

Ironman with a ♥ of Gold

by Anna McAlear

DFAIT employees celebrate Canada Day in myriad ways, but when it comes to energy, commitment and passion for life, no one rivals Yan Michaud.

This summer, Yan Michaud, Director, E-Communications, Communications Products and Services Division, will cycle from Vancouver to Montreal, a journey that will take 52 days, cover 5,285 km and take him through countless Canadian communities. The trip is not only an opportunity to revisit the Canadian landscapes he fell in love with as a child but also a quest to help those less fortunate in his local community and in communities across the country.

Since childhood, Michaud has been a passionate sports enthusiast, excelling in competitive tennis, badminton and squash and enjoying numerous other active pursuits. But after losing a dear friend to bone-marrow cancer in 2006, Michaud took his adventurous spirit to a whole new level. "I realized that the future I had been taking for granted was not guaranteed," says Michaud. "I decided to really seize the present moment and channel my passion for life into something bigger and deeper."



Yan Michaud loves cycling but loves helping others even more.

That year, Michaud climbed Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. This year, he will power his bicycle across Canada, the second-largest country in the world.

Michaud's undertaking begins on July 1 in Vancouver and ends in Montreal on August 21. He will be travelling with a group of cyclists organized by Vélo Québec, a company that creates and oversees cycling trips all over the world. The itinerary for the trip foretells a gruelling trek, with cyclists riding nine days out of every 10. The shortest distance they will travel in a day is 75 km, while the longest is 188 km. "I can't wait to hit the Rockies," says Michaud with his usual crackling positivity. "That'll be a great challenge."

For much of the ride, he will follow the Trans-Canada Highway, a road he remembers fondly from his childhood. Michaud's father was a financial administrator for the Canadian Army and the family would move every few years when he was posted to a new base. The long car rides, which crisscrossed the country, instilled in Michaud a deep appreciation for Canada and its landscape. Through his back-seat window he saw a country filled with forests, water, mountains and plains, and he was amazed. In city after city, he met people of different ancestries, belief systems and mother tongues. "It was incredible. It was diverse. I learned so much."

Yet as he grew older, he noticed a disparity that he could not celebrate: that between the rich and the poor in many Canadian communities. Michaud now works to address this disparity and has organized his fundraising bike trip to support Moisson Outaouais, the local food bank in Gatineau, Que. In addition, at each major town along the route, Michaud will be meeting with local media to raise awareness about the need for food banks across the country.

"When I look at my life, it seems truly blessed," says Michaud. "I have a secure and rewarding career, a loving spouse, great friends. I want for nothing. But when I look around society, I see the needs of others aren't always being met. That's a big part of why I'm doing this."

Michaud hopes to raise \$15,000 to help Moisson Outaouais meet its mandate. He is doing what he can, but the needs of charitable services in Canada seem endless and he actively recruits others to get involved. "It's a minority of people who donate their time and money, but it feels good when you help, and there's no question it makes a difference."

To follow Michaud as he cycles from Vancouver to Montreal, visit *Our World Online*.

To contribute to his fundraising efforts, visit www.moissonoutaouais.com.