



Fact Sheet

The Canada Border Services Agency: A vital part of the *Our Missing Children* program

The history

The Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) is part of the [Our Missing Children program](#). Working in co-operation with the RCMP's National Missing Children Services, Foreign Affairs Canada (FAC), and the Department of Justice, the program aims to locate and reunite missing or abducted children with their lawful parents or guardians.

In the early 1980s, Revenue Canada customs officers volunteered to develop *International Project Return* as a local initiative. In 1986, a national program was implemented and a training course describing the techniques used to identify and intercept missing children was developed. By 1987, more than 3,500 customs officers had been trained and were looking for missing and abducted children.

In 1991, *International Project Return* merged operations with the RCMP's Missing Children's Registry. Each has a slightly different mandate: the RCMP helps police departments to locate and recover missing children and gives statistical information on such cases; *International Project Return* detects and recovers missing children crossing international borders.

In 1993, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) joined forces with the other two partners. The three departments, with the same goal of protecting children, formed the *Our Missing Children* program.

To complement and enhance this nationally acclaimed program, the fourth partner, the Department of Foreign Affairs, officially joined the program in 1996.

In October 2000, at the annual *Our Missing Children* conference in Montreal, customs coordinators unanimously agreed that the CBSA's portion of the program should be called *Our Missing Children*. This name was chosen to replace *International Project Return* to further highlight the program's partnerships.

September 2001 brought the Department of Justice to the program as the fifth partner. It provides liaison with governments on individual abduction cases, consultation on the interpretation of legal instruments and support on related family law issues. The Federal Central Authority for the Hague Convention is located within the Department of Justice.

When the CBSA was formed in 2003-2004, the CBSA assumed full responsibility for the *Our Missing Children* program at the border from CIC.

The program

The *Our Missing Children* program requires teamwork. We have a strong network of five national co-ordinators supported by regional co-ordinators across Canada. The CBSA has eight regional co-ordinators who train and help our front-line inspectors.

This working unit of co-ordinators is linked to all Canadian police forces through the Canadian Police Information Centre, U.S. police agencies through the National Crime Information Centre, and to most foreign police agencies through Interpol. The *Our Missing Children* program has access to the administrations of more than 200 customs services, as well as citizenship and immigration officers in many embassies around the world. The program is also in contact with foreign government agencies, non-government agencies, and foreign social services in all countries of the world.

The joint *Our Missing Children* program has developed training packages on:

- how to deal with abduction cases;
- indicators and profiles of abductors, as well as missing and abducted children;
- interviewing techniques; and
- laws related to abducted and missing children.

Workshops have been prepared for CBSA officers, Canadian police forces, airline personnel, foreign customs services, U.S. Immigration, and law enforcement agencies around the world.

In November 1999, the *Our Missing Children* program won the distinguished Webber Seavey Award for Quality in Law Enforcement, the most prestigious award in the law enforcement community.

The Webber Seavey Award for Quality in Law Enforcement was established to recognize law enforcement's contribution and dedication to the quality of life in local communities. It also facilitates the exchange of ideas and solutions to common law enforcement problems. The award is named for Webber S. Seavey, the first president of the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

Since the program started in 1986, CBSA officers have recovered over 1400 children. We are extremely proud of the role we play. As the first line of defence when entering our country, we must ensure that we remain ever vigilant and watchful for the children we come in contact with. We must strive to work closely and harmoniously with all our partners in law enforcement and with recognized non-profit organizations who play an integral and vital role in recovering missing children.