

Camp Cosmos

Includes activities focused on building connections and leadership skills for children and teens.

The 2023 season at St. James United in downtown Montreal, was filled with sports, art and discovery. Over six weeks, the camp welcomed **87 children**, including **6 with special needs** and **27 new or returning Ukrainian refugee families**. A total of **15 languages** were spoken! The dynamic Leaders-in-Training played a vital role in supporting the team and developing their skills for future leadership positions.

Under the guidance of dedicated environmental and intercultural coordinators, campers enjoyed exciting city-wide adventures that broadened their horizons and deepened their connections to one another and to their community.

This year's **Environmental Program** empowered campers with practical ways to care for the planet. Through engaging outdoor and indoor activities, from farm visits to *Santropol Roulant*, to recycling workshops, campers learned about the environmental impact of animals, gardening, climate change and ecosystems. Our dynamic counselors nurtured a deep understanding of eco-conscious living, teaching campers how to make sustainable choices.

In the **Intercultural Program**, campers had the opportunity to delve into the vibrant landscape of Montreal, engaging in a variety of workshops that celebrated their unique backgrounds. Traditional dishes, pretend passports and a foray into Indigenous culture, made for a rich summer program

The **St. James Music & Dance Program**, led by Yazan Salwaha, brought extra excitement to the weekly schedule for the 7-8 year olds, and occasionally other age groups, through diverse cultural dances and music.

With new friendships formed, valuable experiences gained, and countless wonderful memories created, campers eagerly anticipate the opportunity to do it all again next summer!



Students & Volunteers

Provide front line experience to students from a wide variety of disciplines, and volunteers with an opportunity to make a unique contribution.

The impact of MCM in the community is greatly enhanced by student interns and volunteers. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine carrying out our different programs and activities without them! They not only help us provide essential services, but also strengthen community connections and a sense of belonging for all.

Students

In 2023, 4 McGill Social Work interns joined the Just Solutions Legal Clinic team, meeting with individuals seeking assistance, taking on complicated case work and carrying out research. 3 Pro Bono law students from *l'Université de Montréal* also made a much appreciated contribution to the work of the clinic.

We renewed our relationship once again with the McGill Ingram School of Nursing by welcoming two cohorts of 9 students in total. An online workshop dealt with common infectious disease in the spring of 2023 and in the fall, nursing students gathered at MCM to offer an in-person training session on First Aid.



McGill Nursing	9
McGill Social Work	4
UdeM Law	3

Volunteers

MCM also benefits from the dynamic presence of enthusiastic volunteers: an Iftar meal is prepared by Middle Eastern chefs along with teen KP assistance; French and English language instructors open the door to integration; a seamstress teaches women a skill that can be used to find employment; hats, gloves and sweaters are knitted to shield newcomers from harsh winter weather, board and committee members dedicate countless hours to financial and organizational management and planning ... and the list goes on.

A new experience in 2023 involved 4 recently arrived dentists from Sudan (Manahil & Ryann) and Egypt (Nada & Mohammed), who hosted a dental care workshop, sharing their knowledge and expertise with a group of 30+ newcomer families and children.



My time at MCM has given me a fascinating window into the workings of a community ministry, the challenges faced by the staff team, and the creative responses they develop. Whether collaborating on a recipe/memory book, being interviewed by CBC or participating in the review of the Maa'n intercultural program, MCM has become a home away from home. I feel privileged to offer whatever assistance I can to this incredible organization.

Val Shannon, Elder-in-Residence

Upon arrival in Montreal from Ottawa to study law, I immediately sought a place to continue my volunteer work with refugees, and was more than delighted to discover MCM. I was given free reign to develop a new recreational program for refugee children and their families, and then invited to join the Board of Directors, where I will soon step into the position of chair. MCM has played a vital role in my life, connecting me to community, providing me with meaningful opportunities to give back, and supporting me through warm and compassionate friendship. Merci MCM!

