



Apropos

Batshaw Youth and Family Centres

News from Michael Udy, Executive Director

POW! WOW!

(Contributed by Merv Atta-Segal, Receptionist at Prévost Campus, DRTSA)

On Saturday, June 12th, Batshaw Youth and Family Centres and the people of Kahnawake held the 7th annual traditional Powwow at the Prévost campus. This year's theme was "Honouring our Youth". The day was a resounding success in terms of participation and weather.

Forty people from the Cree Nation from Mistissini and Chisasibi were present. The elders set up a traditional cooking Teepee and dug a fire pit where they roasted over a dozen wild geese, several roasts of caribou, and four types of bannock. They gave out samples of their traditional foods, in accordance with their philosophy and custom of sharing. The group came to our Powwow through the efforts of Ms. Lynn Hanley of Cree Social Services.

The Kahnawake "Tiny Tots" Lacrosse team played an exhibition game. Even at such a young age, native boys and girls learn the intricate and often difficult handling of the ball in this fast-moving game.

The host drum--considered the heartbeat of any Powwow--was "Big Stone". The seven men kept a steady rhythmic flow of song and beat for the dancers.

The Iroquois / Mohawk people were represented by over 30 dancers, including traditional, hoop, jingle and fancy dancers. The variety of dance and regalia was a feast to the eye.

Two Inuit throat singers from the "Northern Module" performed two songs of these guttural sounds that emulate nature and their environment.

The "Tasiutigiiit" Cree foster families also came to enjoy the day through the organizing efforts of Margaret Butler of the Montreal Children's Hospital.

And finally, Claude McKenzie, formerly of the popular duo "Kashtin", sang six songs, some from his latest C.D. This is the 3rd consecutive year that he performs at our Powwow. He believes in our cause to give our native clients a sense of belonging and pride in their culture.

A group of 15 people from the Montreal Native Friendship Centre set up a craft table and an information booth on diabetes, which is a growing concern amongst the native population.

There were several tables of native crafts, from beaded jewelry to a variety of dream catchers to geese made of Tamarack crafted by one of the Cree elders. A Native medallion was raffled off and won by a young local girl.

The festivities were attended by over 700 spectators and there was a constant ebb and flow of people from the surrounding area and Montreal. There was a good turnout of Batshaw foster families, residential unit clients and staff, as well as Batshaw employees and their families.

Our Native clients were involved in hosting this event, and helped to take care of the elders' needs, and to set up before and clean up after the festivities. They were also involved in the presentation of the plaques to the performers.

Several reporters from local papers, as well as two students from McGill University's radio station, covered the event.

A native medallion was presented to Nick Paré by Rudy Montour and the people of Kahnawake for being partly responsible for this event to take place each year.

This Powwow could not have been possible without the efforts and commitment of Mr. Rudy Montour of Kahnawake. Rudy was largely responsible for contacting most of the dancers and host drum, Tiny Tots Lacrosse team, craft vendors and ice cream truck. He approached the Mohawk Council of Kahnawake and Peter "Pitt" Jacobs, who shared the cost of a bus to bring performers and elders to the Powwow.

The Powwow was also made possible by the involvement and help of several Batshaw divisions.

Many thanks go to Sam Barile and the "Ways and Means" Committee, made up of Prévost Campus clients. The boys and girls were a big help in moving furniture, painting the rink in case of bad weather and generally helping out wherever needed. There was also the work done by clients who owed community hours, also under the supervision of Sam. They helped out in the kitchen, at the barbecue and anywhere else they were needed.

The Prévost recreation staff manned the barbecues and grilled hundreds of hot dogs, hamburgers and Italian sausages in the hottest part of the day. Pierre Beauchamps and his maintenance crew prepared the grounds, built shelters and generally readied the campus for this event. Eric Moran and his work program clients mowed the grass several times in preparation for the dancing and festivities. Our very talented chef, Sylvio Bicari, once again carved a masterpiece in honour of this Powwow. This year's carving will be donated to the Youth Group in Kahnawake. Sylvio and his team were also involved in providing lunch and supper for approximately 75 people. The transportation department was helpful in providing transportation for visitors, performers and clients.

Finally, thanks to Mario Foisy and the Prévost Campus security team for diligent coverage of the campus in order to keep the festivities orderly and safe.

YOU ARE INVITED

The Annual Staff BBQ at Camp Weredale will be held on Sunday, August 22nd, from noon to four, at beautiful Lac L'Achigan in the Laurentians. All staff, their partners and families are invited to attend the BBQ and enjoy a relaxing day in the country. There is a free lunch and plenty of activities on land and in the water for all ages.

If you have never visited the camp, it's a wonderful opportunity to see where a large number of youngsters who receive services from Batshaw Youth and Family Centres experience the great outdoors. Note the date and watch for posters and flyers that will provide further information. Hope to see you there.

BRAVO!

Congratulations to Batshaw foster parents, Amal Nafie and Ibrahim Abdelatiff, for receiving the Child Welfare of Canada 2003 Outstanding Achievement Foster Parent Award. More details in the September Apropos.