

MISSING

– the computer game that saves lives

Nestled securely in the family home, a place you think your child could not be safer. But thanks to the computer technology so many of us have welcomed into our homes, children can be even more vulnerable than if they were wandering around the most hazardous city streets.

Today, young people socialize over the Internet unaware of the real danger of predators. That prospect is hard for many parents to accept, and just as difficult for police officers to believe. However, by the late 1990s, disturbing cases started to crop up. Young people were being bullied through the Internet, and lured from their homes, often into the clutches of someone interested in abusing them.

“Police officers will tell you that some of the biggest problems they face are related to the Internet,” says Vancouver entrepreneur Drew Ann Wake, founder of Livewwwires Design, Inc. Police investigators asked her about producing a computer game to educate kids, parents and above all themselves in the perils of the Internet.

The outcome was the creation of **‘MISSING’**, a game where players become detectives searching for a boy named Zack. Through tips left behind on his computer, it becomes clear that someone Zack has been corresponding with on-line has kidnapped him. **‘MISSING’** walks kids through Zack’s oversights in an engaging format, resulting in the analysis of their own Internet behaviour.

Thanks to the determination of Wake, the support of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Foundation, the Canadian Police Research Centre (CPRC) and other partners, over 100,000 copies of **‘MISSING’** are in libraries and schools across Canada, the United States and Britain.

A wider net was cast with the arrival of John Evans an Edmonton police officer seconded to the CPRC. Working through his contacts with American law enforcement officials, Evans began to spread the word. CPRC hosted Ms Wake and **‘MISSING’** at international police conferences and exhibitions. Introducing **‘MISSING’** to police in the UK, Pan Pacific and Australia. Interest mounted quickly, recalls Wake, who continues to work with the CPRC.

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“Because CPRC works beyond our borders, they were able to help us connect with police that we would otherwise never have been able to reach.” She adds that CPRC through their network and personal enthusiasm made it happen, “They’re very outgoing. They have ebullient personalities. They charmed people into looking at things they wouldn’t normally look at. Without CPRC, **‘MISSING’** would not enjoy the success it has today!”

THE CANADIAN POLICE RESEARCH CENTRE (CPRC) IS A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE (RCMP), THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE (CACP) AND THE NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL OF CANADA (NRC) – www.cprc.org