illness, that kept me from being able to leave PEI because of it.

Due to closed records I am not able to find out more about it. I cannot tell you as a parent how concerned I am as this could possibly be something that pops up in my daughter's health future.

Children are products of their parents, have the right to know their beginnings, know their roots, know the preceding events before their birth, know the events of their infancy, know the extended members of their family, know their immediate family, know all the facts surrounding their lives, or at least access to people who can give them the information they want.

Being an adult, a baby of adoption, I have none of these basic rights. I am not looking to ruin anyone's life. I am looking for the opportunity to have access to all of these very important facts, people, things that help put the pieces of my life puzzle together.

I do not let my adoption define me as a person. However there are aspects of my being adopted that make me feel as if I am a ghost. Simply because someone, some people, some government has mandated that I am not worthy to have this information.

In today's day and age, do you think it just that people should have this information kept from them. I do not. This is why I request records to be opened.

Thank you for your time,

Dawn Marie Cacace

2416 Silver Shadow Drive

Las Vegas, Nv. 89108

From: Cathy
To: jsjaylward@assembly.pe.ca
Sent: Friday, November 24, 2017 1:07 AM
Subject: open adoption records please (my story)

To Whom it may concern,
Hon. Mr. Aylward

Please feel free to share this letter with the Assembly

I would start by saying my name is Cathy, I am 65 years old. I was born in the old Montague hospital and was put up for adoption, and was adopted here on the Island when I was 3 months old.

I was in some sort of boarding place until I was adopted, of which was not a nice place.

My mom told me when I was 6 yrs old that I was adopted, in case a relative or neighbour, etc, said something to me.

I was raised in a warm loving home with their two boys, who I know as my brothers. My adoptive father was a well known seed potato inspector (Earl Carrier), and my adoptive mom (Katherine Carrier nee Livingstone) was the Kensington librarian for many years. Both my adoptive

parents were from the Eastern part of the Island, how ironic that, so too, was my birth parents, although to date I am not aware who my birth father was, my birth mother was Elsie Jean MacLean. I spent many of my years growing up and visiting cousins and Aunts and Uncles down East on my adoptive side, not knowing, only a stones throw away were my birth family

From the time I was told, I wanted to know (who I was, where I came from, why I was given away).

As I became older, and was asked by doctors about my medical background from my birthside, I soon realized, that too, was taken from me at birth. I had no idea what medical issues was in my birth family.

Questions mostly about who I was, my identity, something everyone else takes for granted, because they have all those answers. I did not.

For many years I felt like I was born under a cabbage leaf or something. Everytime mom and dad would go out, I would rummage through drawers, and closets and papers looking for something, anything, that would give me those answers.

But, I was told that the papers had burn't in a fire and that they never asked

who I was because they didnt want to know, as they knew, I would no doubt be asking questions.

So, for years, I felt hopeless and really unwanted by my birth mother. When I was younger, some kids used to call me little orphan Annie, those things stick with you. The name bastard was even tossed around.

I personally felt I had done something terrible being born, and the idea was

reinforced every time the thought of my birth mother giving me away popped into my head.

My husband had an interest in genealogy and started to try and help me.

I received my non-identifying info when I was in my 50's after a very long wait, due to over worked, under staffed people at the adoption records. Lucky for me, that in my 30's, with alot of work and sheer determination and my husbands help, I found my birth mother. She was happy to meet me and we became close friends.

But, what makes me mad and sad is all the years we missed out on, not

possibility that there are two more, as well as half brothers and sister I never found that could still be alive, and aunts and uncles, and cousins, many I have since met. I feel I missed bonding with my siblings, and cousins,

they share memories I will never be a part of .

What scares me is the size of the island, and how easy it would be to date or marry your own sister or brother or relative.

I have cousins by the dozens through my birth family, living here.

By the Grace of God, to my knowledge, I never went out with a relative.

I married a non- Islander, to make sure of that.

Naturally, I am trying to give the facts and am shortening up the story for

you. I guess it comes down to rights , an adopted child doesn't seem to have

any rights. I believe our rights have been violated because we were babies

and could not speak for ourselves.

