

Annual Report 2021

May 1st 2020 to
April 30th 2021



www.benedictlabre.org



SUMMARY



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INTRODUCTION

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A year full of challenges for our community!

How can we sum up the year that is ending at Benoit Labre with simple words when in fact we have faced so many extraordinary situations? When I think of the team and all the work accomplished, I am proud. I cannot deny the feelings of sadness and indignation that I feel when faced with the living conditions of vulnerable people who are particularly affected in this context.

For the South-West, the needs are growing and affecting more and more people. The partners had to work together to allow a better cohesion of the actions, whether it is in health, food, emergency shelter, or overdose prevention.

In order to better support the people we accompany on a daily basis, it was essential to adapt, reinvent ourselves, be creative, and above all to mobilize quickly. It is therefore with our heads held high that we can look back on the efforts made and all the actions implemented this year. Thanks to our dedicated volunteers and caring partners, we have been able to better support our community.

For the community groups that work on a daily basis with people experiencing homelessness, the work will certainly be hard following this pandemic. This collaborative work will be increasingly necessary. Let's be ready to continue our actions with our community as we know so well how to do. The coming year promises to be hopeful in this sense, with the beginning of the construction of the Atwater project, which will include a living environment adapted to the rhythm and needs of the people who use our services.



ANDRÉANE DESILETS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

THE MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

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President

Santiago Garcia-Rejon

Vice-President

Danielle Olofsson

Treasurer

Emmanuel Valery Tchamba

Secretary

Joshua Parr

Departing members:

Charles Le Guen et Édith Bolduc are both members of the community.

We thank our 2 members who have given much time and commitment to our resource.

Directors (members of the community)

Matthieu D'avoine- Tousignant

Sarah Harding

Michel Primeau

Francesca Taddéo

Liam Hayes

The organism consists of 31 members.

Number of board meetings

5 meetings of the Board, May 11, 2020, November 10, 2020, December 17, 2020, February 10, 2021, April 27, 2021. We can add 5 meetings of the Executive Committee, numerous meetings of the Atwater Committee, the Finance Committee and the HR Committee.

Members co-opted from the Board during the year:

Franco San Gregorio and Yves Dagenais, both members of the community.

We thank the members involved over the years.



Cancellation of the Annual AGM: Due to the pandemic and related health restrictions, we could not accommodate people in one room to attend the meeting and thus promote democratic life; most of our members were not familiar enough with video conferencing platforms to attend virtually, so we chose to postpone the AGM to a later date.

OUR MISSION

To be an inclusive place that provides the necessary support, services, and resources to the most vulnerable population in order to improve the living conditions of everyone.

THE VALUES FOUND IN THE MIDST OF OUR ACTIONS RESPECT, HUMANISM, OPENNESS, INTEGRITY, EQUALITY

These values guide our choices in terms of our intervention philosophy. All our actions and decisions are guided and chosen according to them. Our interventions are based on humanistic approaches, active listening, and respecting the rhythm of each person. We have also chosen a harm reduction approach in order to reach a more marginalized population. Our goal is to give people a chance to regain control over their lives and decisions, to reconcile with themselves and with society in the greatest possible autonomy.

LOW-THRESHOLD APPROACH

This approach is part of a process to meet the basic needs of a person deemed vulnerable, in which there are no conditions of access. It is a process that aims to rebuild a relationship of trust with the various health and social services. There are no expectations, no record keeping, and respect for the person's unconditional pace. The usual rules are often too rigid in a marginalized population and reach only a small part of the targeted population. Thus, a flexible and open model is proposed where respect for the premises, the workers, and the other people who frequent the organization is required.



- A. To be a harmonious and empowering community home for people in need,
- B. To work towards social justice by encouraging peaceful relationships,
- C. To assist communities in caring for their members by providing meals, support for reintegration and self-esteem building,
- D. To promote involvement and networking among individuals, businesses, and corporations working in similar fields and, in some cases, to provide financial assistance.
- E. To complement the services offered at the Benoit Labre House day center for homeless persons and persons at risk of homelessness, to offer residential units for rent to persons with low or modest incomes; to establish, maintain and direct one or more transitional or permanent community housing projects for homeless persons or persons at risk of homelessness with various problems;
- F. To provide a rewarding and stimulating environment for homeless people or people at risk of homelessness with various problems such as substance abuse, behavioral problems, emotional and social isolation, and others, to help them take charge of their lives;
- G. To help the resident rediscover their own resources and untapped potential;
- H. To offer residents a continuum of services and residential stability to users. This will be an additional level of intervention in a global approach with a marginalized clientele, including those from the Aboriginal community;
- I. To consolidate partnerships with the Aboriginal network and to develop an expertise in intervention with this population in order to improve support for them;
- J. To allow each resident to progress individually according to his or her ability to evolve at their personal rhythm in order to promote as much autonomy as possible.

