

# LE PORTE-VOIX

*At the heart of relational health*



LA RUE DES  
FEMMES

## ♥ MORE THAN A ROOF...

### HEALING HOMELESSNESS

For the past six months, COVID-19 has plunged us all into a completely new and unfamiliar world – a world of distancing, confinement and masks... not to mention disconnection, since our faces play an important role in our connection to ourselves and to others!

I'm not saying this because I disagree with these protection measures. In fact, I believe they are our only defense against this terrible virus that has already caused the loss of over one million human lives worldwide. This pandemic has also been a deeply traumatic experience for many of us, and its effects may linger for a very long time. **No, I'm saying this because this world of distancing, confinement, self-isolation, and disconnection from oneself and others existed long before March 13, 2020!**

We don't need to go very far to encounter the inhabitants of this world – they are out there on our streets – homeless, jobless, robbed of their ability to take care of themselves, to find a roof over their head.

Their distress is obvious. They are – and we cannot say this often enough – survivors of profound trauma. They are homeless and suffering from post-traumatic stress. They have lost their relational health – the vital capacity to feel safe and to connect with oneself and others. It is this capacity that makes it possible for us to take care of ourselves.



Photo : Kathleen Girard / Studio Kat Kennedy

They have been deprived of their mental health and their physical health.

They are extremely ill. And all they want is to get better. But in order to heal, they need care and they need love. Love is what helps them re-establish the connection to their heart, which is key to relational health. We need to offer them the type of care that can heal homelessness, isolation and disconnection. And we need to offer them shelter for as long as it takes for them to heal. That is the mission of La rue des Femmes, and it is a mission with long-term results.

**In this year of our 25th anniversary, a year marked also by COVID, thank you for believing, as we do, in relational health, and thank you for joining with us to help heal homelessness.**

**Léonie Couture, C.M., C.Q.**  
Founding President

## ♥ A SIGNED WORK BY JEAN-CLAUDE POITRAS IN SUPPORT OF LA RUE DES FEMMES



With his new work entitled *La promenade vers l'éden*, Jean-Claude Poitras has partnered with LrdF to support women living in a state of homelessness. Reflecting great sensitivity, the work, a hymn to love "created during the days of the coronavirus," adds a glimmer of hope in these uncertain times. **A limited series of numbered and signed giclée prints are offered for sale at Encadrex.\* A portion of the proceeds will go to La rue des Femmes.** \* [www.encadrex.com](http://www.encadrex.com)

## ♥ LA RUE DES FEMMES, MORE VITAL THAN EVER!

**We have implemented the strictest measures to protect our workers and the women we serve.** And we have been able to maintain our shelter services. However, starting on March 13, we were forced to close our two day centres. Day centre services are now offered at the door, including bags of groceries, emergency meals, clothing and sanitary products, access to showers and the telephone. **The centres' services are used over 2,000 times each month.**



La rue des Femmes has been welcoming and caring for women in a situation of homelessness for 25 years. A visit to Olga House or Jacqueline House is all it takes to realize how desperately these women need our help... and also the quality of the care we offer them! The workers at La rue des Femmes have the biggest hearts and are always ready to give these women all the attention they need and to do everything possible for each and every one of them, and they do it all with a radiant smile. As a spokesperson for the past 14 years, I have seen this with my own eyes. And with each visit, I'm always moved by the courage of the women and by the unwavering dedication of the counselors and all the other workers at La rue des Femmes!

**Today, in the midst of this pandemic that has made you more essential than ever, my thoughts go to you, the workers at La rue des Femmes, and it is to you that I'd like to express my profound gratitude.** You embody everything that is great and noble about humanity: empathy, kindness, generosity. You are a shining example of humanity for all of us. All I can say is... thank you.

**Catherine Proulx-Lemay**  
Spokesperson for La rue des Femmes



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Thanks to our printer



♥ HEALTH AND KINDNESS AT THE HEART OF HOMELESSNESS!

