



## ***BRIEF NEWS FROM IBCR***

Welcome to another edition of our informal newsletter, *BRIEF NEWS FROM IBCR*, which is published on an occasional basis to share with you the happenings and developments at the IBCR.

With these newsletters, we aim to bring you up to date on our successes, projects, introduce you to some of our collaborators and summarize for you our more important meetings.

We hope that you will once again enjoy this more relaxed and easy-to-read format for communication that gives you an open window into the everyday world of the IBCR.

### **A woman of action for the cause of children and the IBCR**

*Louise Gagné is one of the IBCR's most dedicated volunteers, collaborating with us since 1999. She generously gives up a day of work (and pay) per week from her job with the Quebec Ministry of Immigration to spend time with the IBCR, a sacrifice we are grateful to be the recipient of. Here is an interview with this remarkable and devoted woman.*

### **What is your role as a volunteer with the International Bureau of Children's Rights?**

My role at the IBCR has evolved since I first arrived in 1999. That year I worked with Judge Ruffo (co-founder), who is a friend, to organize a conference, sponsored by the IBCR in honor of the tenth anniversary of the Convention of Rights of the Child. From there, I just continued to volunteer. Then in 2001, after long negotiations with the provincial government, I was put « on loan » to the IBCR while still under salary with the government.

It was following 9/11 and border controls in Canada had become stricter. A number of minors were subjected to interrogations that were not adapted to their age and capacities, and The Canadian Council for Refugees sought out the help of the IBCR to address the question of how to interview minors at the border. The IBCR began to work on the issue and I became very involved in this dossier. I created a work group to research and address this question, and eventually became responsible for the dossier, and took on the role of the IBCR's spokesperson for separated children.

It was the question of « separated children » that led to the problem of child trafficking, which is why today I participate in the IBCR's research programme on child trafficking, particularly before the IBCR had the means to bring an expert on board to oversee the programme.

I am also in charge of fundraising amongst religious communities, who help finance a large part of our activities. It is not just simply raising funds, however, it is also working in conjunction with these groups to fight against trafficking. The religious community has identified the fight against child trafficking as an urgent need and showed its commitment when it adopted the issue as a priority by resolution of the International Association of Religious Communities and established Cathii, a group that lobbies and fights against child trafficking.

Today, I am employed at the Quebec Ministry of Immigration, but have chosen to give up one day of paid work per week to pursue my work with the IBCR on child trafficking and in my role as a liaison with religious communities, while also taking on other volunteer activities.

**Gving one day a week to the IBCR is a large personal donation. Where does the motivation come from?**

You know, for me, it is a question of balance in my life. That is my motivation because it doesn't come from a paycheck I have always moved between two worlds, that of work and the office, and that of my family. I need that duality. When my children got older and needed me less in the day-to-day, I needed to find something new to fill the gap and maintain that balance. And I found it with activism, and particularly through my work with the IBCR. I view life as a cycle and what I learn at the IBCR can serve me in my work or other areas of my life, so even if it not profitable per say, it still enriches my life.

**What are your hopes for children's rights?**

I'm an optimist. At the moment, there is actually a positive evolution, a global acknowledgement and growing awareness of the reality of child trafficking. In North America, this is a recent phenomenon. Whereas before trafficking was viewed as a potential threat, now it is acknowledged as an actual issue. Now that people have been awakened, there is more to be done. We need to find ways to counter trafficking, to prevent it, to help victims, and finally, to legally pursue perpetrators. The profitability of trafficking needs to be undermined, the penalty and risk of conviction needs to outweigh the benefits of trafficking to perpetrators so as to dissuade them. I believe that this phenomenon can be curbed quickly and in a lasting way if there is firm co-operation. The IBCR can be very effective in this fight, we have a role to play, we have credibility and can be the coordinator between all the different actors.

Océane PLOCKYN