

Creativity, Inclusion, and Opportunity in Lanaudière

In Joliette, a growing initiative is opening doors for creativity, professional development, and genuine community connection. Ouvre Ta Boîte, L'Arche Lanaudière's multimedia production project, is a social enterprise where people with intellectual disabilities learn, contribute, and shine in every stage of creating high-quality videos.

Its goal is simple but transformative: train and integrate people with intellectual disabilities into video-production roles while offering local organizations

access to professional, heartfelt promotional content. Participants build technical skills, explore creativity, and gain confidence. Just as importantly, the project fosters social inclusion by creating natural connections among team members and with the wider Quebec community.

Ouvre Ta Boîte has already collaborated with non-profits, schools, and local companies. Clients consistently note not only the strength of the final product but the joy and authentic relationships that emerge through the process.

As the project grows, it generates sustainable income for L'Arche Lanaudière—supporting its development and funding new opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities. Ouvre Ta Boîte is inclusion in action, where creativity becomes a pathway to belonging and community impact.



Expanding Inclusion: Two New Homes for L'Arche Avalon

Since 2017, L'Arche Avalon has been creating spaces where people with and without intellectual disabilities can connect, celebrate diversity, and participate in meaningful community life. What began as a small day program has grown into a steady rhythm of monthly walks, music circles, and social gatherings that strengthen relationships and build a sense of belonging.

Now, the community is taking its biggest step yet.

Late last year, a major development marked a new chapter: L'Arche Avalon is

now moving toward building two residential homes in the Pleasantville area. These homes will feature two eight-unit buildings, each with four fully accessible units on the main floor and universal design guiding the upper level. Construction is planned to begin this year, with completion anticipated in 2027.

"These homes will be more than just buildings; they will be places of belonging, friendship, and dignity," says Lewis Andrews, Vice-Chair of L'Arche Avalon's Board of Directors. "Rooted in L'Arche values of community and inclusion, they will enrich

the lives of those who live there and strengthen the heart of our wider community."

This exciting project represents not only a milestone for L'Arche Avalon but also a significant step forward in creating more inclusive, vibrant communities across Newfoundland & Labrador.



L'Arche Ottawa Builds for the Future: A New Home Designed for an Aging Community

Across Canada, many L'Arche homes are responding to the realities of an aging population – and L'Arche Ottawa is no exception. As people with intellectual disabilities grow older, their needs change, and the spaces they live in need to change with them.

One of L'Arche Ottawa's long-standing homes has reached that point. The house is in a wonderful location – close to neighbourhood amenities and woven into community life. It has been a place of welcome for many years. But bringing the aging structure up to today's accessibility standards would require a full renovation that is extremely costly and, ultimately, limiting.

Rather than invest heavily in a renovation that can only go so

far, L'Arche Ottawa has chosen a bold and hopeful path forward: the home will be demolished and rebuilt completely from scratch. The new building will be thoughtfully designed to support accessibility and meet the needs of an aging community.

This transformative project is possible thanks to a generous partnership that is fully funding the rebuild. Their support ensures that the people who call this house home – and those who will live there in the years to come – will have a space that truly meets their needs.

As we look ahead to the coming year, L'Arche Ottawa's new home stands as a beautiful example of what becomes possible when vision, generosity, and care come together to build a better future.



Voice & Choice: Growing Leaders Across The Country

Last November, ten participants from Halifax, Cape Breton, Antigonish, and Saint John – including five people with intellectual disabilities and their support assistants – gathered for an intensive week of leadership development training through L'Arche Canada's Voice & Choice initiative.

The training was co-created and co-facilitated by Nick Herd,

L'Arche Canada's Creative Advocacy Coordinator, a skilled facilitator, actor, and leader who also happens to have an intellectual disability, and Cheryl Zinyk, one of the founders of L'Arche Toronto's Sol Express program. Nick's presence brought lived experience and authenticity to the week, offering participants a powerful example of what inclusive leadership can look like.

"What we are doing is at the very core of L'Arche. When people with an intellectual disability are included and have a place to lead and contribute, we all benefit. We need each other – and we need their voices at the centre."

