



Winter Newsletter from Boston Korean Adoptees, Inc.

Boston Korean Adoptees, Incorporated <info@bkadoptee.org>
Reply-To: info@bkadoptee.org

Thu, Dec 5, 2013 at 10:03 AM



BKA Newsletter Winter Edition 2013

In This Issue

- BKA Board Letter
- New Board Member Welcome
- Meet Danielle Godon, BKA Scholarship Recipient
- Past Event Recap
- #BKA14 Update
- Upcoming Events

Issue 5.0

December/2013

BKA Board Letter

WELCOME!

Dear BKA Members,

It's been an incredibly busy year and it's winter already. (Can you believe it? We can't!) We're hoping that everyone had a fun-filled and safe turkey-and-football day! We'd also like to wish everyone happy celebrating as we head into the December holidays.

In this issue you'll hear from BKA's Gathering Scholarship Recipient, Danielle Godon as she reflects on her first trip to Korea. You'll learn about upcoming events and the latest updates on the BKA Anniversary Conference, August 14-17, 2014.

We are also pleased to welcome three new people to the BKA Board of Directors: Laura Knuttunen, Secretary; Alice MacMillan, Clerk; and Tony Cova, Board Member.

As always, we'd also like to welcome all of you who have just joined BKA and give a shout out to all our existing members. We hope that you've been able to make it to an event or two, follow us on social media (see the quick links on the left), and keep up with events on our Yahoo email group.

Quick Links

- [Find us on Facebook](#)
- [Find us on Twitter](#)
- [Check out our website](#)

2014 Conference Links

- [Webpage](#)
- [Call for Proposals](#)
- Like us on Facebook!
- Twitter: #BKA14

Join Our List

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)



If you have any information or content that you would like to see in an upcoming issue, we welcome suggestions! Just send an email to info@bkadoptee.org.

Thank you for your support of BKA. We hope to see you at an upcoming event!

Sincerely,

Boston Korean Adoptees' Board of Directors
Nate Bae Kupel, President
Christopher Albrizio, Treasurer
Sarah O'Neill, Secretary/Clerk
Mark Zastrow, Director
Nikki Rizzo, Director

P.S. Don't forget to renew your membership for 2014! Click [here](#) and don't forget to sign in first!

Welcome New Board Members!

BKA is excited to announce three new board members: Tony Cova, Laura Knuttunen, and Alice MacMillan!

Many of you have already met them at the annual meeting this past fall, or at various other events in the past. They have all been members prior to joining the board and active with the organization in the past. The next newsletter will feature more detailed introductions; in the meantime, please join us in welcoming them to BKA's leadership team!

::drum roll:: The BKA Board lineup for 2014 will be:

President: Nate Bae Kupel
Treasurer: Sarah O'Neill
Secretary: Alice MacMillan
Clerk: Laura Knuttunen
Board Member & Events Coordinator: Mark Zastrow
Board-at-Large: Chris Albrizio, Tony Cova, Nikki Rizzo

Thank you to all of you for voting! Looking forward to a great year!

Meet Danielle Godon, BKA Korea Scholarship Recipient

BKA is pleased to introduce Danielle Godon, the BKA Korea Scholarship Recipient in 2013. Danielle had the opportunity to visit Korea for the first time and attended the ICAA Gathering in Seoul this past August. Here are Danielle's reflections from her first trip back to Korea.

Reflections on my Trip to Korea
Danielle E. Godon (Ae Kyung Kim)

Let me start by disclosing that being a Korean adoptee was not a salient part of my identity until quite recently. In fact, I adamantly denied that being adopted, and especially being Korean,



meant anything to me at all for the first 25 years of my life. Serendipitously, after I began to study adoption in graduate school, I stumbled upon this huge underground world of Korean adoptee (KAD) online social networks. This was one of the happiest accidents I could have ever hoped for.



I felt especially welcomed by the BKA community and, by another fortuitous twist of fate, I ended up in Boston for further graduate school so I decided to become a full-fledged member. I learned about the IKAAs Gathering at a BKA social event. Although it seemed financially unfeasible at the time, BKA's scholarship and a few other academic funding opportunities made my first trip back to Korea, a life-changing journey, possible.

