

SEARCH TIP SHEET

If you were adopted or are the birth parent of an adopted child and have obtained your identifying information, the following is designed to assist you with the process of searching for your birth relative.

If your adoption was finalized outside of Alberta, be sure to see the current legislation for your province and consult your provinces [Post Adoption Registry](#).

Information available to... *The adopted person*

The adopted person has access to information in the adoption order, original birth registration and the adoption file. The information should provide the following:

Birth mother's name – The original birth registration provides the birth mother's maiden name, which could be different from your surname at birth if she was married when she placed you for adoption. Look at how she signed her name to learn if she uses her first name or her middle name.

Birth mother's age – The age, year of birth, or exact date of birth may be listed for the birth mother.

Birth mother's address – The birth mother's address can be found on the original birth registration. The physical address could be for a maternity home or relatives house where she was staying. The mailing address is more likely that of her family's. The adoption file may also provide several previous addresses of the birth mother. Her family address, if it can be determined, is the most helpful when checking reverse directories to find her parents' names.

Birth father's name – The original birth registration doesn't usually list the birth father unless he was married to the birth mother. The information for the father can be misleading because, if she were a married woman, the name given could be that of the husband and not the father. If he was named, the adoption file may provide the birth father's name, background information, physical description, address and age or year of birth.

Birth parent(s)' occupations – The original birth registration and adoption file may provide information about the birth parents' occupations. This could also include the families' future plans and information about family members.

Parents and siblings of the birthparent - Non-identifying information may include the number of brothers/sisters, their ages, marital status and occupations.

Information available to... *The birth parent*

The birth parent has access to:

- Birth child's name after adoption;
- Where and when the adoption was finalized.
 - The location or jurisdiction of the court can be an indication of the adoptive parents' residence.

Non-identifying information about the adoptive parents may be released upon request.

Other information to look for

If a religion is mentioned, looking in records of local churches of that denomination may prove useful. If a cultural or ethnic background is given it might lead to local cultural organizations. The same would apply to interests or special talents like sports.

Try variations on the spelling of surnames. Birth mothers didn't always know how to spell birth fathers' names, social workers sometimes made mistakes writing things down, or birth parents may have purposefully give a wrong name.

What information is not available?

Persons who have been adopted, and those who have placed their child for adoption, are not considered related for vital statistics eligibility purposes, so will not be able to access vital statistics records for birth parents or any people who were relatives before the adoption. Birth parents will not be able to access their child's original birth record from vital statistics once the adoption is finalized.

Legislation prohibits Alberta's Post Adoption Registry from releasing third party information such as the names of the birth parents' siblings or parents, or the names, addresses and occupations of the adoptive parents.

Beginning Your Search - You can use some of the following ways to begin your search:

1. Directories

Telephone directories - Start with the local phone book for the last known place of residence. The birth relative may still be listed under the name given in the identifying information.

Reverse directories - Reverse directories, like Henderson's Directory, can be used if one or more old addresses and surnames are available. Directories can be found at public libraries and provincial archives. Larger centres published their own city directories, but these directories were discontinued by 1989. A 1966 directory is needed if looking for information from 1965. An alphabetical listing by surnames at the front of the book, including first names, middle initial, address, occupation and whether they are the head of the household or residing there with someone else may be found in a reverse directory. It is possible to figure out who the members of the family are by using this information. Some reverse directories contain an additional section that cross-references telephone numbers with addresses.

2. Internet resources

Canada 411 is an online phonebook. Numbers attached to a name throughout Canada are displayed. Put in a first initial, a city or a province to shorten the list. Other sources are [Telus](#), [Superpages](#) or [WhitePages](#). Try [Infobel](#) if the search goes beyond North America. Listings found on websites may be out of date.

Search engines - Search directly through a search engine like [Google](#) for the person in question, which will bring up any reference to this person in any Internet sources. E-mail addresses may also be found in this way. The websites or types of sites listed in the Post Adoption Registry's [Resources](#) section may prove useful.

3. Legal records

Each province has provincial archives. In addition to birth, marriage and death records, they have local history books, provincial government employment records and other resources.

Marriage records - Birth, death and marriage records can be accessed through the [Provincial Archives of Alberta](#). This will be invaluable if the birth mother's current surname is needed.

