

Quebec 2009

Journal from the "chef de mission" to parents

Update July 6th

We have arrived in Shawinigan after multiple bathroom stops and traffic jams in Montreal. We were a few hours late but in good spirit and with lots of energy thanks to Jeremy's candies. Megan and Paige have discovered in the bus ride that they were "best friends" as did Ryan and Michel and the whole boy contingent held a contest of the world best (or worst) funny or gross face ;)). After lights out at 10:30, Blake and Marc-Andre discovered that Christian and Carson can fall asleep in a nanosecond and you really can't chitchat!!!! Lauren's birthday cupcakes were a huge hit (thanks mom) and she was thoroughly embarrassed by the loud rendition of Bonne Fete. Tal and Eden (from France) could not believe that we could be driving this much and still be in the same country. "Mais on doit bien être rendu!!!!".

Up early tomorrow for the Cite de L'Energie, Arbre en Arbre and the show Eclips oh yeah and the huge pool beside our Auberge.

More tomorrow.
Martine

Update July 7th

Well what a day. The visit of the "Cit  de l' nergie" this morning included an elevator ride up the tower which has over 500 stairs. The view was sensational. The demonstration included watching a train float in the air with the help of nitrogen and walking through real turbines that were used in the early century. Mark and Blake even pedal to generate energy!!! The kids really enjoyed it until they got their lunch and realized that their ham was.....ground ham....what is that!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!. They did not believe the counselors who explained that it is a very traditional way to serve ham in a sandwich in Quebec!!!

Off to "Arbre-en-Arbre". Carson, Eden and Megan did not make the height requirements to do the adult circuit so off they went to the youth circuit in good spirit; it had the same tree link challenges but just lower. So they decided to get their money's worth and run through the circuit 4 times in 2 hours. That must be a record!!! The rest of the group went on to the adult circuit, which was composed of 4 smaller routes going progressively higher. Before attempting the first one, Maya decided the youth one looked good and joined the others. After the first 2 routes, Christian, Paige and Tal decided to also go to the youth one so they had a good group over there. Ryan conquered his fear of height and finished the whole

circuit and "actually had a good time". We even had to climb a fish net and swing on logs and slide on skate boards high up in the air. We had some real brave "cow boy" kids who had the best time. Maryam and Kimberley encouraged each other through the whole route and finished it. Even Jeremy who barely made the height finished the whole circuit but maybe it is because he couldn't see how high he was with his hair!!! Lauren was the only one from her room to finish it and with flying color. Not even tired after. Kaitlyn said she "looooved it" and was there one more route??? and that summarized everyone's feeling.

Exhausted (the counselors) but exhilarated (the kids), the group decided to go swimming in an outdoor pool that was 70 degrees!!!! They lasted about 20 minutes!!!! An evening of rest and memorable performance from the boy choir led by Michele, Mark and Alex with background singer Eitan, Marc-Andre, Jeremy, Christian and Ryan. They have now mastered "I shot the sheriff" and "Buffalo soldier". Carson and Blake wisely decided to learn how to make friendship bracelet with Annie while the girls decorated their t-shirts with Andreeanne. 150 pictures later, Martine was editing pictures for the slide show. Eden and Blake looking over to make sure that there were enough pictures of them.

At 9PM, we were off to a spectacular show "Eclips". It was the premiere tonight and the famous quebec author Bryan Perro (of Amos Daragon fame and author of this show) was on hand. Marc-Andre and Alex hurried over to get his autograph and pictures and tell him that they had read his book in Ontario so Blake, Carson, Eitan, Jeremy and Mark decided to do the same. Michele is now in love with a blonde in a tight blue suit that twirls around a piece of fabric high up in the air. The acrobacy of the show especially on the trampoline was fantastic and has nothing to envy Cirque du Soleil. It was spectacular. Now off to bed to be rested for the big kayaking trip tomorrow.

Bonsoir

Martine

Update July 8th

We are now officially exhausted...well some of us...the old ones as Blake said. As he conversed with Annie and tried to find out how old she was, he guessed she and Andreeanne were 16 or 17. I said: "do you think your mom would send you on a trip with 2 teenagers?" No problems he said, you are old!!.....Thanks a lot...

