



Press Release
For immediate release

Launch of Missing Children's Month

Montreal, May 1, 2021 - Today, the Missing Children's Network officially launched *Missing Children's Month* with this year's theme, "*Forget-Me-Not*". The objective of this month is to raise awareness about the issue of missing and exploited children and to inform parents and educators on what they can do in order to better protect their children.

Last year, according to the RCMP's 2020 Annual Report, law enforcement in Quebec registered 3,831 cases of missing children. This is a significant decrease as compared to 5,805 cases in the previous year and can be attributed in part to the restrictions imposed by the government (school closures, confinement, curfew, non-essential travels) in response to the pandemic. While the news is certainly encouraging, we can all concur that one missing child is already one too many. Following are some of the highlights of the Annual Report:

- 60% of all cases involved females;
- 72% were runaways;
- 63% of missing children were found within 24 hours, while 92% were located within a week.

It is important to keep in mind that time is of the essence when a child disappears regardless of the circumstances:

- When youth run away, their risk of being victimized greatly increases. The dangers may include sexual assault, violence, theft, substance abuse involving drugs and alcohol, homelessness, suicide and gang involvement.
- While most parental child abductions are resolved, they remain traumatic events that can have lifelong effects on the children involved and the left-behind parent.
- The abduction of a child by a stranger is rare (less than 1% of all cases) but is of little comfort to parents and the community. We must remain aware that such dangers are a constant reality.

A missing child's best hope for a safe return depends on **immediate, coordinated and focused action** ... a role that the Missing Children's Network assumes with passion, determination and conviction since 1985.

During the entire month of May, the Missing Children's Network will feature on its social media platforms heartfelt messages of hope by searching families, practical safety tips, inspiring interviews with key partners, long-term missing children cases and publish its annual poster featuring 12 unresolved missing children cases. As well, the organization will launch, *Forget-Me-Not*, an important awareness campaign aimed at ensuring that missing children are never forgotten.

About 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 a non-profit organization whose mission is to assist parents in the search for their missing child, and to contribute, through public education, to reduce the occurrence of children disappearing in Quebec.

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

- 30 -

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