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01

INTRODUCTION

Letter from the Board

The 2025-2026 year at the Verdun Women's Centre was marked by human resources challenges, challenges that the staff brilliantly overcame. Having to manage with a reduced team for several months, they found ways to maintain the core of their planned activities. The implementation of such a contingency plan would not have been possible without the involvement of certain members, the team of interns, and dedicated contract workers. The flexibility and organizational skills demonstrated by the team, in my opinion, prove the success of the co-management model adopted by the Centre.

The Centre is now well established in its premises on Verdun Street. The staff and members have successfully transformed the space into a welcoming and inspiring environment, ideal for social activities, meetings, and workshops. The space is also used by external groups and local organizations, further solidifying the Centre's strong presence in the community.

The organization's political mission remains very much alive, notably through its participation in various mobilizations. Among other things, several members expressed their delight at having joined a contingent from the Centre for the 6th Quebec edition of the World March of Women, which took place in Quebec City on October 18th. In March, the workers actively participated in local and national actions within the "Community at the End of It!" movement, which aims to denounce the underfunding and precariousness of the community sector by the provincial government.

For the second year in a row, the Centre had adopted housing as its priority struggle. It was on this basis that activists and a worker actively collaborated with the CACV mobilization committee, and played an active role in the mobilization around the Ethel parking lot, one of the only sites in Verdun where it is still possible to consider the construction of social housing.

The actions of the Verdun Women's Centre remind us that social struggles are often cross-cutting, that campaigning for a more feminist world involves showing solidarity with other groups, and taking part in a multitude of struggles!

Camille Toffoli

VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD

Message from the team

This year, the Centre continued to transform, and so did we. Looking back at the past year, the team noticed that something precious had taken root in our relationship with the Centre: a real sense of being at home, for us as a team too. It is a place where we feel comfortable, invested, and able to welcome others.

What we also observe is that this sense of home extends beyond the team. It becomes a space to share, a meeting point where different realities, missions, and projects nourish each other and respond to community needs with their own approach. Circumstances also led us to see how the permanent team was supported, not only by involved members, but by a network of committed contractors who stepped up and helped keep the Centre afloat when an exceptional combination of circumstances led to the simultaneous and prolonged absence of several permanent team members.

The Centre lives through those who pass through it. It is built as a place of collective anchoring, well beyond us, where one can find strength and meaning. In a political context of austerity and dismantling of the social safety net, where the atomization of individuals is increasing, this place of mutual aid becomes essential.

For the coming year, we are energized by the idea of mobilizing these solidarities so that they extend further beyond our physical space and nourish the struggles for our collective living conditions.



02

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION



Mission

The Verdun Women's Centre is a welcoming, safe, inclusive, and feminist space where we defend the rights and interests of women and gender-diverse people, in the perspective of social change.

Territorial acknowledgment

We acknowledge that we work in **Tiohtiá:ke** (Montreal), on unceded Indigenous territory, guarded by the Kanien'kehá:ka nation, a gathering place for many First Nations. We are aware that this acknowledgment can remain symbolic and insufficient: we commit to questioning our practices and acting in solidarity with anticolonial struggles here and elsewhere. Colonialism does not belong to the past; it continues and reconfigures itself today, notably through militarism and resource extraction. It continues to structure our institutions, our territories, and our collective lives.

General objectives

- Break the isolation of participants
- Foster individual and collective awareness
- Provide tools to regain power over one's living conditions
- Be a place of involvement that fosters the acquisition of new skills
- Fight against various sexist discriminations
- Defend and promote the rights of women and gender-diverse people

Values

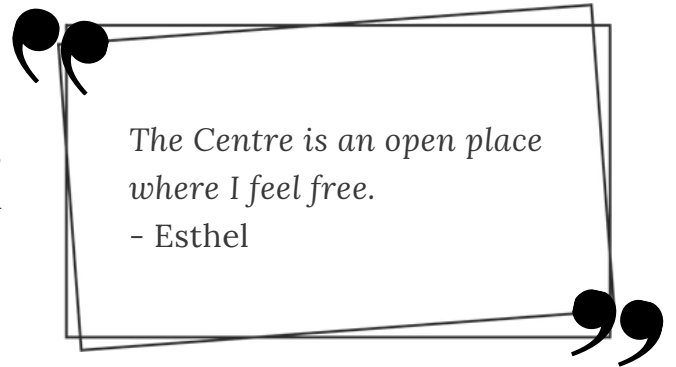
Equality, openness, solidarity, justice and equity, democracy and respect serve as guides for all aspects of life at the Centre.

Orientation

The Verdun Women's Centre opposes all oppressive systems that perpetuate poverty, violence and discrimination. In this sense, it is guided by an **intersectional feminist analysis** that advocates for a convergence of social struggles.

We advocate a **holistic approach** to prevention, awareness and promotion of physical and mental well-being. Our intervention is flexible and versatile. There is no waiting list or appointments. Educational services and activities, activist involvement and participation in organizational decision-making are all springboards for developing one's potential and equipping oneself to act collectively.

From a perspective of inclusion and solidarity, the Centre is a **non-mixed environment** open to all women and people living with or having experienced oppression related to the female gender, regardless of age, social conditions, marital status, ethnic or cultural origin, status, religion, physical appearance, mental or physical health, or sexual orientation.



Governance/Management

MANAGEMENT MODEL

To embody the changes we advocate, we work in co-management. This model promotes the absence of hierarchy and the sharing of power between the Board and the team, while relying on active member participation and the democratic process.

WORK TEAM

The permanent team is composed of 4 workers:

Audrée T. Lafontaine, Emmanuelle Bonneau-Lebleu, Virginie Pineault and Maritza Bello Nava.

We are also supported by the significant contribution of other contract workers who complete the team:

- **Mina Askour** who handles accounting wonderfully and helps us stay on track;
- **Sandra Bustamante** who contributes to our community space and fosters connections with the rest of the community;
- **Muriel Sirois** who maintains our premises and keeps the space clean and pleasant;
- **Marion Duval** who is the project manager for the kitchen component of the “For a Solidarity-Based Vibrant Kitchen” project, financed by Desjardins;
- **Rose Ribereau**, who provided invaluable on-the-ground support during the year, while part of the team was on sick leave.
- **Em Willis**, our summer employee who became a self-defense coach and helped us out enormously during critical moments.



Several interns were involved at the Centre this year. We want to highlight the work of Laurie-Anne Paquette, who was with us as part of her social work internship, and Laurence Doin, as part of her sexology internship. We also thank Fatma Benmefteh, Romanne Dennetière-Joly, Marilou Joly and Zelda who, through their shorter internships, brought their unique contributions to our community space.

You will see in this report the other wonderful people who contributed to the various projects that marked the year.

At the end of summer 2025, the Centre needed me and I needed the Centre. It was an almost unbelievable coincidence: I was newly looking for work when Audrée contacted me explaining their urgent need. Of course I was going to accept! I am sincerely happy I did. During those 6 months, I witnessed so much gentleness, mutual aid, and passion for maintaining a community we need. I also saw women and people who work very hard, who organize, who show remarkable sensitivity and determination. I learned a lot professionally and personally and I came out of it inspired for what's next. Thank you for this beautiful experience. I hope my presence helped the Centre get back on its feet for the coming year!