Now we can, but sadly, it is too late for many, their birth parents are dead

and gone, as is my whole birth family, except the two or so that could be out there still. I just thank God for the time I did have with 4 of my siblings,

one boy had been given to my birth mother's sister in N.B. and was killed in a car accident, years before I found them, so sadly, I never met him , one sister had been sent to the states, she did end up finding us, but sadly she also died , so I'm left with some very dear cousins , and a couple of aunts, everyone else is gone.

I would like the records opened so I could see mine, and for all the thousands still searching and wondering who they are and where they came from, please grant them some peace in their lives, as many birth mothers and adopted children are out there suffering in agony as we speak. The records need to be opened . The sooner the better.

Thanking you in advance for your help in opening the records.

Cathy Cooper nee Carrier

102 East Drive

Summerside, PE

902-436-1698

cjcoop@pei.eastlink.ca

Martine Chartrand
1811, Racette Rd.
Limoges, ON
K0A 2M0
613-868-3340

November 19, 2017

To whom it may concern:

Presently, with the advent of Bill 113 opening up adoption records in Québec, PEI is now one of two remaining provinces who have failed to do so. I would like to tell you about my frustration with the closed adoption records.

I adopted two children from Prince Edward Island in 1990 and 1992. Since their young age, I had always been open about their adoption. I shared with them what I knew about their birth parents, and told them I would help to continue the research of their birth at the age of majority. I always told them that I wanted to be involved in this research. I also wanted them to know that their biological mother had gifted them to adoption due to love. They wanted the best for them since they were too young to look after a child. On each of their birthday, I asked them to have a thought for that other mother who loved them so much. I never spoke negatively about them. After all, without them, I would never have been a mother myself. I owe them the two most beautiful gifts I ever received.

During their childhood, we visited the Island several times. I wanted them to enjoy and love their place of origin. For both adoptions and our trips to the Island, we rented the same hotel room. Each time, I told them how it went, and they could see how much their adoption had made me happy.

At the age of 18, my daughter showed interest in finding her birth mother. It was through Facebook that she found her, since we knew her last name at birth. For my son, it was another story. At the age of 18, he shared his desire to do research. Since we did not know his last name at birth, we contacted Catholic Family Services in Charlottetown. We were told that the files had been transferred to Toronto as we were residing in Ontario. After contacting the agency in Toronto, we were told that the transfers were not done. We were sent back to Charlottetown, and so on. After several e-mails and calls to Charlottetown, we were consistently told the same thing. It was very frustrating. We seemed to hit a dead end. We had asked for non identifying informations, but only received it several years later.

After six years of frustration, no closer to his goal, my son decided to contact a journalist from The Guardian newspaper in Prince Edward Island. He told his story and the morning after the publication, he had already received an email from his birth mother.

I would like you to empathize with all those adopted children who are asking questions. Who do they look like? From whom do their interests and their passions come? Why did their mother gift them to adoption? Do they want to see them again? So many questions but no answers!

As for the biological mothers, they have questions also. Often teenagers, mostly alone, ostracized by their love ones due to a unplanned pregnancy, these courageous young women gifted their children to families unable to have their own children. The hope of a better life for their babies was their motivation, not a lack of love. Still, many unanswered questions inhabited them. Does he blame me? Does he know that I exist? Is he having a good life? He is happy? Is he still alive? Will he want to see me? Not to mention the birthday of their child ... painful memories that constantly haunt their thoughts. Have I made the right decision? Does he think of me on his birthday? Does the adoptive parents talk about me on this special day? We can not remain indifferent to this situation. Adopted children should not have to fight to know their origins.

Confidentiality in adoption is important to protect the child and the adopted family, as well as the birth mother. Important to protect but not to prevent two willing parties from discovering informations. Should both parties agree to disclosure, there should be no valid reason to prevent the same.

In conclusion, following the reunion, my two children feel a great inner peace. They finally have the answers to their questions, just like their biological families. Please, give everyone the chance to live a beautiful story.

To: PEI Legislature

From: Sandra Comeau

Re: Petition to Open PEI Adoption Records

Growing up on PEI, I was always told "Born on the Island = Always an Islander". So, as an Islander, I write this letter to request the PEI government open all adoption records without restrictions and to acknowledge the harm that was perpetrated on mothers and infants during the Baby Scoop Era in which government funded 'homes' led by religious outfits and others under the auspices of 'social services' coerced and forced unwed mothers to relinquish their children because of so-called social morals.

