

The Adoption Link

Spring Edition 2011

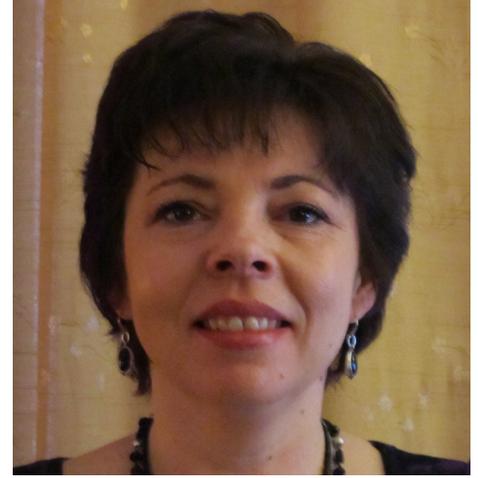
ABC

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Licensed Open Adoption Agency

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From Ramone...

We are very proud to announce that Adoption By Choice has a new location for our head office in Calgary. We are now located at 250, 3115 12 Street NE. Over the years our scope of service has expanded considerably and we are very happy to have a new home with more space available to our staff and families. We are very pleased to have two therapists Terra Bovingdon and Marlene O'Neill-Laberge, join our office who specialize in providing counseling to adoptive families and children. The focus of all of our services is to Bring Safety Permanency and Happiness to Children which guides all of our work as outlined in our mission statement. In our domestic adoption program we have found that so many of the situations that our birth parents are facing are incredibly complex. Many of the birth parents and their families that we provide service to, find it very difficult when faced with an unanticipated pregnancy, and find it very challenging when considering all of their options making a plan for their child. Over the past several months the staff at Adoption By Choice have been working very



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hard with many birth parents providing them support in making some of the most difficult and life changing decisions that they will ever be faced with. Since September 2010, the social work staff have provided services to 24 birth parents and their families. In many of these situations the birth parents have found themselves in a state of crisis and have been very

unsure what the best plan is for their child. We have provided counseling to several birth parents over the course of days/weeks where in the end, the best choice for the birth parent or the extended family has been to parent the baby. Since January 2011, we have been extremely busy at Adoption By Choice working with birth parents in a variety of situations and continue to maintain a commitment to the work providing the best possible service to families to meet

the needs of their child. Our work in adoption services does not always translate into an adoption placement, but we are very committed to providing support to birth parents and their families in determining what will be best for their child.

Ramone Kindrat - Executive Director

facebook *and Open Adoption –* *Deciding to “Friend” our Birthparents*

Over the past five years the manner in which we communicate has really changed. New methods have been added, such as social networking sites, and old ways, such as letters, are not as commonly practiced. Facebook has become a tool in which to keep in touch with friends, family, and co-workers. It has become so popular because of the ability it has given us to easily communicate with everyone we know. The question for individuals who are involved in adoption is; should you add birthparents as 'friends'?

Complications

Before an adoptive placement occurs, Facebook can be used as a way for adoptive parents to initiate contact with their birthparents. Information can be shared about how the pregnancy is going, arranging get togethers, or just simply having an easy way to talk with one another. However, what happens if the adoption falls through? Complications could easily arise if this were to happen and how do you 'unfriend' yourselves?

“Even if Facebook seems to be working for you before the adoption, attorney Mark McDermott says that it is no substitute for face-to-face meetings. He warns that it's common for miscommunications to occur, and cites a case in which an expectant mother decided not to continue with the adoption, based on something she saw on the prospective mother's Facebook page.” (Krueger, 2010).

Boundaries

A lot of the information individuals have on their

Facebook page is very personal. This includes information about our families, friends, personal pictures, and our status posts. Before making a decision, as to whether to “friend” your birth parent, take the time to take a really good look at your profile and the information that's on there. Then ask yourself, am I comfortable giving the birthparents access? Personal comments are often made on status updates and messages from friends posted on your wall. Are these comments ones that you feel comfortable sharing with the birthparents before and after the adoption?

“Although sharing the everyday ups and downs gives many parents pause, Christine Zwerling finds she enjoys interacting with birthparents on a daily basis: “It's been a great way for the birth families to see what the boys are up to - whether it's a sniffle, a big accomplishment, or just a happy day. After I posted, ‘L hates peas, chucked the bowl across the room’, his birthmom replied, ‘Well, we all hate peas!’ I get a kick out of little exchanges like that.”

