

THE SEARCH FOR ORIGINS

IN INTERNATIONAL ADOPTIONS
AND ADOPTIONS IN ANOTHER
CANADIAN PROVINCE OR TERRITORY

A guide for adopted persons



ÉDITION

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

This publication is available only in an electronic version at:
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Masculine pronouns are used generically in this document.

Legal deposit – 2024
Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec
ISBN 978-2-550-97744-5 (PDF)

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If you are thinking about searching for your origins and want to learn more about the process, this guide is for you!¹

What is a search for origins?

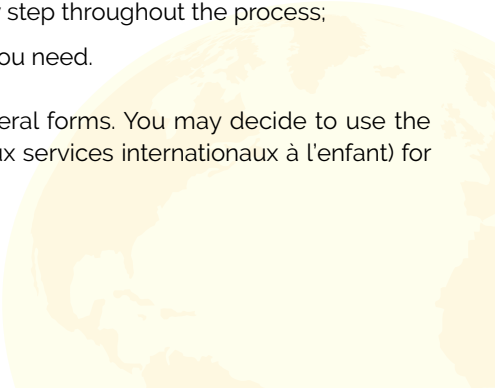
A search for origins is an inquiry that adoptees can make to obtain information about their pre-adoption history.² Each adoptee has their reasons for undertaking such a search.

For example, an adoptee may want to find answers to questions about their pre-adoption history, learn about their culture and country of origin, return to their country of origin or reunite with their birth family.

Searching for 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 and analyze your reasons for searching and your limits, both in the beginning and at every step throughout the process;
- make sure you have the support you need.

The search for origins can take several forms. You may decide to use the services of the SASIE (Secrétariat aux services internationaux à l'enfant) for your search.



What is the SASIE (Secrétariat aux services internationaux à l'enfant)?

The SASIE is Quebec's Central Authority in matters of international adoption under the *Act to implement the convention on the protection of children and co-operation in respect of intercountry adoption*, adopted on May 29th, 1993, at the Hague, and enacted into law in Quebec on February 1st, 2006. As such, in Quebec, the SASIE is the official channel to begin a search for origins and international reunification procedures.

The SASIE is mandated to assist adopted persons in their requests. They can provide a [summary of family and medical background](#) (adoption history), [information on the identity of the persons sought](#) in accordance with the Quebec legal framework and help with [preparations for reunions](#). The SASIE can conduct the search for the identity and whereabouts of the persons concerned.

The SASIE also offers psychosocial support throughout the process, information on rights and responsibilities, and, if needed, referrals to appropriate support and intervention services.

In addition to the services the SASIE offers, adoptees may also wish to use various external tools, means, and resources, such as associations offering support to adopted persons and their families, search intermediaries³, DNA testing, social networks and returning to the country of origin.

What services does the SASIE offer in the search for origins?

Summary of family and medical background (adoption history)

The summary of family and medical background is a summary of the adoption file. It contains information from various administrative and judicial records relating to the adopted person's history, subject to legal restrictions on disclosure. The identity of the persons in the adoption file remains 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 identity

In accordance with the current legal provisions, an adopted person may obtain his or her original first and last names, as well as those of his or her parents, grandparents and siblings of origine, unless a refusal prevents this and if this information is available. In such cases, SASIE contacts the person sought to inform them of the disclosure of their identity.

Obtaining a Copy of the Original Birth Certificate and Adoption Judgments

Under the law, an adopted person can obtain a copy of his or her original birth certificate and adoption judgments.

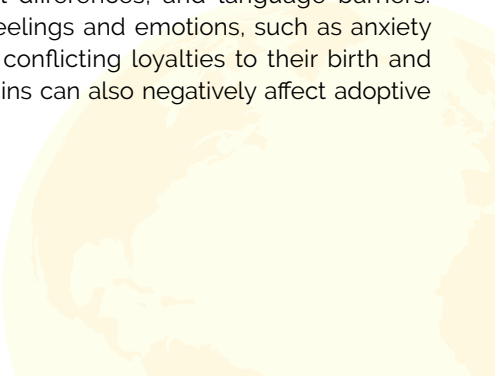
Reunion

A reunion means the adopted person and at least one member of their birth family have re-established contact. Reunions can take place remotely or in person. Before meeting in person, reunited family members will often decide to get to know each other through other means, such as emails, phone calls,

videoconferencing or letter exchanges. However, Quebec legislation stipulates that consent must be given by all concerned parties before a reunion can take place. The SASIE may work through partner organizations in other countries or Canadian provinces and territories to locate and inform a birth parent that the child they placed for adoption is searching for them, and vice versa. The purpose of this initial contact is to obtain their consent to a reunion. The SASIE undertakes search requests under the laws and standards of both Quebec and the country of origin, with due respect for the privacy of the persons concerned.

What to expect?