The Requests:

1. Every adopted adult has an unqualified right to access his/her original birth certificate, original baptism certificate, the court files pertaining to his/her adoption, and his/her personal files held by the adoption agency, government, and/or licensee.
2. Every natural parent, siblings, and grandparents of adopted adults has an unqualified right to access the amended and original birth certificates and the original baptismal certificate of his/her adult adopted child, along with the court files, any document that he/she signed at the time of surrender, and his/her personal files held by the adoption agency, government, and/or licensee.
3. All parties to the adoption process should have unrestricted access to all adoption records once the child reaches 18. There should be no vetoes or restrictions on these disclosures. It is not up to any government body to determine whether adults should or should not have a relationship, to determine whether or not names, places and dates should be divulged. As adults, the parties involved are the only ones who should be able to decide if they want a relationship.
4. Publicly acknowledge the involvement of government funding and support in perpetrating harm and trauma on thousands of unwed, exiled mothers and their relinquished infants during the Baby Scoop Era (1945-1970's); and investigate the lack of requiring accountability for funds received by certain religious orders in the guise of "donations" exchanged for our babies/

Discrimination:

Sealed adoption records discriminates against those who did not request privacy or protection, the adoptee. All adults in Canada have an undeniable right to obtain a copy of any personal information held by the government; especially their most basic information – their original birth certificate, their original baptism certificate, the names of their natural parents, their ethnicity, their heritage – everyone except the adopted.

Where are their rights? Who, in the PEI legislature, truly believes they have no right to this information? Who among the MLA's can sincerely and honestly stand up and deny them these rights?

Just imagine growing up not knowing who you look like, how you ended up in this family, why you were abandoned, why are you different from your new family? Imagine having seen all your friends look like their siblings and parents, love music like their Mother, enjoy sports like their father. Imagine being told, as an adult, by your government, we have all the information but you can't have it. Imagine being told, we know who your mother is, but we're not going to tell you.

Can you, a non-adopted individual imagine how that feels? To not know who you take after, who else in your family shares a trait, what runs in your family health history? Not to even know your mother's birthday or what she looks like / looked like? There are tens of thousands of adoptees who will never even see a picture of their mother. Never know who they were born to be. Have gone, or will go to their graves never knowing.

Denying an adult adoptee knowledge of their origins, of their original birth certificate is inhumane and against every country's human rights declarations and charters. It causes them to remain in limbo or to tirelessly search through unconventional means for their natural families – often with little success.

Denying loving parents' knowledge of their children, even when those children become adults, is a cruel and unnecessary punishment that causes suffering for all. A severing of parental rights does not cut off a parent's love.

Adopted adults should not have to fight over 40 years for the right to locate the missing information of their history. No one or no government agency should rob a person of their identity. Keeping biological history from an adopted person is in fact identity theft by omission. Not only is their health at jeopardy but also the health of their children. Why should adopted adults have to spend years searching when a simple change to an archaic law would allow access to the one record that would open the path to their natural family?

Keeping these records closed, is our government's way of continuing this abuse of its citizens, the very ones they represent.

The Best Interest of the Child:

The closing of adoption records was meant to protect the adopting parents who were told this child was now 'as if born to them'. It was never to protect the child or the natural parents. The reasons for coerced/forced adoptions, secrecy, shame and Homes for Unwed Mothers, not allowing a mother to hold or even see her newborn, were merely a result of societal views and supposedly high morals - none of which applies or matters today.

Adopted children are not pieces of property that parents who adopt get their names put on a birth certificate like some title transfer for a car or an animal. Adopted adults need truth and transparency to truly feel like a 'real' person who has a God-given place in this world.

The best interest of the child is still being ignored today when that child has become an adult and cannot know his/her origins, heritage or even their name.

Rights of the Child:

Canada signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on May 28th, 1990 and ratified the Convention on December 13th, 1991.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes in Articles 7 to 10 that call for:

- A Child's right to have access to their name from birth
- A Child's right to their original identity and documentation or restoration of such
- A Child's right to not be removed or separated from their original parents
- A Child's right to be reunified with said original parents

Part 1, Article 8 “the right of the child to preserve his or her identity, including nationality, name and family relations...”

