

# Vanished: Families' awful wait

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Now the awful wait has begun for another Island family. Fourteen months have passed since Lisa Marie Young, 20, was last seen getting into a car in Nanaimo after a night out with friends. As with the other unsolved disappearances on the Island, hundreds of leads have been followed but to no avail.

"It's frustrating for us that after all this time, Lisa still hasn't been found," her father Don Young recently told the *Nanaimo Daily News*. "My family is looking for closure."

All told, 66,532 young people were reported missing in Canada last year. Close to that same number have been reported missing every year all the way back to 1986, the first year Canada started keeping statistics.

The vast number are runaways — 52,390 last year. Another 400 or 500 children in any given year are kidnapped, all but a handful of them abducted by a parent. The majority of disappearances in all categories are cleared up within 24 hours; 86 per cent

are resolved within a week.

But that still leaves several thousand each year that linger on, wreaking quiet devastation on friends and family desperate for answers.

"You never think it can happen to anyone you know," says Nanaimo singer Allison Crowe, who went to high school with Lisa Marie Young and recently wrote a song about her disappearance. "But I came home from out of town and Lisa was gone."

B.C. newspaper archives are full of items on people gone missing — big stories if it's a small child, smaller stories if it's a grown one. Some end happily the next day, when the person in question is found at a friend's house, or spotted in a nightclub blissfully unaware anyone was worrying about them. Too many end tragically, usually as suicides but occasionally as murders.

And some never end. Yi-Cheng Chen, a 15-year-old Taiwanese student, vanished from Surrey three years ago and has never been found. Neither has Nicole Hoar, the young tree-planter who disappeared 15 months ago while

hitchhiking from Prince George to Smithers. The family of Mathew Hobbs lived without answers for eight years, until firefighters battling a blaze deep in the bush near Falkland this summer stumbled on the 18-year-old's remains.

"It's an open wound," acknowledges Crystal Dunahee.

The families cope, often by helping people like themselves. Dunahee, guest speaker at a Nov. 7 fundraiser for ChildFind Victoria, is interim president of the provincial body.

Crowe wrote her song, and is turning over the proceeds from sales of her new album to keep the search alive for Lisa Young. Others volunteer for support groups run by the Missing Children's Society, reaching out to heart-sick families not yet ready to believe life could possibly go on.

It does. But never easily.

"You know, it's something you never forget," says Jack Aspinall, now 77. "If they were dead, you would forget about it. This way, you don't know. You don't know."

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## Vanished: Families' awful wait

Times Colonist (Jody Paterson) - Sunday October 5, 2003

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