



### *Anniversary Update*

By Marlene L. Dalley, PhD.  
Research and Program Development

National Missing Children Services (NMCS) is proud to have been serving Canadians for twenty years. The official opening of the RCMP Missing Children's Registry took place on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1986. At that time, there were no accurate missing children statistics. Therefore, in response to public and not-for-profit searching agencies pressure, the federal government allocated funds and resources for a national missing children conference and research study. The conference brought like-minded people together to discuss the missing children situation, while the study provided more information on the nature and scope of the problem. The study took place in four urban sites, Edmonton, Surrey, Montreal and Toronto. All missing children under 18 years of age were tracked and the data consolidated to give a national picture.

Research results identified a need for law enforcement support and collaboration among government departments involved in the *search for* and *return of* the child. A new Canadian Police Information Centre system file was created to separate missing children data by category and characteristics so that a more in-depth picture of the Canadian situation could be developed yearly. The data was used to collate information for the periodic publishing of national statistics. Currently, an annual NMCS Missing Children Reference Report is released each year on National Missing Children's Day, May 25<sup>th</sup>. Over its years of development, NMCS has grown from two employees to nine – one administrative assistant, four police officers (including the NCO i/c), one research and development manager, one liaison analyst, and two operational data analysts.

National Missing Children Services, formerly the Missing Children's Registry, added two programs to its service, namely the Travel Reunification Program and the Photo-age progression service. Today, NMCS has expanded to include an AMBER Alert assistance service and an informal service partnership with Transportation Canada.

In 1995, Missing Children's Registry, in partnership at the time with RCMP Community Contract and Aboriginal Policing Services, won the Can Pro Award and the International Crime Stoppers Award for the production of the crime prevention video *Safe Children*.

In 1996, the **our missing children** program received the Treasury Board of Canada Award of Excellence for service to the public.

In 1999, the **our missing children** program received Weber Seavey Award for Quality in Law Enforcement at the 106<sup>th</sup> International Association of Chief's of Police Conference (IACP) in Charlotte, North Carolina.

From 1993 to 2006, NMCS has been part of the “our missing children” program, which operated on a formal basis. Today, with technological advances, the service continues with its partners Foreign Affairs Canada, Canada Border Service Agency, Department of Justice Canada and National Police Services, Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

In 1998, The Fourth Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, *International Child Abduction: Issues for Reform* was published. The Missing Children's Registry officials presented to the committee, which resulted in the development of several recommendations leading to important changes.

NMCS also recognizes seven not-for-profit agencies which meet a preset criteria set by NMCS, namely Child Find and its provincial organizations, The Missing Children Society of Canada, Victims of Violence: Canadian Center for Missing Children, International Social Service Canada, The Missing Children Network of Canada, Operation Go Home and the National Missing Children Locate Centre. Some of these agencies are very involved in the actual search and return of missing children while others provide support for parents, return children home, provide social service linkages and conduct crime prevention activities. In essence, they provide a variety of services which assist police and the parents with different aspects of the missing child or youth investigation. NMCS also works in close partnership with the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children in the United States.

NMCS has worked cooperatively on investigations with agencies in Canada and abroad. When the missing child is believed to be residing in Canada, it plays a major role in the investigation of children missing from other countries. In 2006, NMCS assisted with 100 Canadian cases, 189 United States cases and 116 international cases. As of December 2006, National Missing Children Services has assisted with 9,476 missing children files since 1988. Upon request, law enforcement training is offered in Canada and abroad.

Over the years, NMCS has produced several research papers on parental abduction, stranger abduction and runaway children. Additionally, the researcher has served on a number of government and non-government committees spearheading changes that serve to protect missing children and their families. The service has produced a number of crime prevention brochures and reports that are available in hard copy or on the website at [www.ourmissingchildren.gc.ca](http://www.ourmissingchildren.gc.ca).