-Rose Ribereau, contract worker



➤ ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD

In an autonomous community action organization like ours, the Administrative Board (AB) plays an indispensable role in the management and smooth operation of the Centre. Ensuring respect for the mission and priorities, approving and overseeing sound budget management, setting hiring conditions and reviewing working conditions are some examples of the AB's responsibilities.

The AB is currently composed of:

Dialla Sakho, president and member of the human resources committee

Camille Toffoli, vice-president

Dorota Boryczka, secretary

Chryssoula Stamatakos, treasurer

Yasemin Tuncer

Martha Viviana Brigada Fuentes

Virginie Pineault, workers' representative

Maritza Bello Nava, workers' representative



➤ GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The general assembly includes members in good standing of the Verdun Women's Centre. It is the supreme body of the organization. It handles the legal affairs of the corporation, including the adoption of annual documents such as the annual report; it sets our overall goals; it determines annual priorities; it receives financial statements and budget forecasts; it elects AB members.

➤ COMMITTEES

Work committees are for the involvement and empowerment of members. They support the Centre's mission by creating projects, organizing actions, and reflecting on issues that affect the organization. These committees are sometimes mandated by the AB or arise from member or team initiatives.

You will find more information on the annual general assembly (AGA) and committees in section 07 Community life, involvement and volunteering

➤ CO-OWNERSHIP SYNDICATE

Our reality as property owner comes with new responsibilities, including sitting on the board of directors of the co-ownership syndicate that was created for our acquisition project. This body ensures the follow-up of administrative and financial affairs of the common areas of the building.

03

MEMBERS PORTRAIT

Any person who registered as a member of the Centre between April 1st, 2024 and March 31, 2026 is considered an active member of the Centre.

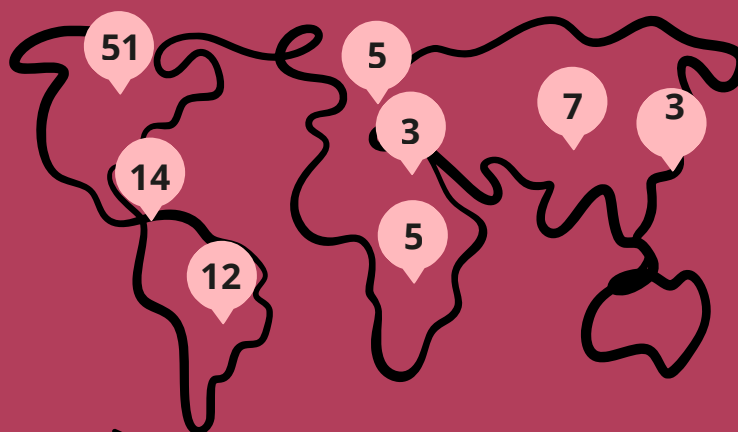
We currently have
360 members

Including 103 new members who registered during the 2025-2026 year.

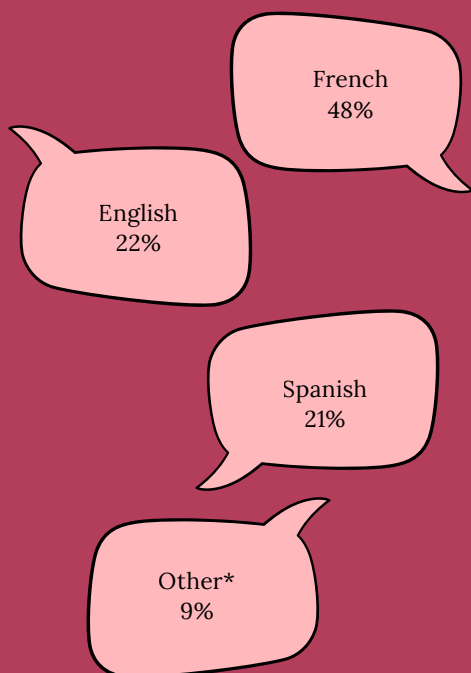
ORIGIN

Our members come from **28 different countries**.

Here is an approximate breakdown in percentages.

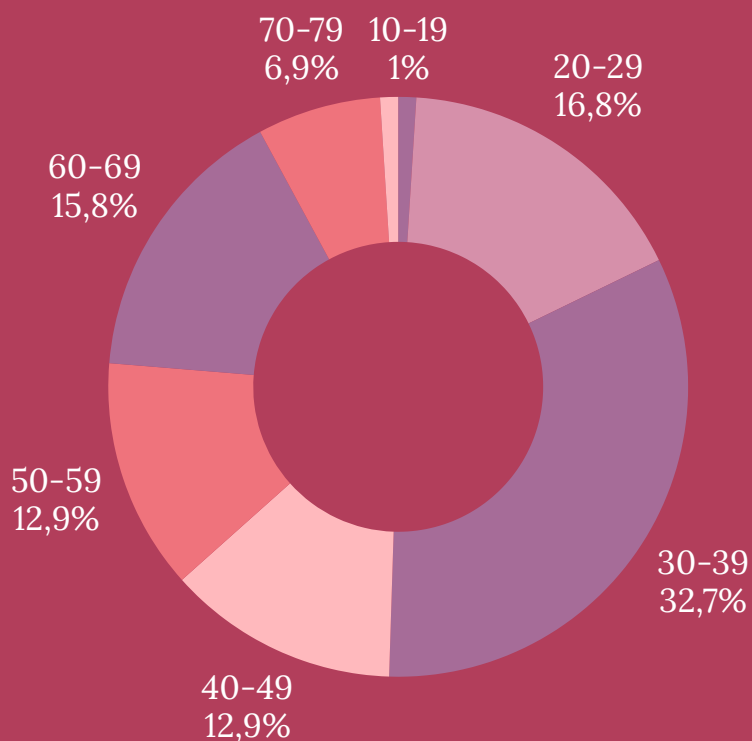


MOTHER TONGUE



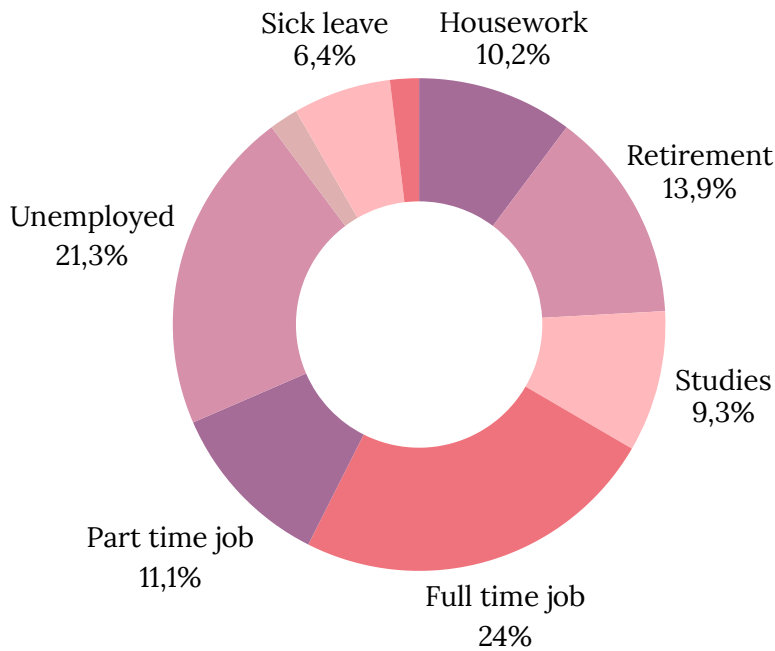
- Arabic, Persian, German, Mandarin, Polish, Turkish, Kabyle, Creole...

