



### Message from the President

**A**ction Saint-François has been in existence for ten years now, and our weekly clean-up operations continue to mobilize large numbers of volunteers. The figures for 2002 are impressive, and you have until the end of October to participate. All those interested in an outdoor activity in good company, take note !

*Pierre Dansereau*

The success of our clean-up operations has brought great visibility for our organization, and memberships and donations continue to fund our basic operations. Environment Canada has also been a solid supporter for over five years, providing funding to hire a coordinator from May through October. Also worthy of note is the contribution of a handful of faithful volunteers who have supported the organization for many years. Many thanks to all those who have believed in the organization these last ten years, investing their time and their talents!

This just happens to be a good time to put out a call for new blood. There are now two openings on the board of directors. Members of the board attend monthly meetings that last two and a half hours at the most. Depending on your availability and interests, there are also various committees you could get involved in, dealing with updating our website, putting out this newsletter, and organizing a benefit show next spring (see article in this issue). Action Saint-François could also be your chance to



### Action Saint-François wins an environmental achievement award

On Tuesday, October 22, 2002, Action Saint-François won the environmental excellence award in the Environmental group, non-profit organization or institution category. The event was held at Sherbrooke's Delta Hotel, for the 9<sup>th</sup> annual edition of Environmental Excellence Awards, Eastern Townships. There were about 450 guests present at the environmental recognition event organized by the Fondation estrienne en environnement (FEE) together with the Conseil régional de l'environnement de l'Estrie (CREE).

*Cont'd on page 3 : Action Saint-François wins*

develop environmental projects, if you are prepared to put some time into fundraising and ensuring continuity. For instance, we hope to conduct a tree-planting project on wildland along stream banks – an activity that requires some planning. The organization's educational side also offers tremendous development potential, as does the dossier on watershed management.

For ten years, Action Saint-François has been an important vehicle for community-based environmental projects. Let's hope the coming years bring new vitality to the

organization, allowing us to broaden our range of activities.

Warm regards to all our members, volunteers, and sympathizers!

### SUMMARY

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## Tales of clean-up operations and volunteers

**T**o get more Action Saint-François members involved in our clean-up operations, here are my personal impressions, a few anecdotes, and some statistics on this clean-up season which is already drawing to a close! As you will see, our clean-up operations bring their share of surprises...

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*Alexandre St-Laurent*

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Our first operation of the season showed us just how bad the lack of concerted management used to be at Quebec's rural landfills. At Saint-François-Xavier de Brompton, we collected a variety of waste from the bank of the Tomcod River. We found a huge metal pipe as well as a number of refrigerators, tires, two or three licence plates, barbed wire, some small furniture, a KFC plastic figurine, car wheels, dozens of square meters of sheet metal, and more. What particularly struck us was the quantity of metal recovered.

The operation took place in a pleasant natural setting, near a beaver lodge and an impressive dam. Robert Léo and volunteer Nathalie Lessard favoured us with some fascinating birdcalls. If you have the pleasure of meeting Nathalie, put in a request for her top hit, the song of the kildeer. You'll want an encore...

The second site we cleaned up, the Soucy-Roy River, was on the edge of Rang 2 Southeast, in the new Sherbrooke Borough 1 (Bromptonville). We found some household appliances (stoves, a fridge, etc.), a derelict car, a few tires, and miscellaneous trash. Five volunteers took part in this first clean-up day, along with Robert Léo and myself. The

weather was fine and a frankly companionable atmosphere prevailed.

When I got back from vacation (bike touring in the Lower Saint Lawrence and Charlevoix regions, fabulous weather, fantastic views... but I digress...) the first two sites had been completely cleaned up, so we started on a new stream in Saint-François-Xavier de Brompton, Rang 4. From here, we had a magnificent panorama of the Saint Francis valley. We found lots of derelict cars, including an old Buick that dated back to around 1973, according to the owner of the site, who seemed to be a connoisseur. The said owner very kindly helped us pull the biggest stuff out with his tractor. Some volunteers disturbed a wasps' nest and got a good scare... Luckily, Action Saint-François is equipped with a bug killer (thanks to our incredible budget!) and we were able to fend off the vengeful critters! It was a nice morning, a little on the hot side but normal for the end of July.