Off to the river today for an 18 km kayak ride. We had 7 campers with Annie and the guide in a rabaska (a voyager canoe) and 7 pairs of double kayak with 2 guides patrolling us. Alex and Eitan who volunteered to go in the rabaska thinking it was less work were quickly brought back to reality. Dominique (our guide) quickly assigned them to the front and back to "carry" the boat as the oldest one!!! We made a stop halfway at the Forges St-Maurice, and listened to the legend of the "trou du diable". We even experimented lighting it even if it is at the shore and under some water. Wow. We now know lots about Belzebuth the devil.

When the kids heard that we still had another hour or about 9 km, they could not believe it.

Not only that, the bathrooms were the woods. It took Lauren, Kaitlyn and Eden 3 tries to actually believe that it was true and to go. Jeremy was kidnapped by Annie and Andreeanne and ended up with a pig tail on the top of his head. Martine quickly took a picture before Jeremy took the elastic off. We actually saw his eyes!!!! Carson, despite a valiant effort in the blue kayak the first half of the trip requested a trade to the Rabaska. Tal was happy to obliged even if it meant teaming up with Martine☺. Lauren, and therefore Maya, tried for a trade to the Rabaska but only Paige agreed to it, so Lauren was back in the kayak with Kimberley. Kaitlyn and Megan showed great style paddling in sync while Michele and Jeremy battled for first position with the blue kayak (Martine's and Tal) even using illegal maneuvers and rumors of attempt at tampering the blue canoe sprouted :))) They were quickly caught up by the rabaska and while the blue canoe escaped, Michele and Jeremy's canoe were caught in the crossfire of water pumps brought in unknown to everyone by our guides Anthony and Yves. Michele and Jeremy and the kayak of Mark and Maryam were also caught and soaked. Meanwhile in the rabaska, Carson and Maya were wondering if they made a good deal as they were inundated sitting too close to crazy Annie who was using her paddle as a water weapon with Alex, Eitan and Marc-Andre. Even Eden as small as she was could not hide from the water!!! She wasn't trying and was as involved in the battle as anyone. She was a real trooper though paddling through the whole trip. Christian was actively trying to be invisible to be able to take breaks from paddling....only the promise of pizza gave him the strength to help.

During that epic war the "girl" kayaks of Megan and Kaitlyn and Lauren and Kimberley had quietly taken a huge lead ahead and away from trouble while Tal was actively trying to paddle towards the water war as Martine was paddling away...the blue kayak was in trouble. But what of the kayak of Blake and Ryan and the one of Andreeanne and Paige? They were bringing up the rear and surprise surprise the girl kayak sailed by the water war while the boy one went directly to it!!!!

Luckily the guides timed the war about 20 minutes from the arrival so we just had to make a last valiant effort. Soaked and cold (cause we had still not seen the sun) we arrived and after bringing the kayaks up and changing, we were off to pizza hut.

Back at the auberge we had a quiet evening of games and cards and updating our communal journal and.....football and freezbees...yeah not so quiet!!! Big cake for Paige's birthday and campfire and marshmallows where Martine demonstrated the perfect technique for browning marshmallows while others just went for burning them...they get to eat them faster....how many did Christian get??? 3 at a time it must be time to stop him!!!! Kaitlyn and Jeremy worked very hard at reproducing Martine's perfection but Kaitlyn's kept exploding. Jeremy persevered and came pretty close I must admit.

Off to packing (thanks to Andreeanne for doing the laundry for everyone) and early bed. While the girl room of Megan, Eden, Lauren, Maya and Paige asked to turn lights off at 9:45. The boy room of Marc-Andre, Carson, Blake and Christian requested the continuity of Annie's Winnie the pooh bedtime story that now includes Spiderman. The room across the hallway of Alex, Eitan, Mark, Jeremy waited for their own version of the story before agreeing to turn the lights off. Everyone is in bed now and off the counselors go as we are also wiped!!

Good bye to La Mauricie and off to Beauport tomorrow :)))

Oh yeah did I say we lucked out and our bus driver Mr Best is the best!!!

