AUTUMN 2026 | ISSUE 4

NEWSLETTER

L'AID'ELLE SHELTER AND SUPPORT CENTRE

MAISON D'AIDE ET D'HÉBERGEMENT L'AID'ELLE

Appointment of Nanou Gauthier as Director

Hello,

It is with pride, conviction, and dedication that I will continue to fulfill my role as Director of L'Aid'Elle. Alongside a dedicated team of women, an engaged Board of Directors, and committed community partners, I will continue to advance our mission and strengthen its impact within our community.

Through collaboration, collective efforts, and the sharing of our expertise in domestic violence, I hope to continue our fight against violence against women and children.

I would like to thank the team and the Board of Directors for their trust in me.

Nanou Gauthier

Executive Director



L’Aid’Elle Shelter and Support Centre, way more than a shelter

Above all, L’Aid’Elle is a safe and supportive environment where every woman can take a breath, find a moment of respite, and begin to regain control over her life.
We provide individualized support that respects each woman’s needs, pace, and choices, offering a compassionate, non-judgmental approach every step of the way.

Shelter – MH1

MH1 provides safe accommodation for women and children experiencing domestic violence or facing circumstances that require support and a safe environment. Support focuses on promoting safety, helping women understand their situation, regain control over their lives, and develop strategies that foster independence.

Second-Stage Housing – MH2

MH2 is for women who wish to continue their journey toward greater independence following a period of shelter and recovery. It provides a safe environment where women can build on the progress they have made, continue their personal and social goals, and develop the conditions needed to transition toward a more independent and stable life. MH2 also supports women experiencing post-separation violence.

External Support Services

External support services allow women to access support without staying in a shelter. Depending on their needs, support may focus on understanding domestic violence, safety planning, psychosocial needs, regaining control over their lives, navigating personal, legal, and social matters, and accessing appropriate resources.

An Approach Tailored to Each Woman’s Needs

Whether through MH1, MH2, or external support services, our team supports each woman with consideration for her individual circumstances, pace, and needs. Our goal is to create spaces where women can find a moment of respite, gain understanding, rebuild, discover their strengths, and move toward greater independence.

Our Living Environment: A Place to Rebuild and Regain Independence

The environment we create within our shelter is an important part of how we welcome and support women and children. Our goal is to provide a warm, safe, comfortable, and functional space where residents feel welcome and can begin to regain a sense of stability and normalcy in their lives.

A supportive living environment involves more than meeting basic needs. It also means creating opportunities for women and children to relax, connect with others, participate in activities, and feel more in control of their daily lives. Common areas, books, children's toys and games, activity supplies, equipment, and other available resources all help create a welcoming and positive atmosphere.

It is important to maintain an inviting, well-kept space with resources that reflect the diverse needs and circumstances of the women and children we support. The environment should offer opportunities for a variety of activities while reflecting our feminist approach and core values of respect, autonomy, safety, solidarity, and empowerment.

The needs of residents change over time, and our living environment should evolve with them. We must continue to develop and adapt our spaces and resources to ensure they remain welcoming, comfortable, and responsive to the needs of the women and children staying with us.

Regularly reviewing the environment helps us identify opportunities for improvement. This includes listening to residents' feedback, considering the needs of the women and children we welcome, and drawing on the team's observations and experience.





Activities offered in 2025-2026

At L'Aid'Elle, the living environment is an integral part of the support offered to women and children. It aims to promote well-being, independence, self-confidence, and the development of healthy relationships in a safe and caring environment.

Throughout their stay, women and children have the opportunity to participate in a variety of activities suited to their needs and interests. Here are a few examples:

- Educational and prevention workshops on domestic violence, the different forms of violence, patterns of control, and strategies to promote safety;
- Activities that promote self-confidence and self-esteem;
- Awareness activities on healthy relationships and personal boundaries;
- Self-awareness activities that help women better recognize their needs, strengths, and resources;
- Wellness and relaxation activities, such as yoga, relaxation exercises, and other activities that promote relaxation;
- Outdoor activities, including walks and other opportunities to enjoy the outdoors;
- Opportunities for discussion, sharing, and socializing that foster a sense of belonging and mutual support among women;
- Coffee and conversation gatherings led by outreach support workers, providing a welcoming opportunity to talk, share experiences, and build connections.

