



Hello everyone! Always with the intention to inform you about the IAT, here is the second edition of the **members' journal** which is dedicated to the presentation of developments in 2006 and the priorities of the year.

Content: - general information; - maintenance; - management and communications; - sales and finances; - environment; - fund-raising hike by members of parliament; - the international and national IAT networks; - the annual general meeting (AGM) and news from the Board of directors (BD); - Conclusion

**General:** Developments for the IAT in 2006 are quite positive despite the long response time for our financial support requests for basic maintenance and trail quality. Because this crucial step is not fully fulfilled, we had to put a lot of projects on hold and some files in development have been only partially completed. In spite of this instability, we are very satisfied with the responses from the community and from our principal socioeconomic partners with respect to the trail's development plan. We have the support of the *Sépaq (Society of outdoor establishments of Quebec)*, the *Regional Tourism Association of the Gaspésie (ATRG)* and *Québec maritime*. The *Conférence régionale des élus* of the *Gaspésie - Îles-de-la-Madeleine* region (*CRÉ-GIM*) has allowed us to present our requests for the financing of maintenance in their Volet II program. We are now hoping that the same organisation in the *Bas-Saint-Laurent* region, which the trail also runs through, will accept to offer us the same conditions by including maintenance of the important touristic and recreational trails as admissible projects for the Volet II program.

One of the pieces of good news for this year is that our number of members has increased from 30 to more than 130, and the involvement of volunteers for maintenance and management of the trail has also increased. Our objective for 2007 is now to double this number and to continue recruiting volunteers in charge of specific sectors of the trail in their area.



**Maintenance:** Basic maintenance of the trail remains our main priority. In 2006 we weren't able to finish maintenance in time for the beginning of the season, nor over the entire trail. We did, however, have received financial support to install 9 lean-to shelters and 13 anti-bear food rigs for the camping sites of the IAT. The hikers have appreciated these improvements. For 2007, we will continue the partnership with forestry groups in the 5 MRCs along the Trail. We must file requests to the Volet II program to finance their services. Other partners are also involved, depending of the program or region (*Rexforêt, URLS, Corporation de gestion récréotouristique de Matane, PARC Bas-St-Laurent*). To determine the

maintenance priorities at the start of the season, we count of volunteers and the first hikers of the season to give us their reports. This information allows us to pinpoint the most important jobs for the forestry group workers. In collaboration with the *Centre intégré de développement touristique de la Gaspésie (CIDTG)* and the *ATRG*, we have formed a touristic and recreational trails committee for the Gaspé Coast, including snowmobile and quad trails, bike trails (la route verte) and kayak routes (la route bleue), as well as other similar partners, to find lasting solutions for the continuity of these trails. In the next months, this committee will try to develop programs for the maintenance of all the major touristic and recreational paths. We must work with our elected representatives and get their commitment to ensure the quality of these infrastructures. The next step for this new committee is to work together to promote our network of infrastructures and services and to create touristic circuits. (Photo : Régis Desrosiers)

**Management and communications:** Right now, customer services and management of the IAT-Oc are done by the members of the Board of directors and by the present director. Because of a lack of human resources, a lot of important files have had to be left aside. Our communications are minimal and our information tools (web site, books for hikers, topographic maps) are in need of revision. In 2006 we solicited the *ATRG*, the *Québec maritime* and the *CLD* and *SADC* of the 5 MRCs along the trail to finance web site updates and other such investments. In 2007, we hope that these requests will bear fruit and we will also make requests for the update of our information tools with the *Ministère des régions*. We also hope to collaborate with the *Fédération québécoise de la marche* to do a topo-guide and a book of one-day hikes which would highlight the attractions of each sub-region. Projects with the *CIDTG* for the establishment of a network of service provider - partners (Ex. restaurants, transporters and lodging along the trail) will continue. Other priorities include the completion of our emergency measures plan and the launching of a sponsorship campaign for 2008.