*We thank all our stakeholders for their support over the years and look forward to serving law enforcement, searching agencies, government agencies, parents and children for another twenty years.*

## 2006 Kids Horizon - Air Canada / RCMP Child Recovery Award



(Left to Right) Insp. M. Martin, Staff Sgt. R. Martin, Rhonda Morgan, Dr. M. Dalley, and Mr. Mike Prosser

Written by Liz Ballendine, Public Relations  
Missing Children Society of Canada, Calgary, Alberta

On October 12, 2006, the Missing Children Society of Canada (MCSC) was delighted to become the first not-for-profit to win the 2006 Kids Horizons - Air Canada /RCMP Child Recovery Award.

The presentation ceremony took place at the RCMP Southern District Headquarters in Calgary, Alberta. Presenting the award was Staff Sergeant Roger Martin, NCO in charge National Missing Children Services, Dr. Marlene Dalley, Research and Program Development manager, National Missing Children Services, Inspector Michael Martin, Southern Alberta District, and Mike Prosser from Air Canada.

Rhonda Morgan, Founder and Executive Director of the Missing Children Society of Canada who accepted the award on behalf of MCSC stated: *"It is an honor to receive this award and we are very grateful to the police and Air Canada for recognizing the work that we do."*

The Kids Horizon - Air Canada/RCMP Child Recovery Award is an Award of Excellence which recognizes the work and efforts of a Canadian individual and/or a Canadian organization in the search for and safe recovery of missing children. Nominations were received from law enforcement, non-profit organizations and volunteers who work with the local police. The criteria and recipient of the award were selected by the National Missing Children Services, National Police Services, RCMP, in consultation with Air Canada officials.

## Prime Minister Visits the Canadian Centre for Missing and Exploited Children



Prime Minister Harper took time from a busy schedule to visit the Canadian Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and learn about its services. Commissioner Zaccardelli presented the Prime Minister with a painting of the RCMP ship, the *St. Roch*, which was the first ship to make a voyage across the Arctic or Northwest Passage, 1940-42.

## Korean Delegation Visits NMCS

In 2006, a delegation from the Korean National Center for Missing Children visited National Missing Children Services and the National Child Exploitation Coordination Center. Delegates traveled to these centers to learn more about missing children services, research undertakings, national statistics gathering and reporting methods, investigation techniques, and the nature and scope of related support services. Two Korean parents of missing preschool age children also attended the meetings and exchanged details of their case ( Contact: <http://www.missingchild.or.kr> ).

## Subject : « Coming Back to Stay » Resource Book for Parents of Runaways



Did you know that every day in Quebec on average, 19 children are reported missing to police authorities? The majority of these children are runaways – youngsters between the ages of 12-17 years who flee their home or youth center for various reasons that may include the need to rebel, exert their independence or escape an environment of abuse. Thankfully, over 86 % of these children are located and returned home safely within the first week of their disappearance.

Running away can be a frightening experience – for both the child and the family. The child becomes vulnerable as soon as he/she leaves home – potentially falling victim to drugs, crime and sexual exploitation. In the face of this reality, many families may feel guilty, depressed or even paralyzed by fear which may delay them seeking the necessary support and assistance required. Often, they do not know where to turn to for help.

An important component of the **Missing Children's Network's** mandate is to support families throughout the entire ordeal of the child's disappearance. We recently collaborated with the **Montreal Police Service** and **En Marge**, a community organization that provides services and referrals to adolescents living on the streets, and published a resource booklet entitled, « **Coming Back to Stay** ». This invaluable tool is intended for parents of runaways and provides them with possible solutions so that they will know what to do, where to obtain help in the event that their child has run away, and very importantly, how to deal with the child when he returns home. The booklet also provides tools that will assist parents in preventing their child from running away again.

If you are interested in obtaining a copy of this booklet or if you know of any family who is at risk, please inform them of this new resource available in both English and French, on our website at [www.missingchildren.ca](http://www.missingchildren.ca) or on the Montreal Police Service site located at [www.spvm.qc.ca](http://www.spvm.qc.ca)

Running away from home is often a cry for help ... the longer a child lives on the streets, the higher his risks are of falling victim to aggression and exploitation.

Thank you for helping us create a supportive and nurturing environment for our teens and their families.