Although adoption law in Canada is a provincial matter, the federal government has an obligation under the terms of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to ensure that the terms of the Convention are implemented throughout all provinces and territories in accordance with the General Guidelines of Implementation of the Convention issues in October 2003 that state:

The Committee reiterates that in all circumstances, the State which ratified or acceded to the Convention remains responsible for ensuring the implementation of the Convention throughout the jurisdiction. Further, The UN Convention states that federal governments must ensure there are “safeguards to ensure that decentralization or devolution does not lead to discrimination in the enjoyment of rights by children in different regions.”

Why is Canada and the two provinces left (Nova Scotia & PEI) falling short of meeting the guidelines as stipulated in the Convention and specifically as noted above?

My Story:

My son found me 47 years, 8 months, and 25 days after he was taken. PEI’s closed adoption laws caused us to lose 30 years of shared memories. Years we can never get back.

My story is the same as millions of other exiled mothers of the baby scoop era. There was no counselling available to me, no legal counsel provided about the papers I was signing while still recovering from childbirth, no information about any waiver period – just sign here; no options for assistance, no choice but to relinquish this beautiful child to strangers to raise and love as their own.

In 1968, I was not told my son’s birth certificate would be altered, was not told all records of the adoption and his original birth certificate would be sealed permanently – even from me, the one who gave birth to him; was not promised nor did I request privacy at any time or any point in the adoption process, and was not given a copy of anything I signed. I was told it was illegal for me to search for him and was led to believe he could find me when he turned 18 – ‘if he wanted to’ (implying he would not want to). But how was he to find me?

After I married, I sent a letter to the adoption agency stating my new name and husband’s name along with the fact he was a member of the military (thinking that would make it easier for me to be found as we would move a number of times). At first I trusted the information went into my/his file, but as the years went by I started to doubt the information was dealt with appropriately. When 18, 25, 30 years passed with no contact from the agency, I began to believe he had no interest in knowing who I was or even why this all happened. Or even worse, he had been told I was a terrible person and he should be grateful he didn’t know me.

Once the internet became available, I would type the name I gave him into the search engine and scroll through several pages and sites looking for him. After 10 years or so of doing this, I lost any hope of finding him. If he was still alive (isn’t it terrible to not even know if your child is alive?) he was now 40, past the stage of needing to know why, past the curiosity and wondering, I thought.

A few months later, my son posted on an Adoption Search Registry. 7 years and four months later, I typed his name once again. Why? Perhaps a certain psychic message from a granddaughter I didn’t

know I had finally made it through the cosmos! His name was the first result from Google search. Right at the top of the page. My son was alive!

High Price to Pay:

There is a high price to pay for sealed adoption records, it robbed my son and me of 30 years of memories, of graduations, marriages, Christmases, birthdays, of sharing the joy of his children's birth and childhood– the list goes on and on. He first started a search in 2000 – 16 years before we were able to connect. Open records, at that time, would have allowed me to be there for the birth of my grandchildren and we could have built so many memories over those years. Open records from the time he was 18 would have allowed me to at least know he was alive and well all those years in between.

Sealed records gave us the gift of a lifetime of grief, years upon years of searching and wondering about a part of you that is missing, profound grief that reappears when that piece of you is found and you suddenly realize all you have lost, all the time you have missed, the beautiful grandchildren you could never have imagined – all of which is forever gone.

Opening records now cannot benefit me or my son, but you can end the anguish of 1000's of other PEI natural mothers and their relinquished children by restoration of their rights and their heritage.

The laws providing for the sealing of adoption records and changing birth certificate information was created in 1917. It's been 100 years of secrecy. Isn't it time for PEI to come out of the darkness?

Respectfully submitted

Sandra Comeau (nee Arsenault)
Born in Summerside, PEI 1948

Mother of Trevor Scott Arsenault
Born in Charlottetown, PEI 1968
Taken to New Jersey, USA

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

In 1992 our daughter gifted her baby boy for adoption. This was the most heart-wrenching and difficult decision she had to make at the time and continued to be so for the next 24 years.

What she and her baby's father and we as her parents requested and believed at the time was to have the records open so that their child could access these records upon his 18th birthday. It pains me to say this did not happen. My grandson spent six years trying to find his birth parents. He was frustrated, anguished and felt defeated time and again to have faced roadblocks at his every turn.

