

Symbolic seat for children added to CDN-NDG council

By Joel Ceasu The Suburban
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School administrators, student and parent make presentation to CDN-NDG council.

Some small towns have more seats at their town council than the number of people who show up to meetings, often a reminder of their own inflated self-importance.

But in Montreal's most populous borough, with some 170,000 citizens and only six elected officials, there's a new seat in town. No, Côte des Neiges–Notre Dame de Grâce was not granted an extra seat, but instead welcomed a powerful reminder of who faces the consequences of decisions taken at council.

La Chaise des générations was brought to council to reserve a symbolic place for children at the table of a decision-making body, reminding élus that every decision related to the climate crisis and protection of biodiversity impacts future generations. The chair was decorated by students from Saint Monica and Marc-Favreau elementary schools in NDG, and presented by Mères au

front to Borough Mayor Gracia Kasoki Katahwa at the council meeting last Monday.

Inspired by themes related to preservation of biodiversity, some 27 Grade 4 students from neighbouring French and English schools adorned the recovered chair with various materials, expressing their artistic potential and articulating their expectations in the face of climate issues. "La Chaise des générations gives hope and power to children who need to be heard" said co-organizer Lise Huneault, "and feel that they are also participating in a green and fair transition."

In NDG, St. Monica teacher Sandra Banon's Grade 4 class hosted their peers from École Marc Favreau around the block to complete the project. "The whole idea is to take a chair and have students decorate it with natural or repurposed items. There was no going to the dollar store for this." Banon organized a morning workshop where students from both schools worked together in shifts, making new friends and using materials but no written words, to convey a message in the universal language of art to adults deliberating on their future.

"Municipalities are on the front lines and facing the effects of climate change and the ecological crisis," said Katahwa. "It is our responsibility to accelerate the green transition to protect the health and safety of future generations." The Chaise project is taking root in cities across Quebec and was inspired by Quebec City Mayor Bruno Marchand's office.

Banon's students got it right away. "They understood that the council makes important decisions for the future," she told *The Suburban*, and "they completely understand the issue of climate change. Of course they do. They look outside the window and see it's December and there's no snow. They know why they are not wearing snow pants to school. Believe me they get it. They are all on board."

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