

# How to Search for Birth Relatives in China:

What you need to know to get started

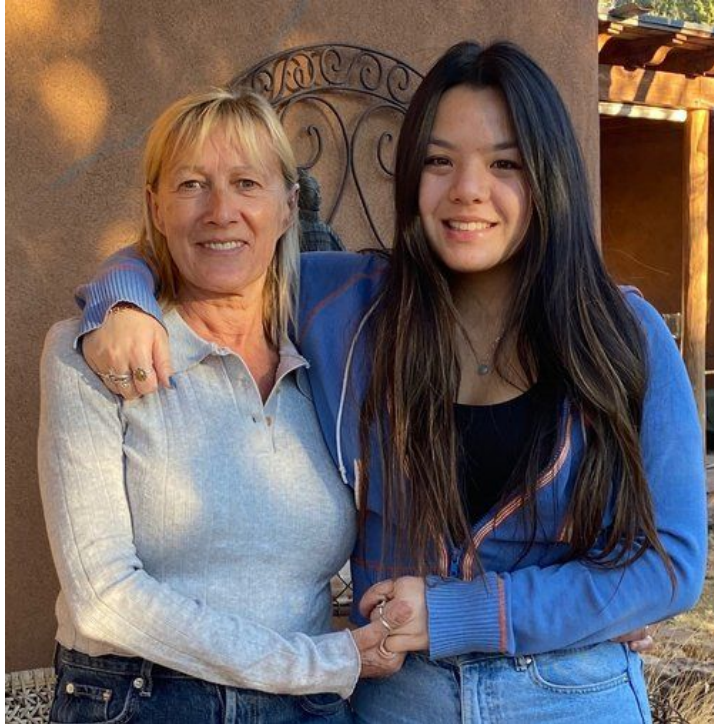


THE ROOTS OF LOVE



# Corinne Wilson

Co-Founder of The Roots of Love



THE ROOTS OF LOVE

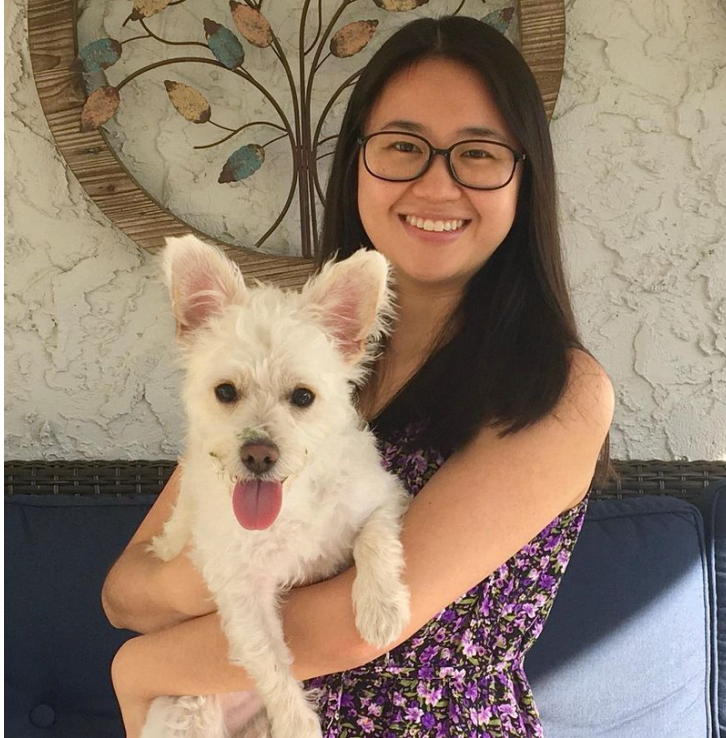


- Adopted my daughter from Chongqing in 2005
- Started searching for her birth parents in 2019
- Hired Xixi for the search
- Started The Roots of Love in 2020



# Cassidy Sack

Co-Founder of The Roots of Love



- Adopted from Chongqing in the 1990s
- Started searching in late 2017
- Found foster family
- Co-founded Roots of Love in 2020
- Hired searchers
- My roles: social media, coordinating projects, community outreach

# Erin Valentino

Co-Founder of Nanchang Project



- Adopted my daughter from Nanchang, Jiangxi, in 2016
- Started searching later that same year
- Founded Nanchang Project along with another adoptive mom (Faith Winstead) in 2018 after our personal search efforts went viral in China
- Held a press conference in Nanchang in 2018 to officially announce our efforts in family reunion
- Visited China again in 2019, participated in a two part documentary that aired throughout Mainland China