Martine

Update July 9th

Hello everyone,

Today was a busy day and Martine is tired so it will be a shorter one!!!

Hourra, Blake and Carson have finished their bracelet and Annie has secured them to their wrist permanently!!!

Finally we saw the sun today andof course it was too hot. The falls were magnificent and we participated in the rally recreating the life in 1759, the year of the battle of the Plains of Abraham. Campers were divided in 3 teams; the soldiers led by Eitan, the aboriginal led by Kaitlyn and the pioneers led by Alex. They won "Louis" for answering questions and resolving puzzles during the 3 hours activities. The visit culminated with the descent of the 489 stairs from the top. Did you know that these falls are 1.5 times the height of Niagara Falls?? The treasurer of each team counted their "Louis" and the pioneer team was declared the winner. Hot and tired we made our way to Le Saisonier where we were welcomed by Tar our animator for the evening who promptly told the kids that the only words he knew in English were "my cat is brown"!!!

After dinner, we went to the climbing wall for a turn by everyone to climb. Maryam was the only one of the girl to attempt the spiderman descend....head down!!! Of course the boys were challenging each other to all try it!!! Great pictures. We then went to try our hand at archery. Tal was the only one to hit the target twice but oooops it wasn't his target!!! Then on to "hebertisme". Structures built in the wood to climb etc... That was soooo fun. We were then treated to a great campfire with Tar leading us in "chanson a répondre" where he sings a sentence and we have to repeat it....but then of course they have to be able to understand him!!! So we started over slower :))))) He then went on to tell us the aboriginal legend of the loon and the white necklace.

Off to bed as we have a big day tomorrow.

Martine

Update July 10th

Hello everyone,

What a day. Alex even said that it was "almost" as hard as a football practice. What a trooper Eden and Paige were (our 2 little ones).

We started the day at Mont Ste-Anne, where we took the gondola to get to the top and went directly to the canine museum. What a treat that was. There were 70 nordique dogs waiting

to be petted. After the guide explained to the children that they could pet the dog and talked about the hierarchy in the pack and how they cared for them, the kids went at it. As soon as we approached, the dogs knew what was up and all got up and came to the fence for a pat. The kids had a great time!!! We then met our guide and hiked down the mountain through the woods. The highlight was that the mountain is host to the mountain biking Quebec cup tomorrow and the world cup at the end of the month so the circuits were set up and the bikers were training. Our trail crossed the race a few times and we got to stop and watch and cheer them on. Warning, Christian wants to try it !!!

About 3/4 in, Eden could not feel her legs so she climbed on Martine's back and took a break for a little while. Once we got to the rest spot, Christian asked if he could have turn!?!? No chance.

Back at the bottom everyone's leg were shaking and Marc-Andre, Carson and Christian clocked in at 21 slides/tumbles!!!. How proud they were!!! When we tell you not to run, we mean it!!!!

Back in the bus and off to les Sept-Chutes. It is the oldest hydroelectric central still operating in Quebec; its construction began in 1912. The kids were shocked to know they were still walking, Tal and Michele falling asleep in the short 15 minutes drive to it. Promptly the boys wanted to know the height and debit of the fall compared to Montmorency. Well from the bottom fall to the highest one, it is 128 feet so more than twice the height of Niagara but the debit is 28,000 liter per second in the summer, compared to the 35,000 for Montmorency as it is not as wide. It was beautiful scenery though.

Michele, Tal and Ryan who are some of the tallest boy could barely move forward whereas the girls moved as a pack at the head of the group. We discovered that in all our hikes and walks, the girls are always ahead as a pack finishing first whereas the boys??? The oldest they are, the slowest they are!!! However in the morning, when the boys say they need 20 minutes to get ready, they mean it, whereas when the girls say they need 45 minutes, they really mean 1 1/2 hour!!!!

They finished at the Sept-Chutes with a run in the splash pad and lots of shopping in the small souvenir shop!!! Off to the Charlevoix region with its breathtaking scenery!!! The bus driver was looking at me saying...you want me to go down THAT hill!!!! Is that the worst one??? We really lucked out with our bus driver, always ready to please plus the boys found out he was a retired policeman.... A REAL one so we're good!!