Julia Green, MCM Board Member



Montreal City
Mission
communautaire de Montréal

A United Church of Canada Community Ministry



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Annual Report 2023

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Director's message

“The time is very urgent — we must slow down” Bayo Akomlafe (philosopher, author, activist)

The quote from Bayo Akomlafe sums up MCM's approach over the past year. While continuing our front-line work to meet pressing needs within the community, we also took the time to slow down, reassess and envision new possibilities. That reflection led to a brand new project with 3 additional staffers, expanding our work in the areas of advocacy, research and awareness raising.

We also undertook the first of 3 major reviews with our Maa'n Intercultural Program, assisted by board members and MCM Elders-in-Residence who helped us stay the course! In 2024, we will continue evaluation and strategic planning with the Just Solutions Clinic.

Needless to say, our interfaith community was devastated by the war in the Middle East that broke out in October. A *Gathering of Lamentation* in December proved to be a welcome balm on all of our distressed souls. Maintaining relations of support and caring is especially important during times of crises.

Last but not least, a word of appreciation to my cherished colleagues on the MCM board and staff team. Our board underwent renewal in 2023, welcoming 6 new members whose timely advice and participation in our events and activities have invigorated our organization.

And the MCM team - composed of older members and more recent recruits - continues to amaze me with their devotion, compassion and visionary ideas.

It is a privilege and honour to work with all of these dedicated individuals. Thanks to those who come into the mission every day to ply their trade ... to those who trust us with their problems, hopes and dreams ... to those who attend important meetings and events ... and to those who support us morally, spiritually and financially, MCM is making a difference!

Rev. Paula Kline, Executive Director

Maa'n/Ensemble

Facilitates the integration of all newcomers, whatever their origin, through concrete projects and interfaith partnerships.

January

Why Faith? To celebrate **Muslim Awareness Week**, an intergenerational, intercultural group of 30+ from ages 20 to 95 engaged with one another on the question of faith and its ongoing role in modern, secular society.

April

Annual Iftar at St. James United with 95 members from the Muslim, Jewish, Christian and Sikh communities, to celebrate Ramadan, Passover and Easter over a meal and conversation on how we experience awe and wonder in our lives.

Panel Discussion with Dr. Amal El-Sana on her book: *Hope Is A Woman's Name* at the Blue Metropolis Literary Festival.

May

Launch of a partnership with **Goodera** that engages corporate employees for social impact and to support non profits world wide.

Summer-Fall

Second cohort of **Holistic Reconciliation Within Newcomer Families**. Bi-weekly conversations with 9 new families on concerns and challenges they encounter with spouses and children, and how to gain a foothold in their new environment.

September

Approximately 500 people of diverse cultures and generations joined us for our annual apple picking outing at the farm of Hassan and Nathalie Guillet. A day of enjoyment in the country, making new connections, playing games, dancing, and eating apples and other delicious food.

September - November

Supported by **Plan International Canada**, and motivated by the success of the pilot project, we continued **Power Within** - a program of empowerment with 20 refugee and newcomer children/teen girls aged 10-17.

December

Gathering of Lamentation in the St. James sanctuary with Muslim, Jewish, Christian and secular partners. Prayers, poetry and words of peace were shared to comfort and console. Those in attendance expressed appreciation for the opportunity to gather as a community during this difficult time of war in the Middle East.

A **vernissage** featuring stunning land and seascapes by Sudanese artist Hind Al Ahmed. A second exhibit of Hind's work was organized at the CBC **Make the Season Kind Holiday Market**.

Women Weaving their Dreams Catering Collective (with 10 events), language classes and the sewing circle were active throughout 2023 with old and new members.



REVIEW

An important factor in remaining innovative and pertinent is program review and evaluation. In 2023, former MCM volunteer and Systems Management Masters student at Concordia, Owen Campbell, led Maa'n staff, board members and Elders-in-Residence in an 8 month reflection on accomplishments thus far, current challenges and unfolding perspectives.



Legal Clinics

Just Solutions and Roger Snelling Clinic for Seniors facilitate access to justice for migrants with a precarious immigration status.