OUR ORGANIZATION
OUR TEAM



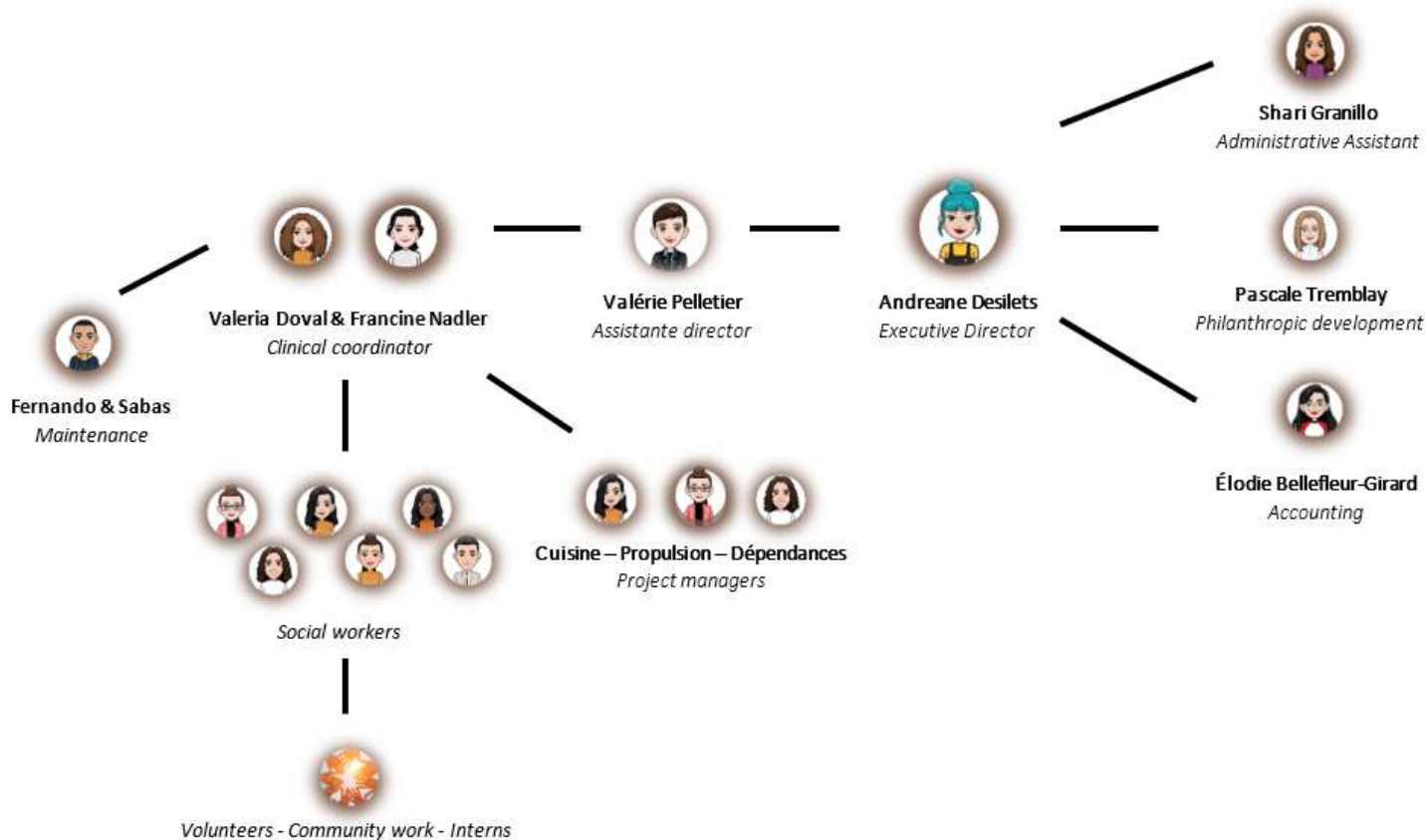
Since 2020, our intervention team has only grown to meet the needs of our community. We have several full and part-time workers with different specialties, educational and life backgrounds. This diversity of experience gives us a solid and efficient team ready to face any situation.

AN ORGANIZATIONAL CHART THAT REFLECTS THE ORGANIZATION

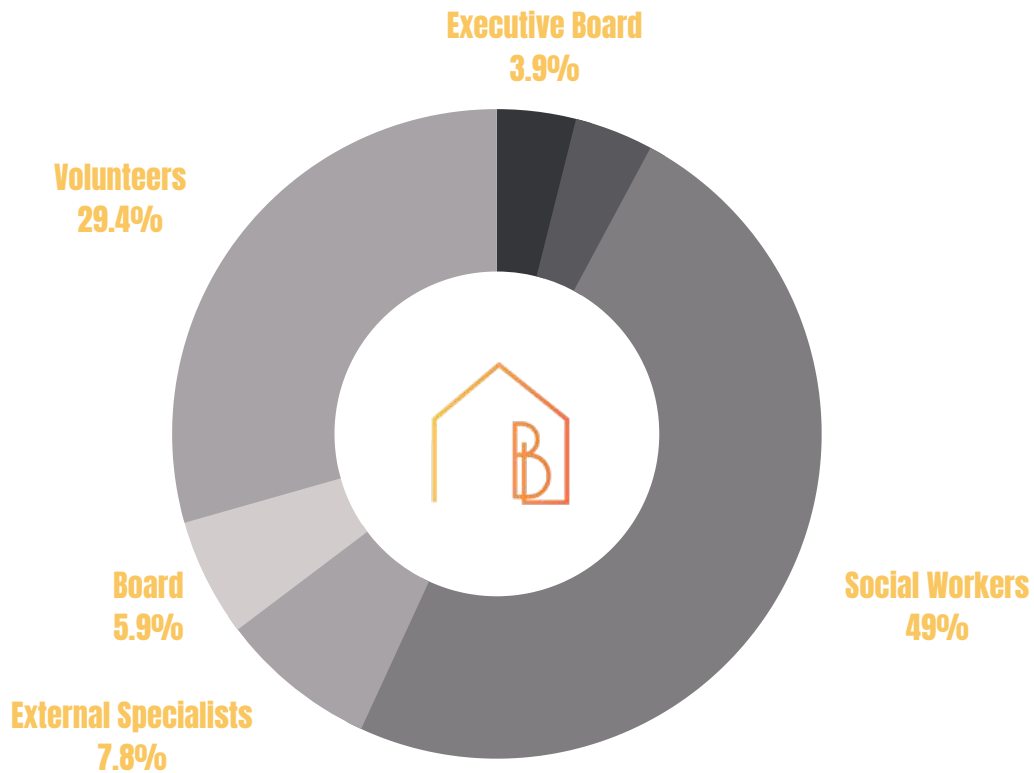
Our daily activities are made possible in courtesy of our organizational chart.

During the year of the pandemic, many changes took place at Labre House, including the very essence of the balance of our organization; its employees and volunteers allowing for efficiency and effectiveness. Our management team has grown to better respond to the needs of the staff and to the increase in our service offering.

Among the team, there are workers on the floor, clinical coordinators who allow for follow-ups and meetings to increase the efficiency of our projects and an outstanding administration that makes all of our daily activities possible.



THE STAFF

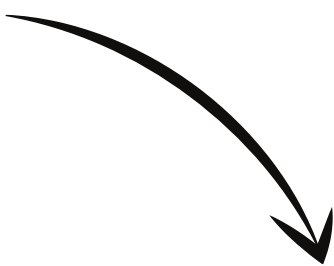


An organization such as Labre Housee that offers human services requires a variety of specialists and support staff.