For a while, I was in disbelief that I was going back to the country of my birth. Even after I booked the flight and made arrangements for accommodations, the prospect of going to Korea still just didn't seem real. For months before the trip, people would ask if I was excited; I found it difficult to respond because, honestly, I wasn't quite sure how I felt. It did not hit me that I was traveling back to Korea until I was on the plane.

I got to the hotel a few days before the IKAAs conference began. On my first night, I decided to walk around and explore a bit. I only lasted for about an hour before deciding to go back to my room. It felt odd to be walking the streets of Seoul; I thought about how the city I was born in felt so foreign to me now. It was overwhelming being in the middle of a bustling metropolis where I could not speak the language and where I got the sense I was being stared at. I wondered if people could tell that (even though I was "from" there) I was not *from* there.

However, once the IKAAs conference began, I felt immediately comfortable. I could not imagine a better way to visit Korea for the first time than being surrounded by hundreds of other KADs. Prior, I had read about adoptees' first-trip experiences and they spanned the gamut. Some KADs feel instantly "at home," while others have a very strong negative reaction. I guessed I would fall somewhere in between. Looking back, if I had went alone, I think I would have felt estranged. Everyone has different experiences, but for me, going to Korea to attend the IKAAs Gathering made the transition so much easier.

It was incredible to be around so many other adoptees. Until I began graduate school, I was typically the only Asian person in the room. The first time I was surrounded by adoptees was about one year ago when I went out with the BKA folks. It is difficult to describe, but I remember feeling an overwhelming sense of comfort. Don't get me wrong; it is not like I have felt uneasy for my entire life, but there is something to be said when you are surrounded by others who just "get it." It is the difference between being able to *share* stories within a community versus having to *explain* your story to people who want to understand something about you (e.g., why you don't have an Asian last name).

There were quite a few times during the Gathering when I would just be in awe at our diversity. We were hundreds of KADs from all over the world, each bringing our different cultures and languages, yet still united by our early pasts. I remember an eerie feeling when I realized

the way our lives turned out seemed so completely random. Prior to leaving for my trip, my dad gave me all of the files he had regarding my adoption. It was the first time I saw my case number, K85-2486. "K" stands for Korea; "85" is the year of my birth; and I reasoned I must have been the 2,486th baby to be sent out for adoption that year. Looking around the room, filled with hundreds of KADs, I just thought, "Wow, everything was so random when we were placed. I could have gone to Paris, Los Angeles, Copenhagen, etc." Regardless of the arbitrariness inherent in the beginning of our lives (and in life in general), I was thankful that we were all present in that moment and for that week. I had an incredible time meeting so many KADs.

Although I had much fun drinking makgeolli and enjoying the Korean nightlife, the biggest highlight of my trip was visiting the adoption agency. I had decided, somewhat last minute, that I wanted to take a look at my file while I was in Korea. Even though I knew it was something I'd eventually want to pursue in the future, I had no intention of searching for birth family at that point. You can imagine my surprise when I sat down and the social worker calmly and casually said, "So your birth mother stopped by five years ago and dropped off this letter for you." I only made it through the first paragraph before I started crying with tears of joy, guilt, longing, and a strange sense of empathy. I was holding a physical artifact from my birth mother; I felt a weird sense of connection from simply touching the paper she had touched. I was stunned by this unexpected twist and could barely think straight. Luckily, I had invited a somewhat random person, who I met at the conference a few days prior, to come to the agency with me. Throughout the day, he helped me process and make sense of this emotional and pivotal news, and thus went from being an acquaintance to someone I admire, trust, and owe a great deal of gratitude toward, in a matter of hours.

In conclusion, traveling to Korea for the first time and attending IKAA's Gathering changed my life. I laughed. I cried. I found out I have two half-brothers. I shared stories. I felt connected. Ultimately, I made incredible friendships that will hopefully last a lifetime and rekindled what will become an enduring relationship with Korea and possibly my birth family. After a little over a month, the social worker was able to contact my Korean mom to let her know that I read the letter. I received all of her information (just two days earlier from when I wrote this reflection!) and I am now working on writing a letter back to my birth mother, J.