These activities are offered in a way that respects each woman's pace, choices, and needs. They provide opportunities to rebuild confidence, develop personal resources, and gradually regain a sense of empowerment.





FESTIVE AND SAFE: EVERYONE HAS A PART TO PLAY



SHANNA REHEL, ANNE-MARIE ROY, AND NADIA NORMAND AT THE FESTIVAL MUSIQUE DU BOUT DU MONDE.

Launched in 2023 by the Gaspésie–Îles-de-la-Madeleine Feminist Roundtable, this project aims to raise public awareness, help festivalgoers feel safe, and prevent sexual assault and involuntary intoxication.
It is important to remember that these forms of violence can be exacerbated in festive settings. Prevention, awareness, and an on-site presence therefore play an essential role.

This year, our team was present at several events on the Côte-de-Gaspé, including the Petit-Cap Festival, the Gaspesian Ribfest, the Festival Musique du Bout du Monde, and the Rivière-au-Renard Western Festival.

This partnership gave us the opportunity to connect with our community in a different way than we usually do. We had the chance to speak with many people and raise awareness among people of all ages about the importance of adopting safe and respectful behaviours during festivities.

Because prevention is everyone's responsibility.
Thank you to everyone we met and to our partners who make these initiatives possible!
We'll see you... next year!

Introducing Our External Support Services Team

For nearly a year now, L'Aid'Elle's external support services have been provided by a dedicated team whose mandate is to reach out to women and the community directly. Our team works in three main areas: **individual support**, **awareness**, and **service development.**

Mona Smith – Support Worker, External Support Services

With nearly 36 years of experience as a support worker, Mona has extensive expertise in supporting women experiencing domestic violence. After several years working in a shelter, she now offers follow-up support to women experiencing violence who are not living in the shelter, in addition to co-facilitating workshops and Coffee and Conversation gatherings.

What does she enjoy most? Connecting with women. Listening to their stories, helping them put into words what they are experiencing, validate their feelings, and better understand their experiences. Above all, Mona enjoys being there to support women throughout their journey and rebuilding process, one step at a time.

Shanna Rehel – Support Worker, English-Language Services

New to our team, Shanna supports English-speaking women through L'Aid'Elle's various services, including first- and second-stage housing, external support services, and community awareness activities.

Although she is new to the team, Shanna has already made a valued place for herself through her attentive listening, commitment, and desire to make a difference.

Her goal? To help the English-speaking community better understand intimate partner violence and ensure that language is never a barrier to seeking and receiving help.

Anne-Marie Roy – Support Worker, Service Expansion

Anne-Marie has just over eight years of experience supporting women. She has worked in both first- and second-stage housing, and for the past two years, she has been working in external support services. Among other things, she facilitates awareness workshops in high schools and connects with CEGEP students to help them become allies in the cause of women.

What does she enjoy? Building connections, raising awareness of available resources, and working with various members of the community.

Her hope? That outreach services will be accessible throughout the Côte-de-Gaspé region, so that every woman can receive support, no matter where she lives.

Individual Support

A woman does not need to stay at a shelter to receive support.

Our support workers offer individual and confidential meetings to women experiencing domestic violence or post-separation violence, or who have questions about their situation.

Examples of services offered include:

- Listening and support;
- Explaining the different forms of violence;
- Supporting women in identifying their needs and choices through a personalized plan tailored to their situation;
- Providing information about their rights and referring them to appropriate resources;
- Supporting women in regaining control over their lives and building independence;
- Accompanying women through various processes (legal matters, the Sûreté du Québec, youth protection services [DPJ], financial matters, etc.).

Outreach, Awareness, and Service Development

Our team is also present in the community to raise awareness about intimate partner violence, post-separation violence, and coercive control, while promoting a better understanding of these realities.

We visit a variety of settings, including:

- Schools and educational institutions;
- Community organizations;
- Workplaces;
- Community and public events;
- Various partners throughout our service area.



ANNE-MARIE ROY, SHANNA REHEL, MONA SMITH

Our approach is based on a commitment to being accessible and present in the various settings where women and teenage girls live, learn, and spend their time.

We reach out to partners, organizations, and the community to build connections, increase awareness of our services, and encourage referrals that are suited to women's needs.

We also work in collaboration with local resources to strengthen the safety network surrounding women and their children.

The development of external support services also involves creating and maintaining partnerships with organizations and stakeholders throughout the region.

