



# L'amitié en action Friendship in action

UN MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉGLISE MENNONITE À MONTRÉAL / A SERVICE OF THE MENNONITE CHURCH IN MONTREAL

AUTOMNE 2003 / FALL 2003

## VISION D'UNE BÉNÉVOLE

### Témoignage de mon expérience

J'ai travaillé à la Maison de l'amitié de septembre 2002 à mars 2003, en tant que professeur de français langue seconde, pour les débutants. Ce qui m'a plu dès le début, c'est le fait que la Maison de l'amitié offrait des cours de français, à un prix abordable. Le prix n'était donc pas une barrière à l'éducation et cela permettait aux gens de tous les horizons de pouvoir y venir étudier le français. J'ai eu donc la chance de pouvoir enseigner à des adultes du monde entier.

Grâce à cette diversité multiculturelle, je faisais plus qu'enseigner, c'est-à-dire partager *ma* culture et *mon* savoir sur la langue française, je m'éduquais par la même occasion. J'approfondissais mes connaissances culturelles, je développais une meilleure compréhension des différentes coutumes, et je m'ouvrais davantage aux autres. Ce partage de connaissances s'est aussi traduit à travers un projet final réalisé en classe, avec la conception

d'un petit livre<sup>1</sup> regroupant des poèmes créés par les étudiants et parlant de leurs différentes villes d'origine ou de leur vision et/ou opinion de Montréal.

La classe n'était plus seulement un contexte d'apprentissage de la langue française, mais un marché d'échanges culturels, et c'est à travers ces échanges culturels que s'opérait un véritable enseignement à double sens.

Mon expérience à la Maison de l'amitié m'a aussi beaucoup apporté professionnellement. Je me sentais autonome et indépendante au niveau de mon travail, sans pour autant me sentir isolée, car l'isolement n'est pas un sentiment que l'on ressent à la Maison de l'amitié. Il y a toujours quelqu'un à qui l'on peut demander de l'aide ou avec qui discuter, et cela continue en dehors des heures de travail avec les repas communautaires ou les nombreuses activités organisées.



*Karen (troisième en partant de la droite, rangée du bas) et ses étudiants lors du lunch d'au revoir.*

Ce fut pour moi une expérience vraiment enrichissante, et elle continue de l'être car, même si je n'y enseigne plus, la Maison de l'amitié me garde toujours ses portes ouvertes, et c'est avec un grand plaisir que j'y reviens régulièrement.

*Karen Gavar vient de terminer sa maîtrise à McGill et continue d'enseigner le français à Montréal.*

<sup>1</sup> Ce livre est d'ailleurs disponible à la Maison de l'amitié, dans la salle de cours à côté de la cuisine.

## ENGAGEMENT SOCIAL

### Premier festival de la Paix à Montréal

Quelle heureuse initiative que cette rencontre des vendredi 8 et samedi 9 août derniers à l'occasion du premier festival de la paix à Montréal! Deux journées où tout fut dit, faisant faire le tour de la planète à tous les participants, comme si le bonheur était à la portée de tous. *Why not!* Cet événement fût l'initiative du MCC Québec avec la participation de la Maison de l'amitié et du Conseil Mennonite Québécois et s'est déroulée sur la rue Duluth devant les locaux de la Maison de l'amitié. Du souper conférence sur la communication non-violente aux activités dans la rue, dont le service ecuménique du samedi matin, de la participation du public à la finition de la murale de la paix et au partage des 12 groupes de musique... nous eûmes le privilège d'assister à un témoignage d'honnêteté intellectuelle rare de nos jours. Avec élégance et honnêteté, les interlocuteurs

ont tous insisté, chacun à leur façon, sur la liaison qu'il y avait lieu de faire entre paix et justice.

Et, à propos de communication, rappelons que celle-ci est multiple. Il y a, bien-sûr, le parler et l'écrit, mais il y a aussi toutes les autres formes artistiques comme la musique. Là encore, la rencontre de samedi a été au diapason! Les différents groupes, dits amateurs, qui se sont succédés ont été à la hauteur de la note, amenant à leur manière la paix entre une sono et quelques instruments à cordes, à vent et autres.

Fasse Dieu que cette manifestation de paix organisée puisse être entendue de tous, et reprise dans toutes les langues et langages!

*Hocine Tahmi est un de nos bénévoles qui contribue aux activités depuis plus de deux ans.*



*Création de la nouvelle murale durant le festival de paix.*

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## A CLOSER LOOK :

### Maison de l'amitié board plans

Where does the buck stop at the Maison de l'amitié (MA)? For every day decisions it stops at the Director, Luke Martin, but for overall management, long-term planning and broader decisions, the Board of MA takes ultimate responsibility. Every few years, organizations need to look at what they are doing, and decide if they need to make changes to their mission and programming goals. Having recovered somewhat from the stress of the renovation project, the Board, led by its chair, Philippa Wiens, decided it was time for MA to take a careful look at how the organization is working and what its future should look like.