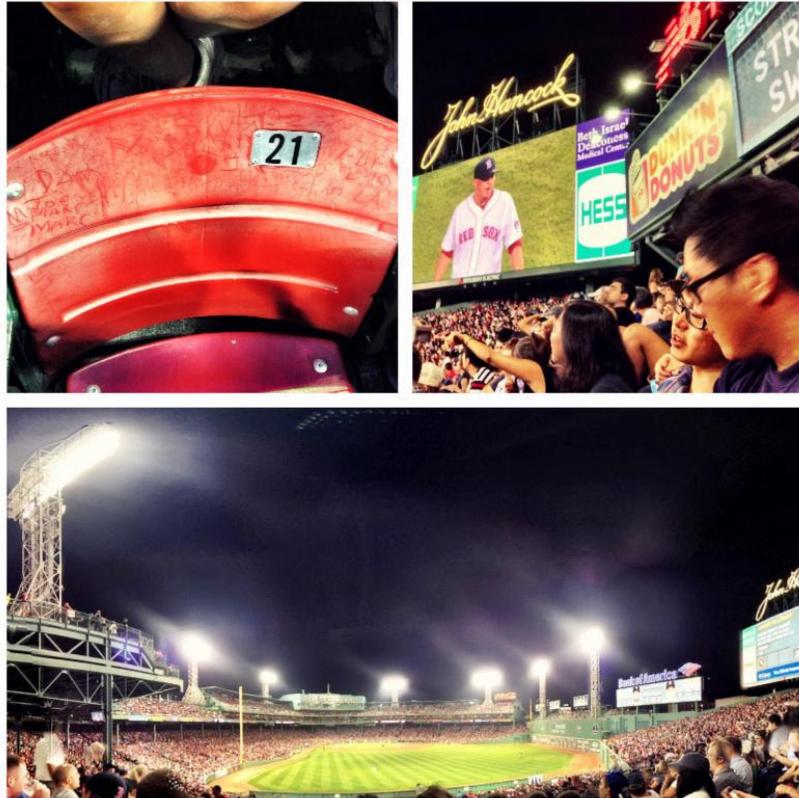
Recap of past events

For the second year in a row, we had our annual summer BBQ in beautiful Larz Anderson Park in Brookline, on July 7. And for the first time in we-don't-know-how-many-years of doing this, we had no rain! In fact, the weather was beautiful-perfect for frisbees, water gun fights, and grilling burgers and Korean favorites. Thanks to everyone who came!



* * *

In late August, a group of 15 of us made our annual pilgrimage to Fenway Park to take in a Sox game. It was great to see both old friends and newcomers at the game. Maybe coolest of all was that our bloc of tickets in the right field bleachers included the lone red seat in the ballpark: Section 42, Row 37, Seat 21. It's the famous seat that marks where the longest home run ever hit at Fenway landed, hit by Ted Williams in 1946 and officially marked at 502 feet. Oh, and we won, beating the White Sox 7-2! Take that, KAtCH! ;)



* * *

On September 21, we gathered at Chung Ki Wah Restaurant in Medford to celebrate the Korean holiday of Chuseok-one of the most important family holidays-and also to hold our annual meeting. I think for those of us in school (there are a few of us in this town), Chuseok with BKA has become a way to mark and celebrate the arrival of a new school year. It's always great to see everyone there.

Of course, we had some business to take care of, in the form of our board elections. This year, the board decided to restructure some of the roles, splitting the Secretary/Clerk position into two separate ones. As a result, we had three open seats (including one at-large).



* * *

KADtalk, a BKA Reading Group, met at the beginning of November for its fall group discussion. This month's (excellent) conversation centered around Don Lee's novel [The Collective](#). The next meeting is December 12 and we will be reading Eleana Kim's [Adopted Territory: Transnational Adoptees and the Politics of Belonging](#). Our February book will be Thomas Park Clement's [The Unforgotten War: Dust of the Streets](#). Interested? Contact Saebom at bookclub@bkadoptee.org and introduce yourself!