He had all but lost hope when someone suggested he go to the newspaper. Within hours of the newspaper article being published, he was handed the gift of his mother's name. And the rest, as the saying goes, "is history".

My daughter has her "life" back! I have my first grandchild back. SADLY, it was four years too late for his grandfather who died in 2012.

I know there are many birth parents and adoptees out there who have similar stories to tell. That is why I am asking the Legislature of Prince Edward Island to enact revision of the Adoption Act and other Acts to permit adult persons adopted unrestricted access to original birth certificates, original birth registration, adoption orders, and grant full identifying disclosure with respect to their natural mother/father, siblings, and grandparents. And also, to permit natural mothers, fathers, siblings, and grandparents unrestricted access to birth certificates/adoption orders/ and full identifying disclosure with respect to their sons and daughters, sisters, brothers, and grandchildren.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna L. Cantwell
dlcantwell@hotmail.com

To MLAs in PEI

Hello

I am writing this email to you on behalf of myself and other adoptees on Prince Edward Island.

It should not be the government who says we can't get what is our given right to have our information such as medical history.

We are in the year 2017 its time PEI gets with the times like other places in Canada and open the records up.

How would you feel to know that you or a family member is adopted would you not want yourself or them to know medical history?

Also this is discrimination against adoptees and the mothers who have not asked anyone to be kept a secret from their past.

How would you feel if your family was taken away from you and you knew zero about them?

It was not our choice to be put up for adoption but it is our choice to know about our families and medical history.

Thanks.

Justin Campbell

pejkr07@gmail.com

Petition to Open Adoption Records

To Members of the PEI Legislature

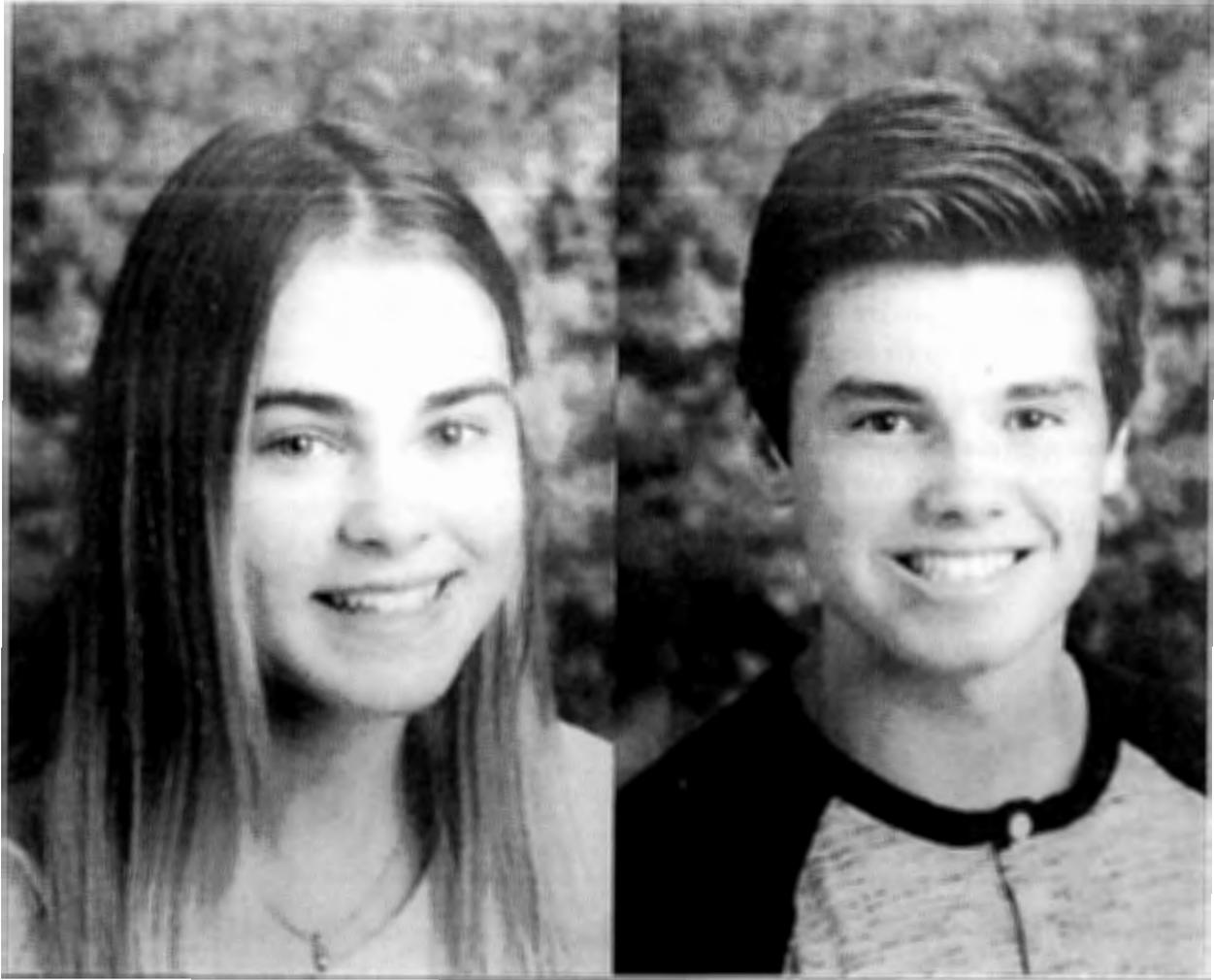
Attached is a school essay my granddaughter wrote last month detailing her reasons why Adoption Records should be open and accessible to all parties to the adoption, most specifically the adopted adult and the natural parents. She has asked me to forward it to the PEI Legislature so her voice can be added to the many who will tell you about the devastating effects of closed records.

