



ANNUAL REPORT

2015-2016





Left to right.: Marie-Noëlle Goulet, Audrey Chénard, Raisso Sougal, Nadia Kadri, Leslie Ning, Nicole Dunbar, Francis Guilbault (Winter 2016)

OUR TEAM

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M^e Allen Mendelsohn (Secretary)

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M^e Michèle Moreau

M^e Geeta Narang

M^e Aisha Topsakal

Executive Director

M^e Leslie Ning (since Dec. 2015)

M^e Valérie Gobeil (Oct.-Nov. 2015)

M^e Christine Paquin (until Sept. 2015)

Students (Fall 2015/ Winter 2016)

Andrea Buitrago Carranza

Audrey Chénard

Chantal deSereville

Philippa Duchastel de Montrouge

Nicole Dunbar

Marie-Noëlle Goulet

Francis Guilbault

Nadia Kadri

Raisso Sougal

Deborah Guterman

(Administrative Assistant)

Students (Spring/Summer 2016)

Karine Bédard

Marie-Noëlle Goulet

Eve Laoun

Jean-Sébastien Neault

Jeansil Bruyère (Communications Officer)

Shannon Snow (Fundraising & Development Officer)

Volunteer Lawyers

M^e Fanny Albrecht

M^e Lan Au

M^e Daniel Aubé

M^e Audrey Boctor

M^e Daniel Baum

M^e Jérôme Bélanger

M^e Coline Bellefleur

M^e Martin Bergeron

M^e Mélissa Bérubé

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M^e Barbara Felx-Leduc

M^e Renaud Gauthier

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M^e Neil Hazan

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M^e Miriam Israel

M^e Molly Krishtalka

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M^e Sarah Marinier-Doucet

M^e Caroline Moreau

M^e Farid Muttalib

M^e Thu Mai Nguyen

M^e Alexandre Papale

M^e Andres Miguel Pareja

M^e Benjamin Prudhomme

M^e Éva Richard

M^e Elsa Rizkallah

M^e Catherine Sénéchal

M^e Nicholas Scheib

M^e Samuel Singer

M^e Natasha Sivret

M^e Nicolaos Strapatsas

M^e Nicholas Teasdale

M^e Andrée-Anne Tessier

M^e Annie-Pier Therrien

M^e Emira Tufo

Volunteers

Daria Boyarchuk

Bahareh Mahdavi

Alexandra Sakellariou

Laurence Vallières-Nollet



Left to right: Eve Laoun, Shannon Snow, Jean-Sébastien Neault, Leslie Ring, Karine Bédard, Marie-Noëlle Goulet, Jeansil Bruguère (Summer 2016)

THE CLINIC IN A NUTSHELL

Our network of lawyers and law students has been dedicated to making justice more accessible and offering meaningful legal support at every step of the judicial process. We believe that no one should face legal problems without the knowledge necessary to protect and exercise their rights.



Our Clinics Since 2002, the Mile End Legal Clinic has been offering weekly drop-in hours from the Mile-End Community Mission. Since 2008, the Tyndale St-Georges Community Centre has been hosting the Tyndale St-Georges Legal Clinic in the Little Burgundy neighbourhood, with consultations on a weekly basis for the past two years. While our legal clinics operate at the heart of these neighbourhoods, both clinics offer services to the broader Montreal community.



Our Clientele Our clients come from across Montreal and beyond, and the legal issues we address extend to many different areas of law. Our student interns provide legal information to anyone who comes to the Clinic, and our volunteer lawyers provide legal advice and support to individuals and families who cannot afford a lawyer and do not qualify for Legal Aid.



Student Training We train future lawyers and jurists by providing hands-on professional and academic internships to law students from McGill University and Université de Montréal.



Strong Network of Lawyers We recruit volunteer lawyers with a diverse range of expertise to provide free legal information and advice to our clients, and to contribute to training our law students.