# NCPT and ROL Intro

- 100% nonprofit-based groups made up of adoptee, adoptive parent, and Chinese volunteers
- We utilize Chinese social media and a network of on-the-ground volunteers to spread search info; prior to COVID, traveled in person
- We cover the costs of DNA tests for birth families anywhere in China & provide free contact info to adoptees who match
- To date, we've reunited over 30 adoptees

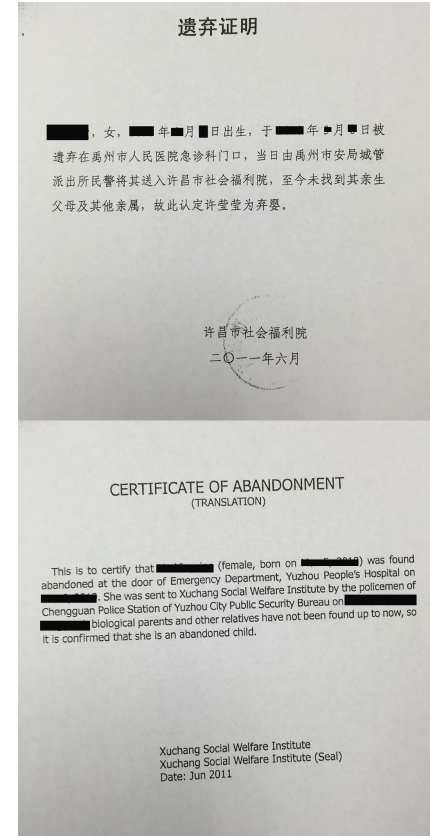


# Brief History of China's One-Child Policy

- By 1970, China's population was very close to the one billion people mark. The one-child policy was implemented nationally in 1980 and became a two-child policy in 2016. Around 120,000+ Chinese children were adopted internationally. As of 2021, three children are allowed per couple
- Family Planning officials in China would fine families who had more than one child. Parents who could not afford this fine would have their children taken to orphanages (Social Welfare Institutes, SWIs) for adoption and/or other consequences
- Many families also relinquished their daughters so they could try for a boy
- Local governments operated differently; some areas allowed for additional children

# How to Get Started

1. Locate original Chinese adoption documents: (1) Certificate of Adoption, (2) Certificate of Birth, (3) Certificate of Abandonment
2. Ask a fluent Chinese speaker to carefully review paperwork; some adoptees have found “hidden” info in the Chinese versions
3. Follow us on Facebook & Instagram and join search-relevant Facebook groups
4. Take DNA tests & upload your raw data results to other databases
5. Download WeChat and other Chinese social media apps—connect with locals
6. Create a search poster for distribution online or in-person
7. Consider hiring a searcher (some searchers include poster making)



# Search Posters

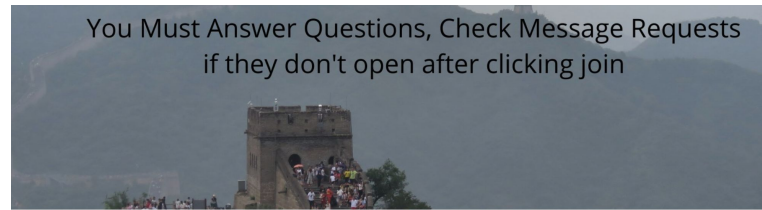
When searching online and in-person, posters are a quick and effective way to distribute information to many people. Ask a native Chinese speaker to assist you in translating the poster text. Your poster should be colorful, easy to read, and include the following:

- Earliest known photos, photos growing up, current photo—optionally include a family photo
- Birthdate, finding date, finding details—clarify this is estimated, not definitively known
- Special medical conditions or body markings or items left with adoptee—depending on comfort level
- Discuss reason(s) for searching and keep it positive—adoptee is happy, no hatred towards birth parents, want to learn about their culture and history, etc.
- Adoptee's interests, hobbies, future goals, etc.

\*Out of respect for adoptees' privacy, we are not including an example image of a poster. You can find many complete search posters in the Chinese searching groups on Facebook.



# Facebook Groups



**Family Ties: Chinese Adoptee Birth  
Family Search**

Private group · 4.7K members

Connect with us on social media and join relevant Facebook groups. These are great places to learn more about the history of adoption, best practices for searching, new matches, upcoming events, connecting with like-minded people, and asking questions!

