

SMILES AND CHUCKLES... (end)

Day #12: On these islands, with their captivating landscapes, a total of 12,000 inhabitants live here (it's easy to count). Three cases of MS in all, an incredible Christmas party for their MS Society! Almost everyone knows one another or knows the big families with 16 kids. On the radio, they look after announcing births and deaths. One hundred kilometers of road stretches along these islands, and we covered 700 of them to find a place to live. That's right, we turned in circles an awful lot!

Inconceivable to leave here without having found a place to live, and yet if we didn't, Luc would have no more work on his return. We went to see the house where our waitress of the day before had referred us. And poof! We bought it! The house wasn't very pretty inside, with its fake bricks and fake stones, but nothing that paint couldn't remedy. In front of the house, a quiet street, but a horrible view: the arena. Behind the house and at the end of the street, to forgive the front, was the ocean! As almost everywhere on the islands, the village of Fatima where we'll live is desert-like. Only daisies and wild roses grow well. As for the trees, they get carried away by the wind! Some evergreens manage to grow in rare spots. No respectable broadleaf tree would go and plant itself down in the middle of these winds—it would be suicidal. I think MS also blows away in the wind, and that's fine with me!

Well, there we were, back in Pointe-Claire; the humid, stagnant, overpowering heat, the stress, the noise and the pollution, our little things and our old habits. On our return, my MS problems that I have known all too well since the age of 18 returned, too; I had managed to forget them on the islands. What is the secret of these islands? The salt water? The calm and quiet? Whatever it is, these islands will be good for me and will give us a few more years of life, even with my MS.

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PROJECT ADAPTECH: COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY AND ADAPTED TECHNOLOGIES

Adaptech is made up of a team of professionals, students and consumers who conduct research into the use of computer technology and adaptive technologies by disabled students at Canadian colleges and universities. We are located at Dawson College in Montreal, guided by an advisory committee that is committed, dynamic, bilingual and pan-Canadian. Our main objective is to provide empirical information to individuals, professionals and organizations concerned, in order to ensure everyone accessibility to new computer technologies.

Since our beginnings in 1996, we carried out three major studies. The findings of these studies show that students, regardless of their sex, age, curriculum or type of disability, do and can use computer technologies in order to succeed in their studies. The number and nature of the benefits of computer technologies demonstrate the importance of computers in disabled students' success. It is

also interesting to mention that the staff in charge of services to disabled students notes that the use of computers is not only beneficial to the students but also efficient and effective for the rest of the educational institution. Approximately half of the students in our samples have two or more disabilities. This results in the need to adapt workstations, which can meet the needs of students with multiple disabilities. In this context, there was a strong tendency for «inter-utilization» of adaptive technologies, i.e., students having a specific disability take advantage of technologies targeting another category of disabilities.

Despite the fact that Adaptech is engaged in research based on observation, having discovered important information from our many studies encourages us to go beyond writing reports and articles. We are trying to set up projects that may interest people who have disabilities.

In our modern society, everyone uses computer technology for various purposes. Unfortunately, computer equipment is not always adapted to the needs of the disabled nor compatible with the other components already installed in their computer. Besides, computer hardware and software are often very expensive, making the situation difficult for low-income earners.

Free and inexpensive. For this reason, Adaptech launched a project called «Free and inexpensive». It makes it possible for people with disabilities to try out products before buying them. We are also researching products that are easily accessible and low cost. Some of these items are demos while others are completely operational.

Our pricing criteria are set at a maximum of \$150. By visiting our website in the «Downloads» section, you will be able to judge whether one or more of the products presented there are useful to you. You can also download them and try them out. We don't claim that these software replace cutting-edge hardware and software currently on the market, but rather, we are offering them as a short-term solution or a chance to test various adaptive technologies. We strongly believe that this is a good place to start.

We invite you to visit us on our website, at www.adaptech.org, to learn more about the Adaptech Project, our studies and their findings, and to discover «free and inexpensive» products. You may also send us questions and/or comments. We will be delighted to answer you. Adaptech will soon be launching other projects as well. We'll keep you up-to-date on our progress.

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