OUR EXECUTIVE

M^e Christine Paquin - Executive Director until Sept. 2015



I left my position as Executive Director last September, appreciative of the three years I had completed. Directing the Mile End Legal Clinic and having the privilege of working with jurists who wholeheartedly promote access to justice was a unique experience that profoundly touched me.

I remain convinced that we must expand to multiply our efforts to address the problem of access to justice here in Quebec. A few months ago, a criminal court judge in Toronto decided to postpone a hearing until the accused could truly exercise his right to counsel. This type of conversation has its place here in Quebec. This explains why I am very happy with the significant interest shown by the judiciary of the Clinic's work this year; MELC was invited to participate in the *Conseil de la magistrature du Québec*'s annual colloquium to discuss self-representation and access to justice. By volunteering or supporting the Clinic, everyone can contribute in a concrete way to discussions surrounding access to justice.

The voice of the Clinic is valuable in Quebec and I am pleased to see Leslie's enthusiasm as she assumes her role, knowing that passion and effort have always been at the heart of the Mile End Legal Clinic's values. I have no doubt that the Clinic will continue to make a significant difference for many community members in the coming years.

M^e Leslie Ning - Executive Director since Dec. 2015

When I joined the Mile End Legal Clinic 8 months ago, I had made the choice to leave a national law firm to pursue a legal career allowing me to work more closely with the community. It is extremely fulfilling to work directly with clients and empower them to navigate the twists and turns of the judicial system, in a world where too few legal resources exist for those who need them most.

The more clients I see, with such a range of problems and issues, the more I appreciate the importance and contribution of jurists, and especially our lawyer volunteers, student interns, donors, university and community partners, all whom together make the Clinic such a success. Whether it's helping to draft a settlement in a tenancy dispute, assisting in the preparation of a Small Claims hearing, or taking time to explain the steps involved in divorce proceedings, we can never underestimate the impact that this assistance has for a person dealing with a legal system that remains largely inaccessible to the average person.

And we can do so much more. The Clinic makes a meaningful difference in the lives of many, but the problem of access to justice is one that the legal profession as a whole has a duty to address. MELC is involved in such initiatives that bring lawyers from the private sector, government, academia and community organizations together. I'm very excited for what the future will bring for the Clinic, and to build on the tireless work of my predecessors. We will continue to offer much needed legal services to the community, all the while looking to increase our hours of consultation and aiming to open another satellite clinic in the Park Extension neighbourhood. I am thrilled to be part of the great community surrounding the Mile End Legal Clinic. I hope that you will join us and pledge your support as we head into our organization's 15th year.





MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Prof. Alana Klein - President of the Board



This past year has been one of tremendous change for the Mile End Legal Clinic.

We bid a fond farewell to M^e Christine Paquin, Executive Director of the Clinic since August 2012. Christine, with her sincere dedication to access to justice and good sense, brought us so much. She found new and diverse sources of funding for the Clinic, expanding the number and quality of legal consultations we are able to offer. She diversified our base of volunteer lawyers. She increased the Clinic's collaboration with health care actors, social workers and other community clinics. The Clinic's reach has never been stronger, and for that we owe a great debt of gratitude to Christine.

Change brings exciting new possibilities. In late 2015, we welcomed M^e Leslie Ning as our new Executive Director. Leslie has had no trouble filling Christine's big shoes (and then some!). Leslie has invested great time to get to know our clients and their needs. She has identified gaps in our capacities, and has recruited a team to address them. She is leading the Board through a careful exercise of self-reflection about the Clinic's goals as we prepare the ground for a strategic plan.

What we have learned through this reflection is that the Clinic must redouble its efforts so that the justice we offer speaks meaningfully to the lives of the clients we serve. We will be working even harder to understand and address our clients' legal problems in their broader context. This will mean closer collaboration with health and social service providers, social workers, and community organizers. We will also continue to build on our strengths, and in particular our capacity to offer legal services – and not just legal information – when our clients need it.

I would like to close with a thanks to the collaborators, donors, volunteer lawyers, students, and university partners who continued to show tremendous dedication to the Mile End Legal Clinic through its growth periods, and who understand and take so seriously the challenge of access to justice.