Pina Arcamone  
Director General  
Missing Children's Network Canada  
[www.missingchildren.ca](http://www.missingchildren.ca)

## Amber Alert Program Coordination

AMBER ALERT Working Group Meeting - Washington DC.  
Prepared by Cpl. Marie-France Olivera

Cpl. Olivera attended the second Working Group Meeting, which was chaired by Assistant Attorney General Regina Schofield. In attendance were high-level representatives from agencies such as John Rabun, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer for the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), the Director of the National Association of Broadcasters, and the program managers from US Border Protection Services. Cpl. Olivera also had the opportunity to speak to Mr. John Bish, father of Molly Bish who was abducted and killed in the state of Massachusetts in 2000 - a strong supporter of the AMBER Alert Plan. Mexican counterparts did not have any representation at this meeting and the Working Group is looking for a new representative. Cpl. Olivera provided a Spanish presentation of the NCMEC and OMC program.

The main focus of the meeting was to try to develop a national "Endangered Persons Advisory", a protocol which addresses child abduction cases that do not meet the AMBER Alert criteria. An example of this problem is as follows: a child has been abducted and there is no information on the suspect or vehicle.

The Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) AMBER Alert coordinator informed the Working Group that the OPP felt they had not had an increase in AMBER Alert activations even though they activated several AMBER Alerts without information on the suspect or vehicle. However, it was determined that strictly enforcing the preset AMBER Alert criteria was necessary to maintain the credibility of the system and avoid civil liability suits from disgruntled parents. Furthermore, in the spirit of international cooperation, U.S. State AMBER Alert coordinators expressed that they would only activate an AMBER Alert request from Canadian law enforcement if the criteria were fully met. Canadian representatives felt that the same would apply in a reverse situation.

For 2006, the NCMEC and Fox Valley Technical College developed six new courses on missing children. One of them was the Child Abduction Response Team (CART) course, designed to train over 500 specialized officers for an eventual deployment to jurisdictions needing help with a high-risk abduction cases. This team would work in collaboration with the already existing "Team Adam", which deploys retired specialized volunteer police officers to communities, facing high-risk missing children searches. Other courses include "AMBER and the Media", "Leadership for Missing Children"(LMC) and "Investigative Strategies for Missing and Abducted Children".

## **AMBER ALERT Working Group Meeting**

January 10, 2007, Moncton, NB

Prepared by Cpl. Marie-France Olivera

Cpl. Olivera, National AMBER Alert Coordinator attended the AMBER Alert Atlantic meeting in Moncton, New Brunswick on January 10, 2007. Following the National AMBER Alert conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico in July 2006, which brought together law enforcement from the U.S., Canada and Mexico, several dedicated Canadian Atlantic coordinators and Executive Director, Lori St-Onge of Child Find P.E.I. identified the need to create Child Abduction Response Teams (CART). This innovation would mirror the efforts of our American counterparts. The idea behind a CART team was to engage a multitude of community resources and maximize the chances of the safe recovery of an abducted child. This change would ensure the family and the community that these resources are accessible on a 24-hour basis. In the event a child is abducted, members of the CART team would be ready to respond according to a pre-established plan of action. Phil Keith, retired Knoxville, Tennessee, Chief of Police and current Program Manager of AMBER Alert Training, and Ron Laney, Associate Administrator Child Protection Division, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention made a presentation to the group on "getting started". They overviewed how to identify and mobilize resources in each province. The US Department of Justice has generously agreed to cover the costs of transportation, accommodations and course registration to Canadian AMBER Alert coordinators and their teams who wish to attend the four and a half day CART training. In 2007, they will be offered at various cities throughout the United States.

Phil Keith also suggested that a "Canadian Corner" in the "AMBER Alert Advocate" monthly newsletter be created, thus educating Canadian and United States stakeholders on their respective country issues and initiatives. Canada and the United States aim to maintain a seamless exchange of information to ensure an efficient response to any cross border missing or abducted child investigation.

Regarding AMBER Alert POSTERS, Canadian law enforcement can also take advantage of the United States National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) offer to produce all AMBER Alert posters at no cost. For those posters that do not qualify as an AMBER Alert missing children case, the NCMEC will cover the cost of the first 200 posters.

This initiative is in addition to the current service offered by NMCS to create a LOCATER poster and disseminate it to thousands of United States law enforcement agencies and Canadian agencies by e mail address.