We arrived at the 125 years old Auberge and the kids were in heaven, Tal saying it was "too nice". The lounge has a pool table, a card table and a piano. Of yeah and Blake exclaimed his dad would love that room because it has a bar AND a beer tap. Our host Lyne welcomed them as family and served a fabulous meal with a big strawberry shortcake for Martine's birthday. Martine tried to tell Blake that there was no desert but "Lyne sais that if we stood on chair we would not get desert, therefore there is desert". No way to fool that kid...Lyne then told them that if she got lots of "bisoux", they would get chocolate on their crepes on Sunday morning. Blake and Carson promptly gave her a kiss and went on a campaign to get everyone to oblige. Kaitlyn asked if a hug would do cause she does not like to give kisses and sure enough it worked. What a wonderful host she is!

The boys are spending an evening of playing pool and cards at the card table while

Kimberley impressed us with her piano skills on the fly and Andréanne played the Lion King theme.

They love it here!!! Can we just stay here???

That is it for now!!!

Martine

Update July 11th

Hello everyone,

On the menu today were the crepes!!! They were excellent, stuffed with sugar strawberries and offered with chocolat or maple syrup. Martine had to miss them as she had to do a trip to the hospital to get medication to deal with an allergic reaction she had to some plant. It looks worse than it is but it is very itchy!!! The crepes were a huge hit!!!

Off to the papeterie for a workshop on paper making by artisan who are still making paper by hand. It was founded in 1988 and it is in production 6 months a year. 2 campers were chosen to give it a try. Christian realized that it takes a lot more dexterity and patience than he thought. Lauren succeeded on the first try like an expert!!!

They then moved to the "musee maritime" across the street. On board the "St-Andre", they experimented a storm at sea and saw the evolution of the construction technique for a "goelette" since 1956. They participated in a rally looking for hints to find the keyword "matelot". Michele was the first one to find it!!! They then were challenged to learn how to make knots....real ones!!! Aboard the towboat Felicia they were taught how to communicate with lights, sounds, movement and color. Maya used flags to signal the letter "R". After lunch they made their own boats in teams of 3, which they then launched in the St-Laurent to everyone's cheers and encouragement. Some got stuck as the tide was low. We then went to put on bathing suits and went to the beach by the museum to put our feet in the St-Laurent (10C). It was FREEZING, Tal exclaiming that he would loose his toes. Mark finally went in to screams of torture. The real brave ones were Blake, Paige, Megan, Eden and Marc-Andre who actually dipped their whole bodies.

The girls mentioned that the mud was good for our skin!!!

Off to the pool for some more civilized swimming and then back home for an excellent dinner. Well not that civilized with Christian, Marc-Andre and Carson going heartily at each other on a war of noodle and Alex, Eitan and Mark imagining new ways to jump in the pool. How about leap frogging over each other into the pool Martine? NOT..... Meanwhile at the other end of the pool, Eden on Lauren's shoulder and Megan on Paige's shoulder were battling it out under the watchful eye of Kimberley and Maryam. And I thought we were tired???

This was followed by our murder mystery night where everyone was given a role to play to find who murdered "Mrs Murray, the rich manor owner". She was found poisoned at the piano. Led through a game similar to Clue, but live, by "Maria Lucinda Gomez" and "Carmen Petunia Perez", they discovered that the novel author played by Blake was the murderer.

The kids all enthusiastically took on their role even dressing for the occasion. Maryam and

Kimberley were excited to dress as twin for their maid role and Jeremy used the girl's makeup to get in his rock star character. Ryan donned on the aviator sunglasses to transform himself into a bodyguard. Thank you to Annie and Andreeanne for creating the game and Lyne our host for the clothes and help with the set-up.

An evening of free time sees Michele teaching Paige, Lauren and some of the other girls the technique to play pool while Eden adopted Maryam and Kimberley as her big sisters for a card game. Some of the boys (Blake particularly) convinced Annie to make an exception and be allowed to watch TV for the special concert for Michael Jackson. Marc-Andre and Tal have finally been able to use the pool table on their own without supervision or rules so they can learn the game with Annie's help.