In 2023, MCM bid farewell to longtime clinic coordinator Olga Houde after eight years of dedication, tireless efforts and compassion that have impacted the lives of countless migrants. Olga also made a major contribution on the fundraising front by securing a grant from the Lucie et André Chagnon Foundation to launch a brand new initiative - **Danaides: Diversity Without Discrimination**. Following some preliminary work in the fall of 2022, a new Team D was hired in the spring and summer of 2023 to consolidate and expand this project. The work accomplished thus far, as outlined below, is indeed impressive.

This is a time of transition for MCM's legal work 'with and for' migrants. And so, we are taking the time to reflect on how best to expand our decades-long mission of promoting access to justice for those pushed to the margins, while investing in new areas of endeavour. As the interim, part time clinic coordinator, I feel privileged to work alongside these talented individuals, while assisting MCM in this exciting period of growth.

Paul Clarke, Interim Clinic Coordinator



Networking

JS and Danaides teams participate in several important committees to further MCM access to justice work:

- Comité accès garderies / Day Care Access;
- Comité Accueil des demandeurs d'asile au Québec (ADAQ) / Welcome of Asylum Seekers;
- Quebec Campaign for regularisation of non-status individuals;
- Collectif PL96 / Quality Public Services For All Collective;
- STCA/Roxham Protests & March Ad-Hoc Committee;
- Canadian Council for Refugees Inland Protection Working Group;
- IRB (Immigration & Refugee Board) and RPD (Refugee Protection Division) Stakeholders meetings;
- Comité avisur du BINAM / Steering Committee (Municipal Office of Integration);
- Peter-McGill Community Council Immigration Committee.



Danaides: Diversity Without Discrimination

Paying homage to the first migrants as recorded in Greek mythology, our new Danaides project, was launched to promote access to justice for migrants with precarious or no status.

In 2023, the following was accomplished:

Research

- 12 academic partnerships across various regions and community organisations, engaging them comprehensively in the research process;
- Monthly meetings with members of the scientific committee to ensure methodological precision and adherence to scientific rigour;
- Approval from the Research Committee Board of *l'Université de Montréal* and the University of Ottawa for the research protocol and associated documentation, underlining the project's adherence to institutional standards and ethical guidelines.

The recruitment phase of the project, scheduled to commence in 2024, will unfold in three distinct stages of focus groups discussion and individual interviews with service providers and migrants with precarious or no status.

Advocacy & Awareness Raising

- Participation in the General Consultation on Provincial Immigration 2024-2027, through presentation of a *mémoire* to a committee of the Quebec National Assembly;
- Consolidation of MCM legal clinic partnerships;
- Creation of a steering committee with multiple community organisations;
- Identification of advocacy goals and actions to be pursued in 2024 with Just Solutions staff;
- Development of a public awareness campaign to be launched in Sherbrooke in 2024.

Project Development

- Successful application for an additional \$20,000 to consolidate the first phase of the Danaides Project;
- Successful application for a 2 year grant to hire a caseworker at Just Solutions devoted to English-speaking migrants (2024-2026);
- Ongoing fundraising to ensure sustainability of our work with migrants.



Just Solutions

Top Areas of Intervention	
Humanitarian Application	29 %
Refugee Claim Process	18 %
Family Reunification/Sponsorship	12 %
Non-immigration	7 %

Vulnerability Factors	
Financial Precarity	41 %
Serious Health Issues	34 %
Family & Gender-based Violence	16 %
Single-parent Families	14 %

Total Cases	256
Total Interventions	3735

Roger Snelling

Top Areas of Intervention	
Humanitarian Application	46 %
Refugee Claim Process	11 %
Non-immigration	11 %
Work Permit	9 %
Removals from Canada	6 %

Vulnerability Factors	
Serious Health Issues	51 %
Financial Precarity	51 %
Family & Gender-based Violence	6 %
Risk of Homelessness	9 %

Total Cases	35
Total Interventions	845

