

# THE SEARCH FOR ONE'S ORIGINS

FOR INDIVIDUALS BORN IN QUEBEC  
AND ADOPTED BY PARENTS IN QUEBEC

A guide for adopted persons



This guide was produced by the Secrétariat aux services internationaux à l'enfant (SASIE) in collaboration with the following people and organizations: Anne Marie Piché, professor in the École de travail social at the Université du Québec à Montréal, and her research assistant, Johanne Thompson-Sweeney; RAIS-Ressource Adoption; L'Hybridé; and Maïly Daigle, psychologist. It was adapted for the search for One's National Origins by Noémie Desbois, social worker, with the support of Amélie Poirier Rousseau, provincial coordinator, responsible for implementation for the MSSS of the SASIE and Mouvement Retrouvailles – adopté(e)s – non adopté(e)s – parents.

## ÉDITION

**La Direction des communications du ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux**

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Masculine pronouns are used generically in this document.

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## What is a Search for One's Origins?

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A search for one's origins is a process that adoptees can undertake to obtain information about their pre-adoption history.<sup>1</sup> Each adoptee has their own reasons for undertaking such a search.

For example, an adoptee may want to find answers to questions about their pre-adoption history, have details as to their medical history, know who they may resemble or want to have contact with their family of origin.

Searching for one's origins is unique to each individual and may be carried out in a way that is appropriate for that person. It is important to:

- go at your own pace and take the time you need;
- listen to your needs;
- identify your motivation for undertaking a search and determine your limits, both in the beginning of the process and at every step throughout;
- make sure you have the support you need.

The search for one's origins can take several forms. A person may decide to start their search by requesting psychosocial services from The Background, Disclosure and Reunion Service available through an institution with a Child and Youth Protection mandate.

## What is the Background, Disclosure and Reunion Service?

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Institutions with a Child and Youth Protection mandate are responsible for responding to requests for services from individuals who were domiciled in Quebec at the time of their adoption and were adopted by parents domiciled in Quebec. The service provides searches for members of the family of origin, can provide medical and socio-biological antecedent information and can facilitate reunions, when circumstances allow.

These services are governed by numerous acts, including the *Youth Protection Act*, the *Act respecting health services and social services*, the *Civil Code of Québec*, the *Act to amend the Civil Code and other legislative provisions as regards adoption and the disclosure of information* and the *Act respecting family law reform with regard to filiation and amending the Civil Code in relation to personality rights and civil status*. The Directors of Youth Protection are responsible for the permanent preservation of adoption files and compliance with the confidentiality rules.

The Background, Disclosure and Reunion Service is mandated to assist adoptees with their requests. It can provide them with a summary of their family of origin and medical background (adoption history), disclose information on the identity of the people sought in accordance with Quebec's legal framework and help with preparations for reunions. To do this, The Background, Disclosure and Reunion Service conducts the search for the identity and the whereabouts of the people concerned.<sup>ii</sup>

It also offers psychosocial support throughout the process, information on rights and responsibilities and, if necessary, referrals to support and intervention services.

In addition to, or independently of, the services offered by the Background, Disclosure and Reunion Service, adoptees may wish to use various tools, means or resources, such as associations that offer support to adoptees and their families, search intermediaries,<sup>iii</sup> DNA testing, genealogy sites and social networks.

## **What Services Does the Background, Disclosure and Reunion Department offer?**

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### **Socio-Biological Summary (Adoption History)**

The Socio-Biological Summary is a summary of the adoption file. Subject to legal restrictions on disclosure at the time of writing, the summary contains information from various administrative and judicial records relating to the person's adoption. The identity of the people in the adoption file is confidential and is not included in the summary. Only the original name and surname of the adopted person may be disclosed, if available.

### **Disclosure of Identities**

Provided the information is available, the law stipulates that an adopted person may obtain their original first and last names and those of their parents of origin, grandparents of origin and siblings of origin, unless there is a disclosure veto that prevents the release of this information. Where applicable, The Background, Disclosure and Reunion Services contacts the person sought in order to inform them of the disclosure of their identity.