AGE

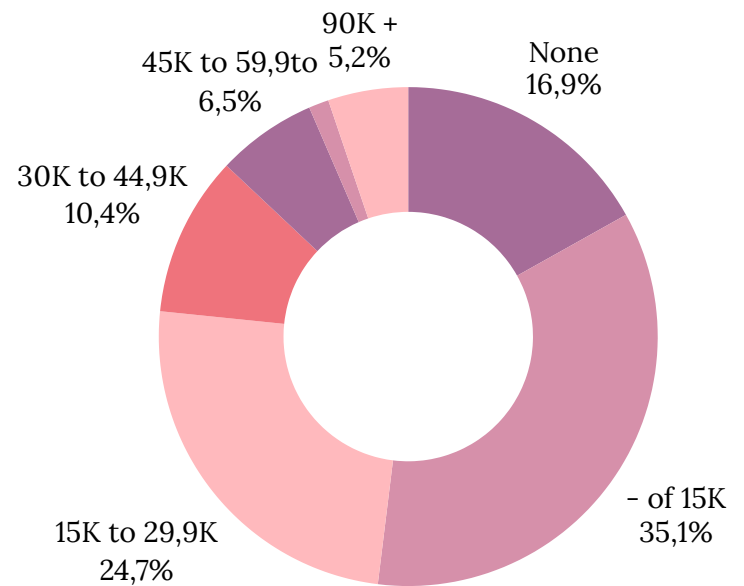




OCCUPATION



INCOME



Key findings:

Our membership continues to get younger with an average age of 43.5 years for 2025-2026.

87% of our members live below the poverty line, a percentage that increased by nearly 10% compared to last year (78%).

In 2025, the viable income (threshold for living out of poverty) calculated by IRIS in Montreal for a single person is \$40,084 net per year. Rent increases (average of 11%) are the main factor explaining the increase in viable income.

The rising cost of living, impoverishment, and growing inequalities result from political and economic choices. The housing crisis is a central expression of this. Our neighbourhood has experienced accelerated gentrification and social housing is underrepresented (4% in Verdun, compared to 7% on average in other Montreal boroughs). These dynamics lead to displacement among modest households. This residential instability directly weakens local solidarity networks. (Portrait of Housing in Verdun, CACV, 2025)

PORTRAIT OF A MEMBER



My name is Dorcas and I am from Rwanda. When I came to the Verdun Women's Centre (VWC) in 2025, I was going through a difficult time of waiting for immigration documents. My permanent full-time job was on hold due to the expiration of my work permit and I was experiencing a lot of stress and anxiety as a result of lacking income. I arrived at the center for the first time to do compensatory work, but Miss Audrée and the team welcomed me with warmth and I decided to become a member. I started going to the center regularly to participate in social activities such as crafting, self-defense classes, gardening, and workshops. The care and affection I received from the team and other members helped me cope with my anxiety and the center became like a safe haven for me. It is one thing to be nice and to smile at someone, especially when they are new, but I was moved by the level of attention the employees at this center give to their members. They go beyond and above trying to know what we are going through and provide a solution. Miss Audrée and the team helped me receive financial assistance that I needed while waiting to return back to work. My involvement at the VWC has greatly improved my mental health because of the help I received from the team, other members, and the resources available. I am grateful to have known the VWC and to be a part of it. I extend my gratitude to the whole team of the VWC and to all members who encouraged me and who continue to bring positive impact to others.



-Dorcas, a member of the Center

04

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

► EMBRACING OUR NEW ROLE AS PROPERTY OWNER



After two years in our new premises, the Centre is increasingly inhabited: members are taking ownership of the space, proposing initiatives and investing the space. Groups of activists and citizens borrow it for their actions. This dynamic relies on shared trust, where the Centre's life does not depend solely on the team, but on a community that organizes itself and can thus broaden the scope of the mission.

Meanwhile, our financial management and building maintenance are becoming more predictable as we get to know the premises. That said, living in a building continues to confront us with unexpected events and surprises. It's a learning process that remains ongoing... and will probably never be completely finished!

Impacts and highlights:

- Completion of major building work and other improvements to the premises;
- Development of the garden and kitchen promoting space appropriation and meeting food needs;
- Lending of premises to more than 9 organizations and projects, in addition to supporting recurring self-managed initiatives contributing to the Centre's mission in the community;
- Accessibility of the premises for people with reduced mobility, despite some improvements still needed.

Perspectives:

- Establish an annual self-financing activity in our premises;
- Strengthen the Centre's visibility in the community through field presence and training volunteers who represent us in gathering places (kiosks, food banks, soups, kitchens, etc.);
- Improve premises accessibility, notably by installing a permanent accessibility ramp at the entrance.

➤ CONTINUING TO SECURE OUR SPACE

In 2023, the Centre initiated a process to make it a place where everyone feels safe, supported and recognized, through a broad consultation to better understand how to foster full participation of all.

Following this, several concrete accessibility measures promoting participation were implemented (more evening events, simultaneous translation, posting the code of conduct in the premises, etc.). Deeper work streams were also initiated, including fostering the appropriation of our mission, political orientations, code of conduct and democratic processes by members, so that they become carriers of these, beyond the team.

For the space to be safe, clear and predictable, it is also necessary to frame team practices and provide tools to support their work. Another work stream was therefore the formalization of our internal practices through training and self-reflection spaces (See section 09 - Team training and support p.41).

Impacts and highlights :

- Production and presentation to the AB of a synthesis and analysis document of the consultation data.
- Adaptation of the Centre to the realities of workers, students and parents, notably by increasing evening involvement spaces and setting up spaces for parents.
- Beginning of a process to create a welcome document for new members, including a simplified code of conduct and a presentation of our mission, values and political orientations, with the support of the Table des groupes de femmes de Montréal (TGFM).
- Adoption of a new human resources policy offering more inclusive working conditions for permanent workers.

Perspectives

- Foster greater appropriation of political struggles by members by multiplying spaces for reflection and involvement, while supporting the implementation of concrete actions around issues that concern them so that spontaneous mobilization impulses can transform into collective action.
- Continue reflection spaces to deepen work streams related to our practices, including the creation of a code of ethics for workers, the design of a welcome document and the improvement of our intervention policy.



➤ FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT TO HOUSING

For two years now, the Centre members have chosen to prioritize the feminist fight for the right to housing in their activist efforts, in response to the housing crisis that profoundly affects collective living conditions.

Among our key partners, the Comité d'action des citoyen-ne-s de Verdun (CACV) plays a central role. We are fortunate to work alongside an organization that supports tenants, equips our members and contributes to the political organizing of citizens.

The workers participated in various consultations and information-sharing events, notably with the Table d'habitation et d'aménagement urbain de Verdun (THAUV) and the CACV mobilization committee. We also participated in the Social Housing Day in Verdun on April 11, 2025.

Participation in the homelessness committee and our trusted relationship with street workers from Travail de rue et Action Communautaire (TRAC) aim to make the Centre a known and accessible environment for those most affected by the housing crisis, particularly those experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Impacts and highlights

- 24% of our individual interventions have housing-related issues as their main reason (risk of homelessness, problem with landlord, support accessing social housing, etc.);
- The Coopérative Verd'Eau, of which the Centre is a founding member, made progress in negotiations with the City and developers for access to land in the Dupuis-Hickson sector;
- Members are better informed about their rights and the roots of the housing and homelessness crisis;
- The Centre is better known and new solidarities have been created with neighbourhood activists and beyond!