BIG hike tomorrow and we are leaving our perfect auberge....., off to bed.

Martine

Update July 12th

Hello everyone,

I am borrowing the laptop from the owner of the Inn to let you know 2 important facts:

1) We are at a different inn that originally planned as we found something that fit better in our schedule with Lyne's recommendation. We are at the Relais des Hautes Gorges just at the entrance of the National Park where we were today. The phone number is 1-800-889-7655 website: quebecweb.com/relais. It is gorgeous and the food is wonderful. Several children tried the "gateau renversé à la rhubarbe et fraises" for desert :)))

2) There is NO cell phone service anywhere around here....we are in the middle of nowhere. Therefore I will not be able to receive any email or txt until tomorrow at 9AM. If there is an emergency, you must call the hotel.

Here is the update (until the laptop dies :)))

We left this morning to Lyne's hugs and praises for your kids. They are so well behaved and polite, they can go back anytime.

At the Hautes-Gorges, the kids climbed a total of 9KM there and back to the 1st summit of the "acropole" It has a 800M denivellation!!! It is VERY high and steep in some places. As Blake said, how did the workers get up here to lay the stones for us to climb on as steps, did they really climb up and down every day? YEAH!!! Hats off to all the kids, particularly the little one such as Eden with her little legs. She was a real trooper.... We left the foot of the trail at 11Am and got to the first summit at 1:45 after several stops. We followed Andréanne who is like the energizer bunny...she never stops....SLOW DOWN :))) As usual on our

climbs she was followed by Kaitlyn (who is also the energizer bunny), the quiet Megan who just keeps going and Kimberley, Megan and the younger girls (Maya, Lauren and Paige) not far behind. After the first stop of the climb, Carson, Christian and Marc-André (our youngest boys) decided to get to the front of the line since they could rest longer when we stopped (smart). The older boys specialized in complaining, Mark can even do it in French no problem and has no problems coming up with new ones every few minutes...was he always this loud??? They somehow found the energy to sing non stop pretty much the whole greatest hits library of Michael Jackson. Can Alex and Michele sing any louder???? After a while, Michele, Tal and Ryan were struggling at the back with Blake and Eden in front of them. About at the 2/3, Blake made a run for it and joined the other grade 5 at the top of the line.

With about a third left, Andréanne took a solid lead ahead with the older girls, Carson and Blake. Martine, in the middle, was helping Paige and looking over Marc-André and Christian who could not stop chatting. With about 10 minutes left, the whiners in the back (Eitan, Mark, Alex and Jeremy) made a run for it and ran the whole rest of the way....so much for being tired. We finally made it to the top to a breathtaking view. I can not find the words to describe the feeling of looking as far as you can see and not seeing any trace of civilization or human buildings, with all the peaks and valleys, lakes and river....Our country is so beautiful... We were SOOOOO high!!! Martine took pictures of everyone with a view of the river below. The view was spectacular. The campers were very worried when they realized that there were 2 more summits, the last one about 750 m further but all steep climb. When Martine said that we would not go for it, Michele exclaimed from the heart: THANK YOU!!!) After a 45 minutes lunch break in the cold wind and with the children saying that their ears were bugging them like in an airplane, we began the descend.

Martine took the lead to slow the tempo (I am 20 years older after all!!!) and took Eden with her to help set the pace. Again, the girls positioned themselves behind her and she was treated to the whole library of the Beatles, Kaitlyn, Maya and Lauren even translating some of the verses in French. They then had a heated argument about who was best: Harry Potter or Twilight. Martine weighed in with the Potter Pals to Kaitlyn's delight and Lauren's horror. Eden proceeded to enlighten Martine about Twilight forgetting that she was walking. Maya even exclaimed: "I don't know why but I am not even tired, this is fun!!!"...too much talking...who knew Maya could talk that much. Kimberley made sure throughout the whole conversation that everyone had their facts right, like when Harry Potter is coming out....get it right Kaitlyn.... Is Maryam still there...she is another one who never stops walking and stays quiet and focus to the task just like Megan. They were both great climbers. Meanwhile Marc-André was relating a whole movie to Annie all in French ((for about 1 1/2hour)), can he talk or what. Carson, with his shoes barely tied, kept trekking on...not much talking now, he is getting tired. What are we doing tomorrow again? Blake was slowly falling behind with the older boys with his look saying it all: Are we there yet???). Paige, with all of her 10 years, was also right at the front with the girls, taking all the conversation in...who is cool and who is not (like Hilary Duff is so out and the Jonas brothers are going there too...who knew!!!).