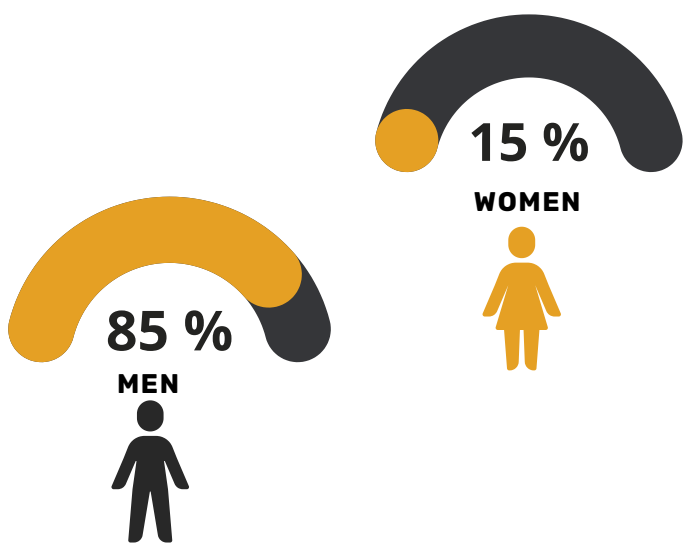
Essential needs are important to consider and none of these should be overlooked. This is why we work hard to ensure that our organization provides the support and services that each individual deserves with dignity.

It is for this reason that during the year 2020-21, the team at Labre House has grown rapidly. During the first months of the pandemic, workers from other backgrounds came to help. We also called upon a large number of volunteers. We would not have been able to offer our services without their precious help. This allowed us to be able to respond to the increased demand.

SERVICES USED BY VISITORS PER DAY



We receive approximately 1900 visits per month for a total of 23,000 visits per year. Of this number, 85% are men and 15% are women (5% increase in the female population). 35% of these individuals are over 55 years old.



THE HOUSE'S HISTORY

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The history of the House dates back to 1952. It was founded by Tony Walsh. At that time, Labre House was a shelter for a dozen elderly men he had met on the streets. He created a shelter on the upper floor of 418 de La Gauchetière Street. In 1955, the group started the newspaper Unity. The contributors to the paper were Tony Walsh, Father William Power, Marjorie Connors, David Marvin, Murray Ballantyne, John Buell, and Leo MacGillivray. During the same year, the organization moved from de La Gauchetière Street to 122 Duke Street for a few months before finally occupying our former location on Young Street. At that time, Griffintown was a neighborhood, and we could find the Patricia House and the Benedict Labre House on Murray and Young Streets respectively.

There were dilapidated houses filled with low-income families. The whole area was densely populated, so you didn't have to look far to find people to help. Over the years, the House has been transformed. Gerry Pascal, Director in the '70s, participated in various pan-Canadian movements in order to acquire a critical and grounded view of the assistance provided to homeless people. Until the 1980s, the director of the House lived on the 3rd floor of the building and lived off the food that the House received. He also distributed the goods received; donations from the community.

In the 1980s, due to deinstitutionalization and the economic recession, the need for homelessness grew. During this decade, the House became a day center and students lived on the 3rd floor in exchange for volunteer work. Through time, the services adapted and gave way to the organization we know now.

In 2019, we opened a new page in the history of Benedict Labre House. By moving to 4561 Notre-Dame W., we were able to reach a different clientele while still reaching our service users on Young Street. In fact, we changed our location in order to offer a better place to intervene and to increase our reception capacity.

The imminent need for a new home

Our previous location in Griffintown no longer met the physical needs of the organization. Our work requires an accessible, clean and safe space to accommodate the thousands of guests and volunteers who visit each year. Our previous location was not wheelchair accessible; the building's foundation required extensive work and space was simply too small to meet the demand we were experiencing. Over the past 5 years, we have experienced a significant increase in demand for our services. In particular, the homeless Aboriginal population has increased significantly and the number of overdoses in the area has become a public health issue. In addition, we have seen an increase in the number of people with severe addictions and deteriorating mental health, as well as more youth in need. Despite these increasing demands, the Benedict Labre House remains the only day center for people living in a homeless situation in the Sud-Ouest Borough.

NEW HOUSE UNDER DEVELOPMENT

Building the new house from scratch will allow us to expand our service offering and add a **housing component** for which there is a **great need** in the community.

The new Labre House will consist of **36 studios** on 3 floors. The entrance to the apartments will be located on Greene Street in Montreal. Each apartment will include a private bathroom, a bed, a table and chair, a small refrigerator, and a microwave. The units will not include a kitchen. However, residents will have access to the dining room located in the day center which serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner. The **housing program at Benoit Labre House** is designed to support people experiencing homelessness - particularly those living in chronic homelessness - from the street or emergency shelters into stable, long-term housing.

The goal is to help strengthen and develop the skills and abilities of the individual, based on self-determined goals, which may include employment, education, social integration, health improvement, or other goals that will help stabilize the tenant's situation and lead to self-sufficiency.

Each floor will have a social worker who will be responsible for accompanying the 12 tenants on the floor. They will be responsible for monitoring progress and assisting each tenant in their efforts.





The day center has evolved greatly in the past year. We have reorganized the space and modified our work methods in order to respond to sanitary measures and thus significantly reduce the risk of a COVID-19 outbreak. Our workers have deployed a lot of energy, tools, and means to maintain and apply our intervention values to this difficult situation as best as possible.

We did everything in our power to maintain the services of the day center. We wanted to remain a **safe place** where everyone is welcome and accepted as they are. We wanted our visitors to continue to be able to come and rest, eat and bathe themselves.

The House has experienced many challenges in the past year. Some we already knew about; others were completely new and required a lot of imagination on the part of the entire team. If in the past we felt that our population was becoming more and more precarious, we have reached another level during this year.

On the intervention floor, we had to find workers as quickly as possible in order to continue to offer our services with the same quality as before the pandemic. The Benedict Labre House team expanded rapidly. During the first months, workers from other backgrounds came to help us. We also called upon a large number of volunteers. We could not have offered our services without their precious help. They truly allowed us to continue to accompany and intervene with our visitors.

During the pandemic, we received many visitors who were experiencing issues related to the loss of their jobs and housing. We had to be patient and imaginative in order to find fewer resources to accompany these individuals who were in a vulnerable situation for the first time. In addition to these new challenges, we have seen more distress among the people who use our services.