Perspectives:

- Support initiatives for developing truly affordable housing in Verdun, such as the Ethel parking lot;
- Continue the feminist fight for the right to housing by highlighting the link between the housing crisis and violence against women, as the lack of truly affordable housing keeps many of them in dangerous situations.



A central mobilization: Who gets Ethel? We get Ethel!

The Ethel parking lot is a large multi-storey structure located near the De l'Église metro station. It is currently less than 40% occupied and requires major repairs. In the context of a housing crisis, the CACV and several neighbourhood groups, including the Centre, are calling for the site to be transformed into truly accessible social housing projects, rather than a major reinvestment in the current parking infrastructure.

Over the past year, various mobilization actions took place around this issue, including a protest-occupation organized in the parking lot. These mobilizations helped relaunch the public debate on the site's future and the need to prioritize projects meeting urgent population needs, particularly access to stable and truly affordable housing.

Our new mayor, Céline-Audrey Beauregard, mentions in her platform wanting to reserve the Ethel parking lot for three uses: maintaining parking spaces, plus building social housing and a cultural space. A momentum to use for mobilization!

05 COMMUNITY SPACE

➤ RECEPTION

Reception at the Centre allows you to...

- Leave home and find yourself in a welcoming, warm and dynamic place ;
- Have a space to be heard, supported and referred to other resources ;
- Meet basic needs: eat, cool down or warm up depending on the season ;
- Create, read, stay informed ;
- Meet other people, exchange informally ;
- Take ownership of the space and get involved according to your interests and abilities.

Highlights / Impacts

- Reception is a veritable “for and by” space that fosters mutual aid as well as individual and collective initiatives arising from people's direct needs. We see emerging, among other things, spontaneous cooking, language pairings, creation of visuals for mobilizations or spontaneous art classes;
- With social isolation increasingly on the rise, the Centre sometimes constitutes one of the only socialization spaces, where a real sense of sisterhood develops, often initiated simply by shared presence during reception;
- Members invite friends or acquaintances to the Centre, demonstrating that a sense of belonging has developed towards the organization.



Many times, I come with lots of worries in my head (immigration procedures, job searching...) and I leave more at ease and stronger thanks to the bonds created with the women and the safe and supportive atmosphere of the Centre.

- Fatma

➤ INDIVIDUAL INTERVENTION

Individual intervention at the Centre means listening, accompaniment or referrals. It is unconditional and non-judgmental reception, according to the person's needs, in the present moment.

317 interventions were provided

Highlights / Impacts

- The Centre having a holistic approach, it is sometimes preferable to refer to specialized resources according to people's needs. This also helps broaden the safety net of the person being supported.
- **Referrals** mainly concerned housing (37%), domestic violence (21%), employability (16%) and mental health (14%).
- **The issues** most recurrent concern isolation (31%), mental health (28%), economic precarity (28%), housing (24%), domestic violence (21%) and immigration (20%). These issues influence each other and further fragilise people's situations. Needs are interconnected and complicate access to services: many people find themselves excluded from existing resources due to specific or inadequate eligibility criteria for complex realities, placing them in a service gap. In this context, our presence can play an essential support role.
- Government procedures are increasingly present in accompaniment requests, often leading us to act as intermediaries to help people navigate administrative burdens and complexity. This reality, increasingly dehumanized and digitized (centralized platforms, online services) questions a digital transition that presents itself as ecological but excludes anyone without a mobile phone or internet access.



Thanks to the presence of a sexology intern, a first for the current team, three people were able to access weekly sexological follow-up.

➤ BRUNCH DISCUSSIONS

Brunch discussions allow to...

- Contribute to food security;
- Create connections, break isolation and foster a sense of belonging to the living environment;
- Foster the development of solidarity bonds as well as sharing one's experiences and interests ;
- Foster the reception, integration and participation of new people;
- Share or discover culinary traditions;
- Practice French or even Spanish.

10 brunches took place,
with an average of 20 people per activity,
for a total of 182 participations

The gathering brunch at the beginning of the activity helped me integrate as a new participant at the Centre. I am discovering new resources and I am interested in coming back for other activities.

- Anonymous



Thanks to donations from Marché Frais and Première Moisson, in addition to Desjardins funding, we can offer very generous and diverse brunches.

Volunteers also help us, as always, prepare everything!



➤ POPULAR EDUCATION WORKSHOPS

Autonomous popular education is the approach used by the Centre; it starts from the experience, lived realities and knowledge of each person to initiate collective learning and reflections.

Popular education workshops allow to...

Develop a better knowledge of existing resources and one's rights;

Develop a better understanding of various social issues (housing, domestic violence, transphobia, etc.);

Collectivize lived experiences;

Share concrete tools to improve one's living conditions.

23 workshops took place,
with an average of 9 people per activity,
for a total of 158 participations

Some topics covered: rights in the context of separation, coercive violence, a critical look at anti-immigration discourse, tenant rights and rent increases, mental health rights, Indigenous territorial struggles, caregiving, conscious communication, the history of Black women in community organizing, issues experienced by people experiencing homelessness, and more!



We thank our partners who presented a workshop:

Travail de rue et Action communautaire (TRAC), the Comité d'Action des citoyens et citoyennes de Verdun (CACV), Legal Aid, the Groupe des aidants du Sud-Ouest (GASO), Service d'Entraide la Passerelle, Cybel, postnatal companion, Action autonomie, Histoire engagée and Kimberlie, dermatology resident.

*This activity brings me hope, confidence, accountability. Often, I thank life, but above all, I thank the people before us who fought so that we have more rights. We must continue this infinite struggle...
- Monique*

➤ ACTIVE CLUBS

Active clubs are part of our desire to approach health holistically. They are diverse activities that promote movement, connection and reconnecting with one's body, with oneself and with others.

Active clubs allow to...

- Take care of your physical health by moving, at your own pace, with pleasure and connection ;
- Take care of your mental health by providing a sense of well-being, healing, connection ;
- Foster intercultural exchanges: coming together beyond language and through distinct cultural references (like dance), united by art or movement ;
- Develop concrete tools to act on your physical and mental well-being ;
- Foster intergenerational connections ;
- Discover your neighbourhood.

*32 active clubs took place,
with an average of 8 people per activity,
for a total of 226 participations and 29 children*

Some examples of active clubs this year: walks, capoeira, yoga, dance, cross-country skiing introduction, parent-child yoga, dance with baby, and more!



*A moment of
tranquility,
harmony, letting
go. Sense of
community,
gratitude.
- Anonymous*



We thank our volunteers and partners:
Verena for chair massages, Viviana for Mexican folk dance, Consuelo for yoga, Festival Quartier Danse for movement workshops and Pause Parents-Enfants for lending outdoor equipment.



So much joy. I want classes more often, it gives me energy and enthusiasm. The history of Mexican folklore is very interesting.

- Anonymous



➤ OUTINGS

Outings allow to...

- Learn about free or low-cost cultural events and accessible community spaces ;
- Have access to certain activities otherwise too expensive ;
- Fuel socialization and fun ;
- Try different artistic or cultural practices ;
- Familiarize yourself with less familiar places or routes ;
- Discover the city differently.



