

Missing Children's Day: David Fortin's mother still clings to hope



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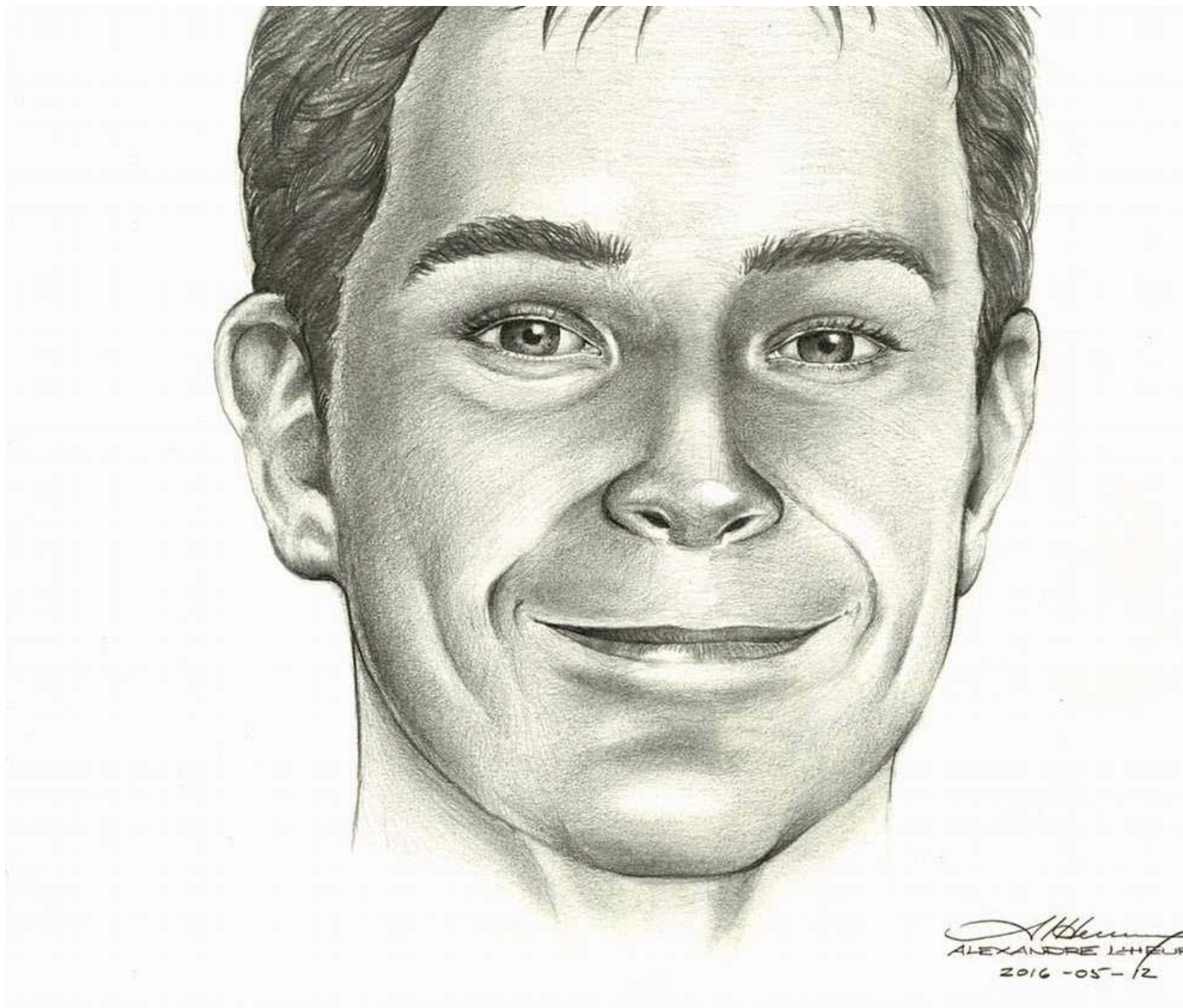
Caroline Lachance, whose son David went missing seven years ago, at a press conference organized by the Missing Children's Network where an age-progressed photo of her son was unveiled at École Barthélemy-Vimont in Montreal, Wednesday May 25, 2016. David would be 22 in June. *VINCENZO D'ALTO / MONTREAL GAZETTE*

Seven years after David Fortin disappeared while on his way to school in the Saguenay region, his mother still has hope that he will be found alive.