Beginning in the Spring of 2002, the board spent hours in meetings, looking at the past, the present and the future of our favourite community centre. This process was recorded and expanded upon in documents written by Luke and Philippa. We looked back at 30 years of service, activity and change at MA, we redefined our mission in Montreal, and we dreamed about future possibilities.

Our discussions were enriched by representatives from other refugee aid organizations, including Glynis Williams from Action Réfugiés and John



Murale "L'amitié sans frontière"

Docherty from RIVO, along with current staff and volunteers from MA, Aden Seaton, Armel Nevo and Jean Mbaitoloum. Later sessions were kindly led by Sari Labelle as we formulated a new mission statement, and made concrete plans for the near and distant future. Eighteen months later, we have not quite finished the process, but the end is in sight.

As a Board member, it was an exciting experience to learn about the many MA achievements through the years. Great use has been made of limited resources, both financial and in terms of staff. It was good, too, to look forward and make plans for the future, so that the work of the Maison de l'amitié can continue smoothly in the years ahead.

*Kit Dench has been on the MA board for the past seven years.*

## A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

### Moving ahead

As described above, we - Maison de l'amitié (MA) board members, staff, volunteers, residents and former residents, have spent much time over the past year and a half reflecting on MA's past and discussing its future. We have identified the following 5 areas that we feel need to be addressed: *Menmonite intentionality, Visibility, Staffing, Programming, and Fundraising.* We have also set goals and strategies for each of these areas. The challenge, now, is to implement them.

We have decided that we want to be more intentional about communicating who we are as Mennonites to those using our services, to our volunteers and to our neighbours. We would also like to be more visible within our Mennonite constituency, with other community-based organizations in Montreal, and within our own neighbourhood. We want to find solutions to enable us to stabilize our staffing situation as we spend a lot of

energy in hiring and training for temporary staff positions. We also want to improve our training tools for staff and volunteers. Of course, to achieve all of this we need to develop our resource base and reach out to new funding partners and donors.

The potential for areas where we can make a difference in people's lives is endless, so we want to assess community needs and establish our own community parameters. We would also like to have a process in place to allow us to continuously evaluate the impact of our programming on the surrounding community.

We are all very excited about the challenge that is before us and hope that you will join us as we seek to be faithful to our mission, to be agents of God's love, to be peacemakers and to be a community of reconciliation and mutual service.

*Luke Martin*

## Update on staff

### WELCOME!

- **Francis Lapierre**, born and raised in Montreal, started volunteering at Maison de l'amitié (MA) in August 2002, and was hired on as our full-time web-site designer this past spring. After his work here, Francis hopes to continue with website design.



- **Kalaf Jufain**, originally from Kuwait, began working at MA this past spring as the networking manager and technical support. He has enjoyed the easy-going atmosphere at MA and appreciates the warm welcome he has received.

- **Mia Brooks** began her work as the new MA chef this past August. Mia is originally from British Columbia,



but she has been a "Montrealer" for the past six years. She hopes to work in community service for the next few years and then return to school to do a Masters in Social work.

GOODBYE



- **Adam Zwickle**, a University student from Nebraska, spent the summer at MA on a three-month MCC assignment. Adam helped with MA summer programming along with working on organizing and running the Peace Festival.
- **Jean Mbaitoloum** has been working at MA for the past year as a pastoral animator for the residents, staff and volunteers. Thank you Jean for all of your hard work. May God's love and grace continue to guide you in your journey ahead.
- **Laura Shantz** is finishing her one-year MVS assignment as the coordinator of the emergency family apartment program, Family Refuge. Laura has greatly enjoyed her year at MA and looks forward to further involvement with MA in the years to come.

## FOOD AND FELLOWSHIP: More than just a meal

It's another hectic Monday. I have been running from one meeting to another, and in a spare moment I dash up to the family apartment to pass on a message. As I enter the apartment I am greeted by Olga\*, the Ukrainian grandmother staying with us at Family Refuge, smiling over a frying pan full of diruy (potato pancakes). Her eyes light up when she sees me and before I have a chance to open my mouth, I am being herded through the living room to the dinner table. My mind races-I don't have time for this, I have to make that phone call, and there's the meeting later... I open my mouth to protest, but Olga is quicker. "Eat, Eat!" she yells with a smile as she slams a bowl of fresh potato pancakes smothered in sour cream in front of me. "But Olga, I can't, I have to -" "EAT!" she cries. I realize that my resistance is useless and I dig into my pancakes-savouring the first warm, deliciously fresh bite of this Ukrainian specialty. Soon Olga joins me with a plate and we laugh and talk with our limited shared vocabulary (hello, eat, yes, no, do svidaniya).

