

PROMISING INITIATIVES TO MOBILIZE THE LOCAL COMMUNITY IN A POST-DISASTER LANDSCAPE

BY THE PUBLIC HEALTH DIRECTION OF THE CENTRE INTÉGRÉ UNIVERSITAIRE DE SANTÉ ET DE SERVICES SOCIAUX DE L'ESTRIE – CENTRE HOSPITALIER UNIVERSITAIRE DE SHERBROOKE

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AREQ:	Association des retraitées et retraités de l'éducation et des autres services publics du Québec
CAB:	Centre d'action bénévole
CDC:	Corporation de développement communautaire
CDEC:	Corporation de développement de l'entrepreneuriat collectif
CHSLD:	Residential and long-term care centre
CHUS:	Centre hospitalier universitaire de Sherbrooke
CIUSSS:	Centre intégré universitaire de santé et de services sociaux
CJ:	Centre jeunesse
CLSC:	Centre local de services communautaires
CPCJ:	Comité participation citoyenne jeunesse
CPE:	Centre de la petite enfance
CSSS:	Health services and social services
DSPublique:	Direction de santé publique
ESPE:	Enquête de santé populationnelle estrienne
FADOQ:	Fédération de l'Âge d'Or du Québec
MRC:	Municipalité régionale du comté
MSSS:	Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux
OMS:	Organisation mondiale de la santé
PFA:	Psychological first aid
RCM:	Regional county municipality
RLS:	Réseau local de service
RPA:	Résidence privée pour aînés
RSSS:	Réseau de la Santé et des Services sociaux
SAT:	Systèmes alimentaires territorialisés
SDEG:	Société de développement économique du Granit
SHV:	Healthy lifestyles
SoC:	sense of coherence
TCPA:	Table de concertation des personnes aînées
TPL:	Théâtre des petites lanternes
UQAC:	Université du Québec à Chicoutimi

BACKGROUND

On July 6, 2013, a train carrying 72 cars of oil derailed in downtown Lac-Mégantic in the Estrie region of Quebec, Canada. The derailment triggered a major fire and a series of explosions. This disaster resulted in 47 deaths, the destruction of 44 buildings, the evacuation of 2000 citizens (i.e., a third of the local population), and an unparalleled oil spill (i.e., 6,000,000 litres of crude oil spilt into the environment). This tragic event had a major impact in human, environmental and economic terms.

Over the first three years, the Direction de santé publique (DSPublique—Public Health Direction) de l'Estrie has undertaken several actions, including the monitoring of physical and mental health consequences. Four community-based surveys were conducted one, two, three and five years after the disaster, respectively, by the DSPublique and Université du Québec à Chicoutimi (UQAC), among a large sample of adults living in Lac-Mégantic and surrounding areas. A fifth survey was conducted in 2017 by UQAC among people aged 10 to 25 from the same community. The findings of these surveys have shown significant and persistent health needs, but also strengths and abilities not to be underestimated.

The recovery period is an opportunity to share and develop a common vision of a healthy and resilient community. The Réseau de la santé et des services sociaux – RSSS (Health and Social Services Network), through the vision of The Public Health Organization, is a conducive actor in contributing to this holistic approach to health. This disaster becomes an occasion to implement innovative, synergistic strategies maximizing the positive impact of the actions taken. Throughout the long process of recovery, several opportunities arise to support community development. These opportunities must be taken to enable collaborative work and to broaden and become well anchored in the community.

At the beginning of 2016, the DSPublique intensified its work with the community. A multi-sectoral action plan was developed to increase community resilience and promote health and well-being.

This action plan pursues the following objectives:

1. Maintain and adapt psychosocial services to individual and community needs;
2. Stay connected with the community;
3. Foster resident involvement.

In June 2016, the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS) and the Canadian Red Cross announced substantial investments that would provide adequate resources to sustain the adopted action plan.

This document aims to share a few concrete initiatives that, for the most part, emerged from this action plan, all of which have contributed greatly to empower citizens and mobilize the community of Lac-Mégantic and surrounding areas (also referred to as MRC du Granit).

COLLECTIVE REFLECTION DAY

Since July 6, 2013, numerous partners have invested intensively to help the community. These efforts have, of course, helped to move the community through different stages of recovery. Here are some examples of good moves made during the first two years following the event:

- Shuttle (public transport) to get out of isolation and create links;
- Conferences to increase better understanding;
- The Musi-Café summer concerts to gather and share good times;
- Deploying a psychosocial recovery team to meet increased needs;
- The last walk to the downtown area (before demolition) to facilitate the transition and get through the mourning process;
- The Grande cueillette des mots du Granit to allow the expression of the experience and to better understand (see [Initiative #1](#)).

At that time, however, there was no formal coordinating mechanism to ensure a common understanding of the needs of the community and the linkage between different actions.

At the same time, on February 4, 2016, the CIUSSS de l'Estrie – CHUS presented the results of the second edition of the *Enquête de santé populationnelle estrienne* (ESPE – Estrie Population Health Survey) on the impacts of the Lac-Mégantic tragedy. This survey conducted in the fall of 2015 among 800 adults living in the Granit area and 800 living elsewhere in Estrie, has shown that various global and psychological health problems were more common in Lac Mégantic than elsewhere in Granit or Estrie. There was very little improvement and sometimes even a deterioration in health status compared to what was observed one year after the tragedy. In addition to these major findings, some observations were made to the effect that:

- Two in three (67%) citizens had moderate or severe post-traumatic stress signs in Lac Mégantic;
- Anxiety disorders were twice as frequent in Lac-Mégantic as elsewhere in Estrie (14% versus 7%);
- One in eight (13%) did not feel safe in their neighbourhood and this proportion had increased in Lac-Mégantic since 2014;
- Despite the high proportion of people affected by the tragedy in Lac-Mégantic, the consultation of psychologists or social workers has halved since 2014.

Given the magnitude of the tragedy, it was therefore necessary to take a step back to understand and situate ourselves in relation to the normal process of community recovery. It is in this context that the idea of organizing a collective reflection day emerged, bringing together local actors to discuss possible solutions for the health and well-being of the community.

The purpose of holding a collective reflection day is to work together to take ownership of the recovery and reverse the cycle. More specifically, we aim to:

- Take a step back to understand and situate ourselves in relation to the normal process of community recovery;
- To be inspired by the experience the community had so far and build on its apprenticeship while learning other experiences, other knowledge;
- Develop together a common vision of solutions in order to transmit a clear, coherent and positive message to the community.

In February 2016, the results of the ESPE were released and it was announced that an amount of \$125,000 would be granted jointly by the MSSS and the CIUSSS de l'Estrie – CHUS to support community

mobilization projects aimed at fostering recovery of the population. It did not take more for a working committee to be formed. This committee, bringing together actors from the CIUSSS de l'Estrie – CHUS, RLS (local service network) du Granit (formerly the Centre de santé et de services sociaux [CSSS] du Granit), the CDC du Granit, the Ville de Lac-Mégantic and UQAC, became responsible for organizing a think tank day.

The think tank day, held in March 2016, brought together a group of fifty key players (decision makers, professionals, citizens and experts) and was divided into two parts:

Morning: Conference on resilience and lessons learned from other experiences.

- Work in subgroups:
 - Highlights, interventions and initiatives implemented by social workers and other partners;
 - Identifying benefits at the individual and community level.
- Work in large group:
 - Constructing a timeline;
 - Recognizing the progress made;
 - Identifying the features common to the actions that created the effect.

Afternoon: Conference on the levers of long-term recovery.

- Work in subgroups:
 - List of activities with potential for the future;
 - Prioritizing an intervention;
 - Identifying community strengths to respond.
- Work in a large group:
 - Common vision of the desired future;
 - Identifying three priorities for action and research priority;
 - Follow-up and conditions of success.

A month later, in April 2016, a “Plan for the recovery and development of a healthy community in Lac-Mégantic and in the MRC du Granit” was drafted. The Table des partenaires has been designated as the strategic body to support the plan coordination, while the Direction de santé publique du CIUSSS de l'Estrie – CHUS must conduct its implementation. Citizen engagement is recognized as being at the heart of the process in this plan.

The drafting of the plan led to a request for additional funding from the MSSS to form a team to provide community development support and psychosocial support adapted to needs, by meeting people directly in their living environment.

Shortly after, in May and June 2016, the announcement was made of a grant from the MSSS and the Red Cross, allowing the Outreach Team to be created and begin operations in late summer. 2016.

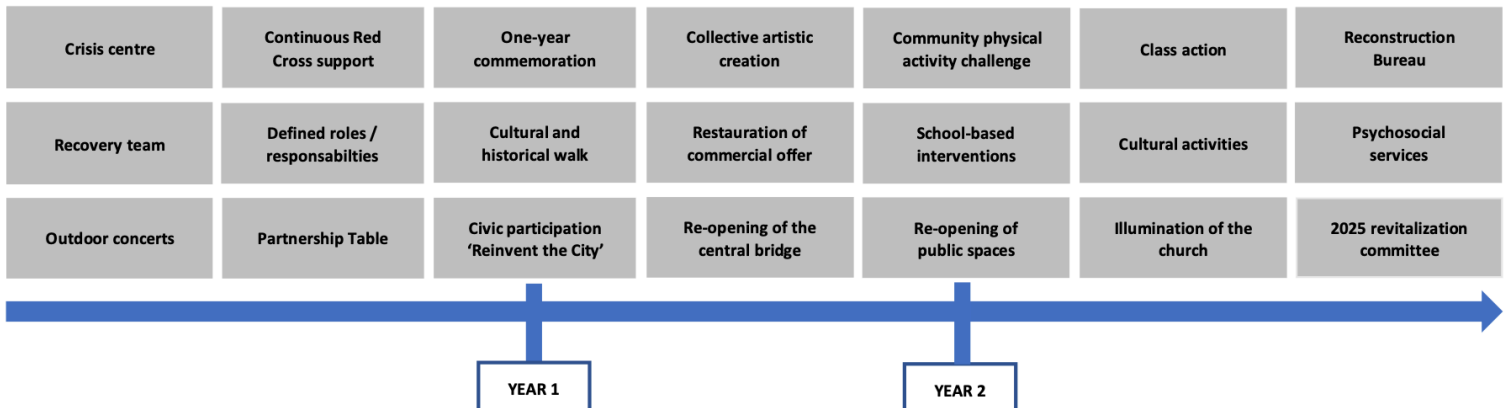
Several positive outcomes of the collective reflection day were observed:

- Mobilization of the participants who greatly appreciated the activity;
- Many promising ideas launched by citizens and local partners;
- Three priorities for action: 1) maintaining psychosocial resources and bringing them closer to the field, 2) a positive campaign based on the strengths of the community and 3) a place conducive to discussions (see [Theme #1](#));
- A research priority selected: the Photovoix project (see [Initiative #2](#));
- Drafting of an action plan from the tracks proposed during the reflection day and subsequent discussions of the Table des partenaires du Granit;

- Obtaining recurrent financial support of \$250,000 from the MSSS dedicated to the operation of the core Outreach Team (three full-time resources);
- Obtaining from the Red Cross financial support dedicated to the operation of the extended Outreach Team (three part-time resources) for a period of two to three years, as required;
- Organizing a second think tank day in 2017, this time focused on the needs of young people (see description on [page 2](#)).

“Building a project together is really motivating. Especially since everyone feels involved: from citizens to elected officials. It was a very inspiring day!!”

- A participant of the think tank day



THE OUTREACH TEAM

One component of the action plan was the creation of a permanent community outreach team in Lac-Mégantic, in summer 2016. This multidisciplinary team, located outside formal clinical settings (i.e., in downtown Lac-Mégantic), aims to bring psychosocial services closer to the population. It is composed of four full-time professionals, including two social workers, one social work technician and one community organizer. The Outreach Team is working closely with another community organizer, two health promotion officers and a doctor in public health. This great team is called “Extended Outreach Team”. The following principles guide the entire approach: global health, prevention, scientific rigor, strength-based approach, empowerment, collaboration, and inclusion.

Citizen participation and community development are at the heart of the Outreach Team approach. A wide range of services are offered, from daily interactions with citizens and local organizations (in the form of psychosocial support, response to service requests, early detection, and response to emerging needs, etc.) to involvement into various initiatives arising from the action plan. We have chosen to describe 6 cross-cutting themes and 21 initiatives to mobilize the local community in the post-disaster landscape. These initiatives have been developed and implemented over the first six years following the disaster, by at least one member of the Outreach Team and many other local partners.



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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Two theoretical frameworks have supported the development of the various promising initiatives presented throughout this paper, namely salutogenesis and community resilience.

Salutogenesis is a theory developed by Aaron Antonovsky that refers to an approach focused on the factors that produce health or well-being, rather than the factors that cause disease¹. Salutogenesis postulates that, in a stressful situation, an individual may (or may not) use resources to overcome adversity. The sense of coherence (SoC) is a central element of the theory of salutogenesis. It is about the individual predisposition to understand a stressful event, to make sense of it and to manage it². People with a strong SoC then adapt better to the stressors of daily life and tend to make greater use of the resources available to them to counter these stressors, which would ultimately contribute to better physical and mental health. So, to be successful in dealing with adversity, individuals must not only have a strong SoC, but they should also have resources within their community that they can use to withstand the stressors they are facing.

Two major fields of action have been identified to strengthen the SoC³. The first field of action is that of reflection. It is essential to concede that it is not only the actual stressful situations that are important, but also the ideas that are made about them. The SoC can then be seen as a filter through which we see the world around us. This filter can either support or hinder our ability to cope with stressors. Reflection therefore refers to any activity that makes it possible to become aware of our own filter, tinted by our personal values, our goals, and our beliefs, and of our behavioural responses which result from it in a context of stress. The second field is empowerment. This field is based on the fact that having many resources at our disposal to resist stress does not necessarily produce health. People should actively use these resources. They must therefore be enabled to identify and mobilize resources to better cope with stressful situations.

The second framework that has largely inspired the work of the Outreach Team is that of community resilience, more specifically the EnRiCH⁴ framework which is based on qualitative research carried out in five Canadian communities, as well as on the scientific literature. This framework aims to support an integrated approach to building adaptive capacities, both in prevention (upstream) and in reaction (downstream) to adversity. Here are the main components.

Components	Description
Adaptation capacity	Flexibility in shifting contexts
Pillars	
<i>Empowerment</i>	Power to activate forces
Collaboration	Partnerships for a shared vision
Innovation	Emerging new practices
Fields of intervention	
Awareness and information	Collective sharing and learning
Strength-based management	Mapping and linking forces
Upstream leadership	Proactive investment of resources
Social connectivity	Networking of individuals and groups
Complexity	Dynamic, non-Linear context
Culture	Community-based context

¹ Antonovsky. The Salutogenic Perspective: Toward a new view of health and illness. *Advances*. 1987, 4(1), 47–55.

² Lindström & Eriksson. *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to Salutogenesis: Salutogenic pathways to health promotion*. 2010.

³ Généreux et al. Strengthening the adaptive capacities of individuals and communities in times of pandemic: the key role of the sense of coherence, REFIPS/IUHPE. 2020. https://www.iuhpe.org/images/IUHPE/Advocacy/COVID19_SOC_UIPES_REFIPS_eng.pdf

⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4205231/>

COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH

A community-based approach⁵ is a practice that positions the community at the heart of reflections and action. It is the starting point of the Outreach Team and the reason why the team's offices are located off-site. The goal is to reach the people where they are. One of the great successes of this approach is based on the availability and accessibility of responders. The team quickly set up walk-in time slots and spends a lot of its time directly in various environments: schools, restaurants, bars, public parks, shops, etc.

The bond of trust is the core of this approach, which is subsequently experienced by the welcome, the availability of the team, the respect of the rhythm, the assistance, the presence in the environment, the conviviality, and the informal aspect of the meetings. Everything is done without judgment, with a view to facilitating and supporting references to become an ally for the community and its citizens.