I know you are aware there are real people locked behind this archaic law, below are pictures of just a few of those people who are sincerely hoping you will support this important change to the adoption law.

This was taken on the day my son and I finally met again, the day before his 48th birthday. My beautiful and supportive daughter in law and us.



These beautiful people are my grandchildren; Olivia 16 and Nicholas 14. I met them for the first time on November 6th, 2016.



Thank you for supporting the unrestricted opening of adoption records and let the people affected by this law begin to heal, like us.

Respectfully,

Sandra Comeau

Olivia McDonald

Short

AP. Lang-Period 5

3 October 2017

Coming out of the Darkness; Unsealing the Secrets

My dad, who was adopted as an infant, was found by his natural mother 47 years, 8 months and 25 days after he was taken from her. Though it may sound eerie or dramatic, my use of the word “taken” is intentional, as it is the word my newly found paternal grandmother, Sandy, purposefully uses when she recounts what she describes as the most traumatic experience of her life. Sandy was a product of a different time and generation, one that believed it was not only financially burdensome, but also shameful, to be an unwed mother. Her mother, who was widowed at the time, and her older sister, together determined that it would be “best” for Sandy to give her newborn child up for adoption. Being young and without financial means, Sandy reluctantly trusted her mother’s decision. However, she felt the extraordinary, overwhelming, depth of this wrongdoing from the moment my dad was taken from her on the day of his birth. From that day on, Sandy describes feeling an immeasurable void in her soul that stayed with her until August 1, 2016 at 12:15 pm, the moment my dad came back into her life. Though she was powerless to change the course that fateful morning at the Charlottetown Hospital in Prince Edward Island, Canada, she vowed to herself that she would one day find my dad. She carefully memorized his features, noting a small birthmark on his thigh, and deliberately gave him a unique name that she hoped would “stand out in a sea of adoptees” to make her future search for him easier.

The following are some of Sandy's comments about her quest to find my father:

"I was not told your Dad's birth certificate would be altered, was not told all records of the adoption and his original birth certificate would be sealed permanently, was told it was illegal for me to search for him, was not assured my privacy would be protected (as if that would be anything I wanted or asked for) and was led to believe he could find me when he turned 18 – 'if he wanted to' (implying he would not want to).

