



... building on the L'Arche model in Newfoundland and Labrador

NOVEMBER 2014



BUILDING BLOCKS NEWS



L'Arche: A Better Design by Lorraine Angelopoulos

Recently I was listening to a CBC radio program, the Current, with Anna Maria Tremonti. She was speaking with Bruce Mau a Canadian designer who sees the quality of design in our lives as fundamental to our quality of life. This renowned Canadian designer is known as a visionary when it comes to pushing frontiers. He wants to help shape a better future for all of us and believes it can be achieved through the power and practicality of design. In 2010 he established The Massive Change Network aimed at helping people design the world they want to live in.

What does this have to do with L'Arche, you might ask. These days I am beginning to see many things that come my way through the prism of L'Arche. I thought of Jean Vanier and how horrified he was by the loneliness and hopelessness of the men and women in the mental asylum in Trosly Breuil, France, fifty years ago, and how he set out on a quest to find a better way,

a better design. Just as our group, Cornerstone Housing Society, here in St. John's, is working toward a better design, a better model of care for our loved ones than is found in traditional institutions or home care settings. Of course we are standing on the broad shoulders of Jean Vanier and many others with their 50 years of experience, striving to grow as individuals and to collaborate as a community in order to design for our disabled family members living arrangements where they can live lives as normal as possible, where they can love and be loved, where we can visit them freely, where the routines and rituals of their new lives will create a safe place for them with people who appreciate them and their gifts.

Think of the design of the name and logo of L'Arche. The ark is a big commodious boat, a shelter from the storm, a welcoming place, an ancient symbol of covenant between God and man. The name reflects so much about the mission of L'Arche. Design is not just a physical thing; it is also philosophical and symbolic. There is organizational design as well. Just as Judeo-Christian faiths are built around the Ten Commandments and the Muslim faith has its five pillars and businesses have their mission statements and guiding principles, so too, the International L'Arche organization has its own unique framework.

In L'Arche communities there is a foundation of common principles, goals and practices. Although each community has its own identity, all are designed around several essential elements, such as:

- i. The value of persons with a developmental disability
- ii. Life sharing between core members and their assistants
- iii. A spirit of mutuality in which people are bound by their common humanity and learn from each other
- iv. Faith Community rooted in prayer and trust in God
- v. Leadership, Management, Structures and Human Resources to fulfill their mission
- vi. Integration into the local community

These principles are the critical infrastructure, the load-bearing walls that ensure the strength, solidity and longevity of L'Arche. Furthermore, there are many traditions in the L'Arche community that are designed to reinforce these principles and values. For example, in the L'Arche communities I visited this summer in Wolfville and Antigonish, there were work programs that gave each participating core member a sense of worth; there were day programs for elderly core members in which their needs and preferences were addressed; there were art programs that celebrated the unique offerings of the core members; there were residences that felt like loving homes to people with a wide range of disabilities and their assistants. The Community Leaders I spoke with were clearly very experienced managers who spoke of the organic growth of L'Arche within their respective communities, of their relationships with government, of the importance of training and support for their assistants, of the need for fiscal responsibility and of their trust and faith in God. For me it was an opportunity to glimpse the L'Arche model in practice. It also made me see that a L'Arche community here in Newfoundland is not an unreachable vision, it is a practical objective.

I could continue with the design theme, but let me end with this one: the gap. The gap is another interesting design feature. Mind the gap! One mustn't fall into the gap. The generation gap. Many unfortunate people in

society fall through the cracks. Some of us parents have fought long battles over the years to prevent our disabled children from that fate. Gus Leuschner, Community Leader in Antigonish, claims that there is always a gap – a gap between what you have and what you want. L'Arche, according to Jean Vanier, exists to fill the gap in society between poor and rich, between the disadvantaged and the privileged, between the abled and disabled. L'Arche communities currently exist in 35 countries, in all five continents and in every province of Canada except Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland. Another gap! It is the goal of Cornerstone Housing Society to bridge that gap, to bring L'Arche to Newfoundland, a L'Arche Terre Neuviennne!



