

Western Canadian man charged with extorting several youth

A 32 year old man from Western Canada has been charged with extortion and a variety of Internet sex crimes involving several boys.

As a result of a lengthy investigation, Robert Smith, 32, has been charged with accessing, possessing and distributing child pornography, as well as extortion with intent to obtain child pornographic images on the Internet.

Police said the investigation began in February after members of the local ICE Unit learned about a report of the online extortion of a male who was under 16 years of age. The youth revealed the blackmail to his parents who then reported the crime to Cybertip.ca and the police. An investigation was then conducted, resulting in the discovery of other young boys being extorted by Smith.

Smith targeted male youth that

he met during his employment at a local youth centre and regular volunteer work. It appears that he used his position of authority to develop a deeper relationship with the youth. He then encouraged the males to send him partially nude pictures in order to "practice for future intimate relationships." Upon receipt of these initial images, he would then blackmail the youth into sending more sexual images by threatening to share the first pictures with the youth's family and friends.

"Smith may have extorted more than 30 individuals over the past decade," says Sergeant Murray, the lead investigator. "We want the public to know that sextortion and child pornography are serious crimes and will not be tolerated."

One mother of a victim speaks out:

"My son had been dealing with this blackmail for almost a year without anyone's knowledge. He is ashamed of what he has done, though I remind him it's not his

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fault. If it weren't for the youth who first came forward, I don't know how much more serious this would have become."

Police encourage any victims to come forward. "It's a tough thing to do, but talking with a trusted adult and reporting these types of crimes are essential in stopping the abuse and protecting others who may not be able to speak out," states Murray.