

The History of Mouvement Retrouvailles

Mouvement Retrouvailles dates back to 1983. Volunteer movements always come into being to meet the specific needs of people with common interests. We are no exception to this rule. At Mouvement Retrouvailles, it was issues concerning adoption which brought together our volunteers, i.e. helping out adoptees, non-adopted people, birth parents and adoptive parents.

You have to go back to 1976 to retrace the first steps which led to the creation of Mouvement Retrouvailles. And more precisely to Sherbrooke in November, 1976 when Mr Jean McConnel established an agency whose purpose was searching for abandoned or adopted children, better known by its French abbreviation: AREA. AREA's primary goal was reuniting parents and children by looking for matches amongst the applications submitted by adoptees and birth parents.

It soon became clear that this wasn't enough and that other activities would be required to meet the needs of the growing clientele. As a result, the services aimed at birth parent-children reunions were supplemented by new political activities as AREA Montréal took up the fight to effect changes to the laws on sealed adoption files. Basing its demands on Québec's Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms and the positions outlined in the submission made to the Commission des droits de la personne du Québec, AREA Montréal began campaigning, in the name of all adoptees and non-adopted persons of Québec, for the right to know one's origins and for the right of access to information.

This struggle became its primary goal. Starting in March 1982, AREA organized demonstrations, petitions and visits to the offices of the Ministers to demand the opening up of adoption files. A moratorium and a parliamentary commission were called for.

Groups of adoptees, non-adopted persons and parents came into being all around the province and they, too, took up the struggle for the right of access to information. It was these groups which eventually led to the creation of **Mouvement Retrouvailles**, under the direction of Mme Reine Landry of Montréal.

It was in 1983 that Mouvement Retrouvailles was founded with the recognition and support of more than 4,000 members. Over the years, the work done by Mouvement Retrouvailles, its founder, Ms Reine Landry, and her team, have earned them great respect. The organization was officially registered in Québec City on February, 9 1983 by its founder, who teaches in Montréal, Mrs Gisèle Falardeau, an auxiliary nurse in Charlesbourg, and Mr. Gilles Bertrand, a dispatcher from Montréal-Nord. These three people made up the board of administration during that period. Today, there are more than 14,000 members spread across the province, out-of-province and out-of-Canada, who are still fighting for their rights to their origins and access to information.

Since its establishment, Mouvement Retrouvailles works in many regions of Québec. Each region has an office which is run regionally and offers well-

structured services. To date, our provincial registry continues its evolution and all entries are co-ordinated by our Head Office in Lévis.

The services offered by Mouvement Retrouvailles are:

- Regional telephone networks
- Counselling throughout the procedures leading up to reunion
- Regional meetings
- links to all CISSS/CIUSSS
- search and contacts with family members
- etc.

Since its conception, many volunteers of Mouvement Retrouvailles have headed up various special projects, both of governmental and public nature, for example:

- Cadieux Commission (1985);
- Access to Information Commission;
- Reform of the Québec Civil Code (1990);
- Reform of the Québec Ministry of Health and Social Services (1998);
- Participation in many events (Salon de la Femme, Salon de la Famille, Salon Maternité-Paternité-Enfants, Salon des générations, etc.);
- Held provincial conventions;
- Two television specials (1991 and 1995);
- Coalition with Groupes familiaux de retrouvailles apprivoisées
- Collaboration with Adoption-Émotions-Retrouvailles, GPAQ, Recherches et Retrouvailles;
- Weekly program « Lons des yeux, Près du cœur » with Normay St-Pierre on different radio stations and now on Sound Cloud;
- YouTube program « Des mains tendues »;
- Member of Interministériel working committee headed by Mr Vital Simard (report presented in November 1999);
- Participation to the Working Committee on Quebec Adoption Regime headed by Me Carme Lavallée in January 2007;
- Public demonstrations in Quebec and Montreal;
- Participation to Injustice-Quebec in Quebec and Montreal;
- Filing of petitions to the National Assembly
- Filing of many letters, reports and briefs, press releases and press conferences;
- Participation to many parliamentary committees (2010, 2012, 2016, 2017, 2021)
- Adoption of Bill 113 "*Act to amend the Civil Code and other legislative provisions as regards adoption and the disclosure of information*" in June 2017 by the National Assembly;
- Presentation and brief to the *Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology* on the Forced adoptions of Babies of Unmarried Mothers in Post-war Canada, in February 2019. This committee presented the report entitled "The Shame is Ours", thereafter
- Participation to the Adoption Seminary prepared by the Secrétariat à l'adoption international in mai 2019;

- Member of the COCON (Quebec Adoption Advisory Committee)
- And many other actions.

The visibility of the Mouvement Retrouvailles is spreading through various sources of information, both in newspapers, radio, television and social networks, as well as through the pen of several authors.

Although great strides have been made, the main goal (the complete abolition of the confidentiality of adoption records) has still not been achieved. The Mouvement Retrouvailles continues its role in the field of accompaniment, support given to members and we hope that one day, the good will and collective effort will meet the means and people able to modify, a bit further, the laws that govern the field of adoption and that adequate procedures related to the communication of all information are put in place. We are still working to have our rights recognized by government authorities.

The work of Mouvement Retrouvailles continues in the province of Québec and we hope it will continue for a long time to come, so that all adoptees and non-adopted persons will be able to find the answers in the search for their identity and roots.