13 outings took place,
with an average of 9 people,
for a total of 126 participations and 5 children

Some examples of outings: beach crafts (Cartoneros) with the Verdun Library, Festival des Nuits d'Afrique, dance visit at Centre Phi, visit to the Verdun Greenhouses and community gardens with the Maison de l'environnement, exhibition on lesbian history in Montreal at MEM, visit to SANAAQ, lunch at Comité social Centre sud, Biodôme, Museum of Fine Arts and Stella exhibition on Sex Work.



➤ PARLONS FRANÇAIS

This activity is for allophone people who wish to practice French in a safe space.

Parlons français meetings allow to...

- Get introduced to the French language ;
- Continue conversation practice after or during francization ;
- Offer a safe space to practice French without pressure ;
- Socialize and develop mutual support in the experience of being newcomers ;
- Learn with pleasure ;
- Engage in rich cultural exchanges (music, dance, cooking).

I loved everything! The game, the food, the communication! I learned many new words and new expressions
- Anonymous

21 meetings took place,
with an average of 5
participants,
for a total of 105
participations and 14
children

➤ LANGUAGE PAIRINGS

For people whose schedule or the group meeting format doesn't work, we are also fortunate to have volunteers who offer their time for individual French practice.



Thank you to our 4 volunteers who committed to preparing and facilitating meetings as well as language pairings: Dorota, Isabelle, Rachel and Julie-Christine!

The atmosphere is very welcoming, everyone had the opportunity to participate. There are participants who came back several times, that means we like the activity! I am developing friendships linked to learning French!
- Anonymous

➤ LA PARENTHÈSE SUPPORT GROUP

The La Parenthèse support group is a warm and safe space that aims to break isolation and encourage mutual aid through dialogue and collective reflection.

The support group allows to...

- Respond to a deep need for human contact;
- Bring out what connects seemingly different life paths;
- Free oneself from shame and develop self-compassion;
- Collectivize experiences and recognize the political dimension of problems experienced;
- Create lasting bonds!

We feel less alone going through our hardships
- Anonymous

It was a closed group that took place over 7 meetings and was composed of 8 participants

There is a beautiful energy within the group, which is shared and strengthens our personal energy. We feel better leaving here, after having shared together
- Anonymous



This group truly responded to a strong need amongst th members and participants are asking to continue. The team is working to find funding to have the resources to offer this group more regularly. We still plan to do it again in the near future and are setting up an art therapy group in the fall, thanks to two volunteers.

➤ EVENINGS AT THE CENTRE

Evenings allow to...

- Offer activities in a time slot more suitable for some people;
- Foster meetings, intercultural and intergenerational exchanges;
- Support expression through various mediums;
- Create spaces of trust.

26 evenings took place,
with an average of 8 participants,
for a total of 207 participations and 3 children



Some examples of evening events that took place: film nights, community dinners, sexo evenings, movement/dance workshops, writing workshops, activities sharing artisanal practices like Tatreez (Palestinian embroidery), cyanotype, jewelry making with metal stamps, leatherwork, and fabric painting.



Thanks to all the people who shared their expertise or knowledge during the evenings: Alexia, Christina and Nashwa, Lorena, Linda, Fannie, Golnoosh, Toni, Taj and all the others!





This evening made me realize that we still have a lot of work to do to free ourselves from guilt and feel comfortable, take our place, reclaim power over our lives!

- Anonymous

I leave with a full heart because I just made a friend

- Anonymous

A beautiful discovery of this technique. I leave with a beautiful ring that I made, the pride of having created it and the pleasure of sharing.

- Anonymous

The sexo evening allows me, every time, to free myself from learned shame, to feel lighter and more normal. There are no taboos here, we can speak in complete confidence.

- Anonymous



Community dinners reach many people. Food brings people together while meeting an essential need. Intercultural and intergenerational exchanges of culinary traditions were particularly touching (See page 29- For a solidarity-based and vibrant kitchen).

➤ SELF-MANAGED PROJECTS

Where time limits the team, volunteer mobilization takes over! The Centre is stronger and reaches further levels thanks to these various initiatives. These are activities that take place without workers present, organized by volunteers.

Board game nights

One of our AB members, Chryssoula, wanted to offer the community a gathering place in a fun and pleasant atmosphere on weekends. Thus, since winter 2025, board game nights have taken place every other Saturday evening and reach an average of 12 participants. Chryss's involvement has provided a social space to break isolation, differently, through games! And the response is more than positive!



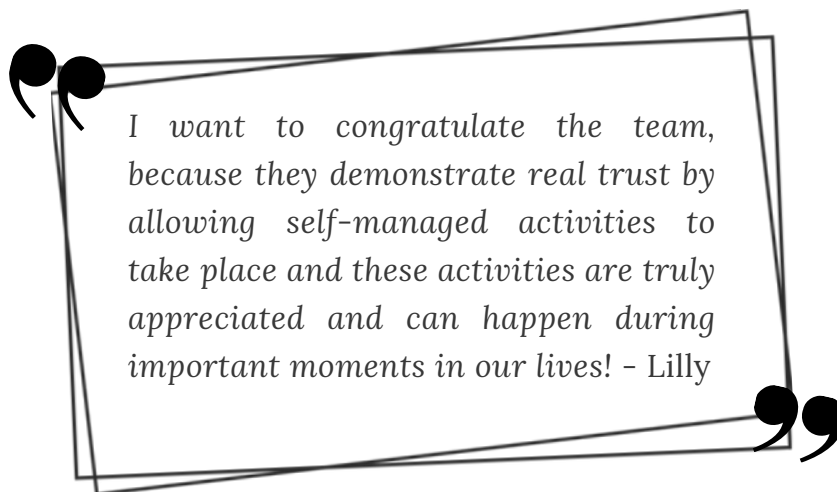
Thanks to Chryss's mobilization as well, the Centre was able to count on game donations from the Librairie de Verdun, from members, as well as monetary donations to acquire a variety of games for all tastes!

Meditation

We are fortunate to benefit from the involvement of Françoise, who offers weekly meditation sessions to an average of 5 members. It is a precious space of well-being and we thank Françoise for making this space possible.

Choir

The choir was a self-managed group, led notably by Micheline, that met every two weeks at the beginning of the year to sing together. 4 members were involved. They even offered us a beautiful performance during a brunch discussion!



06

SPECIAL PROJECTS

➤ FOR A SOLIDARITY-BASED VIBRANT KITCHEN

This project, financed by Desjardins, aimed to make the kitchen and the garden spaces of mutual aid, solidarity and popular education. It is also based on the idea that contact with the earth, growing food and sharing culinary knowledge are concrete means of collective reappropriation of our living conditions, fostering autonomy and collective well-being. Although they form a coherent and interrelated whole, one can distinguish a food component, an urban agriculture component and a popular education component.

This project enabled:

- Fostering learning and reflection on various topics, such as the origin of food, its environmental and ethical dimensions, the profits generated by major players in the food industry, and more;
- Creating spaces for sharing and trust between members, particularly around the relationship to food and the body;
- Celebrating and sharing culinary and cultural traditions, for example during community dinners, where members cooked traditional dishes from their countries;
- Responding to a growing food need;
- Increasing the reach of our workshops in general, by ensuring the provision of diverse and nutritious food.