HIGHLIGHTS

2015

September 30th

Partnership with Accès au Droit et à la Justice (ADAJ), a research project led by professor Pierre Noreau of the Université de Montréal, which brings together 34 co-researchers, 7 collaborators and 44 partners from various fields: institutional, professional, community and academia. The project is divided in three distinct areas, sub-divided in 20 different areas of work, with the Clinic participating in the area involving self-representation and self-represented litigants. The research program constitutes an important mobilization tool addressing fundamental questions of how to improve our justice system.

ADAJ Accès au Droit et à la Justice

October 9th

M^e Valérie Gobeil and clients of the Clinic participated in a focus group for the ADAJ project. For research purposes, they discussed self-represented individuals before the *Tribunal administratif du Québec* with UQAM professor Emmanuelle Bernheim.

November 5th

M^e Christine Paquin was invited as a panelist at the *Conseil de la magistrature du Québec*'s annual colloquium in La Malbaie. Discussing self-representation and access to justice, the colloquium had the overarching theme of "Alone in front of a judge... alone!" [translation].

November 11th

The Clinic participated in McGill University Faculty of Law's "Public Interest Career Day". The event's aim was to present employment, research and volunteer opportunities in the fields of human rights, international law and social justice.

November 23rd

M^e Leslie Ning joined the Mile End Legal Clinic as Executive Director.

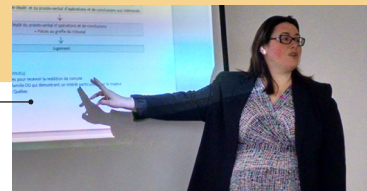
December 9th

M^e Ning participated in the annual Forum on Legal Clinics organized by Pro Bono Québec.

2016

February 23rd & March 22nd

A series of two workshops entitled "The protection mandate: from its preparation to its homologation", were given by M^e Amélie Lacroix, volunteer notary, for social workers of the CIUSSS Centre-Ouest-de-l'Île-de-Montréal.



May 9th

The Clinic received financing through Service Canada's Canada Summer Jobs program to hire 6 student interns, doubling our summer staff from last year. This funding allowed the Clinic to stay open until mid-August 2016, and also to hire Communications and Development & Financing Officers.



May 14th

For a second year in a row, the Clinic was invited to give workshops at Pro Bono Students Canada's National Training Conference in Toronto for program coordinators from civil law faculties. M^e Leslie Ning facilitated three workshops: pro bono project development; legal information vs. legal advice; and searching and retaining volunteer lawyers and supervisors.

IN THE MEDIA

December 28th

"Montréal Maintenant" - 98.5FM hosted by Marie-Claude Lavallée
M^e Christine Paquin interviewed for "Would you represent yourself in court without a lawyer?" [translation]

March 2nd

"Maîtres en solution" - CIBL 101.5 in partnership with the Barreau du Québec - hosted by Stéphanie Gagnon
M^e Leslie Ning interviewed for "Women and Justice", a discussion between five lawyers working in different fields and contributing, each in their own way, to the advancement of women's rights.



May 14th

The Mile End Legal Clinic joined the Twittersphere

May 31st

"Mosaïque en lumière" - MAtv - hosted by Chan Tep
M^e Leslie Ning and M^e Andres Miguel Pareja, volunteer lawyer at the Clinic, participated in a roundtable discussion on cultural communities and justice.