We are, for a moment, two people laughing and eating. Immigration appointments, phone calls and meetings are forgotten, for now.

As I finish my one-year MVS term as the Family Refuge coordinator at Maison de l'amitié (MA), I have been looking back over the year's highlights and have realized that meals have been a central part of my time here. Whether it be enjoying the tantalizing curry prepared by Ali\* as a thank you to all of the MA staff and volunteers, eating Fatima's\* carrot halva during morning check-in, or sharing another one of Mia's Friday night suppers with residents, volunteers and staff, I have thoroughly enjoyed and been blessed by the meals I've had at MA.

These meals are more significant than simple nourishment-they are, in a way, a metaphor for how MA functions. Shared meals offer a time when individuals can sit as equals around a table. They break down boundaries of power imbalance, cultural difference and fear,



*Staff, residents and volunteers dig into an incredible curry prepared by a resident from Family Refuge.*

creating a space where laughter, conversation, and openness prevail.

As my life path takes me away from MA, I will miss the meals shared together here. But, more than that, I will miss the community that these meals represent. Thank you to everyone who has welcomed me to the table, and into the community here. May God continue to bless you in the work that you do and the meals that you share.

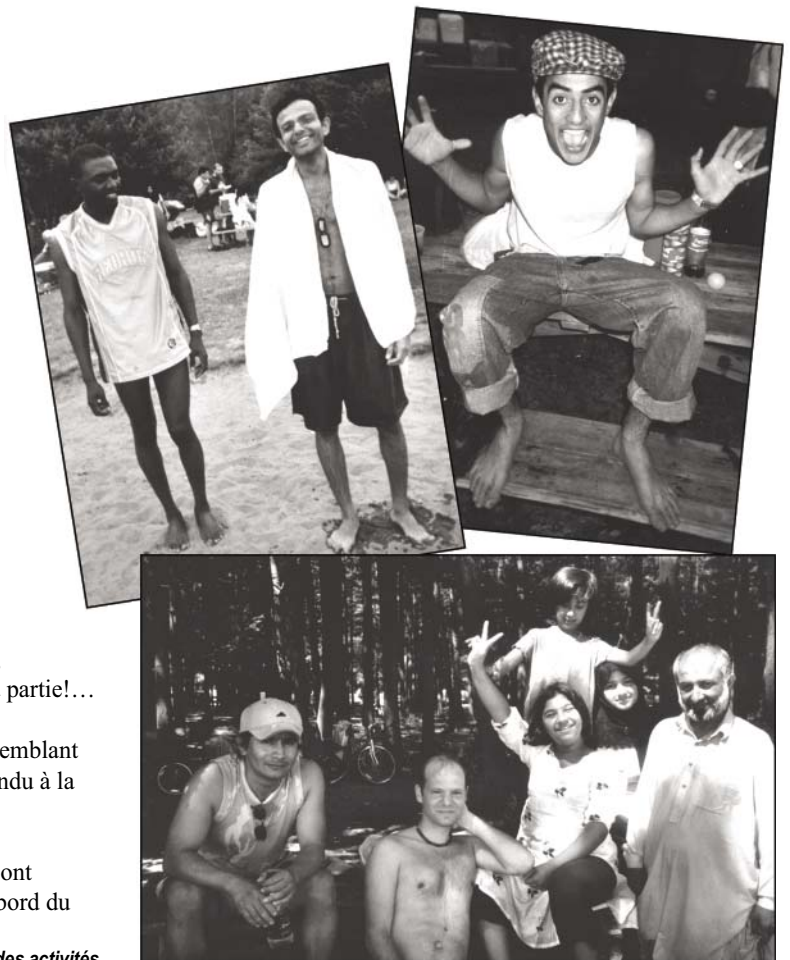
*Laura Shantz is the Family Refuge Coordinator. She is finishing her one-year MVS assignment at MA.*