The food component was marked by:

- Nine kitchen committee meetings, involving 16 different volunteers who prepared economical and nutritious recipes, then served in the community space;
- The provision of more than 405 complete meals, not counting the many meals shared informally during workshops and activities;
- 8 community dinners (121 participations), 10 brunch discussions and 26 meals during evening workshops;
- The preparation of meals for several community life events, including the Christmas party and March 8 (International Women's Rights Day) activities;
- The kitchen renovation, notably the purchase of a refrigerator and a dishwasher.

The urban agriculture component, marked by:

- The creation of the garden committee, composed of 5 volunteers who participated in seeding, planting, garden maintenance and the development of new growing spaces;
- The garden development through planters, garden bags and flower beds where herbs, vegetables, decorative plants and shrubs grow, also contributing to reducing heat islands;
- Garden maintenance was done collectively, with several members taking turns watering and weeding.

The popular education component, marked by:

- Four educational outings related to food and urban agriculture, notably to the Lucien-Carron community garden, the Verdun greenhouses, the Montreal Biodôme and the Comité social Centre-Sud.

This project allowed me and other members of the Verdun Women's Centre to volunteer at community kitchens.

This activity allows us to get to know each other better, share recipes and especially learn to cook new proteins that are much less expensive than meat and allow us to better feed ourselves and our families.

We also learn to collaborate amongst us so that our collective goal is achieved.

A big thank you again for allowing us all this learning experience and all these good times together. We all hope this activity continues.

-Monique

➤ CULTURAL MEDIATION

“Moving Our Lives, Making Trajectory” was an invitation to explore different ways of cultivating a curious and creative attention and contact with ourselves, others and the space we share. Participants ventured into various practices such as free dance, meditation, improvisation, visual art and speech. This project was funded by Quai 5160 and led by movement artist Lorena Terán.

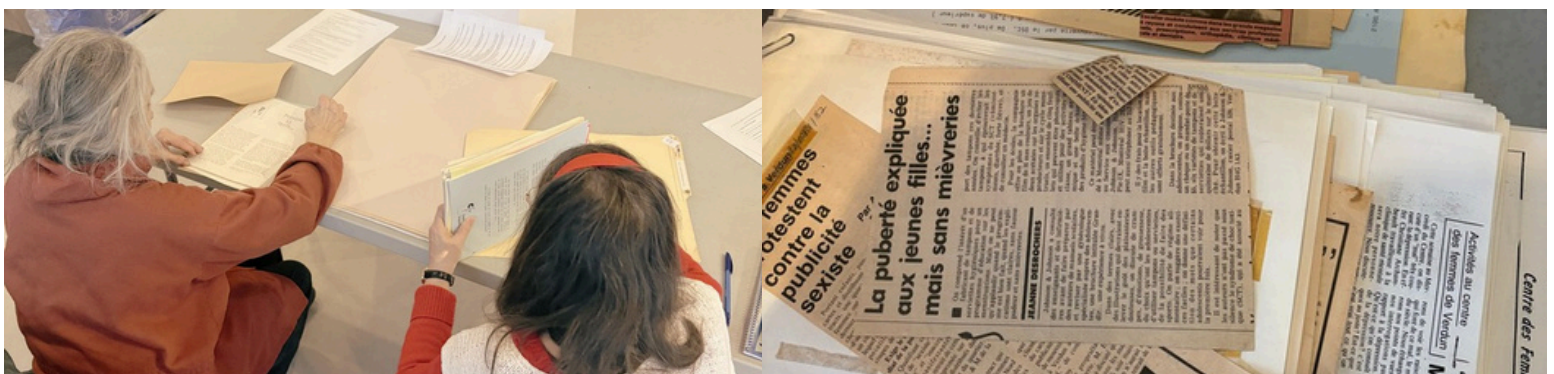
This group concluded this year by sharing its experience with others during a closing evening and left behind, as a trace of their process, a video piece and an artist's book accessible in our premises.



➤ ARCHIVES PROJECT

To mark the Centre's 45th anniversary, the Histoire engagée team, in collaboration with the staff, led a project entitled “Learning to Write History with Those Who Make It: The Verdun Women's Centre Through the Lens of Community Organizing History in the Neighbourhood”, funded by the Cultural Participation in Neighbourhoods program.

Led by historians Catherine Larochelle and Samia Dumais, the project took the form of three workshops with our members: a first on the history of women's centres in Quebec, a second dedicated to exploring archives and defining the narrative angle to use for telling the Centre's 45-year history, and a third guided by artist Fannie Bertrand around creating collages as a starting point for a commemorative work. In parallel, interviews with members were conducted to document the organization's living history.



➤ FEMINIST SELF-DEFENSE : DISCOURSE OF THE BODY AND PUBLIC SPACE

This is a project funded by the City of Montreal, through the Urban Safety Prevention Program for children and youth in vulnerable situations.

The Centre, in collaboration with the Feminist Self-Defense Network (RAF), offers physical and psychological self-defense sessions aimed at increasing the sense of safety in public spaces, developing a better understanding of power dynamics and violence, and reducing feelings of helplessness.

4 course sessions, including one in English, took place in the past year, reaching 30 people

2 public actions emerged from this:

- The creation of a Zine on workplace harassment, of which about twenty copies were distributed;
- A collective action by the waterfront to denounce sexual assaults that frequently occur there and support victims.



! The strong presence of gender-diverse people in this workshop and the testimonies shared seem to support the hypothesis of an increased need to equip oneself against a growing sense of insecurity in public spaces linked to the rise of anti-LGBTQIA2S+ discourse.

It reassured me in the understanding that I could be strong and it also allowed me to connect with others and see how much our stories are common. It's in these kinds of moments that the word sisterhood takes on its full meaning.

-Anonymous

I feel more kindness towards myself, a sense of belonging to a community and increased confidence. I know who to turn to for help. I have access to community resources. And I feel more comfortable asking for help than I would have thought.

-Anonymous

I have more confidence in myself to not let myself be pushed around or insulted, belittled.

-Anonymous



We thank Rose, Em, Ju and Artemis who led the classes

07

COMMUNITY LIFE, INVOLVEMENT AND VOLUNTEERING

➤ ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

The annual general meeting is a highlight of the Centre's community life. We present the work accomplished in the previous year and choose our action priorities for the coming year. It is also a time to gather with friends, allies and partners to celebrate the life and mission of the Centre.

*The AGM took place on June 13, 2025
40 members in good standing were present,
plus 5 observers and 6 workers.*



➤ CHRISTMAS PARTY

The Christmas party was a beautiful moment to gather. We had the help of dedicated volunteers and members who shared food (for the potluck), songs and wishes. It was “Christmas magic” to see the dynamic of sharing and exchange that evening.

59 adults with workers and 4 children were present.





➤ INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S RIGHTS DAY

With the goal of gathering, sharing a meal and reflecting collectively for International Women's Rights Day, the Centre held an evening: *What is work? Class feminism and invisible labour.*

At a time when feminism is often limited to valuing individual success without questioning the system, the workshop examined the concept of unpaid work that sustains daily life and explored how class feminism is essential to transform this invisible labour into collective power.

The participants' feedback was incredibly rich and contributed to building our action plan for the years to come.

Fannie Bertrand's artwork, *Femmes de Coeur et d'action*, which pays tribute to those who contributed to the social fabric of the Verdun community, was also presented by the artist.

