

I am a mother who lost a child to adoption in Canada in the era of closed and coerced adoptions. I went on to have other children but the pain of loss never left. The daughter I relinquished wasn't able to find me because she was only identified on her birth certificate by her first name and the initial of her surname. My name and her birth father's were left off. Her birth registration number was used for identification but she was born in one province and placed for adoption in another, and the province where she was adopted didn't recognize the documents of other provinces. So, even though both provinces opened their records when she was an adult, she wasn't able to find us -- and we weren't able to find her.

Eventually, her birth father used a private detective to find her, who did it in an hour. This is not the best way for people separated by adoption to find each other or meet. Reunion is very complicated, emotionally.

And even though both provinces have opened their records, in our particular situation my daughter will never be able to get her original birth certificate.

As well, in 1959 an uncle of mine relinquished a child for adoption. She found me through a DNA test this year. She spent more than twenty years looking for her father, after her adoptive parents died. She was able to get her records from the provincial government, and they clearly stated that her nineteen year old mother had wanted to keep her and had left the maternity home with her, but that social workers told her that if she didn't sign the baby for adoption, they would put her baby into foster care and the baby would never be adopted. My cousin loved her adoptive parents but it's not right that she wasn't able to find her birth family until after all of her parents had died.

Please allow adoptees to have their original birth certificates. That document belongs to them, and not to anybody else. As a surrendering mother, I can say that the idea that those certificates have to be sealed in order to protect mothers' privacy is not true -- it forces us out onto the internet and to DNA testing to look for each other, giving us no privacy at all. In any case, nobody's right to privacy should trump another person's right to have their own birth certificate.

I just heard about the need for testimony today, so please forgive me for sending something late and so rushed.

Sincerely,  
Maureen Colclough Bayless  
Vancouver, BC Canada