Whatever means are used to search for origins, it is essential to remember that the parties involved may encounter obstacles at various stages. The search for origins can be emotionally and psychologically demanding for adopted persons, who should be prepared to live with uncertainty throughout the process. For example, reuniting with birth family members or returning to the country of origin may present various challenges, including financial or socio-economic issues, cultural differences, and language barriers. Adoptees may experience mixed feelings and emotions, such as anxiety or fear of rejection. They may feel conflicting loyalties to their birth and adoptive families. Searching for origins can also negatively affect adoptive and birth family members.



Before beginning your search, it is essential to think carefully about your motives and expectations, define your boundaries, and consider the possible implications for you and other people concerned. It is a good idea to do a little soul-searching in preparation. Here are a few questions to get you started:

- **Why do I want to begin a search for my origins?**
- **What am I looking for?** (e.g., to find my family, learn more about myself and my culture of origin, reclaim my life story, come to terms with my adoption, or connect with my brothers and sisters)
- **What do I expect to get out of my search?** (e.g., get answers to my questions, meet my birth family)
- **Will I have emotional support throughout the process?** (e.g., friends, family, psychosocial support offered by the SASIE or another association or professionals)
- **How do I discuss my decision with my adoptive family and loved ones?**

There are several avenues to undertake a search for origins. This may take as little as a few weeks to as many as several years, depending on the means chosen for that process.

Adoptees may decide to begin their search only to set it aside for a time and return to it later or abandon it altogether at any point in the process. The important thing is to respect your needs and go at your own pace.

Can birth parents initiate a search for a child they placed for adoption?

The birth parents or any birth family member may initiate a search for a child placed for adoption or for information about that child. It is entirely up to the adoptee to decide if they want to follow up on a request. They should not feel pressured to do so.

Your support network

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

Can First-Degree Descendants of an Adopted Person Initiate a Tracing Process?

Only the first-degree descendants of a deceased adoptee, aged 14 or over, can undertake the same process and obtain the same services as an adopted person.



SEARCH FOR 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.

Unravelling who I am

(e.g., Where do I come from?
Who is my birth family?
What is my medical history?)

**Breaking down
my search options**

**What are my motivations
and expectations?
What are my boundaries?
What do I need in terms
of support?**

Why am I doing this?

(e.g., I want to know the
name of my birth parents,
find out my adoption history,
learn more about the culture
of my country of origin)

Research my rights and responsibilities

Government organization:

Secrétariat aux services internationaux
à l'enfant (SASIE)

- Adoption history (birth family history)
- Disclosure of identity
- Reunion (virtual or in person)
- Obtaining a Copy of the Original Birth Certificate and Adoption Judgments

Other means:

- Associations
- Search intermediaries
- DNA tests
- Social media
- Returning to my country of origin (to visit the country, to find my family of origin, etc.)

Taking stock

Here are some support services to help you in your search and thought process:

Secrétariat aux services internationaux à l'enfant (SASIE)

adoption.gouv.qc.ca/en_accueil

rasri@msss.gouv.qc.ca

514 492-0467 or 1 833 453-0521

Associations in Quebec that can offer information and support to adoptees and their families:

L'Hybridé

www.lhybride.com

info@lhybride.com

438 389-5465

RAIS-Ressource Adoption

www.rais-ressource-adoption.org

info@rais-ressource-adoption.org

438 410-RAIS (7247) or 1 844 410-RAIS (7247)

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

www.mouvement-retrouvailles.qc.ca/en/

1 888 646-1060

Fédération des parents adoptants du Québec (FPAQ)

fpaq-adoption.ca

fpaq.info@gmail.com

514 209-3262

Professional orders in the psychosocial support field:

Ordre des travailleurs sociaux et thérapeutes conjugaux et familiaux du Québec

www.otstcfq.org

info@otstcfq.org

1 888 731-9420

Ordre des psychologues du Québec

ordrepsy.qc.ca/english

info@ordrepsy.qc.ca

514 738-1223 or 1 800 561-1223

Ordre des psychoéducateurs et psychoéducatrices du Québec

ordrepsed.qc.ca

info@ordrepsed.qc.ca

514 333-6601 or 1 877 913-6601

Other organizations providing information to adoptees and their families wishing to travel to their country of origin independently or as part of an organized tour:

adoption.gouv.qc.ca/list-of-certified-bodies

1. The Secrétariat aux services internationaux à l'enfant (SASIE) also provides services to other categories of applicants. For more information, visit the [SASIE website](#). This guide was produced by the SASIE, in partnership with the following people and organizations: Anne-Marie Piché (Professor at École de travail social of Université du Québec à Montréal) and her research assistant, Johanne Thomson-Sweeny; RAIS – Ressource adoption; L'Hybridé; Maily Daigle, psychologist.
2. 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*).
3. Search intermediaries are professional or volunteer researchers or search agencies who provide support services to individuals seeking their families of origin.