

# Bibliothèque des jeunes de Montréal Montreal Children's Library

Depuis 1929 ~ Since 1929



*« J'ai accompli de délicieux voyages,  
embarqué sur un mot. »  
Honoré de Balzac*

## Proposal for the Revitalization of Downtown West - Ville Marie Borough

### « The Montreal Children's Library In The Park »

As you may already know, the **Montreal Children's Library** is a unique not-for-profit community library where « *any child can discover the magic of literacy, where imaginations flourish, and where learning is fun.* » We have been serving the Montreal community continuously since 1929. We encourage literacy by providing all children with free library services, as well as diverse and innovative programs, all within a safe and welcoming environment. We also have outreach programs, dedicated to filling specific needs within the various communities. We have a lot of parent involvement at the Atwater branch and many young immigrant families.

Our activities at & through the Atwater Branch include :

- 2 storytimes for pre-schoolers a week for 39 weeks
- 39 weeks of after school activities for children ages 6-12, including : help with homework, reference resource, science club, chess club with mentor, arts and crafts.
- special library events including puppet workshops, children's theatre, music and song, author visits and illustrator visits, etc.
- Storytime visits for the Daycares (12 from Ville Marie)
- Outreach programs to the Montreal Children's Hospital, Montreal Diet Dispensary, etc

Summer Activities in Cabot Park :

- 2008 :10 weeks (4 days per week) = 1667 children attended
- 2009 : 6 weeks (4 days per week) = 3013 children attended
- 2010 : 5 weeks (3 days for 3 weeks + 2 days for 2 weeks) = 1305 attended

We count on the Ville Marie Borough for funding these activities.

If fully funded, we have longer sessions 4 days a week, with programs geared to the older kids.

If only partly funded, we cut the number of weeks and the number of days per week. We can only offer as much as we have the money for.

School age kids less likely to attend, so we need additional activities for them like a giant chess board in the park, ping pong table, etc. We need a built space for kids to have these kids of activities that bring them to the park.

Pepsi Forum offers us our only rainy day space and they have been amazing letting us use the space for our summer programs when the weather isn't good. But we would rather have a real space dedicated to children.

Comité exécutif  
Executive committee

Linda Miller-Eubank  
Présidente  
President

Nadia Craig  
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Vice-President

Lorraine Deley  
Trésorière  
Treasurer

Margo Charlton  
Secrétaire  
Recording Secretary

Bernie Shalinsky  
Directeur général  
Executive Director

Bureau-Office  
1200 Atwater  
Montréal, QC  
H3Z 1X4  
514-931-2304

Succursales  
Branches

Atwater  
1200 Atwater  
Montréal, QC  
H3Z 1X4  
514-931-2304

Jean Rivard  
4121, 42<sup>e</sup> rue  
Montréal, QC  
H1Z 1R8  
514-276-7309

Richmond Square  
870 Richmond Sq.  
Montréal, QC  
H3J 1V7  
514-931-6265,  
ext. 28

Internet-Website  
www.mcl-bjm.ca

Courriel-E.mail  
info@mcl-bjm.ca

Télé-Fax  
514-931-2304

**PART A – SHORT TERM GOAL of the Montreal Children’s Library :  
a rent subsidy to help us to afford a reasonable space in the  
Atwater Library**



At present, we are located in the basement of the Atwater Library at 1200 Atwater Avenue, across from Cabot Park. We have been in this space **as a tenant** for more than 30 years now, in the basement, (in the photo, we are located where the the two basement windows are, to the left of the front door.) Not a perfect space for little children.

Due to planned renovations and updates at Atwater Library , we have been asked to vacate our Administrative Office area as well as to give up a part of our tiny library. Both are being appropriated by Atwater Library for the inclusion of an elevator in the building and a wheelchair accessible bathroom in the basement. Atwater has offered us another space in the basement area for our offices, at the same rent as we are now paying, but that space is less than ideal for us and would be very tight with no storage space included, something we need very much.

We cannot afford to pay more rent for a larger space in the basement of Atwater Library, though there is a larger space available to us.