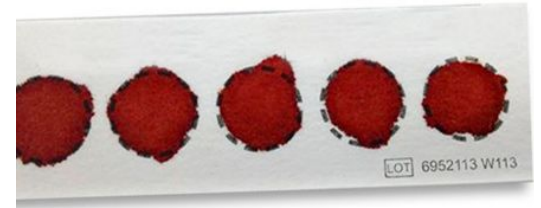
- **Family Ties: Chinese Adoptee Birth Family Search** (Adoptive parents & Adoptees)
- **CCI Birth Parent Searching and Reunion Group** (Adoptees only)
- **Journey Across Forever** (Adoptive parents & Adoptees)

Search for private Facebook groups dedicated to your province, city, or orphanage. Not all areas have a group, but quite a few do, so give it a try by searching keywords!

Some areas also have a group dedicated to birth family searching

# DNA

- DNA testing is a **MUST** to confirm a biological match
- **Utilize as many databases and platforms as possible to increase your chances of finding biological relatives**
- What are the most popular choices?
- There are two types of tests: Autosomal (SNP) and Paternity (STR / CODIS-type)



# Autosomal (SNP) DNA Tests

- Autosomal tests have higher accuracy and can identify close and distant relationships: parent/child, sibling, aunt/uncle, grandparents, close cousins
- American companies: **23andMe**, **AncestryDNA**, **MyHeritage**, **FamilyTreeDNA** (Chinese adoptees should do 23andMe first & then AncestryDNA if finances allow)
- Chinese companies: **23mofang**, **WeGene**
- Databases to enter 23andMe raw data: all the above plus **GEDmatch**

[GED  
match]



# STR (Paternity / CODIS-type) DNA Tests

- STR tests are most commonly used in China, but can only accurately predict parent-child relationships
- American companies: **LabCorp**, hospitals, other commercial labs (To order from LabCorp, call 800-742-3944 and mention the MyTaproot STR test; cost should be \$70 incl. shipping. Verify how you will receive your results: by email or mail.)
- Chinese companies: lots of labs available across China
- Databases to enter raw data: **Help For Family Reunion (HFFR)** ([join Facebook group](#)), other regional databases in China, **Gen Gen** ([gengencharities.org](#))
- Police database only accepts blood entries



Help For Family Reunion (HFFR)

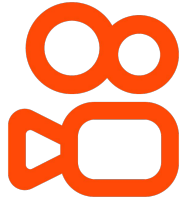




# Chinese Social Media



抖音



- **WeChat** - texting and social media platform
- **Weibo** - Chinese Twitter
- **Douyin** - Chinese TikTok
- **Kuaishou** - Short video sharing platform (like TikTok)
- **Toutiao** - news/article sharing platform

# Hiring a Searcher



- Less costly than traveling to China yourself and hiring a translator/guide, however many more birth families tend to come forward when the adoptee and/or adoptive parent visits in person
- Prices vary depending on the searcher, the area they will search and for how long, the number of posters to be used, and other factors
- Always speak with the searcher in advance about their experience, search methods, DNA testing process, and your needs. We recommend you read others' experiences with individual searchers before you hire them too
- Find a list of searchers on [icsachina.org/hiring-a-searcher](https://icsachina.org/hiring-a-searcher)

# Additional Resources



**Group Searches:** From time to time, group searches are organized for a specific area. This method gives you the opportunity to potentially save money as many searchers will offer a discounted “group rate”. This approach also has the potential to bring a variety of birth families forward as most group searches represent a variety of demographics (birth dates, finding places, etc).

**ICSA (International Child Search Alliance):** Volunteer group that specializes in digital group search posters and search resources. [ICSAchina.org](http://ICSAchina.org)

**My China Roots:** For profit business based in China. My China Roots offer a variety of search services including assistance with Chinese Social Media, Chinese DNA sites, as well as in person search trips. Featured in the film *FOUND*. [Mychinaroots.com](http://Mychinaroots.com)

**\*It is not necessary to purchase data (i.e. orphanage info, subscription blogs) to search successfully. There are many people in the Chinese adoption community eager and willing to share their knowledge for free.**

# Searching in Person

If possible, searching in person will give you the best chances of success. There is nothing more convincing than an adoptee / adoptive family visiting the area directly and speaking to locals. You will potentially have the opportunity to interview with the media and visit with key players in your story (police officer, finder, orphanage staff, etc). Working with a skilled searcher during your search will ensure conversations go smoothly both translation wise as well as culturally appropriate.

Be prepared for anything! China functions as an “in the moment” culture. Each day will bring new surprises, be ready to go with the flow and change plans as the day progresses.





