

## Native health centre near

It has been a few years in the making, but an Indigenous health centre in downtown Montreal is close to reality. Following an intensive needs assessment by a coalition of Aboriginal organizations in the city, the Indigenous Health Centre of Tiohtà:ke was officially incorporated in February 2016. Finding an appropriate site was the challenge. This February that search was successful.

A small building on the grounds of the Collège du Montreal at Sherbrooke and Atwater Streets is available from the Sulpician owners for one-third the going rent. “What makes this location even more desirable is that there is space for a medicinal herb garden,” says **Pascale Annoual**, who heads up the Centre’s clinical and scientific committee. “That ties in well with the holistic approach we’ll be taking.”

The Centre will serve an educational role in promoting traditional health and healing practices to the local Indigenous population, as well as sensitizing healthcare providers to their importance. “It will bridge the traditional and mainstream approaches to healthcare for a very vulnerable population,” Annoual says.

There are up to 30,000 Aboriginal people in the Greater Montreal region. They account for ten percent of the city’s homeless population. Response to the needs assessment done by the Centre’s founding organizations illustrates the inequities they face in healthcare services delivery. Respondents cited recurrent discrimination and general difficulty in accessing mainstream services, especially in finding appropriate response to mental health and drug rehabilitation needs. They pointed to a general lack of knowledge about Native cultures among urban services providers. They were also concerned about their lack of involvement in decision-making and management of their own health care.

Montreal is the only large Canadian city without a health centre for its Indigenous population. “It’s time,” affirms Annoual.

## Important institutions merge

Two of the English-speaking community’s most venerable institutions, the Constance Lethbridge and MAB-Mackay Rehabilitation Centres, have merged into a single entity known as the Lethbridge-Layton-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre. The member establishments have served Montrealers with motor, sensory, and language impairments for over 100 years. This new merger will enhance continuity of services from childhood to adulthood under one administrative direction.

## Notes from Centraide

Centraide of Greater Montreal raised \$57.5 million in its 2018 fund-raising campaign, up from \$56 million the year before. These monies are to be allocated to its 350 affiliated agencies to support their work in alleviating the effects of poverty.

Among winners of Centraide’s annual awards for extraordinary performance in 2018 were the N.D.G. Community Council; **Tania Charron**, executive director of Action jeunesse de l’Ouest-de-l’Île; and **Jean Panet-Raymond**, coordinator, Citizenship Participation Committee. The Michèle Thibodeau-deGuire Award, which honours the exceptional contribution of a major volunteer, was given to **L. Jacques Ménard**, president emeritus, BMO Financial Group, Quebec.

## Justice for all anglos

The Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) has received a \$445,000 grant from the Department of Justice Canada for a project designed to improve access to justice in English in Quebec. It will address three key areas: justice services related to administrative tribunals, youth, and seniors.

The QCGN project will provide support to those navigating the justice system through an online platform. It also includes a community forum to be held in September 2019.

## The stigma of mental illness

The stigma attached to mental health issues is the number one impediment for young people to seek help. In 2014, the Mental Health Commission of Canada launched a program to mobilize youth across the country to tackle that problem. Called HEADSTRONG, the program has been adapted by 60 community organizations across the country.

CCS introduced the program to its territory in March. A “summit” meeting was held to bring students and school staff together for a day at which young guest speakers talked about their personal experience with mental health problems, followed by discussions among attendees to develop action plans to broach the issue in their schools.

“What I love about this model is that it isn’t just a day of sharing experiences,” says **Steve Valin**, CCS manager of Youth and Camping Programs. “It’s also about creating follow-through activities that can be initiated at their schools. And it’s not a cookie cutter approach: not all schools have the same resources, so they each come up with their own plans.”

The CCS summit involved 100 participants from ten schools: 80 youngsters and 20 staff. The ideas they developed include: daily p.a. announcements of mental health tips, creating a “safe space” for kids going through crisis moments, or posters with encouraging messages. The idea is to normalize the idea of youth being able to step forward to get assistance in a non-judgmental manner.

