



# APPROPOS

BATSHAW YOUTH AND FAMILY CENTRES



## THE ROUTE SANS FIN

*Daina Girard, Educator, DRTSA, Project leader for "Une Route sans fin"*

The year 2010 marked another successful one for Batshaw Centres' participation in *Une Route Sans Fin* bicycle event. Our goal was to make Batshaw Centres a bike-friendly agency and to promote physical activities for youth.

We created a bicycle repair and maintenance workshop. It was with much pride that some rode the bikes that they had fixed both on practice runs as well as on the day of the event. Due to this success 2 more workshops were offered last month.

Forty-three clients from Prévost and Dorval campuses, as well as group homes benefited from organised practice runs through the month of May 2010. Fifteen of these clients completed the 50 km Montreal leg of the event, and one determined client challenged himself to successfully complete the 110 km run from Huberdeau to our Prévost campus. Batshaw Centres received the caravan of cyclists for a delicious supper prepared by our talented kitchen staff.

Our participation created positive media visibility for the agency, being mentioned on the radio, T.V. interviews, and newspaper write-ups including one from our local newspaper in Prévost. At the present time we are preparing clients for the Montreal leg of the 9-day event, and distributing funds for units and group homes to receive proper and safe bike equipment.

I send out a big overwhelming thank you to all contributors that continue to support and encourage this event, and everyone who believes in this project's therapeutic impact on our clientele.

## NORTHWATERS.

### A WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME!

*Philip Segal and Daina Girard, Educators, Project Leaders for "Northwaters Wilderness Program"*

In August 2010, two groups of adventure-seeking youths set out for the wilderness experience of a lifetime on the Batshaw Centres Northwaters canoe trip. After making it through the selection process and braving a rain-soaked, pre-trip training session on Mount Royal, ten youths and us were primed to get out on trail and spend ten days enjoying all that the beautiful Temagami region of northern Ontario has to offer.

In response to the demand of applicants, a younger boys' trip was planned in addition to the traditional older boys' trip. Five boys aged 12-15 made up our first group, and five 15-17 year olds on our second. As usual participants were selected from all points of service including foster and community group homes, campus, and clients receiving service while living with their families.

After enduring a nine-hour drive clients climbed aboard a floatplane and were whisked away to a remote basecamp located on an isolated island. There they spent two days receiving wilderness training between breaks for swimming, fishing and exploring. By sundown the participants were ready for bed, good thing because there's no electricity!

On the third day the canoes are loaded with gear and we head out for eight days in the wild. Participants were challenged physically and emotionally by both the rigors of a canoe trip and the rugged terrain and inclement as they travelled the 120 kilometre journey. Participants were pushed out of their comfort zones by the harsh conditions which enable them to open up about deeper issues that are often buried by the distractions of modern life. There were memorable moments along the way for the boys as well. From the rush of cliff jumping to constructing enormous birch bark infernos, to catching record-setting pike and bass, the boys were able to enjoy the outdoors and engage in newfound experiences. Portaging can be difficult for the strongest of people, but watching a 70-pound participant portage a 45-pound canoe for a kilometre was a sight to behold. There were also inspirational moments, watching participants come together to form a community, to help each other in difficult times and to share in the successes. On the last day participants paddle in to main camp to a hero's welcome and banquet where they tell their proudest stories.

Months after their return all the participants rejoined their trip leaders for another day in the woods. This time the boys climbed high in the

trees for a ziplining experience they won't soon forget. There they received photos from their trips, as well as a map of the route they travelled. Participants shared how the Northwaters experience influenced them and helped to show them that life's obstacles can be overcome with persistence and a belief in themselves.

We would like to thank the Batshaw Centres Foundation for continuously supporting our youths in being part of such a therapeutic once in a lifetime experience.

This year, places will be limited to only one trip of 6 youths. We will be taking names shortly, and interviews should take place at the end of May or beginning of June. Please contact us for further information.

## AN EXCITING YOUTH EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVE AT BATSHAW CENTRES

*Marie-Josée Roy, Program Manager for Services to Older Adolescents, DRTSA*

As the year drew to a close in 2010, Margaret Douek impressed upon us that at the top of our wish list is a desire to find ways of intervening with our clients to make them feel like they are active participants in their change process.

We, at Batshaw Centres, know a lot about adolescents and about providing services for them. Among other things, we have chosen to implement the Circle of Courage model because we know that it is attuned to the science of positive youth development and empowerment. We also know that the most important feedback on the services we provide comes from youths themselves. We know that their feedback is fundamental to the development, evolution and improvement of services. We know that the greatest influence on adolescents comes from their peers. We know that the power of group process has been well documented and that it can be the key for shaping a culture of personal growth.

And yet there is a lot we don't know... Youth in care have valuable information about themselves and their experiences that we need to tap into to be able to provide services that best meet their needs.

It is with the above in mind that we thought to reach out to a Youth Alumni and create a Youth Empowerment Liaison, an initiative graciously supported by both the Batshaw Centres Foundation and the Kids are Alright Foundation who liberated some funds for a 2-year contracted part-time position.

After interviewing five great candidates and with much anticipation, it is with pride and great pleasure that we introduce Jennifer Dupuis who has accepted the position. Jennifer is currently a recipient of the Foundation scholarship program. She will help past and current clients who are in pursuit of post-secondary academic or training programs. Some of Jennifer's responsibilities will include: reaching out to youth in care, recruiting them for a youth empowerment group to be developed, co-developing and co-animating this group, co-creating events, activities in such a way as to expose youth at every level possible in our organization, exposing youth to positive community involvement, all with a focus on empowering youths through their active participation in services and programs that impact on them. In addition, Jennifer will incite youths to become active participants in the implementation of the Circle of Courage to help build healthy, strength-based, residential communities at Batshaw Centres. Jennifer will serve her functions under my responsibility.

## MDC PROFESSIONAL DAY

### JOIN US AND CELEBRATE 11 YEARS OF SHARING!

*Tina Close, Educator, Prévost Campus, DRTSA*

The MDC Annual Professional Day will be held on Friday, November 11th. The Organizing Committee is seeking presentations and, following the success of last year's events hopes to continue the trend of providing a day filled with motivation and sharing knowledge. The topics must be relevant to our work with youth, families and the community. If you are interested in being a presenter please complete and submit the form made available on the MDC intranet link. If you need further information or have any questions please do not hesitate to contact Gina Carvalho or Wendy Barnett. We are looking forward to hearing from you.

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