Beyond reaching out and intervention, the approach aims to promote the development of communities, through citizen participation and the creation of links between the health network, partners (schools, community organizations, service police, cities, etc.) and citizens.

Everything that emerges from the Outreach Team builds this foundation because the foundations of this approach are in line with the objectives for the long-term recovery of the Granit community.

Concretely, all the initiatives in this document stem from this approach. It is also possible to add bar tours, company tours, field presence in schools and support to teams in the health and social services network, among others. All these initiatives serve to take the pulse of the community in order to offer a response adapted to what is experienced there. Ultimately, all of this aims to create the bond of trust that is necessary for the various interventions deployed by the team.

⁵ To better understand the local approach, it is possible to read the related documentation at: http://www.csss-iugs.ca/c3s/data/files/Intervention-proximite-20avril15-numerique_guide_accompagnement.pdf



THE THEMES

THEME #1

GATHERING SPACE

If there is one common desire in the Lac-Mégantic community, it is the will to get back on track, to move forward. The various leaders are all working to make this desire a reality. The contribution of community members is essential for long-term recovery to take its course. Their involvement must be encouraged, so that all individuals feel as though they are useful, have their rightful place and that the community requires their participation.

In 2016, the space in the community garden has become a first place of animation allowing everyone to get involved in the recovery process. The community garden, as well as other indoor and outdoor spaces, downtown, at the train station, are inclusive sites fostering relationships and participation. They become a pretext to create a space for social animation.

The implementation of animated and available places makes it possible to consolidate social and intergenerational links, to develop social integration activities adapted to people's realities, and above all to offer the population of the MRC du Granit a place of dialogue, mobilization, and citizen participation.

Whether through the organization of lively discussion meetings, sports or cultural activities followed by a discussion period or even ad hoc non-directed meetings, it is clear that social animation allows citizens to participate in social reconstruction of the Town of Lac-Mégantic with the concerned actors.

Over the years, several actions have been deployed in Lac-Mégantic under the theme of social animation, including:

- Community gardens (see [Initiative #13](#));
- Animated Tuesday evenings at the station, with activities as diverse as “Surprises on the Grill” or even the outdoor cinema, which resulted in the creation of Place éphémère (see [Initiative #10](#));
- The “Les incroyables comestibles (The Incredible Edibles)” movement (see [Initiative #13](#)) which aims to promote participatory urban culture and shared abundance:
- The Cittaslow (<https://www.cittaslow.org/>) Lac-Mégantic movement, a good-living accreditation that recognizes the contribution of gardens to the revitalization of the community and healthy living.

By providing opportunities to gather, these inclusive spaces have in common that they foster connectedness and community reclaiming of space.



THEME #2

ART AND HEALTH

Arts are a significant determinant of the well-being, healing and rehabilitation of individuals and communities. They contribute to improving health, by making possible to express what is difficult to express, by increasing self-confidence, by fostering the creation of new links, by putting order in people's lives, by creating a living memory of events, by making it possible to give to others and by creating a caring community.

With its experience and striving to find innovative solutions to face adversity, Granit seeks to promote the systematic use of art and culture in strategies aimed at improving the health and well-being of its population. The vision that art and culture, in all its forms, have a positive impact on health and well-being is being promoted more widely.

Indeed, art and culture have undoubtedly contributed to the promotion of community resilience and to the psychosocial recovery of the Granite community in recent years, in several ways:

- Creation of exchange situations between citizens and cultural and artistic circles;
- Revitalization of the territory and social development;
- Promotion of dialogue and social cohesion;
- Breaking social isolation, valuing and helping each other;
- Youth citizen participation and creation of a sense of pride;
- Promotion of healthy lifestyles (SHV);
- Information and awareness on other cultures;
- Creation of a dialogue surrounding societal issues.

At the MRC du Granit, after the railway tragedy of July 6, 2013, many tangible artistic initiatives were developed to create the effects described above, including:

- La Grande cueillette des mots du Granit (see [Initiative #1](#));
- The screening of a film at the Lac-Mégantic heritage station, which brought citizens together and made them aware of the climate emergency;
- The Photovoix project (see [Initiative #2](#));
- The Arts et Métiers (Red Cross) project, which helped break social isolation of frail elderly people through arts.
- The installation of a public piano on the Promenade Papineau and in front of the heritage station, which created a place of exchange and expression;
- Artistic and cultural activities at the Place éphémère; (see [Initiative #10](#));
- Different art forms during the Mercredis en bonne compagnie (see [Initiative #11](#));
- The vernissage as part of the fight against tobacco use among young people;
- The deployment of Festival du cinéma du monde sur la route (<https://fcms.ca/surlaroute/megantic/>), in Lac-Mégantic.

This non-exhaustive list is, first of all, a reflection of the dynamism experienced at the MRC du Granit in terms of artistic or cultural initiatives that can have a beneficial effect on the health and well-being of the local population.

THEME #3

FOOD SECURITY

While the community of Lac-Mégantic is in a recovery phase following the tragedy of July 6, 2013, food initiatives are emerging to promote links between citizens. This is particularly the case for collective gardens and the Frigo Free Go, meeting and exchange venues that emerged in the years following the 2013 event. For the instigators of these initiatives, the feeling of contribution to a community project is a real lever for recovery.

Beyond psychosocial issues, concerns related to food security, the fight against food waste, the environment and economic development are very present in Lac-Mégantic. The use of territorialized food systems (TFS) creates a common thread between food-related initiatives and other initiatives in the community.

TFSs are defined by reducing distances between different stages of the food chain. They aim at promoting local products, rooting agriculture and local know-how in its own territory, reducing the ecological footprint of food production, developing niche products and preserving quality local jobs⁶. TFSs therefore cover the entire food chain, from seed to the consumer's plate to composting.

Food security is for sure an essential social determinant of health and well-being on which we must act. While they address a basic need, food security interventions also serve as a pretext for building greater community connections. This approach therefore adopts a vision of sustainable development, which considers both economic and environmental aspects and social aspects in the long term. Several projects, which have emerged in the MRC du Granit in food security and that respect this vision, have been grouped together within the TFS's global approach.

Through the theme of food security, we seek to promote food access for low-income people and healthy lifestyles, to develop the knowledge of partners and citizens, to promote the autonomy of citizens, to promote local and proximity purchasing, as well as to promote communication and mutual aid between the various partners, both in the private and public sectors. It is therefore motivated by a desire to promote food security, social cohesion, environmental protection and the local economy that multiple actions have been launched in recent years at the MRC du Granit, in connection with food security or THS, including:

- A collective refrigerator called FrigoDons (see [Initiative #14](#));
- The Incredible Edibles (see [Initiative #13](#));
- The Les solutions gourmandes project inspired by that of Carotte joyeuse (see [Initiative #14](#));
- Kitchen groups, cooking workshops, collective gardens, etc.

It goes without saying that such an approach requires the collaboration of many partners throughout the THS chain (producers, processors, public markets, grocery stores, collective kitchens, food banks, restaurants, etc.)

⁶ RESOLIS. (2016) TERRITORIALIZED FOOD SYSTEM IN QUEBEC: 100 local initiatives for a responsible and sustainable nutrition. [Online], <https://www.chaire-diversite-alimentaire.ulaval.ca/en>

THEME #4

HEALTH PROMOTING BEHAVIOURS

A variety of daily behaviours directly influence our health and well-being, including eating patterns, physical activity, smoking, alcohol and drugs, sexual behaviours as well as travelling. We can also add safety-related behaviours whether at work, in transport or in leisure. Finally, they relate to hygiene measures such as hand washing, protective measures such as the use of sunscreen or the installation of carbon monoxide detectors, as well as actions that promote a healthier environment such as the use of public transit. Such behaviours are seen as “individual” level health determinants because they are a matter of personal choices, but it is recognized that these choices are largely influenced by socioeconomic conditions and living environments, as well as by systems and the overall context factors⁷.

In its approach and initiatives with the local population, the Outreach Team focuses on the promotion of supportive health behaviours and on the impacts of their adoption on the overall health of the population.

The concept of global health and its determinants considers the definition of health adopted in Quebec: “Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” Accordingly, the Act Respecting Health Services and Social Services specifies that the actions of the network must aim “to maintain and improve the physical, mental and social capacity of individuals to act in their community and to carry out the roles they intend to assume in a manner which is acceptable to themselves and to the groups to which they belong.” Using a broad conception of health, including disease and mortality, but also well-being, freedom of disability or the pain of living, we can expect that the determinants involved to be multiple and varied. Only a comprehensive and inclusive conceptual framework of health and its determinants can integrate the various factors that influence the health of a population.

In doing so, the Outreach Team seeks to make the entire community aware of 1) the positive impacts of adopting healthy behaviours and 2) the importance of implementing supportive conditions. More specifically, we seek to:

- Develop and implement environments conducive to healthy lifestyles;
- Create lively, accessible, inclusive places;
- Promote social, intergenerational and intercultural connections;
- Develop social integration activities adapted to people’s realities.

The integration of this theme is prominent in many of the promising initiatives presented in this document, including Place éphémère (see [Initiative #10](#)), Mercredis en bonne compagnie (see [Initiative #11](#)), Incredible Edibles (see [Initiative #13](#)) and Cube de marche (see [Initiative #5](#)), to name only a few.

⁷ Reference: https://www.inspq.qc.ca/sites/default/files/responsabilite-populationnelle/cadre_conceptuel.pdf

THEME #5

CARING COMMUNITY

The Outreach Team was inspired from the beginning by scientific literature and experiential knowledge to establish the basis of its projects. The idea of working to develop a caring community is inspired by the concepts of salutogenesis, a sense of coherence, resilience⁸, and research into the collateral impacts of the pandemic⁹.

Firmly believing that developing benevolence towards oneself and others is an important protective factor, the team then chooses to make it a major theme that will cover several projects, the ultimate goal being to develop a culture of benevolent, caring community.

The term benevolence is used more and more frequently, and the team realizes the negative impact that a misuse of the term could have on the concept they hold dear. In order to establish a common understanding of the concept that can easily be overused, the team creates benevolent messages using comic strips dealing with sensitive themes within the population. The Patates bienveillantes (Caring Potatoes) comic strips come to life; a playful way to pass benevolent, caring messages with an emphasis on benevolence towards each and everyone (see [Initiative #18](#)).

Another project was created in the same spirit with community partners in connection with a concern for confined families who are going through a more difficult time. The Patate bienveillante parcels are then distributed to 150 families in the MRC (see [Initiative #17](#)).

Likely, the desire to take care of colleagues and provide a respectful and safe environment to share their stories is reflected in the creation of a peer support group (see [Initiative #20](#)), for certain members of the health and social services network community working in the Granit area. Other members of the CIUSSS de l'Estrie – CHUS, RLS du Granit choose to form an internal benevolent committee to create a place for reflection and to increase their feeling of belonging to the workplace while leading actions to take care of the community (see [Initiative #15](#)).

Through all these initiatives, it appeared necessary to promote the culture of benevolence in the different living environments. The Outreach Team, in conjunction with the Table des partenaires du Granit, is also working on the strategies to be undertaken to achieve well-defined targets. It acts as a project leader in which each action, coming from different backgrounds, comes together to strengthen this culture of benevolence within the large community.

⁸ https://www.caot.ca/site/pt/COVID-19?language=en_CA&nav=sidebar

⁹ <https://nccid.ca/publications/psychosocial-impacts-of-the-covid-19/>

THEME #6

PANDEMIC INITIATIVES

On March 13, 2020, when the health measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic were announced, the team had to review how it deploys its services in the community. Since the basics of the proximity approach are to reach out to people in their communities and create opportunities for sharing and meeting, it became difficult to continue the usual activities without adjustment. The team had to review its actions focusing on bringing people together and aiming at strengthening the social fabric, promote citizen participation and foster the reappropriation of the territory.

As the pandemic lasts over time and the needs of the community are constantly evolving, the team continues to adapt to the situation today. Adapting projects, activities and services has also always been part of the reality of the team working in a recovery context and it must be flexible as the situation changes.

One of the team's goals is to reduce the collateral impacts of the pandemic for people in the community. One of the ways imagined is through the communication of information (truthful and up to date) to the population. Through its actions, the team hopes to support the understanding of health instructions, to assist individuals, groups, and the community in managing the emotions generated by this new reality and to promote collective resilience by facilitating the adaptation of daily activities.

The team continues to reach out to partners (e.g., businesses, community organizations, schools) to support them. It toured businesses to get a feel for their reality, find out if it could play a role and propose information tools. It also proposes a space for reflection with partners from the economic sector to think together about possible responses to needs expressed or felt in the sector.

Moreover, it has established with different partners a place of dialogue concerning families and young children and has participated in a project aiming at having members of the community deliver caring parcels to families affected by the situation (see [Initiative #17](#)).

It has also adapted its activities already in place. The Mercredis en bonne compagnie and Place éphémère were both able to continue their activities by revising certain practices in order to respect the sanitary rules in place (see [Initiative #10](#) and [Initiative #11](#)).

The animation of the team's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/equipedeproximite) has also become a concrete means of intervention to continue to reach people. Capsules presenting feel-good elements are proposed: exercises, little advice on healthy lifestyles, "Patates bienveillantes" comic strips, and so on (see [Initiative #18](#)).

The support, by weekly telephone calls to a clientele considered vulnerable, made it possible to keep in touch and take the pulse of part of the community, to support the vulnerable RLS du Granit teams and to identify the needs and ideas proposed by the community (e.g., telephone reminders, prevention projects in the community).

The return of the walking club, when permitted and adapted to health measures, was a concrete means of reaching and mobilizing citizens. The benefits of this group are numerous for the clientele, particularly in this year of the pandemic. Its return, as often as possible, was necessary (see [Initiative #5](#)).

Objectif Bouge

DÉFI SANTÉ

Aujourd'hui, découvrez ce court entraînement par intervalles, préparé par une kinésiologue. Il est parfait pour améliorer votre cardio et accumuler des minutes actives dans le confort de votre maison!



Chantale Clusiaux, kinésiologue
Équipe de proximité

INCROYABLES COMESTIBLES

RECHERCHONS DES POUCE VERTS !

Afin de préparer les jardins à partager, nous cherchons des personnes intéressées à partir des semis chez eux. Nous pouvons vous fournir semences, terreau et contenants. Le temps venu, nous les planterons dans les espaces prévus pour en faire profiter à tous.

INTÉRESSÉS ?
ENVOYEZ NOUS UN MESSAGE

HEY!

MERCI !

Marie-Claude Maillet
organisatrice communautaire



Les mercredis en bonne compagnie

Cette semaine nous te proposons de fabriquer une mangeoire à oiseau avec du matériel que tu as déjà à la maison.



Cuisinez plus à la maison et limitez les produits préparés : c'est gagnant pour le porte-monnaie et la santé!

Ne laissez pas vos légumes se gâter : utilisez les légumes défraîchis dans les potages, les soupes et les purées.

Catherine Bouffard
nutritionniste
équipe de proximité





PROMISING INITIATIVES

INITIATIVE #1

GREAT WORD HARVEST

Context

The first few months following the Lac-Mégantic tragedy were focused on several interventions, mainly characterized by the implementation of measures to meet the population's most urgent needs. While benefiting from first resort financial, material, and psychological support, the population quickly found itself in the sinuous and unavoidable phase of recovery linked to the events of July 6, 2013, in Lac-Mégantic.

Shaken by a disaster that affected them on a human, social, environmental, economical, and commercial level, the people, families, and organizations of Lac-Mégantic and MRC du Granit, struggling with an overlay of grieving, would be faced with the challenge of finding the means by which they could best regain their bearings and balance.

It is therefore guided by the willingness, starting in 2014, to support and contribute to this great movement of individual and collective resilience that the Centre de santé et services sociaux (CSSS) and the Corporation de développement communautaire (CDC) du Granit have joined forces to propose constructive and structuring projects.