After we finished cleaning up that site, we went back to the Soucy-Roy to tackle another dump on the opposite bank of the stream. The main obstacle here was herbaceous – and prickly: raspberries and blackberries galore! On August 10, our first clean-

up date at the new site, there were only five of us working. Despite our small number, we managed to collect an impressive quantity of metal, including a number of pieces of aluminum.

This year we decided to run some special clean-up operations and get public figures and target groups such as politicians and media people involved. The idea was to organize media events to enhance our visibility. Our first special clean-up operation was held on August 31, and we invited politicians from the region to participate. Sherbrooke Council members Diane Delisle, Serge Forest, and Julien Lachance came out to give us a hand, along with Claude Boucher of the Parti Québécois and Serge Cardin of the Bloc Québécois. The site chosen was the Key River near Chemin Dion in Saint-Élie d'Orford, where a regional business stored thousands of tires over a period of years, seeing no need to recover them when it closed down. A number of tire-collecting operations have been conducted at this site in recent years and dozens of tires still need to be removed. Passing tires along the chain kept most participants busy. Serge Cardin really threw himself into the task, specializing in

digging out those that were farthest away. All told, there were 18 of us removing tires from the flood plain of the stream that morning. About a thousand tires were gathered and put in piles for Recyc-Québec to pick up later.

I would kick myself for forgetting to mention our clean-ups at the former Saint-Élie d'Orford dump. This site made the front page of *La Tribune* in August, as some of you may recall. We made our first trip there on August 24, mainly to collect tires, and we went back again on September 7 and 14 for metal and trash.

On September 21, it was back to the Veillette River in Compton, a site that had already been partially cleaned up in previous years. Kudos to the three brave journalists (two from *La Tribune* and one from CHLT) who took us up on our invitation to be part of this "Media Special". We removed about a hundred tires, some appliances, two metal bedframes, a few kilos of trash, and glass and plastic containers. The steep slope caused a few incidents, including

## Action Saint-François wins

(Cont'd from page 2)

The excellence awards aim to offer tangible recognition to those (people, organizations or firms) who have significantly contributed to the preservation of the Eastern Townships' environment, be it through environmental protection programs, or through personal or corporate initiatives for regional environmental sustainable development.

The awards were given for the following categories:

- *Personal contribution;*
- *Large and medium business;*
- *(75 employees or more)*
- *Small business;*
- *(74 employees or less)*
- *Agricultural or forestry sector;*
- *Municipality, town or village;*
- *Environmental group, non-profit organization or institution;*
- *Environmental research and development.*

We are proud to accept this award and are grateful that our work has been publicly recognized by our peers. We congratulate all those who were nominated in all categories and wish them good continuance in their efforts towards improving the environment. The contribution of each individual is important and every environmental action, be it ever so small, is an important contribution.

Finally, we must thank all those who have worked in some way with Action Saint-François. They are the ones who deserve the recognition symbolized by this award.

**Robert Léo Gendron**  
**Pierre Dansereau**

### T-shirts for sale

Great T-shirts: 100% cotton, in natural unbleached sandy-beige colour. Front shows the Action Saint-François logo (green) in full detail. Back: an original work of art depicting the watershed of the Saint Francis River. We would like to thank the artist, Isabelle Loignon, for her excellent volunteer work and her dedication to Action Saint-François.

T-shirts sell for \$15 each. Available in three sizes: medium, large, and extra-large. You can get yours by calling 563-5362, or dropping in to see us at Action Saint-François, 18 Wellington North, Sherbrooke. (It's best to call before you come.)

some tires that rolled all the way down to the streambank. As a general rule, however, the slope helped us move the tires. The trees provided welcome shade; the heat was surprising for the time of year, and really knocked us out when we went back to our vehicles. A total of 12 people participated in this operation.