"I hope that David, wherever he is, is okay and I hope that one day I will be able to hold him in my arms," Caroline Lachance said on Wednesday at a news conference to mark National Missing Children's Day. "We miss him every day and our lives are not the same."

David was bullied relentlessly for years by classmates who teased him about his ADHD and singled him out as being weak because he couldn't stand up for himself, his mother said.





An artist's rendition of David Fortin as he would appear presently at the age of 22 in a handout from the Missing Children's Network on the International Missing Children's Day Wednesday, May 25, 2016 in Montreal. *MISSING CHILDREN'S NETWORK*

At the news conference organized by the Missing Children's Network, police released an

age-progressed picture of what David would look like at age 21. Lachance asked people to view the photo in the media and on the Missing Children's Network's website. She encouraged the public to come forward with information about the disappearance of her son and the hundreds of other missing children, including many runaways.

REASONS CHILDREN WENT MISSING IN QUEBEC IN 2015

REASON	FEMALE	MALE
Abducted by a stranger	2	3
Accident	2	5
Wandered off	3	9
Parental abduction with custody order	6	7
Parental abduction without custody order	10	6
Abducted by a relative	2	1
Ran away	2,218	3,187
Presumed dead	0	1
Human trafficking	1	1
Unknown	448	594
Other	145	149
Total Quebec		6,803
Total Canada		45,288
Missing children/youth		

In 2015, there were 6,803 reported cases of missing children in Quebec, including 5,405 runaways, a 19 per cent increase from 2014. More and more, parents are calling police to report that their child has run away, said Pina Arcamone, director general of the Missing Children's Network. "With social media, parents are not hesitating to report their teens missing right away," she said. "This motivates law enforcement to get involved right away."

Although most runaways are found within a few days of their disappearance, many are missing for days, weeks and months, she said.

Arcamone said the attempted abduction of a child in Jeanne-Mance Park over the weekend is a reminder that children are vulnerable especially during summer months when families are outside. "These cases are rare but we can't lower our guard," she said.

To mark National Missing Children's Day, Arcamone launched an awareness campaign called Together for Safety. The Missing Children's Network and

reports involving females	58%
Missing children/youth reports involving runaways	76%
Missing children/youth reports solved within 24 hrs	58%
Missing children/youth reports solved within a week	91%

SOURCE: RCMP

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Groupe Jean Coutu created 25,000 activity booklets that encourage youths to make wise decisions about their safety. The booklets, which are being distributed in schools by police officers, encourage youngsters to walk to school with a friend, have a family password for emergency situations and behave appropriately online.

Lachance, who travelled from Alma for the press conference, said none of the 10 teenagers who bullied her son ever called to apologize. She said she

has spoken to other classmates who said they regretted not sticking up for David or for not reporting the bullying that they had witnessed.

Lachance said she believes that fewer children are being bullied today because of extensive anti-bullying campaigns that have been implemented in schools over the last several years. "Today, it's not at all acceptable," she said. "I think teachers have received better training and are more vigilant. The person being bullied needs help, but the person doing the bullying also needs help."

She said she still hopes to receive a phone call one day telling her that David has been found alive. "The hope of finding David is slim," she said. "But we want to hug him and tell him that we love him."

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Left, Caroline Lachance, mother of the missing David Fortin, and Pina Arcamone, director of Missing Children's Network hug at a press conference organized by Missing Children's Network at École Barthélemy-Vimont in Montreal, Wednesday May 25, 2016. *VINCENZO D'ALTO / MONTREAL GAZETTE*

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