Indeed, our visitors found themselves with spaces usually occupied more difficult to access and excessively framed by sanitary measures or closed. Our workers had to add another string to their bow; the law. We worked hard to counter the effects of laws that made our populations even more vulnerable, such as **curfews, the ban on being in parks, the closure of many cafés and shopping centers**. All of these regulations gave our team a hard time navigating this puzzle. Social distancing and personal protective equipment were other issues for the resource. Indeed, with the arrival of winter, we found ourselves in a dilemma of wanting to accommodate as many people as possible and respecting health measures. Mental health issues, substance abuse issues and personal protective equipment are all difficult to mix. We feel we have found a happy medium, while prioritizing the well-being of our users above all else.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES
THE DAY CENTER

In recent years, we have noticed a variety of problems, including the precariousness of the mental and physical health of the people who use the resource as well as disorders related to the use of psychotropic drugs. Since the pandemic, the day center has not only provided essential goods but has also allowed us to respond to several issues.

Mental health and addiction have always been issues for the Benedict Labre House day center. Although our workers are used to and trained to intervene in this context, we have observed an increase in the number of people with mental health problems, as well as a worsening of the symptoms of those we already know. The same situation is happening with drug users. We have noticed a decrease in the quality and ease of obtaining their consumption, which has had a negative impact on the physical and mental health of our visitors.

Last April, we received the good news with the opening of our evening center. The Benedict Labre House is now open from 8:30 am to 11 pm. The extension of the hours of operation came just in time with the end of the Halte-Chaleur period. There have been many benefits to extending our hours of operation. We are able to offer our services to clients that we were only seeing at night. Many of our services, such as showers, are available longer. We are now able to offer lunch and dinner at times that seem more convenient for more people. Our clients have access to a safe, neutral space for a longer period of time. We are extremely pleased with this change.

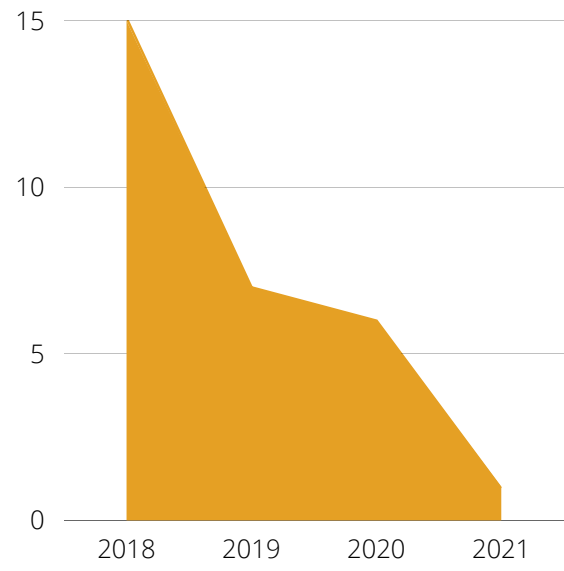
We had to make several changes and adaptations to the day center. We completely changed the layout of the space. We removed the computers and the lounge area to maximize the space to seat as many people as possible. Now, people can only be seated two people per table or rest on an Adirondack chair. Since we have removed some of the entertainment such as computers and TV, we have replaced them with board games. For example, we had board games laminated and incorporated new community activities such as the monthly bingo. This event is certainly the most anticipated of the month.



During the winter, we had to be patient and flexible since we had to share our space with the drop-in center that moved to the Labre House site in December. Having two intervention teams working side by side without crossing paths required a lot of effort and adjustments from everyone. We had to learn to work together in a short period of time. It was a challenge that was taken up and turned into a more positive project: the evening center.

This year has seen some big changes in our statistics. COVID-19 has allowed us to change the way we count our visitors. Indeed, the number of visitors allowed indoors has greatly varied with the sanitary measures. We went from unlimited visitors to only 20 allowed indoors, and then eventually evolved to about 60. As you can imagine, we had to use our imagination to rearrange our space to accommodate as many people as possible, while respecting sanitary measures. Despite a sharp decrease in the number of users at the beginning of the pandemic, we have noticed an increase in our population and major changes.

One of the major changes we have seen is the decrease in our native population. We have gone from about 10 people per day to 1 person per day. The Aboriginal population now represents less than 1% of our visitors. We have various hypotheses that explain this decrease. In fact, our floor workers mentioned that they had taken several steps at the beginning of the pandemic so that these individuals could return to their communities. In addition, we have a few community organizations in the neighbourhood whose mission is to serve Aboriginal populations in particular. So we think that our Aboriginal visitors have moved to these specialized centers.



The Aboriginal population now represents less than 1% of our visitors.

CLOTHES SERVICES

Visitors have the opportunity to purchase dry, clean clothing daily through our "vestiaire". They can receive underwear, boots, a coat and everyday clothing items. This clothe service is offered free of charge. It is through the goodwill of donations from our community that we are able to offer this much-needed service.

THE DIFFERENT ISSUES TO WHICH CLOTHES SERVICES RESPONDS TO

Several factors add to the challenge of clothing for people living in homelessness or precariousness;

- inability to have access to a washer
- the inability to store seasonal clothing
- the cost of getting new clothes on a regular basis.

These factors add pressure on this population and add costs to their physical and mental health. Indeed, there are several significant issues that can be mentioned regarding the attire of our visitors.

- Physical health burden (infections, skin disease, itching)
- Impact on mental health (reduced self-esteem, social pressure, marginalization)
- Impact on the dignity of the individual.

CHALLENGES!

High demand year-round for clothing, but limited supply.

- New underwear and socks are essential and yet we have difficulty receiving brand new ones.
- Sorting, washing and sanitary measures are a big burden for our staff. The help of the volunteers during Christmas is a great help!
- The donations vary according to the season. We receive a lot more donations in December, unlike the rest of the year.



THOSE WHO USE THIS SERVICE

The clothes services at Labre House allows us to clothe between 90 and 150 people daily with clean clothes. With this program, in a year, more than 1500 people will be able to be properly clothed.

More specifically, up to twenty women per day use this service. As for men, more than one hundred men use this service per day. A clear increase has been observed since the pandemic due to several reasons.