Statistics-lovers be assured, you are not forgotten! Here, in a nutshell, are the salient data on the ninth Action Saint-François clean-up season: As of September 21, 2002, 67 different volunteers took part in our operations; some of these came more than once, for a total of 136 "person-days". Thirteen metric tons of metal were recovered and sold to our sponsor, Olympique Métal; 360 kilos of glass and plastic went to the regional sorting centre; and 690 kilos of trash were

shipped off to the sanitary landfill. Expressed as percentages, metal accounted for 92.5% of what we collected, glass and plastic for 2.5%, and trash, 5%.

In short, we have had a productive clean-up season, with good times aplenty. My thanks to all of you for participating in such large numbers, and I hope I'll have the pleasure of working with you again next year. For those who are interested in environmental volunteer work, take note that our clean-up operations start at 7:45 a.m. on Saturday mornings, from the beginning of May to the end of October. We meet in the La Grenouillère parking lot in downtown Sherbrooke (entrance off Rue Frontenac).

Have a good fall and we'll see you next year!



# Watershed (or river basin) management

The Action Saint-François leaflet features the following title: “Action Saint-François, environmental organization, watershed management”. The notion of watershed management was the cornerstone of the organization when it was founded. In setting out their project to protect and develop the Saint Francis River, the founders’ global vision inevitably led them to define it in terms of a notion that takes the greatest possible number of parameters into account: the notion of a river basin or watershed.

**Robert Léo Gendron**

Before we continue, novices might appreciate an explanation of the term “watershed”. Imagine a drop of water falling from the sky: either it falls on one side of a mountain or it falls on the other side. Where it falls will determine whether it enters the stream network of one watershed or another. That drop of water will travel. It may end up inside a tomato on your plate; maybe you’ll drink it; or it may be used to wash you off, before returning to the water supply and evaporating under the sun’s warm rays. The water at a given point in a river carries the history of all the streams and slopes it has travelled before reaching that point.

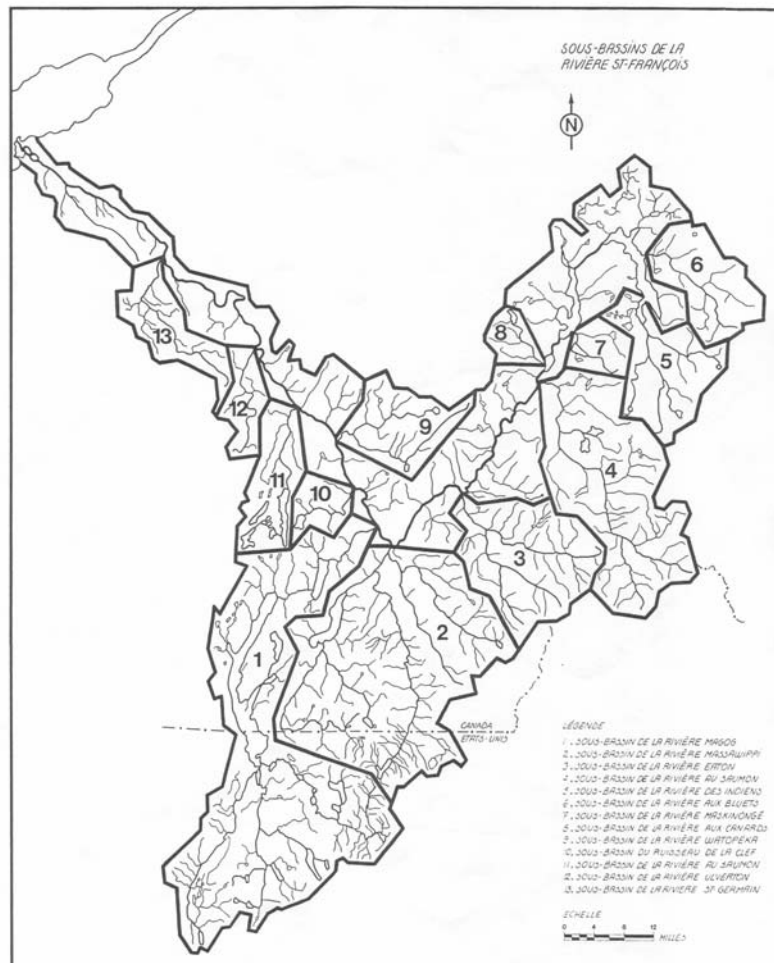
A watershed’s characteristics, and especially its size and shape, are generally determined by the geological structure, including the nature of the land (permeable or impermeable) and how it is placed, the contours of the terrain (orography), climate, vegetation, and soils. Because that drop of water is just passing through, the watershed can be considered to be an open system, a set of interconnected elements and processes that exchange energy with the surrounding environment.

