

L'Arche à la française - Visiting L'Arche Montreal

This past summer, I discussed my upcoming trip to Montreal and my desire to visit some L'Arche homes with Sheilagh, our board chair. She kindly put me in contact with the CEO of L'Arche Canada, Louis Pilotte, who in turn put me in contact with Djinene, Director of L'Arche Montreal. Djinene was enthusiastic about meeting and we arranged to meet on July 24.



My arrival

The first thing I saw upon my arrival at L'Arche Montreal was an old church that had been transformed into a day workshop (l'Alize), a community center (that L'Arche Montreal rents for various events), and administrative offices. Upon my arrival, I was warmly welcomed by Djinène and Zoël Breau, the Assistant Director. Despite having been in the position for only four months, Djinène already exhibits the same enthusiasm I observed in all the staff members I met. Zoël is a well-known figure at L'Arche Montreal, having previously been a community leader before taking on a role with L'Arche International.

We settled into the boardroom, where Djinène and Zoël shared with me the history and organization of their community. Zoël mentioned that my visit perfectly illustrated what he has long advocated: that every member of L'Arche, when traveling to another province or country, should try to visit a local home. They inquired about the progress of our building project. I responded optimistically, expressing our hope to see it come to fruition soon.

Visiting L'Arche Homes

As lunchtime approached, Djinène, Zoël, and I went to one of their five homes: "L'Arc-en-ciel". Upon arrival, all the members of the home, along with the assistants, including

a student participating in a provincial summer program, warmly welcomed us in the living room. I was introduced to each of them, and we laughed when we discovered that the home now had three people named Michel. One of the core members proudly showed me two of her paintings, displayed on the living room wall, which turned out to be true works of art. The residents expressed their pride in living in a trilingual home, including sign language, as one of the residents, who cannot speak verbally, uses sign language with the home manager.

After these moments of conviviality and a few more laughs, we proceeded to the dining room, where ten guests gathered around a long table. The assistants served us with grace. Before starting the meal, we all held hands to recite the blessing, led by a resident. Zoël, whose infectious enthusiasm never wavered, shared stories and



experiences from L'Arche internationally. He told us about L'Arche Palestine (Ma'an lil-Hayat) in Bethlehem, about an hour's drive from Gaza. Although this region is relatively spared from violence, its inhabitants face severe movement restrictions. The members of L'Arche in Palestine have learned to transform sheep wool, purchased from a shepherdess, into nativity scenes, which are highly sought after by tourists. Unfortunately, their activity is now severely impacted by the lack of tourism.

During the meal, the residents talked about their evening plans. The atmosphere was electric with excitement as the night approached for their much-anticipated Cirque du Soleil outing.

After the meal, we said our goodbyes and visited another home, "Le Rameau", located in the former presbytery adjacent to the offices. To conclude my visit, we then went to the l'Alizé workshop, where the residents create art, including greeting cards they sell to fund their activities.

Meeting with the CEO

Next, I met with Louis, who sounded enthusiastic about his work as L'Arche Canada's CEO. He seemed to be restraining himself from talking too much about his passion for L'Arche to allow me to ask him questions about L'Arche Canada, though he shared stories about his relationships with core members. One story about a young medicine student's relationship with core members really resonated with me. The student needed a place to stay and struck a deal with the director of the home. He would be accommodated in a home and in return would advise the director on the health conditions of the core members and offer basic medical assistance. His experience, as the young medical student revealed, moved him and he explained that his vision for caring for patients had been changed forever. It was a transformative experience, as Louis put it. The story about the young doctor gives testimony to a statement I read

on the L'Arche Montreal web page "Everyone is invited to contribute to life together according to their abilities and desires." Core members can contribute in meaningful ways to the spiritual growth of our society.

He asked about our building project, the only one of its kind in Canada. He is looking forward to it becoming a reality and is much aware that the major hurdle impeding our progress is a commitment from the province concerning operational funding.

We parted and he offered to keep in touch and reiterated his continued support for L'Arche Avalon. As for me, I felt at home among all the people I met during my short stay.

~ Michel

Greetings from the Chair

As we say goodbye to summer and get ready to welcome fall, I want to remind you of our big fall event - our Community Weekend, a weekend of Weaving Connections.