Purpose and objectives

The purpose of this Grande cuillette des mots (Great Word Harvest) du Granit¹⁰ is to promote dialogue and social cohesion through a writing process fostered by the citizens of MRC du Granit. More specifically, the project can be described as follows:

- A collective journey on the timeline;
- A journey through stories from the past, present and future on the universal theme of landmarks;
- A theatrical experience in the heart of the people's lives, where over 400 residents of all ages and throughout MRC du Granit area became those who will inspire its story.

Managers and partners

- Managers (Steering Committee): CDC of Granit, CSSS of Granit, Hauts-Cantons School Board, MRC du Granit, Ville de Lac-Mégantic, Carrefour Jeunesse Emploi of Granit, Mégantic Cultural Committee;
- Partners: Théâtre des Petites Lanternes (TPL), Marvayus, financial partners and numerous people and organizations from MRC du Granit.

Actions

- February 2014: First discussions between the TPL and the organizations responsible for the project, CDC and CSSS;
- April to August 2014: Development of the project and implementation of the Carnet de parole (Word Book);

¹⁰ <http://www.english.petiteslanternes.org/productions>

- September to mid-October 2014: Networking, tool design and preparation of the Grande cuillette des mots (Great word Harvest);
- Mid-October 2014 to September 2015: Collection and reception of the Carnets de parole, summarization, artistic lines, auditions, drafting, co-creation, scenography, pre-production, production, show and summary.

Outcomes

This project helped reach numerous citizens:

- Approximately 1000 residents throughout the MRC du Granit participated or collaborated in the various stages of the project: project steering, recruitment, facilitation and participation in the various writing workshops, recruitment, facilitation and participation in the lantern-making workshops, cookie making, singers, photographers, volunteers and community organizations;
- More than 1000 people attended the 4 performances planned as part of the project;
- Play performed in other regions of Quebec;
- Distribution to the 20 municipalities of the MRC du Granit of the lanterns made during the workshops held in their respective community;
- Exhibition of lanterns that contributed to the theatre design in a meaningful place in Lac-Mégantic, as a gesture of solidarity of other municipalities towards the Ville de Lac-Mégantic and the 47 victims of the disaster.

Many impacts were observed:

- Project complementary to the efforts made in other activity sectors;
- Channelling of constructive energies;
- Liberating effects;
- Unifying, inclusive, mobilizing and meaningful event;
- Social cohesion and civic participation;
- Sense of contribution to the recovery;
- Sense of pride and accomplishment.

Budget

The overall budget is approximately \$200,000. Funding sources are broken down as follows:

- CSSS/Red Cross = \$30,000;
- MSSS/CDC = \$12,000;
- Ministère de la Culture et des Communications/MRC du Granit = \$12,000;
- Fondation Béati = \$24,000;
- Pacte rural/MRC du Granit = \$28,000;
- Plan d'action gouvernemental pour la solidarité et l'inclusion sociale = \$76,000;
- Comité d'aide aux sinistrés = \$8,000.

PROMISING INITIATIVES TO MOBILIZE THE LOCAL COMMUNITY IN A POST-DISASTER LANDSCAPE



INITIATIVE #2

PHOTOVOIX

Context

In March 2016, several partners of Lac-Mégantic and surrounding areas came together for a think tank session on the community needs following the 2013 tragedy. The need to initiate a positive campaign to highlight the strengths of the community was then put forward.

Based on a salutogenesis approach, the positive campaign aims to improve citizens' pride by demonstrating, through concrete examples, what the region has to offer in a positive way. It also aims to stimulate the emergence of an ambassador fibre among the local population so that it can help attract people to settle in the region and meet part of the labour needs.

The Photovoix (Photovoice) project emerged from a proposal made by Professor Tracey O'Sullivan at the University of Ottawa. The project was included in the positive campaign supported by the Table des partenaires du Granit. The Photovoix method is a participatory approach that allows participants to get involved in research that impacts their life or that is important to them.

A Photovoix group (approximately 8–10 people) meets monthly for about 6 months. Each month, the members identify a theme, and the participants take photos that are meaningful to them, always related to the theme chosen. The photos are then presented to the group and discussed. After about 6 months, the group prepares an exhibit during which the photos are displayed or pooled. The community is then invited to discuss the themes selected. The exhibit is open to the entire community. Invitations are sent to community actors and decision makers. This meeting allows participants to discuss with other community members with different roles and share their respective ideas and experiences.

Purpose and objectives

The purpose of this project is to give a voice to citizens of MRC du Granit so that they can express their view on a positive public relations campaign. The project also allows people to share their different experiences to support the recovery of the community over the long term. More specifically, this is an opportunity for citizens of MRC du Granit to:

- Share the aspects that make their community an attractive place to call home;
- Identify the aspects that support resilience within their community;
- Describe their perception of Lac-Mégantic and communicate their vision of the future for their community;
- Create a digital photo and story gallery describing the impact of the positive public relations campaign on the resilience of the community.

Managers and partners

- Managers and Co-Managers: University of Ottawa, DSPublique de l'Estrie and Université de Sherbrooke;
- Partners: The Outreach Team, Table des partenaires du Granit.

Actions

- February and March 2017:
 - Promoting the project and recruiting of participants.
- March to June 2017:
 - Implementing the project, monthly group meetings (3 groups);
 - Analyzing the meeting content by the Ottawa University team.
- June to September 2017:
 - Uniting the groups and pooling of the pictures and themes discussed;
 - Building and planning the exhibit.
- September 2017:
 - Opening of the exhibit entitled “Entre la mémoire et l’espoir : turbulence, résilience, renaissance” (Between Memory and Hope: Turbulence, Resilience, Rebirth). The different community actors and general public are invited to learn more about the work accomplished and developments made over the last few months (approximately 200 visitors);
 - The exhibit moves to the Ottawa Parliament, with the support of Mr. Luc Berthold, Mégantic l’Érable Federal Member of Parliament. This action allows participants to share their messages of hope and resilience with the federal political class, including Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.
- October 2017:
 - Project assessment with the participants who wish to continue to support the Photovoix message;
 - Reflection initiated on the legacy wanted for the community.

Outcomes

The Photovoix project ended up having individual, group, and collective impacts. Indeed, participants mentioned having experienced positive personal development through the project. Use of media to express emotions fostered introspection and self-understanding.

The three groups developed their own dynamics. Camaraderie and strong respect developed among participants. The groups fostered discussions among people from different social backgrounds presenting different ideologies.

The exhibit seems to have had a positive impact on people of MRC du Granit. Many positive and touching comments were heard during the launch held in Lac-Mégantic. Following the two exhibits, the participants and visitors showed great pride and a sense of belonging to the community. Out-of-town visitors and political leaders gained a fresh look at the community (i.e., its strengths), with a clear message that Lac Mégantic is much more than a tragedy.

Budget

\$25,000, non-recurrent (funding sources: MSSS).

"We could express our sadness, our emotions openly because we were welcomed, without criticism.

At first it was quite emotional, but over the meetings, this overflow was transformed into something lighter. It did me good. It made a big difference."

- A participant of the Photovoix project



INITIATIVE #3 GREETERS



Context

The contribution of tourism is a source of wealth for the region. At the same time, these visits can become a source of stress for individuals who experience them daily especially during the summer period. Visitors try to understand and question the merchants, restaurant owners and service providers in different ways. The contribution of local citizens helps to meet the high demand. Furthermore, it consolidates individuals' needs to identify to the region. The approach therefore proposes to work on social determinants of health: personal and social skills as well as the living environment of the local community.

Drawn from an international approach¹¹, the Greeters of Lac-Mégantic are volunteers who wish to share the love and enthusiasm they have for their city, in the pure hospitable way of Lac-Mégantic citizens. The greeter accompanies the visitors on a walk through the city for a few hours and makes them see it under a unique angle, that of the lover. This is certainly a rewarding experience that families, couples, friends, and even single travellers are invited to dwell in a serene environment.

Purpose and objectives

The purpose of this project is to give local citizens the opportunity to contribute to the revival of the community. More specifically, these projects aim to:

- Give people an opportunity to meet and build a bridge between the past, present and future;
- Highlight the resources of our community: people and themes;
- Have a good experience;
- Help rebuild our community's image.

Manager and partners

- Manager: The Outreach Team;
- Project teams: Citizens, Accorderie du Granit (<http://accorderie.ca/english/>), Reconstruction Bureau (<http://reconstruction-lac-megantic.ca/>), Ville de Lac-Mégantic, Société de développement économique du Granit, Commerce Lac-Mégantic;
- Partner: Canadian Red Cross.

¹¹ <https://internationalgreeter.org/>

Actions and outcomes

Actions	Outcomes	Deadline
Inform potential partners	Evolution of the perception of the role of the body or individual as co-builders.	January 2017
Build a project team	Evolution of the constitution of the partners involved in the start-up committee.	February 2017
Develop a local network	Development of ties between underutilized existing resources.	June 2017
Monitor the Greeters experience	Development of a sense of identity.	Throughout the project

Here are a few project impacts that have been observed so far:

- A real exchange between the visitor and Greeter;
- The Greeter receives as much as he or she gives;
- “It feels good”;
- To add to the pleasure, a greeter with a passion for history developed, wrote and published a booklet telling the essential story of the people from Lac-Mégantic, “Lac-Mégantic racontée”, ISBN 978-2-9818838-0-3.

Budget

\$4,000, non-recurrent (funding sources: MSSS and Red Cross).



INITIATIVE #4

MEMORIAL SITE

Context

When creating a memory space, both the purpose and process contribute to the healing of individuals and the community.

For a successful outcome, it is important to build on the community's strengths and assets of the community. The citizens are best placed to identify these strengths and assets as well as potential solutions. The full participation of citizens is therefore critical to the creative process, and their contribution benefits at all stages.

For a process to be successful, citizen participation must be a key determinant of health. After a difficult experience, an adaptation process is inevitable. People adapt more positively if they are able to make sense of the event and their lives, if they are given the opportunity to find balance between the then and now.

Creating a memorial space therefore requires an approach that:

- Values citizen participation;
- Values the solutions proposed by citizens;
- Inclusive from the start and throughout the project;
- Transparent with clear guidelines.

Purpose and objectives

The purpose of this project is to foster the development of a sense of belonging from citizens toward the permanent memorial site that is created. More specifically, we aim to develop and implement an approach encouraging the civic participation of all Lac-Mégantic citizens interested in contributing to this memorial site, which is an important recovery stage.

Managers and partners

- Managers: Reconstruction Bureau (<http://reconstruction-lac-megantic.ca/>) and the Outreach Team;
- Partners: Architecture students participating in the Ateliers du Lac (Lac-Mégantic Workshops) and Ville de Lac-Mégantic.

Actions and outcomes

Actions	Outcomes	Deadline
Discussing with the population and holding information meetings	Understanding of what the space could be and of the process of realization.	Summer 2017
Holding informal meetings with the population by the Outreach Team	Listening to apprehensions, expectations and suggestions. Elaborating inspirational images from the citizens' ideas and of past experiences in the world. Multiple sharing spaces for all to express themselves. Strengthening of the open dialogue between the population and the co leaders of the project.	
Creating a Memory space working committee	Composition of the committee with a diversity of members: the Reconstruction Office, the Outreach Team, an elected official, a representative of bereaved families, two citizens and a representative of the first responders. Developing individual and community empowerment.	Fall 2017
Creating a temporary memory space to mark the 5 th anniversary of the tragedy	Opportunity for everyone to make a symbolic gesture. Update on the progress of the video project describing the citizen participation process shared on YouTube ¹² . Facilitating the community's long-term healing and recovery process by supporting social and citizen participation and fostering social bonding.	July 2018
Present the plans in the form as a 5 to 7 for the population	Continuous round trips to the population for validation and participation in the process. Developing of the feeling of belonging to the project.	November 2018
Meeting with a group of citizens, on an ad hoc basis, to validate certain choices	Taking a step back when faced with a dead end. Building on the strengths and assets of the community.	June 2019

Budget

- No turnover costs for the Working Committee;
- Voluntary participation of different representatives.

¹² https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=17&v=ggaaFfpVpbU



INITIATIVE #5 WALKING CUBE



Context

This project began in September 2017 in line with animated Tuesdays, held throughout most of that summer at the train station (see [Theme #1](#)). The project is based on many principles of the Outreach Team, including the promotion of overall health and an inclusive approach. Walking is indeed a physical activity that is accessible to all. It is safe, free, and beneficial for one's physical and mental health. Moreover, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), the term “mental health” is not limited to the absence of mental illness. Rather, WHO describes mental health as a state of well-being in which a person can fulfill themselves, overcome normal life stresses, do productive work, and contribute to life in their community. In addition, some studies suggest a protective effect of physical activity on the onset of anxiety symptoms, both in adolescents, adults, and the elderly.

Purpose and objectives

The purpose of this project is to start a long-term walking club. Inspired by the initiative of the Grand défi Pierre Lavoie (<https://www.legdpl.com/en/>), the idea of the “walking cube” is to walk for 45 minutes as a group. Through fun challenges, the Grand défi Pierre Lavoie aims to encourage people to adopt healthy life habits. The “walking cube” derives its name from the energy cubes, where each 15-minute session of physical activity corresponds to an energy cube. Each session earns one cube. The more active you are, the more cubes you accumulate.

Establishing a walking club in this form is an opportunity to create an accessible and free health–friendly environment, which helps people to adopt a physically active lifestyle. Through this initiative, we wish to highlight the importance of acting in promotion and prevention, upstream of physical and mental health problems.

In addition, each walking session is followed by a health capsule on various subjects. The animation of such health capsules on a weekly basis aims to raise awareness and inform individuals, to help them adapt healthy behaviours, make better food choices, and have an active lifestyle. The approach of “sharing” experiences is put forward during this time of exchange between the participants. It also promotes social interactions, social integration, and the feeling of belonging to the walking club.

Manager and partners

- Manager: Health Promotion Officer (kinesiologist) of the Outreach Team;
- Partners: A kinesiologist from the private sector in the MRC du Granit, citizens, local organizations (Fédération de l'Âge d'Or du Québec (FADOQ), Viactive, Association des retraitées et retraités de l'éducation et des autres services publics du Québec (AREQ), etc.)

Actions and outcomes

Actions	Outcomes	Deadline
Determine the meeting point	The choice of the meeting point in front of the heritage station was made in line with animated Tuesdays.	
Determine an accessible walking route, achievable for all, which varies every week	<p>The routes vary every week; this allows citizens to rediscover the city by walking and to reclaim different areas.</p> <p>This action also allows participants to discover environments favourable to VHS in Lac-Mégantic (walking route, bike paths, intergenerational exercise circuit, etc.)</p> <p>The different route choices are made to make the activity inclusive for all.</p>	Every Tuesday evening, from September 2017 to this day
Facilitate a 45-minute walking session per week, Tuesday evenings	<p>These meetings help to break the isolation.</p> <p>Many of the participants regularly state that they would not walk alone and that what motivates them the most is to come and join the walking group.</p> <p>Moreover, the walking club gathers people of all ages, including retirees, workers, and young children.</p>	
Host a health segment at the end of each session on various topics and sometimes with handouts	<p>The benefits associated with the practice of physical activity are frequently mentioned by the participants. This time for reflection promotes awareness of the benefits of the activity for everyone.</p> <p>Allows to create a dialogue venue, promoting the sharing of knowledge and experiences between citizens.</p>	

So far, between 10 and 20 walkers participate each week, in average. It is a mix of regular participants and new ones recruited through social media or by word of mouth.

Here are some examples of health segments prepared and hosted by the SHV promotion officer of the Outreach Team:

- Teaching the 4-4-8 breathing technique;
- Teaching tips and exercises to improve postural balance;
- The importance of laughing every day;
- Tasting recipes;
- Sporting challenges;
- Experimenting the Tabta training method;
- Posture for winter shovelling.

