

CHEZ NOUS



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There are events that people experience that are life changing: moving abroad, falling in love or going back to school. For Sheila, Adeline and Tima, it was staying at La Lumineuse, our shelter dedicated to women with children. Partly because they found refuge and safety. But mostly because they found a community.

In the holiday bulletin we return to the theme of the power of community. We see how the women and children in our services can be positively impacted by a nurturing community. Whether it is a stay of up to one year in our shelters, *La Lumineuse* and *Maison Benoy*, or up to three years in our transitional apartments, having a circle of support is crucial to healing and to personal growth.

Our new permanent housing project

This is why we are absolutely thrilled to be adding 35 permanent housing units to our services, opening fall 2024. Connecting with neighbors will give women the opportunity to build a social support network, share resources and create a sense of long-term security.

You will discover the transforming power of community for yourself as you read about Sheila, Adeline and Tima's experiences at *La Lumineuse*.

But before we begin - a little background on *La Lumineuse*

This shelter can house up to 7 women with children. It has a shared kitchen and living room and each woman has a private bedroom. Depending on the age and number of the children, a family may occupy one or two rooms. Supper is provided, and the women are responsible for their other meals.

Thanks to our volunteers

Photography: Cyrille Jodas
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A year ago, Adeline, Sheila and Tima arrived at La Lumineuse with their children. They were all unsure of what awaited them but relieved to turn the corner towards a better future.

Adeline had come out of a failed marriage and had moved four times in the last year.

Sheila was shut down and mistrustful and had just been evicted.

Tima was quiet and shaken, having left a situation of conjugal violence.

All three had faced the financial challenges of being single mothers, trying to care for their children while dealing with the trauma of their experiences. All three were exhausted and nervous.

These women shared how they met and what it meant to build friendships and a circle of support while living at La Lumineuse.

Adeline has always lived in a community setting and was used to looking out for others. She is naturally warm and gregarious. She is also extremely forgiving and non-judgmental.

When Sheila first arrived, she recalls staying in her room most of the time. *"I'm a tough nut to crack, I was closed off, I had no interest in sharing."* Despite Adeline's efforts to engage with her and get her out of her room, Sheila resisted. *"I was mistrustful, I had a critical eye, something must be behind her kind gestures."*

But Tima welcomed Adeline's friendliness. Tima tends not to approach people, but is receptive when people reach out to her. She found great comfort in talking to Adeline and appreciated being heard.

Adeline's persistence to draw Sheila into the emerging friendships finally paid off the day Sheila was sick and unable to care for her daughter. Adeline was unavailable to babysit, but she asked Tima to help Sheila out since the two women's daughters were already playmates.

After that, the two moms began speaking to each other more as their children's friendship grew. Occasionally the girls would have a little squabble and the moms would have to intervene. They got to know one another better and realized they had similar parenting styles.



Then food brought them even closer

Adeline is an amazing cook and loves to share the meals she makes. For Sheila, one bite is all it took! Tima also has her traditional favourites such as tajine, couscous and msemen (Moroccan crêpes) that she makes for them. This shared joy of eating led to cooking together, creating Haitian, African American, Trinidadian and Moroccan feasts. Before long the women were not just cooking together but also going out to grocery shop together.

What really solidified their friendship though was when Adeline invited Tima and Sheila to attend her daughter’s high school music concert. Sheila pushed herself to accept the invitation because one of her personal objectives was to go beyond her comfort zone, but then her anxiety crept in and she regretted it. *“I complained the whole day, I didn’t want to go. There was a snow storm and I just wanted to stay in.”*

But she went. And Tima did too. They both brought their daughters and afterwards everyone went out for pizza to celebrate.

Tima described what it meant to her. *“There was a feeling that night that we were more than friends. I felt close to them. For me, it was a new beginning. My ex-husband abused me for two years and I went through it alone. I’m disappointed with the people I knew and cut off all ties with them. I had no friends. But things changed that night.”*



“Food is not just fuel. Food is about family, food is about community, food is about identity. And we nourish all those things when we eat well.”

Michael Pollan, author of *The Botany of Desire* and *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*



Moving forward

The trio have recently all moved into our transitional housing project, *Logifamille*. Their apartments are located side by side and they continue to celebrate each other and support each other in difficult times.

“When things don’t go well we talk about it.”

Recently Adeline was stern with Tima as she was fed up with hearing her complaining about being unhappy. She told her “I’m tired of seeing you like this. Your negativity is bringing me down.”

It was difficult to say, but Adeline knew that Tima needed to hear it and that she needed to say it, part of being a friend and for her own self-care. Tima agreed. Feeling safe in their relationship made it easier for Adeline to speak and for Tima to listen.

What they have taught one another

Adeline has learned that she needs to **take care of herself** and that not everyone is deserving of her big heart. She needs to be a bit more cautious of the intentions of others.

Sheila says that Adeline taught her how to be **kind to others**, to reach out and make the first move.

“Being in the community has changed the way I am. I trust my intuition now, I spent so much time on my own that I had forgotten how to socialize. Now that I’m around people again, my inner voice is steering me in the right direction. And if something goes wrong, I can say to them: I need support - this is what happened, what do you think?”

Tima has learned that she is **courageous**.

“I was beaten like a dog and still living with the emotional and physical scars. They have helped me see myself in a different way. To accept what happened and to move on.”

“A community is not always an intentional gathering... sometimes communities form because unpredictable events and circumstances draw people into shared life intersections...”

Barbara A. Holmes author of *Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church*



Yes shelters take people off the streets but that’s just the beginning. Shelters like *La Lumineuse* stimulate reconnections with others, which fosters healing and growth, positively impacting everyone around.

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THANK YOU FOR HELPING LOGIFEM CONTINUE
TO PROVIDE SHELTER TO ALL WOMEN IN NEED