After I married, I sent a letter to the adoption agency stating my new name and husband's name along with the fact that he was a member of the military (thinking that would make it easier for me to be found as we would move a number of times). At first I trusted the information went into my/his file, but as the years went by I started to doubt the information was dealt with appropriately. When 18, 25, 30 years passed with no contact from the agency, I began to believe he had no interest in knowing who I was or even why this all happened. Or even worse, he had been told I was a terrible person and he should be grateful he didn't know me. Once the internet became available, every few weeks, I would type the name I gave him into the search engine and scroll through several pages looking for him. After 10 years or so of doing this, he was now 40, past the stage of needing to know why, past the curiosity and wondering I thought. So I gave up. A few months later, your Dad posted on an on-line adoption search registry. 7 years and four months later, I typed his name once again. His name was the first result from Google search. Right at the top of the page."

Since her incredible reentry into my dad's life, Sandy has become a treasured part of all of our lives, and we have had many conversations about adoption and how the experience affected her. Over the years she has studied the impact of adoption on adoptees, in an effort to somehow get to know and understand what might have been the life experience of the child she never knew. Sandy explained to me that there are 3 distinct "generations" of adoptions, each with different social views surrounding them. The first generation was before WWII, where mothers were helped and encouraged to raise their children born out of wedlock. If not possible, the child was adopted by members of the family. In the second generation, after WWII and until the landmark abortion case, Roe vs. Wade (late 1940's until 1970's), babies were taken from shamed, unwed mothers and provided to 'childless' couples and records were sealed. This was

Sandy's era; the era of coerced, secretive adoption. The effects of this were made even worse by the fact that sealed records made it difficult, if not impossible, for adoptees and natural parents to find each other as the years passed. In the third generation, from 1980 to present, the trend is more towards 'open' adoptions, rather than keeping records sealed and closed. Of course, there are many present day adoptees, like my dad, who are products of the second generation, with life experiences that have been colored by the absence of information about their identity. Although adoption has been handled differently over the years, the one thing that remains consistent is the emergence of a life with undeniable basic rights, the most primary of which are linked to identity, origin and biology.

Today, we live in an age of openness, honesty and truth. And this has thankfully resulted in adoption laws changing to quiet the different parties involved in the process. The advent of the internet has also made it easier to help many adoptees, like my dad, connect with their natural parents. However, open records would have made the process even easier, and the reunion with his natural mother, and my natural grandmother, much quicker. I have gone fifteen years wondering where Sandy was during the holidays, my birthdays and other special occasions. We have lost fifteen years worth of memories that we can never get back. Though progress has been made, today only six out of fifty states in the United States allow adoptees and natural parents unrestricted access to adoption records (Adoptee Rights p. 2). While this is certainly progress, *all* parties to the adoption process *everywhere* should be able to access their records once the adopted child reaches the age of 18. It is not the mandate of any government to monitor the social secrets nor the freedom of association of its citizens.

There are many arguments that support keeping adoption records open. The downward mental health and broken life trajectory of birth mothers, who, like Sandy, spent their entire adult lives with “a piece of their soul missing”, as she described it, is certainly compelling. The statistics are indeed heartbreaking -- 82% of natural mothers suffer from depression; 80% have feelings of inadequacy; 68% have trust issues; 57% have anger issues (Crowell p. 94). Sandy’s life choices were certainly impacted by the experience. She quickly married and had another baby following her surrender of my father for adoption. As she says it, she was trying to regain what had been lost. Realizing she couldn’t broke her spirit just a little bit further. Mothers today immediately text their child the second they don’t know where they are. I can’t imagine how Sandy and other mothers who have lost children to adoption feel knowing their child is out there somewhere; but not knowing where or if they are okay. Uncertainty is constantly cutting through the tie that keeps biological parents and their children united. Blood relationships cannot be physically broken and therefore the tie is never completely cut, tattered and shattered as it may become through the years. As Evelyn Robinson, a mother who lost her first child through adoption and a member of ARMS (Association Representing Mothers Separated from their children at birth) affirmatively states regarding birth mothers, “there is no finality to her loss” (Robinson p.7). If birth mothers are given the chance to recover their loss, they might then *finally* be able to fill the void that defined their lives. Easy access to adoption records would be the first step in this direction.

Though his years with his adoptive parents were enjoyable and full of opportunity, my father had a quiet yearning throughout his life to know his birth parents. April Dinwoodie, Chief Executive of the prestigious Donaldson Adoption Institution sums up this yearning shared by

many adoptees, claiming that, "...one's birth certificate is a major part - in fact the very starting point - of one's story" (Ribben, Should Adult Adoptees p. 3). My dad longed to know his story but without open records, it wasn't until the dawn of the internet in his adulthood that it became possible.