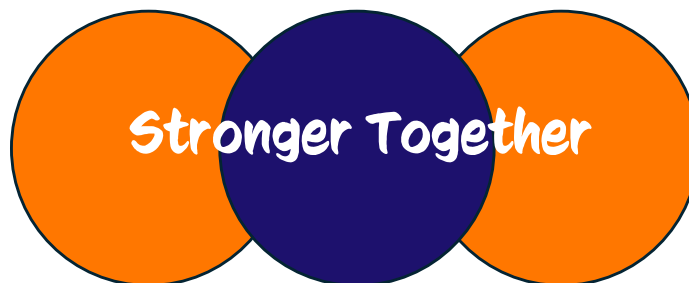
Every year the L'Arche Regional Leader makes her official visit, and we have our community weekend of fun and togetherness. Save the **weekend of November 1st to 3rd** and look for details of the weekend on our Facebook page. I look forward to seeing all of you there this year to enjoy the music, the food, and the activities. As well, we hope to have visitors from L'Arche Nova Scotia. It will be wonderful to have them visit with us.



Jenn Power has been our Regional Leader since the beginning of L'Arche Avalon and, unfortunately, this is her last year as our leader. As of the end of this year, she will be taking up another position and we will miss her greatly.

Sincere best wishes to everyone,

Sheilah



This Year's Board Members

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|--------------------------|------------|
| Sheilah Mackinnon Drover | Chair |
| Lewis B. Andrews | Vice-Chair |
| Lorraine Angelopoulos | Secretary |
| J. Paul Walsh | Treasurer |
| Cindy Bishop | Director |
| Peter Barnes | Director |
| Mary-Anne Stevens | Director |
| Michel Genest | Director |

Meet our new Board Member

Michel Genest became a member off L'Arche Avalon in 2022. He found in L'Arche a caring, focused, and determined community and is committed to contributing to community building.



Michel was born and raised in Montreal. His move to St. John's in 1982 was related to his work with a laboratory equipment and supplies organization. Shortly after getting settled here, the school board, one of his clients, asked him to consider moving from business to teaching. Michel's career in education spans over 37 years. He taught the French Immersion program for nine years before being seconded to the Department of Education to develop programs for the French First Language schools. Twelve years later he became the Director of Education/CEO at the NL Francophone School Board. Five years after that he returned to the classroom at St. Bon's where he currently teaches French.

Michel holds a Bachelor of Science degree from McGill University as well as both Bachelors and Masters degrees in education from Memorial University.

Soon after moving to St. John's, Michel found a parish community and got involved in various ministries. One of his favourites was as coordinator for the youth group. Other community involvement important to Michel was as a volunteer for several years in the Pastoral Care Department at St. Clare's Mercy Hospital. He served on a consultative team for The Lantern to develop an operational plan and has been a Board Director with the NL Francophone Association.

Michel's wife, Eleanor, is also a member of L'Arche Avalon. They have two grown children, Charlotte and Claire.

We always enjoy music!

The Tuckamore Music Festival's Adaptive Concert

Anton, his dad, and his buddy Jodie, went to the Tuckamore Music Festival's Adaptive Concert, and enjoyed this special musical event this summer. Maureen and Sheilah were there too! The performers played short pieces from various composers, covering a whole range of different classics. We would like to say thank you so much to the Tuckamore Music Festival's organizers and of course to the performers: The Greenwich Trio and Boris Bizjak for the invitation, the opening up of the music world to a neuro-diverse audience and making events accessible and enjoyable for persons with all kinds of disabilities.



The Newfoundland Symphony Orchestra



This concert was hosted by the Newfoundland Symphony Orchestra. The performers were The Atlantic String Quartet. They played a variety of popular classical music such as parts of Vivaldi's Four Seasons, the William Tell Overture, the Barber of Seville and Over the Rainbow. They concluded the concert with three fiddle tunes and the Irish Washer Woman. All our core members who attended with family members and caregivers were delighted with the beautiful music.



Paul was listening carefully



Anton and David enjoyed the concert



Mark liked the fiddle music so much he got up to dance with his mom Marilyn

Whether it's bowling or a picnic lunch, Anton is always on the go!

Each Monday Anton enjoys going bowling in the morning. He always has a smile on his face and although he doesn't love the commotion when someone gets a strike he likes to see his friends. The year end event for Special Olympics included a delicious meal and awards ceremony. Anton enjoyed sitting with some of his bowling teammates and eating several hamburgers. When the dance started he was happy to people watch from the sidelines even if the music was a little loud. Can't wait to get back to regular bowling in the fall!