“The speakers had such courage, and spoke so frankly,” says Valin. “And what they had to say about suicide attempts, addiction and other personal or family issues really resonated with the attendees. There was a lot of inter-play among participants.

“The day was a resounding success,” adds Valin. “The next step for me is to follow up in a hands-on manner since I’m already involved in social and emotional learning programs in elementary and high schools in the territory CCS serves. We would also like to make this an annual event.”

## Caring for Northern youth

The West Island Health and Social Services Centre (CIUSSS-WI) and the Nunavik Regional Health and Social Services Board signed an agreement in March aimed at improving services to vulnerable Inuit youth. They are to jointly evaluate the rehabilitation services they provide when these young people are sent to Montreal for care and when they return to their home community.

There are some 90 young Inuit between 12 to 18 years requiring social and/or psychosocial services in Montreal facilities every year. “Our chief concern is that they receive culturally sensitive attention while here, and continuity of professional services when they return to their home communities,” says **Najia Hachimi-Idrissi**, associate president/CEO of the CIUSSS-WI.

Consultants are now assessing the viability and continuum of services currently being provided to these young people by both healthcare systems. Both youth and their families and service providers will be tapped for their opinions.

“Our two health agencies have long been collaborating on care for Inuit youth,” says Hachimi-Idrissi. “The ultimate aim is to have all necessary services provided in Nunavik. But until that goal is realized we will continue to strengthen the viability of services offered by both organizations.”

## Foundation distributes funds

The Foundation of Greater Montreal has awarded \$640,000 to 47 community organizations dedicated to bettering the lives of children and adolescents. These grants respond to the findings of Vital Signs, the Foundation’s landmark 2017 study of the wellbeing of Montreal youth.

This year’s recipients operate in the areas of food security, scholarly success, non-violence, or promotion of health and clean environment. Each will receive \$15,000.

## SAQ senior conferences

Seniors Action Quebec (SAQ) has entered a second phase in highlighting concerns of Quebec's English-speaking seniors about social issues that affect them. During its province-wide consultation, six issues predominated: information on health and social services, housing, transportation, financial issues, abuse and social isolation. Now the SAQ has started a series of open conferences featuring prominent speakers to sensitize both stakeholders and public service providers on seniors' concerns.

"We're not a service organization," says **Ruth Pelletier**, conference organizer and past president of SAQ. "We're a policy and advocacy group. So getting people together to talk about vital issues requiring public attention is basic to our mandate."

Mental health was targeted in April. There was discussion on seniors dealing with life changes and caregivers' rights and responsibilities. In May, housing options were explored. One highlight of that meeting was description of a unique Netherlands project, a village dedicated solely to people suffering from dementia. June's conference will focus on geriatrics. For information: **In brief** : page 4.

## Catching up with caregivers

Often left to their own devices, caregivers of seniors were spotlighted at a forum held in January by the West Island Health and Social Services Centre. Staff and workers from the healthcare network and community organizations met to reflect on the priority needs of these informal caregivers, and to inform them about what services are available specifically for them, such as home respite, psychosocial support and workshops.

There are 54,000 informal caregivers of seniors on the West Island, 35,000 of whom have jobs, 16,000 of whom are immigrants. Province-wide, 50 percent of informal caregivers support their parents and 50 percent of seniors assisted by a relative are over 80 years old.

## Opening up the lunch box

Now into its 15<sup>th</sup> year, an exceptional nutrition program for young people first introduced by the N.D.G. Food Depot (now Depot Community Food Centre) is continuing to grow. Two years ago local community organizations implemented the program in Centre-Sud and Saint-Michel; this year it is to be expanded to Montreal North and the West Island. The Boite à Lunch (BàL) is a free after-school program for elementary and high school students to learn cooking skills, build nutritional knowledge and develop healthy eating habits.

"The need to educate youth about the importance of good nutrition had become very obvious," explains **Bacchah Frasier**, regional director of the BàL program. "Over 25 percent of the N.D.G. population lives at or below the poverty line; that includes one in three children. Kids were coming to school without breakfast and inappropriate lunches."