# Cultural Considerations

- **Saving Face:** “In China and much of Asia, Face represents a person’s reputation and feelings of prestige within multiple spheres, including the workplace, the family, personal friends, and society at large” ([chinaculturecorner.com](http://chinaculturecorner.com)). Face needs to be considered in how we represent our search — including what (if any) implications us sharing our search would have on the potential birth family.
- **Collectivism vs. Individualism:** In Chinese culture, you are defined by your relationship to the larger group. All of your actions, whether positive or negative, don’t just reflect on yourself, but on the group as a whole. Whereas in American culture, we are celebrated for our individual contributions. Chinese citizens have a very hard time understanding why adoptees care to know about their roots because of this. One’s own “personal identity” is not important in their culture.

**Both Collectivism and the concept of Face will play into birth families feeling comfortable coming forward.**

**Admitting to losing a baby is not easy; many people carry deep shame from an event like this.**

# Cultural Considerations, cont.



- **Adoption in China:** Adoption is rarely discussed in China. Even in instances of domestic adoption, generally the child is raised without knowing he/she was adopted. There is no support or education in China for adoptive families.
- **Expectations:** Due to cultural differences and lack of adoption education, many birth families are genuinely confused as to what the adoptive parents or adoptee “wants” from the relationship. It is not uncommon for a birth family to think the adoptive parents are looking for financial reimbursement for the child’s medical needs or that they think the adoptive family is trying to “give them back.”

# Reunions



It's important to keep realistic expectations once in reunion. You may learn some or all of the information provided by the orphanage was incorrect (birth date, finding info, etc). Be mindful of things like language barriers and differences in cultural expectations when cultivating your newfound relationship.

Go at the pace you feel most comfortable! Reconnecting with biological relatives is not an easy process and every adoptee's experience is unique. Some birth families will take a more laid back approach in interacting with you while others are much more attentive.

To date, we are not aware of any birth families or foster families in China asking for financial assistance. First families primarily want to know that their child was well loved and cared for. ❤️



Ricki Mudd with her birth family, 2005.  
“**Ricki’s Promise**” is streaming on YouTube.



Kati Pohler with her birth family. Kati’s story is featured in the film “**Meet Me on the Bridge**” and is on YouTube & BBC.

## Films featuring Chinese adoptees searching & in reunion

The latest film “**Found**” follows three cousin adoptees on their return to China and birth family searching; it is on Netflix.



# The Roots of Love: Adoptees in Reunion Event

Session 1 Europe Panel | **adoptees in reunion**

MEET THE SPEAKERS



Session 2 USA Panel | **adoptees in reunion**

MEET THE SPEAKERS



**Louise Birgersdotter**  
(sweden)

**jiangxi**  
(江西省)



**Jade Boonstra**  
(netherlands)

**chongqing**  
(重庆市)



**Rebecka Rubenbauer**  
(england)

**jiangxi**  
(江西省)



**Claire Miller**  
(arizona)

**hubei**  
(湖北省)



**Christina Boerem**  
(new york)

**anhui**  
(安徽省)



**Amanda Phillips**  
(virginia)

**guangdong**  
(广东省)



**Sophie Vukadin**  
(texas)

**chongqing**  
(重庆市)



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(Chongqing Roots of Love)

<https://www.therootsoflove.org/>  
[chongqingrootsoflove](https://www.chongqingrootsoflove.org/)  
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**Co-Founder of ICSPA**  
(International Child Search Alliance)

<https://www.icsachina.org/>  
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Sunday, June 5th, 2022 • EU 19:00-21:00 CET • USA 10am-12pm PST / 1pm-3pm ET

Sunday, June 26th, 2022 • USA 2pm-4pm PST / 5pm-7pm ET • EU 23:00-01:00 CET

Over the summer, we hosted adoptee-led online sessions with panelists who were either in reunion with adopted siblings/cousins or birth family in China. We plan to organize future free events to support adoptees and their families.

# 您 寻 亲 不 再 一 美国部分领养家庭来昌寻亲见面会



# Links & Our Contact Info

Facebook Groups:

- **Family Ties: Chinese Adoptee Birth Family Search** (Adoptive parents & Adoptees)
- **CCI Birth Parent Searching and Reunion Group** (Adoptees only)
- **Journey Across Forever** (Adoptive parents & Adoptees)

List of private & professional searchers: [icsachina.org/hiring-a-searcher](https://icsachina.org/hiring-a-searcher)

Province search posters: [icsachina.org/province-search-posters](https://icsachina.org/province-search-posters)

Facebook	<b>The Roots of Love</b>	<b>The Nanchang Project</b>
Instagram	<b>@therootsofloveorg</b>	<b>@nanchangproject</b>
Website	<b>therootsoflove.org</b>	<b>nanchangproject.com</b>
Email	<b>chongqingproject@therootsoflove.org</b>	<b>nanchangproject@gmail.com</b>