LABRE HOUSE'S KITCHEN

Our kitchen is an essential project at the Labre House. It is much more than a solution to food insecurity in Montreal. It is the starting point for our activities. It allows us to bring together the most vulnerable and to accompany and guide them in order to offer medical care and assistance without judgment.

THE MAIN ISSUE AT THE CENTER OF OUR CONCERNS

Of course, one of the main issues for people in a precarious situation is to be able to feed themselves and have access to healthy and nutritious food. Every day, about a hundred meals are distributed on the spot or take away in order to respond to malnutrition and to promote better physical and mental health indirectly.

The kitchen is the heart of the resource and therefore one of the most important work areas at Labre House. Indeed, the participants of the pre-employability program as well as the employees subsidized by Emploi-Québec are trained and followed by the project manager in order to integrate the MAPAQ standards. Whether it is learning good hygiene habits in a food context, or how to prepare a meal from scratch, the participants develop skills that will be useful in future jobs as well as in their lives in general. In addition, this work platform is an essential exchange environment between volunteers and participants, which helps break down isolation and preconceived ideas about poverty in general. Cooking together allows us to create links and to intervene in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect.

With the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic, we faced several significant food challenges. First, the demand for food baskets skyrocketed due to the loss of employment for many Southwestern residents. We had to increase from 50 food baskets per week to 250 at the beginning of the pandemic. This exceptional increase, combined with the work of the neighborhood food security committee, allowed us to participate in the creation of a full-fledged food security organization in the St-Henri neighborhood. Épicentre St-Henri is now responsible for food baskets, allowing us to focus on our mission.

Another important challenge was to modify our schedule to meet the needs of the people using our services. Since we could only accommodate 50% of our usual capacity in order to meet the government's requirements, we decided to give 3 hours of lunch instead of 1 hour and 1.5 hours of supper. Since the end of March, we have also added an extra lunch to ensure the well-being of our people reached.

THE PROJECT'S IMPACT

In short, our kitchen project has had a positive impact on our community. It has reduced food insecurity in households and in the homeless population in the South-West of Montreal as well as reduced malnutrition in the most vulnerable community.

PARTICIPANTS

This project feeds 60 to 150 people per day. There has been an increase since the pandemic. We now receive twice as many visitors, more than 2000 visits per month. Moreover, the kitchen not only provides food needs but also allows the reintegration of two cooks into the workforce. Several volunteers also collaborate in our activities on a daily basis in order to distribute the meals in a way that respects sanitary measures. Finally, several workers are on-site to guide and promote the well-being of all visitors.



THE EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC: THE NEED FOR FOOD

- Increase in households requiring food assistance
- Decreased household income due to job loss
- Deterioration of physical health due to increased alcohol and drug use

Challenges brought on our organization:

There was an increase in the cost of services for the kitchen in order to respect the sanitary measures and the increase in the urgent needs to be met in our community in food security.



PROPULSION

The Propulsion pre-employability program was greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. When the first lockdown was announced in March 2020, we made the difficult decision to temporarily decrease the number of participants in order to re-evaluate the needs of the organization, but especially to ensure that participants would be integrated into a safe environment; health rules required. Also, some people chose to stop participating in the program in order to reduce the risk of contamination to themselves or others. In addition, participants who refused or had difficulty following the hygiene measures were invited to rejoin the program at the end of the pandemic. Thus, the Propulsion team temporarily reduced the number of people participating to ensure their safety.

The six participants who continued their involvement were essential actors in the adaptation of our services to the new realities imposed by the pandemic. Thanks to their assiduous presence, they contributed to the collective effort of the Benedict Labre House to develop, set up, and operate the food bank, the drop-in center, and the evening center. Their contribution was indispensable for

- Handling and distributing food items to the food bank;
- Preparing meals, coffee, and snacks in the kitchen and serve them at the tables;
- Sorting, organizing, and distributing clothing donations ;
- Clean all areas and equipment (bathrooms, showers, door handles, stairs, tables, chairs, etc.) of the center according to a strict protocol.



PROPULSION

By June 2020, the program's 12 slots were once again filled. When the drop-in was implemented, three more participants were able to be added to the team. In all, 7 women and 20 men, 9 of whom are over the age of 50, were able to benefit from the program during the 2020-2021 year. During their involvement, they were able to, for example, develop useful employability skills, discover their strengths, learn to respect their limits. They also benefited from personal and personalized support that allowed them to take certain steps to stabilize their situation and to access various services (medical, psychological, housing search, financial assistance, etc.). Finally, to our knowledge, at least 7 people have left the Propulsion 2020-2021 program to enter the full-time job market.



Testimony

Testimony of Jean-Pierre, a participant in the pre-employability program in 2020-21

"Labre House is a very good place for someone who wants to take charge of his life. Someone who wants to get out of it will have access to all the resources. The workers respond quickly to requests. Moreover, I am blessed to be able to help in turn. I see what it is to give to the next person. To give a pair of socks and see the smile on the person's face, you know that you have made the person's day.

Also, I think that the Benedict Labre House is managing the pandemic well, the proof is that we have not closed. We even offered the vaccine and COVID tests! In addition, there were many more people. Especially during the winter, it filled up quickly. We added more places when we ran out.

Here, I was able to see the reality of homeless people who have addiction problems and mental health problems. When I was on the street, I avoided being around them to avoid violence.

I feel that my suggestions are taken into consideration and that my experience is continuously improved.
"- Jean-Pierre, a participant in the pre-employability program.



ACTIVITIES AND OTHER

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The pandemic was one of the biggest challenges we faced, but the most vulnerable population was the hardest hit. While the world was confined to their homes, our service users and the thousands of homeless Montrealers were stuck outside with very few resources at their disposal.

In response to the pandemic, the Labre House team took action. We worked to keep our essential services open. With the support of St. Zotique Parish, we moved our day center into the entire basement of the church. This allowed us to accommodate the new sanitary measures put in place by the DRSP including distancing, dedicated areas for specific activities, table service, etc. We quickly installed a sink in the entrance so that everyone could wash their hands upon arrival. In addition, thanks to the commitment of our volunteers, we have instituted table service for our guests to limit the number of trips within the day center. We have created a full-time housekeeping position that has the enormous task of disinfecting all surfaces as the day progresses. We worked with the borough to ensure that chemical toilets were installed across the street from the church to provide easy access to a suitable location when we were closed.

