

Conceiving Family

Director's Statement

I tried really hard not to make this last documentary, *Conceiving Family*. It would have annoyed my partner if I had been worried about camera placement and lighting as we were meeting our children for the first time. I knew I needed to be fully present, unmediated by a camera, for the sake of everyone involved, including me.

But, I wasn't about to leave my camera untouched. After all, it wasn't your average way to start a family: my same-sex partner was asked to provide her husband's name during our intake call, we lived with the Christian Fundamentalist foster parents for two weeks during the 'transition period', and we doubled the size of our family overnight. Most importantly, I wanted a way for Franny and Theo to see how we all came into each other's lives. It was for this reason that I decided to document particular moments, not make a documentary film.

About a year into parenting, I really wanted a way to share the ways adoption had transformed our lives for the better. I wrote a proposal to the Victoria Foundation, who had a call out for projects that increased awareness of adoption, to tap the potential of the gay and lesbian community as prospective adoptive parents. I would tell their adoption stories and use bits of our footage to weave it all together.

But, there was a major problem. I couldn't find the original tape - the one of us meeting the kids, bringing them home - the most important footage I had ever shot. I looked through boxes, closets, bags, and over the course of 3 months it didn't turn up. Needless to say, I was panicked. I had already received grant money to start work on this project and I couldn't find the footage that was crucial to telling our story. I called a psychic with a specialty in finding lost things. He had even worked with the RCMP on missing person cases. Maybe I was overreacting, but I needed help.

He shared some of his visualizations - possible places to look. More importantly, he helped me realize that I needed to literally ask the question: where is my tape? For all the time I couldn't find that tape I had yet to calm down and just ask myself that simple question. Also, it became clear that I was much more concerned with finding the tape for Franny and Theo's sake than for the purpose of making a film.

Three weeks after the phone call, the question remained unanswered - the tape was still missing. I had no choice but to start the project. I sat down at my desk and began to construct a whole new approach for the film project. I opened the drawer to grab a piece of paper and noticed a videotape sitting in a little box of business cards. I picked it up. It was THE tape. It had been sitting in front of me for months. I had found it the very day that I had decided to move forward despite the missing tape.

Finding the tape enabled me to share our story, but more importantly, it made it possible for me to share it with my children. And, that's the point of this film. The emotionally and technically raw footage as we were forming our family through adoption is not as much through the lens of a filmmaker going through this process, but of me when I was becoming a parent. That distinction may sound slight, but it made all the difference.