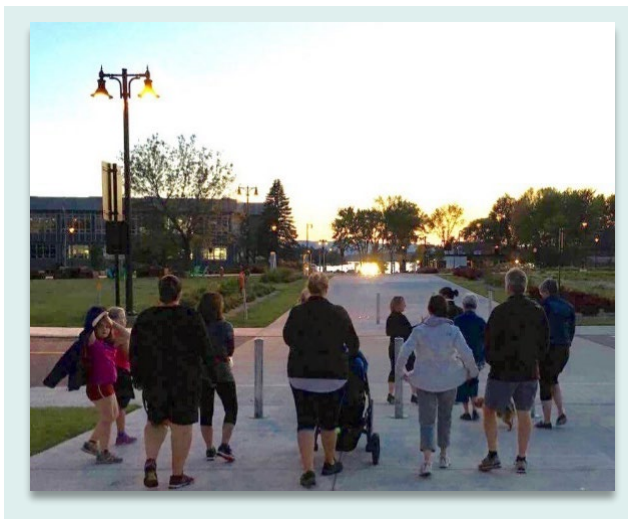
Participants regularly share the benefits of participating in the walking club. A few comments from participants:

- “The walking club gives me the boost of motivation for walking on winter evenings.”
- “This walking club, in this format, arrives at the right time in my life. I needed that.”
- “Congratulations to the team, it’s a real group therapy.”
- “We’re really an awesome gang! We laugh as much as we walk!”
- “If it were not for the walking club, I wouldn’t be walking tonight.”
- “It’s motivating to know that we are meeting people to walk.”
- “It’s really fun to see that there is life at the train station, when we arrive for the walking club, that there’s action here, that something’s happening.”
- “You did me so much good tonight. I had a pit in my stomach all day today, and now, it’s gone. I feel much better.”



Budget

No budget required to run this activity.



INITIATIVE #6

CONCERTO

Context

A few months before the Lac-Mégantic tragedy, some organizations were considering the idea of a study project on general and social housing in MRC du Granit, reflecting the concerns and needs.

The events that occurred in Lac-Mégantic on July 6, 2013, only emphasized the need to acquire such a tool, which is why they focused their approach on this municipality first.

Led by a local multisectoral committee with a team of researchers from the Observatoire estrien en développement des communautés (<http://www.oedc.qc.ca/>), the project has evolved with the loss of 110 housing units in the downtown area as well as the willingness of citizens participating in the great public consultation called “Réinventer la ville” (Reinventing the City) to see the emergence of a new inhabited and vibrant downtown area.

Then, it is by building on a culture of collaboration and consultation well rooted in the community that the Concerto project, originally CHIC 2, meets different needs and takes shape in a mixed-use building located within the perimeter of the downtown area.

Originally, this building was intended for:

- 13 social and affordable housing units for singles, and low-income families living in the MRC du Granit;
- A 42-place daycare centre offering both regular and atypical hours for families and workers;
- A daycare centre for one-time activities or appointments;
- An indoor park for 0 to 12-year-old children and their families;
- The Outreach Team.

Purpose and objectives

More than a building, Concerto is a project that will contribute to the rebirth of a populated and lively city centre. With this project, we specifically intend to:

- Promote cooperation between several partners, increase services provided to the population, and contribute noticeably to several restoration efforts deployed for the entire city centre;
- Create a dynamic environment conducive to social, community, economic, educational and recreational activities, which will stimulate opportunities and benefits for the MRC du Granit.

Managers and partners

- Managers (Steering Committee): Corporation en développement communautaire (CDC) du Granit, CHIC du Granit, CIUSSS de l’Estrie – CHUS (RLS du Granit), Constellation 0-5 ans du Granit and Centre de la petite enfance Sous les étoiles;
- Partners: Entraide Habitat Estrie, Granit Action, Business Community Committee, Reconstruction Bureau, Ville de Lac-Mégantic, Member of the Legislative Assembly.

Actions and outcomes

The Concerto project was launched in 2014, after the MRC du Granit general and social housing study was completed. Its participants saw their efforts materialize in 2018.

- Public tendering period: January/February 2018;
- Tender opening: March 2018;
- Signing of contract with the contractor: May 2018;
- Rental space and housing occupancy: January 2019.

Budget

A diversified financial package supported by a fundraising campaign was preferred. More than \$1 million was raised, from a variety of sources:

- Citizens = \$25,000;
- Corporations = almost \$200,000;
- Philanthropic donations = \$700,000;
- Local assistance funding = \$250,000.



INITIATIVE #7

LESSONS LEARNED

Context

Following the broadcast of the program “Enquête” in March 2017¹³, the Outreach Team brought together the people concerned and invited the Barreau du Québec to come and answer their questions. This TV program did indeed destabilize many citizens in Lac-Mégantic and the surrounding area, revealing that in the aftermath of the tragedy in Lac-Mégantic, American lawyers were on the ground to recruit the families of victims wishing to sue the American companies involved in the disaster. According to this program, nearly half of the money to which the families were entitled went directly into the pockets of these American lawyers. During the meeting with the Barreau du Québec, we noticed that many participants had concrete ideas to improve the practices of the Barreau du Québec and other bodies.

The idea behind this project is therefore to collect the stories of those who experienced the tragedy through one-on-one and group interviews and to identify the main themes. This initiative will provide a voice and bring together people who wish to contribute in this way, identifying what could be changed or improved as a way of managing future disasters. Through their experience, citizens can then make recommendations to the various bodies they worked with during July 2013 rail tragedy, but also in the months and years that followed it.

This led to the drafting of a document consolidate good practices following a disaster, from the perspectives of citizens with a unique on-the-ground expertise. This document could eventually be submitted to the relevant bodies, subject to approval from the group.

Purpose and objectives

The purpose of this project is to provide a different opportunity for citizens to contribute in the aftermath of the tragedy. More specifically, we aim to:

- Provide an opportunity to tell the story;
- Recognize people’s experiences;
- Contribute to the improvement of methods in a tragedy context.

Manager and partners

- Manager: The Outreach Team;
- Partners: Citizens.

¹³ <http://ici.radio-canada.ca/tele/enquete/2016-2017/segments/reportage/18515/enquete-lac-megantic-firme-avocat-victime>

Actions and outcomes

Actions	Outcomes	Deadline
Build the interview chart	Development of a tool that can be shared, based on the CHAMPSS Functional Capabilities Framework ¹⁴ .	Fall 2017
Recruit participants	A positive response to the invitation and recruitment of citizens that would not have been reached otherwise.	Fall 2017
Conduct interviews	Lively discussions about the tragedy to change the way things are done. Sense of contribution, having one's experience recognized.	Winter 2018 to winter 2019
Pool emerging themes	Synthesis of stories for collective learning from the citizens' varied experiences.	Spring 2019
Provide the document to participants and invite them to a meeting to discuss the actions to be taken from now	Validation of emerging themes, additions or modifications. Gathering of participants, building relationships and sense of contribution.	Fall 2019
Disseminate a document	Sharing lessons learned with key stakeholders (if wanted).	To be determined

Here are a few project impacts that have been observed so far:

- “It’s crazy how it is liberating.”
- “Thanks, it allows me to better understand.”
- “We walked through this. We can clearly help others.”
- “It feels good to talk about it again, we’re sometimes fairly embarrassed to want to talk about that night.”

Despite all that this tragedy has brought to the citizens’ lives, the people met during the interviews appreciate having a time to talk about the tragedy, often more clearly, emotionally, but always in a constructive spirit. The citizens we met hope that this tragedy can serve to improve and, above all, protect other victims, with the ultimate goal of improving practices and ensuring that the relevant bodies take into account or draw on the lessons learned. It is a way for them to contribute to the recovery of their community and to make sense of this unfortunate event.

In short, it is a precious time granted to them, a “permission” to discuss the tragedy again.



Budget

Minimal budget (design, printing and dissemination of final deliverable).

¹⁴ http://enrichproject.ca/CHAMPSS_June_2014.pdf

INITIATIVE #8

SOCIAL ACCEPTABILITY

Context

It is necessary for all community actors to remember the fragility of a population living in a post-tragedy context. The literature shows that it is normal, even 10 years after the trauma, to experience symptoms related to post-traumatic stress.

The announcement of a major tourism project, led by a private promoter who would transform the Parc des Vétérans (Veterans Park), provoked strong reactions, going beyond simply taking a stand, by the citizens directly concerned. The Park is in the downtown sector, in between a residential area and Mégantic Lake's shore. Most of the residents in the area have been highly exposed to the tragedy and its consequences. Accordingly, this park is a powerful symbol of the region and its resilience for some members in the community.

Following the presentation of this project and the publication of a series of articles in reaction to this announcement in the local newspaper, the Outreach Team was challenged in a direct and indirect way by some citizens who were experiencing a strong discomfort with the situation.

The reactions to this project are a reminder of the fragility of the local population. Symptoms related to post-traumatic stress disorder have been identified: anxiety, insomnia, nightmares, feelings of anger, etc. The perceived lack of information and consultation surrounding this project has revived some people's sense of helplessness and psychological injury related to the tragedy.

Purpose and objectives

The Outreach Team wants to connect all citizens affected by the announcement of an economic development project to break the isolation, reduce suffering, and provide support.

We pursued two specific objectives to meet these needs:

- Implement a process to promote power reappropriation;
- Make public health recommendations addressed to interested parties.

Manager and partners

- Manager: The Outreach Team;
- Partners: Ville de Lac-Mégantic and citizens.

Actions

In December 2017, common elements were identified during a first meeting with the affected citizens:

- The need to learn about and understand the tourism development project. The vagueness surrounding this project fuels the feeling of helplessness and anxiety;
- The need to speak (to survive and not collapse) and to feel heard.

The following actions were subsequently implemented:

- Citizen meetings led by the Outreach Team;
- Opportunity to meet with the municipal personnel involved in order to facilitate communication between the actors;
- Presentations, to the concerned parties, concerning best practices for citizen participation, economic development, and project social acceptability within the very delicate context of a healing community.

Throughout the entire process, the Outreach Team strived to stay neutral, objective and non-partisan. Their recommendations were based on the best scientific evidence available.

Outcomes

Several benefits stem from this approach, including:

- A reduction in individual suffering through pooling of forces;
- Creation of communication channels between citizens and municipal actors;
- A decrease in the feeling of powerlessness through empowerment supported and coached by the Outreach Team;
- Improved knowledge related to the specifics of the community's economic development in a post-tragedy recovery context.

Budget

This project did not require a budget; therefore, no funds have been allocated.



INITIATIVE #9

YOUNG CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Context

Of the many actions undertaken by the Outreach Team, active citizenship is the preferred approach. This observation leads to the conclusion that we must make room for the younger citizens. It is important that opportunities for engagement and participation be provided within the community. We observe that young people are involved within the school system. Also, according to the school actors consulted, there is a desire to promote this participation outside of those walls.

Since implementing the “Réinventer la ville” (Reinvent the City) movement, young citizens have been participating in consultations for the Espace Jeunesse (Youth Space) project. There is now a skate park idea in development, and a committee has been formed to bring the project to completion. This could become a starting point to increase youth participation and have it become part of the local culture. It is an important aspect to keep in mind for the future of this project as well as for the various projects already in action.

Moreover, a recent study on young people aged 10 to 25 in the Lac-Mégantic community, led by Professor Danielle Maltais (UQAC), shows that there is considerable vulnerability and silent suffering among them. Many responders have also reported feeling isolated and little invested in their community¹⁵.

We know that youth is the future of Lac-Mégantic’s community; they are tomorrow’s driving force. Therefore, it is imperative not only for them, but for the whole community, that they become an integral part of our solutions.

Four major wishes emerged from the initial reflection:

- Youth presence in community areas;
- Actual roles and responsibilities entrusted to young people in their community;
- Greater sense of belonging to a community for all youth;
- The development of a sense of personal effectiveness among young people and, a sense of collective effectiveness.

Purpose and objectives

The goal of this project is to promote and support youth citizen participation in the MRC du Granit. We specifically intend to:

- Implement policies created by and for young people;
- Launch a collaborative construction process with relevant actors in order to support youth involvement;
- Develop a culture of active citizenship among young people;
- Present a community empowerment approach designed to teach and coach young people to become active citizens.

¹⁵ <http://www.uqac.ca/chairetrauma/impacts-sur-les-jeunes-de-10-a-25-ans/>

Manager and partners

- Manager: The Outreach Team;
- Partners: Hauts-Cantons School Board, Red Cross, and youth actors in the community.

Actions and outcomes

Actions	Outcomes	Deadline
Analyze the data collected during the study on young people aged 10 to 25 from Lac-Mégantic and review the literature	Deepen our understanding of the various needs of MRC du Granit's youth groups (high and low risk).	January 2018
Hold half a day of collective reflection to allow community actors to meet and talk about solutions to promote health and well-being for young people	Mobilization of the parties concerned (youth, parents, social actors and community leaders). Goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a step back to position ourselves and understand the normal long-term healing process of a community; • Rely on our achievements and the knowledge gained through experience, to then start building from them as well as find fortification in evidence-based information relevant to our community; • Formulation of a common vision comprised of potential solutions worth pursuing or implementing. 	February 2018
Establish a committee composed of partners and young people from the community	Participation of several partners (Maison des jeunes, Carrefour Jeunesse Emploi, Constellation du Granit, the Outreach Team, school board psychoeducator) to set up a gathering place to meet the needs of a diversity of young people.	Spring 2018
Mobilize young people by quickly obtaining small successes	Holding a first event by and for young people organized by the young people involved in the committee with the support of adults present at the committee. About thirty young people of high-school age and CEGEP participated. The event was a success, and a second one took place later.	Summer 2018
Implement promising projects (by and for youth)	Accountability of the members of the committee who are given the task of identifying the needs of their peers and developing initiatives to meet them (with financial support). Expansion and diversification of the number of young people participating on the committee called Comité participation citoyenne jeunesse (CPCJ). Creation of an event to promote the CPCJ.	Fall 2019

Actions	Outcomes	Deadline
Promote supportive environments	Development of conditions (social, economic, and physical) promoting healthy life habits, a balanced lifestyle and the well-being of young people.	Summer 2021
Make the CPCJ committee known to local political authorities	Development and recognition of the legitimacy of the CPCJ committee within the community. Collective reflection on the creation of a local youth policy.	Fall 2021*

*At the time this document was created (October 2021), this action had not yet been undertaken.

Here are some proofs of young people’s appreciation of this initiative:

- “At the beginning of the evening, I did not think I would have as much fun.”
- “The responsibilities were not too heavy.”
- “We were happy with the presence of adults. It made us feel secure.”
- “Being part of the CPCJ committee allows us to learn perseverance and to have a second option.”
- “It makes everything more feasible, more easily than before to organize activities.”
- “It’s a great preparation for the job market.”

Budget

A budget of \$25,000 ensures the implementation and sustainability of the project. It was granted as a financial support tool to promote youth citizen participation through various initiatives designed and launched by and for young people in the community.

The Outreach Team oversees all aspects of the project.



INITIATIVE #10

PLACE ÉPHÉMÈRE (EPHEMERAL PLACE)

Contexte

After a first summer in downtown Lac-Mégantic, the population is clearly struggling to reclaim this new place full of meaning and without any familiar landmarks. The loss of the downtown area is synonymous with lost landmarks, but also loss of gathering places that, at present, have not been recreated. At the same time, from the various meetings of the Outreach Team with individuals and groups, both formal and informal, there is a desire for citizens to get involved and to revitalize their living environment. In the summer of 2017, the Accorderie du Granit initiative (<http://accorderie.ca/>) was launched to offer citizens free evening gatherings. Named Les mardis soirs animés à la gare, “Animated Tuesday evenings at the station,” these evenings offered a variety of activities such as surprise tastings on the grill, an open-air movie night, a public piano concert, and so on. These activities brought together and reached a wide variety of community members.

