

Launch of Missing Children's Month

Montreal, April 30, 2019. May is *Missing Children's Month*. The objective of this month is to raise awareness about the plight of missing and exploited children and to inform parents about what they can do in order to better protect their children both in the real world and on-line.

For the first time in several years, we observed an important decrease in the number of missing children cases that were reported to law enforcement in Quebec. Last year, according to the RCMP's Annual Report, law enforcement reported 5,927 cases as compared to 7,025 in the previous year. While the news is encouraging, we can all concur that one missing child is already one too many.

This year, the Missing Children's Network is proud to partner with MSN Québec. This unprecedented collaboration will not only help raise awareness about the plight of missing children in Quebec but also inform parents and educators about what they can do in order to better protect their children against abduction, aggression and exploitation. Beginning today, and for the entire month of May, several unresolved missing children cases will be featured. With over 950,000 daily visitors on MSN Québec's website, we hope that this initiative will give families the gift of closure. As the safety and well-being of children is at the very heart of the Missing Children's Network's mission, a wealth of age-appropriate safety documentation intended to help parents and educators will also be shared by both organizations via their respective social media platforms.

For the third consecutive year, child care facilities in the Greater Montreal area will take part in the Tiny Tots Walk for Hope. This annual walk is a reminder to searching families that their children are missing but not forgotten. At the end of the event, the Missing Children's Network will distribute *Juliette and Jacob Stay Safe*, a fun and engaging safety quiz that is designed to help parents foster their preschoolers' safety competence. This educational tool teaches our little ones how trusting their instinct, knowing their personal information and finding safe people are key to their safety, in case of emergency.

«Ten years later, we must continue to keep hope alive, have the strength and the courage to go on [...]. I have faith in life and I remain hopeful that I will find my son. » declared Caroline Lachance, the mother of David Fortin missing since 2009 from Alma. This year, the Missing Children's Network is proud to welcome Caroline Lachance and Éric Fortin, the parents of David as their Bearer of Hope Family for this important awareness month dedicated to missing children.

The month will conclude on May 25th, International Missing Children's Day. Once again, in a show of solidarity, the City of Montreal will honour missing children by illuminating Montreal City Hall in green.

About - International Missing Children's Day

Missing Children's Day was first recognized by former President of the United States, Ronald Reagan, on May 25, 1983. May 25th is the date that six-year-old Etan Patz disappeared from a New York City street corner on his way to school. Etan's case remains one of thousands of unsolved missing children's cases and this day serves as an annual reminder of our responsibilities to ensure the well-being and safety of our children.

In 1986, the Solicitor General of Canada declared May 25th to be **National Missing Children's Day** in Canada. Today, this annual awareness day is international in scope with over 50 countries pausing on May 25th to honour its missing children.

About the Missing Children's Network

Founded in 1985, the Missing Children's Network is the only non-profit organization in Quebec dedicated to the search for missing children and the prevention of their disappearance. Regardless of the reason for the

disappearance, from runaways to parental or criminal abductions, the Missing Children's Network's team supports, assists and advises the families of missing children.

In addition, the team works closely with law enforcement, child welfare agencies and the media to find these children and bring them home safely. Since its inception, the Missing Children's Network has helped law enforcement to recover over 1,500 children, and has educated more than 200,000 students how to remain safe in their daily lives, both online and offline.

Last year, the organization implemented **SHINE**, an education program whose aim is to prevent preteens from running away and falling victim to sexual exploitation. As well, the Missing Children's Network launched **Sign4I**, an innovative and indispensable tool that allows parents to electronically record and store an information record of their child directly on their smart phones, to be used in the event of an emergency.

The Missing Children's Network is a front-line partner of the **AMBER Alert Program** in Quebec and a recognized partner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) **National Centre for Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains (NCMPUR)**.

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