Lorraine and Paul Angelopoulos



COMMUNITY MANDATE

Our Community Mandate reflection and writing process is complete and now it's time to focus on fulfilling our commitment. Our November 16th gathering at Rotary Sunshine Park included an unveiling and a brief explanation by Don Rowe. Then all were invited to sign the document indicating their support and commitment as we move forward. The Community Mandate will be available on our website. www.cornerstonehousingsociety.ca



L'ARCHE IN THE MEDIA

Jean Vanier on Vision TV

Vision TV will air the broadcast premiere of "Love and Belonging: Jean Vanier at L'Arche" on **Monday, November 24th at 11:30 PM** Newfoundland Time. Please confirm the schedule at www.visiontv.ca

A Public Lecture on L'Arche by Professor Pam Cushing

Professor Pamela Cushing's lecture, "Jean Vanier, L'Arche, and the Unfolding of a Radical Idea in Disability and Care" was presented at St. Michael's College, University of Toronto, on October 29th 2014. Dr. Cushing noted "the extensive common ground between Vanier's early imaginings and the principles of current-day Disability Studies. Jean Vanier's ideas continue to invite us all to commit to the difficult, uncertain challenge of moving toward genuine mutuality even amidst difference." (46 minutes)

See the presentation at:

<http://www.larchedaybreak.com/2014/11/17/a-public-lecture-on-larche-by-prof-pam-cushing/>



FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Thank you to the Sisters of Mercy for their second gift of \$1000 to assist with our regular operations.

Thinking of making a year-end financial contribution to Cornerstone? Contributions of \$20 or more before December 31st are eligible for a tax receipt for the current tax year. We are registered with CANADA HELPS to accept on-line contributions through our website www.cornerstonehousingociety.ca . Or you may send a cheque directly to:

Cornerstone Housing Society

209 Marine Drive, Logy Bay, NL A1K 3E2.

Cornerstone is also set up to receive e-cheques via email to: cornerstonehousing@nl.rogers.com



BUILDING COMMUNITY BY JOINING TOGETHER

We are thrilled to have received an invitation from L'Arche Inverness in Scotland to become a "sister community" with them! Several of our young people (Catherine, Elissa, Sarah, Meagan, Ben) were L'Arche Assistants in Inverness prior to joining us at Cornerstone. The celebration candle we light at the start of each gathering is from the L'Arche Inverness workshop.

L'Arche Inverness will be marking their 40 year anniversary in 2015 so it would be wonderful if some from Cornerstone were able to make the trip across the pond to join in the celebrations.

Meanwhile, visit

larcheinvernessblog.blogspot.com



FUNDRAISING

Some of our fundraising includes applying for grants from other organizations. If you have experience writing grant applications and proposals, and are interested in helping us, we would love to hear from you.



COMMUNITY GATHERINGS MARK YOUR CALENDAR

December 13 (Saturday) from 2-4 PM

Christmas Gathering

Rotary Sunshine Park

2015 January 18 (Sunday) from 4:30-6:30

It's "Chili" in January ~ Supper Gathering and Drum Circle with Renee White, RMT



BOARD NOTES

Highlights from recent board meetings include:

- Developed job descriptions for Board positions
- After receiving input from all participants, the Board reviewed and ratified the Community Mandate before presenting it to the membership on November 16
- Established committee to set terms of reference for other committees



THANK YOU

To the churches who have afforded us meeting space in the past months! We are grateful for the warm welcome and the use of the excellent facilities at St. Mark's Anglican Church on Logy Bay Road for our Reflection and Mandate writing sessions and to the Salvation Army Citadel on Adams Avenue. The support of the larger faith community is vital to Cornerstone and to L'Arche.



WELCOME

Shrami Hebert and daughter Madeline; Clotilde Raydon and Luc Roland with daughters Jacqueline and Madeleine. These interesting folks bring a wealth of L'Arche experience to our group!



BUILDING INVOLVEMENT

New memberships and renewals (valid to the end of 2015) are available for \$20 by completing the application form on the website or contacting us by email at cornerstonehousing@nl.rogers.com.

Cornerstone Housing Society

209 Marine Drive, Logy Bay, NL A1K 3E2

CRA Charitable Registration Number 81025 5042 RR0001

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