## Understanding the situation

In a watershed, everything is intimately connected: the climate, stream flow rates, the ecosystem, and so on. Before taking any concrete action, it is important to under-

stand the existing interrelations between the hydrological, climatic, and biological phenomena operating there. Moreover, the watershed is the site of many human activities, all of which have profound consequences (whether deliberate or inadvertent) on the functioning of the watershed.

To fight floods, human societies have built all kinds of systems like dams and canal networks, thus altering drainage patterns. We also draw large quantities of water for our needs. Water taken for domestic and industrial uses is largely returned (though often in pretty poor condition), but water taken for agri-



culture is almost totally used up. Of the water we remove from the system, 70% is used for agriculture, which returns less than 10%. In setting up farms and towns on slopes, human societies have also changed the vegetation cover, which is essential to retain runoff. Roads, sidewalks, and parking lots are all good examples of impermeable surfaces that change drainage patterns by keeping the water from penetrating the soil.

As well as modifying the quantity of water in streams, human activity affects its quality. Aquatic environments are heavily used as disposal sites for much of the waste produced by human activities. They are also contaminated by the fertilizers and pesticides that are widely used on agricultural lands. For instance, 74% of the nitrogen input in aquatic environments comes from industry farming, fertilizer applications, and livestock production.

Water quality and quantity also have direct and less direct effects on the ecosystem nurtured by the watershed. Fish, small invertebrates, algae, phytoplankton: the aquatic organisms that live in streams are many and varied, and all have a role to play in the ecological balance of their environment. But toxic substances in the water have catastrophic consequences on the biology of these aquatic organisms, causing malformations, growth defects, and reproductive problems.

## **Working together**

Now let's talk about watershed management. By and large, it means doing everything that can be done to keep the water in the best possible condition. This management approach actively involves all concerned parties to get concrete results. There are numerous obstacles to be overcome in setting up a

watershed management system, however – the main one being that watershed boundaries do not correspond to the borders of MRCs (regional county municipalities) and administrative regions. This means it's important to work together, and all sectors (municipal, agricultural, forestry, economic, industrial, environmental, tourist, cultural, leisure, etc.) must be represented. Often, the watershed extends into several MRCs. Or again, a given municipality may be in two different watersheds. Still, if everyone remembers the main objective – safeguarding the environment – it's possible to take concrete, positive action.

## **The Saint Francis River watershed: some statistics**

The Saint Francis River watershed is a big territory, extending upstream to Lac Saint-François and downstream to Lac Saint-Pierre. It covers a total area of 10,230 square kilometres, of which 14% is in the U.S. Approximately 70% of the land is forested. Nearly 25% is agricultural land (of which about 75% is used to grow fodder), and only 5% is tied up in urban zones. The population of the Quebec portion is estimated at 329,600. The watershed is said to comprise some 10,000 expanses of water all told, including lakes, rivers, streams, and ponds. This means that Estrie and the other regions in the Saint Francis River watershed are still richly endowed with natural environments. To develop procedures for ensuring the survival of these environments and the future of the communities that live there, watershed management is absolutely essential.