## Copy of the Original Birth Certificate and Judgments Relating to the Adoption

The law stipulates that an adopted person may obtain a copy of their original birth certificate and the judgments relating to their adoption.

### Reunion

A reunion means the adopted person and at least one member of their birth family have established contact. Reunions can take place remotely or in person. Before meeting in person, the people concerned will often decide to get to know each other through other means, such as emails, telephone calls, videoconferencing or letters. However, Quebec legislation stipulates that consent must be given by the people sought before a reunion can take place. The Background, Disclosure and Reunion Service may take steps to locate and contact the person sought in order to obtain their consent to a reunion. The search process is undertaken in accordance with the laws and standards of Quebec, with due respect for the privacy of the people concerned.

## What to Expect?

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Whatever means are used to search for one's origins, it is essential to remember that obstacles may be encountered at various stages. It can also be emotionally and psychologically demanding for the adoptee, who should be prepared to live with uncertainty during and after the process. Meeting a parent of origin may present various challenges, including differences in values and socioeconomic gaps. The adoptee may experience mixed emotions and feelings such as apprehension or fear of rejection. They may also feel conflicting loyalties to their birth and adoptive families. Searching for one's origins can also negatively affect adoptive and birth family members.

Before they begin their search, the adopted person must think carefully about their motivations, expectations and boundaries and consider the possible repercussions for them and the other people concerned. It is a good idea to ask yourself the following questions:

- Why do I want to begin a search for my origins?
- What am I looking for (e.g., to find my family of origin, learn more about myself, reclaim my life story, come to terms with my adoption or connect with my siblings of origin)?
- What do I expect to get out of my search? (e.g., get answers to my questions, meet my birth family)?
- How will I react if I do not get answers or if the answers I get are hard to accept?
- What are my boundaries?
- Will I have emotional support throughout the process (e.g., friends, family, psychosocial support offered by an association or a professional)?
- How do I discuss my decision with my loved ones?

There are several ways to undertake a search for one's origins. Depending on the means used, it can take a few days to a few months. An adoptee may decide to begin their search, set it aside and return to it after a short time, much later or abandon it altogether at any point in the process. The important thing is to go at your own pace.

## **Can Other People Initiate a Search for a Child who was Placed for Adoption?**

The parent of origin, grandparents of origin or siblings of origin may initiate a search to obtain information about the adoption of their child or their relative or to get in touch with them. It is entirely up to the adoptee to follow up on the steps taken and they should never feel obliged to do so.

If they are 14 years of age or older, the first degree descendant of a deceased adoptee may take the same steps and obtain the same services that the adoptee would have obtained themselves.

## **Your Support Network**

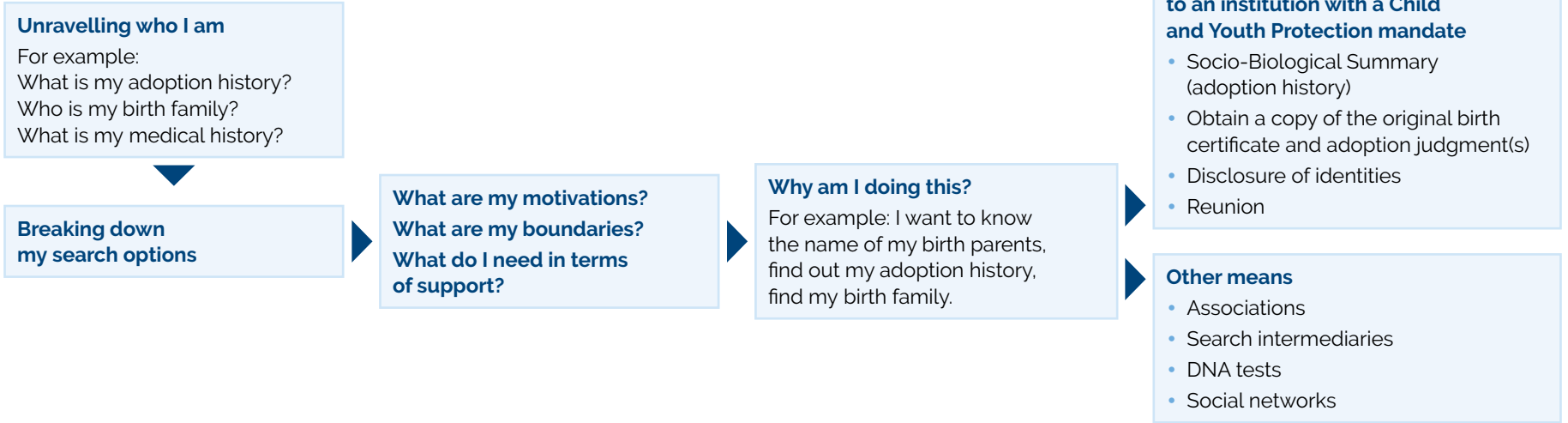
If you have support, it can be easier to deal with the challenges you may encounter in the search for your origins. Support may come from a health and social services institution, associations, professionals, friends and family, adoptive parents or other adoptees. Their support can help the adoptee work through their decision to begin a search, express their feelings and emotions and understand the different situations that arise.