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IN NUMBERS

Client statistics from JULY 2015 - JUNE 2016

LAW STUDENT TRAINING

2620
HOURS

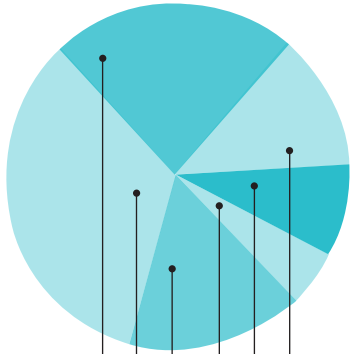
CLIENTS

395

DROP-IN EVENINGS

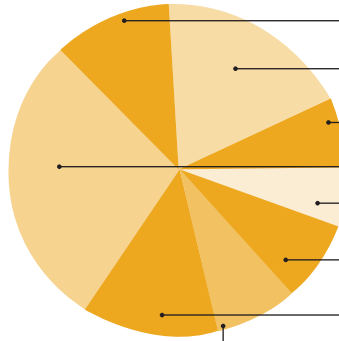
85

Disclosed Income



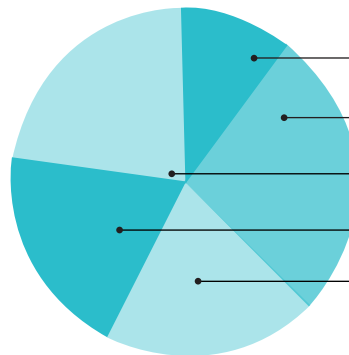
Less than \$10K - 23%
\$10K - \$20K - 34%
\$20K - \$30K - 16%
\$30K - \$40K - 13%
\$40K - \$50K - 9%
\$50K + - 5%

Areas of Law



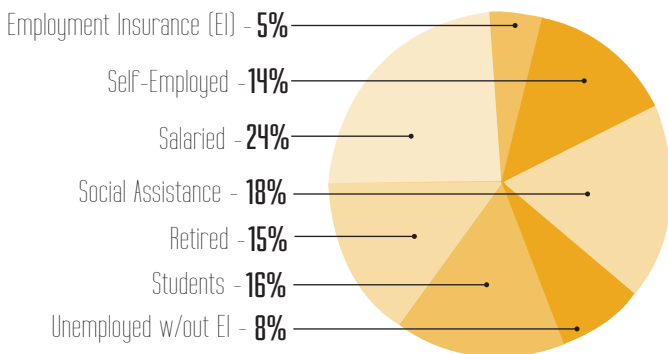
Criminal - 11%
Housing - 19%
Immigration - 6%
Civil - 29%
Administrative - 6%
Employment - 8%
Family - 13%
Other - 8%

Age



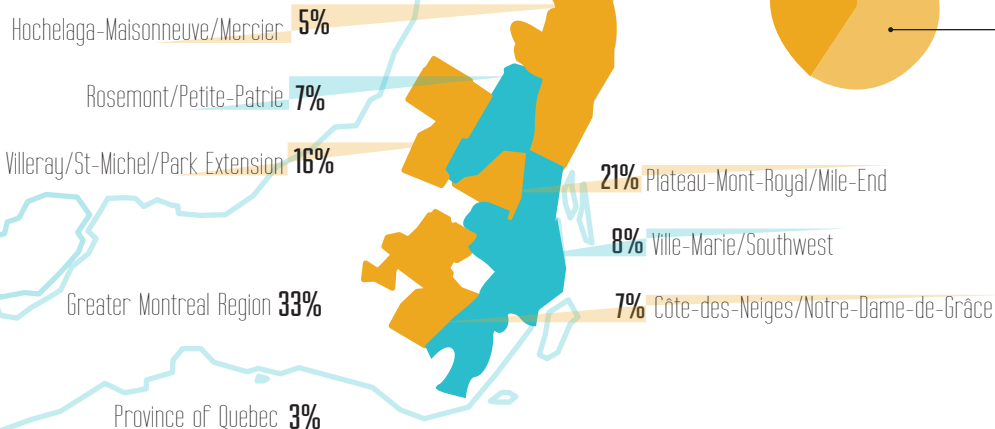
18-29 - 10%
30-39 - 27%
40-49 - 20%
50-59 - 20%
60+ - 23%

Employment or Occupation Status

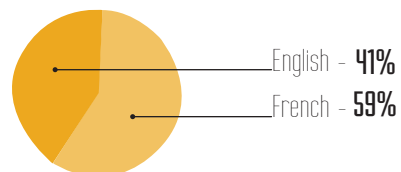


Employment Insurance (EI) - 5%
Self-Employed - 14%
Salaried - 24%
Social Assistance - 18%
Retired - 15%
Students - 16%
Unemployed w/out EI - 8%

