

Girls cook up support for Quebec Lodge

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Illustration: Color Photo: Perry Beaton, Special to The Record / Hannah Bowen, Akayleh Langlois and Elizabeth Robinson are raising money to keep the cash-strapped Quebec Lodge Camp open.

NORTH HATLEY - Three determined girls from North Hatley Elementary School want to save Hatley Township's cash-strapped Quebec Lodge Camp from being sold and they're selling baked goods to help keep it running.

The camp, valued at about \$5 million, was closed in January because it was losing too much money. So far, the girls have raised \$100.86 -- and counting.

Hannah Bowen, who went snowshoeing at the camp this past winter with her class, said she planned to go back this summer. "People there are really caring, friendly and nice," said the chipper eight year old.

Hannah said she started cooking with her mother Sunday night because the baked goods "have to be fresh." They included brownies, chocolate chip cookies, banana bread, popcorn and muffins.

Last week the girls made eight posters and posted them around the school. They include misspelled names of the cookies for sale and their prices. Nothing is over 50 cents.

A few minutes before Monday's bake sale in the school cafeteria, the girls laid out a half a dozen plastic trays filled with treats. Children and adults got in line to buy items.

Akayleh Langlois, 8, who helped to bake some banana bread and other goodies, said the girls had lots of help and support from their teachers. She said they also had help setting prices and deciding what to bake.

Elizabeth Robinson, the daughter of the camp's director, who lives on the camp ground with her family, said the camp is a "lovely place." The 10-year-old redhead said people go there to find themselves and learn to appreciate nature.

Elizabeth said Hannah and Akayleh have been a great help to her and her family. She said they want to stay in Hatley Township.

"I didn't want to lose one of my best friends," Hannah said.

The 140-acre camp, located on the shores of the

Massawippi River, has been operated by the Anglican Diocese of Quebec for the past 63 years. Its programs were aimed at helping campers prepare themselves physically, mentally and spiritually.

But after losing almost \$500,000 in the last few years, the diocesan executive council decided to shut it down.

The camp had been receiving about 100 kids from all across Quebec, Ontario and the United States every summer and various adult church groups throughout the fall and winter.

Camp executive director Quentin Robinson blames rising operating costs and insurance rates for the camp's financial troubles.

The diocese established the Quebec Lodge Foundation in 2004 with a mandate to operate the camp and find new ways of infusing more money, but the plan did not prosper.

Robinson, who took over the management of the camp in the early 1990s, said the camp has always survived on the financial support of donors, but it was never able to attract new support.

Since the Church announced the camp's closure Robinson said interested buyers have included Bishop's University. Robinson said he would rather see a public institution such as the university take it over if it is sold because it's a place that deserves to be shared by everybody.

However, he said he would rather see the camp survive on its own and doesn't doubt that Hannah, Akayleh and Elizabeth's bake sale will help ignite some extra financial support.

"What better spark than kids," he said. The girls are planning another fundraiser for April.

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