We want to work together to:

- Better identify situations of violence;
- Facilitate access to services;
- Share our knowledge and expertise;
- Develop joint initiatives;
- Promote a coordinated response to women's needs.

A Team That Reaches Out to Women

External support services are about a team that does not stay within four walls. We are a team that travels throughout the Côte-de-Gaspé region, raises awareness, builds connections, develops partnerships, and supports women where they are.

Upcoming Projects

This fall, our team will work on offering Coffee and Conversation gatherings for women in the community, developing awareness workshops for partners, and organizing several opportunities to meet and share as part of the 12 Days of Action Against Violence Against Women, taking place from November 25 to December 6, 2026.

Presentation of our Specialized Educator

In our last issue, we introduced you to Marie-Michèle, our new specialized educator. Since her arrival, she has quickly become an invaluable member of the team, as well as a trusted source of support for the women and children she works with.

Children's services

-Supporting children staying in the shelter
-Reducing the impact of the consequences of domestic violence on children by intervening with them, identifying the effects they are experiencing, and offering them activities that allow them to recognize and express their emotions.
-Screening for possible effects on children's development.
-Helping mothers to support their children navigate their challenges.
-Providing mothers with respite

Women's services

-To support women by helping them to live better on a daily basis, by offering them weekly follow-up and tools to overcome the impacts of domestic violence.
-Offering self-care activities on a daily basis (meditation, yoga, walking).
-Offering activities on emotions, self-esteem, self-compassion, rebuilding, etc.

Mother-child relationship

A relationship marked by domestic violence can affect the bond between a mother and her child. A child living in a context of violence may become withdrawn, have difficulty accepting boundaries, align themselves with the abusive parent, or come to see violence as normal. These behaviours can sometimes contribute to difficulties in the mother-child relationship. However, when a mother and her child are no longer living in an environment of violence, there may be opportunities to rebuild their relationship and strengthen their connection.

To better respond to a child's need for security and rebuild a relationship of trust, it is important to understand the effects of violence on children. Children may also have complex feelings about each parent and may experience loyalty conflicts. It is important that they are not placed in a position where they feel caught between their parents or pressured to choose sides.

It is also important to redefine family roles when necessary, as a child may have taken on responsibilities that are not appropriate for their age during episodes of violence. For example, a child may have had to prepare meals for their siblings or take on other caregiving responsibilities.

To rebuild trust between a mother and her child, reassuring words, gentle gestures, and quality time together can help. Mothers can also encourage their children to express themselves, recognize their strengths, and develop age-appropriate independence.

Whether children have been exposed to or directly affected by violence, it is essential to provide them with a safe space to express their emotions and feel heard. Talking with children about violence can also help them understand their experiences and develop the tools to recognize and prevent violence in their future relationships.

Several protective factors can help strengthen the mother-child relationship. These include responding to children's needs, providing appropriate supervision, setting clear boundaries, maintaining consistent and balanced discipline, and encouraging positive ways to resolve conflicts. Recognizing children's distress and offering understanding, affection, and support can also help strengthen their bond.

At the shelter, interventions with mothers primarily focus on strengthening the mother-child relationship. We help mothers improve communication with their children and develop healthy ways of resolving conflicts. Children are also given opportunities to share their experiences of violence with their mothers. In addition, efforts are made to strengthen the support network around the family and help children feel secure in their mother's ability to care for them in a safe environment.

Marie-Michèle Côté, Specialized Educator



Happy Retirement Johanne!



Recently, much of our team came together to celebrate someone who has played a very important role at L'Aid'Elle. After 25 years of service, Johanne Côté is leaving L'Aid'Elle to enjoy a well-deserved retirement.

Dear Johanne, you are a kind-hearted, generous, and caring woman. Thank you for all the nights you have spent caring for women and children. Thank you for your attentive listening, your support, and your reassuring presence. Thank you for the comforting home-cooked meals, the conversations, the stories shared, and the countless moments of laughter over the years.

For 25 years, you have been there with your compassion, gentleness, and kindness, helping make L'Aid'Elle a place where women and children felt welcomed, heard, and safe.

You have certainly left your mark on L'Aid'Elle, but more importantly, you have touched the hearts of the many people whose lives you have crossed paths with over the years.
Thank you, Johanne, for these 25 years of dedication.
We wish you a retirement filled with comfort, happiness, well-deserved rest, and wonderful moments with the people you love.

Happy Retirement!