The United States Wireless Foundation, a not for profit organization, is actively negotiating with its Canadian counterpart to work with major wireless communications companies to encourage all their subscribers to sign up (free of charge) to receive AMBER Alert secondary notifications on their cellular telephones and other electronic devices. This system would allow subscribers in the appropriate geographical area to receive AMBER Alert notifications, thus adding "millions of eyes" in the search for an abducted child. Cpl. Olivera has encouraged all AMBER Alert users to contact by letter the Canadian Wireless Foundation in order to establish this working protocol.

*As the National Coordinator, I wish to extend my sincerest gratitude to our American partners for their commitment and generosity on behalf of all Canadian AMBER Alert coordinators.*

Further information is available at: <http://www.fvtc.edu/index.asp> for OMC AMBER Alert coordinators to take the ISMAC and LMC course. Persons interested in these training opportunities are asked to contact Cpl. Olivera at 613-993-8656.

## National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre Combating Online Child Sexual Exploitation

The issue of online sexual exploitation of children has gained a far greater profile over the past few years. The Internet has changed the way child sexual exploitation offences are committed, investigated and prosecuted. Investigating this type of borderless crime required a dedicated centre with its own resources. It has also challenged the ability of the Canadian criminal justice system to respond effectively to this type of criminal activity.

In May 2004, the Government of Canada announced the expansion of the National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre (NCECC) for law enforcement as part of Canada's National Strategy to protect children from online sexual exploitation.

The NCECC was created under the direction of the RCMP as part of its National Police Services. Its functions include: ensuring national coordination of investigations and international liaison; promoting national investigative standards and criminal intelligence sharing; building capacity within the Canadian police community to effectively investigate these offences; and developing prevention, education and awareness strategies.

As of September 2005, the NCECC has been led by Superintendent Earla-Kim McColl who came to the Centre from the RCMP Lower Mainland District "E" Division in British Columbia.

Under the leadership of Superintendent McColl, the Centre has continued moving forward in its agenda to enhance investigative efforts to eradicate online child sexual abuse images and apprehend criminals who view, trade and produce these images.

Another critical component of the Centre is to develop effective methods of identifying and locating victims of abuse so that they can be removed from harm and appropriately cared for. Since the Centre began operation, Canadian investigators from all agencies have successfully identified 100 Canadian children who were victims of online sexual abuse.

The Centre is currently developing the Canadian Image Database for Exploited Children (CIDBEC), a relational database that will allow the centre to maintain a bank of images gathered from across the country and work with all law enforcement agencies to identify victims.

The Centre works with national and international partners and is the one point of contact for any international Internet facilitated child sexual exploitation investigations involving Canada. The NCECC recently played a significant role in the identification and saving of three German children from further child sexual abuse and the arrest of their abuser. The Centre has also taken a proactive approach to investigations that have led to the apprehension of offenders, including one P2P investigation where two young offenders were charged under the Youth Criminal Justice Act and put through the diversion program for their first offence.

For more information on the NCECC, please visit [www.ncecc.ca](http://www.ncecc.ca). For more information about Internet based sexual exploitation of children and youth, please consult the Executive Summary of the Environmental Scan at [www.ncecc.ca/enviroscan\\_2005\\_e.htm](http://www.ncecc.ca/enviroscan_2005_e.htm).

## Missing Children Awareness Program between NMCS and Transport Canada

This initiative was put in place after a Canadian child ran away from her non-custodial father at the Amsterdam airport and placed back into his custody without any further questioning by authorities. As a result the child was successfully abducted.

Since April 2005 Transport Canada (TC) employees are on the lookout for missing children, particularly for children who may be leaving from Canadian airports illegally. TC has agreed to post awareness materials on their intranet site as well as feature photos of missing children. The purpose of these changes is to help employees recognize an abduction in progress. Mr. Jean Barrette, Director of Security Operations at Transport Canada candidly affirmed “We have a moral obligation to protect children”.