**Sales and finances:** In 2006, we've respected the balanced budget as planned and we also had a 35% rise of the accommodation sales, compared to 2005. The working capital is approximately \$15,000. The basic budget covers management fees and about 14 weeks of work for the trail director. In 2007, with the collaboration of *Emploi-Québec*, we have also hired a tourist technician. The goal of the sponsorship campaign is to receive financial support other than that from

government programs. Right now we finance 1/3 of our operational fees. These revenues come from accommodation reservations, sales of maps and books, and membership fees).

**The Environment:** The protection of the trail's environment is one of our major preoccupations - the IAT's quality depends on it! A lot of members are involved in following the various areas where forestry exploitation. The objectives of all forest users are hard to reconcile because of the actual condition of the forest. One of the most sensitive areas for us is located in the Matane Wildlife Reserve. This is a sector in demand for timber and we feel it would be pertinent to estimate the possible profitability of this public territory if it were better protected and served for ecotourism development. In the medium- and long-term and taking into consideration the actual international reputation of the Chic-Choc Mountains and the *Parc national de la Gaspésie*, the entire Chic-Choc mountain chain should perhaps be protected. A local committee in Matane is working toward getting this territory recognized as a protected area of Quebec. (Photo : Jean-Claude Bouchard)



**Fund-raising hike by members of parliament:** From September 27 to October 1st 2006, in collaboration with the *Parc national de la Gaspésie*, *Absolu ÉcoAventure* and *Destination Chic-Chocs*, we organized a fund-raising hike with the *Fondation des parlementaires québécois* to finance literacy programs in francophone developing countries and for the realisation of redistribution projects in Quebec communities. Seven present (Nancy Charest, Marie Malavoy, François Gendron) and retired (Pauline Marois, Roger Bertrand, Marie Grégoire, Hélène Robert), members of parliament of all political allegiances united their efforts to walk 50 km on the IAT-Qc, in the *Parc national de la Gaspésie*. There's good chance that this event will be back this coming year. It's a unique occasion for the IAT-Qc to connect with our elected representatives to have them understand the importance of the trail and also to gain visibility on the provincial scene. (Photo : Margaret Kraenzel)



**International and national IAT networks:** The international IAT network has pursued its development and Mr Richard Anderson, the president, is still as involved as ever. His contact network contributes to recognition of the trail by the media and by associations of thru hikers in the United States and elsewhere. A new chapter has been established in Nova Scotia, so the IAT group now includes Maine, New Brunswick, Quebec and Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. In Quebec, we're hoping that the national trail will eventually join the IAT-Qc in Amqui area.

**The annual general meeting (AGM) and news from the Board of directors (BD):** The next AGM will take place on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of May 2007 in Matapédia. The meeting notice will be sent to you by April. We would very much appreciate your presence. Besides discussing the trail's development, we are organizing a short hike for on the trail for the participants. Concerning the BD, Mrs. Josyane Laroche from Côte-de-Gaspé committee retired herself because a lack of availability. Mr. Jacques Chartier will replace her. Mr François Boulanger, director of the *Parc national de la Gaspésie*, will be an observer on the BD in the name of the *Parc national de la Gaspésie*.

**Conclusion:** Let's conclude by saying that the IAT-Qc is moving forward, though it is with small steps and it will take a certain time before we see the spin-offs that justified the trail's construction in the first place. Trail directors would like to see a higher level of investment so that the totality of the business plan of the trail could be achieved. This would allow the trail to become more self-sufficient. We believe that it will be possible for us to auto-finance our budget if during the next years we have help to ensure basic trail maintenance, management and visibility. The IAT-Qc meets the sustainable development standards of provincial and federal politics of *Tourisme Québec* and also of the Canadian Tourism Commission and we think it would be a great investment for the sustainable development of our regions.

We hope to benefit from your support and participation as a member and partner of the trail in the coming years!

Sincerely,

Eric Chouinard  
Director and secretary