Meanwhile in the back, the boys are busy acting out entire scenes from different movies....(how many times have you seen it to remember all the words)...Mark, Eitan, Michele and Alex can really do the accent, man....Apparently we really must see Borat. Jeremy does not have enough ears to take it all in....I am a bit worried about what he will go home with :))) Does Ryan really talk this much!!!! Great to hear him laugh so much... He has told me that the fear of height is history now!!!! Where is Tal? He is right at the back with Andréanne wondering how much longer....what a trooper, he finished without complaining despite blister on both feet...MADE IT AT 4:40...what a day...is there really this many muscles in a calf???

The campers are all wondering when they can sleep in??? Not until you go back home...don't plan ANY physical activities for them when they get home for a few days...they will need to rest their poor legs (me too)...

Staying in a beautiful rustique "relais" was the cherry on the sundae today. Top notch chef too...what is that on my slice of roast veal??? It is thyme and yes you should eat it:)))

Good night...big day again tomorrow...Carson is counting the days to the whales...2 more sleeps :)))

Martine

Update July 13th

Hello everyone,

We are now at the Ferme where there is no cell phone or wireless connection. We will not be able to send communication tomorrow from all campers and they will not be able to read all messages. I will attempt to have them read and send messages during the day as I can connect in Tadoussac but we have several activities planned, which are more important. Please do not worry if you do not hear from us as regularly when we are here.

Today, we left our beautiful "Relais" high up in the mountain and left for Port-au-Saumon. We learned that while it was full of salmon before, the "draves" (carrying of cut down trees on the river) has contributed to the extinction of salmon in the area. Pierrot showed us the effect of spruce sap in the water...it releases gas which seals the top of the water, effectively suffocating the life below.... The "centre écologique" was beautiful (again) and the basins were very interesting to the campers. They were filled with life from the St-Laurence river such as anemone, urchins, large snails, corals and even starfish. The campers got to take turn holding a live urchin and a starfish. We had a 2 hours visit, which included an hour walk

in the nature trail, where Tal commented that this was nothing after yesterday. Is that Carson I am hearing relating a whole movie in French to Marc-André???

We stopped at a local "casse-croute" and got to experiment REAL poutine. Then we left for the rock climbing. Unfortunately after we got all fitted with the equipment, a thunderstorm erupted. We waited half an hour but despite the fact that the thundering and the lightning stopped, the rain did not subside and we decided to cancel the activity to ensure our safety. We were all very disappointed but we will try to reschedule the activity for Thursday morning at 9AM on our way back to Montreal. We are also planning on trying to stop at the cheese factory as we also had to cancel that activity.

Instead we decided to stop at Pointe-Noir this afternoon to take the chance to see the Belugas. We were treated to a great presentation by a naturalist on site and got to learn more about the river and the reason why whales congregate there: the water from the Great Lakes coming into the river from the west, the water from the Saguenay river coming into the river from the north and the salt water coming from the ocean from the east are joining to create a unique water system in that very area. We were able to see a few belugas in the distance coming for air. They are very easy to distinguish with their brilliant white color coming out of the sea.

Once at the Farm, Angelo treated us to a visit to the animals. The campers got to bottle feed a baby deer and 2 baby moose. All 3, orphans from accident to their mothers and found by passerby. We also got to hold some kitten; they are for sale for only \$10, Eden and Christian are figuring it would be a great souvenir?!?!?! We held some rabbits and fed some very friendly raccoons amongst a multitude of animals. More tomorrow morning.