**OUR PROPOSAL FOR THE SHORT TERM :**

**We ask for a subsidy from the Ville Marie Borough to pay just the rent increase for the bigger basement space**, so that our children’s library would function better and we so that we would at last have some space to store books that we receive while they are being catalogued.

## **PART B – LONG TERM GOAL of the Montreal Children’s Library : our own library in the park**

We have a dream, a VISION, for a free-standing **Montreal Children’s Library In The Park, specifically in Cabot Park**. This would instantly animate and energize Cabot Park and could help it to begin its transition to a family park full of children, laughter, and activities for all. What about a showcase library in kids’ colours and interesting, healthy, and sustainable design that would inspire and excite the kids?

Many of today’s kids are so overwhelmed with their environment and their situation at home, that we have to be able to give them hope, stick with them in the tough times, and create an environment of optimism in our Library.

We believe that connecting kids with Nature is critically important in the learning process and we know that many of our kids today are suffering from « Nature Deficit Disorder ». **Montreal Children’s Library In The Park** would make all the difference in the world! Just think of it!

- At no other time in human history have children/youth been more separated from direct experience in Nature
- Our team works hard to engage and empower parents, grandparents, families, and educators. Everyone needs to help build foundations of caring relationships between kids and nature & adults and kids
- The Nature deficit comes from overworked parents, fear of Nature, concerns about emerging diseases, and limitations on outdoor play
- In 30 years, the percentage of obese children has tripled in the USA. Canada is not that far behind anymore
- Our team works hard to engage and empower parents, grandparents, families, and educators. Everyone needs to help build foundations of caring relationships between kids and nature & adults and kids
- By tapping into the restorative powers of nature, we can boost mental acuity and creativity; promote health and wellness; build smarter and more sustainable businesses, communities, and economies; and ultimately strengthen human bonds.

Can libraries connect children to nature? For sure! Today, through a library’s outdoor learning space, librarians can participate in the growing movement to connect children with the environment. For example, there could be a climbing/crawling area, messy materials area, building area, nature art area, music and performance area, planting area, gathering/conversation place, and reading area. We have so many good ideas on how to use this park to its best advantage.

Remember, buildings are a transition from Nature to concrete. Libraries can build bioregional identity by expanding regional natural history sections, offering lectures by local nature experts, and providing a meeting place for people who want to explore and discuss the nature of their own region. They can become information hubs of outdoor activities.

The **Montreal Children’s Library In The Park** could solve a problem for the city. We could turn Cabot Park into a learning and leisure park for children and their families and friends. Imagine if we had a greenhouse in the park where the children could learn to grow vegetables...and could take them home and eat their own produce! Imagine the pride they would feel and the skill they would learn.

Family retention in the community and school retention would likely increase, reducing the drop-out rate by exciting children at an early age to learn about Science, chess, mathematics, astronomy and the galaxy, the arts, creating something from scraps...etcetera. The possibilities are endless and the solution fairly simple.

**OUR PROPOSAL FOR THE LONG TERM :**

**We ask that the Ville Marie Borough consider making available to the Montreal Children's Library, on a permanent basis, a piece of land either in Cabot Park proper, or on the land used as an outdated and relatively unused bus collector lane at the east end of Cabot Park, so that an independent children's library can be built and enjoyed by the children of the Borough and their families and friends.**

**We would also ask that Ville Marie supply us with some seed money to begin the proper campaign to raise funds to build a wonderful children's library « IN THE PARK » to benefit the entire community, and help to keep young families in the area and keep young teens in school long term.**

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In the month of November, 2011, I was introduced to a young and creative urbanist, Jon Leitner, who was telling me about his « Urban Station Project ». I got excited about it and he got excited about the Montreal Children's Library. We realized we had the same passion for kids and doing good things for them, and for helping to revitalizing Cabot Park. We met a few times thereafter to brainstorm our ideas and realized the possibilities available to us and to the Borough. That is why we have chosen to present to you together today. I represent the Montreal Children's Library and Jon represents The Urban Station. Together we think we can show you our dream.

If you require more information or statistics, please contact me at the email address below.  
Thank you.

Linda Miller Eubank  
President, Montreal Children's Library  
1200 Atwater Avenue, Montreal QC, H3Z 1X4