A thematic day on outreach intervention, organized as part of the Journées annuelles de santé publique 2017¹⁶, inspired this initiative. We learned that places éphémères (ephemeral places) are animated places created by citizens of the territory concerned. These places allow involvement and gathering while bringing a community to meet part of its needs. They are also an opportunity to experiment with concepts or ideas since they are temporary installations.

To meet the desired objectives of creating an ephemeral place in Lac-Mégantic (www.facebook.com/PlaceEphemereLacMegantic/), it was determined that its location should be in the heart of the city, in a space promoting social activities, networking and gatherings. The idea here is to bring positive experiences to the city centre that was largely destroyed during the 2013 rail tragedy.

Purpose and objectives

The purpose of this project is to promote the reappropriation of a territory through citizen involvement. More specifically, we aim to:

- Create a new gathering place on the territory under reconstruction;
- Promote the creation of social bonds;
- Provide the public with a forum for consultation and citizen participation;
- Encourage and support the involvement of citizens of all ages and all walks of life.

Manager and partners

- Manager: The Outreach Team;
- Partners: Ville de Lac-Mégantic (field loan and logistical support); Red Cross and a committee composed of partners and citizens.

¹⁶ <https://www.inspq.qc.ca/jasp/miser-sur-l-intervention-de-proximite-pour-agir-aupres-des-populations>

Actions and outcomes

Actions	Outcomes	Deadline
Present the project to the City Council and apply for access to land in the downtown area for the summer of 2018	Access granted to the field in front of the heritage station by the Ville de Lac-Mégantic.	February 2018
Present the project to actors and users by touring community organizations	Better knowledge of the concept of an ephemeral place (e.g., Place éphémère).	March to June 2018
Organize citizen meetings	Citizen mobilization/involvement.	May 2018
Establish a committee to make of Place éphémère a reality	<p>The Committee is composed of the Outreach Team, an Intro-travail mobilization officer, a youth worker from Maison des jeunes, and three citizens. The Committee remains an open group. Anyone interested in getting involved can join.</p> <p>Launch of the activities of Place éphémère with animation, every Tuesday evening, provided by the Place éphémère Committee.</p> <p>Free and varied activities to citizens on Tuesday evenings in the form of 5 to 7 (evening with musicians; barbecues; outdoor film projection with popcorn; outdoor games for young and old; meeting of Cercle des fermières and discovery of their creations; evening by and for young people with ping pong, campfires, marshmallows, candy bar; laughter yoga; intergenerational karaoke; etc.)</p>	June to September 2018
Conduct a tour of partners to re-explain what is Place éphémère	<p>Through this tour, we invite partners and citizens to get involved in the Place éphémère by proposing activities, contributing to the organization of events, etc.</p> <p>The Committee's mandate is to support various community initiatives to facilitate citizen involvement.</p>	February to May 2019
Host a wide variety of activities on Tuesday evenings at Place éphémère, with the contribution of the Committee	<p>Promoting the use of Place éphémère by citizens and organizations. For example, a person offers a free evening of Zumba ®/Pound ®. The Centre des femmes (Women's Centre) uses the space for their Drum Women activity, as well as for a self-reflection activity. The youth centre disco is also held at Place éphémère, which brings young people to further dwell in the community. Finally, the Leucan Shaved Head Challenge is held in August 2019 at Place éphémère.</p> <p>During the summer, moving of Place éphémère on land located in the Fatima sector for an evening of song made it possible to reach new people and to make our wish better known, namely that citizens get involved in the animation of the community.</p>	June to September 2019

Actions	Outcomes	Deadline
Mobilize the Place éphémère Committee through monthly and bimonthly meetings in order to plan for the summer of 2020	As from March 2020, discussions were more in line with the feasibility of summer activities during this COVID-19 pandemic period in Quebec. By mutual agreement, the members of the Committee wished to adapt the type of activities in connection with the Public Health recommendations. Projecting into the future, planning for the “positive” were beneficial for community members. The possibility of having a “virtual” Place éphémère was also discussed.	January to May 2020
Ensure that an activity is held at Place éphémère one evening a week by the Committee	A wide variety of activities were held every week: yoga sessions, an evening of Indigenous stories and legends, a rally in partnership with Maison de la famille, outdoor cinema, meditation music, etc.	June to August 2020

In addition to the above, several benefits were observed in the creation of Place éphémère:

- The tour of organizations made it possible to create a real link with citizens in addition to strengthening the links with community organizations;
- Citizen participation in the Committee made the project human and accessible: it is the heart of the project. This allowed the citizens concerned to have a real involvement in the social reconstruction of their community in addition to fostering a sense of belonging and pride in their downtown area;
- The activities organised by the Committee on Tuesday evenings made the place lively and inviting. The participation in activities is more than satisfactory, ranging from 30 to over 100 citizens;
- The installation of outdoor furniture, a basketball basket and other game equipment promotes social interaction and continuous play in the downtown area. However, efforts must be pursued to promote good neighbourliness with the Concerto residents (see [Initiative #6](#)).

The Lac-Mégantic Place éphémère therefore addresses psychosocial issues stemming from the July 2013 railway tragedy and supports the long-term recovery of the Lac-Mégantic community.

Some lessons can also be learned from this valuable and fruitful experience:

- It is important to clarify at the outset the functioning of a committee responsible for the Place éphémère, as well as the mandate and roles of each of its members. The implementation of the programming and the animation of the activities must rest on all members. Even if it assumes leadership in the project, the Outreach Team must ensure that responsibilities are shared within the community since citizen involvement in the social reconstruction process is just as, if not more important than what results from it (i.e., the creation of an ephemeral place);
- The planning of such a project as well as the mobilization and involvement of partners and citizens require many discussions. Sufficient preparation time allows everyone to be truly involved. It is therefore essential to plan a few months in advance the creation of an ephemeral place;
- Several strategies foster participation in the activities offered. The appearance of the premises is an important factor that should not be overlooked. Painting the furniture in bright colours and making the place vibrant encourages citizens to stop by. The use of social networks, such as the creation of a Facebook page, also makes it possible to better reach the local population and to inform them in real time of the programming offered;

- We must remain vigilant in the offer of programming to citizens. Citizens should not wait for programming (i.e., “I receive, expect offers”), but should be supported in developing their own power to act using the participation venues available to them;
- Finally, it shows that the team must continue its efforts to increase understanding of its mandate and bring citizens towards a real contribution.

Budget

The Outreach Team is investing human and material resources in this project, as land reclamation is a central issue in the context of post-disaster recovery. For the summer of 2018 and the summer of 2019, a budget of \$10,000 from the Red Cross Fund has been mobilized in order to concretize and animate the place.



 **ÉDITION 2020 - ON S'AJUSTE**
Cette page proposera des initiatives citoyennes qui respectent les valeurs de la Place Éphémère.
GRATUITE • INCLUSION • RESPECT

ET TOI, QUELLE EST TA PLACE?
TOUTES LES FAÇONS DE CONTRIBUER SONT BONNES
Participer au comité • Animer une activité • Prêter du matériel • ...

Appelle Chantale Clusault au 819 583-2572 poste 2553
Écris-nous via Facebook: www.facebook.com/PlaceEphemereLacMegantic/

30 juillet
18h30 **YOGA DU RIRE** 

31 juillet
20h30 **CINÉMA PLEIN AIR** 

1 août
18h30 **KARAOKÉ**
INTERGÉNÉRATIONNEL 

Place Éphémère - Juin 2019						
DIMANCHE	LUNDI	MARDI	MERCREDI	JEUDI	VENREDI	SAMEDI
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

Ouverture officielle de la Place Éphémère 18h30

Place Éphémère - Juillet 2019						
DIMANCHE	LUNDI	MARDI	MERCREDI	JEUDI	VENREDI	SAMEDI
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

f Place Éphémère Lac-Mégantic

*La pro

Place Éphémère - Août 2019						
DIMANCHE	LUNDI	MARDI	MERCREDI	JEUDI	VENREDI	SAMEDI
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

*La programmation est sujette à changements sans préavis.

f Place Éphémère Lac

f Place Éphémère Lac-Mégantic

INITIATIVE #11

WEDNESDAYS IN GOOD COMPANY

Context

Loneliness and social isolation are realities in Lac-Mégantic and the surrounding areas, mostly during the cold season. We find that during the rest of the year, some days of the week are more difficult for these socially isolated individuals, especially since there is little or no entertainment or activities to do on weekday evenings. For example, on Tuesday evenings, there is Cube de marche (see [Initiative #5](#)). Thursday and Friday evenings, stores and shops close later, offering a place to spend time. However, Wednesdays are days when there is little or no activity available and people get more bored. Many people feel lonely, more particularly during the fall, winter, and spring seasons. Restaurants, bars, and movies are paying activities, making them difficult to access for some of the population suffering from poverty. Through simple and accessible activities, we aim to be more inclusive.

The Outreach Team wishes to take the opportunity to highlight the Art and Health theme since the evidence shows that the arts are a significant determinant for the well-being, rehabilitation, and healing of individuals. An artistic project is therefore proposed, but not imposed, during the meetings on Mercredis en bonne compagnie (Wednesdays in Good Company).

Purpose and objectives

To provide a gathering place for people experiencing social isolation. We therefore wish to break this isolation by bringing together individuals who share similar interests, whether the proposed activity or the simple fact of meeting around a coffee.

Objectives:

- Create pretexts for meeting people;
- Create meaningful links between individuals;
- Reduce social isolation among the population of Lac-Mégantic and surrounding areas;
- Allow citizens to host an evening, share a passion and take their place;
- Screen individuals with greater psychosocial needs and refer them as needed;
- Link individuals with similar interests;
- Propose simple and accessible art projects for all;
- Promote the health benefits of art.

Manager and partners

- Manager: The Outreach Team;
- Partners: Citizens.

Actions and outcomes

The Mercredis en bonne compagnie concept is then simple, flexible, and adaptable to meet emerging needs and the different clientele reached.

Actions	Outcomes	Deadline
Provide a diverse and accessible indoor and outdoor venue * (i.e., well located, open to all, without registration and free of charge)	<p>People experiencing social isolation have access to a space to spend time, meet people, break isolation, and meet psychosocial workers in an informal setting.</p> <p>Although citizens of all ages and social groups are invited to share and occupy the space, middle-aged men, often from more disadvantaged backgrounds, are more likely to be attracted by the activities.</p>	From October 2018 to May 2019, every Wednesday evening (break during the summer to make way for Place éphémère)
Give citizens the responsibility to determine the program of activities	Citizens feel that the activity and the place belong to them.	From November 2018 to now
Publicize programming through social media publications and poster printing	Recruitment of additional participants and promotion of citizen participation (approximately 5 to 10 participants in each activity, with new “recruits” on a regular basis).	Throughout the year

* Among the thirty activities offered from October 2018 to May 2019, there are card games, board games, bingo, DIY, colouring, decoration, creation of special event cards, and karaoke.

Here are some observations showing the effects of this project so far:

- On the evening of an activity, a man mentions: “It’s fun to have something organized tonight. It allows me to do something other than go to the bar.” The next day, the same person said that he usually has trouble sleeping and that night, following the colouring activity, he had no trouble falling asleep.
- A colouring activity attracted several young people from the Maison des jeunes. The evening was pleasant, some young people coloured, others played card games. We have observed young people occupying the downtown area, which is very much in line with the Comité participation citoyenne jeunesse (see [Initiative #9](#)), who wants young people to occupy more public space.
- At a Halloween decorating event, we had the chance to connect people of all ages, cultures, and economic classes. French students were present, users of a community organization, elderly ladies attending the Centre des femmes, and girls and young women were present. Some of them dared to go towards the unknown, to experience something they had never done in their lives.
- During an activity, some men talked together about their experiences, their marriage and divorce, their personal difficulties. Outside the group, a man was colouring and listening. At the end of the evening, we validated with that man if he enjoyed his evening, he answered that he likes to listen to the other men’s story, it allowed him to think and learn. At the end of the activity, one of the men thanked us for putting him at ease, and to have allowed him to have a good time and to open up to others. After the event, one of the men thanked us for making him comfortable and allowing him to have a good time and share with others. This man admitted having no one to talk to during the day.

Several lessons emerge from this experience:

- Competitive activities do not foster social interactions because participants focus on their performance and hope to win.
- Artistic activities are more popular than other types of activity, attracting around fifteen participants each time.
- The activities offered during the holiday season are not very popular. Consideration should be given in not scheduling activities during this time of year.
- Many of the men reached by Mercredis en bonne compagnie. Men who participate have a lot to say, they have a great need to ventilate. This sometimes requires adjustments to the planned formula to take the time to talk with them (active listening) and to foster the creation of links between them.
- Many of the men reached by the activities are struggling with certain difficulties, which creates a heavier climate and encourages other citizens to refrain from coming. Over time, for this reason, we are losing the sense of the initiative that was meant to be inclusive and accessible to all.

Budget

- Coffee offered by a local private business;
- Purchase of food = about \$50;
- Purchase of equipment for activities, most of which was provided in the form of donations or loans = approximately \$50;
- Printing of a hundred posters in colour = negligible costs.



Les Mercredis en bonne compagnie présentent...

CRÉATION DE DÉCORATIONS DE NOËL

12 décembre 2018
18h00 à 20h00
Matériel fourni sur place
Activité gratuite

Bienvenue à tous !

5480, rue de la Gare, Lac-Mégantic

A collage of images showing various Christmas decorations. It includes two snow globes with snowman faces, several blue and white jars with snowflake patterns, a red jar with a Santa Claus face, and a green jar with a Christmas tree and a red jar with a Santa Claus face. There are also some bottles decorated with winter themes.

INITIATIVE #12

EMERGENCY PLAN REVISION

Context

The city of Lac-Mégantic has been and continues to be a much-sought-after instance, since the tragedy of July 6, 2013. The employees and executives of Ville de Lac-Mégantic represent a portion of the community that was highly exposed to the 2013 disaster. They were indeed pivotal people, both for the emergency response as for the communications to the population, because of their knowledge and their proximity to the community. They had to be very adaptable and accept overload of work, while at the same time being citizens themselves impacted by the tragedy. The organizational and individual health within this municipality is therefore of concern: it must be considered.

Beyond the immediate response to the tragedy, Lac-Mégantic is a pillar organization in a context of physical, economic, and social reconstruction following this event. The state of health of its staff is obviously a condition for success of this reconstruction. Given that employees are involved in the reconstruction project, it is hoped that the reconstruction process will be beneficial, not prejudicial, for them.

Lac-Mégantic must also update its emergency plan following the 2013 tragedy. To involve employees and executives in the project delivery process, the city is requesting the collaboration of the Outreach Team. There is a desire for a participatory and inclusive approach to the review of the City's emergency plan.

The Outreach Team sees this as an opportunity for the staff to talk about their experiences (both as an employee and as citizens), to contribute to the city's learning in terms of emergency planning and to close a loop in relation to the 2013 tragedy. In other words, we must recognize and take advantage of this unique expertise that has been developed over the last five years among the staff of Ville de Lac-Mégantic. In addition, this is a good opportunity to promote and provide access to psychosocial services for those who express the need for it.

In collaboration with those responsible for reviewing the emergency plan, the Outreach Team is mandated to organize and hold a group meeting and to ensure that the process remains beneficial to the community participants throughout the project. The team wants a real contribution from all the individuals involved in the process. The city is very open to the idea that revising this emergency plan will allow the contribution of the employees and executives of Ville de Lac-Mégantic. This project will also explore the results of Enquêtes de la santé populationnelle estrienne (Population Health Surveys—ESPE) in relation to post-traumatic stress symptoms to normalize and demystify the request for help.

The context is ideal because, to carry out this type of exercise, there must be some distance from the tragic event. The revision of the emergency plan therefore becomes a pretext for the Outreach Team to go and verify the condition of the people, normalize the symptoms present and offer the services in line with the needs expressed. This process can even inspire the municipality for future projects where citizen involvement will be restorative in a post-tragedy context.