Back at the big house, the girls have decided to organize a huge slumber party by sleeping all of them in one huge bedroom and keeping the other one for luggage. We will see if they will sleep!!! They all seem to get along famously making sure that they all spend time with everyone. The boys are back to the Michael Jackson music and the older ones are practicing the MJ moves!!! Most have even purchased the trademark aviator sunglasses a few days ago. The younger boys are constantly playing some kind of a card game...it is addictive apparently.

Thank you to the lady at the administration for lending me her PC for this tonight :)) That is all for now.

Martine

Update July 14th

Hello everyone

Last night, our common area got transformed into a disco. With Maryam leading the way, the girls danced their heart out. Tal joined them followed by Blake after his card game. Carson could not stop laughing, is he still breathing??? Mark took over as DJ and Ryan got involved too.

Meanwhile, Eitan and Alex asked if they could look at the France 2007 pictures that were still on the laptop. They had a great time reminiscing with Mark and Marc-Andre and laughing at themselves and telling Michele and Jeremy all about it.

At night, Martine sang the Evangeline song in the girl dormitory at Eden's request, which put her right to sleep. The next morning we had to get up early to go see and feed the animals. This time we got to see Mo' the moose. The kids all had a great time again.

Off to Tadoussac to the CIMM to a very interesting presentation on whales. We cancelled the fur trading post cause we REALLY have to shop now!!!

After lunch, (where once again we were complimented on how well the kids behave and how polite they are) we stopped at the sand dunes and what a treat that was. Kaitlyn exclaimed that was the most fun so far!! Up and down very high dunes they went. It is exhausting to go down and up but apparently not for the kids as they keep going back up to be able to run down. Carson, Marc-Andre, Blake and Christian going as high as they could even behind the bushes. All the girls are going down hopping following Kaitlyn and Megan. Alex, Eitan, Mark and Michele going down rolling on top of each other. Ryan and Jeremy getting out of the way. They are crazy. Meanwhile, Tal is in the water joined shortly after by some of the girls (Megan, Eden and Paige tired of hopping) and Ryan and Jeremy. They were hunting mussels and shrimps...lots of them.

Time to go...somehow the ascent to leave was soooo hard they just did not have any more energy. Alex mentioned that it was because they knew there were not gonna get to run down...always need a motivation!!! Can we come back???

Of course we get to the Cap-du-Bon-Desir and there was no whales. One of the guides set the kids on the rocks and gave them a very interesting presentation on the whales. Of course Lauren, Eden and Maya had to go to the bathrooms. All the kids were freezing as it looks like some did not believe me when I said they needed warm clothes and did not bring any!!! All of a sudden, there it was, a mink whale right there in front of us and then a seal popped its head out. It was so cooooool. Annie was disappointed to have missed it as she was on bathroom duty. Hope to see more on the cruise tomorrow.

It is still quite itchy and I look scary but the kids are not laughing at me too much!!!!

Till tomorrow, we are getting out of range again!!!

Martine

Update July 15th

Only a few days left :((

Late yesterday afternoon, the kids spent time with the animals. Paige throws the stick to Lasso endlessly, he has her well trained and comes to her first as soon as he sees her. The girls also spent time holding the 2 kittens and the chicks. They managed to get permission to do that WHENEVER they want. Eden made sure to tell me that they don't have to ask permission. Maryam and Eden are ALWAYS there. Eden even found a bird outside the cage and the girls all made sure they looked after the situation.

Later on, the kids were treated to the bison that came up near the farm. The kids all gathered around as Lasso started taunting them. One of the bison charged the fence to deal with the dog, which caused a lot of excitement amongst the kids. The older boys were playing catch while some of the others were playing on the playground on the teeter-totter or playing soccer with the dog. So much for my balls!!!

Yesterday evening was packed. Andréanne has spent the last 2 evenings coordinating laundry with all the campers with only 2 washing machines and 2 dryers (which barely dried). She hung all the clothes that were still not dried before going to sleep and was drying some clothes with her hair dryer this morning that children needed. Meanwhile Annie started and organized the campfire and distributed marshmallows. The campers are very lucky to have these counselors look after them and care for them as if they were their own.