Others find “too much information” to be too much. One mom describes Facebook posts from a birthmom reflecting “dubious lifestyle choices”, including drug and sexual references. Another reports feeling uncomfortable when a birthmom replied instantly to every post, raising questions from friends who noticed the hyper-attentiveness.” (Krueger, 2010).

As many of us have experienced with any form of written communication, sometimes information can be misinterpreted or overanalyzed. It's hard to determine the tone and intent behind a set of texts that





facebook

Email Password

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doesn't include those aspects. Birthparents and adoptive parents could experience this on Facebook so it's very important to; "apply the same caution and empathy to online communication that you would to carefully composed letters" (Krueger, 2010).

Suggestions

The most important aspect to remember is communication. Communication between birthparents and adoptive families beforehand can hopefully ensure that parameters are set in place before becoming Facebook 'friends'. Discussions should happen ahead of time about what are appropriate comments and pictures. Birthparents and adoptive parents should be aware of one another's boundaries when it comes to Facebook. If needed, adjust your privacy settings or even set up a separate page that is only used for communication between yourself and the birthparents.

When Your Teen Uses Facebook

As your adopted child gets older they may become more curious about their birthparents and learning more about them. It's important to openly discuss this with your teen as it is natural for them to want to learn more. Be there for your teen and support their curiosity. This can be done cautiously by adding your teen as one of your Facebook friends in order to monitor their communication on Facebook. And discuss with your teen how information can be misinterpreted on Facebook and that if they have any concerns they can come to you.

"A teen will be less likely to search on

his own, if you've always spoken openly about adoption and birthparents in your family. Provide frequent openings to talk. "You can say, 'If you're interested in looking up your birthmom on Facebook, I will help you do it, but we'll go slowly,'" says Taddonio. "By your telling your child you're going to search with him/her, they won't have to search in secret." It may also help to connect your teen with an adult adoptee or a trusted family friend." (Krueger, 2010).

"Facebook provides a powerful way for birth and adoptive parents, and their children, to stay in touch. When used with caution and consideration, most find it a positive development that brings new meaning to openness in adoption." (Krueger, 2010).

Conclusion:

Facebook has essentially given adoptive families and birth parents another tool to maintain connections. If you would like to share your thoughts on whether Facebook has helped or hindered a relationship in regards to adoption, please forward them directly to Laura Swift at: laura.swift@adoptionbychoice.ca. We will include these comments in our next newsletter.

*Written by: Chelsey Berkenpass
(Mount Royal University-Social Work Diploma Program)*

*Edited by: Laura Swift, BSW, RSW
Adoption Program Supervisor*



New Arrivals

Domestic



CHRISTENSEN

Paul & Michelle are delighted to announce the arrival of their son Magnus "Mac" Trace. Mac was born on October 31, 2010 and we welcomed into our family on December 10, 2010. A special thanks to Laura and Janet at ABC for all of their guidance and support throughout our adoption journey and a big thank you to Mac's birth family for bringing this precious little boy into our lives. What an amazing Christmas gift!

International



SPECTOR-TRONO

The Spector-Trono family, Loren, Mario and Ruthie (age 5) are delighted to announce that after many years of waiting and wondering, at long last their son/brother has arrived. Embakom Trono (age 4) was referred to us in May 2010, and was able to travel to his forever home in Calgary from Ethiopia in November. Many thanks to the staff at ABC who helped us prepare and update documents, presented the referral, and are providing support as we help this new little Canadian adjust to so many changes in his world. He is thriving - skating, tobogganing, speaking lots of English and smiling through it all. We couldn't be happier!



CORSON

Mark, Angel and big brother Damien are so excited and proud to announce the arrival of Brady Joseph Anthony Corson into our family. He was born in Miami, Florida on December 27th, 2010. Words cannot express how grateful we are to Brady's birth mom Keiyana. She has given us the most amazing and precious gift possible. Thank you to everyone involved for helping us complete our little family.

Feelings of Jealousy & Possessiveness?

Sometimes, adoptive parents are sensitive to the role of birthparents' in their child's life and feelings of jealousy or possessiveness may surface.

