



Apropos...

Batshaw Youth and Family Centres

News from Michael Udy, Executive Director

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

February is Black History month. It has become a month of celebration and learning at Batshaw, as we participate in seminars and activities that explore the history of the Black community in Montreal and North America. Learning about the Black community is a long term project, which Black History month lets us advance a little further each year. There are activities in different locations in the agency, be sure to participate in at least one. These activities are part of the multiracial/multicultural commitments adopted by the Batshaw Board in 1995.

At their January meeting, the board of directors received the report of the Black Advisory Committee for 1998. It takes considerable effort to develop an advisory committee to its full capacity. The Black Advisory committee has made a good start, as it examines ways to connect with clients and staff, and contribute to policy and program development. The committee was created via an agreement signed with the Black Community Resource Centre. The Batshaw board has acknowledged its satisfaction with the agreement which will be renewed at the end of February.

CAMPUS PROBLEMS

Since last September our campus programs at Prévost and Dorval have been going through a very rough period. There are a few reasons for this, including the fact that fewer residential beds means a greater concentration of more difficult clients; less support resulting from the thinning of management time, social service practitioners and specialized services; and greater turnover and use of backup resources. The end result is greater instability in many of the residential groups.

Director Nick Paré, the managers and staff in the division are in the process of developing and implementing a plan that is intended to bring stability to the programs in the short run, and development in the medium term, that will raise not only the level of stability, but also the level of expertise and effectiveness of these programs.

GEMMA

On Thursday, January 21st, Trish White, Coordinator of Residential Programs for Adolescent Girls, and her staff presented the Gemma program to Batshaw staff at the Dorval campus. You will recall that the transformation plan called for the closure of a residential unit for adolescent girls, and in fact Renaissance closed in the summer of 1998. Part of the plan called for the development of new social reinsertion supports to help young women stay in the community where possible, and return there from residential programs more quickly.

Gemma is the response to that plan. Essentially, the program aims to reach adolescent girls in a different way while under the care of Batshaw by providing them with mechanisms to enable them to make better and different choices. The program is managed by Lynn Hanley and Bruce Cummings. Staff assigned to the program include a social worker, Judy Hampton and two youth care workers, Gloria Jean Murphy and Peter Desmiers.

SUICIDE PREVENTION WEEK

February 14th to 20th is Suicide Prevention Week. The *Association québécoise de suicidologie* has proposed a theme for the week, and Batshaw psychologist Kees Maas has translated this into a series of activities for our youth and staff. These activities will take place at different locations around Batshaw, look for news on your bulletin board.

HIV/AIDS

Batshaw has long been a sponsor of Project 10, an outreach program for gay, lesbian and bisexual youth. The program's aim is to diminish the likelihood of the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases through the availability of information, peer counselling and support, and raising self esteem. We have also had a peer counselling program in the residential programs. But further development of Batshaw's programs in this area has been stymied by lack of funds and staff time.

Therefore, we are pleased that the Regional Board has allocated some \$22,000 to Batshaw in 1998-99, and will likely allocate more next year, so that we can pursue this development. Marie Leduc, Manager of Health Services, has undertaken to oversee the work, which will be carried out in collaboration with staff from the three direct service divisions.

COMPUTERIZATION AND THE INTRANET

You have no doubt observed the growing number of computers in the different points of service around Batshaw. This represents the implementation of the Computer Master Plan. When completed in April 1999, there will be 350 PCs spread throughout Batshaw's offices and residential programs, all connected together.

This system presents great opportunities for saving time and enabling administrative and client information to flow much more rapidly through the organization. At present, a growing number of staff are able to communicate with each other by e-mail, memos sent from one computer to another, or simultaneously to many others. Documents can be attached to e-mail so that distribution of documents and work on drafts can be far more rapid than the courier system can ever provide. It is also possible to post documents (the Policy and Procedure manual; forms; eventually this newsletter) on a kind of internal website called the intranet.

Intranets are like the websites on the internet, except it is only accessible to Batshaw staff. The framework of the intranet is already on the system, but it does not have a lot of content yet. This will change over the next several months. If you want to look at the intranet, follow the instructions you received from Berry Khawam, via Lotus Notes, on December 14, 1998. If you were not hooked up to the system at that time, please contact Berry at 989-1885. Later in 1999, software will become available that will enable us to have a single electronic client dossier, and tools to support clinical practice will also become available.

To help you have the knowledge and experience to use this tool, that represents the backbone of Batshaw communications and information management in the future, the human resources development staff and the computer services unit offer courses every month on a regular basis, so that over time everyone can become computer literate. You can consult the course schedules on your local bulletin board or on the Batshaw intranet.

CLICHE REPORT

In January the Cliche committee report was released. This committee, chaired by the Executive Director of les Centres de jeunesse Mauricie-Centre du Québec, Guimond Cliche, puts forward many recommendations that call for a much greater collaboration between youth centres, schools, CLSCs, the medical network and community organizations. This is a direction already being pursued by Batshaw in our work with the 13 CLSCs that make up the Table de Concertation Sud-Ouest. More about the Cliche report and our work with the Table de Concertation in the March *Apropos*.