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Kidnapped: an update

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In a recent article "Kidnapped: Gabriola grandparents fight Japan," the *Sounder* told its readers about the ongoing battle of island residents Marilyn and Ian Wood to have their young grand-children returned from Japan.

In concert with their son Murray Wood - who was granted legal custody in Canadian courts - and supporters, they are currently conducting a public awareness campaign regarding the first time that our federal government has issued a formal request to Japan for the return of a parental child abductor.

In the absence of an extradition treaty between the two countries, this request is the most forceful diplomatic tool available in the effort to have the children's mother, Ayako Wood, returned to this country to face criminal charges for two counts of child abduction.

Such requests are usually reserved for murder cases, yet Ayako Wood's conduct has been so outrageous, and the evidence against her so conclusive, that the Canadian government has decided to seek Japanese assistance to bring Ayako Wood to justice and, consequently, to see the two Canadian children returned.

Japan - which has not signed the Hague Convention of the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction - is a haven for international child abduction. In addition to many unreported cases there are 21 known and outstanding cases of parental child abduction of Canadian children and Japanese born parents continue to live with the children in that country with impunity.

The Wood abduction case, and the Canadian Government's unprecedented request for Japanese assistance, provides an important opportunity to draw public attention to the gravity of the injustice routinely perpetrated by the Japanese court system and irreparable damage on the lives of abducted children.

Murray Wood's attempts to retrieve the children through the Japanese Court system have been protracted and disappointing and all applications were dismissed in January 2006.

In Japan, the children have been denied all contact with their Canadian family despite hundreds of postcards, telephone calls and two trips to Japan by their father, among the clear indications that the children are being deliberately denied contact with their family and friends from their home country.

Child victims suffer negative psychological effects when kidnapped by a parent, are often used as a tool or weapon in the conflict between the parents, and the abduction is widely considered to be a form of psychological child abuse in which the guilty parent's needs are given priority over the child's developmental issues.

For information about the effects of parental abduction, visit: www.takeroot.org. More information is also available at www.irocs.com.



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Gabriolans can support the Wood family by e-mailing the Japanese Ambassador to Canada: sadaaki.numata@mofa.go.jp asking that his country sign the Hague Convention of the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction.

As well, they can contact MPs, MLAs, and the Ministers of Justice and Foreign Affairs to take action to protect children from international abduction.

Headlines



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The banner features a scenic view of a marina with boats and two women smiling in the foreground. A seagull is flying in the sky on the right side.

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