Neighbourhoods



Language of Consultation



English - 41%
French - 59%

TESTIMONIALS

VOLUNTEER LAWYERS



M^E ANDRES MIGUEL PAREJA - Admitted to the Quebec Bar '13;
Universidad Pontificia Comillas, Certificate in Comparative Law and International Relations '12; UQAM, LL.B. '12

I believe that involvement within a community organization reinforces our belonging to society and allows us to connect with people who share a similar vision of making justice more accessible. My volunteer work at the Clinic helped me to refine my knowledge, and particularly to simplify legal knowledge in order for students to understand the extent of their client's problem. Above all, I am happy to work around students who are motivated to learn. I strongly encourage my colleagues who want to accumulate a variety of experiences to get involved with the Mile End Legal Clinic. You will contribute in your own way to enable the members of our community, from here and elsewhere, to exercise their rights while developing personal skills: a winning combination.



M^E ANNIE-PIER THERRIEN - Admitted to the Quebec Bar '12; Université de Montréal, LL.B. '09

People that we see at the Clinic sometimes require more general advice on their problem or simply need to understand the stages of the judicial process as they represent themselves in a case. Whichever the circumstance, it is always rewarding to see the positive impact we have on our clients. Indeed, they leave the Clinic often very relieved and confident because they better understand the challenges they face. As a volunteer lawyer, I particularly appreciate the walk-in legal clinic model, where our doors are open to anyone. It is a humbling and human approach. And being paired with law students promotes discussion on various points of law and makes the experience even more fruitful. Also, the Executive Director is very flexible as to the level of involvement of lawyers, since she understands this is an additional time commitment on top of our work. For those interested in a lower time commitment, it is also possible to be added onto a list of lawyers to be consulted remotely when our expertise is required. In short, it is a very rewarding experience!

MINKO

I'm a 70 year-old avid cyclist, but I was a victim of a traffic accident while biking which left me with many medical problems. I decided to appeal the SAAQ decision concerning my compensation. I started contacting firms and realized how expensive it would cost to obtain representation or advice. Through the Mile-End Community Mission, I found the Mile End Legal Clinic. It was great meeting with a volunteer lawyer who had an expertise in the matter to discuss my preparation to a conciliation session before the *Tribunal administratif du Québec*. I was astonished by the amount of attention I was given by the team at the Mile End Legal Clinic. The volunteer lawyer worked with me for hours – such a thing is rare for those who can't afford it. When you have cognitive problems on top of it all, one often feels powerless and does not know what to do. I was pleasantly surprised by the assistance I was given and I am very thankful.

SATISFIED CLIENTS



When you live at a certain level of poverty, you often feel hopeless, like there is no way out. Finding the Clinic helped take away that feeling of powerlessness. The Mile End Legal Clinic gave me the tools and material to educate myself on the procedures required to resolve my legal problem. It is still hard for me to believe that there are people out there that took the time to listen when nobody else would. As a result, I decided to give back. The services I received were amazing and consulting a lawyer would have cost me so much otherwise. I thought that a donation was the least I could do. To be honest, I wish that I could have given more. After all, paper and ink costs money and with legal problems, there is a lot of printing! With a community organization like the Mile End Legal Clinic, no one should give up or lose hope. They taught me how to laugh again! I truly am a happier person.



MERLENE



VICTOR

Faced with the possibility of being thrown out on the street, I was desperately searching for a lawyer that could help me. It was a very difficult time for me as I knew that I could not afford to find help to fix my situation. The Mile End Legal Clinic gave me hope when I was in a dark place. They referred me to Legal Aid, accompagnied me through the process, and it was determined that I was eligible to receive legal representation before the Rental Board. During the consultation at the Clinic, the volunteer lawyers explained my rights and obligations in an upfront and honest way. There was a possibility that I might not win my case and they helped me manage my expectations and prepare for either outcome. In an ideal world, everyone would know about the Mile End Legal Clinic; there would be more volunteer lawyers, more student interns and more weekly drop-in clinic sessions so that the community could benefit even more.