* * *

You can see more pictures from all of these events in the BKA Facebook group.

Looking ahead: BKA 2014 celebration

In the summer of 2014, Korean adoptees will come from all over the nation and the world to gather in Boston for a weekend of socializing, community building, and workshops-and we, BKA, will be hosting them in celebration of our 10th anniversary.

Our theme is "What's (Y)our story?" The phrase is meant to suggest that each of us brings our own unique story and experiences-but also that together, we write our own story as a community, and that we have the power to write our next chapter.

Our planning for this 2014 conference is picking up steam. Back in January, we had a fantastic, productive brainstorming session with our members. Many thanks to everyone who attended! Out of that, the Planning Committee has been hard at work incorporating your feedback and is well into planning programming. The thing that we hear over and over again at the committee meetings is that we're committed to not just repeating what has been done in the past at similar conferences—we want to change the game.

In keeping with our theme, we want to find ways to make the meeting's workshops more participatory and meaningful for everyone involved, so that everyone feels that they have something to contribute.

As part of the first phase of our year-long story-telling process, we have two projects going on:

- **Call for Proposals (CFP):** We are looking to fill several workshop blocks throughout the conference weekend with interesting and substantive programming representing many different topics, viewpoints and presentation styles. We are currently accepting workshop proposals; each workshop block lasts one hour. Do you have a topic you can speak to in an educational and/or interactive workshop? Are you a musician/artist/writer/etc. who would love to talk (or perform) to an audience of enthusiastic conference attendees? What story can you tell?

Your proposal can be a panel discussion, presentation, workshop, or just about anything else that is related to the adoptee experience. Here are some topic examples that you might choose to submit in your proposal. Please note that these are only examples and not preferred topics:

- Identity
- Race
- Gender
- Sexual Orientation
- Visiting Korea
- Repatriation to Korea
- Readjusting to Life After Korea
- Parenting as an Adoptee
- Adoptive family relations
- K-pop
- Korean Films
- Korean Cooking
- Dual citizenship
- Unwed mothers in Korea
- The future of Korean adoption
- Birth Family Search (Reunion and Non-Reunion)
- Learning the Korean Language
- Relationships and Dating
- Mental Health

We welcome new ideas, new topics, and new perspectives.

- **Digital Story Project (DSP):** Storytelling has its roots in just about every culture. Through storytelling, we learn, we are inspired, and we grow. The adult Korean adoptee community has grown dramatically over the past 20 years with the rise of the internet and social media. Today, adoptees from all over the world are able to connect online through Facebook and other social media outlets to share their stories. We hope that you'll share your story with

us and in doing so, you'll inspire others to tell their stories. In order for us to share our stories at this international event, we are asking attendees to submit a Digital Story.

To submit a Digital Story, simply create a 90-second video, upload it to YouTube, and paste the YouTube video link into your application. Your video can be a story, a conversation, photos, artwork, music, or just about anything else that is relevant to your identity as an adoptee. Feel free to be creative.

There is no fancy video editing required to submit a video. Your video can consist of just about anything you like-narrative, poetry, artwork, music. Your Digital Story can be only audio with a still image in the background if you wish. However you decide to create your digital story, it must be uploaded to YouTube as a video and pasted into your application.

Your Digital Story will be shown at various times throughout the conference on video monitors. Several Digital Story applicants may be chosen to be featured in an interactive plenary session.

For more information, submit your story, and watch the video, please visit our website here:

<http://www.bkadoptee.org/bka14main>

Also, stay tuned for more information on #BKA14's conference location and registration...coming soon!

Upcoming events

KADtalk: A BKA Reading Group - December Meeting

BKA's reading group meeting for December will be meeting on Thursday, December 12. This month, the group is reading Eleana Kim's [Adopted Territory: Transnational Korean Adoptees and the Politics of Belonging](#).

