

# LE PORTE-VOIX

At the heart of relational health



## ♥ LA RUE DES FEMMES INSTITUTE OF RELATIONAL HEALTH: HEALING HOMELESSNESS

First, let's define homelessness.

In Québec, as elsewhere, there is a fairly widespread definition of homelessness as a "situation" that is related to exclusion from housing, and this belief guides our policies on homelessness. As a result, there is a belief that homelessness can be ended through, for example, a "housing first" approach.

Another definition is that of La rue des Femmes, a new and unique definition that positions homelessness as a "state" of grave loss of relational health—the vital capacity to feel safe and to connect with oneself and others—caused by severe relational injuries related to post-traumatic stress. The idea is to welcome extremely wounded and broken people and offer them the care and resources they need to heal and return to a normal life. With the same principles of ethics and confidentiality as in our health system.

### Homelessness, a health problem to be cured

Healing homelessness involves recognizing homelessness as a condition, i.e., acknowledging that homelessness is a health problem.

Homelessness stems from an inner turmoil related to post-traumatic stress disorder: to be in a state of homelessness is to be disconnected from oneself.

To heal homelessness, it takes safe and welcoming places, a relational approach, and workers trained in relational health who are caring, empathetic and patient. Because it takes time to heal.



Photo : Kathleen Girard / Studio Kat Kennedy

### A paradigm shift is needed

Anthropologist Margaret Mead said she believed history's first sign of civilization in an ancient culture was the discovery of a human femur that had been broken and then healed. This healed femur was evidence that a person took the time to accompany the injured person, to treat their injury, take them to a safe place and help them recover slowly. She concluded that helping someone through difficulty is where civilization started.

It is high time that people experiencing homelessness are humanized and that, in a civilized society, they be treated with dignity and as truly curable. Advances in neuroscience offer us more and more ways to heal.

It takes a society that is aware of traumas and their impact on everyone's life and relational health. It takes a society that loves and helps its neighbour.

It takes an institute of relational health... and we are working on it.

**Léonie Couture, C.M., C.Q.**  
**President and founder**

1. As reported by Dominique Vigneux-Parent

## ♥ LA RUE DES FEMMES IS MY SECOND FAMILY!



Binta has been with La rue des Femmes for almost 20 years. She first came here for a short internship during her studies. She immediately felt the beautiful and vibrant energy of the care team; a team totally dedicated to women's well-being.

Binta quickly found her calling in the helping-relationships profession and at the end of her internship she asked to be hired. Done!

### The perfect match!

Ever since she was a little girl in her native Guinea, Binta has been shocked by the violence she has seen against women and is moved by their suffering. Deep down, she knows she wants to help marginalized women, those that society has left behind.

As a young bride, she left her family to join her husband who had emigrated here to Québec.

Her other true love story seems to be with La rue des Femmes:

"My encounter with La rue des Femmes was simply magical! I was strongly attracted by its unique approach of welcoming women empathetically, compassionately and kindly. It fit perfectly with my vision of connecting with extremely vulnerable women in order to help them. To heal them."

A patient person, she lets the women come to her: "I wait. I don't impose myself. I am there to accompany the women, not to question them! Sometimes it can take months for a woman to open up to me and when that happens, I am there for her. And the healing happens little by little."

It takes time for a strong bond of trust to be established. Binta understands and respects this.

**Binta Diallo**  
**Head of Olga House day centre**



♥ PLANNED GIVING: THE STORY OF THE ESTATE OF LISE ROY

Lise Roy was a registered nurse, single and childless, a work colleague and friend of mine. She was a committed woman with deeply rooted social values of justice, equality and respect for others; values I share. She desired the well-being of all.

A true feminist, the improvement of women’s living and working conditions was of great importance to her. Early in her retirement, her health began to fail and Lise died suddenly.

In her will, she appointed me as her executor... and bequeathed her house to La rue des Femmes, which shares her values of mutual aid, comfort, encouragement and support.

Without hesitation, I accepted this mandate. This particular legacy became my motivation to close the estate successfully. Not being skilled in this field, I took the time to inform myself well, to surround myself with competent people and to manage this file to the best of my knowledge... house maintenance, phone calls, paperwork, accounting, learning.

Despite some moments of sadness and insecurity, with perseverance, one step at a time, we are reaching, at the end of 2021, the positive outcome of this project!

This experience has made me richer with comforting human encounters.

I would like to thank all the people who, directly or indirectly, helped and supported me throughout the stages of this adventure. Special thanks to Carole Fortier, friend to Lise and me, for her support and work during the last 20 months.

Above all, a big thank-you to Lise Roy for her generous decision...

Congratulations to La rue des Femmes for your essential work with women experiencing homelessness. I hope that you will be around for as long as we need you.

With fondness,  
**Diane Lamoureux**



Have you considered making a planned gift to La rue des Femmes?

Whether it’s a gift of life insurance, a legacy gift, a gift of stock, or the creation of an endowment fund, planned giving is a way to perpetuate your generosity. To guide you in this process, contact **Mélissa Pilon, Fundraising agent, at mpilon@laruedesfemmes.org or at (514) 284-9667, ext. 227.**



♥ SHEENA TOSO, HONORARY CHAIR OF THE TOGETHER... HEALING HOMELESSNESS! CAMPAIGN

Sheena Toso’s family and friends were not surprised to learn that she was named Honorary Chair of the annual Together... Healing Homelessness! campaign, as she has always been sensitive to the plight of those around her. Every time she came across homeless people, Sheena asked herself what she could do to help them. Determined to engage with society’s most disadvantaged, she asked questions, sought information... one thing led to another and she discovered La rue des Femmes (LrdF).

Professional and passionate, she wanted to know everything about LrdF’s mission. She visited Olga House and spoke at length with Léonie Couture, the organization’s President and founder. She was touched by LrdF’s unique approach: “La rue des Femmes is focused on the well-being of the participants,” she says. “It’s warm. All women are welcome.” As a committed Honorary Chairperson, Sheena wanted more than anything to spread the word about LrdF. She started with her friends and family, asking guests attending her partner’s birthday party to make a donation to LrdF, rather than giving a gift. At work, she solicited her colleagues and created two teams to tackle the first edition of the *Together... Healing Homelessness* challenge!



Moreover, when Geneviève Brin, who also sits on the annual campaign committee, proposed a symbol of solidarity with the women of LrdF—two pink lines to be drawn on the left cheek—Sheena immediately jumped on board: “It has to go viral!” Meet Sheena at the virtual Gala on December 14.

**Sheena Toso**  
**Regional Vice-President, Eastern Canada**  
**RBC Insurance**

News from the *Together... Healing Homelessness!* campaign

Our Together... Healing Homelessness! fundraising campaign has collected \$140,000 to date. Thank-you to all of our donors and sponsors who have responded to our appeal! We now need your help to reach our goal of \$200,000, so that La rue des Femmes can continue to offer its full spectrum of care and services to women in a state of homelessness. Make a donation today and join us on December 14, along with our ambassador Alexandra Diaz, to close the campaign and celebrate with us, from your home, that most human of feelings... solidarity! You will receive the invitation link shortly. To make a donation and for more information, visit [www.healing-homelessness.org](http://www.healing-homelessness.org).



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