



BRIEF NEWS FROM IBCR

We'd like to introduce you to our new informal newsletter, which will be published on an occasional basis to inform you on the happenings and developments at IBCR. With these newsletters, we will aim to bring you up to date on our successes, projects, introduce you to some of our collaborators and summarize our more important meetings. We hope that you will appreciate this new form of communication, more relaxed, informal but with the intention of giving you a more open window into the everyday world of IBCR.

Everything you've ever wanted to know on child trafficking

Lawyer Catherine Gauvreau has been overseeing the IBCR's all-encompassing research/action programme on the trafficking of children in Canada since last January. Why has she undertaken this elaborate study for the IBCR, how has she steered it and what are the potential outcomes of the study?

Here is our behind the scenes interview with her:

Why was this study on child trafficking in Canada initiated by IBCR?

This problem did not just fall out of the sky. The IBCR's study is a response to a social, political and media context that has brought this issue to the forefront. It has suddenly become a flagrant reality that IBCR could not ignore. Trends on the international scene include child soldiers and the sexual exploitation of children in the tourism industry. Since 2002, there have also been scandals in Canada, particularly regarding immigrant children separated from their families. Naturally, a network of advocacy quickly developed within the Canadian NGO community and as an advocate for the rights of children IBCR quickly got on board.

Furthermore, at the governmental level, following the events of September 11, 2001, border security has become a major concern and has impacted the phenomenon of human trafficking. The media has also played a part in making this a known issue, with news reports on child trafficking, street gangs, and documentaries on the subject. It has grabbed the social consciousness of our population. It is within this context that IBCR has committed itself to studying and finding solutions to this problem that directly involves Canada, whether as country of transit, destination or origin.

In the first part of your work, you conducted over 50 interviews with people directly involved in the struggle against human trafficking, all under strict confidentiality. Why is this absolutely necessary for the success of your study, considering it eventually will be made public?

There are several reasons why the confidentiality of the interviews and anonymity of participants is necessary. First, it is simply a question of creating trust between ourselves and those being interviewed. They need to know how the information they provide will be used. Second, it is a question of caution. When cases of child trafficking are revealed to us, the child in question has already suffered severe trauma and does not need to further suffer by being exposed to our readers. Lastly, it has to do with safety. Revealing the identity of our interviewees could place them in danger, particularly those who work directly on the street with perpetrators. Without exaggerating, anonymity can be a question of life and death. Also, at times police officers reveal their strategies to us, which for evident reasons we can't disclose. We can't forget that we are discussing human trafficking, in other words, an illegal, highly clandestine activity that involves an inhuman form of victimization. I think without the confidentiality clause, participants would not have spoken with such candour and honesty, thus providing us with the information we need to fight this problem.

How exactly is the study being conducted, and what will you do with the 50 completed interviews?

We're actually using a very scientific procedure. We've created a questionnaire that is organized under larger themes that serve to join all our recorded interviews. These are then typed, studied, dissected and links are established between the interviews using specialized software. Also, if a persistent issue is revealed by the interviews, then it will be identified and addressed within the plan of action to be developed in phase II of our work.

Our report will be released at the end of October 2006, but already preliminary results reveal a clear course of action. My hope is to get direct input and reactions from child victims to our proposed plan because our motivation in creating it is their wellbeing and safety, which is why their guidance is crucial.

This study has made us aware of many evils and unbelievably tragic stories. But our interest with this study is not just to relate what is happening, but to create action by proposing concrete solutions and having the biggest impact possible. The objective of this project is to incite activism, because if we don't, then the outcome will be just like staying home and watching horror movies.

Océane PLOCKYN