Purpose and objectives

The purpose of this project is to update the city of Lac-Mégantic's emergency plan by involving the City's employees in a real contribution perspective. The primary objectives of the project are:

- To provide employees and managers with a venue to discuss the event of July 6, 2013, and its impact;
- Enable a real contribution from city employees and managers (so that their experience and expertise serve);
- Ensure that the process of updating the City's emergency plan is beneficial to individuals;
- Ensure that the process is reflected in the deliverable, so that the revised emergency plan reflects City's staff and management and their expertise.

The project also has secondary objectives:

- Build on the data collection approach developed under the Lessons Learned project (from a citizen perspective) (see [Initiative #7](#));
- Demystify and standardize psychosocial needs with municipal employees and managers;
- Inform about available resources and facilitate access to psychosocial assistance as needed by municipal employees and managers;
- Strengthen the links between the Outreach Team and the municipality;
- Demonstrate that making room for employees in the decision-making process is beneficial for everyone, even though it may add to the process.

Managers and partners

The people involved in this project are the Outreach Team and the Direction générale de la Ville de Lac-Mégantic.

Actions and outcomes

The project is divided into major phases, including clarifying the mandate of the Outreach Team, planning of the animation, organizing the activity, conducting the activity (in the form of a large group with 17 participants) and synthesizing the data. The focus group topics are based on the CHAMPSS framework, which describes the resilience of communities according to the functional capacity approach. It should be noted that two members of the Outreach Team participate in the activity, as a facilitator and observer respectively. The Observer is responsible for 1) analyzing the focus group content using his/her personal notes and 2) synthesizing the content by identifying the key lessons learned and the recommendations of the municipal staff and managers.

In a more detailed way, here are the main actions that are performed.

Actions	Outcomes	Deadline
Promote citizen participation in an inclusive way	Meaning of real contribution by municipal employees and managers.	Winter 2019
Give a space for discussing issues related to the 2013 tragedy	A focus group for municipal employees and managers to share their stories, make sense of the event and close a loop. This is the first-time municipal representatives have had the opportunity to share their experience related to the 2013 events. Normalization of new and recurrent symptoms. Screening for psychosocial issues and offering services as needed.	Winter 2019
Strengthen partnerships and the driving forces of the community	Recognizing the world's unique expertise of municipal employees and managers.	Winter 2019
Draw from experiences	Collecting, analyzing and synthesizing data. This work is integrated in the synthesis resulting from the project "Lessons learned (from a citizen perspective)". Integrating into the City's emergency plan the apprenticeships appointed by municipal employees and managers.	To be determined

Here are some quotes showing the effects of this project:

- "It's the first time we talk about it, we never took the time to do it."
- "Interesting to hear others, it helps to understand and realize that everyone has put their strengths to work."

The risks and issues to be considered in this project are as follows:

- The process is not taken seriously;
- The steps of this project cause an overload of work for the people concerned and the people involved in it;
- There is a weakening of the links between the Outreach Team and the city staff;
- The people targeted and involved have expectations that are too high in relation to the time allowed to complete this project;
- The results obtained by this approach do not match the expected results;
- The content of the exchanges is not taken into account during the revision of the emergency plan;
- The initial contract does not meet the expectations of the City's staff and the general management.

Budget

- Logistical aspects during the focus group assumed by the Ville de Lac-Mégantic;
- All other required resources are assumed by the Outreach Team.

INITIATIVE #13

THE INCREDIBLE EDIBLES

Context

During the one-day think tank held in March 2016 (see description on [page 2](#)), the creation of a space to speak appeared as one of the priorities for action. The Accorderie du Granit, responsible for updating it, used the pretext of the collective garden to promote a place of meeting and discussion. With the collaboration of the municipality, a first garden was erected on land near the Marina, that of the old harbour master's office. This place has always been dear to the people of Mégantic and giving it life encouraged the emergence of a meeting place. The guardian of the garden, a worker of the organization, played an educational role regarding the collective character of the garden and facilitated the discussions with passers-by.

The Accorderie du Granit got it right on target at the inauguration of the collective garden. Gardening has become a pretext for citizens to meet and collectively take care of a simple and unifying project. It has become a concrete example of successful “doing together”. After having moved near the station, this evolutionary project led to the adhesion to the international movement of Incredible Edibles. (<http://lesincroyablescomestibles.fr/canada/>). It is a citizen and member of the *Société méganticoise d'horticulture et écologie* who extended the invitation to the group already involved.



In the summer of 2019, Lac-Mégantic joined the movement with a well-engaged citizen committee.

Purpose and objectives

Les Incredible Edibles is a participatory citizen and solidarity-based approach resulting from a voluntary impulse of giving and sharing. It belongs to all citizen gardeners in solidarity, their friends and supporters, who fully subscribe to the fundamental values and principles of the movement:



- Create edible spaces in all sectors of the city;
- Allow the participation of citizens at different stages of culture;
- Develop in partnership with the municipality and the various actors in the field of public spaces in a gourmet landscapes;
- Develop the knowledge and know-how of gardening for citizens;
- Build partnerships with the various organizations concerned with food security.

Manager and partners

- Manager: The Outreach team;
- Partners: Citizens, Municipality of Lac-Mégantic, Société méganticoise d'horticulture et d'écologie.

Actions and outcomes

Actions	Outcomes	Deadline
Build the first collective garden	Space for meeting and discussions between citizens. Better knowledge of the collective movement. Creation of the festive event the <i>Fête des récoltes</i> (Harvest Festival).	Summer 2016
Move the collective garden to the station	Increased visibility of the movement. Contribution to the animation of the last accessible site on the main street destroyed by the tragedy. Contribution to the development of citizen empowerment. Centralization of the citizen movement to the animation of the city centre by allowing the development of Tuesdays animated by Accorderie.	Summer 2017
Relocate the bins on the site of the station	Organizing of activities of the Place éphémère facilitated by the freeing of the site. Increase the social acceptability of the project by creating a better harmonization of the layout. Creation of opportunities for twinning activities with the Public Market.	Summer 2018
Join the Incredible Edibles Movement	Creation of the Incredible Edibles Committee Contribute to the municipality's Cittaslow ¹⁷ certification. Gathering of citizens and organizations. Pooling of community strengths. Sharing of knowledge. Space for citizen participation at different levels (committee, culture, interview).	Summer 2019—to this day

Budget

- The Outreach Team invests human resources for the animation of the groups;
- Participants devote personal time to it;
- The constructed bins were made from recycled materials;
- \$ 1000 from the start of the project for the purchase of soil, potting soil, fertilizer, seeds, paint, prints and graphic design service.



¹⁷ <https://www.cittaslow.org/>

INITIATIVE #14

FRIGODONS

Context

Food waste has been the focus of statistics for several years. According to Recyc-Québec in Canada, the number of avoidable residues is estimated at 11.2 million tonnes. Avoidable residues are still consumable foods that could be eaten, particularly fruits and vegetables, bakery products, dairy products, and eggs.

Beyond waste, food security remains an important issue for many people, and the community of Lac-Mégantic is not immune to this reality. It is a social determinant of health on which the Outreach Team wishes to act. There are many needs for food. Requests for developing knowledge about food are also received, particularly by young people.

Interventions targeting food security, while meeting a basic need, also serve as a pretext for building more links in the community. Activities and citizen participation remain important elements of this project, which involves several aims that go well beyond the war against food waste.

Purpose and objectives

The main goal of the project is to work with different actors in the community to reduce food waste and to give access to food to all those who need it. The specific goals are:

- Develop a partnership with various actors to reduce food waste;
- Raise awareness among distributors (grocery stores, restaurants, cafeteria services, etc.) on the importance of food redistribution;
- Provide a space accessible to citizens where they can find free food;
- Create a space for sharing for any citizen who wishes to give to the next;
- Educate people on healthy eating, introduce new foods and share food conservation tips;
- Involve citizens in the transportation of food and the maintenance of the refrigerator so that they can develop a sense of real contribution.

Managers and partners

Managers: The Outreach Team, Centre d'action bénévole (CAB) du Granit, Les solutions gourmandes project of the Corporation de développement communautaire du Granit (CDC), Société d'aide au développement communautaire, Owner of the premises;

Partners: Volunteering citizens, food distributors, the Québec food bank network, and other contributors.

Actions

2017

- L'Accorderie du Granit, CAB du Granit and Point jeunesse du Granit decide to focus on food security and reducing food waste;
- Inspired by the different self-serve refrigerator projects around the world, they bought a refrigerator that was made available to the community;
- The location chosen for this self-serve refrigerator is close to the team, which creates an opportunity to reach a new clientele. In this way, the Outreach Team joins the project and eventually becomes its co-leader with CAB du Granit.

2018-2019

- The fridge committee meets Corporation de développement de l'entrepreneuriat collectif (CDEC) of Sherbrooke to join the Frigo FreeGo project (<https://cdec-sherbrooke.ca/frigos-free-go/>);
- During the summer, the FreeGo fridge is located outside, behind the heritage train station in downtown Lac-Mégantic and is located inside the Outreach Team premises during the winter;
- A round of restaurant owners is organized to encourage companies to take their unsold goods to the FreeGo fridge;
- Consideration is given to the possibility of building a shelter for the fridge for it to remain outside all winter. Urban planning issues then do not allow the project to succeed;
- In the winter 2019, the Outreach Team is moving to the basement of the City Hall along with the refrigerator. The donations are more difficult since access to the refrigerator is impossible during office closing hours.

2020

- The Frigo FreeGo Committee integrates the CDC du Granit into the team through the Les solutions gourmandes Project Manager;
- The Committee chose to withdraw from the Frigo FreeGo banner in order to have a unique donation and collect plan. The Frigo FreeGo then becomes FrigoDons;
- The partnership between the Food Bank and the project Les solutions gourmandes allows FrigoDons to recover three times a week the unsold products of the FlashFood project of the Maxi Lac-Mégantic grocery store. Les solutions gourmandes is also committed to providing 10 servings of meals per week to FrigoDons;
- A citizen expresses her willingness to host the FrigoDons in her home so that it can remain accessible outside all year long. This citizen is actively involved in the project Committee and represents the citizens who visit the FrigoDons;
- An article in the local newspaper and a publication to all community organizations as well as to the Centre local de services communautaires (CLSC) and the police station are used to publicize the project and to name donation and collection rules;
- Two citizens offer two storage shelves to the project, available close to the fridge. The Committee decides to allow canning and toy donations and trades through these storage shelves;
- Another citizen is using the shelves to start a project to collect and redistribute winter accessories. Through this project called Petits joyeux d'hiver (Little Winter Joys), every daycare centre and schools of Lac-Mégantic receives spare tuques, mittens and neck warmers for children who need them. FrigoDons offers a space for donations and uses its Facebook page to publicize Petits joyeux d'hiver;
- A volunteer project allows the FrigoDons Committee to join Carrefour Jeunesse emploi to build a permanent shed. A local cabinetmaker, helped by an apprentice citizen, will build the FrigoDons

shed. The local recycling depot, the Chiffonnier, offered a generous donation to allow the project realization;

- Other distributors in the area are approached. A convenience store with a ready-to-eat service also become an important contributor for the fridge project;
- Posters on food conservation offering advice and recipes are created by an Outreach Team nutrition trainee and shared in the project's Facebook page;
- Given that the volunteers' involvement goes beyond the tasks related to FrigoDons, the Outreach Team decided to train two of the volunteers in the Red Cross psychological first aid approach (see [Initiative #21](#)). These volunteers then become the eyes and ears that enable the Team to be aware of the difficulties experienced by the users of the fridge and consequently to offer the appropriate services.

2021

- The FrigoDons Committee continues its partnership with the CAB and with Les solutions gourmandes. Volunteers actively involved in the maintenance of the refrigerator become important partners and ensure the transportation of the food between the various organizations four days a week. As a token of appreciation, each volunteer received a warm meal from Les solutions gourmandes project and is allowed to choose four items from the fridge on each trip;
- The Quebec food bank network is approached to help the two partner organizations improve the collection of food from local grocery stores.

Next

- The FrigoDons volunteers are more and more involved in collecting food directly from the grocery stores;
- The Committee must contact other grocery stores and install a second FrigoDons in another sector of the town;
- Since the grounds that accommodate FrigoDons is already used as an Incredible Edibles garden (see [Initiatives #14](#)), citizens want to liven up the space all summer long. The goals are to create social life around the FrigoDons and to provide popular education on healthy eating, food conservation and transformation.

Outcomes

- Currently, the FrigoDons is being filled up to four times a week and nothing is being thrown away. The citizens who are living in the nearby area say they notice a high level of traffic and a diversity of clientele;
- Even frozen food is collected. A woman thanked us on the Facebook page of the project by mentioning that she uses uncollected food (lettuce and jelly) to feed her animals;
- The residents of the neighbourhood expressed their satisfaction to see this animated space and the Team notes that they act as protectors of the project;
- Users contact the Team to become volunteers and do their part in the fridge maintenance;
- Regular consultations between the organizations lead to an improved partnership. A broadened volunteer offer emerges. The goal is to involve volunteer users, to lead them towards greater citizen participation through other committees or through the CAB;



- Users are referred to the services of the Les solutions gourmandes project that make ready-to-eat meals available at a lower cost;
- The Frigo project provides a space for discussions on food, sharing and citizen participation;
- Volunteers are very involved and use FrigoDons as a way to start other projects;
- Food donation partners are personally involved in improving food retrieval in their own businesses.

Budget

The refrigerator was bought by the CAB. A citizen offered the project a second refrigerator that she paid herself.

A shed was built to house the fridge and the shelf cabinet. A budget of nearly \$9,000 was shared between the CIUSSS de l'Estrie – CHUS, the Chiffonnier recycling depot, a Carrefour Jeunesse Emploi volunteer project and a local cabinetmaker.

The transportation of food and the fridge maintenance are voluntary by the citizens. In exchange for their services, they have access to a full meal from Les solution gourmandes project and the right to choose four items from the fridge.



From left to right: Cindy Stewart, Jo Cooper, Audrey Auclair, Philippe Foley, H el ene Touchette

INITIATIVE #15

RLS DU GRANIT CARING COMMITTEE

Context

In the context of the establishment of the CIUSSS de l’Estrie – CHUS, April 1, 2015, which implied a shift in the organization and governance of the health and social services network, the employees of this network had to adapt to many changes. For many, this has resulted in a loss of bearings as well as a decrease in work enjoyment. Some also mention that they feel a decrease in their sense of belonging to work. The Outreach Team is approached by network employees to support them in their need to take care of themselves, but also of their colleagues.

Purpose and objectives

The RLS du Granit Caring Committee has three main goals:

- Its training was first initiated by the desire of colleagues to take care of themselves, but also of others;
- The Committee was also motivated by the desire to have moments of reflection between colleagues, to be able to ventilate and discuss on what they are experiencing on their own and ultimately to succeed in giving meaning to what is happening to them;
- Another goal of the Committee is to create opportunities for network employees to contribute and increase the sense of belonging in the workplace.

Manager and partners

- Manager: The Outreach team;
- Partners: Employees and retirees of CIUSSS de l’Estrie – CHUS, RLS du Granit.