## **Watershed committees**

The Quebec government made a commitment to watershed management in 1996, when it signed the charter of the International Network

of Basin Organizations (INBO). In November 2001, an umbrella group of Quebec watershed management organizations, the Regroupement des organisations de gestion de bassin (ROBVQ), was set up. In addition to promoting watershed management, the new group's mission was to support the actions of its members and to communicate watershed organizations' positions to the public, municipalities, and all users of streams. Nineteen watershed organizations now belong to the group, of a possible 50. Each organization will receive \$20,000 from the Ministère de l'Environnement to support the implementation of integrated watershed management. This positive initiative responds to the recommendations made in the 2000 report of the Commission sur la gestion de l'eau au Québec (Commission on water management in Quebec).

A Saint Francis River watershed committee is now being organized. The process is just getting under way, but the various groups in the region are joining forces, and Action Saint-François is sure to be among the twenty or so organizations directly or indirectly involved in managing the water of the Saint Francis River watershed.

You can find out more by consulting the various websites devoted to the topic, including "ROBVQ" in your search. You can also call Stéphanie Martel of the Conseil régional en environnement de l'Estrie (CREE: Estrie regional environmental council), who is in charge of setting up the Saint Francis River watershed committee; the number is 821-4357.



## A history of tires !

**S**ince the beginning of Action Saint-François' cleaning efforts in 1993, we've found tires on practically every site we've cleaned. Up to now, we've gathered about 64 metric tons (64,000 kg) of tires. Lots of volunteers ask why we need to remove all the tires, and if they really pose a problem if just left outside. They also ask me where the tires we collect on Saturday mornings end up, and what they're turned into. I hope this will help answer those questions...

First of all: a bit of history. The ancestor of the contemporary tire was the pneumatic tire, which replaced the rubber bands that graced horse carriages and the first automobiles. The first pneumatic tire used compressed air to support the weight of the tire, and was invented by the Scottish citizen R.W. Thomson, who received a patent in 1845. This tire was rediscovered in 1888 by the Scottish inventor John Dunlop, who used it for bicycles. It was a simple rubber membrane filled with compressed air and sealed at the ends. In 1891, the Michelin brothers received the patent for the first detachable tire, which they used on a car in 1895. (The majority of the information to follow comes from the Recyc-Québec Web site).

Tires today are made partially from synthetic rubber, which comes from petrol, and natural rubber, which is produced by a native South American tree. The elastic properties and general resistance of rubber are improved by Vulcanisation, a procedure which bonds sulphur to rubber, and as a consequence makes the recycling of rubber more complex. The radial tire, which is now the norm, is mounted on a steel structure that represents about 10% of the weight of the tire. The stronger radial tire, introduced in the '70s, substantially augments tire life and caused a drop in sales that only the sheer number of vehicles on the road has made up for in the past few years.

Since the invention of the wheel, the pneumatic tire is definitely one of the most significant for the comfort of drivers. The sought-after qualities of durability, stability and security are the source of the problems at the end of their useful

lives – unused tires, near indestructible, accumulate and require solutions that pit the environment against economics. Every year, Quebecers dispose of the equivalent of 6.4 million car tires. Furthermore, the number of unused tires piled around various Quebec sites is estimated at 25 million.

### Environmental Problem

In the absence of solutions and adequate outlets, most old tires are found in landfills or storage sites, all more or less well-controlled. While rubber is relatively inert and stable chemically, it is also uncompressible and occupies lots of space, and given its tendency to rise from the earth, makes landfilling difficult. Before burying them it is necessary to cut them, which is relatively expensive. Tire storage also constitutes a major risk of fire, with consequences that impact on the environment and public health. In effect, uncontrolled low-temperature tire fires represent a significant source of atmospheric pollution, mainly through several organic compounds that are toxic for the natural environment and health. Thermal decomposition of tires also creates pyrolytic oil, similar to raw petrol, which contaminates the soil, surface water and the water table.

### Recyc-Québec

In 1993, RECYC-QUÉBEC launched its program to help reuse, recycle and use for energy unused tires in Quebec. This program directs the annual flux of unused tires in Quebec towards the retreading, recycling and energy industries, encouraging the emergence of such industries while diminishing the need for storage or burial.

