

# Portage Atlantic puts focus on substance abuse during National Addictions Awareness Week

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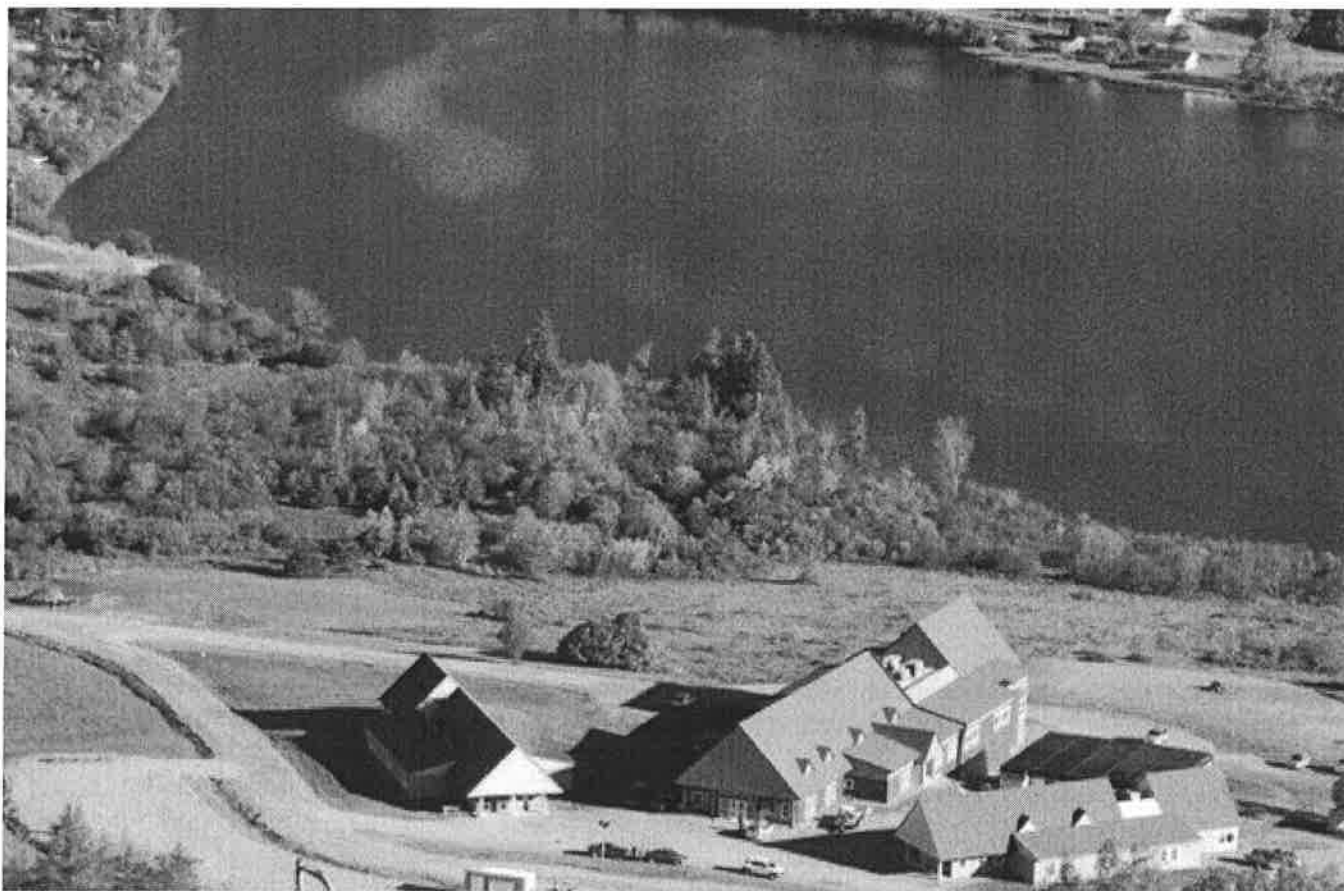
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Portage Atlantic, a residential addiction rehabilitation treatment centre for youth between the ages of 14 and 21 with serious substance abuse problems, is reminding New Brunswick residents of National Addictions Awareness Week, which is running until Nov. 21.

Photo: Submitted

A New Brunswick based rehabilitation centre is trying to raise awareness about the negative side effects of drugs.

This week, Portage Atlantic, a residential addiction rehabilitation treatment centre for youth between the ages of 14 and 21 with serious substance abuse problems, is reminding New Brunswick residents of National Addictions Awareness Week, which is running until Nov. 21.

Addiction is a chronic health condition that affects individuals, families and communities.

Portage Atlantic has distributed information about National Addictions Awareness Week to various organization relating to the national event, to prevent youth using illicit drugs.

Statistics Canada says 60 per cent of illicit drug users in Canada are between the ages of 15 and 24.

"It negatively affects families and communities in so many ways," said Carol Tracey, director of corporate development with Portage Atlantic.

The reported harm due to their drug use is four times higher than it is for drug users over the age of 25.

Since Portage Atlantic was established in 1996, more than 2,500 Youth from Atlantic Canada have benefited from the facility.

Tracey said many youth at the Portage Atlantic rehabilitation centre, have complicated backgrounds of trauma, family dysfunction and chaos.

"They are factors that contribute to drug addiction and mental health problems sometimes these youth, to escape their everyday reality, will turn to substance abuse," she said.

Tracey added that many have already started using drugs as early as 10 to 12 years old.

"They have lost interest in school or not attending regularly, and are often alienated from family members and no longer live at home," she said.

At Portage Atlantic, the approach to treatment is based on the therapeutic community model which, through positive peer pressure and role modelling, helps youth increase self-esteem.

To help address issues pertaining to addiction, Portage Atlantic, which is located at Cassidy Lake in New Brunswick, also offers gender-specific programs.

"Without the pressure of being around members of the opposite sex, the young women are better able to identify the root causes of their drug problems and work through them," said Portage Atlantic chairman, Dr. Russell H.T. King.

For many of the youth in treatment, unhealthy relationships, physical or emotional abuse and poor self-image are often intertwined with drug use. The rehabilitation program is gender-specific for this reason.

"They feel more comfortable and can make better progress in their therapy," he said.

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