

Foreign police and identification specialists are taking an interest in Alexandre Beaudoin, 27. The Montrealer developed a cheaper, more reliable technique to lift fingerprints from wet paper

# Young researcher makes his mark

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THE GAZETTE

A forensic researcher working for the Sûreté du Québec has developed a technique to lift fingerprints from wet paper that works better than existing methods.

It is also a lot cheaper than techniques now in use and has raised interest among Canadian and foreign police and identification specialists.

Researcher Alexandre Beaudoin, 27, trained in microbiology at Université de Montréal, developed the method over two years at his lab at SQ headquarters on Parthenais St.

Beaudoin developed the method as part of his mandate to create new technologies so the SQ is at the forefront of forensic science.

The usual method is based on oxidation reduction, which uses silver to coat and identify fingerprints.

But this method is not reliable, Beaudoin said, and the chemicals used cost about \$250 for one batch of fingerprint searches.

Beaudoin's innovation was to soak the evidence – wet or soggy paper – in Oil Red O, a liquid used in microbiology to identify membranes in cells.

Using his background in the university lab, Beaudoin mixed this substance with methanol and found that it works as a stain to clearly delineate a fingerprint.

"It took me about two years to work this out," Beaudoin said as he demonstrated how it works.

Material for his method would cost about \$15 for 500 grams, while equivalent material using the oxidation reduction method would cost about \$1,000, he said.

The technique can be useful to lift prints from a shipwreck, submerged vehicle, or papers that are soaked in water or snow.

"We just lifted a fingerprint from a piece of paper that was taken as evidence 20 years ago that someone used in a failed attempt to light a fire," he said.

Beaudoin outlined the new technique and its advantages to colleagues



JOHN MAHONEY THE GAZETTE  
Forensic researcher Alexandre Beaudoin at SQ headquarters.

last month at the annual conference of the Canadian Identification Society.

Society president Sgt. Grant Boulay of the Belleville, Ont. police force, de-

scribed Beaudoin as "a great, authentic research person."

"It is a new way to find fingerprints and it is significant for us in the field – one more way to get the bad guy that much quicker," he said in an interview from Belleville. "It is a significant find, a great piece of research."

Beaudoin also presented his discovery in a scholarly paper published in August, last year in the forensic researcher's peer-review publication, the *Journal of Forensic Identification*.

His method has raised interest among colleagues in Ottawa working for the RCMP, and he received calls from European police forces, Beaudoin said.

The SQ lab also examines evidence for fingerprints on behalf of the Montreal police, he pointed out.

Beaudoin is continuing his research in digital photography and computer technology and is working on his master's degree at Université de Montréal in evaluation of new technologies.

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