One adoptive mother describes her feelings of jealousy (and eventually acceptance of the birthmother's role) when her daughter's birthmother, Mary, came to visit her daughter Angela when she was 16 months old:

I came into the family room to hear Mary saying to Angela, "That pin could hurt you. Give it to Mama." I walked out, hurt, and resentful. I later talked to a close friend, saying I felt like Mary was trying to be the mother when she had said she wouldn't. My friend told me bluntly, "She is a mother. She is Angela's birthmother and you can never undo that." I realized that I had a choice of feeling defensive or of changing my thinking. It didn't make me any less Angela's mother because Mary was one too. Much as we would like sometimes to make it possible, you can't divorce a child or divorce someone's child from them the way you can divorce your spouse.

Another adoptive mom shares her feelings regarding this issue:

At times, Susan (birthmother) will refer to Luke as "our son" or his birthgrandparents will sign letters "Grandma & Grandpa." I am sensitive to hear these things and know that the older my son gets the more possessive I am. I think it would be easier emotionally to pretend the birthparents don't exist. But, realistically, I feel blessed my son has such a loving birthfamily. I just have to remind myself not to let my possessiveness get in the way.

Acknowledging that these feelings may be "normal" goes a long way to building a better relationship with your child's birthfamily, and in turn helping your child become an emotionally healthy person.

Stories adapted from Children of Open Adoption, (1989) Kathleen Silber & Patricia Martinez Dorner.



Thanks... and a Reminder

I want to thank the adoptive parent who recently talked to me about his frustration and disappointment that ABC was not calling to update how often their profile had been shown to birth parents.

We have struggled with this issue at ABC for the past 21 years! The reason we do NOT have that policy, is because many couples told us that they did not find it helpful to have us calling to tell them they had been shown to a birth parent, but they had not been chosen. If a birth parent wants to meet you, we will call you right away! So that is the reasoning behind us not notifying you each time your profile is shown. It is typical to be shown 20 or 30 times before you are matched with a birth parent, but it is not easy to receive 20 or 30 phone calls, letting you know you were shown, but not chosen.

HOWEVER, we love to hear from you, so when you want to know if your profile has been shown, give us a call. We will be happy to share the information that we have about the birth parents that you have been shown to, such as whether they actually made an

adoption plan. Some couples call us on a monthly basis for updates....others call us less frequently....and some couples don't call at all. We respect that everyone has a different level of comfort with wanting to know how many times they have been shown to birth parents.

As you will see in this news letter, we have decided to include the numbers of birth parents that we have been working with over the past 6 months, so that adoptive parents get an idea of the total numbers of birth parents that we see for counseling, and not just the number of birth parents that actually follow through with an adoption plan. We think this will give you a more realistic picture of the work that we do at ABC. We have always included the numbers of placements that we have done, both domestically and internationally.

If you have any other suggestions for us, in terms of what you would like to see in the news letter, or how we can better meet your needs, please let us know!

Janet Patterson MSW, RSW

Our heartfelt thanks to Carol and Garry Murray for sharing their adoption story at our September Workshop in Calgary. In January, 2011, we had a very special panel. Maggie and Angelo Facca, along with Angelo's birthmom, Jenna, joined us at the Pre-Adoption Workshop to talk about their open adoption. In addition, we were very happy to have Chris and Bianca, a birth couple who are still in the process of choosing an adoptive couple, on hand to answer questions about their experi-

ence in building an adoption plan for their unborn baby. Many, many thanks to all of you!

If you would like to be on one of our panels at a future workshop, either in Calgary or Edmonton, just let us know. We would love to have you share your experience with new adoptive couples!

Thank You!





Labours of Love *Canadians Talk about Adoption* By Deborah A. Brennan

An honest and compelling look at what it means to be an adoptive parent, an adoptee, and a birth parent. The experiences in adoption, by every member of the constellation, are fraught with the entire gamut of human emotion.

Labours of Love chronicles the journeys of Canadians who have overcome heartbreaking obstacles to become parents. Their stories are as diverse as our country, and span the borders of our world. While each account is unique in its own way, the stories are connected by the overwhelming commonality of the power of human connection.

Labours of Love unearths an issue that is still stigmatized in some areas of the country. Through conversations with adoptive parents, adoptees, and birthparents who reveal their inmost feelings, the reader will gain a new understanding of the complexities of adoption. What shines through this societal veil, however, is the undeniable element of celebration – of the children we love – whose origin, while important, has little to do with their precious place in our hearts.