# SEARCH FOR MY ORIGINS

My goals, motivations, expectations and boundaries can change over time.

I can put my search on hold, come back to it or end it at any time.



Research my rights and responsibilities

Taking stock

## Here Are Some Support Services:

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Services relating to the research into family of origin background, medical background and reunions

[Search for information on the family of origin or on the child in adoption | Government of Quebec \(quebec.ca\)](#)

Mouvement Retrouvailles – adopté(e)s – non adopté(e)s – parents

[www.mouvement-retrouvailles.qc.ca](http://www.mouvement-retrouvailles.qc.ca)

1 888 646-1060

Fédération des parents adoptants du Québec (FPAQ)

[fpaq-adoption.ca](http://fpaq-adoption.ca)

[fpaq.info@gmail.com](mailto:fpaq.info@gmail.com)

514 209-3262

RAIS-Ressource Adoption

[www.rais-ressource-adoption.org](http://www.rais-ressource-adoption.org)

[info@rais-ressource-adoption.org](mailto:info@rais-ressource-adoption.org)

438 410-RAIS (7247)

1 844 410-RAIS (7247)

Secrétariat aux services internationaux à l'enfant (SASIE)

[rasri@msss.gouv.qc.ca](mailto:rasri@msss.gouv.qc.ca)

514 492-0467

1 833 453-0521

Ordre des travailleurs sociaux et thérapeutes conjugaux et familiaux du Québec

[www.otstcfq.org](http://www.otstcfq.org)

[info@otstcfq.org](mailto:info@otstcfq.org)

1 888 731-9420

Ordre des psychologues du Québec

[ordrepsy.qc.ca](http://ordrepsy.qc.ca)

[info@ordrepsy.qc.ca](mailto:info@ordrepsy.qc.ca)

514 738-1223

1 800 561-1223

Ordre des psychoéducateurs et psychoéducatrices du Québec

[ordrepsed.qc.ca](http://ordrepsed.qc.ca)

[info@ordrepsed.qc.ca](mailto:info@ordrepsed.qc.ca)

514 333-6601

1 877 913-6601

- i. This guide is also intended for adoptable individuals who have not been adopted and who wish to begin a search for their origins. An adoptable individual who has not been adopted is a person who has been declared legally eligible for adoption or for whom consent to adoption has been given, but who has never been adopted (Gouvernement du Québec, 2024, *Guide de pratique professionnelle en matière d'antécédents sociobiologiques et de retrouvailles*).
- ii. The Background, Disclosure and Reunion Service also provides services to several other categories of applicants. For more information, visit [Québec.ca](https://quebec.ca).
- iii. Search intermediaries are professional or volunteer researchers or search agencies that provide services and support to individuals who are searching for their family of origin.