The need for activities has never been greater, the people who attend our services had nowhere to go, nothing to do, and they relied on the few activities they could get to help them escape the daily pressures of the pandemic. We found a way to have monthly bingo, while still meeting all the health requirements. We made holidays like Halloween and Christmas special.



ABOUT HARM REDUCTION

Harm reduction can be described as a strategy for targeting individuals and groups to reduce the harm associated with certain behaviors. For example, when applied to substance abuse, harm reduction recognizes that continued use of medications and drugs is unavoidable in society and sets goals to reduce the adverse consequences for those who use them. It is concerned with health, social and economic outcomes rather than drug use. Our intervention context has changed in recent years. We have established a **culture of intervention with the social worker at the forefront.**

All our interventions are based on a **humanistic approach, on active listening and respect for the rhythm of each person.** By choosing these approaches, we are able to reach the most marginalized populations. We rely on an intervention based on the respect of an individual's rhythm, their choices, and their aspirations. One of the first steps we take with our visitors is to help them make contact with our workers as well as with other visitors in order to begin a social reintegration.

APPROACH USED

We allow them to take the time they need to arrive at the resource and create benchmarks. We listen to their situation and their needs. We adapt to their situation and their requests. The workers must be able to see the person beyond the mental health problems, the addictions, the aggressive behaviors, the defense mechanisms, and the limitations of these individuals. **These aspects of their lives do not define them as a person.**



OUR INTERVENTION GOALS

- Intervene on the consequences of homelessness
- Give people a chance to regain control over their lives, to reconcile with themselves and with society
- Promote the overall health of each individual who comes into contact with our services
- To act in the prevention of homelessness
- To develop a collaboration with different authorities of the health and social services network and community in order to orientate people who feel ready in their approach of taking charge.
- Be a place of mentoring and learning for students/interns in the field of intervention



The southwest, like many other neighborhoods on the outskirts of downtown, is noticing a significant change in the consumption habits of its citizens. The various actors in the neighborhood who work closely or remotely with addiction have the same observation (SPVM, TRAC, Borough), there is a lack of accessibility to consumption material as well as to overdose prevention material. Thus, we note that the southwest sector is not immune to the overdose crisis. This is why Benedict Labre House, in partnership with the RHPD (Regional Public Health Department), has set up a project that has two objectives: 1: To increase access to prevention materials and to disseminate information and prevention messages related to drug use in a harm reduction approach. 2: To promote the creation of links to work in prevention and better respond to the changing environment.

Our 2 workers hired at the beginning of the health crisis worked hard to set up this new project as well as to get involved in the various steps. Here are some examples of their involvement:

Following the constant increase in overdoses in Montreal among drug users, the Regional Public Health Department requested the help of several community organizations. We participated in a urinalysis study to detect the presence of fentanyl in the drug in circulation. The conclusion of the study was that fentanyl was found in 20% of the cases and this, for all drugs.

In partnership with the HEPCO cohort, affiliated with the CHUM. Members of the cohort come several times a month to survey the drug users who frequent the organization. In particular, they have focused on people who inject drugs to get data on HIV and HCV transmission.

We are allied members of the TOMS and sit on the CAMS consultation table, which is the Committee of Action Montreal on Overdoses. The Benedict Labre House, Cactus Montreal, and Spectre de rue were the organizations chosen to be part of a research study with users on the effect of the pandemic on their consumption habits.



*Chantal Fleury et Thierry Jean-Baptiste
Overdose Prevention Project Officers*

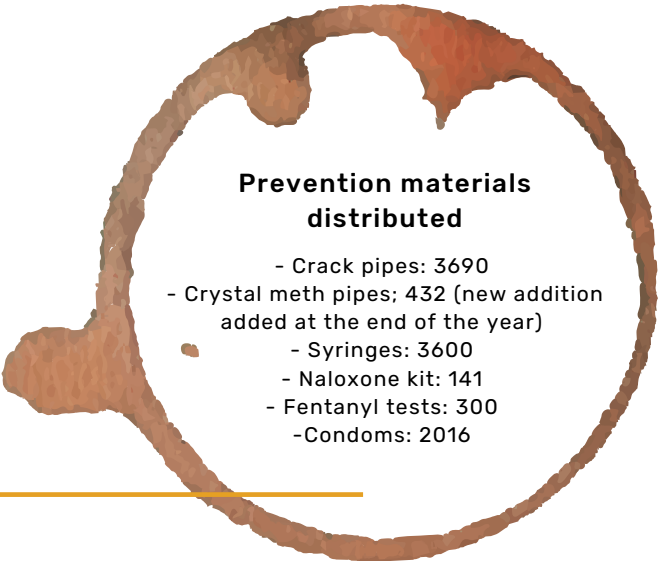
THE REALITY OF CONSUMPTION AND HOMELESSNESS

CHALLENGES

Homelessness means precariousness in terms of housing, of course, but sometimes also in terms of family and social networks. Also, for people with a mental health condition that requires specific follow-up, losing one's network of caregivers can be catastrophic for both the person and for the people likely to come across these people.

Through all these realities, we sometimes tend to overlook the fact that many people use legal and illegal substances. Some use them recreationally, many abuse them and some have developed a dependency on the substance, adding to the precariousness of their mental health, which is sometimes poorly treated or not at all.

According to reports from the RPHD (Regional Public Health Department) and the SPVM (Montreal Service Police), there is an increase in the number of overdoses related to opioid use throughout the city, but particularly in our neighbourhoods. From this number, we can easily assume that there are people in a homeless situation. In fact, in only one month, we have had to administer the necessary first aid on four occasions following overdoses to people who frequent the drop-in center, people in a homeless situation. Since the opening of the drop-in center, many messages of overdose prevention and distribution of naloxone kits are done. We also distribute prevention material (condoms, injection kits, inhalation kits, etc.). Every new employee must be trained in the administration of naloxone since our daily reality is the risk of overdose for our guests.