We're looking forward to discussing this intelligent and well-researched piece. Due to the breadth of what the book discusses, we plan to focus on pages 1-130 for December's meeting (although BKA readers are encouraged to read further, if time allows). We may reconvene in January to discuss the rest of the book, depending on group members' schedules.

Fun fact: BKA and one of its founding members, Jen Strong, is mentioned briefly in the book.

Typically, KADtalk meets every other month, on the first Thursday of that month.

The next meeting will be the 1st Thursday in February and the book will be Thomas Park Clement's [The Unforgotten War: Dust of the Streets](#).

If you're interested in joining the group, please contact Saebom at bookclub@bkadoptee.org.

Holiday Party

Come celebrate the winter and holiday season with BKA. Our holiday party this year will be held on December 14 at the Third Square Apartments in Cambridge (near Kendall Square). Join BKA for food, games, a yankee swap and more! RSVP by emailing Mark at eventscoordinator@bkadoptee.org.

For more information on these and other events, please see our website at: <http://www.bkadoptee.org/calendar>.

A Word from the #BKA14 Fundraising Committee

The Fundraising Committee has been busy!

On July 27th, we hosted our first Game Night fundraiser at Between Hours PC Cafe in Allston. It was a lot of fun, and a success! There were many games to choose from, some of the most popular games were Bang, Monopoly Deal, Apples to Apples, and Quelf. Besides enjoying delicious patbingsu and playing games, each of us received a raffle ticket and prizes were given out. More than twenty-five BKA members, family members, and friends attended. We raised more than \$200, thank you for your support! Our second event was last weekend, on November 24th, welcoming another enthusiastic crowd of gamers. We would like to thank Between Hours PC Cafe, a family run business that is close with a few BKA members. The owner closed off half of the cafe just for BKA and served us patbingsu. We will be planning four Game Nights next year and hope you can attend one!

We organized a Tag Sale fundraiser on October 19th at the East Boston Social Center. Never in the history of BKA has there been a fundraiser the size of our Tag Sale! It took a lot of hard work to gather donations, publicize, recruit volunteers, set-up and clean-up yet it came together very well. Our Tag Sale was a success-we raised \$1200! As you know, all proceeds from the Sale will go towards our Anniversary Conference in August 2014. Thank you to all of you who donated, shopped, and volunteered! Shout out and a big thank you to Laura Knuttunen, who picked-up many donations and kept everyone on-track throughout the months prior to the Tag Sale! We learned how to plan a big event and are hoping to organize another one next year! The Committee currently consists of Laura Knuttunen, Lillian Hexter, Nora Hexter, Alice MacMillan, Sarah O'Neill, and Stacy Slater.

As always, BKA wants you to be involved! We are always looking for more people to help out, whether it's brainstorming ideas, helping out at a fundraiser, or planning events. Please contact us at fundraising@bkadoptee.org if you are curious about what we do or would like to become involved.

BKA Relies on Your Support

Make a Gift to BKA

As 2013 winds down and we get ready for the excitement that will be 2014, please consider BKA in your end-of-the-year charitable giving plans. BKA is a nonprofit organization that relies on the support of its members, volunteers, donors and community partners. The funds needed to put on BKA events, run its programs, and keep the organization up-and-running come entirely from donations, membership dues, fundraising events and the occasional grant.

Thank you for all of your support and thanks again for reading!

To make a secure gift online (through our Paypal-backed website), please go to <http://www.bkadoptee.org/donate>.

We hope you enjoyed the final BKA Newsletter of 2013. If you have questions or comments, please send us an email at info@bkadoptee.org.

Hope that you have a great December, a fantastic holiday and see you in the New Year! (Maybe we'll see some of you at our holiday party in a few weeks!).

Sincerely,

Nate, Chris, Sarah, Mark, Nikki
BKA Board of Directors

You are receiving this email because you are a member of Boston Korean Adoptees, Inc. If you wish to opt out of the BKA newsletter in the future, please contact info@bkadoptee.org.



Forward email



This email was sent to sarah@bkadoptee.org by info@bkadoptee.org | [Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Instant removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).

Boston Korean Adoptees, Incorporated | P.O. Box 120841 | Boston | MA | 02112