NELLY

With a hearing date fast approaching before the *Tribunal administratif du Québec*, I did not feel in any way prepared to represent myself alone in a case regarding my son Jonathan's language of education. I found the Clinic, I presented my case to the students, who listened to me attentively. I really felt that in discussing with them, I participated and cooperated in dissecting my case. The Director of the Clinic called me several times after the initial consultation and provided legal guidance and explanations as to how the hearing would unfold. She helped me organize the structure and delivery of my arguments and discussed the adequate behaviour to have before the Tribunal. In short, I felt enormously equipped thanks to an extensive follow-up from a professional team.

Notably, it is with pride that I share with you that the judge and the lawyer for Justice Québec congratulated me after the hearing, convinced that I was a law student given how well prepared I was!



TESTIMONIALS

STUDENT INTERNS

MARIE-NOËLLE GOULET - Université de Montréal - LL.B. '17



The Mile End Legal Clinic is an entry way towards accessing justice. A case that was particularly upsetting involved a three year old child that was violently shaken at daycare. She had serious injuries, including partial blindness. With Clinic resources, we managed to find a lawyer to accompany her father in complex legal proceedings at an affordable cost to the family. Through my internship, I was able to develop a more informed social awareness and with it, the certainty of wanting to actively participate in improving access to justice during the course of my career.

RAISSO SOUGAL - Université de Montréal - LL.B. '16 - B.A. Political Science '13



On top of making justice accessible and offering support to the community, the Mile End Legal Clinic helped me develop certain skills: I gained a keener sense of organization, with which I managed the variety of cases we received. This skill also helped me manage my time juggling volunteer hours, my studies, and a part-time job. The fact that the Clinic did not specialize in a single field of law helped me discover different fields I never considered during my law degree and pinpoint which fields interested me as potential career options. I equally learned how to adapt to the people seeking assistance from the Clinic. Explaining legal information to people unaware of the terminology requires one to communicate in simple layperson's terms - a challenging, but rewarding adjustment! I am proud to say that as an intern, I helped do my part in a team that is breaking social and economic barriers that exist between people and the law.

UNIVERSITY PARTNER

PROF. DANIELLE PINARD - Université de Montréal - Faculty of Law- Responsible for community-based internships

Among the 30 organizations with which the Université de Montréal's Law Faculty has established collaborative relationships, the Clinic is the most popular community internship with our student body. The Clinic is seen for what it is: a place of exceptional training that offers a stimulating environment.

This training is unique and it is essential. Many students begin their legal education with social justice concerns and quickly feel disheartened in the world of academia, where a level of abstraction exists between students and the real world. It is through a community-based internship that, for them, the law acquires its meaning for the first time. The next generation of legal professionals must know that access to justice is not just a trendy topic, but it occurs in exceptional community organizations like MELC.



The Clinic facilitates, develops and integrates various types of learning for its interns: direct contact with service users, collegial discussions with the Director of the Clinic, lawyers and fellow interns, as well as research and client follow-up. This integration of activities makes students more responsible as they realize that they are an essential part of the Clinic's mission of access to justice.



PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

MILE-END COMMUNITY MISSION

Partnered with the Mile End Legal Clinic since 2002, the Mile-End Community Mission is a charitable non-profit organization that empowers and assists disadvantaged, socially excluded individuals and families living in the Mile End and surrounding areas. The Mission has grown tremendously, having started as a soup kitchen serving 20 meals week, to now providing 14,000 meals, 8,000 food bags and numerous emergency food packages annually.



