

Community Engagement Initiative: Day Camp Massawippi Olympics 2019



SAMUEL CENTRE
FOR SOCIAL
CONNECTEDNESS

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Social Connectedness Fellow 2019

Goal

The goal of the initiative was to organize a mini Olympics for the campers at Day Camp Massawippi. Planning for the event started end of May and the event took place on July 23rd, 2019. The target population were children and youth aged 6-25 years old with profound/multiple disabilities (PMD), as well as people without disabilities in their early 20's. 25 campers participated, along with approximately 20 counsellors, and 15 volunteers. Photos and a video were shared via social media to raise awareness in the wider Montreal community, and through the Special Olympics (SO) and Samuel Centre (SCSC) networks.



I chose to do my initiative in this format because I felt it would be the best way to demonstrate to the public how individuals with PMD can participate in sports when they are tailored to their capabilities. Athletes partook in a torch parade, a variety of sports (target shooting, javelin, shot put, bowling, and relay), as well as an awards ceremony in which they received a custom SO Quebec (SOQ) ribbon, a certificate and sports bag.

Key Partners and Collaborators

- Sydney Shapiro, Camp Coordinator, Day Camp Massawippi
- James Lapierre, Director, Sports Programs and Community Development, Special Olympics Quebec (SOQ)
- Danielle Gravel, Occupational Therapist, Peter Hall School Ouimet
- Caitlin Beavis-Hardy, Lecturer in the Department of Occupational Therapy at St-George's, University of London
- Meghan Hussey, Senior Manager, Global Youth Engagement, Special Olympics (SO)



Benefits

The Motor Activity Training Program (MATP), an adapted sports program designed for those with PMD and administered by SO, is not available in Canada. MATP requires expert professionals to individually train individuals on a variety of motor skills, eventually working their way up to potentially competing in sports events.

Although this initiative does not officially qualify as an MATP event, I was still able to bring the same recreational and supportive spirit to the camp that MATP should produce.



While planning the event, I learned that SOQ hosts sports days with various schools in the Montreal area such as Peter Hall. However, SOQ does not run a program with the MAB-Mackay Center and the Philip E. Layton School, the school in which many of the Day Camp Massawippi children attend. The sports stations were inspired by SO MATP resources, as well as by SOQ and Peter Hall.

The counsellors were extremely helpful in supporting the campers in the completion of the sports, and the volunteers were enthusiastic and facilitated the stations with confidence. My event demonstrated a method of engaging this population in a way that is fun, supportive and encouraging. If this event were to be repeated in the future, it would be beneficial to hold it on a weekend to ensure that the parents would be available to attend. The Olympics could be held at the end of a school year just before summer break, to also ensure the presence of SOQ employees and volunteers.



Volunteer Testimonial

“It made me so happy to see all the happy faces on the youth throughout the day and you could really tell they were genuinely having a good time. I think the activities selected were a perfect fit for the audience as everyone was able to participate in their own way. Throughout the day I found myself feeling empathetic and reflecting on my childhood experiences. [...] I reflected on how they go about their day differently than my own. Finally, I was thinking about how much I can learn from youth with diverse abilities.”

Social Media

Day Camp Massawippi:

<https://www.facebook.com/CampMassawippi/videos/359184281673841/>

YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3YU5xp1RhXI&t=2s>

The [photos](#) and video were also posted on SCSC’s Facebook page.