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LE PORTE-VOIX

At the heart of relational health

FONDATION LA RUE DES FEMMES

LA RUE DES FEMMES

A WORD FROM LÉONIE

Discovering and driving forward a new concept, relational health, and a new paradigm, the state of homelessness, requires vision, determination, tenacity, skill and, above all, heart and passion! After dreaming of, then "discovering," then launching this concept, I worked hard to get as many people as possible on board, all while developing it and giving it the means to become an integral part of the "state" of homelessness: the ultimate outcome of the loss of our priceless relational health. And also, to heal homelessness.

During this marvellous journey of conception and creation, it was first friends who believed in it, then donors, workers, volunteers and partners, all of them essential ambassadors for spreading and recognizing this concept.

Today, more than ever, I remain focused on La rue des Femmes' mission and vision:

- To reaffirm the humanity of all these traumatized women, survivors of violence, who are living in a state of homelessness, by offering them safety, support and care, in order to help them legitimately overcome their post-traumatic stress, heal their wounds and return to them access to their relational health and their full potential.

- To be a beacon for homeless women in their tireless quest to heal, to regain those near and dear to them, their family and friends: their life.

- And to share the recognition that societal and individual violence is a manifestation of suffering, and that without the care that is needed to heal the wounds and traumas of violence in those who are afflicted by it, violence will continue to (re)occur, with all the horror that it causes.

That's what I've been doing, always with the same passion, for 30 years–and for many more, I hope–in order to expand the concept of total health to include relational health, to change the paradigm of homelessness and... to save the world!

With your contribution. To all of you, THANK YOU!

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

BRIGITTE LEBRETON, NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF LA RUE DES FEMMES

Brigitte arrived at La rue des Femmes along with the new year, bringing her boundless energy and wicked sense of humour! Nothing would seem to have predestined this holder of a master's degree in science and technology from France, who came to Quebec to do her end-of- studies internship, to one day become Executive Director of La rue des Femmes.

A scientific background

In Quebec, Brigitte accepted a position as a lecturer in the Biochemistry department of Université Laval. While teaching, she completed a doctorate in biochemistry. Brigitte then headed to sunny Los Angeles, where she became a research professor in molecular genetics at the University of Southern California (we're still a long way from the world of community sector!).
Brigitte eventually left academia, bringing with her a wealth of scientific knowledge and discoveries, and entered the world of business, holding senior positions at biotechnology and biopharmaceutical companies.

From scientific innovation to social innovation

It wasn't until several years later that her passion for scientific innovation morphed into a passion for social innovation. Brigitte first sat on the Board of Directors of the Caisse Desjardins du Plateau-Mont-Royal, then became Executive Director of L'Ancre des Jeunes, a not-for-profit that works to reduce the school drop-out rate. She has been Executive Director of La rue des Femmes since January.

"Even before I heard about La rue des Femmes, I was deeply convinced that homelessness was one of the major issues facing our society," Brigitte says. "La rue des Femmes appealed to me because of its solid foundations, its innovative approach, its connection-based organizational culture, its sense of action and its avant-garde vision of women's homelessness."

Following her intuition, and making decisions that are entirely consistent with her values, Brigitte says of her arrival at Rue des Femmes: "There's no such thing as chance: I decided to join La rue des Femmes because I was ready for it and it was ready for me. It's all a question of timing: being in the right place at the right time isn't the result of luck; it's the culmination of a life journey."

Brigitte, who also teaches tai chi and yoga, speaks enthusiastically about her relationship with her predecessor, the President and founder of La rue des Femmes: "I knew right away when I met Léonie [Couture] that I would learn a lotfrom her. We have very similar knowledge and ways of doing things, and a great synergy is developing. We have much respect for each other... and we share at least a laugh a day!"

ISABELLE VENDETTE, SECRETARY OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF LA RUE DES FEMMES

Isabelle Vendette is a Partner in the Litigation Group at McCarthy Tétrault, and it was because of the contribution of her law firm, one of the valued donors to the *More Than a Roof... Healing Homelessness* major fundraising campaign, that she first heard about La rue des Femmes.

Isabelle, who was already concerned about the cause of homelessness, was deeply moved by La rue des Femmes' mission and decided to meet with Léonie Couture, the organization's Founding President, and Sophie Lemieux, Chair of its Board of Directors. Her discussion with these two women was a memorable one.

"Léonie told me about a woman who, after living in a state of homelessness for several years, got back in touch with her daughter, met her grandchildren for the first time... all thanks to the incredible efforts of the support workers. Today, this woman has regained her joy for life!" Isabelle says with obvious emotion.

At the end of the meeting, Isabelle asked if her background as a lawyer could be of help. As you can imagine, the answer was yes. And since November 2022, Isabelle has been a full member of the Board.

Secretary of a very welcoming Board of Directors!

Isabelle quickly assumed the role of Secretary, sitting on the Executive Committee, taking part in the organization's decision-making and meetings, held every six to eight weeks, and ensuring that the various documents are in compliance.

The La rue des Femmes Board is enriched by the varied backgrounds of its members, she says: "There's a great deal of diversity on the Board, and our different areas of expertise complement each other and ensure sound governance and ethical practices. We're all there for the women [experiencing homelessness]. The atmosphere at our meetings is really pleasant."

She adds: "Because the Board meetings are held in one of the La rue des Femmes houses, we have the opportunity to hear from the workers and participants on a regular basis. These are very enlightening and help us to understand their reality and their everyday experiences. As well as touching us, I think these visits help us make informed decisions."

Volunteering on the Board of Directors of La rue des Femmes is Isabelle's way of giving back to her community.

Thank you, Isabelle, for joining us in welcoming and caring for women living in a state of homelessness.

CÉLIA MÉDINA, INTERVENTION COORDINATOR AT OLGA HOUSE

Célia's title is actually much longer: Coordinator of Intervention, Day Centre Activities and Reception. "Just say intervention coordinator: it's shorter," she says with a little laugh. It set the tone for our interview –, whose tone was one of lightness, tenderness and humility. She goes on to say that "cultivating lightness is essential" in her work, but also in life in general. Of course, suffering – that of others and our own – has to be taken seriously, but we mustn't let it get the better of us or take up all the space.

"I strive to find moments of beauty throughout the day. And these gold nuggets are always there, they're everywhere! They can be comical moments. Every day, with my colleagues or with the participants, there are moments when I'm fully aware that I'm involved in something bigger than myself."

To read Célia's full profile, visit our **laruedesfemmes.org**, click on the "News" tab, then on "Blog." Enjoy!

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Monthly giving allows you to spread your annual contribution to La rue des Femmes Foundation over a full year. It also ensures:

• A stable and predictable source of revenue for La rue des Femmes • Reduced administration costs • Worry-free automation of your contribution
• The assurance that you can change or cancel your commitment at any time

Want to find out more? Call us at 514 284-9665
or at info@laruedesfemmes.org

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