

## Internet Bullying Causes Teen's Death

**Varennnes, Quebec** – Clara Harding spent months begging her mom to let her have a MyFace page. Clara's mom wasn't sure it was a good idea. She didn't want Clara spending too much time at the computer, but eventually she decided that a MyFace page might help Clara to make some friends.

"In primary school Clara was often teased because she was taller than the other girls," said Mary Baxter, Clara's mother. "She was really shy and sensitive. I thought that online at least she could make friends without being judged by her physical appearance."

Baxter was wrong. The bullies from primary school found Clara online through her MyFace page and launched their attack. It began simply enough. They created fake names and asked Clara to be their friend, complimenting her on the pictures and artwork that she posted online. Then, one of the bullies decided to invent a fake boy who would get a crush on Clara. "They named him Jake," Baxter said, holding back tears. "Clara was so excited that a boy had a crush on her. She told me all about it and showed me his picture. I had no idea that he didn't really exist."

Then, the online situation suddenly turned ugly. Jake and Clara's other virtual friends began to make nasty and hurtful comments, telling her that her ideas and messages were "stupid," that she should "think before you type." "I had no idea that her so-called friends were being so mean to her," sobbed Clara's mother. "I guess she deleted their messages before I could see them, or else I would have made her stop looking at her MyFace page."

Clara's new-found self-confidence vanished.. At first she tried to fight back, replying in kind to her tormentors, but there were too many of them against her. Clara, already fragile from years of bullying at primary school, felt alone and as if she would never make a friend, either in real life or online. Tragically, Clara decided to end her life. "I came home after work and found a note from Clara on the table," said Baxter, wiping her eyes. "It was the most awful moment of my life. As soon as I saw the note I just knew what she had done."

While Clara's case may be considered as extreme, it is far from exceptional. Bullying is commonplace in schools, and with new technology, victims are no longer safe when out of school or even at home.. Today's bullies inflict their poison on their cellphone with text messages, or on their computer with e-mails or, as with Clara, through web pages. Bullying and cyberbullying have serious consequences; they must be stopped before another tragedy occurs.