*\* Names have been changed.*

## LES ACTIVITÉS COMMUNAUTAIRES ÉTÉ 2003

- **Le 18 Mai**, nous avons visité le Festival des Tulipes à Ottawa. La journée fut enchanteresse et très ensoleillée.
- **Le 6 Juin**, avait lieu la réunion annuelle. Le directeur a évoqué tout le travail effectué durant l'année, et a remercié tous les bénévoles impliqués dans le centre communautaire.
- **Le 21 Juin**, nous sommes allés à Québec. Les quelques 150 personnes présentes ont pique-niqué aux Chutes Montmorency et ont visité le Vieux Québec.
- **Le 12 Juillet**, le Mondial des Cultures nous accueillait à Drummondville. Une quarantaine de pays nous ont présenté des spectacles de danse et de chants. De retour l'an prochain!...
- **Le 19 Juillet**, on se rendait à la plage d'Oka, et, malgré les nuages, la journée fut fort agréable. La joie et la bonne ambiance était de la partie!...
- **Le 2 Août**, il y avait de nombreux amateurs pour venir au Mont-Tremblant (environ 200 personnes !...). On a grimpé la montagne, on s'est rendu à la plage et on a fait des randonnées en canot. Ce fut très apprécié.
- **Le 23 Août**, le personnel et les bénévoles de la Maison de l'amitié ont accompagné les familles au Camp Péniel, endroit paradisiaque au bord du lac, et relaxant de surcroît!

*Armel Nevo est notre coordonnateur des activités.*



## IMMIGRATION CONSULTANTS Steps towards regulation

The whirlwind of confusion experienced by most new immigrants and asylum-seekers arriving in Canada often leads newcomers to enlist the help and expertise of immigration consultants. While many such individuals are a vital component of the network of services available to newcomers upon their arrival, others are a major deterrent to a newcomer's success taking advantage of their culture shock, fear and limited knowledge of Canadian immigration procedures and promising quick and easy status ... for a fee.

Asylum-seekers, as a group, have lost hundreds of thousands of dollars and often their entire refugee claim as a result of following the guidance of corrupt immigration consultants. There is currently no system in place to regulate the qualifications of and services offered by consultants. Concerns questioning the professional capabilities and trustworthiness of non-certified consultants across Canada have been on the increase for several decades. At long last, these concerns have been addressed by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC).

### Perception

*Every man has an eye  
Every eye has a view  
Every view has a thought  
Every thought has a question  
Every question has an answer  
Every answer has several  
Perceptions*

### One Mistake

*One mistake you cannot correct.  
One mistake you always regret.  
One moment you cannot forget.  
One moment is what you get.  
One decision you cannot deflect.  
One decision you always dread.  
The tales of the past do not help.  
The clock ticks by, as you think!  
Time leaves you behind as you think.  
No where to run, no where to hide,  
The time has come for you to decide.  
Your fate awaits,  
It's time to decide.*

**FKMS, 15**  
FKMS was a resident at Family Refuge,  
and greatly enjoys poetry and art.

Recognizing the importance of protecting immigrants and asylum-seekers throughout their initial first points of contact with Canadian society, CIC Minister Denis Coderre made the issue a priority by enlisting a Committee to look into the regulation of one of these important initial contacts, the immigration consultant industry. In May 2003, this Committee issued an extensive Report detailing the potential for exploitation of immigrants and asylum-seekers by immigration consultants involved in the current, unregulated system.

The Report outlined a potential model for curriculum instruction that would ensure that all practicing immigration consultants are adequately trained to provide their clients with the high quality service they deserve. In addition to setting standards for education and training, the committee recommended that candidates for regulation undergo character and official language ability examinations, and produced a model Code of Professional Conduct for the industry.

While non-governmental organizations such as la Maison de l'amitié are also in the business of

**La Maison de l'amitié is  
a non-profit organisation  
and a work of the  
Mennonite Church.**



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## Thank you to:

- **St. Paul Elementary School** in Laval who raised \$1200 to buy departure gifts for Family Refuge families. Thank you for your hard work St. Paul students and staff!



**Students from St. Paul Elementary School present Laura Shantz with a cheque of \$1000 dollars for Family Refuge.**

- **The Bridge St. United Church Foundation** who donated \$2000 for the purchase of a new energy efficient washer to be shared by Projet Refuge and Refuge Famille residents. Thank you for your generous contribution!

helping new immigrants and refugees make sense of the paperwork, they will not be required to be regulated under the new legislation, as they do not charge a fee for their services.

It is the hope of the Committee, and of the refugee service community at large, that CIC will apply its recommendations in this effort to protect the interests and hopes of asylum-seekers and immigrants seeking to arrive at and stay within Canadian borders.

*Andrea Dawes, a recent McGill graduate has been volunteering with Family Refuge for the past three years.*



**Volunteers from Project Refuge are all smiles after a day of washing cars at MA.**

MA has held **three successful car washes** this summer raising upwards of **\$1500** to help subsidize outings to OKA beach, Mont Tremblant and Camp Penial for former Project Family residents. Thank you to all of the staff and volunteers who helped out!