Death Records - Additional information may be available to those who are old enough that their birth grandparents or birth parents may be deceased. Check with the local cemetery to find out if and when someone died. Cemetery records can be found through town offices or cemetery caretakers. They may have information about any next of kin and/or which funeral home was involved. Look for an obituary once a date of death is obtained.

Obituaries often run in local newspapers and will give married names of daughters as well as their husbands' first names, grandchildren's names, surviving siblings and so on.

Funeral homes may also have information including next of kin, survivors, etc. Many provincial genealogical societies have been working on listing all gravesites. In Alberta those are available for a fee, or visit the Edmonton branch of the [Alberta Genealogical Society](#) and search their library.

4. Archives

Newspapers - Newspapers contain obituary notices and birth announcements as well as any newsworthy items relating to the family being searched for. Old newspapers may be found at **public libraries**, and small town newspapers can be found at Edmonton's Legislature Library. Search for a city or town on the Internet to see if there is an **online newspaper** available and to find the location of the back issues. The [Alberta Heritage Digitalization Project](#) provides online copies of old newspapers.

Local history books - Many rural communities have local history books that can be found in public libraries, provincial archives, and from the [Alberta Heritage Digitalization Project](#). It is easy to find out if there is an entry on a family by using the index in one of these history books. Sometimes school or family photos of birth parents, grandparents, etc. can be found. The [Alberta Family Histories Society](#) is another excellent resource.

City archives - Sometimes town and city records such as voter's lists and census records can be helpful to track a family.

Genealogical libraries - The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has set up genealogical libraries with records that can be used to track family members through generations, continents and centuries. [Family Search](#) provides the address, telephone listing and hours of operation of the closest centre. There are many centres in Alberta, including more than one in both Edmonton and Calgary.

Armed forces - Searching for a birth relative within the Canadian Armed Forces (Army, Navy, and Air Force) requires certain information about the individual like his or her name, date of birth, regiment, military service I.D. etc. Contact [The National Archives of Canada](#) for more information.

5. Churches

Often, church records can be quite useful. Births, deaths, and marriages are all recorded in the local parish and many of these records are available online. Baptismal records provide additional names such as godparents and other records pertaining to the family. Check the denomination recorded on the adoption file for insight into where to begin searching. Family descendants could still be members of the church today.

Initiating contact

There are several possible ways to proceed:

- A phone call or a letter;
- With an intermediary;
- Using an adoption agency; or
- [Alberta Children & Youth Services Post Adoption Registry](#) for voluntary registration with the Post Adoption Registry for contact with another family member.

Adoption agencies may provide professional intermediary and support services. Whichever method you choose, use respect and patience.

Support during search and reunion

Look for help if the feelings brought up at the reunion are too intense and seem unbearable to handle alone. Remember, there are support groups, adoption counsellors and other professionals available to assist you.

Additional Resources

The Post Adoption Registry has [resources](#) available for further information on search agencies and other useful materials. Call (780) 427-6387, or to be connected toll free from anywhere in Alberta, dial 310-0000 then dial (780) 427-6387.

Internet Resources

[Alberta Family Histories Society](#)

www.afhs.ab.ca
712 - 16 Avenue NW
Calgary, AB T2M 0J8
(403) 214-1447

[Alberta Genealogical Society](#)

www.agsedm.edmonton.ab.ca
AGS Edmonton Branch
#162 – 14315 – 118 Avenue
Edmonton AB T5L 4S6
(780) 424-4429

[Alberta Heritage Digitalization Project](#)

<http://136.159.239.228/>
Digitization Initiatives,
University of Calgary Press
2500 University Drive NW
Calgary, AB T2N 1N4

[Family Search](#)

www.familysearch.org/eng/Library/FHC/frameset_fhc.asp

[Genealogy Unlimited](#)

<http://www.genealogyunlimited.com>

[Google.ca](#)

www.google.ca

[Infobel](#)

www.infobel.com

[Superpages](#)

www.superpages.ca

[Telus](#)

www.mytelus.com

[WhitePages.ca](#)

www.whitepages.ca

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0N4
(613) 996-5115
1-866-578-7777 (toll free Canada & US)

[Provincial Archives of Alberta](#)

www.cd.gov.ab.ca/preserving/paa_2002/index.asp

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Edmonton, AB T6E 5W1
780-427-1750
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[Canada 411](#)

www.canada411.ca

[The National Archives of Canada](#)

www.collectionscanada.ca

Library and Archives Canada