

FAMILY EVER AFTER

PUNCHLINE

Hoping to adopt through the foster system, one couple's quest transforms two families forever.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

An Alberta couple gets more than they bargained for when their attempt to adopt a child through the foster system results in a transformative path to parenthood they never could have imagined.

LONG SYNOPSIS

Filmmaker Guy Lavallee and his wife, Tammy, first met in 1994, but didn't become a couple until 2009. Time being of the essence, they decided to start a family right away, and since Guy is adopted, they also planned to adopt at some point. They tried having kids of their own, but life had other plans.

So, they fast-tracked the adoption idea. After spending a considerable amount of time looking at all of the different adoption options out there (including private adoption), they discovered a fairly new Alberta program called "Foster to Adopt" ("FTA"). The goal of this (now-defunct) program was to get kids placed into the home of foster parents who wanted to adopt them, instead of just bouncing them around from foster home to foster home. In theory, it was a brilliant idea.

After months of meetings, workshops, and training sessions, they got "the call". A sister and brother, ages 18 months and three years, were being removed from their home, and within 2 hours (!), they were living with the Lavalles. They quickly integrated into their new home, and things were going exceedingly well - for the children and for their soon-to-be adoptive parents.

Then, nearly a year later, not having just cause to keep the kids in foster care any longer, ACS informed the Lavalles that they would be sending the kids back to their birth mother. The kids were confused and inconsolable. Their birth mom feared she was in over her head.

THIS is where the typical foster story ends. But in this case, it was only the beginning.

There's a phrase we hear a lot when it comes to family - that 'blood is thicker than water'. That it's these blood ties that keep us bound together and fighting for one another, no matter the cost, no matter the personal sacrifice. That it's because of these blood ties that we value family above all else. But in this case, there's an argument to be made that *LOVE* is thicker than water.

In *FAMILY EVER AFTER*, you'll meet 2 families who worked together to create a non-traditional, loving family, and the children who are all the better for it.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

There are a lot of stories in the media about adoption, the foster care system, kids in short or long term care, birth parents who struggle - and the VAST majority of the stories we read and hear about are negative.

We're told that kids are in foster care because the parents are drug addicts, that the caseworkers don't care, that the foster homes are 'gaming' the system - the list goes on. But we rarely, if ever, hear positive stories of WHY some kids find themselves in temporary care. Maybe their birth parents are struggling a bit and might need some help - it doesn't make these parents evil, it makes them human.

Similarly, we rarely hear about the many amazing prospective parents out there who want to foster and/or adopt kids, to love them, to nurture them, to give them all the opportunities in life that we all deserve - and WHY they want to foster or adopt.

I myself am adopted, and so I always felt like I would adopt a child of my own. From a very young age, I felt no different from any other kid just because I happened to be adopted, and I wanted to make sure another child could have that same feeling. No one should have to grow up feeling like an outcast just because their family situation is different from what others perceive as 'normal'.

If one person can watch this film, and feel empowered to open their hearts and minds to a non-traditional type of family, then this is the ultimate success that we can achieve by sharing our story.

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