On November 8, 2006, Cpl. Marie-France Olivera, National Missing Children Services, spoke to the Air Transport Association of Canada meeting, which brought together management personnel from various areas of the civil aviation industry, including airline companies, technical services and Air Cargo Security personnel. This meeting was arranged to inform these agencies of NMCS concerns and to encourage the stakeholders to come “on board” and support the program.

For additional information on this awareness initiative, please contact Cpl. Olivera at 613-993-8656, direct or 1-877-318-3576, toll free line.

## Canadian Police Knowledge Network

By Tracey Allen  
Public Relations, CPKN

The Missing Child First Responder e-learning course aids law enforcement personnel and the public to better understand the different categories of missing children and how to effectively intervene when faced with these situations. The course integrates the AMBER Alert program and clearly outlines its objectives and the roles and responsibilities of the individuals involved.

For more information, please visit [www.cpkn.ca](http://www.cpkn.ca) or call 1-866-357-CPKN (2756)

## National Missing Children Services Training



Staff Sgt. Roger Martin, NCO i/c, NMCS  
State Clearinghouse and NPO National Conference  
Appleton, Wisconsin, October 19 to 21, 2006

NMCS was asked to speak to the not-for-profit agencies and United States Clearinghouses about the services of NMCS and other Canadian agencies. The presentation stressed the importance of liaising with law enforcement on missing children cases so as to prevent duplicating efforts.

It was also pointed out that the searching agencies have a vital role to play, especially liaising with the victim’s families enabling the police to concentrate more fully on the investigation itself. It is very important for a missing child investigation to proceed rapidly to prevent the child from leaving the country or being seriously harmed.

The presenter also explained the limitations imposed on Canadian law enforcement by the Privacy Act, the Access to Information Act, the Third Party Rule guidelines and the Constitutions of Interpol requirements.

NMCS wishes to congratulate Lori St-Onge, Executive Director of Child Find P.E.I. on her recent involvement with Association for Missing and Exploited Children's Organization (AMECO). We wish you much success in coordinating program, investigations and contributing to the service of the organization.

In conclusion, the conference was an excellent way to enhance relationships with Canadian not-for-profit agencies, overview particulars of cases of mutual interest, and expand their networking opportunities.

## Canada Border Services Agency

Canada Border Services Agency Update  
By Marc Perras, CBSA

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) program to recover missing and abducted children was developed by volunteer customs officers as a local initiative in the early 1980's. In 1986, given the success of the local program, a national program was implemented. A training course on techniques to identify and intercept missing children was developed and by 1987; over 3,500 customs officers had been trained and were on full alert. This was a significant undertaking as no other border agency had a program of this type. The first integrated missing children program was named International Project Return.

On July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1991 the Missing Children's Registry (MCR) and International Project Return joined forces to work together on the recovery of missing children. The Joint Forces operation ensued that look outs for the abductor and missing child were done as quickly as possible. In 1993, this MCR initiative became the "our missing children" program. Recognizing the importance of teamwork and working in partnership, the "our missing children" program was strengthened over the years by including the Department of Citizenship and Immigration (CIC), the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) and the Department of Justice Canada (DOJ). In 2004, when the port of entry function from CIC was transferred to the CBSA, the immigration and customs programs were combined.

CBSA Services are as follows:

- To stop the illegal movement of children across international borders;
- To research, collect and analyze information and compile national statistical data on missing children;
- To provide law-enforcement agencies with a source to quickly obtain accurate information on the status of missing children;
- To assist law-enforcement agencies and other interested groups and organizations in obtaining information on missing children;
- To coordinate and exchange information on prevention programs with Canadian police, communities and community groups by publishing and distributing documents such as research studies, newsletters, pamphlets and brochures, etc.;
- To coordinate particulars as it pertains to the implementation of the NMCS Travel/Reunification Program, which provides for the return to Canada of children abducted from Canada, using the services of corporate partners;
- To promote networking between countries, especially those belonging to Interpol and those which are signatories to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, as well as, members of the World Customs Organization and the Caribbean Customs Law Enforcement Council;
- To contribute to international efforts to obtain support for a unified global response to the issues of missing, abused and exploited children; and,
- To develop specialized training and provide educational resources for police, border services and consular officers.