The new program for unused tire management was launched. In May 1997, it innovated through creating a transport network for unused tires in all of Quebec's administrative regions. This transport network took, for free, loads of unused tires to places that sold new, used, retreaded or remolded tires directly to the consumer, and supplied with equipment to de-rim and install tires, to scrap merchants, to car and truck parts recyclers, and to vehicle fleets and municipal corporations. It should be noted that permanent tires and off-road tires larger than 48.5 inches (61.25 cm) in diameter are not accepted by the Program.

The new Program relies on the loyalty of both retailers and the general public in Quebec. The response of retailers was more that favourable, and regis-



trants went from less than 2,000 to more than 8,500 Quebec businesses. The recuperation was entirely financed by RECYC-QUÉBEC. Retailers, through their registration in the program, agreed not to claim money for the old tires brought in by Quebec consumers.

On the other hand, since October 1, 1999, the government has levied a \$3 tax before taxes per tire to Quebec consumers buying new tires. This law guarantees the continuance of the Program, to clean permanent sites and invest in research of new technologies encouraging the recuperation of tires accumulated in numerous storage sites (Plan d'Action Québécois sur la Gestion des Matières Résiduelles 1998-2008.)

Since 1993, more than 20 million tires currently in flux (i.e. car, truck and van tires produced annually) have been treaded, transformed or used. To this

considerable number, we can add about 500,000 tires for every month of the Program's operation. Regarding the recycling potential of recuperated tires, their quality becomes a major aspect to consider. They must be part of the current flux (the rubber can't be too deteriorated), be free from contaminants and be de-rimmed.

## Recycling and rehabilitation

Recycling consists mainly of mechanically grinding the tire to produce rubber powder that can then be used as a primary material in different manufacturing processes for secondary recycling. Chemical transformation, through pyrolysis, is another method. This process decomposes the tires through intense heat, in the absence of oxygen. It produces oil, carbon black, and combustible pyrolytic gas, as well as liberating steel. The recent creation of a devulcanizing process opens the door to the use of recuperated rubber in more refined products – such as new tires.

Finally, energy uses consist of using the tires as a combustible as a replacement in high-powered thermal facilities, such as cement works. The results of tests carried out on atmospheric emissions in a Quebec cement factory show no negative effects. The use of tires as fuel can reduce the concentrations of sulphur released into the environment from typical conventional combustible use.

In Quebec, a dozen businesses work in the recycling of unused tires. These businesses generate 300 jobs. This is added to the economic activity of



the two cement factories that use these tires for energy.

Recyclers make an exhaustive list of products, from tablecloths to blasting mats for explosives, soundproofing to piping, cushions to barricades.

We can see that there has been effort invested in tire recycling in Quebec – good news. But we must also remember the wild sites of uncollected tires. There's still a job to do, and minds to change. It's essential to reduce our tire consumption by using more public transit, ride-sharing, shared rental like the Communauto system, rail transport and even bicycles. Our cities must stop developing to serve the automobile, the golden calf that enslaves us all. The tire problem is only one of many coming directly or indirectly from our autocratic civilization. I hope that we can make some major changes in our transport habits, to ensure our society a brighter future.

**Robert Léo Gendron**

### Recyc-Québec on the web :

<http://www.recyc-quebec.gouv.qc.ca>

### Communauto :

<http://www.communauto.com>

### Recommended reading :

- *Le livre noir de l'automobile*  
An exploration of contemporary man's unhealthy relationship with the automobile.  
Richard Bergeron; Editions Hypothèse, Montréal, 1999, 435p, 34.95\$Can
- *Magazine Car Busters*. Excellent, From the Netherlands.
- *Ecology of the Automobile*  
Black Rose Books, Montréal, 1994, 19,95\$Can
- *Ironie du char*  
An essay on the car and the Montreal transport crisis;  
Jean-Pierre Dagenais, Édition d'auteur, Montréal, 1982, 208p, 7,50\$

(you can find all these titles at the Biosfaire book store in Montréal)

