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## OBITUARY

# Morissette was cyclists' advocate

## FOUNDER OF LE MONDE À BICYCLETTE

Helped establish city's car-sharing network and pushed for better facilities

MICHELLE LALONDE  
THE GAZETTE

A white bicycle, a symbol of the worldwide cycling movement, is now chained to a fence at the Plateau Mont Royal home of well-known cycling advocate, author and social activist Claire Morissette, who died Tuesday at 57 after a long battle with breast cancer.

For more than 30 years, Morissette fought for better, safer bicycle routes in Montreal and affordable access to bikes for people around the world.

The white bicycle was put there during Friday's "critical mass" bike ride, a monthly event organized by young cycling advocates, many of whom saw Morissette as their inspiration.

It is exactly the type of event Morissette would have loved, said her friend and advocacy partner, Robert (Bicycle Bob) Silverman.

"They (the cyclists) stopped in front of her house on Esplanade Ave. They left the white bicycle, and there was a minute of silence for Claire," said Silverman, his voice cracking with emotion.

As he prepared for Morissette's memorial service yesterday, Silverman reminisced about his friend's many accomplishments.

Morissette, with Silverman, founded Le Monde à bicyclette in the mid-1970s. The group was widely credited for winning cyclists the right to bring bicycles on the métro, creating a bike link from Montreal Island to the South Shore, and promoting the main bicycle path network.

Morissette also helped establish Montreal's car-sharing network, Communauto, and founded Cyclo Nord-Sud, an organization that has sent more than 20,000 used and new bicycles to developing countries since 1999.

In 1994, she published *Deux roues, un avenir* (Two Wheels, One Future) a book that explored the history of the global cycling movement and the bicycle's potential to improve cities.

Silverman recalled with a chuckle the creative stunts, many devised by Morissette, that Le Monde à bicyclette used to draw public attention to their

cause.

The two organized a "die-in" in 1976, where about 100 people lay down and played dead at the corner of Ste. Catherine and University Sts., using ketchup to symbolize blood and mangled bicycles to demonstrate the effect of the car culture on cyclists and pedestrians.

To show the absurdity of the métro system's no-bicycles rule, the group brought ladders, cardboard elephants and other large unwieldy objects into the subway, noting to reporters that métro guards allowed those but not bicycles.

Morissette continued to push for better bike infrastructure and as recently as the spring attended the city's announcement of the de Maisonneuve Blvd. bike path, where she was treated to a round of applause by city officials and cycling advocates.

Morissette is survived by her partner Pierre Giasson, her siblings, Jean, Andrée, Claude and Pierre, as well as five nieces.

**Claire Morissette** has requested that donations be sent to Cyclo Nord-Sud, PO Box 1242, Succursale Place du Parc, Montreal H2X 4A7. Bicycles can be donated at 7235 St. Urbain St. For information on dropoff hours, call 514-843-0077 or go to [www.cyclonordsud.org](http://www.cyclonordsud.org)

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GAZETTE FILE PHOTO

Claire Morissette died of breast cancer Tuesday at age 57.