### **Program Partners Awards and Recognitions**

1996 - The Treasury Board Award of Excellence.

1999 - International Association of Chiefs of Police - Webber Seavey Award for Quality in Law Enforcement.

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## **CBSA RECOVERY STATISTICS**

From January 1, 2006 to September 30, 2006 the CBSA has recovered 51 children that have been reported, either missing or abducted.

### **RECENT CASES**

#### **International Cooperation Stops a Parental Abduction Attempt**

In March 2006, Our Missing Children (CBSA) received information from the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) that a woman had abducted her son from a foster home that morning and was waiting to board a flight from the United States to Europe. The information was sent to the National Risk Assessment Centre (NRAC), where a lookout for the mother and son was entered into the system and then shared with the National Targeting Center (NTC) in the United States. The local Immigration and Customs Enforcement team took the mother and child into custody. With the coordinated and cooperative effort of the OPP, the NRAC and the NTC, the process took 45 minutes, that is, receiving the report, removing the mother and son from the aircraft, and taking them into custody.

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#### **Mother Attempts to Enter Canada with Missing Son**

In January 2006, a woman traveling with her sons (one adult son and the other one a minor) arrived at a Canadian port of entry. The mother indicated she wanted to come to Canada to buy a house and live here permanently. Data base checks revealed that the minor son had been listed in the United States since August 2005 as a *missing/endangered youth*. Checks also revealed that the mother had convictions for carrying a concealed weapon, having a loaded firearm in a public place, and vandalism. She revealed that she had smashed the windshields of 10 vehicles because she was unhappy with her legal counsel. The older son had serious criminal convictions for distributing and manufacturing marijuana. During the search of the vehicle, 25 grams of marijuana was found. All three subjects were driven back to the United States, and upon her arrival, US officers arrested the female.

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#### **Lookout Finds High-Risk Youth**

In March 2006, CBSA received a request for a border alert from the United States Customs Border Protection on a 17 year-old female who they believed might be traveling to Canada. The information received indicated that the girl might be suicidal. As a result of a *plate hit*, the subject was intercepted at a Canadian port of entry. Examination of the vehicle revealed several knives and rat poison. Checks revealed that the girl had a previous history of weapons offences. The subject was returned to the US and turned over to the Customs Border Protection Officers.

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## **Fake Scoutmaster**

In July 2006, a male living in the United States, and a teenager living in Europe, arrived at a Canadian port of entry. The adult informed the Border Services Officer (BSO) that he was a scoutmaster and the teenager was a boy scout visiting from overseas. When asked, the teenage boy did not have a letter from a parent authorizing him to travel with a stranger. The BSO conducted an identification check and a secondary examination of the vehicle and baggage. Indices checks revealed the adult had records related to sexual contact with minors, information that was denied by the adult. The US authorities were contacted for additional checks, which in turn confirmed suspicions. The adult had driven to a major US international airport to pick-up the youth just prior to coming to Canada. The pair were refused entry into Canada and turned over to US authorities.

US authorities informed us later that they called the youth's mother who was in shock when she learned her son was in North America. Further checks with Scouts USA organization revealed that the adult was not a scoutmaster.

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## **Fraudulent Use of Birth Certificates**

On August 27, 2006, a lady and her two children arrived at a Canadian airport on a trans-border flight. The lady had in her possession the original birth certificates issued in Canada in the names declared on her customs declaration card. She produced these later for immigration officers. However, at the primary inspection lane, she presented a photocopy of foreign birth certificates for the children, which conflicted with the children information on the declaration card. Her common-law spouse arrived on the same flight but declared he had traveled alone to a different destination in the United States. During the examination, it was determined the pair had traveled to a country in the Caribbean to abduct the children who were living with their custodial father. The lady claimed her lawyer in the Caribbean had given her two birth certificates issued in Canada of twins bearing different names in order to gain access to a flight out of the Caribbean country. The four traveled to the US and then flew to Canada the following day. The common-law husband admitted they had planned to bring the children back without the father's permission. Both adults were arrested for abduction and confined by police. The children were put in the care of the Children's Aid Society pending further Immigration examination of their citizenship status and the home country custodial order stipulations.