The flagship BàL program in N.D.G. runs two 10-week sessions a year, with a total of 14 weekly workshops. Each has three facilitators for up to 16 participants at a time. Workshops are held at different sites, near the youngsters' schools. Menus are progressive, becoming more complex as they learn. Many participants are new immigrants, so cultural cooking is included.

There are several overall benefits to the program. The students learn grocery shopping and how to become more critical consumers; learn and develop recipes; come to understand nutrition and how to make good food choices. And, as well as creating a meal together each week, they are given activities to take their learning home to their families.

"We've come a long way in 15 years," says Frasier. "We started with a few dozen students; last year we served over 600. There has always been very strong feedback from the kids and their parents. As well as these workshops, we also run parent-child healthy eating workshops and recently introduced our educational activities to city-subsidized summer camps." For information: 514 483 4680, ext. 211.

## McGill program continues

The McGill program for training and retention of health professionals has just completed its fifteenth year. Dialogue McGill was designed to ensure that English-speaking Quebecers have access to the full range of health and social services in their own language. The goal is to maintain a sufficient complement of healthcare personnel capable of providing services in English. Over the next five years, the program will provide 250 bursaries for students from the regions to study for healthcare professions, organize 300 internships for healthcare graduates to practice in the healthcare field, and provide financial and professional support for healthcare graduates moving to remote locations.

## New federal laws for charities

The federal government has set up a new permanent Advisory Committee on the Charitable Sector. It will serve as a focal point for discussion on issues affecting charities and nonprofits as a whole. The committee will be comprised of charitable sector experts and government officials, and is co-chaired by **Bruce MacDonald**, President and CEO of Imagine Canada, and **Hilary Pearson**, from Philanthropic Foundations Canada.

## Givers go down

Canada Helps and Imagine Canada have jointly released a report on current trends in charitable giving in Canada. Their main finding is that while there was an increase in the amounts given between 2006 and 2017, there was a decrease in the percentage of Canadians donating to charities. People over 55 years, and those in the top three income groups (\$150,000 plus) showed the largest declines in charitable giving. It was immigrants who showed the most positive results: they donate more than Canadian-born citizens of the same economic class. New-Canadian households making less than \$40,000 donated an average of \$404, compared to \$214 from non-immigrants earning the same.

## In brief

**Andrew Lufty**, President and CEO of Groupe Dynamite and Carbonleo, and **Éric Martel**, president and CEO of Hydro Québec, will head the Centraide fund-raising campaign of 2019.

**Richard McConomy** was elected president of the foundation of the Queen Elizabeth Health Complex.

**Caroline Storr-Ordolis** was named to the board of CIUSSS-de l'Ouest-de-l'Île-de-Montréal.

Seniors Action Quebec is holding a day-long conference on Geriatrics on Thursday, June 13, at the Ramada Plaza, 6445 Décarie Blvd. Admission: \$60; \$35 for seniors and students. This fee includes lunch and two snack breaks, plus printed materials. Registration and payment must be made by May 30. Contact: seniorsactionquebec.ca.

NOVA West Island is holding its annual weekend bereavement camp for children age 6 to 17 on May 24 to 26. For information: 514 695 8335, ext 210.

Camp Weredale is celebrating its 85th anniversary this year, Camp Amy Molson, its 75th.

AMI-Quebec provides support groups for people living with mental illness, their family and friends on: anxiety, bipolar disorder, depression, hoarding and obsessive compulsive disorder. Sessions are held on different Mondays, from 6:30 to 8 p.m. For information: amiquebec.org/support.

A wide-ranging series of pamphlets outlining legal services available to English-speaking Quebecers is available from Éducaloi.qc.ca.

*The story of Red Feather is available online at*  
<http://redfeathermontreal.ca>.

The editor welcomes story ideas: 514 937 4309.

Legal deposit:  
National Library of Canada ISSN 1709 092X  
Bibliothèque nationale du Québec