

Wilderness first-aid course offers real-life scenarios

by Ginny Miller

To prepare for guiding a hiking trip in the Gaspé Peninsula, Québec, I enrolled in the Wilderness and Remote First Aid training course organized by Blair Doyle and Andrew Foran, both certified Instructor Trainers for the Red Cross.

Doyle, who runs Doyle Adventure and Safety, designed a three-day immersion instruction course that attracts outdoorspeople, small craft operators, eco-tourism operators and tour guides.

On the first day, the 20 participants learned the theory and the basics of soft tissue injuries, hypothermia, treating minor injuries, splinting and CPR. The group met again and spent 18 hours putting their new-found knowledge into practice by setting up scenarios and taking turns being victims and rescuers. At night, Doyle and Foran,



"If you're 50 miles into the wilderness, and out of range for 911, don't have a heart attack or break your femur. Most other things you can deal with," says Blair Doyle of Halifax Regional Search and Rescue.

Photos by Blair Doyle

along with other instructors, set up a mock tragic boating accident on the shore of the lake. There were a number of victims, including a belligerent (possibly inebriated) father, a seriously injured mother and a missing five-year-old boy.

We followed the sounds of distress with just flashlights to guide us. Arriving at the chaotic accident scene, we found a woman screaming for help, holding a child's life jacket. We were able to treat some victims for shock, hypothermia and a broken arm, but the little boy didn't recover.

By Sunday afternoon, the group was emotionally and physically spent, but better prepared for heading out in the woods.

For more information about Doyle Adventure and Safety courses, visit the website at <http://users.eastlink.ca/~adventure> ■

Ginny Miller is a freelance writer and recent public relations graduate. She has also earned her Wilderness Survival/First Aid certificate.