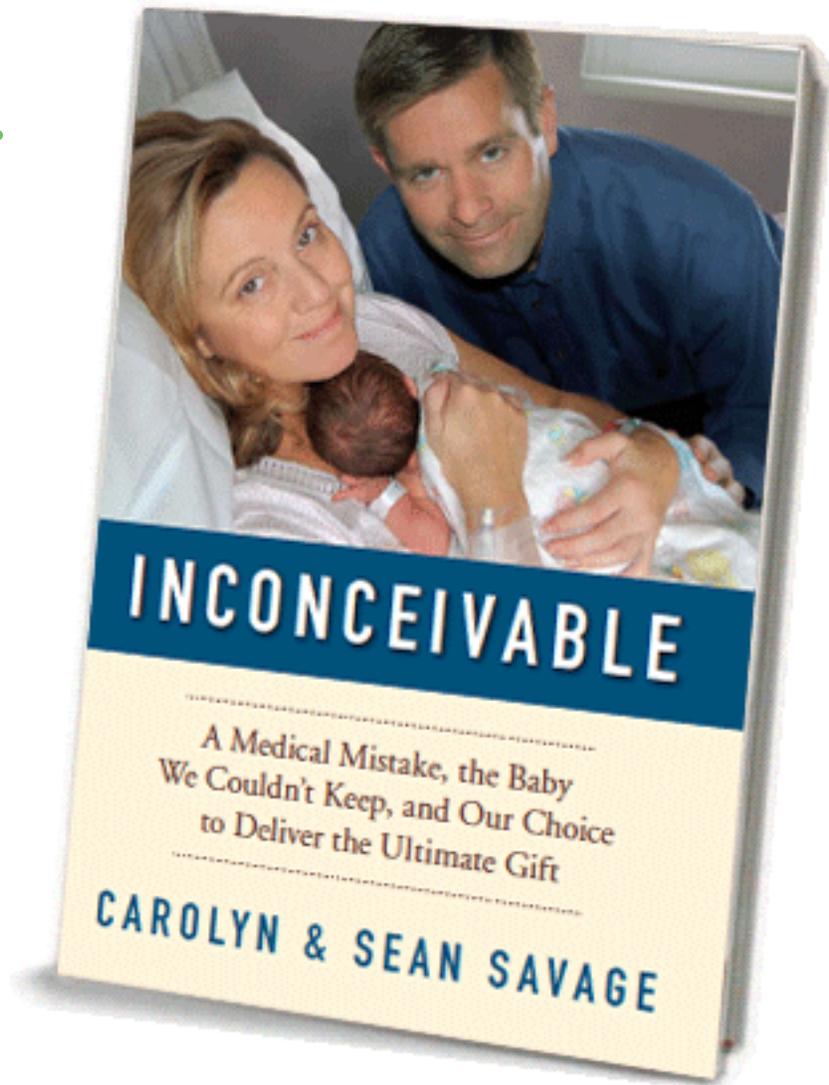
A Medical Mistake... The Ultimate Gift

I'm sure that many of you are familiar with the story of Carolyn and Sean Savage, a couple from the U.S. who were going through an IVF procedure and were implanted with an embryo belonging to another couple. Although their physician recommended that they terminate the pregnancy, Carolyn and Sean made the decision to continue, knowing that they would not be parenting the baby that Carolyn would give birth to. Rather, his biological parents, Shannon and Paul Morell, would be parenting him.

It was interesting to read about the emotional roller coaster that Carolyn experienced as she went through nine months of carrying a child that she knew she could not parent. Sean went through a similar experience, in that he, too, felt an incredible bond with the baby. The baby was named Logan Savage Morell by his parents.

What was striking was how similar Sean and Carolyn's experiences were to the experiences that birth parents describe to us all the time. However, Carolyn and Sean are not viewed in the same way as more "typical" birth parents, because their journey was not a "typical" adoption experience.

Like the birth parents that we work with, Carolyn talked about how she struggled with the role that she was playing, and would play in the future, in Logan's life. She carried Logan for nine months, but didn't experience the excitement of preparing to welcome his arrival by decorating the nursery, or shopping for cute baby outfits, or dreaming about his future with Sean, and herself, and their other children. She gave birth to Logan, but left the hospital without him. She gave birth to Logan, but has no clearly defined role in his life. Carolyn and Sean chose a middle name for Logan, but they won't be there for his first smile, or first tooth, or his first unsteady step. Carolyn talks about feeling that her role in Logan's life is meaningless. She wonders how he is and what he is learning and whether he is healthy. Even though Carolyn and Sean have had two visits with Logan and his parents,



they are uncertain of their roles with the Morells. As Carolyn says, "Logan's always going to be our baby. He's not our son".