51 adults and 6 children participated

It's really important to address these political topics starting from our personal experiences, from our daily lives. Our lived experience is political!
-Anonymous

Everyone should participate in this workshop! I bet many would be willing to pay to have access to this, it was great!
-Anonymous



➤ INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S RIGHTS DAY

On March 8, the Centre participated in the march organized by Femmes de Diverses Origines, Insoumises et unies: Against austerity, fascism, imperialism and militarism, with a delegation of 15 activists and 2 workers.



© Maude Desbois

➤ VOLUNTEERING AND INVOLVEMENT

Volunteer involvement is at the heart of the Centre. Food preparation, maintenance of the space, room setup and data compilation are some examples of tasks that volunteers do. Involvement at the Centre also takes other forms: work committees, administrative board, knowledge sharing, language pairings and more!

This year, we changed how we quantify volunteering. To be counted as volunteering, it must be part of a volunteering agreement made with a worker. Spontaneous involvement is now considered not as volunteering, but as part of the Centre's normal life. It is therefore only a fraction of the real investment in time and energy that is registered, but in what we were able to quantify, we count:

*39 volunteers,
for a total of 1,115 hours throughout the year!*

We note that these volunteers are generally involved long-term, and we are deeply grateful.



➤ COMMITTEES

LGBTQIA2S+ Committee

This committee is a non-mixed space for LGBTQIA2S+ people that meets monthly with the objectives of:

- Organizing awareness and education events for the Centre's community;
- Coordinating for activist actions and political reflection;
- Creating a space for sharing and support.

This year, the committee, composed of a small stable core of three people, organized the screening of the film *Pride*, retracing the alliance between gay and lesbian activists and a miners' strike, as well as a community dinner accompanied by a testimony for Trans Visibility Day.



Immigration Committee

Without being a formal committee yet, we wish to mention that three immigrant women mobilized this year to address common issues affecting them and far too many immigrant people.

They first exchanged with the provincial MNA for the riding, Alejandra Zaga Mendez, on:

- The closure of access to permanent residence for people already on the territory (student or work permits for example), the cancellation of the Quebec Qualification Program and the issue of quotas;
- The difficulties of accessing francization programs (delays and criteria) to qualify with the Quebec government;
- The importance of rapid temporary work permits to support people waiting for processing of applications that can take several months to several years.

We wish to highlight the commitment of these women to improving living conditions for immigrant people!

08

COLLECTIVE ACTIONS

Collective action allows us to stand united against oppressive systems, laws, or projects that maintain exclusion and poverty with our members and partners. Members' activist involvement is also a platform to take power and create bonds of solidarity.

➤ MOBILIZATION: WHO GETS ETHEL?

The mobilization to transform the Ethel parking lot into social housing emerged from the mobilization committee of the CACV (Comité d'Action des citoyen.nes de Verdun), in which the Centre participates. The action of May 23, 2025, a citizen protest and occupation of the Ethel parking lot with food, banner creation and speeches, was a real success that launched the mobilization around the parking lot.

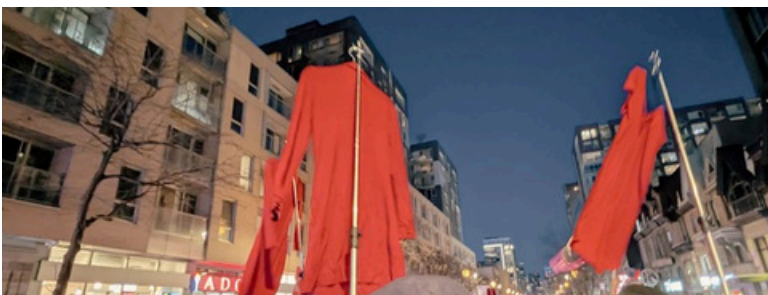


© Caroline Perron

➤ EVERY CHILD MATTERS SOLIDARITY MARCH

To mark the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30, the Centre participated in a march to honour the memory of children who disappeared in residential schools, but also to denounce the persistence of colonial violence against Indigenous peoples, notably the still disproportionate removal of Indigenous children by youth protection services and the intergenerational trauma that results.

➤ VIGIL FOR MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN, GIRLS AND TWO-SPIRIT PEOPLE



On February 14, the Centre attended the vigil to honour murdered and missing Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit people as well as to call for justice, accountability and systemic changes..

➤ WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN IN QUEBEC CITY

A contingent went to Quebec City on October 18, for the great gathering of the World March of Women, under the theme "Still marching to transform the world," where feminists from all regions denounced the continuum of violence against girls and women, poverty, and capitalism responsible for the climate crisis.

The Center marched for:

- The right of girls and women to live in peace and safety;
- The right of girls and women to make their own free and informed choices and to have them respected;
- The right to a decent income guaranteeing economic autonomy for women to live in dignity;
- The right to free and universal access to quality public services, particularly in health and social services, education, etc.;
- The right to live in a healthy environment that respects humans, communities and biodiversity.



➤ COMMUNITY AT ITS LIMIT!

A national strike and demands movement from the community sector, “Le Communautaire à Boutte”, was born from community workers who had had enough of the derisory funding increases and precarious working conditions, in a context where needs continue to grow. The movement quickly spread nationally, and the Centre participated around the following demands:

- Decent working conditions for community sector workers;
- Sufficient mission funding;
- Full recognition of organizations;
- Protection of autonomy and end of precarious funding;
- Recognition and consolidation of the community sector as a strategic pillar for society.

Prior to the large gathering in Quebec City on April 2, in which the Centre participated, workers and activists also spoke publicly, distributed flyers and took part in the local Verdun gathering on March 25.



© Julie Papineau



© Julie Papineau

09

TEAM TRAINING AND SUPPORT

The team also pursues ongoing training and reflection to better respond to the diversity of requests and to feel better qualified in their work.

Some training and reflection spaces on our practices that were set up this year:

- Monthly intervention lunches, which allow us to collaborate together to better support people experiencing complex issues, or reflect on our intervention approaches more generally
- Monthly team clinical supervisions with a psychotherapist for support in our team dynamics or interventions
- Two-day professional retreat for team reflection
- Training on complex personality structures
- Training on suicide risk
- Domestic violence conference
- ECHO workshop, with les Maisons de l'Ancre, on homelessness experiences of women, trans and non-binary people
- Social Housing Day in Verdun



10 NETWORKING

To achieve genuine social transformation, it is essential for the community to stand together, complement each other, and support one another. For our struggles and strengths to unite, we need spaces for meeting, mutual recognition, and joint action. This is why networking and partnerships are so important to us. Beyond mere referrals, we aim to foster a whole social fabric and provide a fertile ground for collective action and improved living conditions.

➤ PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships at the Centre take many forms. They allow us to broaden our impact in the community and give more meaning to our actions.

Donations

The Marché Frais (local grocery store), a neighboring business, generously provided us with fruit baskets before our lunch-and-talk sessions. La Tablée des Chefs, an organization fighting food insecurity, connected us with Première Moisson so we could collect their unsold bread and pastries. La Vie en Rose enabled us to provide pajamas for all the participants at the Christmas party. The Multi-CAUS organization donated menstrual products, powdered milk, and diapers to help parents in need. These donations are absolutely invaluable, and we thank each of the organizations and businesses that supported us.

Finally, many Verdun residents supported us with donations of furniture, kitchen equipment, hygiene products, diapers, baby carriers, books, and more!