The Executive Director, Linda (Lou) Hachey, describes the partnership with the Clinic as one of trust: "[the Clinic's] grassroots approach has no pretence, it is rooted in understanding. We know that it is quality service and appreciate everything they have done through all these years." She explains that members of the Mission face a combination of life challenges: low income, homelessness, mental illness, single parenthood, alcohol abuse, as well as the isolation that comes with old age. No one wants to be poor but the gentrification occurring within the Mile End puts disadvantaged community members in a situation where they cannot afford basic needs once they pay their rent. The fact that Mile End Legal Clinic works out of the Mission's drop-in centre facilitates access and introduces community members to mechanisms of the justice system.

According to Lou, "it is not a secret that legal costs are expensive. The Mile End Legal Clinic is a fantastic resource that focuses on social justice and easier access to legal assistance." As they are appreciative of our weekly presence, so are we for their long-standing partnership, as well as trust and collaboration in increasing access to justice in the Mile End and in surrounding areas of Montreal.



TYNDALE ST-GEORGES COMMUNITY CENTRE

The Tyndale St-Georges Community Centre has been supporting families within and around the Little Burgundy area since 1927. Starting in 2008, the late M^{re} Colin K. Irving gave free legal consultations out of the Centre until his passing in June 2013, after which the Mile End Legal Clinic assumed management of the service.

Many of the families that use the Tyndale St-Georges' services are challenged by racism and poverty on a daily basis. To counteract this, the community centre is a place of support where individuals of all ages, young and old, come together to strengthen their community ties. As the Executive Director, Liz Falco, proudly states: "members of all backgrounds and age groups refer to our centre as their second home - a place to come for support, to enhance their network, to grow family ties and to feel safe."

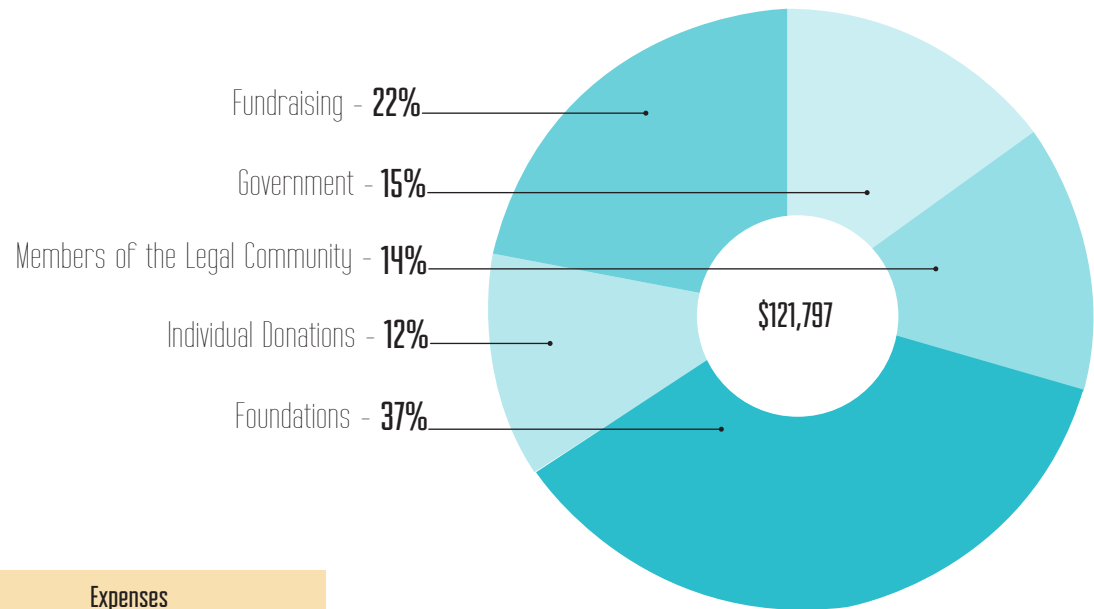
No matter the legal problem, tackling a legal issue head first and without the proper skill set to do so is a daunting task. Liz applauds the Clinic for offering services from within the community: "people already feel safe here and by offering legal services at our centre, it takes away the often intimidating and overwhelming feeling of having to resolve a legal issue, it respects our community, our environment and our neighbourhood." Many thanks to our partner, the Tyndale St-Georges Community Centre, for providing the space to render justice more accessible to individuals within Little Burgundy and its surrounding neighbourhoods.