There are differences between a couple that is implanted with another couple's embryo, and makes the decision to continue with the pregnancy, knowing that they will not parent that child, and our birth parents. However, what is NOT different is the incredible unselfishness shown by Carolyn and Sean, and all of our birth parents, in putting the child's life and future ahead of their own needs. What is not different for Carolyn and Sean, and all of our birth parents, is the fear of being shut out of their child's life, and the worry that they will have no meaning in their child's life.

Carolyn and Sean's book is entitled, "A Medical Mistake, the Baby We Couldn't Keep, and Our Choice to Deliver the Ultimate Gift". I think It's worth reading.

Janet Patterson, MSW, RSW
Social Worker, Adoption By Choice

Council seeks national campaign to boost adoption rates

By Norma Greenaway, Postmedia News
March 5, 2011

OTTAWA - The Adoption Council of Canada, a non-profit advocacy group, says that of an estimated 78,000 children in care in Canada, about 30,000 are available for adoption.

Yet only about 2,300 are adopted each year. So the council wants the federal government to help foot the bill for a national campaign to raise awareness of the large number of children who need permanent families.

“Child Welfare does a good job of taking care of children and bringing them into care, but they do not make good parents,” said council president Sandra Smith.

The council points to the success of a small pilot project launched last spring, in partnership with the Children’s Aid Society of Ottawa, as evidence a broader and better-funded campaign would make a difference.

The project involved a travelling exhibit, titled the Heart Gallery, which featured photos of 20 children and youth in foster care who were eligible for adoption. A total of 16 have been matched or placed with adoptive families.

Adoption advocates say there is no shortage of evidence that those who spend their childhood and youth in the care of child welfare agencies are often damaged. They are, for example, 17 times more likely to be hospital-

ized for mental-health issues than the general public, according to a 2009 report, Kids, Care and Crime, published by the B.C. representative of children and youth and the provincial health officer.

The report also said that by age 21, 40 per cent of children and youth in care have come in contact with the justice system, compared with less than seven per cent of the general population.

“There is no youth crime crisis in B.C.,” the report said. “However, a large and very vulnerable group of children and youth, many of whom are aboriginals in the care of the government, are at higher risk of ending up in jail than their peers.”

“Often, these children have been removed from their family home and have experienced instability and poor attachment to positive peers and adults. Although some of these youth have the strength and resilience to lead successful lives despite the challenges they face, many do not,” it said.

The report is considered one of the most comprehensive ever conducted in Canada on children in care, and its findings are seen as indicative of what is happening beyond B.C.’s borders.

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<http://www.canada.com/Council+seeks+national+campaign+boost+adoption+rates/4388019/story.html>



Native Heritage Facebook Group

Attention parents with adopted native children (or with some native heritage):
Please join the facebook group, called "Adoption is another word for LOVE"

Website address is

<http://www.facebook.com/home.php#!/group.php?gid=56239027489>

This group is for non-native parents with

adopted native children or native adoptee's adopted into non-native families. Lets help each other to understand, educate and help our children to acknowledge, embrace & understand their Native Roots!

Submitted by an Adoptive parent in Edmonton, Alberta



The Gift of Life

*I didn't give you the gift of life,
But in my heart I know.
The love I feel is deep and real,
As if it had been so.*

*For us to have each other
Is like a dream come true!
No, I didn't give you
The gift of life
Life gave me the gift of you.*

Unknown



Did you know?

Adoption By Choice sends this newsletter via email to adoptive families,
waiting families and interested parties in Alberta and across Canada.



If you would like to be on our e-mail list, please
give Penny a call at the office, (403) 245-8854,
or email calgary@adoptionbychoice.ca

Previous additions of the newsletter are also available on the website at www.adoptionbychoice.ca.

If you do not wish to receive this newsletter, please let us know and we will remove you from the distribution list.

Thanks...



The annual ABC Fall
BBQ that was held
September 12, 2010
was a great success. A
huge thanks to all of
those that were able
to attend. Watch our
next newsletter edition
for this years ABC Fall
BBQ!