**Prevention materials
distributed**

- Crack pipes: 3690
- Crystal meth pipes: 432 (new addition added at the end of the year)
- Syringes: 3600
- Naloxone kit: 141
- Fentanyl tests: 300
- Condoms: 2016





The *Halte-Chaleur* was a temporary collaborative project of the Labre House. It was a hybrid project because, in addition to a space to warm up for a few hours, we also offered beds, blankets, a hot meal, a shower, and a shuttle service. We were open from 8 pm to 7 am. In response to the growing number of people experiencing homelessness since the pandemic and the greater visibility of the pandemic, funding was provided to various community organizations, including us, in order to make up for the lack of places in the large shelters in the city.

The drop-in reached an average of 70 men and women every evening and night. We offered them a hot meal, the possibility to take a shower, have clean clothes, a bed, blankets, a warm, safe, and inclusive place 7 nights a week, until the end of March 2021. Due to a lack of manpower, we were only able to open 7 nights starting in January.

THE URGENCY TO ACT IN A PANDEMIC

- Promotes and increases visitor safety by providing a safe space and the tools and information they need
- Reduces harm by providing a supervised space
- Provides shelter for people who were homeless during curfew

We opened on December 1st, 2020 at 8 pm at the initial location which was in Pointe-Saint-Charles near the Charlevoix metro station. The space was very nice and well laid out: the beds were in the basement while those who did not want to sleep were upstairs. However, the space was too small for the real needs of the people we wanted to reach; we had to redirect people to other resources from the first week in order to respect the rules of distancing in force. We, therefore, moved on December 24 to the premises of the Benoit Labre House where we were able to add 29 beds to the 13 we had and thus increase the number of people present in the space. Between 8:00 and 8:30 p.m., the beds were always full, so people were sleeping on the floor, on chairs, under tables.

As a result of the urgency of the project and the speed with which we had to implement it, we had to face some issues that we would have been prepared for if we had had more time. The immediate neighbors of the day center, who had not been consulted nor informed of the project, were not at all happy with the traffic caused by the evening center and the closing of the usual closed places where people take refuge to warm up, not to mention the intolerance of camps, small or large. We dealt with the irritants as best we could, but there was only so much we could do with the time restrictions.



SPECIAL PROJECT

HALTE-CHALEUR

The curfew; people were almost fighting to get into the resource since they feared receiving a fine. The center's capacity would be reached within 5 minutes; this pushed us to accompany a person elsewhere if they were lucky to have a place.

Mental health; we are used to receiving people with mental health realities that are not always well treated or in disarray. However, we believe that the pandemic has exacerbated or caused more psychological distress for some. We have received people who were very disorganized, but we were unable to find their treatment team; the care staff was relieved, the person could not remember the name of their social worker or nurse, etc. One or two people; we are used to this, but in a context where there are 75 people in different states, it was not always easy to manage.

Consumption; we welcome people in a state of consumption (i.e. the vast majority of our visitors), but cannot accept consumption within our walls. When it's cold and there's a curfew, people prove to be great strategists in getting around the rules. Also, pandemic also means difficulty in obtaining certain substances; we have had to administer the necessary care following a few overdoses which fortunately proved not to be fatal.

Despite the different challenges we faced, we were able to make our evenings enjoyable and put a smile on the faces of many of our visitors. Indeed, we celebrated the birthday of 15 different people by buying them a small cake and singing happy birthday: the whole room joined in. We had an evening of circus performances (juggling, people on scaffolds, clowns, and live songs), we organized a karaoke, a spring carnival where we served Iranian food, taffy on snow, there was music and we all participated in a small mural that is currently on a wall of the day center. And not to mention, one activity that was super appreciated was the haircut; a caregiver generously offered to do it for a few hours and now people are asking for more!

To conclude, to provide an idea of the number of visitors, we had 5176 visits in 100 days of operation and the shuttle service reached over 975 people. Of these, some came to the resource, others went elsewhere and many just wanted a hot drink, a blanket, or other support.



NOVEMBER

Preparation of
the 2020-21
Halte-Chaleur

OCTOBER

Creation of the
new image of the
house

MAY

Adjustment of our
services according
to the health
measures of the
pandemic

HIGHLIGHTS 2020

JUNE

New social workers
are added to the
team

DECEMBER

Opening of the Halte-Chaleur
at night; a brand new team
joins us.

Twenty volunteers help out
with winter clothing
donations





JANUARY

Finalization of the move of the Halte-Chaleur to our Centre

Creation of the organization's new website highlighting its new image

Adjustment and enhancement of day and night services

2021

MARCH

Acquisition of the new van that is essential to our activities

APRIL

Closure of the Halte-Chaleur night project

APRIL

Opening hours are extended until 11pm for 6 days a week

It was a very special year, which turned the organization's activities upside down. Our benefits show had to be canceled. We were eager, by this same event, to thank the volunteers who offered us great support during the year 2019-2020.

However, this did not stop our team from doing some fundraising. During the winter period, more than \$110,000 was raised in the month of December. This was possible with the help of our community and our donors. We thank you all.

In fact, in February, we launched a fundraising campaign to finance the acquisition of a new van. The van is the heart of the Benedict Labre House. It allows us to facilitate our food supplies for the kitchen, as well as the transportation of donations. It is thanks to Mayor Benoit Dorais, several donors from the community, as well as Hockey Helps The Homeless that the acquisition was possible.

Finally, during the last months of this year, we have been working to make the Atwater construction project a reality. A campaign will be held in August 2021 to support this project.

ANOTHER THANK YOU

TO LUFA FARMS

Since the beginning of February, we have been fortunate to count among our partners, the Lufa farms. About thirty of our visitors can benefit from a credit applied on their groceries, every week. We jumped on this opportunity taking into consideration that many of our visitors have difficulty feeding themselves with healthy and nutritious food at the end of the month. This little extra makes many happy.



OUR SUPPORTERS PARTNERS AND DONORS



ANOTHER THANK YOU

TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

The work of the staff would not have been possible without the invaluable help of our community. Our volunteers were one of the factors in the success of our activities during this particular year. We have been able to rely on our community of volunteers to enhance our services and to continue to serve our visitors without diminishing the quality of our workers. They allowed us to focus on the urgent needs of our visitors and to improve their quality of life, which was deteriorating even before the pandemic.



TO BREAD AND BEYOND

Bread And Beyond, initiated by the community, has been a great help. Sandwiches have been offered several times a week for months. Donations of socks, backpacks and hygiene products have also been received. Our visitors are pampered and we are grateful for this precious support that Bread and Beyond offers us.