## Action Saint-François

### The new members of Action Saint-François

from April the 1<sup>st</sup>,  
to October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2002

#### BROMPTONVILLE

Line Gagné

#### CANTON DE MA- GOG

Raymond Demers

#### LENNOXVILLE

Bruce Giddinos  
Carole Chevalier  
Charles Ouellet  
Clement Mallalieu  
Dianne Prah  
Elie Khoury  
Francis Marineau  
Gail Farrell  
Ghislaine Champoux  
J. May Beers  
J. Peter Jones  
Jacqueline Wallace  
Jean-Pascal Ouellet  
Jim Brodie  
Louis Taillefer  
Nancy Simpson  
Valois Boudreault

#### ROCK-FOREST

Claude & Line Charbon-  
neau

#### SHERBROOKE

André Mayers  
Bertrand Daignault  
Bibiane Roy  
Catherine Blais  
Charles Brochu  
Charles Farrar  
Clarke Ryder  
Claude Marchand  
Edmond Desbiens  
Églantine Gosselin  
François Evoy  
Gaétan Duhamel  
Gaston Boulé

Ghislaine Beaudette

Guy Powell

Huguette Parent

Jacques Danis

Jean Lavoie

Joanne Blais

Judith Munger

Jules Proteau

Julie Thibault

Julien Marceau

Karl Dalery

Lise Friolet

Lise Proulx

Louis Martin

Lucie Gagnon

Marcel Therrien

Michael P. Tinker

Michel Valade

Monique Lahaye-Desro-  
chers

Patrick Fréchette

Peggy Hickey

Pierre-Louis Péloquin

Raymond Boutin

Roger Carbonneau

Serge Boisvert

Sylvie Fortier

Sylvie Lafond

Valérie Duperval

Yvan Gosselin

Yves Laverdière

#### ST-DENIS-DE- BROMPTON

André Robichaud-  
Johnston  
François St-Pierre  
Johanne Veilleux  
Marie-Reine Thouvenot  
Michel Grégoire  
Roger Tardif

## Action Saint-François celebrates 10 years of activity!

Action Saint-François was created on August 5, 1992. We're going to highlight these ten years of activity by inviting the general public to a benefit concert to take place in May, 2003 at the Grenada Theatre. It's yet another project – and one we intend to carry out over the long term and turn into a success.

In broad strokes, this show will gather artists from various areas: music, dance, storytelling, humour and lots more! A short film on Action Saint-François will also be presented, with three short scenarios on the organization's activities (recruitment, establishment, cleaning).

An ASF booth will be set up in the Granada lobby where an artwork exhibition showcasing some of the trash we have collected will be presented. We'll also be showing photos of our endless cleaning chores!

You're welcome to join us – especially if you want to lend a hand in organizing the event. We're always in need of help! The success of the event will allow us to buy a new van, as our current one is on its last leg...er, wheel. Call us or drop us line via e-mail if you're interested.

**Robert Léo Gendron**

69 people have join for the first time, Action Saint-François, since April 1<sup>st</sup> 2002.

Check us out on the Internet at :  
<http://www.asf-estrie.org/asf/>



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ACTION SAINT-FRANÇOIS A NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION FOUNDED IN AUGUST 1992 BRINGS TOGETHER CITIZENS CONVINCED OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ENVIRONMENT. THE GROUP IS INTERESTED IN THE RESTORATION AND PRESERVATION OF AQUATIC MILIEUS OF THE SAINT-FRANÇOIS RIVER WATERSHED. CLEAN UP, EROSION CONTROL AND REPLANTING PROJECTS ALONG WATERWAYS AND FLOOD PLAINS ARE ORGANIZED BY ACTION SAINT-FRANÇOIS. WE WANT TO HEIGHTEN AWARENESS OF THE POPULATION TO THE NECESSITY TO ACT IN ORDER TO PRESERVE THE HYDROLOGICAL NETWORK OF OUR TERRITORY. ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE 25\$. FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL US AT (819) 563-5362.