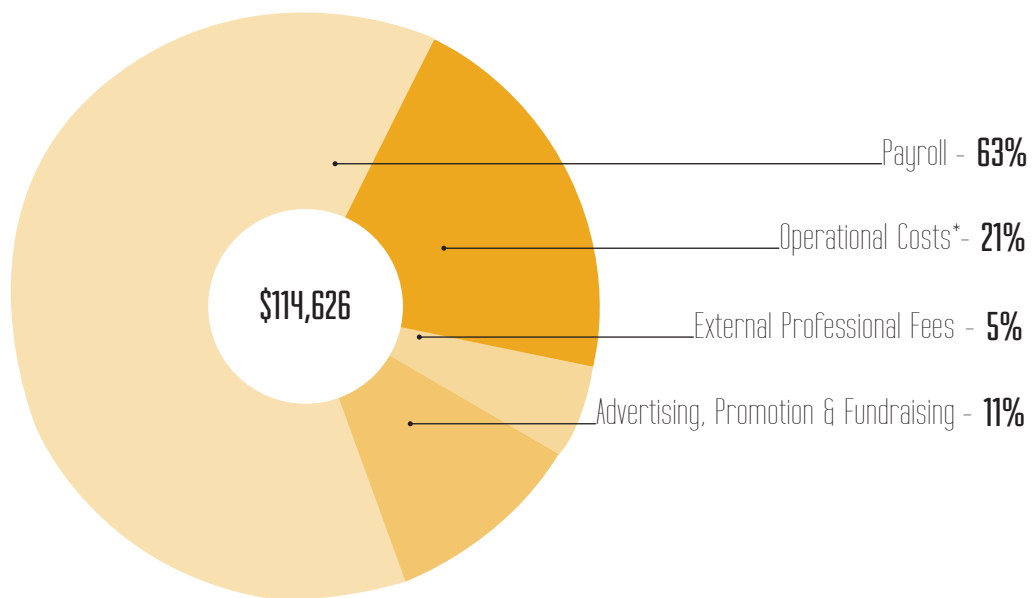
FINANCES

DATA BASED ON OUR LAST FISCAL YEAR'S AUDIT.
FOR A COPY OF OUR FINANCIAL STATEMENTS, PLEASE CONTACT US.

Income



Expenses



*Including, but not limited to : rent, telecommunications, website, professional fees, office supplies, bank fees, and insurance.

THANK YOU

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*We wish to thank those who made a donation in honour of M^e David Laflamme.
M^e Laflamme was a passionate and dedicated lawyer who greatly contributed to the development of the Clinic.*

SUPPORT US



The Mile End Legal Clinic helps around 400 clients per year, giving each client an average of 5 hours of our time. At the symbolic rate of \$100/hour, we are investing \$200,000 worth of time into filling the justice gap! We are asking you to donate the value of one hour of your time, making it possible for us to help a person who needs it.

Donate online at:
www.justicemontreal.org/dons/
info@melc.ca

Cheques mailable to "Mile End Legal Clinic" at:
5159, Saint-Laurent Boulevard
Montreal, Quebec H2T 1R9

The Mile End Legal Clinic operates almost entirely through private donations. Your support is vital!
MELC is a registered charity. Tax receipts are available for donations of more than \$25.
Please include your full email and mailing address with your donation so that we can send you a receipt.

FREE DROP-IN CONSULTATIONS

Mile End Legal Clinic
Wednesday from 4PM to 7PM
at the Mile-End Community Mission
99 Bernard West

Tyndale St-Georges Legal Clinic
Monday from 6PM to 7PM
at the Tyndale St-Georges Community Centre
870 Richmond Square

For admissibility to our drop-in consultations, check our website for more details.
Please note that our services are not limited to the Mile-End and Little Burgundy neighbourhoods.