I have been involved with the Board of Directors of the La rue des Femmes Foundation for nearly five years. I had never heard of this organization or its Foundation when I received an invitation from its president, Lynda Thériault. I joined the Board out of a desire to take action in solidarity with women who are experiencing homeless – our fellow citizens living in a state of extreme vulnerability. I was immediately drawn to the mission of La rue des Femmes and its pivotal approach to relational health. I had already faced hardships in my own life and I knew, in my heart and from my personal experience, that no one is immune to life’s misfortunes.

**More than simply offering them a roof over their head to help ease their insecurity, La rue des Femmes welcomes into its fold, with dignity and respect, women who have been denied their rights and freedoms, who have nowhere to turn and who need protection in order to heal.** As a member of the Board, health and caring are at the very heart of my actions and commitment.

♥ ONE MEMORY AMONG MANY

The year was 2004. I was 23 years old, still a kid in school and full of anticipation for the life ahead of me. I was volunteering at La rue des Femmes every Friday. I wanted to get a closer look at what went on in the art therapy workshops, but the stars weren’t aligned: our schedules didn’t match at all. So I started washing dishes instead.

One Friday, as the warm rays of the sun shone through the windows of the day centre, Suzanne\* came to see me to ask if I would sit for a while with a woman named Janie. It wasn’t complicated she said: “All you have to do is listen to her.” I didn’t really think twice about it, and said yes right away. I followed Suzanne into a small room near the entrance, where the woman was waiting. I looked at this odd woman sitting on a floor mat, with a smile suggestive of a thousand questions.

That turned out to be the first of many encounters. Janie initiated me to the joys of listening, welcoming, back rubs, cutting too-long fingernails, cleaning rooms, serving milk in very specific coloured glasses and memorizing the encyclopedia.

Over the past few years, the organization and its Foundation have made great strides. Among other things, the Foundation has increased its visibility and expanded its activities in order to better respond to ever-growing needs. Restoring dignity to women living in a state of homelessness requires making sure we have adequate resources at the level of governance, management, funding and recruitment.



By working to make a difference in the lives of others, we also make a difference in our own lives. We broaden the scope of our actions, we grow with the organization and we invite future generations to join us in our work of peace.

**Jacqueline Lorange M.Sc. (Management), Lawyer (Quebec Bar), Architect MOAQ, CEEA (Paris) DNSAP (Paris)**

It’s 10:13 and I’m sitting in the coordination office preparing the “income tax clinic.” Fifteen years have passed.

The telephone rings. It’s the receptionist who says: “Louise, can you take a call? It’s Janie.” I smile and say yes.

**A lot of time has passed, but the connection remains. La rue des Femmes is so much more than just a provider of shelter and meals; it’s a community, a family that has been built up over these past 25 years of growth.**



Each branch is important. Each branch tells a little piece of our history through a little piece of the history of each woman. I look at the tree swaying in the wind.

**Louise Waridel**  
**Activity Coordinator**  
*\*Suzanne Bourret, Clinical Director*

♥ TESTIMONIALS

« I had become like a wolf that’s injured,  
Dying of hunger, dying of thirst.  
Angry.  
You welcomed me with love.  
You took time for me.  
And you comforted me.  
You showed me the light within me, and as for my anger,  
I pushed it away.” »

**Claudie**  
**Participant**

When I chose to get involved with La rue des Femmes last December, I was driven by the enthusiasm that’s typical of people eager to change the world. But I very quickly realized that I would be the one undergoing the greatest transformation.

Every day, I learn to go beyond my own limits and to dedicate myself entirely to the needs of the participants. **Thanks to them, I have learned to look beyond the silences, anger, sadness and strained smiles.** The participants give me the strength to focus on their emotions, not mine, so that I don’t rush them as they relearn how to move forward, so that I can listen to their voices scarred by suffering, soothe their wounded dignity and help them reconnect with humanity by lifting the cloak of forced invisibility.

**Rachel-Diane Epoupa**  
**Psychosocial worker in 2019**



**Have you considered making a planned gift to La rue des Femmes?** Planned gifts are a great way to perpetuate your generosity, whether in the form of a life insurance donation, a legacy gift, a gift of shares, an endowment fund, etc.  
To guide you through this process, please contact Mélissa Pilon, Fundraising Assistant, at 514 284-9665, extension 227; mpilon@laruedesfemmes.org.



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