- Coryn, Atlantic Regional Leader

Throughout the training, participants explored theatre exercises, visual arts activities, and group facilitation techniques – all designed to help them discover their gifts, practice using their voices, and build the confidence to lead. They left with tools they can bring home to lead things like community prayer nights, social events, committees, and other gatherings.

The learning doesn't end there. Participants will reconnect throughout the year for online workshops to continue building skills and support each other. The project will conclude with a capstone experience in which participants lead a training session for L'Arche's House & Program Leaders in the Atlantic Region, sharing what they've learned and modeling inclusive leadership in action.



L'Arche Winnipeg's Tova Café: Where Community, Training, and Delicious Food Meet

For over 10 years, L'Arche Tova Café has been more than just a bistro—it's a vibrant social enterprise combining hands-on training and employment opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities with a welcoming dining experience for customers. From greeting customers and serving food or beverages, to food preparation and baking, staff members gain confidence and practical skills in the service industry.

"I like working at the L'Arche Tova Cafe. I am good at it. I like

serving people and bringing out drinks and food. I like hanging out with people." - L'Arche Tova Cafe Staff Member

The Tova Café has helped the community build strong relationships between the customers and people who call L'Arche Winnipeg home, including with a local bank manager who comes to the café every Monday for a warm welcome and a coffee. This bank manager was so touched by her connection with L'Arche Winnipeg's members in the café that she joined the board of directors of the community.

L'Arche Tova Café is proof that great food and community impact can thrive side by side.

"At the Tova Cafe I have cried, received hugs, and laughed a lot. The food is amazing but it's the people there that make it EXTRA AMAZING! In a world where stress and anger can be so easy, the staff here go out of their way to do way more than nourishing me with food. I think Tova has nailed their vision for everyone building compassion and kindness."

- L'Arche Tova Cafe Patron



"The World Needs L'Arche"

Tammy and Kevin Bartel's Legacy with L'Arche

Naming L'Arche in our will was an easy decision. We have been connected to L'Arche's mission for nearly 35 years. Kevin became aware of L'Arche through a professor at university who encouraged students to visit and serve in a L'Arche community. Before L'Arche, I spent six years as a Correctional Officer with youth in the justice system. Desiring a more purposeful and meaningful place to serve, I requested information from a government agency in Ottawa. Among the materials was a pamphlet from L'Arche Daybreak – and the rest, as they say, is history.

We both served as live-in

assistants, and a few years ago, shared our family home with a person with an intellectual disability from the local L'Arche community. I've visited L'Arche communities across Canada and around the world. Visiting the community in Tegucigalpa Honduras showed me that we had so much to learn about enjoying siestas and spending Sundays together.

Every L'Arche community shares a sense of welcome – a core gift of L'Arche that resonates with us personally. We spent 26 years living with a person with a dual diagnosis from another organization and cherished ten years as a foster family. For us,

welcome lies at the heart of our own mission.

As time goes on, our priorities have changed but our passion for the mission and our belief that people with intellectual disabilities transform lives has never changed. Naming L'Arche in our will ensures this transformative work continues and the mission remains active. The world needs L'Arche.

- Tammy and Kevin Bartel,
Legacy Donors

Update on L'Arche Tegucigalpa in Honduras

This past summer, we shared L'Arche Tegucigalpa's plans to relocate to a safer, more accessible part of the city. Today, we are thrilled to provide an update on this important project as the community begins moving into their new home.

L'Arche Tegucigalpa has purchased two properties in a safe, vibrant area—one on a main street, which will eventually host the day program and welcome the broader community, and another on a quiet residential street for the residential home. Both buildings required significant

renovations: the residential building needed demolition work and support columns to safely create 12 bedrooms, while the day program building will require structural updates to accommodate a lift in the future.

We are delighted to share that renovations on the residential home are almost complete – an exciting milestone for the community! Construction on the day program building is planned to start early this year, creating space for expanded programs and activities once funding is in place.

With each step forward, L'Arche Tegucigalpa moves closer to a future where people with intellectual disabilities are safe, supported, and celebrated in a neighbourhood where they can truly thrive.



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