



Appropos

Batshaw Youth and Family Centres

News from Michael Udy, Executive Director

POWWOW 2005

(Contributed by Mervat Atta-Segal, Dave Brown and Andy Simon of Residential Treatment Services for Adolescents at Prévost)

On Saturday, June 18th, 2005, Batshaw Youth and Family Centres and the people of Kahnawake held their 8th annual traditional Powwow entitled, "Honoring our Youth in the Year of the Veteran", at the Prévost campus in the Laurentians. It was a resounding success in terms of participation, diversity and richness of ceremonies.

Forty-five people from the Cree Nation from Mistassini and Chisasibi set up a traditional hunting/cooking teepee, dug a fire pit where they roasted wild geese, beaver, smoked bear, lake trout, sturgeon, caribou stew, and two different types of bannock, and gave out samples in accordance with their philosophy and custom of sharing. A "Walking Out" ceremony was held for two Cree youngsters of eight months. The toddlers emerge from the teepee wearing traditional ceremonial clothing made of deer hide and liberally decorated with beads. They walked around a small fir tree, carrying tools that they will use during their lifetime. The group came to our Powwow through the efforts of Mr. Joe Niposh of Cree Social Services.

A ceremony to honor First Nations Veterans was held and a red maple tree planted in their memory. Native veterans from Canada and the U.S.A. bore their country's flag as well as the Mohawk Nation flag. Veterans from the Morin Heights Legion were present. Several native elders said prayers and sprinkled the roots of the tree with tobacco, a symbol of Peace, or hung tobacco pouches from the branches. One of our youths read a poem that he wrote in honor of the day and another client read a passage written about First Nations Veterans in World War II. It was a very emotionally charged ceremony. Prayers were also made by visiting Chief Mike of the Bonaparte Band from the interior of B.C.

The Minister for Native Affairs, Geoffrey Kelly, was also in attendance and clearly impressed by the Powwow.

The host drum, considered the heartbeat of any Powwow, was "Big Stone". During breaks, they were relieved by a student drum group from the Native Friendship Center, led by Gary McFarland.

The Iroquois / Mohawk people were represented by over 28 dancers. The variety of dance and regalia was a feast to the eye.

Two Inuit throat singers from the "Tasiutigiiit" group performed several songs of these guttural sounds that emulate nature and their environment. They were joined by one of their elders and by one of our residents who had been taking lessons. The "Tasiutigiiit" Inuit foster families also came to enjoy the day through the organizing efforts of Margaret Butler of the Montreal Children's Hospital.

There were several tables of native crafts, and an information booth on diabetes, a growing concern amongst the native population. A Native blanket was also raffled off.

The festivities were attended by over 500 spectators, including Batshaw foster families, clients and employees and their families. Batshaw's Native clients were involved in such ways as helping to take care of elders' needs. Reporters from local papers interviewed spectators and performers.

Thanks go to:

- Sam Barile and his "Ways and Means" Committee of Prévost Campus clients. They moved furniture and painted the rink. Clients serving community hours helped in the kitchen and at the BBQ.
- Prévost Recreation staff who manned the BBQs.
- Pierre Beauchamps and his maintenance crew who prepared the grounds, built shelters and readied the campus.
- Eric Moran and his work program clients who mowed the grass and helped set up the fire pit for the Cree.
- Talented chef, Sylvio Bicari, who once again carved a masterpiece. This year's carving of an Indian brave hunting a buffalo will be donated to the Kahnawake Social Services in Kahnawake. Sylvio and his team were also involved in providing lunch and supper for approximately 75 people.
- The transportation department for providing transport for visitors, performers and clients.
- Prévost Campus Security team for diligent coverage of the campus in order to keep the festivities orderly and safe.

Finally, this Powwow could not have been possible without the efforts and commitment of Mr. Rudy Montour of Kahnawake, founder of the Batshaw Powwow concept.

FROM THE BOARD

At its last meeting on June 13th, the board received a presentation from Dr. Nico Trocmé on the state of and the relevance of research to child welfare work in Canada. Later a three-year agreement with Dr. Trocmé was approved, making him the Senior Advisor for Research Integration at Batshaw as of July 1st. More about this in a future edition of Appropos.

The Board approved the decision to request accreditation from the Québec Accreditation Council (*Conseil québécois de l'agrément*). More about this soon.

The Board approved a change to the long-service recognition policy so that staff who have worked, for example, 15 years in another youth centre will be recognized for their commitment to youth and families over their whole youth centre career, not just the part at Batshaw, providing it wasn't interrupted by a period of more than 90 days.

The Board approved the annual financial report for the year April 2004 to March 2005, which finished with a surplus of \$2,600.

THE BATSHAW CALENDAR

Aug. 21st (Sunday): **Annual Staff Family BBQ at Camp Weredale** – 12 (noon) to 4 p.m.
(For more information: Darlene Job, 932-7161, loc 316).

Sept. 16th: **Staff Golf Tournament at Club Bonniebrook** (For more information: Leo Ferguson, 932-7722, loc 315).