



For immediate release

Katimavik mourns its founding president, Jacques Hébert.

Montréal, December 7, 2007 – On December 6, 2007, founding president of Katimavik, Jacques Hébert, passed away, at the age of 84. Throughout his life, he touched the lives of many, and will especially remain in the hearts of over 28,000 young Canadians as the visionary founder of Katimavik, Canada's leading national youth service program.

Jacques Hébert created Katimavik in 1977. In a book about the program's first year entitled *Have them build a tower together*, he wrote: "...in the beginning there was a simple little idea, a tiny spark that set off a lovely blaze because the wood was good and the wind a willing accomplice."¹ This simple idea flourished into a full-fledged nine-month volunteer service program for young Canadians aged 17 to 21, creating a genuine "meeting place"² for generations of Canadians. This year, on its 30th anniversary, over 1,000 young participants are taking the same route, learning valuable skills through volunteer service, group living and contributing to nation-building in host communities across the country.

Although the program has been relatively successful over the years, it has had its ups and downs. In 1986, funding of the program was cut completely, at which time Jacques Hébert undertook a historic 21-day hunger strike in the Senate Hall on Parliament Hill. Thousands of Canadians manifested in support of the program, but to no avail: the program was on hiatus for eight years. It was reinstated in 1994, thanks to the resolve of its founder and board of directors.

As Katimavik's executive director for the last nine years, Jean-Guy Bigeau worked closely with Jacques Hébert and has many fond memories of their invigorating collaboration: "Jacques was a man of passion with a steadfast conviction that national youth service would one day become the common experience and expectation of all young Canadians. He firmly believed that Canadian youth are extraordinary assets to our nation, and that the earlier they were exposed to national volunteer service, the better prepared they would be to embrace the virtue of lifelong civic engagement".

Up until very recently, Jacques Hébert continued to serve as an active member of the board of directors. "In the four years I have served on the board of directors, I have been astounded by Jacques' relentless tenacity in keeping this program intact. He was eloquent and passionate about the work that needed to be done to ensure that national youth service would finally come of age in Canada", recalls the current chairman of the board, Robert Giroux.

The tremendous influence Jacques Hébert had on youth will likely continue for years to come, as these testimonials among many hundreds from alumni attest to:

"He was a feisty, demanding and kind individual who impressed me with his ability to turn strong beliefs and values into effective action. His infectious enthusiasm, positive energy, and outstanding commitment to the youth of Canada affected me greatly. I admired him and he influenced me to do something significant with my life."

Bruce Gilbert, project leader 1981-1983, St. John's, NL (currently a board member)

“Your inspiration, enthusiasm and spirit are alive and well in both past and present participants. Thank you Jacques, your dream became my reality and I know it continues on for others.”
Brian Michalofsky, 1983-1984 participant, Mississauga, ON

Katimavik, its board of directors, alumni, employees, friends and community members from across the country wish to thank you, Jacques Hébert, you have touched the lives of so many and have made this world a better place. We will strive to keep your dream alive and continue to offer a place for young people to serve this wonderful country.

For those interested in posting testimonials, we invite you to visit www.jacqueshebert.org; to read more testimonials, visit www.katimavik.org.

1. *Have Them Build a Tower Together*, Jacques Hébert, 1979
2. Katimavik means meeting place in Inuktitut.

DOING. LEARNING. BUILDING A NATION... ONE COMMUNITY AT A TIME.

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Katimavik program background:

During their nine-month service experience, participants live in three of the numerous Canadian partner communities, where they volunteer 35 hours a week for a variety of non-profit organizations. Everyday life consists of living with ten other young people from across the country, along with a project leader. The staff member provides supervision and facilitates the implementation of our structured learning programs through a series of workshops and activities pertaining to leadership skills development, learning our official languages, environmental stewardship, experiencing first-hand about cultural diversity and integration, and also adopting a healthier lifestyle. The intent of the program is to shape responsible citizens while contributing to the social and economic development of Canadian communities.

For more info: www.katimavik.org

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