Premises loans

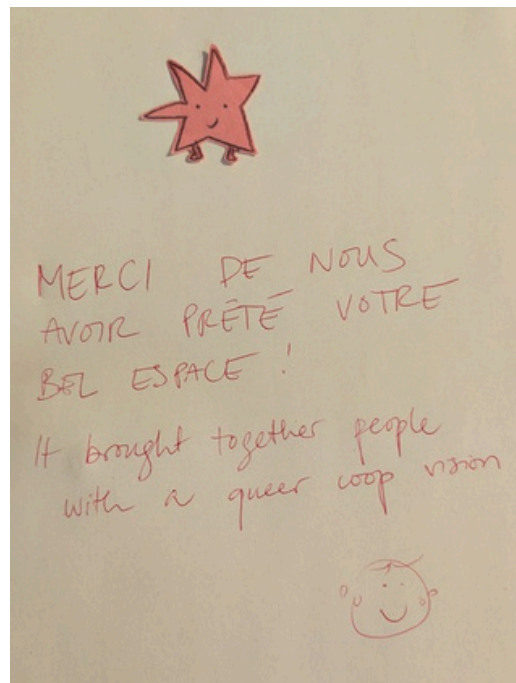
It is important for us to make our premises available in order to support community and citizen initiatives that are consistent with our mission.

Occasional space loans:

- Consultation process led by an architecture student for a housing cooperative project in Verdun;
- Tenant interviews as part of a housing research project;
- Verdun Citizens' Action Committee Christmas party;
- Filming of a member's film.

Longer-term space loans:

- Meetings of Nourri-Source, a breastfeeding support organization, for gatherings of breastfeeding mentors, which led to the establishment of breastfeeding support groups at the Centre;
- Monthly meetings of the Latin American Women's Circle: a space for sharing, sisterhood, and mutual support;
- Parent-child yoga activities led by Consuelo;
- Monthly meetings and fundraisers in solidarity with Palestine;
- Monthly meetings of the Food Against Fascism collective to prepare food which they then distribute at the de l'Église metro station.



Exchanges of practices

Exchanges of best practices are opportunities to exchange ideas with other groups about our methods, to learn from each other or share information. There are many throughout the year, but here are a few examples :

- Meeting of the Comité Vivre-Ensemble of the Rivière-des-Prairies Women's Centre to share our inclusion practices;
- Meeting with a staff member from Madame Prend Congé about our internal operations;
- Meeting with Femmes du Monde to evaluate our activities;
- Meeting with Toujours Ensemble to share information on funding and on our role as building owners;
- Discussion with the Adult Education Committee of Little Burgundy and Saint-Henri (CÉDA) on popular education.

Collaboration within our activities

As you have seen throughout the report, the presence of local organizations and stakeholders, as well as the contributions of their expertise, represent a true asset to our community. This year, we welcomed Cybel, a postnatal doula (Intuition Holistic), TRAC (Street Work and Community Action), Legal Aid, Maison du réconfort, CACV (Verdun Citizens' Action Committee), Festival Quartier Danse, JAME (I Learn with My Child), SEP (La Passerelle Mutual Aid Service), Action autonomie, Histoire Engagée, Pause Parents-Enfants, La Maison de l'Environnement, the Verdun Library, and the CSL (Lesbian Solidarity Centre), not to mention the numerous artists and knowledge-sharing contributions from citizens.



Joint projects

Several collaborations marked our year: those with Quai 5160, as part of the completion of the Racine project; with the CACV, within the framework of their mobilization committee and the resulting mobilizations; with Histoire Engagée, within the framework of the project on the history of the Centre; and with the Feminist Self-Defense Network, within the framework of our self-defense courses. All of these have the potential to continue over time.



Compensatory work

Community service is an alternative way for people to pay off traffic tickets by performing various tasks within a non-profit organization. Thanks to a collaboration with the YWCA and the alternative justice organization TRAJET, six people were able to pay their tickets while supporting the Centre in its mission this year.



CONSULTATIONS

The Table des partenaires contre la violence conjugale et familiale du Sud-Ouest Verdun this year notably supported the creation of an individual and group intervention tool on coercive control, taking the form of a puzzle accompanied by a facilitation guide, distributed in shelters and organizations working on violence across the province. Our participation in this consultation allows us to be better equipped to support victims through a complex and insufficient network of resources given the scale of needs.

The Verdun Homelessness Working Committee allows us to stay informed about new services set up in relation to homelessness, to facilitate referrals, to access the expertise of homelessness partners and to coordinate to meet field needs.

The Centre has sat for the second consecutive year on the board of directors of the **Concertation et développement social de Verdun (CDSV)**. Our involvement on the AB allows us to play an active role in the fight against poverty in the neighbourhood and to further deepen our ties with our entire community and partners. The CDSV was also a catalyst in our reactions to Centraide cuts in the neighbourhood and facilitated collective efforts to raise awareness with Centraide about the impacts of such cuts.

We participated in the **CDSV immigration committee**, as well as the Welcome Day organized by member organizations of the committee, aimed at welcoming newly arrived people in Verdun and introducing them to the resources and services offered in the neighbourhood.

Regarding housing, the Centre continues its involvement in the **Table de l'habitation et de l'aménagement urbain de Verdun (THAUV)**. This involvement allows us to stay informed about opportunities for developing social housing projects in the territory and to highlight the needs we observe.

The Table des groupes de femmes de Montréal (TGFM) served as a space for feminist consultation and political mobilization for the Centre. We participated in its assemblies, the Diversity committee and the Right to the City committee, which advocates for a more inclusive, accessible and safe city. The TGFM organized various communities of practice and training sessions – focusing notably on anti-oppressive practices, the decriminalization of sex work, Indigenous and Two-Spirit realities, systemic racism and the rise of the far right. In addition to offering support within groups for the inclusion of gender-diverse people, which we benefited from.

➤ MEDIA PRESENCE AND COMMUNICATIONS

We observe that for many citizens, our Instagram and Facebook pages represent a window into our activities, but also into the struggles carried by the Centre. Their use can foster mobilization for demonstrations, petitions, or partner events we want to promote. More than 4,000 people follow us on social media and several members discovered us this way.

Regarding traditional media, our important events are now posted on the *Nouvelles d'ici* calendar. Local newspapers also covered the *Communautaire à Boutte* mobilization in Verdun.

➤ COMMUNITY PRESENCE

Especially since our relocation further from downtown Verdun, it is important for the Centre to go out and meet the community to make its mission and services known to people who could benefit from them. Here are some events and spaces that allowed us to create these connections:

- Welcome Day for newcomers in Verdun;
- Participation in the Foire des possibles organized by Demain Verdun;
- Presence at the soup kitchen and Willibrord food bank;
- Vernissage of the artwork *Femmes de coeur et d'action* by Fannie Bertrand;
- Launch of the coercive control intervention tool at Logifem.



11

FUNDING

➤ GRANTS

The Centre could not accomplish all these wonderful things and have such a significant impact without our funders. We therefore wish to acknowledge their invaluable contribution!

First, we are fortunate to have mission-based funding through the Community Action Support Program and United Way:



Then, we received various funding opportunities associated with projects:



➤ DONS

We are also fortunate to receive support from the community in various forms, including monetary donations.

It would be impossible to name everyone who contributed, but we would like to thank the donors of \$1,000 and more:

- Holt Foundation
- Jackie Tan
- Fondation Vie/Life de Pharmaprix
- Guy Lafontaine

Thank
you!