TO H&R BLOCK

Every year, our visitors have the opportunity to do their taxes with the help of our partner H&R Block. This service is available to all, free of charge.

TO CASA CAFI

Casa Cafi was also invaluable during the year. The Casa Cafi offered us two deliveries a week of frozen home-cooked meals.



TO RÉCHAUD BUS

The STM's Réchaud-bus was present several times this year. We thank them for making our home a happy place.



PARTNERS AND DONORS

30

The Benoit Labre House would like to thank all its donors and partners. Your support of our mission makes possible our actions and services that support the most vulnerable Montrealers. Thank you also to all the donors who wished to remain anonymous.

A special mention to Moisson Montreal who allowed us to make the food security project possible. In total, food donations totalled \$498 083.65 during the year.

THE ALTRUIST \$50,000+.

Ville MTESS
VSC (SPLI)
Centraide (FUAC) *Fond d'urgence d'action communautaire*
Centraide
PSOC
Vers un Chez Soi
Direction régionale de santé publique (DRSP)

THE VISIONARY \$20,000 - \$49,000

Mission Inclusion
Angela Rogers (estate)
Serge Beausoleil Fondation Beausoleil
Louis & Joan Catalfamo (estate)
Chicago Title Insurance Canada

THE CHARITABLE \$10,000 - \$19,999

Fondation Écho
Moisson Montréal
Hockey Helps the Homeless

THE BENEVOLENT \$3000 AT \$9999

Dominique Anglade
Diana Catino
T.R.E.E Foundation for training and developpement
FNF Canada
Institute For Christian Communities
La Fondation Home Dépôt
Eric T Webster Foundation
The Barwick Family Foundation
Desjardins – Caisse du Sud-Ouest de Montréal

THE AMBASSADOR 500 - \$2999

Susan Perreault
Florence & Edward Patenaude
Olivia Baddeley
Scott M. Moore

Bernard & Elizabeth McDonell
Bernard Roach
Michel Lessard
Michael Bronstetter
Michael Rogers
Joseph Abbandonato
Gerald Lutfy
Pauline Brodeur
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Elizabeth Danowski
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Tamara Thibodeau
Bridget Tucker
Marc Lalonde
Caroll Bryan
Anthony Joshua Parr
Danielle Miller Olofsson
Santiago Garcia Rejon
Coelho, Kevin & Mrs. Judith
Ron Le Couteur
Francesca Taddeo
Karen McLarnon
Tracey Beaton
Dawn Pouteau
Susan David
La Belle Tonki
CanadaHelps
St. John Fisher Parish & Delorme
German Canadian Community Institut
Erin Sport Association
First Capital Realty
Ferguson Family Foundation
Ascension of lord Parish
Muse Entertainment
DMA Architectes sencrl
Mazon Canada
Fondation Jeanne-Esther
MUFGBank
Église St-Boniface

EXPERTISE: COMMITTEES AND GROUPINGS

The Benoit Labre House has been involved with the regional authorities thanks to its involvement in certain committees within the RAPSIM, such as the Emergency Lodging Committee, the Right to Housing Committee, as well as the committees and joint work for regional representation. We are also allied members of the TOMS and participated twice a month in the "Leave No One Behind" committee, and we have participated in various works on overdoses. The organization remains a member of the RIOCM and the RSIQ.

On a daily basis, the organization works with the CDC SSH as well as other tables in the area (Action-Gardien, CDSV) to work on local issues related to homelessness, the sharing of public space, as well as other issues affecting the people who come to the organization.

TABLE MENTAL HEALTH SOV

This table, which brings together more than 50 partners from both the community and the public network, has the objective of networking and trying to facilitate access to mental health services. Meeting every 6 weeks

COMMITTEE ON HOMELESSNESS ST-HENRI

Discussions of different issues surrounding the realities of people experiencing homelessness in the neighborhood, how to act directly on the issues that affect us, implementation of collective solutions including the implementation of the hybrid project. 2x per week

TABLE HOMELESSNESS VERDUN

Discussions on the different issues surrounding the realities of people experiencing homelessness in Verdun and what role we can play. 6 weeks

COMMITTEE PRECARIOUS.ORG (ALL SOUTHWESTERN NEIGHBORHOODS AND VERDUN)

Following the forum of the same name in 2015, discussions on issues related to the topics discussed at that time, especially on vulnerable people in our covered neighborhoods. Table of important partners in terms of support for the implementation of the drop-in center, the construction project, implementation of collective strategies, monitoring of the needs of our sectors. 6 weeks

SERVICE CORRIDORS MEETING, CIUSSS, TRAC, NGC

Meetings focused on the development of service corridors in physical and mental care in the South West. The objective is to facilitate access to services for people who come to the organization and to allow workers to have an easy and clear way to refer people to existing services



EXPERTISE: COMMITTEES AND GROUPINGS

CIUSSS AND RPHD OVERDOSE COMMITTEE

The 2 meetings we attended were more focused on the accessibility of services related to COVID for people who use drugs. There have been no meetings planned since the beginning of the year.

SOUTHWEST URBAN SAFETY TABLE

Committee made up of the SPVM, the borough, elected officials and a few local community players to work on issues such as cohabitation and dismantling, as well as to promote living together

ONLPD COLLECTIVE

The Labre House is part of the Leave No One Behind Committee (ONLPD). This committee brings together several community organizations. Bi-monthly meetings are organized to allow people to share information/news about their organizations. The committee's goal is to help people who live in tents in the city. The committee participates in advocacy with the city of Montreal regarding the housing crisis, the lack of affordable housing, and the lack of tolerance zones for people experiencing homelessness. Thanks to this committee, the Benedict Labre House has been able to purchase camping equipment, support its users and develop new contacts.

SALSA, FOOD COMMITTEE

In connection with the kitchen activities, we participated in the St-Henri Health and Food Security Committee (now SALSA). Our participation at this table was beneficial because we were able to talk about malnutrition, food insecurity, as well as the issues that people in a homeless situation face in relation to food. We also participated in an emergency food cell that met weekly to ensure that the food needs of the neighborhood were met. The pandemic has also allowed us to create and consolidate several food partnerships with local stakeholders; we are very grateful for this!



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