Actions and outcomes

Actions	Outcomes	Deadline
Conduct recruitment activities and establish a committee of employees of CIUSSS de l’Estrie – CHUS, RLS du Granit	Recruitment is an opportunity for employees to meet new people since people come from different sectors of activity. It also allows to get a sense of what is happening in various work areas and to begin to think together on what everyone wants.	February to March 2020
Organize an “acknowledgement” activity at essential businesses in the city of Lac-Mégantic	The activity having been organized in the evening, at the closing time of businesses and in an anonymous way, it is widely published the following day on social media. A wave of encouragement and gratitude message were published. This activity allows employees who participated to see the positive impact of “simple” caring actions on themselves and others.	April 2020

Actions	Outcomes	Deadline
Plan and conduct a humorous activity for the employees of CIUSSS de l'Estrie – CHUS, RLS du Granit	The theme variation from one week to the next fostered the punctual contribution of many employees. The Organizing Committee has also welcomed the contribution of RLS du Granit retirees.	April to May 2020
Plan festive, lively outdoors suppers for RLS du Granit employees	These moments allow employees to take a pause and go outside. Each week, a suggested game allowed employees to enjoy a moment of rest, to relax. These employees say that it is a good thing not to talk about work.	May to August 2020
Organize two outdoors physical activities for RLS du Granit employees (walking club and jogging club)	Implement health and healthy lifestyle environments in the workplace. These group activities for employees promote the creation of relationships and the sharing of common interests. There is an increased sense of contribution among the members of the Organizing Committee.	September to November 2020 (Shutdown due to COVID-19 health restrictions in the red zone)
Create a tool called “courrier du cœur” (heart mail) to share by email		October 2020

Budget

- No budget required to run this activity;
- Voluntary participation of different representatives.



Courrier du cœur...

Pour se faire du bien en cette période difficile, le Comité Bienveillant du RLS du Granit te propose un échange de messages qui viennent du cœur.

À toi de jouer!

Remercier un collègue, complimenter notre supérieur, souligner le bon travail d'un employé qu'on connaît de près ou même de loin...quelques mots suffisent! Bref, un courriel à la manière d'une chaîne de lettres qu'il ne faut surtout pas briser!

Copie cette explication, puis ajoute ton message personnalisé. Envoie le tout par courriel à 3 personnes de ton choix.

Que cette vague de reconnaissance se répande beaucoup plus vite que le virus à travers le CIUSSS-CHUS et plus loin encore!

INITIATIVE #16

PHOTOVOIX JEUNESSE

Context

The first Photovoix project emerged from a proposal put forward at the 2016 one-day Think Tank (see description on [page 2](#)). This project was part of the positive campaign supported by the Table des partenaires du Granit. The “Photovoix” is a participatory approach in which participants are given the opportunity to express themselves on what impacts their lives or is important to them. This project has had very interesting benefits for the community (see [Initiative #2](#)).

In 2020, in a context of pandemic and the necessary health measures, including the temporary closing of schools, the Outreach Team wanted to use the Photovoix experience to enable young people in the region to share their experiences. This project is part of the major theme Arts and Health proposed by the Outreach Team (see [Theme #2](#)). Having heard about the project, the Société de développement économique du Granit (SDEG) proposed to the Outreach Team to use funds earmarked for cultural development in this Photovoix project dedicated to the young citizens to allow hiring of a professional photographer and enhance the experience of youth.

The project team was created in collaboration with the Outreach team and the hired photographer. Photovoix jeunesse was launched in October 2020. The group of students aged 14 to 17 from Polyvalente Montignac met on a weekly basis for six weeks.

Every Tuesday evening from 4 p.m. to 6:15 p.m., the teenagers identify a topic on which they wish to discuss as a group, then photos are taken to depict this discussion. The following week, participants shares their favourite photographs with the rest of the group. The facilitators then question the young citizens in order to raise awareness and to introduce a new theme for the following week.

In addition, at each session, a moment is reserved with the photographer to guide the participants and suggest various techniques. To conclude the activity well, an exhibition is organized. The exhibition takes various forms, including a virtual exhibition and another at the school, depending on the choice of the participants. It should be noted that the objective of the exhibition is twofold, namely, to offer a platform for young people to share their achievements and to invite observers to express themselves on the chosen themes.

Purpose and objectives

- Allow young people to discuss their experiences in connection with the context of the pandemic (end of the school year, return to school, confinement) and on any other subject of interest to them;
- Share their own interests and learn to express them through the art of photography;
- Develop technical photography skills;
- Use the region’s public transport service on a weekly basis and thereby develop their autonomy;
- Every week, discover a new location and meet different key players in the community (MRC du Granit, Constellation du Granit, Mégantic sports centre and local team).

Managers and partners

- Managers: The social worker and trainee of the Outreach Team, local development agent at the SDEG and a professional photographer;
- Partners: MRC du Granit, Trans autonomie public transit, Polyvalente Montignac, Club photo Mégantic, a citizen volunteer.

Actions

June 2020

- Hiring of the photographer and training of the group of Photovoix jeunesse animators (i.e., the managers and co-managers of the project);
- Recruitment of young people via social networks, word of mouth in the community, and emails with all youth workers in the MRC.

July 2020

- First meeting between the Photovoix jeunesse team and two young people who have shown interest in participating in the project. A photography course is offered to the young participants and the decision to postpone the start of the project until the beginning of the school year is taken, to allow more young citizens to participate.

September 2020

- A second recruitment is made and the group is then composed of five young people;
- First meeting of the group which takes place on land adjacent to the polyvalente Montignac. The other meetings were approved;
- The group then meets weekly for five other weeks, each time in different places;
- Participation in the filming of the documentary “L’adaptation” by Karina Marceau and Boucar Diouf on life after COVID-19, which was released in January 2021¹⁸;
- The group must temporarily stop the meetings because of the tightening of sanitary measures. It was agreed to let a few weeks pass before planning the rest of the project with the young people.

November 2020

- The Photovoix jeunesse Team gets in contact with potential partners, namely the polyvalente Montignac, the Métissage art gallery and the Club photo Mégantic in order to define possible options for the continuation of the project;
- Modulation of group meetings via the Teams platform to plan the exhibition;
- Recruitment of a volunteer citizen to prepare a virtual exhibition in the form of a video.

Décember 2020

- Planning and organization of upcoming exhibitions in January 2021;
- Virtual Photovoix exhibition¹⁹.

¹⁸ <https://ici.tou.tv/l-adaptation>

¹⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/equipede proximite/videos/210560687481682>

Outcomes

The Photovoix jeunesse project has had impacts at both individual and group level. Indeed, all the participants said they had a rewarding experience. They discovered an exciting activity in which they were able to ventilate and forget school for a while, among other things.

At the group level, a real cohesion was created, and young people quickly developed self-help reflexes although they all have very different ages and personalities. Some of them also mentioned having dared to go beyond their shyness to express themselves in front of others, because they felt confident.

The contribution of the professional photographer was also an asset. The facilitators had the chance to see them progress in an impressive way in terms of the quality of their photos, throughout the project. They saw teenagers develop their self-confidence and present photos that they were prouder of each week. The photographer also expresses his pleasure to have participated in such a project and his wish to repeat the experience.

The mother of a participant took the time to personally thank the project facilitators. She expresses that her daughter has really “had fun with the class” and adds: “It is not easy to stimulate teenagers to get them out of their comfort zone.

You are a great team!”

Budget

An amount of \$4000 financed by the cultural committee of the SDEG:

- For the hiring of the photographer;
- For collective transport for teenagers;
- For the photo exhibition (\$300).



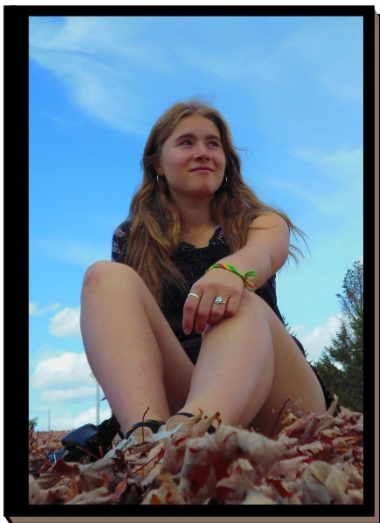
PHOTOVOIX

**TU VEUX CONNAÎTRE DES TRUCS EN PHOTOGRAPHIE?
TU AS ENTRE 14 ET 17 ANS?
TU AS LE GOÛT DE JASER?**

C'est 6 rencontres où nous pourrons apprendre les rudiments de la photographie avec un photographe professionnel, à partir d'un échange sur ce que ces derniers mois nous ont fait vivre.

Pour inscription ou information communique avec **Audrey Auclair -TS** sur messenger ou appelle au 819-583-0700

Première rencontre le mardi 8 septembre 16h00



Elle a la vie devant elle. Elle peut faire ce qu'elle veut sans se soucier des autres
Coralie Boucher - 14 ans



INITIATIVE #17

CARING PARCEL

Context

In March 2020, the announcement of a general lockdown shook all of Quebec. Quickly concerns about the impacts of this lockdown were mentioned by various members of the Granit community.

In this community, many actors are concerned about the impact that the closure of schools and daycare centres will have on families in vulnerable situations. For many children, this is the only social safety net they have. The school and the daycare allow some children to leave their difficult family environment and provide an important reference point for the professionals who work with them. No longer having access to children and families, education and health professionals wish to work together.

In conjunction with the community organizer of the RLS du Granit, the Outreach Team proposes to bring together several youth actors from the MRC to reflect together to collectively address this concern. From this reflection will come the idea of creating a caring parcel to support families living in more difficult contexts.

Purpose and objectives

The Caring Parcel is used as a tool to enable people (e.g., psychosocial workers, teachers, school administrators) to take care of families.

It is also intended to be a concrete to build a caring community (see [Theme #5](#)).

Objectives:

- To provide the child with a pleasant moment;
- Provide support to the adult who has the role of parent;
- Offer parents a treat to relax and have a moment of rest;
- Play without pressure with their children;
- By delivering the parcel, give the caring person the opportunity to communicate to the receiver that they wish to take care of them;
- Connect adults to community resources if they have needs.

Managers and partners

- Managers: The Outreach Team, CIUSSS de l'Estrie – CHUS Community Organizer, and Constellation du Granit;
- Partners: Maison de la famille, CIUSSS de l'Estrie – CHUS (child, Youth Family Sector and Centre jeunesse [CJ]), elementary schools, CPE, La bouée (shelter for women and children victims of domestic violence), food bank and community volunteers.

Actions

April 2020

- The Outreach Team and the RLS du Granit Community Organizer lead a co-development session with the initial question: “How, in the context of a pandemic, can we take care of families in vulnerable situations?” Actors from schools, communities, the network of childcare centres and health (child, youth, family, and youth sectors) are invited to attend. From this meeting emerge several possible solutions, including one that proposes to share the task of being benevolent with the entire community.

May 2020

- Training of a working committee on the Caring Parcel project which initiates the reflection. It is currently important to determine the composition of the parcel and to ensure that the content is simple and accessible, both for the child and for the parents. Whenever possible, buying locally as well as from small businesses is encouraged.

June 2020

- A second co-development session is held. The goal is to use the parcel as a tool to develop goodwill in the community. The initial question for reflection is: “How could one develop this reflex of kindness?”
- La Patate bienveillante (see [Initiative #18](#)) becomes the project carrier;
- The Committee approaches schools, the Maison de la famille, the CPE network and the health network (children, youth, and family sector) and suggests that they target families for whom this parcel can make a difference. It is requested that the person targeting the family undertakes to write a personal note which will be delivered with the parcel;
- Citizens come to help the Committee prepare the parcels for delivery;
- Several communities themselves organize a distribution network for parcels to the families they have targeted. Half of these are then delivered before the end of the school year.

September 2020

- The Committee wishes to resume the distribution of the remaining parcels and tries to join the people who did not respond to the call in June 2020. New people are joining the project.

November and December 2020 and January 2021

- A citizen came voluntarily to prepare the parcels which were not yet ready;
- Discussions with partners make it possible to target other areas and distribute the remaining parcels in a more targeted manner.

February 2021

- In total, 150 parcels were delivered.

March 2021

- The Committee took stock of the project from which emerged the idea to reach the parcel donors again to get their feedback and assess whether the project has indeed been a bearer of benevolence, from their perspective. A simple survey consisting of four questions is developed and sent to everyone.

Outcomes

- 150 families, spread throughout the MRC, received a parcel as well as a personalized note from a person who wanted to take care of them;
- The parcel made it possible to put forward five initiatives and organizations in the region from which families can benefit;
- The employees of the co-development sessions describe their pleasure in participating in such reflections. During the second meeting, a participant noted that “we had just experienced a moment of goodwill” and suggested that we became fully aware of what we were currently experiencing;
- A volunteer citizen shared the pleasure he had in participating in the project. He explained that he felt like Santa Claus preparing gifts for the children. He would like to come back if possible for other similar activities;
- Health network actors mobilized to deliver certain parcels to remote villages;
- All the sectors that were approached expressed their gratitude for having access to this tool;
- The Parcel project is featured in Karina Marceau and Boucar Diouf’s documentary, L’Adaptation²⁰. This allowed the approach to be put forward and the project to be known outside the region. Since the documentary was broadcast, citizens and organizations have been contacting the Outreach Team to find out more about the project in order to adapt it to their community.

Budget

- \$15,000 non-recurring (funded by the Lucie and André Chagnon Foundation Avenir d’enfants);
- The distribution is made by citizens, whether as part of their function or on a voluntary basis.



²⁰ <https://ici.tou.tv/l-adaptation>

INITIATIVE #18

“PATATES BIENVEILLANTES” COMIC STRIP

Context

By March 2020, the pandemic was shaking up the different spheres of daily life and changing the way the Outreach Team met the local population. Quickly, the team realized that certain themes often came up during discussions with citizens and the conflicts that were reported by them. The Team then wonders about a playful way to help everyone to develop a kindness towards themselves and others.

Considering that the population was already saturated with information, coming from social networks, school, and professional communications, as well as health instructions issued by the authorities, the team opted for the development of a very simple and visually attractive information tool. The idea for the comic strip called “Patates bienveillantes” was born in partnership with a public health worker specializing in a positive intervention approach with children and youth.

The image of the potato is chosen as a visual to personify the people inside these comics, as much for its funny side, as for its neutral and universal form. Its content of the comic is inspired by what is experienced in our community to offer models of positive reactions and give everyone the power to go through different situations or emotions. Created in a participatory fashion, the “Patates bienveillantes” comic strip aims to bring stories to life and shed light on everyone’s concerns.

Purpose and objectives

- Create fun and visually appealing landmark to highlight the importance of taking care of oneself and others;
- Offer concrete and positive examples of benevolence;
- Allow citizens and organizations to contribute by calling on the local team to propose and reflect together on a new “Patates bienveillantes” comic strip;
- Illustrate delicate subjects that can lead to conflicts and bring a complementary point of view;
- Normalize the different emotions that can be experienced in the situation and suggest a reflection on what can be done.

Manager and partners

- Manager: The Outreach Team;
- Partners: Positive intervention worker, agencies, citizens, Table de concertation des personnes âgées (TCPA) of MRC du Granit, community television.

Actions

May 2020

- Creation of a comic strip about what is heard and seen;
- Distribution of comic strip on the Outreach Team Facebook page;
- Proposal for a definition of benevolence;
- Discussion with partners on the “Patates bienveillantes” concept.

June 2020

- The image of a potato was chosen as a logo now appearing on the Caring Parcel (see [Initiative #17](#));
- Creation of a caring committee to reflect on the development of the movement;
- Using the comic strip in the Walking Cube health capsules (see [Initiative #5](#)) to trigger discussion with participants about their experiences with the pandemic situation.

October 2020

- Use of comic strips during a business meeting and in school meeting to open the discussion on the health instructions and the emotions experienced in the context;
- Distribution of “Patates” postcards to confined seniors in a retirement home (RPA);
- Creation of a partnership between the Outreach Team and the TCPA Development Agent. An article is written by the Team in the Ensemble Bulletin, a monthly newsletter intended for seniors in Granit, to talk about the Patate. The comic strip is then published there monthly.

Upcoming

- The goal is to bring the Patate to life through more traditional media (radio, newspapers);
- The Team is exploring a possible partnership with a filmmaker who is interested in helping the Team animate the Patate comic strips for broadcast on television.

