

Kayakers make West Island stopover in four-day waterway excursion

Irene Chwalkowski

Thirty kayakers entered the harbour of Beaconsfield's Lord Reading Yacht Club by twos and threes last Friday afternoon after having completed the first leg of a four-day paddle around the island of Montreal. The Tour de l'Île Bleu 2013 was created to raise awareness of the waterways around

ways, not only of the cities but of the islands and their amazing nature, is a fantastic experience," he said.

"Montreal is an island, and we seem to forget that," Robitaille said. "There's a problem with access to the water - we are raising awareness among Montrealers, but also among our elected officials who need to give back the

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Tour de l'île Bleu participants Nicole Lapierre.

the city and to encourage Montrealers to use them.

The event was organized by Accès Fleuve / ZIP Ville-Marie and the Association Récréoculturelle d'Ahuntsic-Cartierville (ARAC) in partnership with the Ville de Montréal.

The kayakers gathered round in a joyous mood, getting out of their wet-suits, lining up their kayaks on the lawn of the yacht club, eager to hit the showers, eat dinner and pitch their tents for the night.

"We set out on Lac. St. Louis this morning and it was wonderful to see such a wide expanse of water," said team leader Rock Robitaille, who was on his third annual Tour de l'île Bleu.

"To be able to see the unique points of view that are offered by our water-

shoreslines to citizens," he said.

"We citizens are used to looking inland all the time. This gives us a totally different perspective of the city," said Nicole Lapierre, one of the Tour de l'île Bleu participants who was also on her third tour.

"We explore different areas of Montreal. We saw a skunk this morning - that was not one of our happiest moments - and a big fish that jumped right past one of our kayaks. We saw deer in Boucherville," she said.

"It's rare that the whole group makes it in together at the end of the day," said Lapierre. "We're early, we're happy."

Lapierre said that the day had been particularly challenging because they ran into a lot of wind in Valois Bay. "It



PHOTO BY IRENE CHWALKOWSKI
Kayakers entering harbour at Lord Reading Yacht Club completing first leg of Le Tour Bleu 2013 June 14. The four-day paddle was held to raise awareness of the waterways around the island of Montreal and to encourage residents to use them.

was temperamental," she said.

"This is the first time we're opening up the Tour Bleu to the general public," she said. About 200 people were to meet the kayakers at Cap St. Jacques in Pierrefonds on Saturday, some paddling a portion of the Rivière des Prairies alongside them.

General Manager of Accès Fleuve / ZIP Ville-Marie Alexandre Joly, who followed the paddlers from shore, said he keeps a close eye on their progress.

"I travel with a trailer attached to my truck, in case a kayaker is in trouble and I have to get his vessel out of the water," he said.

"We want to share this particular love we have for the St. Lawrence. We want to ignite the whole island to start to enjoy our waterways," Lapierre said.

For more information on the Tour de l'île Bleu 2013, go to www.route-bleue.com

YLJ Around the world



PHOTO COURTESY OF MINA CIPRIANI

Catching up with a recent issue of *Your Local Journal*, Secondary V students at Villa Maria High School in Montreal, together with some of their teachers - including Ethics & Religious Culture teacher Mina Cipriani - are all smiles in front of the Eiffel Tower in Paris while celebrating their spring break with their annual trip to Europe, visiting Paris, London, Florence, Rome and Naples.

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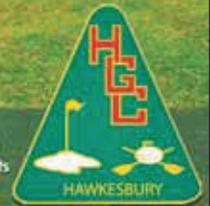
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