Inside, Martine was reliving her youth, French braiding Lauren, Megan and Maryam's hair. No way to convince Kim or Kaitlyn....something about a bad experience. The boys decided to get involved and we put 6 mini ponytails in the hair of Alex, Mark and Eitan (not easy). Carson and Jeremy came in and got 2 long braids in their hair. Blake came in from outside and went for the ponytail look.

The boys then all got into the macramé bracelets and square rexlace production under Annie and Martine's directions. The girls were in their private quarters producing masterpiece in rexlace. They all had to prepare their beach bag for the dunes and their winter clothes for the cruise!!!. Off to bed before 10:30 as we are getting up early.

After breakfast, Martine got to go in the wolves' enclosure and pet them. Kids are not allowed....not fair!!!

Off to the cruise and what a whale watching experience that was!! First we went at large and were treated to several sighting of the giant fin whale with her calf, multiple sighting of mink whales (too many to count), a few seals and later on, several pods of belugas with a few gray calves. Some of them were within 20 meters of the boat!!!! That was an unbelievable experience. Andréanne got lots of great pictures. We also saw the bottom of the river with their underground cameras and discovered that what we found yesterday at the dunes were

not shrimps but crills (the food of the whales).

Off to the sand dunes for an afternoon at the beach. We decided to cancel the 2 1/2 hours hike to the fjord in favor of an afternoon at the beach at the sand dunes. What a beautiful sunny day we have today. We can only hope for the same tomorrow for the rock climb!!!

We will leave the farm and the animals tomorrow morning very early :(in direction of the palissades and should be back on our way to Montreal by noon.

Till tomorrow.

Martine

Update July 16th

Hello everyone,

HAPPY BIRTHDAY RYAN...

Yesterday after I sent my update, we stayed at the beach for another hour. A mud fight started amongst the boys and Lauren and Paige joined in with gusto...boy can they run!!! The other girls wisely stayed away. Marc-Andre had some in his face and we could barely see the skin on their backs under all that mud!!!

They were then forced to dip into that freezing cold water all the way to their necks and scrub each other's backs. They then got to sunbathe on the rocks on the side to dry where the girls, led by Maryam, had made works of art on the rock with mud.

Then of course we had to climb back...ouffffff!! That was a killer!!

Back to the farm and more time with the animal and oh yeah, we have to pack...yikes!! I also got a macramé bracelet from Carson but when I thanked him for making me one, he said he made it for himself but it was too big so I could have it !!!!

Up early this morning for the re-scheduled rock climbing since it wasn't raining. So we said our good byes to the animals and all 3 dogs were surrounding the bus to see the kids off. We got to the Palissades right at opening. We got all geared up and Maya thought she might be scared so she paired up with Roberto the guide. It was 250 meters of denivellation and 950 meters of steel cables, which we were hooked to and followed for the climb up. Paige went for a while and decided that it was too much for her so Roberto took her back down to the waiting staff. We were proud that she knew her limits and that she gave it a try!!

Meanwhile, Carson and Blake who were not so sure in some spots stayed with Annie and Roberto and Andréanne helped Maya and Eden. They all did great. The boys were ahead and Christian was struggling through the verticals so our guide Martin took him with him and coached him all the way. Martine was looking after Tal who was fighting his fear of height.



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He got stuck a few time but managed great. Alex, Eitan, Mark, Michele, Marc-Andre, Jeremy and yes Ryan were at the head and commenting, joking and having a great time. Kaitlyn was also helping Tal right behind him and being very patient. She was followed by all the other super girls Lauren, Megan, Kimberley and Maryam.

It was an amazing job by everyone and we all made it to the top. Now of course we had to go back down. All and all it took us over 3 exhilarating hours and everyone was very proud of themselves and were happy to find Paige at the bottom and share their experience with her.

We now had to make the marathon drive to Montreal and are scheduled to arrive late to Ryan's birthday cake and a big indoor pool. We should be there by 8PM after encountering more constructions than we thought possible. Our last evening together :(We will make the best of it.

Off to Toronto tomorrow. Please expect an email from Kingston to confirm our progress and estimated arrival time which should be very close to 5PM.

Till tomorrow
Martine