

Manny Batshaw Eulogy
July 20, 2016

For over 25 years, Manny and I worked side by side, enjoying a great friendship filled with mutual love and respect, so it is a humbling honour and privilege to pay tribute to Manny today, personally but mostly on behalf of staff and the thousands of 'Batshaw' kids who have lived in care at Batshaw Youth and Family Centres.

Forty-three years ago, my mother returned from an evening fundraising meeting for Youth Horizons Foundation. "I've never seen anything like it" I remember her telling us.....Manny Batshaw stood in front of everyone in the room, and told them how much kids in youth protection needed their help and every single person in the room generously opened up their wallets. He amazed her.

Fast-forward fifteen years, and I found myself in her same position; the one person I wanted to meet was that same Manny Batshaw. A little in awe of his reputation, I couldn't have felt more comfortable in his company, a feeling that I'll always cherish. Manny was humble, Manny was gentle and a gentleman, Manny was comfortable dining at Milos or Le Mas des Olivier but loved sitting enjoying a smoked meat sandwich and a pickle at the Snowdon or Lesters Deli, he loved driving around the city with Lodita seeing the beauty of the changing leaves on Mount Royal or the river along Lakeshore Boulevard, Manny was kind, Manny shared his ideas but also listened to mine. Manny was crafty and smart, always making me and everyone else feel like a million bucks, knowing that 'he'd got me', that I'd do MY very best for the kids, so that they could create their own opportunities, believe in themselves, feel validated and loved by people they barely knew but who cared enough to give them a better life than the hand they'd been dealt. Manny held my hand in difficult days, so it was a privilege to hold his tightly in his dying days.

Manny didn't just inspire me; he always inspired Batshaw's staff, and created an award to celebrate their ability to work in teams as well as recognizing personal excellence. He drew their attention to the importance of research and evaluation and put his money where his mouth was and with others, worked on funding and a partnership with McGill University to ensure that we'd know that what we do is the best that can be done and that we could measure.....does it work?

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We've all read and heard over the past days what a force Manny was in Montreal and the Jewish community. History will probably record that his greatest contribution was in reforming the delivery of youth protection services in the 1970's.....the Ten Commandments that were written in the Coles notes version of The Batshaw Report could be defined as "common sense" but were also the foundation of best practice still relevant to this day.

At Batshaw, we'd argue that the reason Manny and the committee got it right, we'd argue that Manny's greatest contribution was that he had strong moral values and UNDERSTOOD and LIKED children, a combination which guided the work at hand. Many of us were privileged to watch Manny interact with children on many occasions.

In the past year, his activities limited by age, we'd bring kids to visit him at his home; they'd be giddy with excitement that they were about to meet 'MR' Batshaw, they couldn't imagine that he really existed and that he was 100 years old. He never disappointed them, coming into the room with HIS blue eyes sparkling, his smile a mile wide with the same excitement that the kids had come to visit him! He listened intently, didn't judge, showed an interest in their lives and usually challenged them to grow and reach for the stars. His manner was so gentle that they'd sit in awe, because this "old man" got them! They felt his love! It WAS magic watching them together.

Mannyyou knew we all loved you, but it never hurts to say it again. Thank you for being our teacher, our mentor and friend, pushing us to ask the difficult questions, encouraging us to listen, to always do better. Thank you for the generosity of your time. You were always very clear that 'our work is never done, we will not finish it but nor are we at liberty to desist from it'may you rest in the peace you deserve, comforted by the thought that we will continue to strive for excellence and the rights of children, hopeful that you will always be 'our proud parent'.

Judy Martin
Past Board President
Batshaw Youth and Family Centres