Outcomes

The comic strip “Patates bienveillantes” was quickly adopted by the whole community. Whenever it is used or proposed, it brings a smile to people’s faces.

The Team notes that comic strips are very interesting tools for imagining abstract concepts and opening discussions with different types of clientele. They can also be transposed into all kinds of situations and therefore become tools that can be used and reused in various contexts.

Budget

- The Outreach Team invested human and material resources;
- Purchase of the Canva Pro® graphic design tool, to build the comic strips;
- Printing and laminating of certain comic strips, used as visual support during presentations.

La bienveillance c'est quoi?

«J'entends parler de bienveillance, je ne sais même pas ce que ça veut dire. Toi, le sais-tu?»

«La bienveillance, c'est quand on fait des choix de gestes, de paroles ou d'attitudes nous permettant de veiller au bien-être des autres. Ça peut être simple comme faire un sourire aux gens qu'on croisent, éviter de juger trop vite, reconnaître les forces des autres, etc. En plus, il est reconnu qu'il fait autant de bien d'être bienveillant que d'en recevoir.»

Restons BIENVEILLANTS envers nous et les autres!

Ce qui teinte ma décision face au retour à l'école ?

L'heure de Ma décision
Chacun fait de son mieux dans la situation et prendra la meilleure décision pour sa famille.

Les apprentissages
sociaux, affectifs, cognitifs ABC

Le travail

Le virus

Restons BIENVEILLANTS envers nous et les autres!

Je me sens ... face à la pandémie

envie de rien: pffffff !!!

colère: RAAHH

tristesse

stress/anxiété

Tout ça est normal.
Restons BIENVEILLANTS envers nous et les autres

Je me sens ... face à la pandémie

Je vais bien mais je comprends que tout le monde réagit à sa façon.

Restons BIENVEILLANTS envers nous et les autres

INITIATIVE #19

STORY TELLING

Context

An international survey on the psychosocial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic was carried out by a team of researchers from the University of Sherbrooke, in collaboration with many national and international partners. One of the findings of this survey is that, since the start of the pandemic, moderate to severe symptoms of generalized anxiety and major depression in the adult population are very frequent, and in much higher proportions than before the pandemic²¹.

Of all the factors examined in this study, the sense of coherence is by far the factor most strongly related to psychological health during a pandemic. The sense of coherence plays a central role in the theory of salutogenesis which is concerned with what generates health rather than what generates disease. The sense of coherence is therefore the capacity that people must cope with stressful situations and is made up of three interdependent components, such as:

- 1) comprehensibility (understanding life experiences);
- 2) manageability (the belief that you have the necessary resources to go through these lived experiences); and
- 3) meaning (meaning given to life experiences and commitment to action).

As presented earlier in the theoretical framework (see description on [page 5](#)), two major fields of action in health promotion have been identified in order to strengthen the sense of coherence and therefore the capacity to adapt to stressful situations. The first field of action is that of reflection and the second, that of empowerment.

Inspired by these two fields of action, the story telling is a technique which consists in asking one or a few open questions to a person inviting him/her to answer in a narrative form, by speaking freely. Through a person-centred approach, we seek to identify and consolidate the life experiences and actions taken that may have sustained the individual and collective emotional state in response to a stressful situation. The story telling technique in the context of psychosocial recovery makes it possible to act on both reflection and empowerment, and consequently promotes the strengthening of the feeling of coherence, both at the individual and collective level.

Purpose and objectives

This project aims to support post-COVID psychosocial recovery, by pursuing two specific objectives:

- Foster a time for reflection among citizens of the Granit community about their experiences related to the pandemic;
- Empower the citizens and the community of Granit by allowing them to tell and share their stories.

In addition, we hope to use this project in order to benefit from an intervention space with the targeted clientele, having in mind the following objectives:

- Create a caring space;
- Allow people to take a break and be introspective;

²¹ <https://nccid.ca/publications/psychosocial-impacts-of-the-covid-19/>

- Provide a space to tell stories and highlight one's own capacities to go through a crisis;
- Identify, if necessary, a vulnerable clientele and direct them to the appropriate services according to the needs expressed.

Manager and partners

- Manager: The Outreach Team (recruitment of participants and conduct of interviews);
- Partners: Mouvement Santé mentale Québec²² (project ideation), research team from Université de Sherbrooke (analysis and data interpretation).

Actions

July to mid-August 2020

- Development of the project;
 - Drafting a maintenance manual;
 - First, the interviewer explains the context of the intervention and the rules of the game: the person can end the interview at any time, the conversation is recorded for analysis purposes and the information gathered remains confidential. The signing of the consent form follows;
 - During the interview, it was best that the interviewer ask only one question and then let the participant tell their story. "Tell me how you experienced the pandemic, from March 2020 to today";
 - If the person remains focused on describing the facts only (rather than their thoughts, feelings and actions), the following sub-questions can be used: "In relation to what you just told me, how did you feel? What helped you get through this time? What were your tips? What do you retain from this experience? What have you learned?"
 - To end the interview, the interviewer asks: "How are you experiencing the pandemic now? How is it going for you?";
 - The participant was finally asked to name their age, their main occupation in life and with whom they live.
 - Have the project approved by the Ethics Committee of the CIUSSS de l'Estrie – CHUS.

Since August 2020

- Training for interviewers (the Outreach Team);
- Recruitment of participants according to the profiles sought:
 - The aim was to recruit two participants from each of the following categories: young adults, middle-aged adults (ideally a parent of children), senior in the community, senior in a residential and care centre long-term (CHSLD) or RPA, RSSS employees, essential workers outside the RSSS, politician or community leader, people who have had COVID-19 or who have been in contact with a case.
- Data collection by interviewers: a dozen interviews have been conducted so far;
- Analysis and interpretation of the results by the Université de Sherbrooke Research Team;
 - Listen again to the interviews and make written summaries of them.

²² <https://www.mouvementsmq.ca/>

Upcoming

- Continuing interviews and analysis;
- Synthesis of the various interviews (anonymously to respect each person's confidentiality) and dissemination to the community (format to be defined) to bring out collective learning.

Outcomes

For the interviewers

- Following the first interviews, the team decided to modify the interview guide to make it easier for the participant to understand what to say. Sub-questions were therefore created to help the interviewer direct the participant;
- The Outreach Team workers saw it as an opportunity to intervene with various citizens of the region who do not necessarily come to the services (see description on [page 7](#)).

For the participants

- The story telling is meant to be a liberating exercise allowing people to organize their thinking, reframe a stressful situation, and ultimately give it meaning;
- The participants generally expressed that it made them aware of everything that has happened in recent months, their personal journey through the pandemic.

For the community

- This would be an effective approach to help build engagement, trust between groups, solidarity, social cohesion and a sense of belonging, with an emphasis on reconnection and not fragmentation of connections;
- The story telling was also intended as a means of collective learning, raising awareness among the population and decision makers of the psychosocial impacts of disasters and recognizing individual or community strategies to minimize them;
- The story telling finally made it possible to reconstruct and above all, to communicate the story of the recovery of each person, by looking at the elements (individual and environmental) that have been beneficial to them. This contributed to the construction and recognition of experiential knowledge, a type of knowledge that would benefit from being crossed more with professional and scientific knowledge.

Budget

- The Outreach Team invested human resources for the different stages of the project;
- No other budget was required (analysis and interpretation of data supported by the Research Team).

INITIATIVE #20

PEER SUPPORT GROUP

Context

Following the Lac-Mégantic tragedy, several resources that could support the recovery of the community were identified through various activities. Whether through the voice of researchers and experts, or even during conferences, webinars or the Journées annuelles de santé publique²³, these resources have been invaluable in building a response to the multiple needs of our community.

The pandemic also highlighted the strengths of the Quebec community to support the recovery of individuals. Known during the Congrès mondial sur la Résilience held in Trois-Rivières in 2016, Rachel Thibeault, Professor of Occupational Therapy, made available several tools to better understand what resilience is and the means to promote it. From these proposed activities, the peer support group turned out to be a simple and accessible means for different environments²⁴.

As part of the pandemic, several community organizers working throughout the CIUSSS de l'Estrie – CHUS territory were relieved of epidemiological investigations and follow-ups of COVID-19 cases and their contacts, due to the insufficient number of staff from regular public health to meet needs. In order to support colleagues who were going through many upheavals on the professional level, the Outreach Team Community Organizer wanted to give them a moment to meet and support each other.

Purpose and objectives

In general, peer support is used to break isolation and to truly relate to others to better get through difficult times. In the context of this initiative, the objectives pursued were as follows:

- Create and lead a small group of people who had a substantial experience in common;
- Be there for each other to give and receive support;
- Experiment with a formula that can be exported to other groups of the CIUSSS de l'Estrie – CHUS.

Manager and partner

- Manager: The Outreach team;
- Partner: Rachel Thibeault, by her handbook, which is available online²⁵.

²³ <https://www.inspq.qc.ca/jasp/accueil>

²⁴ https://oraprdnt.uqtr.quebec.ca/pls/public/gscw031?owa_no_site=4150&owa_no_fiche=14

²⁵ http://www.pamq.org/assets/pdf/mettre-sur-pied-ou-rejoindre-un-groupe-de-soutien-entre-pairs-guide-accompagnement_PAMO_05-2020.pdf

Actions and outcomes

Actions	Outcomes	Deadline
Proceed to the self-training of the Support Group Facilitator	Reinforcement of empowerment by the development of individual skills and by participation.	September 2020
Hold an information session	Means made accessible to support the person in a stressful context.	October 2020
Hold bi-weekly lunch meetings	<p>Creation of a safe space for discussion and support between people who have had substantial experiences in common.</p> <p>Reduction of excess stress and feverishness.</p> <p>Step back.</p> <p>Sharing concerns, worries.</p> <p>Development of better coping mechanisms.</p> <p>Managing emotions so that although painful memories remain, they no longer interfere with people's functioning.</p> <p>A place for structured and supervised discussions to avoid slippages.</p> <p>Maintaining a constructive perspective despite the scale of the challenges.</p> <p>Strengthening of group cohesion.</p> <p>Fostering creativity and problem solving in the face of new challenges.</p>	Throughout the project

Budget

- The Outreach Team invests human resources for the animation of the groups;
- Participants devote personal time to it.

INITIATIVE #21

PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID TRAINING

Context

In the context of the global COVID-19 pandemic and its many repercussions on the community, the Outreach Team believes in the relevance of training, but also of offering the opportunity to citizens from different backgrounds to take the psychological first aid (PFA) training of the Canadian Red Cross. Two basic PFA courses are available online, namely “Caring for Yourself” and “Caring for Others”²⁶. They are short modules, each lasting 45 to 90 minutes, and adapted to the public.

Above all, PFA is about taking care for oneself to deal with the thoughts, feelings and emotions that are felt during times of stress, during a crisis or after a trauma. They are also tools to support friends, family or community having difficulty adjusting to a situation. It teaches people how to provide practical support and emotional support to individuals, families or communities who are having difficulty coping with a situation. It demonstrates the importance of connecting with people in a compassionate way in order to bring them calm and comfort.

Purpose and objectives

The goal of this project is to increase the adaptive capacities of individuals and the community in the context of disaster and post-disaster. Unlike the Mental Health First Aid program, which teaches the skills required to assist people in psychological crisis, Red Cross PFA courses aim to build resilience and develop coping strategies.

The objective of this initiative is to equip members of the Granit community, through PFA training, to recognize, connect with, support and, if necessary, direct people with signs of psychological distress to the appropriate assistance or resources.

By encouraging access to this training within the community and offering support to those who follow it, we aim to tighten the social fabric by providing concrete tools. These tools allow citizens to acquire the knowledge necessary to assist others in difficult situations.

Manager and partners

- Manager: The Outreach Team;
- Partners: Canadian Red Cross and citizens.

²⁶ <https://redcross.ca/training-and-certification/course-descriptions/psychological-first-aid>

Actions and outcomes

Actions	Outcomes	Deadline
Recruit some twenty citizens from different backgrounds to offer them basic PFA training (online)	The people recruited are mostly significant people in their work environment or with those around them (e.g.: convenience store owner, high school supervisor, grocery clerk, delivery man, receptionist at a sports centre).	December 2020 to January 2021
Register and follow basic PFA training by citizens	Thanks to this course, citizens were able to learn about the effects of stress, trauma, and bereavement, and acquire concrete tools to manage difficult situations.	December 2020 to this day
Conducting a survey of training participants to identify support needs	Adaptation of support to the real needs of citizens trained PFA.	January 2021 to this day
Participate in one-day in-depth course (Outreach Team)	Obtain the certificate in PFA More in-depth learning on how to provide PFA, based on the “do no harm” principle. Improve the quality of support for citizens who have followed basic PFA training by the Outreach Team.	February 2021
Demonstrate the usefulness and feasibility of this initiative with a view to extending it to all of Quebec	This initiative took the form of a pilot project which was then deployed more widely throughout Quebec, as part of the scout network measures announced in November 2020 by the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux ²⁷ .	Février 2021 à ce jour

Budget

- Both basic and in-depth PFA training are chargeable. For example, it costs \$20 per module to complete the basic online training;
- However, the training of the Outreach Team and the twenty or so citizens in Granit was sponsored by the Canadian Red Cross as part of a pilot project to be extended to the whole of Quebec.

²⁷ <https://open.spotify.com/episode/1EA4YeuYeELFJX6MmoGrFI?si=49de638cc454446b>

CONCLUSION

Many lessons have been identified from this unique and informative experience. First, long-term monitoring of both physical and psychological consequences through health surveys is essential. Such surveys serve as powerful tools for health promotion initiatives and advocacy on behalf of the local population. In fact, population health surveys were so helpful in terms of recognizing the full scope of local issues and needs at the community level that we recommend its use for any future major events. Such community-based studies support priority setting (e.g., targeting most at-risk populations) and promote risk-informed decision-making. In the context of the pandemic, such investigations have also led to major investments in the promotion and prevention of mental health in Quebec²⁸.

Second, we learned that the voices of various groups who are disproportionately at high-risk should be heard, in order to take into account their specific needs and capacities. It is important to take time to listen and learn from citizens and consider all members of the community as assets rather than victims. One way to better hear these voices is to offer flexible services that reach isolated people in the community where they live.

Third, no matter what the extent of the problems observed on in the field, public health must seek a balance between a deficit-based approach and an approach focusing on strengths and resources of the community. An understanding and mastery of these two approaches are therefore required for teams working in a psychosocial recovery context.

Fourth, public health practitioners, academics and leaders must collaborate closely with local organizations and citizen groups. This is fundamental for a successful recovery.

Fifth, the social reconstruction is as, if not more, important as the physical and economic reconstruction. One thing is clear: both the process and the goal contribute to the social reconstruction of the population. Putting citizens at the heart of all considerations provides more opportunities to make sense out of a chaotic situation and to contribute to the recovery of the community. Citizen participation is especially critical under complex circumstances, where economic and political considerations may tend to take precedence over citizens' interest.

Finally, we truly believe that public health organizations should capitalize on existing knowledge, to develop and apply strategies and interventions in a post-disaster context. As part of their recovery operations, they should also build knowledge by sharing experiences and lessons learned.

²⁸ <https://nccid.ca/publications/psychosocial-impacts-of-the-covid-19/>

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L'AUBE ENFIN

*D'un bel hier, un demain peut-être
Dès aujourd'hui, l'idée de l'idée
Celle du commencement
Celle du pas en avant*

*Les pieds dans l'eau
Des étoiles dans les yeux
Quelque part entre ciel et terre
Dans un écrin de verdure
Du monde debout*

*Soudés dans l'épreuve
Des hommes et des femmes
La tête et le cœur
Tournées vers la suite des choses
De la nuit, espérer la lumière
Du jour, puiser la force vive de la vie*

*Se donner la chance d'être
Avant d'avoir été*

– Paul, citoyen engagé de Lac-Mégantic

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Québec 