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## **Walkaway**

On August 2, 2006, Border Services Officers encountered a 16-year-old female walking in a field near a port of entry.

The girl who appeared very upset was brought back to the port. Her name was checked against NCIC, which came back positive as a missing juvenile from the United States. The girl wanted to get away from home and decided to travel to Canada to visit two boys she had met over the Internet. Her parents were not aware of her whereabouts. She had

traveled by bus but had been turned away by the driver prior to crossing the border into Canada, so she started to walk in the forest until CBSA officers picked her up. The girl was turned over to United States border officials.

## Missing Children Research Update –Parental Abduction

By Marlene Dalley, PhD.  
Research and Program Development

I would like to thank all not-for-profit agencies, and the parents who filled out the lengthy questionnaire, for their support with the 2006 parental abduction research study. For many, I'm sure the task was difficult as they relived this tragic time in their lives. Nineteen questionnaires were returned. These originated from the following agencies: Missing Children Society of Canada (12), Child Find N.S. (2), Child Find Manitoba (1), Child Find PEI (2), Child Find N.B.(1) and Child Find Ontario (1). The final report will be available in 2007.

### **Parental Abduction: A Canadian Perspective**

Parental abduction is more common than stranger abduction. However, the two types differ in that the child abducted by a stranger is in serious danger of assault and even murder, whereas for the most part, the abducting parent has the *best interest* of the child in mind. Most parents who abduct their child will go to any length to protect their child and ensure they grow up in a healthy environment.

However, in many ways they are harmed emotionally. They are victims of a torn relationship. They are forced to leave their family and friends. They are removed from familiar surroundings. On occasion, they live a life of a fugitive, moving from place to place to escape being found by the authorities. In this situation, normal relationships are difficult to develop and sustain. Furthermore, when the child is told that the left-behind parent does not want them or has died, they feel betrayed. In most abduction incidents, the child's lifestyle and support from significant others has changed forever.

Young children adapt to the new situations fairly readily but older children may think they have caused the abduction. They blame themselves and feel guilty for not telling someone. As well, they are torn between the duty to protect the abducting parent's location and their need to communicate with the left-behind parent.

The length of an abduction episode can last from several days to many years. On a rare occasion, the abducted child is found deceased. Upon

reunification with the left-behind parent, the child may fear re-abduction so the relationship with the abductor is strained.

They also develop a lack of trust toward others, which affects their relationship with the custodial parent. In essence, it takes considerable time for the child to trust others and feel comfortable with the new custody arrangements.

Some preliminary findings are as follows:

#### Child

- slightly more boys than girls were abducted
- most children were Canadian citizens; two had dual citizenship
- the average age of the abducted child was 8 years
- most children were classified as white - ethnicity
- most children were living with their mother at the time of abduction
- most left-behind parents stated their child was emotionally harmed

#### Left-behind parent

- 12 mothers and 7 fathers filled out the questionnaire
- the parent's were white - ethnicity.
- 10 were born in Canada, and five were new Canadians
- over 76% were employed at the time of the abduction
- over half had college or university education

#### Abducting Parent

- the parent's were white – ethnicity
- 50% were employed at the time of abduction
- 26% had a criminal record
- fathers tended to be better educated than mothers
- *revenge* was a powerful motivator

#### Family Situation

- over than half the couples were separated or divorced at the time of the abduction.
- over half of the respondents rated their relationship with the abductor as “poor”, prior to the abduction
- over half of the respondents rated the relationship between the abductor and child as “fair” to “good”, prior to the abduction
- a Court Order, stating custody arrangements, was in effect in 79% of the cases
- 7 children were located in Canada, 7 in the United States, and 5 in other countries
- almost half the respondents reported that there was a known connection to the place where the child was located
- most stated they experienced financial strain, mainly because of high legal fees

## Services

- 78% were very satisfied or satisfied with the not-for-profit missing children searching agency services, and over half with police services
- the left-behind parents' level of satisfaction with the reunification situation, and experience, was most often rated satisfactory to excellent.
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\*Reference: Dalley, M.L., Parental Abduction: A Canadian Perspective, NMCS NEWSLETTER 34, 2007.