Imagine growing up, not knowing who you look like, how you ended up in your adoptive family, and why you were abandoned or rejected. Imagine being told, as an adult, that someone else holds the key to the answers to all the questions you have about your life, but that you can't have it. Can you, a non-adopted individual, imagine how that feels? What would it be like to never know who else in your family shares a particular personality trait with you, or what your family health history is? There are tens of thousands of adoptees who will never even see a picture of their birth mother. Never know who they were born to be. And sadly have gone, or will go, to their graves never knowing.

There does not seem to be a compelling argument in favor of keeping vital birth and adoption records closed to adoptees. In fact, to the contrary, the data supporting open records for adoptees is very persuasive --75% of adopted adults often feel like they do not have control over their own lives because of the powerless nature of adoption (Beemom p. 23). Many adopted persons deal with a grief that is deeply rooted within them, usually without a productive outlet -- many become addicts, have low self-esteem, are unable to have healthy relationships, and many more commit suicide. In fact, adopted people are, in fact, four times more likely to attempt suicide than non-adoptees. Additionally, "the fact is that 4.5 percent of adopted individuals have problems with drug abuse, compared with 2.9 percent of the general population" (Ribben, Toward

Preventing p.1). Without the base of existence a simple birth certificate defines, adoptees feel as if their life is built upon the fear and abandonment adoption instilled in them.

As adults, adoptees should be the ones to decide whether or not they wish to be contacted by their biological parent, and, as adults, they have the capacity to decide if they want a relationship with the biological parent(s). The adoption was not their choice – the contact or not, relationship or not, should always be their choice. As Sandy lamented, “an adoptive person is the only human being in civilized and third world countries who, in most states and provinces, cannot obtain their original birth certificate. This is against their basic human rights. Though I gave birth to your dad, even I would be denied his birth certificate.” How could this outcome be right? What purpose is served?

Though hard to believe, there have been arguments in support of keeping adoption records closed. Some birth mothers may want to avoid their child at all costs out of fear they will have to relive a shameful period in their lives. Or that it may somehow disrupt their post-adoption families. However, studies have shown less than 1% of all relinquishing mothers actually desire to never set eyes on their children again (Protecting the Privacy p.12) . Notwithstanding that one percent, the desire of adopted children to access their information and reach out to their blood relatives should supercede their birth mother’s (and their adopted mother’s) opinion on the matter. Of more importance is the responsibility, if not the moral obligation, that a natural mother has to her child; this does not end at birth. Additionally, adoptive parents would argue that they have a right to privacy and confidentiality. But is it a right, or an expectation? On some level in the moments of adopting a child, adoptive parents surely know, if not fear, that their adopted child may be “found” one day, or may want to search

one day. Privacy and confidentiality are meaningless at that point, and it is an outcome that should not only be expected, but supported. As for adoptees who do not wish to be found, they are certainly not obligated to respond to outreach from their biological parents. The choice is theirs. However, adoptees with no access to adoption records have no choice.

Denying an adult adoptee knowledge of their origins, of their original birth certificate, is inhumane and against every country's human rights, declarations and charters. It causes them to remain in limbo, to suffer emotionally, and to tirelessly search through unconventional and expensive means for their natural families – often with little success. Denying natural parents knowledge of their children, even when those children become adults, is cruel and unnecessary, causes suffering for all parties, and serves no social benefit. A severing of parental rights does not cut off a parent's love or a child's yearning to know who they are. The laws providing for the sealing of adoption records and changing birth certificate information were created in 1917. It's been 100 years of secrecy. Isn't it time to fully open these records, for past generations and generations to come?

To whom this may concern,
C/O Theresa Aylward

I am writing to request that the PEI Adoption Records be open to view for adult adoptees and biological parents.

I have no children other than the one I gave up for adoption.

I would love to have him know where he came from and how difficult it was to let him go.

I wanted a better life for my son as I was too young to raise him.

I need him to know he is loved by his biological parents as well as those who lovingly took him home.

He has a right to know these things as well as his health background.

Sincerely,
Mary Patricia Power
#303-4004 Bluebird Rd.
Kelowna, BC
V1W 1X6
250-215-0007